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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Disclaimer

This document was originally written in German and has been translated into English with an automatic translation tool. It is possible that translation errors may still be found. You can access the original German version here: https://milo.bamf.de/otcs/cs.exe/app/search/query_id/24179136.

4 May 2026

Afghanistan

Security situation: Civilian casualties in Pakistani attacks on Kunar Province

On 27 April 2026, Kunar University was hit by Pakistani rockets, according to reports from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), among others; at least 30 lecturers and students are said to have been injured, according to the Taliban. On the same day, there were further rocket strikes in the region, in which at least seven people were killed and others injured, according to the Taliban. During the night of 28–29 April 2026, at least three people are reported to have been killed and twelve others injured in shelling of the districts of Khas Kunar and Sarkano. Hundreds of families are said to have fled their villages. Fighting also continues in other border regions.¹

Persecution: arrests, closure of tailoring workshops, no freedom of the press

On 2 May 2026, Fawzia Koofi, a women's rights activist living abroad and former member of parliament, stated that her house in Kabul had been seized by the Taliban and that several family members had been arrested. The whereabouts and condition of those arrested are unknown.

According to a report dated 28 April 2026, the Taliban have closed two tailoring workshops in Panjshir province, funded by the World Food Programme (WFP), where women were being trained. The Taliban accused the WFP of promoting the 'unveiling' of women there.

According to the latest World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders on 30 April 2026, Afghanistan ranks 175th out of 180 countries surveyed in terms of press freedom.²

Government affairs: Legal regulations on sermons and land confiscation

According to reports dated 29 April 2026, the Taliban have published a law setting out precise regulations for sermons. Under this law, only Sunni Hanafi Islam may be preached. Furthermore, the law places all preachers under the authority of the Ministry of Virtue. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, describes the law as a violation of international human rights, as it discriminates against religious minorities.

In Kabul, on 26 April 2026, the Taliban declared over 450 hectares of land to be state property, including the Omid Sabz settlement, which is predominantly inhabited by Hazaras. In Khost province, too, the Taliban

nationalised land previously considered private. In doing so, the Taliban cite court rulings of dubious legitimacy.³

Humanitarian situation: Further flooding

Flooding continues in several provinces (see BN of 13 April 2026). According to a report dated 28 April 2026, key supply routes in the provinces of Ghor and Samangan are impassable. According to UN figures from 29 April 2026, around 57,000 flood victims are dependent on humanitarian aid.⁴

Algeria

Activist sentenced to five years' imprisonment

Wafia Tedjani, an activist from Kabylie, was reportedly sentenced on 21 April 2026 to five years' imprisonment for alleged "membership of a terrorist organisation" and "glorification of terrorist acts". Tedjani, who according to human rights organisations and media reports campaigns for environmental and social causes, was reportedly taken into custody on 4 March 2025 following posts on social media. She had previously been placed under judicial supervision in August 2023 on charges relating to a peaceful assembly, the alleged insult of a public institution and the publication of information deemed to be detrimental to the national interest. In early March 2023, Algerian media reported that the activist had allegedly broken her arm, although the circumstances of the injury remained unclear and the authorities had not commented on the matter.⁵

Bangladesh

Human rights situation

On 12 April 2026, the Bangladeshi NGO Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) published its first quarterly report of 2026. In it, the organisation documents 49 deaths nationwide from January to March 2026 as a result of mass riots, 36 deaths and over 4,000 injuries caused by political violence, and 12 deaths and more than 2,500 injuries resulting from clashes linked to the parliamentary elections in February of this year. According to HRSS, at least 17 assemblies and rallies were obstructed by law enforcement agencies, and 183 media workers were victims of physical attacks. Furthermore, HRSS recorded 27 attacks on communities of ethnic and religious minorities, in which at least 31 people were injured. In addition, temples, religious images and residential properties were damaged, and land was illegally seized. Regarding the situation of women and children, the NGO reports that violence was perpetrated against 670 women and girls during the reporting period. 147 women and girls were raped in this context, and nine of them were killed following the rape. 31 women are said to have taken their own lives as a result of rape and domestic violence. Furthermore, there were 328 cases of child abuse, 138 of which were fatal. According to HRSS, a total of 39 people died in Bangladeshi prisons in the first quarter of 2026, including twelve members of the former ruling party, the Awami League. During a visit to Bangladesh at the end of April 2026, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Dr Alice Edwards, criticised the lack of effective mechanisms and independent bodies at national level to combat and investigate torture in custody. Edwards described the violence in Bangladesh as "deep-rooted" and "institutionalised". She noted that the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission had limited independence and autonomy.⁶

