

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	780
Land:	Pakistan
Kilde:	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
Titel:	Briefing Notes
Udgivet:	7. april 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. juni 2025



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

07 April 2025

Egypt

Human rights organisations urge support for jailed hunger-striking lawyer

Human rights organisations published on 31.03.25 an urgent call for intervention in the case of jailed human rights lawyer Mohamed Abou Huraire, who is on hunger strike in protest against the “inhumane” conditions of his detention.

Abou Huraire was sentenced in March 2023 to 15 years’ imprisonment in Egypt because of his support for political detainees and their families. His wife, Aisha Al-Shater, also a human rights advocate, was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment in the same case.

Egypt had more than 60,000 political prisoners according to a 2022 estimate by local and international human rights organisations, one of the highest rates in the world. According to reports, prisoners are frequently subject to torture and mistreatment. There are also reports of deaths. Eight political prisoners are said to have died since the beginning of the year alone as a result of being denied medical treatment.¹

Ethiopia

Clashes in Oromia

According to reports, at least 20 people were killed, others were injured, and three persons were abducted, on 28.03.25 in the Horo Guduru Wollega Zone (Abe Dongoro District, Tullu Moti Kebele). The attack is said to have targeted security forces of the local militia and the Oromia Special Forces. The casualties are said to have included both security forces and civilians. The Fano armed group from the neighbouring Amhara Region is presumed to be behind the attack.²

Hundreds detained in Addis Abeba

More than 900 people are reported to have been arrested in Addis Abeba in February and March 2025. The detainees are said to include 224 Eritrean nationals accused of being linked to the Eritrean government. There had already been mass arrests of Eritreans in Addis Abeba and other regions of the country in the autumn of 2024. Observers are said to presume that the continuing tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia are the cause of the detentions. The other Ethiopian detainees are said to be accused of having ties with the Fano militia, with the Oromo Liberation Army, or with the renegade Tigray People’s Liberation Front faction (cf. BN of 31.03.25).³

Afghanistan

Security situation

The NGO “Small Arms Survey” has published a new report on the availability of arms under Taliban rule, stating that there is no evidence of massive weapons losses from the stocks of the former republic by the Taliban since it

assumed power. According to the report, there has now been consolidation of control over national weapons stocks. Taliban leader Akhunzada is said to have made repeated efforts to monopolise this control and to remove it from the Taliban Ministry of Defence, headquartered in Kabul under de facto Defence Minister Mullah Yaqub, and from the “Haqqani Network” (cf. BN of 11.11.24). Despite the Taliban’s efforts to restrict arms ownership among civilians, it is said that semi-authorised trafficking in arms to allied terrorist groups (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, al-Qaida) is continuing. These arms are still cropping up on informal arms markets in Pakistan, such as in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, where prices are relatively stable, and lower than in Afghanistan, despite the Pakistani government’s ongoing “Azm-e Istehkam” military operation against Islamist groups.⁴

Governance and persecution

A large group of retired government workers once more protested outside the Taliban’s Pension Administration in Kabul on 05.04.25, demanding payment of their pensions (cf. BN of 10.06.24).

Large numbers of women reported that they were being subjected to increased street interrogations by members of the Taliban’s so-called Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue, and that the latter had increased their public presence during the Eid festival.

According to media reports issued on 01.04.25, the beheaded body of a former local police officer was found in Kandahar Province. He is said to have been previously abducted by unidentified individuals. The Taliban authorities arrested a former Afghan soldier in Nimroz Province who is originally from Dara District in Panjshir Province after he was deported from Iran. His whereabouts remain unknown since his arrest. Shah Wali Khan, a senior Jamiat-e Islami commander, was killed by persons unknown in Ghor Province following his release from Taliban intelligence custody. In Kunar Province, two persons involved in an argument between two groups of young men were shot and killed by intervening Taliban.⁵

Guinea

Date set for referendum on a new constitution

According to media reports, General Amara Camara, secretary general of the presidency, read out a decree on state television on 01.04.25 according to which 21.09.25 has been set as the date for the “referendum for the adoption of the new constitution”.

