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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Fighting, attacks, civilian victims

On 24 November 2020, two bomb attacks killed 17 people and injured more than 50 others in Bamiyan province, which has been considered to be rather quiet so far. The attack took place near a market and a hotel in the capital Bamiyan. The province is predominantly inhabited by Shiite Hazaras. Apparently, police arrested three suspects and blamed the Taliban, who have denied any involvement.

On 29 November 2020 at least 31 people died and at least 24 were injured in an attack by an explosive-laden vehicle on a Public Protection Police base in south-eastern Ghazni province. Another suicide bomber attacked the chairman of the provincial council in Qalat, capital of southern Zabul province. The chairman was left slightly injured; three people were killed and 22 others injured. Another local politician from central Afghan Parwan province was injured in an attack on the Kabul-Parwan Highway.

On the morning of 30 November 2020, the district police chief of Obe in Herat province was killed in an ambush by the Taliban, who, however, have not yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to research by the New York Times, at least 205 pro-government forces and 196 civilians have so far died in attacks and military conflicts in several provinces in November 2020 (as of 26 November 2020, excluding the above-mentioned attacks).

The Afghan defence ministry stated that last week, the Taliban significantly increased the number of attacks, with daily fighting in at least 21 provinces (out of 34). The provinces affected were Nangarhar, Laghman, Nuristan, Ghazni, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Paktika, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Herat, Farah, Badghis, Faryab, Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-e-Pul, Helmand, Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan.

The UN has counted over 300,000 conflict-related internally displaced people so far this year, with northern Kunduz and Faryab provinces most severely affected.

German armed forces leave Kunduz

On 26 November 2020 the Federal armed forces withdrew from their base in Kunduz; the soldiers were transferred to Mazar-e Sharif. Press reports indicate that the US military has abandoned at least ten military bases since the agreement with the Taliban was reached in February 2020.

International donor conference imposes conditions on support

On 24 November 2020, the International Donors' Conference for Afghanistan in Geneva decided to provide further support to the country with around 12 billion USD. In return, the Afghan government committed itself in a framework agreement to respect democracy, the rule of law, human rights and gender equality and to take concrete steps against corruption.

Armenia / Azerbaijan

Armenia cedes 121 towns and villages to Azerbaijan

On 23 November 2020, the Armenian government published a list of 121 towns and villages that will pass into Azerbaijani control. The overwhelming majority of these towns and villages are located in the seven Azerbaijani provinces surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh and have so far served as a security buffer for Nagorno-Karabakh. However, individual locations in Nagorno-Karabakh, such as the city of Shusha (Armenian: Shushi), which was conquered by Azerbaijani troops, will also pass to Azerbaijan. In some cases, Armenia had lost control of these locations during recent fighting, in others they were handed over without a fight. Parts of the areas which were handed over are believed to be mined. Meanwhile, there are increasing reports of the destruction of historical and religious cultural assets by Azerbaijani soldiers in the lost Armenian territories. In many places, monuments and churches with Christian symbols have been damaged or destroyed. In the city of Shusha in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Cathedral of Christ the Holy Saviour was fired upon twice by Azerbaijani forces during the fighting. After the conquest of the city, soldiers in Shusha apparently destroyed the church of St. John Mkrtich.

Belarus

Arrests during continuing protests in Minsk

During the weekly protests in Belarus against authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, the demonstrators have changed tactics. Instead of a single large demonstration, some 20 decentralised rallies took place in the capital Minsk on 29 November 2020. Despite snowstorms and police violence, protest rallies were held in all districts of the Belarusian capital. With this move, the participants reacted to the regular violent repression of their protests and to the mass arrests made in recent weeks. Many opposition supporters reported torture and ill-treatment during detention. Once more, the demonstrators protested peacefully against Lukashenko, demanding his resignation and subsequent new elections. Again, the security forces made use of excessive violence, using stun grenades and tear gas against the protesters. Masked men in uniforms struck people lying on the ground. The human rights organisation Viasna reports that police arrested more than 120 people on that day; other sources spoke of up to 300 arrests.