Benin

Drop of over 20 places in the Press Freedom Index

In the annually updated RSF World Press Freedom Index, Benin ranks 113th out of 180, having fallen 21 places compared to 2025. This is according to the 2026 ranking published on 30 April 2026. In 2025, the country was ranked 92nd, and in 2024, 89th. According to RSF, the situation for media professionals in Benin has deteriorated recently. Although the media landscape is diverse, there is a lack of large media organisations that are truly viable. Although Benin's constitution guarantees freedom of the press, journalists

are sometimes prosecuted. A basis for this is provided by a law that criminalises the dissemination of false information that disturbs the public peace. Furthermore the government has expanded its control over the media sector and, for example, exercises decisive influence over the appointment of those in charge of state media and the media regulatory authority. At the same time, media outlets aligned with the opposition are said to be under considerable pressure. In the north of Benin, which is characterised by a challenging security situation (see BN of 20 October 2025 and 16 March 2026), media workers have reportedly been repeatedly attacked. It also happens that media workers are summoned to appear before the Court for the Suppression of Economic Offences and Terrorism (CRIET). According to RSF, two journalists are currently in detention in Benin.

The RSF World Press Freedom Index is an annual assessment of press freedom in almost every country in the world. With its latest ranking, RSF once again notes (see BN, 12 May 2025) a global deterioration in press freedom. For the first time in the 25-year history of the ranking, more than half of all countries fall into the two lowest of the five categories assigned by RSF.⁷

Burkina Faso

Recruitment and training of military personnel

On 24 April 2026, the Minister of Defence presented a draft bill to establish a military reserve, which provides for the recruitment and training of 100,000 military personnel by the end of 2026 as part of the fight against jihadist groups. The reserve force is to consist of reservists, personnel with military experience and civilians. In 2020, the then President Roch Kaboré had already established the civilian auxiliary force *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (VDP) to support the regular armed forces in the fight against jihadist groups.⁸

Chad

Deaths following inter-communal violence

On 25 and 26 April 2026, clashes between two different communities in the eastern Chadian province of Wadi-Fira left at least 42 people dead and ten others injured, according to preliminary official figures. According to other local sources, around 60 people were killed and 20 others injured, with the clashes continuing until 27 April 2026. Media reports suggest the deadly clashes occurred after a dispute over a well between two women in the village of Igot in the Dar-Tama department escalated. One of the two women is said to have been from the Tama community and the other from the Zaghawa community. The incident is said to have an international dimension, as Sudanese Zaghawa militiamen, who are reported to have crossed the border from Sudan, are said to have taken part in the clashes, and the conflict is said to have reached the Iridimi refugee camp, where Sudanese refugees are housed. In addition to the dead and injured, shops, houses and entire villages are said to have been set on fire. Even intervention by the army would not have been able to prevent many of the clashes. To calm the situation, Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby travelled to the region on 28 April 2026. Deputy Prime Minister Limane Mahamat had already announced on 26 April 2026 that the situation was under control. Inter-communal clashes of this kind occur frequently in Chad. In particular, conflicts over resources such as land, livestock or access to water arise in rural areas, usually between livestock herders and farmers (see BN, 10 November 2025).⁹

Iran

Executions

According to media reports dated 4 May 2026, three men were executed on charges of having participated in the protests in Mashhad in January 2026. Two of the individuals were allegedly agents of the Israeli intelligence service Mossad and are also said to have been involved in the killing of a member of the security forces during the protests. The third person executed is said to have been a key figure in the protests in the Tabarsi district of Mashhad. According to Iranian state media, he had led groups involved in clashes that resulted in fatalities.

According to media reports, two further individuals were executed on 2 May 2026 at Urmia Central Prison on charges of spying for Israel and collaborating with the Mossad. The Supreme Court had previously upheld the death sentences. According to Iranian authorities, one of those executed is said to have maintained contact with the Mossad and passed on sensitive information, whilst the other is said to have gathered and transmitted information about key sites, including the nuclear facility in Natanz.

According to press reports, another person was also executed at Urmia Prison on 3 May 2026; this individual had been arrested on 22 October 2022 during the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ protests. The individual was reportedly sentenced to death for “corruption on earth” (Persian: efsad-e fil-arz) in connection with the killing of a member of a so-called volunteer force in Urmia, and the sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court.

