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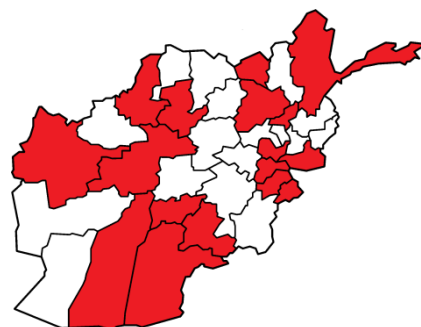
Briefing Notes

20 October 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 13.10.14, Taliban fighters launched a car-bomb attack on an ISAF convoy in Kabul, killing three people and injuring one person. Another bomb attack on a market in the northern outskirts of Kabul left 22 civilians injured. In eastern Nangarhar province, a suicide bomber targeted a hospital, killing a woman and injuring seven people. In north-eastern Kunduz province, an advisor of the finance ministry was injured together with two others in a targeted attack. In northern Sar-e Pul province, Taliban insurgents raided a convoy of Afghan security forces; in the clashes, at least 14 soldiers and police officers as well as 23 Taliban members were killed. In southern Helmand province, the district of Sangin was re-captured by the Afghan military forces.



In south-eastern Paktika province, seven civilians were killed in a NATO airstrike, as was reported by government sources. According to information provided by NATO officials, the victims were insurgents. In southern Uruzgan Province, the Taliban claim to have seized a police station. On 14.10.14, a bomb attack in Kabul's 5th police district killed two civilians and wounded another three. In southern Helmand province, a teacher and a staff member of the local education authority lost their lives when a roadside bomb exploded. In north-eastern Badakhshan province, three children were killed and five injured by mortar shells. In Khakrez district (southern Kandahar province), residence accuse the Afghan security forces of having killed six civilians by misdirected shelling. In southern Helmand province, insurgents killed the chief of Naad Ali district and two of his bodyguards, another six people were injured. Clashes in southern Zabul, Uruzgan and Helmand provinces claimed the lives of more police officers and Taliban insurgents. ISAF announced to hand over their largest military base in Helmand to the Afghan security forces on 26.10.14.

On 15.10.14, at least 14 security officers were killed by insurgents in south-eastern Khost and central Logar provinces. In Garziwan district (northern Faryab province), a bomb attack killed six people.

On 16.10.14, dozens of Taliban fighters were killed in operations against insurgents in several provinces, among them eastern Nangarhar and western Herat province. In northern Baghlan province, two criminal lawyers lost their lives in a bomb attack; in the border district of Torkham (Nangarhar province), the district telecommunications officer was gunned down.

On 17.10.14, the Afghan military carried out an operation against insurgents in Tagab district (central Kapisa province).

On 18.10.14, nine people were killed in a suicide attack on a convoy of the security forces in southern Helmand. In western Ghor, clashes between rival Taliban factions claimed the lives of at least 12 people. In south-eastern Khost province, the police chief of Spera district was killed in a bomb attack.

On 19.10.14, a total of at least 24 people were killed in eastern Nangarhar province in a suicide attack in the capital Jalalabad and in several other incidents. An al-Qaeda leader was killed in an air-raid. In central Logar province, four Afghan soldiers and nine Taliban fighters were killed when the insurgents launched a coordinated attack.

Pakistan

Security situation

Since mid-June, the Pakistani military forces have been operating against radical Islamic insurgents in the tribal areas. Last week, at least 21 people were killed in airstrikes launched in Khyber tribal area. So far, the total death toll is far above 1,000, as was reported by military officials.

Also in Khyber region, a suicide attack was launched on a peace committee on 15.10.14, killing five people and injuring another seven.

Court of appeals upholds death sentence against Christian woman

On 16.10.14, the court of the city of Lahore dismissed the appeal lodged by a Christian woman who had been sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010. Her lawyer announced to make a final appeal to Pakistan's Supreme Court, the third and last judicial instance. In the past, the Supreme Court has often acquitted the convicts or reduced the sentence to a prison term. So far, no-one has been executed for the crime of blasphemy.

India/Pakistan

New cross-border fire in Kashmir

On 18.10.14, new cross-border firing erupted in Kashmir between soldiers of the Indian and Pakistani frontier corps. During the last two weeks, such incidents have claimed the lives of 20 civilians.

Iraq

New displacement crisis in Anbar province

On 14.10.14, UNHCR reported that the fights in Anbar province (see also BN of 13.10.14) have led to a new wave of refugees. Approx. 180,000 inhabitants have fled the city of Hit, most of them escaped to al-Khalidiya, Haditha, Rawa, Ana and other cities in the province. Some people also fled to Baghdad and Kerbela, it was reported.