Burkina Faso

Presidential election results

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 22 November 2020. According to the provisional results, incumbent President Roch Marc Kaboré (Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès, MPP) secured 57.87 percent of the vote. Eddie Komboïgo (Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès, CDP) came second with 15.47 percent, while opposition leader Zéphirin Diabré (Union pour le progrès et le changement, UPC) came third with 12.46 percent. Five years ago, Diabré had received more than twice as many votes in the election. Even incumbent President Kaboré apparently received 13,000 votes less than he did five years ago. It must be noted, however, that voter turnout this time was only about 50 percent (2015: 60 percent). Media reports indicate that more than 1,300 polling stations remained closed due to security issues. The election commission even spoke of up to 3,000 polling stations that had not been opened.

Chad

At least 22 people killed

On 23 and 24 November 2020, at least 22 people were killed and another 34 people were injured in clashes between nomadic pastoralists and local farmers in the southern Kabbia region, a government spokesperson said on 27 November 2020. Some of the dead had been hit by arrows. The spokesperson further said that

several villages were set on fire and 66 suspects were arrested. The violence was triggered by allegations of cattle theft, a local official told AFP news agency. A curfew was imposed in the region.

China

Poverty reduction

Chinese state media report that there is no longer a county in the People's Republic that is classified as poor. All 832 counties (out of a total of 2,851 administrative units at county level) that had been classified as poor in 2012 were no longer to be considered poor on the basis of statistical data on average income, the reports say. Those with an annual income of less than CNY 4,000 (approx. EUR 511) are rated poor, based on current prices. In 2015, President Xi Jinping had announced to lift more than 70 million people of the rural population out of poverty by the end of 2020.

Critics argue that China has set the poverty line too low and that the news conceals a sharp increase in the income gap between urban and rural areas. They also say that the poverty eradication programme focuses on the rural population and does not take into account the poor living in the cities. Since the 1990s, when China's rise to become the second largest economy in the world took place, the People's Republic has brought some 700 million people out of poverty.

DR Congo

Ebola outbreak ended

The DR Congo is once again free of Ebola, as was officially stated by the Congolese health ministry on 18 November 2020. The first case of what is now the eleventh Ebola outbreak in the country's recent history had been reported on 1 June 2020 from the north-western province of Équateur. The World Health Organisation (WHO) had registered 55 deaths and a total of 119 infection cases in the latest outbreak. The DR Congo has recently experienced three Ebola epidemics in quick succession. The tenth outbreak, affecting the eastern part of the country from August 2018 to June 2020, had claimed more than 2,200 lives; over 3,400 infections had been registered. This tenth outbreak had been particularly difficult to control due to instability and fighting among militias in the eastern provinces. Observers hope that the expertise built up in the fight against Ebola can also be used to contain other infectious diseases. For example, the technology used to cool the Ebola vaccine might also be used to cool a future COVID-19 vaccine.

Ethiopia

Ethiopian government declares victory in Tigray

In the conflict in Ethiopia, central government forces have taken over the capital of the Tigray region, Mekelle. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared on 28 November 2020 that full control over Mekelle was in place, marking the end of the last phase of the military offensive. Reports of casualties and the extent of destruction have not yet been published. Internet and telephone connections to Tigray are largely disrupted. It was only on 26 November 2020 that Abiy Ahmed had announced the 'last phase' of the offensive in Tigray, after the central government's ultimatum to the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) to surrender had expired the day before (see BN of 23 November 2020).

Observers doubt an end to the conflict

It is unlikely that the capture of Mekelle will actually end the conflict in the regional state. For its part, the Tigray Defense Force (TDF), which is the military arm of the TPLF, has repeatedly claimed military success: On 24 November 2020, for example, they claimed to have attacked the Ethiopian army on the fronts in Adwa, Idaga Hamus and Mekoni and to have inflicted heavy losses, 'destroying' the 21st division. Most recently, the TPLF has reported the reconquest of the town of Axum and the shooting down of an Ethiopian fighter plane. There are also reports of missile attacks on targets in Eritrea (see BN of 30 November 2020).