Furthermore, according to press reports, the death sentence was carried out on 30 April 2026 against a 21-year-old man who had been arrested during the protests in Isfahan on 8 January 2026. He had been accused by the judiciary of “enmity against God” (Persian: moharebeh) and “effective collaboration with the enemy”. On 29 April 2026, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that since the start of the war with the US and Israel on 28 February 2026, Iran had executed at least 21 people and arrested more than 4,000 others on charges related to national security. At least nine of those executed were linked to the protests in January 2026.¹⁰

Economic consequences of the war since 28 February 2026

According to a media report by a US news website on 28 April 2026, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that up to 4.1 million people in Iran could be pushed into poverty as a result of the war. The economic situation had already been poor before the war began. Due to inflation, corruption and sanctions, per capita income is said to have fallen from USD 8,000 in 2012 to USD 5,000 in 2024. The article also cites a report stating that more than 23,000 factories and businesses have been hit by the air strikes. According to Iran’s Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security, the immediate consequence is the loss of one million jobs. According to a US think tank, the disruption to shipping and consequently to imports has further worsened the economic situation. The think tank estimates that 50% of jobs in Iran are at risk, and a further 5% of the population has been driven into poverty. Under the combined pressure of inflation, recession, war and collapsing demand, a number of companies are reported to have ceased operations. The annual inflation rate stood at 72% in March 2026, though official figures suggest it is higher for essential goods.

The press report goes on to explain that the air strikes on petrochemical plants have resulted in thousands of workers being placed on unpaid leave. In other sectors, numerous redundancies have occurred due to a shortage of raw materials. Official Iranian data also reportedly shows a sudden surge in applications for unemployment benefits. There have been 147,000 applicants in the last two months, which is roughly three times the figure for the previous year. At the same time, the Iranian government stated that it plans to extend monthly vouchers for basic foodstuffs to the poorer sections of the population.¹¹

Lebanon

Fragile ceasefire

There continues to be mutual shelling between Hezbollah and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). Between 28 April and 3 May 2026, there were several military strikes against settlements in Lebanon, following evacuation orders issued by the Israeli side for these areas. An Israeli military strike on 30 April 2026 was preceded by Hezbollah attacks on Israeli positions, in which one soldier was killed. On the morning of 4 May 2026, a major wave of coordinated Israeli attacks began on Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon. In the occupied zone, widespread destruction of infrastructure, including tunnels, continues. According to Israeli sources, this infrastructure is used by Hezbollah; according to Lebanese sources, however, it is predominantly private property. The IDF has repeatedly published photos and videos on social media purporting to serve as evidence of the military use of the infrastructure.

An international news agency reports, citing two unnamed Hezbollah officials, that the group itself does not yet have a complete picture of its losses. The official figures – currently totalling 2,678 civilians and

combatants killed in the latest escalation in Lebanon – are said to be an underestimate. The group estimates internally that several thousand fighters have been killed, whilst Israel has reported 1,800 combatants killed. Many deaths cannot yet be confirmed, as the remains have not yet been recovered from the area now occupied by Israel.¹²

Libya

Civilian casualties due to fighting in western Libya

According to media reports, armed clashes broke out on 27 April 2026 in the western Libyan town of Ajilat between rival militias, one led by Muhammed Bahroun, known as Al-Far, and the other by Muhammad Mustafa Al-Zaytouni, known as Al-Shalfouh. Both men are regarded as influential militia leaders. Mortar shells are reported to have been used during the fighting, causing damage to numerous residential buildings and setting vehicles alight. One civilian is reported to have been killed and others injured as a result of indiscriminate gunfire. Local authorities have reportedly declared a state of emergency and closed educational institutions as a precautionary measure.

Ajilat is considered a major hub for illegal activities, such as fuel smuggling and irregular migration. Consequently, there have been several clashes in the past between armed groups over territorial control, smuggling routes and/or political influence.¹³

Mali

First joint attacks by Tuareg rebels and jihadists

According to various media reports, on 25 April 2026, Tuareg rebels and jihadists carried out coordinated attacks on military bases, barracks and other facilities belonging to the military government in several cities across the country. Attacks and fighting between the army and armed groups are said to have continued in the days that followed. Several people are reported to have been killed, including General Sadio Camara. A suicide bomber is said to have detonated an explosive device outside the general's residence. A further 16 people, including civilians and military personnel, are believed to have been injured in the nationwide attacks.

The targets of the attacks were reportedly the cities of Kidal and Gao in the north of the country, Sévaré in central Mali, the country's most important military base in Kati, west of the capital Bamako, and Bamako airport. According to the Malian military, the capital remains under its control. In the north of the country, the military government has reportedly lost control of some areas to Tuareg rebels, including the strategically important city of Kidal. In November 2023, the Malian military, with the help of Russian Wagner mercenaries, recaptured the city of Kidal after heavy fighting, having been under the control of Tuareg rebels since 2014 (see BN, 20 Nov 23). The Russian-controlled Africa Corps, successor to the Wagner Group, withdrew from Kidal following the fighting.