Bomb attack on Baghdad mosque

A bomb attack on a Shia Muslim mosque in Baghdad killed at least 18 people and wounded another 30 on 19.10.14.

Reports from human rights organisations

On 14.10.14, Amnesty International released a detailed report accusing Shia militias of grave human rights violations against Sunni Muslims. Government forces were also held responsible for torture and execution of civilians, the organisation said.

According to a report published by the organisation Minority Rights Group International (MRG), more than 12,000 civilians have been killed so far this year, most of them by the IS terror militia and in ethnic cleansing operations.

Syria

US military airdrops weapons for Kurds in Kobane

As was reported by the US military command, Kurdish fighters in the embattled city of Kobane were supplied from the air with weapons, ammunition and medical supplies in the night of 20.10.14. The supplies came from the Kurdish authorities in Iraq, it was said. Also, the US army launched several airstrikes, the report went on.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that Kurdish fighters advanced in the eastern part of Kobane which has been seized by IS combatants.

Iran

UN report on executions

On 10.10.14, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, released his new report on the human rights situation in Iran on the occasion of the 12th World Day against the Death Penalty. According to the report, which is based on official sources, more than 850 executions were carried out between June 2013 and July 2014. Many of the victims were women and youths, it was stated. Most executions were conducted after trials which had taken only minutes, the report went on. In total, over 120,000 people have been executed for various crimes since the Islamic Republic of Iran was proclaimed, among them many under the age of 18.

Yemen

Khaled Bahah new head of government

Three weeks after the peace agreement signed by the Shia Muslim al-Houthi rebels and government politicians, Yemen has started a transitional process. According to a report of Saba news agency, Yemeni President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi appointed Yemen's UN envoy Khaled Bahah as prime minister on 13.10.14. Also the Shia Muslim Houthi rebels agreed to the nomination. Mr Bahah, who comes from the Sunni Muslim dominated province of Hadramaut, was asked to form a government, the news agency reported. Before, the country had been without genuine leadership for weeks. During this time, the al-Houthi had advanced to the capital Sanaa from the north and took over control. Now, the rebels are calling for a greater say in the country dominated by the Sunni Muslim religion.

Al-Houthi rebels capture al-Hudaida port

As was reported from security and military circles, Houthi rebels seized the strategically important city of al-Hudaida on the Red Sea coast including the port and the airport in the night to 14.10.14, without any resistance from the government forces. The city is 230 km west of the capital Sanaa and has two million inhabitants. For some time now, the rebels have been demanding access to the Red Sea for the areas controlled by them.

Al-Houthi rebels seize border post near Saudi Arabia

As was reported by Arab news agency Al-Sharq al-Awsat on 17.10.14, Shia Muslim al-Houthi rebels have seized an important border post in Harad region (northern Hajah province) near the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which follows the strict interpretation of Sunni Islam.

Lebanon

Parliamentary elections postponed due to crisis in Syria

Due to the crisis in neighbouring Syria, Lebanon has postponed parliamentary elections for another two years to 2017, a minister told Reuters news agency. The deteriorating security situation made it impossible to hold a vote, he said. Initially, elections had been scheduled for June 2013. This second postponement would lead to two legislative periods for the members of parliament in a row. Moreover, due to disputes among the parliamentarians in Beirut, the country has been without a president since May.

Lebanon has been deeply affected by the civil war in Syria, with violence spilling over to a large extent. As for the support of the rival parties to the civil war, the country remains deeply split.

Turkey

Fights with the PKK

The Turkish military has rejected media reports saying that the army was deploying fighter jets against PKK rebel targets on Daglica (Hakkari province) in the region bordering Iraq. However, fights with the PKK on 14.10.14 were confirmed, after several days of mortar attacks on a military post.

West Africa/Ebola

Latest developments

On 16.10.14, the number of Ebola infections was at 8,997, with 4,493 fatal casualties. According to WHO estimates, the number of unreported cases may be twice as high. Presently, the region with the highest prevalence of infections is the northern part of Liberia bordering Sierra Leone (Lofa, Gbarpolu and Bong regions). While the outbreak of the disease could be stopped in Nigeria, the first confirmed Ebola case in Senegal was reported on 20.10.14, imported from Guinea. Three days before, the WHO had declared Senegal to be free of the virus. Experts expect that roughly 10 percent of the international medical personnel will be infected with Ebola. After the launch of pandemic prevention programmes, monitoring activities have now concentrated on possible mutations of the virus which might make the transfer of the disease easier. On 15.10.14, a second Ebola infection on the territory of the U.S. was confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Another nurse who had helped to care for Ebola patient Mr Duncan from Liberia had been infected with Ebola in the Dallas hospital. As yet, the infection route remains unclear.