After the ruling military junta and transitional government failed to meet the 31.12.24 target date pledged for a return to constitutional order (cf. BN of 16.12.24), prime minister Amadou Bah Oury announced on 05.03.25 that 2025 would see the holding of a constitutional referendum, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections (cf. BN of 10.03.25). The draft constitution presented in July 2024 enabled junta head and transitional president Mamadi Doumbouya to stand in any future presidential elections, in contradiction of a provision in the applicable transition charter, and his own original promises.

Doumbouya announced in his New Year’s address on 31.12.24 that there would be well-organised elections and that political activities would be permitted once more. At the same time, he indicated that the state would continue to prevent activities which were perceived as a disruption to public order and against national unity. Demonstrations in public spaces are currently banned (cf. BN of 16.05.22), and large numbers of political parties have been dissolved or temporarily suspended (cf. BN of 11.11.24 and 17.03.25).⁶

Iraq

Dohuk: attack on Assyrian and Chaldean New Year festival

An armed attack was carried out on 01.04.25 at a public celebration in Dohuk on the occasion of a New Year festival (Akitu) being held by Assyrian and Chaldean Christians in Iraq.

According to media reports, the attacker injured three people with an axe, and was then apprehended. He is said to be a Syrian national with links to IS. The attack was unanimously condemned in Iraqi political and social circles.⁷

Amnesty law: more than 1,000 people released

According to the Iraqi justice ministry, a total of more than 1,000 inmates were released on 06.04.25 on the basis of the provisions contained in the newly-adopted amnesty law.

The new law primarily aims to release people associated with terrorist groups from Iraqi prisons who have however not themselves been accused of having committed murder. Particularly Sunni Arab MPs had urged this since a large share of people jailed on such charges come from this group. The Ministry announced that the move was to be implemented gradually, given the need to examine on a case-by-case basis whether other charges were pending over and above those covered by anti-terrorism legislation.⁸

Iran

58 people executed in March 2025

According to foreign media reports, at least 58 prisoners were executed in March 2025.

A Kurdish Norway-based human rights organisation has confirmed the identities of all 58 executed prisoners. Four women were among those executed. Three of them had been convicted of murder, and one of drug-related offences. A majority of the executions were related to drug offences, which accounted for 52 % of the cases. The other executions were primarily linked to premeditated murder charges, accounting for 48 % of all executions.

According to press reports, state media and judiciary did not officially report any of these executions. Moreover, four executions were conducted secretly. This meant that the families were not notified, nor were any final visits allowed.⁹

Christian converts arrested

According to a Norway-based Kurdish human rights organisation and an NGO based in England which represents the interests of Christians in Iran, two Christian convert brothers were each sentenced to four years in prison back on 05.01.25, plus five years of deprivation of social rights, for “propaganda against the government through promotion of Christianity”. They were furthermore banned from residing in Isfahan Province and each sentenced to two years of exile in Ardal County, located in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. The two brothers were originally arrested on 22.12.21 during a Christmas gathering in a house church in Fuladshahr, and later released on bail.

According to a report by the NGO based in England, all in all 96 Christians were sentenced in 2024 to a total of 263 years’ prison. According to the report, in 2023 22 Christians were sentenced to 43.5 years’ imprisonment. The increase was said to be partly due to the rise in the number of arrests in the second half of 2023, which then needed to be processed in court.¹⁰

Colombia

ELN Comuneros del Sur dissident group: surrender of arms and peace agreement

On 05.04.25, President Gustavo Petro signed two agreements in the Nariño department with the armed group Comuneros del Sur, which formed part of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army (ELN)) guerrilla group. Prior to that, the group had handed over war arsenals including land mines, grenades and rockets to an army unit, thus complying with an agreement that had been reached with the government. The members furthermore undertook to surrender the remaining war materiel within the next three months. President Petro reported on his X account of the destruction of a tonne of war materiel, and called the results a first major success in the policy of “total peace”. At the meeting which took place in Nariño, furthermore, agreements were reached on support for victims, on commemoration of history, on control of illegal mining, and on replacing 5,000 hectares of illegal farming land. An agreement was also reached on initiating a mine-clearing process.

