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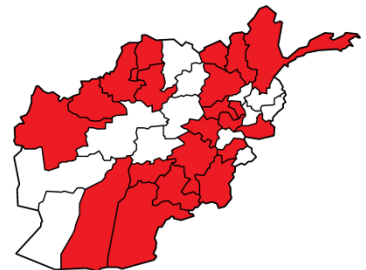
Briefing Notes

14 August 2017

Afghanistan

Armed confrontations

The fighting, purges, raids, air and drone strikes by the security forces continue as well as the ambushes and attacks of the insurgents which sometimes also kill or injure civilians. Following media reports the following provinces were affected last week: Paktika, Paktia (where insurgents reportedly made children fight), Ghazni (southeast), Kunduz, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Takhar (northeast), Sar-i-Pul, Faryab, Jawzjan (north), Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan (south), Nangarhar (east), Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Wardak (centre), Kunar, Lagham (east), and Badghis (west).



According to the quarterly report of the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) issued on 30 July 2017 there were no changes with respect to the government-controlled areas. The status in May 2017 was that 243 of the 407 Afghan districts were under government control or influence. 45 districts (in 15 provinces) were controlled or influenced by the insurgents, thus the government's opponents were controlling a few more districts than in the same period in 2016, the report says. It also details that the number of districts where fighting for dominance continues remained constant at 119. Thus about 3 million of the approx. 32.6 million inhabitants are living in insurgent controlled areas. About 21.4 million people are living in government-controlled areas and 8.2 million in contested areas. The following provinces have the highest number of insurgent-controlled districts: Kunduz (5 of 7 districts), Uruzgan (4 of 6) and Helmand (9 of 14). The northeast of Helmand and the northwest of Kandahar, including the border area between Helmand and Kandahar as well as Uruzgan province and the northwest of Zabul accounted for one third of the 45 insurgent-controlled areas.

Assaults and attacks

Two suicide bombers were shot in Kapisa province (centre, Tagab district) on 08 August 2017 before they could explode their devices. One child died and two were wounded by the explosion of a missile in Farah province (west).

The explosion of a magnetic bomb caused one casualty in Kabul on 09 August 2017. In another bomb attack in Kabul on the same day three policemen were wounded.

On 10 August 2017 two Taliban and one IS fighter were killed in fighting between both groups in Jawzjan (north).

The men of a former commander of Hisb-e Islami assaulted a mosque in Ab Chah district in Takhar province (northeast) killing at least four and wounding 30 people on 11 August 2017. The mosque's imam had declared jihad on the commander who was often involved in fighting with Jamiat-e Islami in this district.

On 14 August 2017 three civilians were wounded in a bomb attack in Kabul. In Herat (west) unknown gunmen shot the head of the traffic police.

Burkina Faso

17 casualties in a terrorist attack on the capital

Eyewitnesses report that on 13 August 2017 around 9pm armed men drove a vehicle up to the restaurant „Cafe Istanbul“ in the centre of the capital Ouagadougou. They emptied their automatic guns into the crowd of guests sitting outside and took hostages. The government informed that 17 people died and twelve were wounded. The area was cordoned off by the security forces who engaged in a shoot-out with the attackers, allegedly killing three of them. In the morning of 14 August 2017 the terrorists were still holding some of the hostages inside the restaurant.

In January 2016 fighters of the African branch of the Al-Qaeda terrorist network had assaulted the restaurant „Le Capuccino“ in Ouagadougou that is located on Kwame Nkrumah Avenue just like the „Cafe Istanbul“. In this former attack 29 people died and almost 70 were injured.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Confrontations between members of the BDK and the security forces

Violent clashes erupted in the capital Kinshasa between the police and followers of the Bundu dia Kongo (BDK) sect on 07 August 2017. The sect's followers had rallied to call for the resignation of President Kabila and unsuccessfully attacked a prison. Human Rights Watch reported that eleven BDK members and ten bystanders were killed in Kinshasa, when the security forces shot into the crowd to dispel the gathering. Similar incidents had happened in the cities of Matadi and Muanda (western province of Congo Central), the organisation said. Reportedly there were at least 27 casualties nationwide, including three policemen.

Iraq

Death sentences for Islamists

On 08 August 2017 a court sentenced 27 people to death for a massacre of army recruits in June 2014. The killing spree of IS in the military base Camp Speicher near Tikrit had left hundreds dead. At the time IS had claimed that it killed 1,700 Shiite soldiers who fled from the base and surrendered to the extremists. 36 convicted murderers were hanged for this crime already in 2016.

Security situation

Many security-related incidents happened last week as well. Two US soldiers died and five were injured in an IS attack on US army units east of the city of Tal Afar on 13 August 2017. Tal Afar, west of Mosul, is still under IS control.

Also on 13 August 2017 Kurdish Peshmerga fought off an IS attack near the border of Kirkuk province.