Somalia

Attack in Mogadishu

On 15.10.14, the detonation of an explosive placed on the vehicle of a high-rank secret service officer killed at least five persons. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack. The al-Shabaab militia is believed to be behind the attack.

Protests against AMISOM

On 19.10.14, hundreds of protesters accused AMISOM soldiers from Djibouti of killing innocent civilians in Beledweyne district. Several people were injured during the protest marches. AMISOM rejected the accusations, saying that the soldiers had responded to an attack by armed militias when they were on their way to a village approx. 40 km away from Beledweyne, where severe fights had erupted between different clans.

Côte d'Ivoire

First trial for forced marriage of young girl

For the first time, a father will be put on trial for having forced his 11-year-old daughter into marriage. A spokesperson of the court in the city of Bouaké said that the trial, scheduled to start on 22.10.14, would 'serve as an example'. The identity of the husband has not been revealed. He had been represented by his relatives at the wedding ceremony.

The arrest was made following a programme implemented by the local NGO 'Solidarity' which conducts information campaigns especially in schools in central and northern Ivory Coast. The charge was brought before court after the director of the girl's school had informed the organisation. According to UNICEF, roughly 12 percent of women in the West African country are married before they reach the age of 15 and 36 percent before they are 18.

Tanzania

UNHCR welcomes decision to grant citizenship to nearly 200,000 refugees

On 14.10.14, Tanzania's President Jakaya Kikwete started the naturalisation process for nearly 200,000 Burundian refugees by handing out the first citizenship certificates personally. The United Nations refugee agency welcomed the decision in a statement on 17.10.14, saying that this marked the largest group in UNHCR's history to which naturalisation has been offered by a country of first asylum. The beneficiaries are roughly 162,000 refugees who had fled their home country Burundi amidst ethnic conflict in 1972, as well as a large part of their children born in Tanzania. The naturalisation had been on the agenda for several years, but had been repeatedly delayed for various reasons.

Nigeria

Ceasefire agreed between military and Boko Haram

On 24.10.14, Nigeria's chief of defence staff, Alex Badeh, announced a truce agreed between government forces and the terror militia Boko Haram during negotiations held in Chad. The troop commanders had received the order not to attack Boko Haram, it was stated. In a programme released by the VOA Hausa service, top Nigerian presidential aide Hassan Tukur and Danladi Ahmadu, a previously unknown representative of Boko Haram who calls himself the secretary-general of the organisation, announced the release of more than 200 school girls who had been captured and abducted by Boko Haram in the city of Chibok in April 2014. Nigerian news agencies reported on 20.10.14 that the release might take place on the following day. However, doubts arise over the imminent release of the girls in the absence of an official statement on the negotiations from Boko Haram's leadership and also because all negotiations conducted so far have failed in the end.

Village attacked by Boko Haram

Despite the ceasefire announced on the previous day, the village of Sina, Michika Local Government Area, in north-eastern Adamawa State was stormed in the night of 25.10.14, when several hundred attackers, believed to be Boko Haram members, killed villagers and burnt down houses.

Ukraine

Fighting in Donetsk

Local authorities reported that in the east Ukrainian city of Donetsk, four civilians were killed by splinters in clashes between Ukrainian fighters and pro-Russian insurgents on 18./19.10.14, nine more were injured. On 19.10.14, the Ukrainian military said that 13 soldiers were injured during fights in eastern Ukraine in the last 24 hours. They gave no numbers on insurgents killed.

The fighting in Donetsk is mostly for control of the airport, which so far has not been conquered by either side. Frequently, residential areas are affected by the clashes.

Separatists deny liability for the crash of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17.

The separatists in Eastern Ukraine have rejected a statement of the German Intelligence Service BND that they had shot down Malaysian Airlines passenger flight MH17. The intelligence service assumes that the plane with almost 300 passengers on board had been shot down on 17.07.14 by separatists with a missile of the air defence system 'Buk' which had been seized from a Ukrainian military base.

The separatists have rejected the statement. According to a communication of the news agency Interfax from Donetsk dated 19.10.14, separatist leader Andrei Purgin said that 'Buk' was a very complex system and that they had no experts to handle it. The allegations were the consequence of a general 'hysteria', he added, and he blamed leadership in Kiev for the crash instead. It was incomprehensible, he said, that the government had not closed the air space above the conflict zone.