The attacks around 25 April 2026 were the largest in years and the first joint attacks by Tuareg rebels from the Front for the Liberation of Azawad and the jihadist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin. Junta leader Assimi Goïta gave a televised address on 28 April 2026 in which he stated that the situation in the country was "under control" but "extremely serious".¹⁴

Nigeria

Charges over attempted coup

According to a statement issued by the Nigerian authorities on 21 April 2026, six men have been charged with high treason and terrorism at the Federal High Court in Abuja in connection with a failed coup attempt in 2025. The defendants, who include civilians, a former member of the military and a police officer, are currently in custody, according to media reports. Another suspect, the former oil minister and governor of Bayelsa State, is not currently in custody. In early October 2025, around 20 military personnel, who are alleged to have planned the coup attempt, were arrested on charges of "insubordination" (see BN, 27 October

2025). The government is said to have initially denied the attempted coup before announcing in January 2026 that it had foiled a plot to overthrow the government.¹⁵

Kogi State: Abduction of orphanage children

On 25 and 26 April 2026, armed men abducted around 23 children, as well as the owner of the facility and his wife, during attacks on an orphanage and a school near the town of Lokoja in the central Nigerian state of Kogi. According to media reports, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Nigerian security forces are said to have already freed 15 of the abducted children. The orphanage is said to have been operating illegally in a remote area without the relevant authorities' knowledge. Despite repeated government promises to prevent them, mass abductions are disrupting education, trade and travel in the country. In November 2025, more than 300 pupils and their teachers were abducted from a Catholic secondary school in Niger State, also in the north-central region of Nigeria (see BN of 24 November 2025).¹⁶

Adamawa State: Deadly attack on football pitch

On 26 April 2026, armed men attacked several civilians on a football pitch in the village of Guyaku, in the Gombi Local Government Area in the north-eastern state of Adamawa, near the border with Cameroon, killing at least 29 people. According to media reports, they are said to have burned down houses, a church and vehicles, among other things. The dead were mainly young people, including women. The Islamist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a rival group to Boko Haram, has claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁷

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Deadly youth violence in central Israel and gang crime in Israel's Arab towns

The violent death of a Jewish Israeli of Ethiopian origin has sparked consternation in Israel over rising youth violence. According to media reports, the 21-year-old was stabbed to death by a group of youths in Petah Tikva on 22 April 2026 following a trivial dispute. The attack by eleven suspects aged between 12 and 17 highlights, according to reports, a dangerous radicalisation of teenage gangs, which are becoming increasingly professionalised. Critics accuse the government of allowing years of neglect and inaction regarding the record murder rate in Arab communities to now spill over into Jewish society, creating a general climate of lawlessness. Whilst the murder of the Israeli of Ethiopian origin attracted massive public attention and led to swift arrests, murders in Israel's Arab community often remain unsolved, having already claimed 98 lives since the start of the year. The years of impunity and inaction by the Israeli police towards criminal gangs in Arab towns in Israel are making the affected towns increasingly uninhabitable, whilst social cohesion is at risk of breaking down.¹⁸

UN OCHA: Humanitarian situation in Gaza remains catastrophic

According to UN OCHA, most people in the Gaza Strip remain internally displaced, living in poor accommodation conditions and exposed to ongoing air strikes, shelling and gunfire. Furthermore, the spread of rubbish and sewage in 80% of the emergency shelters has led to a rodent infestation, with the rodents biting particularly vulnerable people. The population is largely confined to around 41% of the Gaza Strip; according to media reports citing Israeli army statements, the so-called 'Yellow Line' was moved further west on 27 April 2026. According to the UN, people in Gaza have no access to the West Bank and, with the exception of a very small number of wounded or sick people and their accompanying persons, are also unable to travel abroad.¹⁹

West Bank: Continued civilian deaths, looting and destruction of property

According to media reports, on 27 April 2026 Israeli settlers once again attacked the village of Jaloud, located south-west of Nablus, setting fire to residential buildings and damaging vehicles. The settlers reportedly returned to the village repeatedly in the following days, accompanied by soldiers, and set fire to chicken coops on 2 May 2026. The Israeli army reported the arrest of several suspects following the latest attacks. In

further incidents, settlers in Hebron injured several Palestinians, whilst in Ein al-Duyuk near Jericho, settlers raided and looted houses.²⁰