Human Rights Commission confirms AI report on killings of civilians

On 24 November 2020, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which is an independent body but close to the government, confirmed a report by Amnesty International (AI) of a massacre of the civilian population in Mai-Kadra town in south-western Tigray (see BN of 16 November 2020). A group of young Tigray militias ('Samri') was responsible for the death of 600 people, the organisation said. The victims are seasonal workers for agricultural enterprises, mostly ethnic Amhars, who are housed in hostels on the outskirts of the city. Originally, rumour had circled that the crime of 9 November 2020 was committed by Amhara militias. Mai-Kadra is located in a disputed district between Tigray and Amhara.

Ethiopian army apparently prevents Tigray refugees from leaving the country

Apparently, the Ethiopian army prevents people from escaping the embattled Tigray region to Sudan, leading to a sharp decrease in the number of refugees in recent days. According to United Nations (UN) estimates, some 43,000 people have fled to Sudan since fighting broke out in Tigray in early November 2020.

Ethiopia / Eritrea

Evidence of Eritrean involvement in the conflict

There is growing evidence of Eritrea's military involvement in the conflict in Tigray. Eyewitnesses report to Western media about artillery fire from Eritrean territory. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) also cites 'reliable sources' confirming that Eritrean army divisions are currently fighting in Tigray, including heavily armoured units. EHRC reports heavy losses of Eritrean soldiers, as mostly 'inexperienced young conscripts' are deployed. On 25 November 2020, also Tigray's regional state television reported that Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) units had stopped and killed numerous Eritrean soldiers on their way to the provincial capital Mekelle. There is neither an official confirmation of this report, nor of the claim by Eritrean opposition group Arbi Harnet that Eritrean soldiers were wearing Ethiopian uniforms. The Eritrean government has consistently denied any involvement in the fighting in the Ethiopian regional state.

Arbi Harnet reports extensive raids by Eritrean security forces in the capital Asmara. Such 'giffa' serve to check whether someone dodged national service, has deserted or has not yet been drafted. However, local observers have recently stated that there have been no such raids in Asmara since the peace agreement was concluded with Ethiopia in mid-2018. It was also reported that owners of trucks and other vehicles in the southern Zoba Debub were requested to report and prepare for trips to the border region with Tigray. Eritrean sources also report a large general mobilisation of the Eritrean civilian population, with thousands of people up to the age of about 60 years being brought to Adigrat and Adwa in Tigray.

Confusion was caused by a warning issued by the US Embassy in Asmara on 23 November 2020 advising all US citizens in the Eritrean capital to be careful and refrain from unnecessary travel. Reference was made to announcements by local security forces who had urged the population to stay at home because of 'blasting in the course of extensive road construction work'. It is unclear whether this measure was ordered to protect their own population from possible missile attacks by the TPLF or, it is speculated, out of fear of unrest.

Missile attacks on targets in Eritrea

On 28 November 2020 there were reports of rocket attacks on Asmara, with a total of six explosions. Since the rockets were launched after the Ethiopian armed forces reported the capture of the regional capital Mekelle in Tigray (see BN Ethiopia of 30 November 2020), observers assume that the units of the regional government in Tigray (TPLF) still have functional equipment and are able to hit targets in other regions. Already the day before, missiles from Tigray had been fired at Eritrea, apparently crashing near residential areas in Asmara and in Dekemhare (Zoba Debub). Information on losses or damage was not available. About a fortnight ago Asmara was already targeted by TPLF missiles.

