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Group 22 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

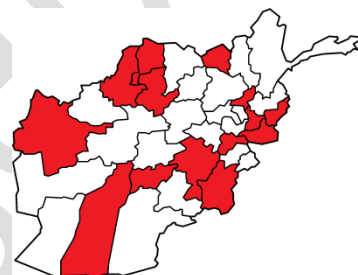
6 March 2017

Summarised edition owing to reprioritisation of tasks

Afghanistan

Armed conflicts

Armed conflicts, cleansing campaigns and raids by security forces continue unabated; the same applies to suicide bombings and attacks by rebels in which civilians are being killed or wounded. According to press reports, the following provinces were affected last week: Jawzjan, Faryab, Samangan (northern Afghanistan), Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan (north-eastern Afghanistan), Uruzgan, Helmand, Zabul (southern Afghanistan), Farah, Badghis (western Afghanistan), Laghman, Nangarhar (eastern Afghanistan), Logar and Kapisa (central Afghanistan).



Suicide bombings and attacks

On 28 February 2017, two tribal elders were murdered in Jalalabad (capital of Nangarhar, eastern Afghanistan). In the Behsud district of Nangarhar province, eight persons including two children were wounded in a bomb blast. In Helmand (southern Afghanistan), a police officer was killed when a booby trap exploded on the Kandahar-Helmand Highway.

On 1 March 2017, insurgents attacked several security checkpoints and the home of a police commander in Laghman province (eastern Afghanistan), killing at least three persons and abducting six men. In Kabul, members of the Taliban raided offices of the intelligence service in the 12th district and a police station in the 6th district, killing at least 16 persons and wounding 104, including women and children.

According to a report issued on 2 March 2017, the Taliban set up checkpoints in Ghazni province (south-eastern Afghanistan, Deh Yak district, Paktia-Ghazni Highway) and are asking travellers to pay customs duties. In Laghman (eastern Afghanistan), attempts made by the Taliban to capture two district centres were foiled.

On 4 March 2017, shots were fired at an MP from Helmand in Kandahar. In Farah province (western Afghanistan) at least eight civilians were killed when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb, 22 persons were wounded.

Bangladesh

Leading Islamist arrested

On 2 March 2017, Maulana Abul Kashem, the leader of Jumatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh, was arrested. The group is being held responsible, inter alia, for the attack carried out on a restaurant in Dhaka in 2016 in which 17 foreigners were killed.

Child marriage legalised

On 27 February 2017, the Bangladesh parliament approved a law that permits girls under age 18 to marry. This means girls under the age of 18 can marry under "special circumstances," with permission from their parents and a court. There is no minimum age for these marriages. Bangladesh has the highest rate of child

marriages in Asia, with 52 percent of girls married before age 18, and 18 percent married before age 15. Under the previous law, which was by and large ignored, the legal age of marriage was 18 for women, with no exceptions.

Pakistan

Reforms planned for tribal areas

Pakistan's cabinet has approved a plan to introduce reforms to its tribal areas under federal administration in north-western Afghanistan. This means the Frontier Crimes Regulation which dates back to British colonial times will be replaced by the penal code which applies to the rest of Pakistan. The five-year plan will see the tribal areas merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, with citizens given the right to vote for representatives in the provincial assembly for the first time. The plan also envisages the holding of local council elections in each of the seven tribal areas. The reforms will also see the introduction of a new law to govern the tribal areas, based on the concept of tribal customs (formalising the holding of tribal councils, also known as jirgas).

The new plan also envisages the complete return of internally displaced persons by 30 April 2017 now that Pakistan's military has regained control over North Waziristan. The tribal areas are considered to be hideouts of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, the Haqqani networks and other Islamist groups that have ties with the Taliban.

Syria

Peace talks

The fourth round of peace talks on Syria ended after eight days in Geneva on 3 March 2017 with minimum consensus being achieved. The representatives of the government and the opposition did not even sit at the same table. According to UN Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, both sides agreed that Resolution 2254 providing for a unity government, a new constitution and re-elections needs to be implemented. Counter-terrorism measures and trust-building processes were also discussed. He said a clear agenda had been set for future talks and that working groups will be set up during the next round of negotiations. The representatives of the government and the opposition continue to view each other with a deep sense of mistrust. According to the leader of the opposition delegation, Nasr al-Hariri, the talks did not produce any tangible results but on the whole had been more positive than the previous talks.

Turkey

Trial against coup suspects

The biggest trial yet against 330 members of the military accused of involvement in the coup attempt of 15 July 2016 began in Turkey on 28 February 2017 in a new courtroom at Sincan prison (on the outskirts of Ankara). The suspects include high-ranking generals such as the Commander of the Polatlı Artillery and Missile School Command in Ankara, General Osman Ünlü, and the Commander of the 58th Artillery Battalion, General Murat Aygün. They stand accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation, attempting to remove the government and parliament of the Turkish Republic or trying to prevent those institutions from conducting their work as well as attempted murder. The public prosecutor is demanding up to three life sentences under harsh conditions. The joint plaintiffs include the Chief of Staff of the Army and the families of those killed in the coup.

Reporter for "Die Welt" newspaper Deniz Yücel in pre-trial detention

After spending 13 days on remand, the reporter for "Die Welt" Deniz Yücel was brought before the investigating magistrate on 28 February 2017 in Istanbul who formally arrested him pending a trial. According to media reports, the public prosecutor has charged him with spreading terrorist propaganda and inciting hatred.

He is also being charged with publishing several articles last year in connection with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and with the attempted coup.

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Kurzausgabe