Israeli army shoots Palestinian stone-thrower in Hebron

On 29 April 2026, according to media reports, Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian man in Hebron who was alleged to have previously thrown stones at soldiers. According to media reports, human rights organisations criticised the fact that the Israeli army regularly uses live ammunition against Palestinian stone-throwers, but not when the stone-throwers are Israeli settlers.²¹

Violence against Christians and Christian institutions in Israel, Jerusalem and the West Bank is on the rise

On 28 April 2026, a Jewish man physically assaulted a French nun in Jerusalem. According to Israeli media, the suspect was arrested on the same day. In recent years, Christians have increasingly become victims of hostility, particularly in Jerusalem. According to an Israeli newspaper, the alleged perpetrators are often students at yeshivot – traditional Jewish colleges – who are said to apply an extreme interpretation of the biblical commandment to ‘abhor idolaters’.

On Palm Sunday, according to media reports, the Israeli police barred the Catholic Patriarch in Jerusalem from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was only following international pressure that he was granted access on a later date. The Israeli government had initially justified the ban on the grounds of restrictions on gatherings during the Iran war, which, however, were enforced far less strictly in the Jewish areas of Jerusalem and with exemptions. In southern Lebanon, an Israeli soldier recently destroyed a statue of Jesus with a hammer. The perpetrator was placed in military custody (see BN Lebanon, 27 April 2026). Overall, the Religious Freedom Data Centre recorded a sharp rise in documented attacks against Christians in 2025, up 65% compared to 2024, and in the first quarter of 2026, with 33 incidents, a similarly high level to that of 2025. The Jerusalem-based Rossing Centre also recorded an increase of around 40% in 2025, with a total of 155 attacks in Israel and East Jerusalem compared to 2024 (111 incidents), with physical assaults (39%) being the most common form. The report also documents 52 attacks on church property, including arson, verbal harassment and vandalism of religious symbols. According to the report, the documented incidents represent only the tip of the iceberg.

Media reports attribute the causes to the fact that radical Jewish groups apparently feel emboldened and legitimised in their actions by the rhetoric of the right-wing religious government under Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the West Bank, too, the situation for Christian villages and communities has reportedly worsened further due to attacks by Israeli settlers and access restrictions imposed by the Israeli military. In the Christian village of Taybeh near Ramallah, fields and Christian sites have reportedly been repeatedly destroyed and damaged by arson attacks, and livestock stolen; at the same time, new settlement projects are increasingly restricting the living space of Christian-Palestinian families. Many Christian families reportedly feel compelled to emigrate.²²

Somalia

Security situation

According to reports, state security forces and local and international allies continue to take action against militant Islamist groups in Somalia (see BN of 20 April 2026). For example, the US-led AFRICOM carried out several air strikes against al-Shabaab in the Lower Juba region of Jubaland between 21 April and 30 April 2026, as well as several air strikes against IS in northern Puntland between 20 April and 26 April 2026. Several al-Shabaab members were reportedly killed as a result, including individuals of Afghan, Yemeni or Syrian nationality. During prolonged ground battles on 3 May 2026, at least one IS member and one regional security officer were killed in Puntland. Prior to this, on 29 April 2026, at least two soldiers and two employees of a telecommunications company were killed in an IS attack, also in Puntland. They had been travelling through the mountains to repair damaged telecommunications infrastructure.²³

Humanitarian situation

According to reports, the humanitarian situation in Somalia remains tense (see BN of 16 February 2026). Drought-related failures of the Deyr harvest in January 2026 have further weakened the local food supply. Prices of maize and sorghum, important cereal crops in Somalia, are reported to have risen by approximately 3% in February; overall, however, they are more than 80% higher than their price in the previous year. Under normal rainfall conditions, the Deyr season harvests would contribute up to 40% of Somalia's total cereal production. Furthermore, the crop losses are increasing the country's dependence on imports. The rise in fuel prices resulting from the Iran-Iraq War has thus further driven up food prices, and disruptions to transport chains have jeopardised the supply of relief goods to the needy population.²⁴

Sudan

Drone strikes on health facilities in Dilling

According to a report by the Sudan Doctors' Network dated 2 May 2026, a total of ten health centres and hospitals in Dilling (South Kordofan) have been forced to cease operations following repeated attacks by the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North, including facilities providing vital nutritional and reproductive health services. In the health facilities still functioning, there is an acute shortage of medical staff, medicines and basic supplies such as surgical dressings. According to the doctors' network, the targeted attacks on health facilities have led to an almost complete collapse of the city's health system. It is becoming increasingly difficult for healthcare facilities in the region to provide medical care. This is putting thousands of civilians, particularly women and children, at serious risk.²⁵