Eritrean refugees repatriated by Eritrean armed forces from refugee camps in Tigray

The Eritrean human rights organisation Human Rights Concern - Eritrea (HRCE) reports that Eritrean armed forces have forcibly returned some 6,000 Eritrean refugees to Eritrea from two refugee camps in Tigray. Apparently, the Ethiopian government gave free rein to the Eritrean military in the camps in Shimelba and Hintsats. The four camps in Tigray, home to almost 100,000 Eritreans, are being run by UNHCR.

Honduras

LGBT people without adequate protection

A report published on 17 November 2020 by the non-governmental organisation Human Rights Watch (HRW) concludes that the Honduran government is not effectively combating violence and entrenched discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation, prompting LGBT people to consider leaving the country. The report entitled "My Life passed before my eyes - Violence and Discrimination against LGBT People in Honduras" states that in some cases violence is even perpetrated by people responsible for the security of the population. According to HRW, the country has one of the highest murder rates of transgender people in the world. Already on 7 October 2020 HRW had published a report entitled "Every Day I Live in Fear" which focuses on the issues of violence and discrimination against LGBT people in the Central American states of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. This report also comes to the conclusion that the Honduran government is not doing enough against violence and discrimination, and that in some cases, the legal situation is even fuelling discrimination.

India

Uttar Pradesh: Law makes religious conversion by marriage a criminal offence

On 24 November 2020, the most densely populated state of Uttar Pradesh, ruled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), passed a law making it a criminal offence to convert to another religion by marriage. Any individual who forces his or her partner to change religion in the course of a marriage can be punished with imprisonment for up to ten years. People wishing to abandon the Hindu faith in connection with a marriage must have their case examined by the authorities two months before getting married and will require a permit. The new law also provides that marriages already contracted may be annulled on suspicion of marriage for the sole purpose of religious conversion.

The term 'love jihad', now common in India, is used by Hindu nationalists to suggest the danger that Muslim men will convert Hindu women to Islam by marriage and thereby change India's demography.

Kashmir: attack on patrol

On 26 November 2020, two soldiers were killed by gunfire in an attack by insurgents in Srinagar.

Iran

Major raid against Baha'i

On 22 November 2020, up to 50 members of the Iranian Baha'i religious minority were reportedly subjected to extensive house searches in at least four provinces (Tehran, Alborz, Isfahan and Mazandaran). The Iranian human rights organisation Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) notes an unusually high extent of the governmental measures, with personal items such as laptops, mobile phones, computers and religious books confiscated. The background of the operation is as yet unclear.

HRANA annual death penalty report

HRANA has published its annual report to raise public awareness of the death penalty situation in Iran, drawing on the research work of its own reporters and a network of independent and verifiable sources covering the period from 10 October 2019 to 8 October 2020. The report also includes disclosures made by

judicial authorities to the media announcing or confirming executions of prisoners. During this period, the Iranian authorities imposed the death penalty on 96 people and carried out 256 executions, including two public executions. Executions decreased by 2 percent compared to the same time last year while the number of death sentences handed down by Iranian courts dropped by 16 percent. Of the total of 256 execution victims confirmed to HRANA this year, only 15 were female. Also, two juvenile offenders under the age of 18 were executed. The report provides a breakdown of executions by crime: 80.08 percent were convicted of murder, 7.42 percent of drug and narcotics offences, 5.08 percent of rape, 2.34 percent of armed robbery/crimes classified as 'corruption on earth', 3.13 percent of political or security offences, 0.39 percent of alcohol consumption and 1.56 percent of unknown charges. According to HRANA, the province of Alborz had the highest number of executions with 16 percent, followed by Khorasan Razavi (11 percent) and Western Azerbaijan (9 percent).

Iraq

Escalation of protests in Nasiriyya

Regardless of the lockdown regulations in place, protest rallies were again staged in several major Iraqi cities on Friday 27 November 2020. This time, however, Muqtada as-Sadr, Shiite preacher and important political protagonist, had called on his followers to show their support for him in counter protest. This led to an escalation, especially in Nasiriyya, where at least seven people were killed and 60 wounded (as of 28 November 2020); of the seven casualties, five died from gunshot wounds. The protest movement has accused Sadr's followers of having attacked them with torches and firearms.