One person is reported killed and seven injured by two separate bomb attacks in Baghdad on 10 August 2017.

UNAMI informed that 241 people were killed and 277 injured in this conflict in July 2017. Ninive province was affected most, followed by Baghdad and Anbar.

Iran

High-ranking posts for three women

One day after presenting his all-male cabinet President Rohani appointed two women as his deputies on 08 August 2017. The government announced on 09 August 2017 that Massoumeh Ebtekar will hold the post of Vice President for Women and Family Affairs and Laya Joneydi for Vice President for Legal Affairs. Other than ministers, vice presidents need not be confirmed by parliament.

Shahindokht Mollaverdi was appointed special advisor for citizens' rights. In May before his re-election Rohani had promised to work for social and cultural reforms and the rights of women, young people, and religious and ethnic minorities.

Arrests for dance classes

In the northern Iranian city of Shahrud two women and four men were arrested on charges of having taught the Latin American dance Zumba. A Pasdaran officer said on 9 August 2017 that they filmed boys and girls during the classes and posted these clips on Telegram and Instagram.

Criticism of MPs for selfies with the EU Foreign Policy Chief

EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, was among those who attended the inauguration of Hassan Rohani. Many of the deputies took selfies of themselves with her. The Iranian media harshly criticized this behaviour, calling it e.g. "selfie degradation".

Israel/Gaza Strip

Fighting

In the morning of 09 August 2017 Israeli fighter bombers attacked targets in the Gaza Strip. Previously missiles had been fired onto Israeli territory from there which did not cause any damage. The Israeli attacks targeted positions of armed fighters in the isolated coastal strip administered by HAMAS. Doctors reported that at least two civilians were wounded.

Cameroon

Boko Haram: Suicide bombing in border village

In the evening of 05 August 2017 a suicide bomber, probably of the Islamist terror organization Boko Haram, blew himself up in the village of Ouro-Kessoum (Far North region, 2 km from the Nigerian border). Eight people died, four were injured.

Kenya

Unrest after Kenyatta's re-election

After receiving 54.2 percent of the roughly 15 million votes, incumbent Uhuru Kenyatta won the presidential elections of 08 August 2017 ahead of his challenger Raila Odinga (National Super Alliance – Nasa), who received 44.7 percent. In addition to the two favourites, six further candidates had entered the race. The parliament and the assemblies and governors for the country's 47 districts were elected at the same time.

The opposition complained of election fraud and refused to accept its defeat. On 09 August 2017 Odinga claimed that hackers had gained access to the election committee's computer system with the identity of the senior election official who had been murdered recently (see BN of 07 August 2017) and then tampered the election results. Confidential sources at the election committee had informed him that he had a lead of several hundred thousand votes. The election committee refuted this. It said that while it was true that there had been a hacking attack, this had been fought off successfully. The EU election observers also said that there is no indication of any manipulation.

Shortly after the election results were announced confrontations between opposition followers and the police, who also used live ammunition, broke out in the poor districts of the capital Nairobi. It is said that the protesters blocked streets, looted and burnt shops, abused police and uninvolved bystanders, even robbing them. Human rights organisations said that at least 24 people died and the Red Cross talked about hundreds of injured. Violent demonstrations were also held in other cities. In the South Murango electoral district police shot one person, in Tana River district police fired at attackers armed with machetes who had forced their way into a polling station destroying ballot boxes and the laptops of the election committee. Violent protests started in Garissa district when the governing party's candidate was proclaimed as winner of the election for governor.

Libya

Coast barred for NGO vessels

On 10 August 2017 the Libyan navy announced that no more foreign vessels, including those of NGOs, were allowed to enter the coastal waters without a special permission.

Three NGOs responded by temporarily withdrawing their vessels. The organizations „Doctors without Borders“, „Sea Eye“ and „Save the Children“ explained that this was due to the change in the security situation.

Nigeria

Boko Haram: At least 31 Lake Chad fishermen killed

On 07 August 2017 members of the terror organization Boko Haram attacked the Lake Chad islands Duguri and Dabar Wanzam. On Duguri they killed 14 and on Dabar Wanzam 17 fishermen. Two weeks prior to the attack the fishing ban imposed by the military two years ago had been lifted.

Boko Haram: Attacks in Borno and Adamawa

Presumably members of the terror organization Boko Haram attacked the village of Amarwa (about 20 km from Borno's capital Maiduguri) and killed four of the villagers on 13 August 2017.

In the night to 10 August 2017 the terrorists attacked the village of Ghumbili (Madagali Local Government Area) in the north-eastern state of Adamawa and torched 60 houses. There is no information on the number of casualties. Only a few days earlier the neighbouring village of Mildu had been targeted and seven people had been killed.