Syria

German journalist detained in Aleppo; RSF: press freedom significantly improved

A German journalist, who is reported to have been arrested by security forces on 18 January 2026 alongside a Kurdish-Turkish colleague following the transitional government's takeover of Raqqa, remains in custody. According to media reports, legal proceedings have been initiated against her. On 30 April 2026, the transitional government confirmed the arrest of the two media workers and stated that they had been detained during the takeover of Raqqa. They were reportedly apprehended in a building used as a base by the Kurdish-dominated so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), had provided false information about their identities and their work, and had attempted to flee. The specific criminal charges against the two were not disclosed. The Federal Foreign Office was in direct contact with the journalist. The Syrian authorities stated that she was being held in custody by the Internal Security Forces in Aleppo, together with her colleague. The journalist was held in custody for several months without her family or the German authorities being informed of her whereabouts. Even when asked, the authorities initially denied her arrest (see BN, 16 March 2026).

In the 2026 Press Freedom Index, the organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Syria 141st out of a total of 180 countries worldwide on 30 April 2026. This represents an improvement of 36 places compared to 2025. Nevertheless, Syria remains in the "very serious" category. RSF attributes the significant improvement to the fall of the Assad government and the accompanying fundamental changes within the transition processes. Whilst political pressure on media professionals has eased, local media institutions must continue to strive to create a sustainable framework for independent journalism.²⁶

Rif Dimashq: Shia cleric killed in attack

According to media reports, on 26 May, attackers killed a Shia cleric near the capital Damascus by throwing a grenade into his car. The attack reportedly took place in the Damascus suburb of Sayyida Zeinab, where he served as a preacher at the Sayyida Zeinab shrine. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack, and the perpetrators remain unknown for the time being.²⁷

North-east: Establishment of four brigades to integrate the SDF into the Syrian Army

According to information provided by the Assistant Minister of Defence for the North-East on 3 May 2026, four brigades are reported to have been established in the north-east of the country as part of the integration of SDF fighters. These are stationed in Kobane (Ayn al-Arab), Hasaka city, Qamishli and Derik (al-Malikiyah). The integration agreement is progressing; numerous government departments have already been handed over and prisoner exchanges have taken place (see BN, 16 March 2026). Under the agreement, the integration of the SDF into the state apparatus, the handover of key infrastructure to the transitional government, and the merging of the administrative structures of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) – the civilian administration operating alongside the SDF structures – with the transitional government have been agreed. According to the Assistant Minister of Defence, further negotiations are taking place between the SDF and the government in Damascus regarding the integration of additional SDF fighters, which could result in the formation of further new brigades.²⁸

High costs and shortage of medicines for multiple sclerosis

According to a media report dated 2 May 2026, patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) face major challenges in obtaining their medication. The report is based primarily on anecdotal accounts suggesting that medication was previously available free of charge through public hospitals. However, due to a shortage of medication designed to slow the progression of the disease, those affected are now reliant on alternative and often costly options. Immunotherapies, which aim to stabilise patients' health in the long term, are extremely difficult to obtain, meaning that sufferers are resorting to more readily available alternatives. These include corticosteroid injections, which are generally available in pharmacies but are only used during active flare-ups. Such injections cost between 10 and 50 USD, depending on the exact type and country of manufacture. Not all patients respond well to the injections, meaning that multiple doses may be necessary to manage a flare-up. The costs involved are unaffordable for many Syrians, over 90% of whom live below the poverty line. According to the Ministry of Health, the delays in the supply of medicines are primarily due to technical and logistical difficulties. Efforts to resolve these issues are expected to lead to fewer supply disruptions in the future.²⁹

Togo

Security situation: New security strategy and extended state of emergency

On 18 April 2026, the government presented its new geopolitical security strategy for the period 2026 to 2028. According to media reports, the strategy aims to position Togo as a mediator between increasingly isolated states such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso and the international community, given the unstable situation in the Sahel region. As a neutral partner, Togo intends to expand diplomatic dialogue, security cooperation and economic integration.

The initiative to ease tensions and limit the growing fragmentation in West Africa could also benefit the security situation in Togo itself. For more than four years, the northern Savanes region has been facing terrorist attacks and raids, allegedly carried out by jihadist groups from neighbouring Burkina Faso. On 27 February 2026, the National Assembly extended the state of emergency in the Savanes region for a further 12 months for the fourth consecutive time (see BN of 7 April 2025). The decision was taken against the backdrop that the terrorist threat on the northern borders remains very real.