Assault on a massage parlour in Baghdad

On 26 November 2020 a relatively new Shiite militia attacked a massage parlour in Baghdad. Such salons are known to house illegal brothels. The group named Rab'Allah put videos of the incident online and initially acknowledged the action. The statements were later removed from their homepage, as there was considerable criticism of the attack, which is generally seen as a sign that the new government is unable to guarantee security, with groups belonging to the People's Mobilisation Forces moving freely and ignoring the rule of law. This assault is one in a series of about a dozen attacks on alcohol shops (usually run by Christians or Yezidis) in Baghdad since October 2020.

Partial school openings

Following the disruption of classroom teaching since February 2020, face-to-face teaching has been resumed again in Iraq. In order to reduce contacts as much as possible, classroom teaching will take place six days a week, with primary school pupils coming to school for one day and older pupils for two days, while the rest of the lessons are taught online. Iraq has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with severe curfews and school closures, with an average of around 2,000 new infections reported each day lately.

Lebanon

Investigation requested into the role of several ministers in the explosion on 4 August 2020

In a letter to the competent body dated 24 November 2020, the judge in charge of the investigation requested to waive the immunity of three ministers currently in office (transport, finance and justice) and of several politicians who held the same positions in recent years. Such a request is highly unusual in Lebanon. No decision has yet been taken.

Mozambique / Tanzania

Joint action against Islamists in Cabo Delgado

According to media reports on 23 November 2020, the police authorities of Mozambique and Tanzania signed a declaration of intent to concentrate their efforts in the fight against militant Islamists in Mozambique's north-eastern province of Cabo Delgado, bordering Tanzania. The agreement provides for the extradition of 516 fighters from Tanzania to Mozambique. They had fled to the neighbouring country and are to be tried in Mozambique.

Nigeria

Praise for campaign against female genital mutilation (FGM)

On 26 November 2020, media reported that the head of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) field office in the town of Enugu expressed his satisfaction with the activities and progress of the ongoing anti-FGM campaign in Imo State. The campaign involves dozens of municipalities in the southern state and also local traditional rulers. The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), which is published every five years, shows that the percentage of Nigerian women affected by FGM is decreasing. Specifically, the NDHS 2018 concludes that the prevalence of FGM in the 15-49 age group fell from 25 to 20 percent in comparison to the NDHS 2013.

Nationwide attention for cases of kidnapping

Nigerian media have reported extensively on kidnappings that became known in the second half of November 2020. Although kidnappings are relatively frequent in Nigeria, some recent cases have attracted more attention: On 15 November 2020, a 36-year-old former national football player was abducted in the southern town of Warri. The athlete had already been the victim of a kidnapping in the same region in 2012; at that time he had been freed by the police after only one day. On 20 November 2020, armed men raided a mosque in Zamfara State during Friday prayer and kidnapped 18 people including the Imam. The following day, a regional politician in Nasarawa State was attacked and abducted at his home. Then, on 22 November, media reported the release of nine students kidnapped on a motorway on 15 November. On 23 November, unidentified individuals kidnapped the wife and son of a police officer in Adamawa State. The same day, a teacher was abducted in Delta State. Her husband reported that the kidnappers are demanding a ransom of 10 million NGN (about 22,000 EUR). Often, there is no information on whether and in what amount a ransom is demanded and paid.

Dozens killed in attack in Borno State

The UN reports that dozens of people were killed in a heavy attack in north-eastern Nigeria on 28 November 2020, when armed men on motorbikes attacked men and women in Koshobe and surrounding villages in Borno State who were busy harvesting rice. Observers say that this is the most serious direct attack on civilians in the region this year. It was initially unclear who was behind the attack. In Borno State, the terrorist group Boko Haram or the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), an organisation that has split off from the Boko Haram group, have been regularly carrying out attacks for years. A report published by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in May 2020 states that since 2011, more than 8,000 people were killed in northwest Nigeria as a result of violence by armed groups.