The Comuneros del Sur were established in 1992, and was the first ELN structure in Nariño. In March 2024, the group split off from the ELN, and started promoting a territorial peace process. The roughly 300 rebels are now to be reintegrated into civilian life.¹¹

Lebanon

Report on state activities against Hezbollah

According to a report in an international Arab newspaper of 04.04.25, the security clearances for roughly 30 people at Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport were revoked because of their affiliation with Hezbollah.

According to the newspaper report, this was part of a large-scale state effort to curb the influence of Hezbollah as a whole, and to prevent them rearming as well as cutting off their illegal funding by Iran in line with the ceasefire agreement reached with Israel. Similar controls were said to have been announced for the state security apparatus and customs.¹²

Libya

Authorities expel ten international aid organisations from the country

On 02.04.25, Salem Gheith, spokesperson for the Libyan Internal Security Agency (ISA) of the internationally-recognised government based in the capital Tripoli, announced that ten international NGOs alleged to be involved in "hostile actions that undermine national security" would be expelled from the country.

The list also includes the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Terre des Hommes and the Italian non-governmental organisation CESVI. Gheith accused the EU of exploiting the instability in the country and of using NGOs as a "tool" to force the settlement of African migrants. He also accused the aid organisations of money laundering and interfering in internal affairs.

The announcement comes after 17 mainly European ambassadors and a senior UN official had accused the ISA in a letter of acting with increased harshness towards NGOs and humanitarian aid workers. Libyan authorities were said to have interrogated at least 18 employees of six different aid organisations in recent weeks, seizing some of their passports and urging them to sign a declaration undertaking to never work for an international NGO again.¹³

Myanmar

Earthquake in central Myanmar; Sagaing region worst hit

On 07.04.25, the military government announced that the death toll of the earthquake, which reached a magnitude of 7.7 on 28.03.25 with its epicentre in Sagaing and several aftershocks, which shook large areas of Myanmar, including Sagaing and the cities of Mandalay and Naypyidaw, had meanwhile reached 3,514. Another 4,809 people had been injured, and 210 were still missing. The independent news portal Democratic Voice of Burma, which reports from exile, has since documented 4,316 casualties, 6,588 injured people and 448 missing persons. Provisional model calculations carried out by the US Geological Survey indicate that the number of casualties nationwide might rise to more than 10,000. Search and rescue teams streamed into the cities of Mandalay and Naypyidaw, the hometowns of the country's Generals. The military regime announced a state of emergency for the regions Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Naypyidaw and Sagaing, as well as for the State of Shan. The earthquake destroyed more than 80 % of the city of Sagaing, which already bore the scars of the civil war. The second-largest city, Mandalay, with a population of roughly 1.5 million, was the second worst hit.

The 300,000 residents of Sagaing were initially largely left to their own devices. The region was already highly isolated and cut off from the internet as a result of the civil war. On 31.03.25, some international aid groups reached Sagaing. Local volunteers wishing to help in the search and rescue work claimed that the military had prevented them from doing so. According to information from the independent research group Centre for Ah Nyaar Studies, large numbers of heavy goods vehicles containing aid have been detained overnight at military checkpoints in the city since the earthquake. Tens of thousands of buildings, including more than 1,000 schools, 48 hospitals, more than 2,600 Buddhist monasteries and pagodas, as well as 312 buildings of other religions, have been damaged or destroyed, as have major infrastructure, roads and mobile communications. Since 03.04.25, international aid deliveries have been arriving.