In northern Togo, the arrival of tens of thousands of refugees from neighbouring Burkina Faso is posing growing challenges for local communities. Many people are not housed in official camps but with local families. This solidarity is coming under increasing pressure due to the rise in population, the resulting competition for resources such as farmland and water, and the additional strain on the infrastructure of schools and health centres, and is fuelling the emergence of conflicts between locals and refugees.³⁰

Türkiye

Labour Day: Police operations and detentions in Istanbul

According to media reports, the Istanbul Governor's Office has imposed extensive security and traffic restrictions in several districts for Labour Day. From 5.00 am, roads, bus stops, metro stations, car parks and parts of the ferry service were reportedly closed; Kadıköy and Kartal were designated as permitted rallying points. Access to Taksim Square were sealed off with barriers. Taksim Square is regarded in Turkey as one of the most important symbolic locations for Labour Day. The main reason for this is the 1977 rally, during which dozens of people were killed there. Since then, Taksim has been of particular significance to trade unions, professional associations and left-wing parties, amongst others, whilst at the same time repeatedly being the subject of political disputes over bans and the right of assembly. The last major authorised Labour Day rally on Taksim Square took place in 2012; in 2023, the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled that the prevention of rallies in 2014 and 2015 constituted a violation of the law. During the course of the day, groups attempted to march towards Taksim; the police intervened, in some cases using water cannons and tear gas. According to reports, those taken into custody included members of political parties, trade unions and other civil society groups. The Istanbul Governor's Office confirmed 575 arrests by 6.00 pm, whilst the lawyers' association "Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği" (ÇHD) put the figure at 576. According to the ÇHD, those affected were later released. There were also allegations that people taken into custody were at times not allowed to speak to their lawyers in hospital and that a police operation against legal representatives had taken place there.³¹

Peace process stalls: DEM and PKK critical, MHP signals continuation

According to the pro-Kurdish DEM party, there are currently obstacles in the peace process. Its co-chair Tülay Hatimoğulları spoke of "some setbacks" and accused the AKP government of failing to pursue the path to peace with determination, instead acting hesitantly. PKK official Murat Karayılan, by contrast, spoke of a frozen process. He cited as evidence the fact that the party's İmralı delegation had not met with Abdullah Öcalan for around a month. At the same time, signals emerged from the ultra-nationalist MHP, an ally of the ruling AKP party, in favour of continuing the process. Deputy leader Semih Yalçın stated that the course towards a "terror-free Turkey" was binding. Once conditions had matured further, Parliament would be involved.³²

Tunisia

Action against media professionals

According to his lawyer, the case against the well-known journalist Zied El Heni, who was arrested on 24 April 2026 for reasons that were initially unclear (see BN, 27 April 2026), is based on remarks he made at a conference in early April 2026. He is alleged to have criticised the unlawful conviction of media professionals and described the judges responsible as "criminals". The charges are reportedly based on Article 86 of the Telecommunications Act, which provides for up to two years' imprisonment for "anyone who knowingly causes harm to others or disturbs their peace via public telecommunications networks". According to his daughter, El Heni went on hunger strike on 26 April 2026 to protest against the actions of the judiciary. Furthermore, the Tunis Court of Appeal initially rejected on 14 April and again on 28 April 2026 the applications for the release of journalists Mourad Zeghidi and Borhen Bssais, who were most recently sentenced in January 2026 to three and a half years' imprisonment each for alleged tax evasion and financial offences (see BN, 26 January 2026). The trial has been adjourned until 12 May 2026. Zeghidi and Bssais were arrested back in May 2024 for comments critical of the government that they had made on radio and television programmes as well as on social media, and were subsequently sentenced to eight months' imprisonment each for "spreading false news". They were due to be released in January 2025 but remained in custody due to the new charges. Human rights organisations have criticised the judicial proceedings against the journalists as politically motivated.

In the annual Reporters Without Borders (RSF) press freedom index, published on 30 April 2026, Tunisia has slipped a further eight places compared to the previous year, ranking 137th out of 180. In 2020, before the

erosion of democratic gains under President Kais Saied, the country was still ranked 72nd. The National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) warned, on the occasion of the presentation of its 2025–2026 annual report on World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2026.³³

Imprisoned Ennahda leader Ghannouchi transferred to hospital

The 84-year-old imprisoned opposition leader Rached Ghannouchi has been transferred from prison in a clinic due to a serious deterioration in his health, according to media reports, as announced by a spokesperson for his party, Ennahda, on 30 April 2026.