Pakistan

IS attack in Quetta

On 12 July 2017 at least 15 people were killed and more than 30 wounded in a suicide attack in the city of Quetta (Balochistan). IS claimed responsibility for the attack that was aimed at a military vehicle driving by.

Russian Federation

Putin critic Udaltsov calls for election boycott

On 10 August 2017 the opposition politician Sergei Udaltsov who had been released from four and a half years of prison camp on 08 August 2017, called for a boycott of the presidential elections scheduled for March 2018. He also announced the revival of his movement Levy Front and more protests. In the summer of 2014 a Moscow court had convicted Udaltsov of organizing mass unrest to topple the government in 2012 prior to President Putin's third term in office.

Serbia

Domestic violence sanctioned

After several women and children have been murdered in recent months, pressure to take effective action against the widespread domestic violence is mounting. Only this year 22 women were killed by their husbands, (ex-)partners, sons or fathers. There are complaints that the authorities often responded inadequately in the time leading up to these events.

At the end of 2016 the Justice Ministry launched a campaign called "Off Violence" spreading the message: zero tolerance. On 01 January 2017 a new law to prevent domestic violence went into effect and provides for a more coordinated and faster response in these cases and better protection for the victims. Furthermore new crime definitions came into force on 01 July 2017 such as stalking, sexual harassment, forced marriage and mutilation of female sexual organs. May 18 was declared a day of remembrance for the victims of domestic violence. But still women feel that state protection is insufficient.

Not only the patriarchal structures are causing the violence, but also the aftermath of the years of war and transformation which often led to traumas, poverty and the breakdown of the social fabric.

Somalia

Attacks

On 09 August 2017 al-Shabaab assassinated the deputy commander of the central police station in Boosaaso (Bari region, Puntland). Already on 04 August 2017 the governor of Galgudud (Puntland) region had become the victim of an al-Shabaab attack. On 08 August 2017 Puntland security forces arrested a suspect of the murder of the governor of Bari region (Puntland) on 07 August 2017 in Boosaaso. It is assumed that there is a connection to rivalries between clans.

Fighting

Ethiopia announced to reconquer the city of Lego (Bay region) from al-Shabaab. The extremists had taken control of Lego after the retreat of Ugandan AMISOM units on 03 August 2017 (see BN of 07 August 2017). On 07 August 2017 al-Shabaab fighters booby trapped a convoy of Burundian AMISOM soldiers and subsequently opened fire at them in Mahaday (Middle Shabelle region). Somali President Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo and the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) confirmed two drone air attacks on al-Shabaab fighters outside of Mogadishu on 10 August 2017. The president stated that they were aimed at one of the extremist's leaders.

Smugglers throw refugees overboard

On 10 August 2017 a Somali smuggler forced 180 Somali and Ethiopian migrants to jump into the water in the Gulf of Aden, when fearing discovery by the Yemeni security forces. In another incident on 09 August 2017 120 migrants were thrown overboard off the coast of south Yemen. At least 50 people are missing.

Syria

Suicide bombing on the border to Jordan

The pro-opposition Syrian Human Rights Observatory reported that on 11 August 2017 at least 23 people were killed and many injured by a suicide bombing in the south on the border to Jordan. Most of the victims were fighters of the Islamist rebel group Jaysh al-Islam (The Army of Islam). The report says that the bomber blew up his explosives belt at a base of the rebel group near the border crossing of Nasib in Daraa province.

Turkey

More arrest warrants for journalists

According to media reports arrest warrants were issued for 35 journalists in Istanbul on 10 August 2017 and nine of them had already been arrested. They are accused of ties to the Gülen movement, because they used the app "ByLock". The report said that this messenger service, that is a favourite with followers of the preacher Fethullah Gülen to write encrypted messages, was also used to prepare the coup attempt in July 2016.

Policeman stabbed

The state news agency Anadolu reported that a presumed member of IS stabbed a policeman in Istanbul on 13 August 2017. The report also says that the man had been arrested shortly before because he was suspected of planning a suicide bombing for IS. During the questioning at the police headquarters he suddenly attacked a policeman with a knife. The attacker was then shot and the victim succumbed to his injuries in hospital shortly thereafter.

Central African Republic

Casualties caused by outbreak of violence

The authorities informed on 09 August 2017 that at least 30 people, including six Red Cross volunteers, had died in fighting between the Union for Peace in Central Africa (UPC) (a splinter group of the Muslim Séléka) and a local self-defence group in Gambo (south-east) in the first week of August. A UPC spokesman however said that they protected the population against attackers.

Assessment of the situation

On 07 August 2017 UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien warned of the risk of genocide in view of the increasing violence in recent months. By now 180,000 people had fled from violence in 2017. He said that there are more than 500,000 internal refugees, half of the approximately five million inhabitants is dependent on food aid.

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ivs-anfragen@bamf.bund.de