Despite the ceasefire announcement, fighting continues in the earthquake area between the military leadership and resistance groups. The independent Myanmar exile medium Irrawaddy reported on 03.04.25 of clashes between government troops and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). According to information from the KIA,

the military junta also launched airstrikes. The dpa news agency reported of several night-time military operations in the Sagaing Region.

The military regime under General Min Aung Hlaing has been fighting rebels for control of Sagaing since its coup d'état on 01.02.21. Armed resistance groups made the region into a resistance hotspot. The military reacted with an ongoing campaign of airstrikes, decapitations and arson attacks. According to the United Nations, the largest number of internally displaced persons in Myanmar live there, numbering one million. In 2024, resistance fighters who have been trained by some ethnic armies of Myanmar achieved major successes against the military. The central Myanmar region Sagaing is home to roughly five million people, and to the country's Buddhist Bamar majority. It is located between the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers, which the military use as important transport links for goods, people and military materiel. According to the independent think-tank Institute for Strategy and Policy Myanmar, at least 27 municipalities in Sagaing already had no access to clean water and electricity prior to the earthquake. More than half the houses and buildings destroyed by the civil war in Myanmar are also located in this region.¹⁴

Niger

Prisoners released

According to media reports, Niger's military junta released about 50 people from prison on 01.04.25. They included former officials of the government that was toppled at the end of July 2023, members of the military, and a journalist. All of them are said to have been arrested following the July 2023 coup. The decision to release them is said to have been taken at the recommendation of a national conference held in February 2025 in Niger's capital city Niamey. According to Human Rights Watch, however, several people still languish behind bars on politically motivated charges. Despite international demands for the release of toppled President Mohamed Bazoum and his wife, both are said to remain under house arrest in the presidential palace.¹⁵

Nigeria

Violence escalates at demonstration in Abuja

On 28.03.25, several people lost their lives at a demonstration by the Shiite organisation Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), which has been banned since 2019. According to media reports, shots were exchanged between demonstrators and security forces during a demonstration in the Wuse 2 district in the capital Abuja. At least 19 demonstrators are said to have been killed and many more injured. Three members of the security forces are said to have been seriously injured. Other sources have it that five IMN members and a member of the security forces were killed. According to the police, armed demonstrators are responsible for the escalation of the violence, whilst others claim that the security forces were at fault. The purpose of the demonstration is also said to have been to show solidarity with Palestine. The organisation IMN aims to establish an Islamic state. Previous years had also seen deadly clashes between security forces and IMN members (cf. BN of 02.03.20 and 02.08.21). Muslims make up roughly half the population of Nigeria, and most of them are Sunnites.¹⁶

Pakistan

Members of the Ahmadiyya community detained and property attacked

In March 2025 there were several media reports of dozens of members of the Ahmadiyya community being detained. In Punjab Province, in Sialkot district on 28.02.25, roughly two dozen Ahmadis were detained in Daska for offering Friday prayers.

On 08.03.25, six members of the Ahmadiyya community were arrested by the police according to media reports, after roughly two dozen Ahmadis had previously been taken into police custody for their protection because members of the radical Islamic Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) party had gathered outside one of their places of worship in Surjani, Karachi, Sindh Province, in order to prevent them holding Friday prayers.

According to reports of the International Human Rights Desk (IHRD) of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the UK, in another incident a case had been registered against 23 Ahmadis from Bhagtanwala in Sargodha District in

Punjab Province because they had offered Friday prayers. No arrests were made, but a crowd of people reportedly staged a sit-in outside the Bhagtanwala police station, demanding the closure of the local Ahmadi place of worship.

On 28.02.25, according to this source, police officers are said to have been captured on video attempting to remove the minaret of the Bait-ul-Zikr mosque in Madrasa Chatha in Gujranwala district in Punjab Province. After resistance on the part of residents, a contingent of approximately 200 police officers were bussed into the village, upon which they took five Ahmadis and four others into custody at the Alipur Chatha police station.