Pakistan

Fifth Ahmadi killed within four months

On 20 November 2020, a 31-year-old Ahmadi was shot dead in a village near Nankana Sahib (Punjab) after the end of Friday prayer with parishioners, presumably for religious reasons. Three other people were seriously injured. Previous incidents of incitement and violence against Ahmadis have been reported in this

region. According to the Ahmadiyya community, this is now the fifth killing of one of its members within four months (see BN of 16 November 2020).

In a joint statement of 26 November 2020, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) called on the Pakistani government to prosecute violence against the religious minority more seriously. Violence against Ahmadis often takes place in a climate of impunity.

Somalia

Cyclone hits thousands

On 22 November 2020, Somalia was hit by tropical cyclone Gati. It was the most violent storm in at least 50 years, causing the same amount of rainfall in two days in the affected regions as normally falls in two years. Puntland and Somaliland were affected by the storm, the Bari region and Iskushuban district were particularly hard hit. A total of 180,000 people were affected by the storm, 66,000 of whom need humanitarian aid such as food, shelter, water and health services. Over 40,000 people have been displaced from their homes. Houses, farms, crops and other property have been destroyed and large numbers of livestock killed. At least eight people have died and many are still missing. Humanitarian organisations are working with the Puntland authorities to deliver this aid, but blocked roads are hampering efforts.

Attacks

On 25 November 2020, several security officers were killed in a bomb explosion in the village of Elasha Biyaha near Mogadishu. So far, no one has officially claimed responsibility for the attack, but al-Shabaab is suspected of being behind the attack.

Apparently, al-Shabaab is also responsible for the killing of a family (parents and children) on 25 November 2020 in Wajid district, Bakool region. The father was a government army officer, which may be the reason for the attack, reports say.

On 27 November 2020 an al-Shabaab militant blew himself up in an ice cream parlour in Mogadishu near the international airport, leaving seven people killed and ten injured, reports say.

On 28 November 2020 a high-ranking employee of the port of Mogadishu was ambushed. He survived, but two other people were killed and an unknown number injured.

Syria

Attacks in Afrin and al-Bab

In the cities, which are both under the control of the Turkish military, two attacks took place on 24 November 2020, killing at least seven people and injuring dozens more.

At an intersection on the outskirts of al-Bab, a roadside bomb was detonated, killing five people and injuring 20. About two hours later, a car bomb exploded in Afrin, killing at least two people and injuring 17 others. Turkey and its allied Syrian Arab militias blame the Kurdish People's Defence Forces (YPG) for the attacks. No-one has yet claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Fights between SDF and Syrian-Arab rebels

In the night of 24 November 2020, heavy fighting broke out between the Kurdish-led Democratic Forces of Syria (SDF) and Turkish-supported rebels in northern Syria near Ain Issa, located between Raqqqa and Tal Abyad.

The Syrian National Army (SNA), as the union of predominantly Syrian-Arab Islamists is called, is reported to have lost at least 18 fighters. No figures have been released on the losses on the part of the SDF. However, an SDF spokesman has confirmed that six civilians were injured in the fighting.

Togo

Opposition members arrested

On 28 November 2020, police arrested Brigitte Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson, coordinator of the opposition organisation Dynamique Mgr Kpodzro (DMK), and Gérard Djossou, another leading member of that organisation. Adjamagbo-Johnson is also Secretary-General of the opposition party Convention Démocratique des Peuples Africains (CDPA). Both defendants are accused of undermining the internal security of the state. They are alleged to have planned acts of violence in connection with an opposition demonstration announced for 28 November 2020. The authorities had banned the demonstration in advance, partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Turkey

Verdicts in the Akinci trial

On 26 November 2020, media reported that many of the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment in the Akinci trial (named after the Akinci airbase near Ankara), which is one of the main trials for the attempted coup of 2016. In total, 475 individuals had been charged with the events of the coup night on 15 July 2016. Life sentences were handed down to 337 defendants for crimes including the attempted elimination of the constitutional order, an attempt to assassinate the President, and intentional killings. In some cases, sentences of up to 79 separate aggravated life terms were imposed. This penalty had been introduced in 2004 in replacement of the death penalty. 60 other defendants also received prison sentences, 75 people were acquitted. The trial had begun in early August 2017.