Russian Federation

Chechens drafted to Russia's army again

In October 2014, more than 150,000 young men are waiting to be conscripted. Among them are about 4,000 draftees from Northern Caucasus: half of them from Dagestan, and 500 from Chechnya. The last conscription of Chechens had taken place in 1992. The head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, has welcomed the decision. In mid-September 2014, he had complained in a conversation with Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu that Chechens are obliged to serve in the army, but not conscripted. For Kadyrov, the reintroduction of the conscription of Chechens is a matter of prestige. It would symbolize a return to normality and give the disputed ruler an occasion to assure Russia of his loyalty, even when the number of young men fit for military service (about 7,000) is much higher than the number of those now conscripted. Given the high level of insecurity and the longstanding factual state of war, the Russian defence ministry had considered the conscription of young men from the Caucasus region as a security risk. This sceptical stance

has not become irrelevant with the decision to draft conscripts from the region. The young men in the Caucasus region who were interviewed by Russian media expressed differing opinions. Apart from mentioning new economic perspectives, they also said they were reluctant to serve in an army which had killed their relatives or had made them 'disappear'. In the Russian mainland, ethnic Caucasians are often discriminated against. In the last years, there have repeatedly been cases of racially motivated unrest.

Sri Lanka

EU's classification of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation is unlawful

In a judgement of 16.10.14, the European Court of Justice ruled that the EU's classification of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) as a terrorist organisation was based on insufficient information and that the decision is to be revoked. The rebels' assets remain frozen, the Court also held. The LTTE had appealed the EU's classification, calling the fight against the Sri Lankan government an 'armed conflict', which would mean that it falls under the regulations of International Humanitarian Law. Currently, only the US, India, Canada and Sri Lanka are still regarding the LTTE as a terrorist organisation.

From 1983 to 2009, the LTTE had fought for the independence of the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, dominated by Tamils, and exercised public authority in the areas under its control. By mid-2007, Sri Lanka's military first captured important LTTE positions in the country's east and intensified its offensive in the north. In the beginning of 2009, the armed forces recaptured the rebels' stronghold Kilinochchi, the Elephant pass and the city of Mullaitivu, i.e. several positions that the LTTE had held for years. The final defeat of the rebels was achieved in May 2009.

China

Hong Kong protests

On 14.10.14, police forces removed several barricades set up by the protesters in Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island. In the night of 15.10.14, police forcibly cleared a road tunnel near the seat of the city government occupied by the protesters, and arrested 45 people. Public outrage was caused by a video clip showing the mistreatment of a protester by several police officers. On 16.10.14, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying offered the protesters to hold talks with them, but categorically rejected their demand for free elections. On 17.10.14, police cleared one of the three remaining protest camps in the commercial district Mong Kok on Kowloon peninsula, thus reopening important roads to traffic. After the protesters erected new barriers there, the police forcefully entered the site in the night of 18.10.14, but did not succeed in preventing the blocking. According to official reports, 15 police officers were injured and 26 people were detained. Violent clashes occurred also on the following day. Smaller incidents were also reported from the other protest camps in Admiralty and Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island. The situation eased somewhat in the night of 20.10.14. Negotiations between government representatives and the protesters have been scheduled for 21.10.14.

Violence in Xinjiang

On 12.10.14, four Uyghurs armed with knives and explosives went to a market frequented mostly by ethnic Han Chinese in Bachu area (Kashgar prefecture) and killed several police officers before they were shot dead themselves by police forces. In total, at least 22 people lost their lives in the incident, dozens more were left injured. Already two days before, two Uyghurs had killed three police officers and three civil servants in Pishan area (Hotan prefecture). The perpetrators were shot dead by the police on a road check on 12.10.14. The attack appears to be a revenge act for a brother of the two perpetrators who had died in police detention.

In the context of violent clashes in Shache County which had occurred on 28.07.14, the intermediate people's court of Kashgar prefecture sentenced twelve defendants to death on 13.10.14; 15 others were also given death sentence with a two-year reprieve; nine defendants received life imprisonment and 20 others were jailed for four to twenty years. The incident has not yet been finally clarified. According to official reports, a group of insurgents armed with knives and axes had attacked a police station and government buildings and killed 37 people before 59 of the perpetrators were shot dead by security forces. Uyghur sources, however, spoke of a violent crackdown on a protest rally.

Philippines

Abu Sayyaf frees two German hostages

On 17.10.14, Islamist group Abu Sayyaf released two German hostages on Jolo Island. The two had been abducted in April while on a sailing trip. It remains unclear whether the demanded ransom of 4m Euro for the release of the 72-year-old man and his 55-year-old partner was paid. The kidnappers had threatened to decapitate the man if the ransom was not paid until 17.10.14.

Abu Sayyaf is fighting in the Muslim-dominated south of the country, whose majority adheres to the Catholic religion. He has sworn allegiance to the IS terror group. As was communicated by Philippine intelligence circles, there are more than ten other people held hostage by the terror group, among them a Dutchman, a Swiss, two Malaysians and a Japanese citizen.