The Community was recently persecuted primarily in Punjab Province by radical Islamic supporters of the TLP party. Ahmadis practice their religious rites in closed buildings as a rule, since their places of worship had repeatedly been the target of attacks, at times causing damage and at times their complete destruction, and there were also repeated reports of official closures. On 08.03.25, in Bahawalnagar in Punjab Province, the authorities removed the minaret of an Ahmadi place of worship in response to pressure from TLP members.

According to a statement of 04.03.25, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has observed a growing trend towards attacks on the houses of families of religious minorities and their places of prayer; other reports speak of arbitrary detentions and the alleged desecration of graves.¹⁷

Baloch Yakjehti Committee leaders detained

Last week, Sammi Deen Baloch, a further leading figure of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee and secretary general of the organisation Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, was arrested. She was re-arrested in Karachi only a few hours after a court had ordered her release because of a protest against the arrest on 22.02.25 in Quetta of human rights activist Mahrang Baloch. Sammi Baloch had been previously arrested because of a violation of Section 144, a provision of the Pakistani Code of Criminal Procedure to maintain public security and order which provides for a ban on gatherings and the detention of participants in a banned gathering. There were further arrests of participants on the basis of this provision on 24.03.25 in Karachi at a protest which was suppressed after roughly one hour.

Mahrang Baloch, who became known as a result of a campaign against disappearances, stands charged amongst other things of terrorism, incitement to violence and rebellion, as well as property damage.

Since 28.03.25, the Balochistan National Party, an ethnonationalist group, has embarked on a “long march” protest rally. It has mobilised thousands of people from across the whole region. The participants then celebrated Eid al-Fitr, the festival marking the end of Ramadan, near Quetta.

The Baloch Yakjehti Committee has developed to become a civil society platform for the interests of the Baloch minority. Pakistani security forces act with violence towards the organisation at times.¹⁸

Security situation

There have been more attacks in Pakistan during the Muslim month of fasting Ramadan than ever before in the past ten years. The Pak Institute for Peace Studies reported on 31.03.25 of at least 84 attacks during the month of fasting, which came to an end on 30.03.25. There were 26 attacks during Ramadan last year. Several militant groups had interrupted their combat activities during this period in recent years.

In November 2022, the Pakistani Taliban unilaterally revoked a ceasefire with the Pakistani government, and the Baloch Liberation Army expanded its capacities to carry out complex attacks. Both have contributed to an increase in security-relevant incidents in recent years. The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies reported on 03.04.25 that, in March 2025, more than 100 attacks by Islamist or separatist groups and subsequent counterreactions by the security forces had cost 335 lives. This is the largest number of fatalities in one month since August 2015. According to this source, militant groups were responsible for the deaths of 228 people, including 73 members of the security forces, 67 civilians and 88 armed fighters.¹⁹

Return of Afghan nationals

The Pakistani government still intends to return an estimated three million Afghan nationals to Afghanistan as part of the plan to repatriate people living in the country illegally which came into force in October 2023. On 31.03.25, the grace period for voluntary departure for the area of the capital city Islamabad and neighbouring Rawalpindi expired. This period also targeted people with Afghan Citizen Cards. Afghan nationals with Proof of Registration Cards are not affected for the time being. The latter cards expire in June 2025 according to current information. Their validity has been repeatedly extended in recent years.

Forced repatriation was originally to start on 01.04.25, but was postponed because of the breaking of the fast after Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr) to 02.04.25, and has since been resumed in key regions, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to information provided by the authorities on 03.04.25, two transit points have been set up for repatriation to the Khyber tribal district (Landi Kotal) and to the Peshawar district (Nasir Bagh). 153 Afghan refugees are also said to have voluntarily left the country for Afghanistan via the Torkham border crossing from various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after expiry of the deadline on 31.03.25.