Ghannouchi, a leading figure in Tunisian politics since the 2011 revolution and a fierce critic of President Kais Saied, was arrested in April 2023 as part of a widespread crackdown on opposition figures. Since then, he has been sentenced to long prison terms in several controversial trials, which now total more than 70 years (see BN of 28 April 2025, 14 July 2025 and 20 April 2026). Ennahda referred to the decision of a United Nations expert committee from 2025, which had concluded that Ghannouchi was being prosecuted for political reasons and that the charges against him lacked any legal or factual basis.

The party did not provide any further details regarding Ghannouchi's state of health, but pointed out that he suffers from chronic illnesses which, due to his advanced age, require intensive care and support, and called for his immediate release. The authorities have not yet commented on Ghannouchi's state of health.³⁴

Ukraine

Civilian casualties

According to media reports, Russian attacks between 26 April and 3 May 2026 claimed several civilian lives in the following Ukrainian regions: 26 April (Donetsk: 2, Zaporizhzhia, Sumy: 1 each), 27 April (Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv: 1 each), 28 April (Kharkiv, Donetsk: 2 each, Sumy: 1), 29 April (Dnipropetrovsk: 3, Donetsk: 1), 30 April (Kherson: 1), 1 May (Kherson: 2, Zaporizhzhia: 1), 2 May (Kherson, Odessa, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia: 2 each, Sumy: 1), 3 May (Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk: 1 each). On 27 April 2026, media reported one death in Russian-occupied Enerhodar, near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, following a drone attack.

According to an assessment by the International Red Cross on 29 April 2026, 15 million people in Ukraine are in need of psychological support in what is now the fifth year of the war, with 60% suffering from anxiety and one in five suffering from depression.³⁵

War developments: Mandatory rotation for frontline soldiers

According to media reports dated 30 April 2026, mandatory rotation for soldiers on the front line, as well as requirements regarding rest periods and the equipment of combat units, have been established. Under these provisions, commanders must ensure that soldiers can remain in their positions for up to two months, with a mandatory rotation taking place during the third month. The order also provides for mandatory medical examinations and rest periods following combat missions, and regulates the timely supply of ammunition and food to frontline positions. The order was issued after relatives shared photos of emaciated soldiers who had been forced to endure months on the front line without adequate provisions. Meanwhile, President Zelenskyy has announced a military reform for the summer to address the shortage of personnel in the armed forces.³⁶

Energy and hospital infrastructure

According to media reports, Russian attacks between 26 April and 3 May 2026 caused damage and temporary disruptions in the following Ukrainian regions: 30 April (power cuts in Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, Odessa, Mykolaiv and Kherson), 1 May (power cuts in Ternopil), 2 May (power cuts in Mykolaiv). According to reports dated 27 April 2026, Germany has handed over three further combined heat and power plants to Ukraine, which are to be deployed in Chernihiv.

According to media reports of 30 April 2026, a hospital in the town of Izmail (Odessa region) was severely damaged in a Russian drone attack. There were no casualties, as staff and patients had taken shelter in time.³⁷

Application of the amnesty law ended

According to media reports, interim President Delcy Rodríguez announced on 23 April 2026 that the amnesty law passed on 19 February 2026 (see BN of 23 February 2026) would no longer apply. Rodríguez stated that the law had been “very successful” and had fulfilled its purpose. Accordingly, individuals who had been excluded from the scope of the amnesty would be dealt with by other bodies. According to government figures, the amnesty law was applied to 8,616 people. However, this figure cannot be independently verified. Overall, according to reports, the vast majority of cases involved the lifting of court-imposed conditions for individuals not in custody and thus were less about actual releases from prison.

Human rights organisations criticised the announcement, describing it as “arbitrary and unconstitutional”. They argued that this constituted a violation of the rule of law, as the amnesty law could only be repealed by another law passed by parliament. This process also confirmed the initial fear that the amnesty law had not been a genuine instrument for restoring freedom to political prisoners. According to the NGO Foro Penal, 454 people are currently still in detention for politically motivated reasons.³⁸

Increase in the minimum wage

After Rodríguez announced the increase in the minimum wage on 8 April 2026 (see BN of 13 April 2026), she announced on 30 April 2026 that, in fact, the total minimum income had been raised to 240 USD (equivalent to approx. 205 EUR) as of 1 May 2026. According to media reports, this does not constitute an increase in the minimum wage itself, which remains at 130 bolívars per month (equivalent to approx. 0.30 USD), but rather an adjustment to the so-called ‘economic war bonus’ for workers, amounting to an additional 50 USD per month. Pension payments have also been increased by 10 USD to a total of 70 USD via the same bonus. The total minimum income comprises the monthly minimum wage, a food allowance of 40 USD and the ‘economic war bonus’ of 200 USD, all of which are paid out monthly.³⁹

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Briefing Notes
BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de

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