Among those convicted are high-ranking military personnel, but also civilians. Everyone associated with the Akinci airbase was charged with involvement in the attempted coup in 2016. The officers had led the coup from there, the prosecution said. Turkey blames the movement of Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen for the attempted coup.

COVID-19 figures

Health minister Fahrettin Koca stated at a press conference on 25 November 2020 that from now on the ministry will also publish daily the number of all persons tested positive for COVID-19. On 29 July 2020, the health ministry had started to adjust the corona infection figures by no longer reporting all positive cases, but only those who actually developed symptoms and needed treatment. As a result, the official figures in Turkey remained low by international standards, with about 7,000 patients per day in the end. By using this method, up to 350,000 corona infections had been concealed by the end of October 2020, media report. According to official figures released on 29 November 2020, a total of 29,281 new infections and 6,439 patients symptomatic of COVID-19 were detected in 168,212 tests in the previous 24 hours. This means that 494,351 people in Turkey have contracted COVID-19, a total of 13,558 people have died of the disease and 300,242 have recovered. The number of seriously ill people was 5,011 at the time.

The health ministry announced to recruit 12,000 new staff.

Arrest wave of PKK suspects

State news agency Anadolu reports that since 27 November 2020, at least 641 terrorist suspects have been arrested in 42 Turkish provinces in a major wave of arrests in the context of the anti-terrorism operation. Weapons, documents and data carriers had also been seized. For several weeks now, police throughout the country have been stepping up action against suspected supporters of the banned Kurdish Workers' Party PKK.

Uganda

Protests

The protests following the arrest of presidential candidate Bobi Wine on 18 November 2020 are continuing (see BN of 23 November 2020). A total of 50 people, 43 men, five women and two children have died so far. More than 800 people have been arrested in connection with the protests. There have also been attacks on journalists documenting the protests.

Western Balkans

Male violence against women remains a serious problem

On 25 November 2020, the International Day against Violence against Women, women protested against domestic violence in numerous Western Balkan states. Current media reports indicate that this socially deep-rooted and serious problem is demonstrated both by police data or official figures as well as by unofficial reports from the countries of Central and South Eastern Europe. The governments of the Western Balkan region are not sufficiently addressing the problem of violence against women, despite a significant increase in the number of complaints and requests for protection during the COVID-19 pandemic. The human rights ministry in Montenegro reported 281 cases of domestic violence in the country; Montenegrin civil rights activists denounced an increase of about 25 percent compared to 2019. In Serbia, 14 women were murdered in the first half of 2020 in cases of violence within the family or in partnerships, the non-governmental organisation Women Against Violence Network reports. According to official data provided by the Kosovo police to the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), 1,571 cases of domestic violence (mostly against women) were registered in the first nine months of 2020, which is about 144 more than in the same period of the previous year. Six women were killed by male violence. Experts put the number of unreported cases far higher, as many cases are not reported for fear of reprisal; besides, not all cases are effectively pursued by the police.

Yemen

Attacks

Forces loyal to the government report that five civilians were killed and seven injured when a bomb laid by Houthi rebels exploded on a street in Hodeida governorate on 24 November 2020.

On 27 November 2020, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition carried out air strikes near the airport of the capital Sanaa.

On 29 November 2020, seven civilians were reportedly killed and ten injured by Houthi rebels attacking a village in Hodeida governorate.