Official data revealed that over 470,722 Afghans, including women and children, have so far departed Pakistan through the Torkham border crossing and 698 through the Kharlachi border, and one undocumented person over the southern Pakistani border to China. Another 2,953 Afghan nationals who were living undocumented in other parts of the country left for Afghanistan via Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 1,561 of them from Islamabad, 1,309 from Punjab, 44 from Sindh and one person from Gilgit-Baltistan. According to these data, of the 477,434 Afghan nationals who have left Pakistan since September 2023, 468,481 left voluntarily, whilst 8,953 were deported by coercive means. In rounded figures, the breakdown includes roughly more than 157,000 men, 111,000 women and nearly 188,000 children.

According to the IOM, roughly 845,000 Afghans have left Pakistan in the past 18 months. According to information from the Pakistani government, roughly three million Afghan nationals have remained: 1,344,584 with a Proof of Registration, and 807,402 with an Afghan Citizen Card. A further one million Afghan nationals are said to be living in the country without documents entitling them to do so.

Another roughly 40,000 Afghans are living in Pakistan as part of resettlement programmes awaiting uncertain resettlement to third countries, mostly in the West. Many fled after the Taliban assumed power in 2021 fearing retribution in their home country due to their ties with the USA, NATO and other western organisations.²⁰

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: Killing of emergency workers; control of territory; closure of bakeries

In connection with reports of the killing of 15 Palestinian emergency workers, the Israeli military announced that parts of previous statements regarding the events leading to the killings had been incorrect.

The 15 paramedics were travelling on 23.03.25 in a convoy with several emergency vehicles when they were fired on and killed. The Israeli military initially repeated statements by the soldiers involved according to which the vehicles were acting suspiciously and had approached the Israeli military without any lights or sirens, whereupon they had opened fire. A video that was found on the mobile phone of one of the paramedics, the authenticity of which has been confirmed by an international newspaper, however shows that the convoy of emergency vehicles was clearly recognisable as such before it came under fire.

The Israeli Army currently controls a total of more than 50 % of the territory in the Gaza Strip. According to reports, one focus is on the border areas, in which the military buffer zone has been doubled in recent weeks to roughly 1 km, and residential buildings and civil infrastructure have been destroyed. According to media reports, the Netzarim corridor is also under the control of the Israeli military, and separates the Gaza Strip into a northern and a southern part.

A professor for environmental studies at Ben-Gurion University states that the 3 km-wide buffer zone along the border to Israel, together with the Netzarim corridor, together make up more than 50 % of the entire territory in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, further areas, in particular the southern city of Rafah and areas in Deir al-Balah, are subject to evacuation orders, which are frequently issued in the run-up to major bombardments of targets in these areas. In order to step up the pressure on Hamas, Israel's prime minister Netanyahu announced the establishment of another security corridor in the south of the Gaza Strip which will separate the city of Rafah and neighbouring areas.

As a result of the blockade of humanitarian aid deliveries to the Gaza Strip, which has been in place for more than a month, according to media reports, the bakeries supported by the WFP were forced to close down. The Israeli authority COGAT stated that almost 450,000 tonnes of aid deliveries had been taken to the Gaza Strip during the ceasefire, and that some of the UN aid had been redirected to Hamas. According to Israeli information, the

volume of humanitarian aid should be sufficient to feed the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip for a while. The UN contradicts this statement, and reports of a critical food shortage.²¹

Palestinian minor dead in Israeli custody

According to media reports, a 17-year-old Palestinian died on 23.03.24 in Israel's Megiddo prison. He is said to have been in jail for six months since his arrest, having been accused of throwing stones at members of the military. He had yet to be sentenced.

According to information from Palestinian officials, the Palestinian from the West Bank died shortly after collapsing and incurring a head injury. An Israeli doctor commissioned by the family of the deceased attended the autopsy at an Israeli forensic institute, and stated that malnourishment and hunger had presumably been the main cause of the 17-year-old's death. He is said to have shown signs of serious malnutrition, as well as of an intestinal infection and scabies.

According to information provided by former detainees, Israeli detention conditions have been getting worse since the start of the war. According to them, there had been physical attacks, crowding and disease outbreaks. Added to this, medical treatment was inadequate and hygiene conditions were poor.

The Israeli Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben Gvir, announced in the past that the minimum detention conditions would be reduced for Palestinians to a minimum stipulated by law.²²

Russian Federation

Prison sentences for media workers

On 04.04.25, Petropawlowsk-Kamtschatski city court sentenced the journalist and head of the Yabloko party in the Kamchatka Region, Vladimir Yefimov, to two years' detention in a penal colony for discrediting the armed forces and displaying extremist symbols in accordance with Art. 280.3 and Art. 282.4 of the Criminal Code. Yefimov was accused of criticising the singer Shaman, who is known for his support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in an internet post, and of publishing an antifascist film in which Nazi symbols could be seen.

On 31.03.25, the Fifth Court of Appeal in Novosibirsk confirmed a sentence that had already been handed down on 27.11.24 on the journalist Nika Novak according to which a journalist was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in accordance with Art. 275.1 of the Criminal Code for confidential collaboration with foreign organisations, this being the first such conviction since the introduction of the law. The court now ordered the additional seizure of 500,000 RUB (roughly 5,377 EUR, as of 07.04.25) which she had allegedly earned by criminal means as a freelance journalist for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Human rights organisations considered the sentence to be clearly politically motivated.

On 27.03.25, the journalist Maria Ponomarenko, who had been detained since April 2022 (cf. BN of 20.02.23), was sentenced to one year and ten months' imprisonment by Shipunovsky District Court in the Altai territory for non-grievous bodily harm in accordance with Art. 321. 2 of the Criminal Code. The journalist was accused of having physically attacked two prison guards, which the convict denied. Ponomarenko was said to have repeatedly complained of harassment by the prison administration, and had been sentenced to solitary detention 13 times as a punishment. Human rights activists stated that solitary detention had become more common among female prisoners since the start of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine as a result of declining consideration vis-à-vis women. The conditions in solitary detention were furthermore more severe for women, since unlike men they were not allowed to wear prison clothing in most cases, but only underwear and a nightgown.

The work of independent media workers has been hindered by more and more repressive means since the start of the war of aggression on 24.02.22. According to Reporters sans Frontières (RSF), almost all independent media in Russia have been banned, blocked and/or declared "foreign agents" or "undesirable organisations" since the fully-fledged invasion. The country fell in the press freedom ranking published by RSF from 150th place in the pre-war year 2021 to 162th place in 2024, out of 180 countries that were ranked.²³

Somalia

Security situation

According to media reporting, fighting has been intensifying once again in many places since the beginning of the year between the different players such as the Somali Army (SNA), al-Shabaab, Islamic State (IS) and several international and regional forces, as well as local militias, (cf. BN of 27.01., 03.03. and 17.03.25).

Regional forces in Puntland have been massively attacking positions of the IS as part of a new offensive since early February 2025 with air support from the USA and the UAE, according to reports. This has allowed control to be gained of strategically-important places such as the Togjaceel Valley. Although the IS is said to have been considerably weakened by the ongoing offensive, experts are said to be warning against failing to sufficiently secure the areas of which control was recently gained, and thus offering IS the opportunity to strike back quickly. According to reports, offensive activities in Somalia against al-Shabaab are focussing on central regions such as Middle Shabelle. In large-scale operations, forces of the SNA are said to have attacked al-Shabaab together with local militias in several districts of the Middle Shabelle region, and seemingly pushed them back.

In the Lower Juba coastal region, which is located in the south, in the past weeks units of Jubaland's special forces (Dervish Force) have launched operations against al-Shabaab together with units of the SNA and with the support of international partners, according to media reports. This is said to have been preceded by a successful operation carried out by the Danab special unit which was planned as the kick-off of the offensive. The target of the offensive is said to have been enclaves in Lower and Middle Juba controlled by al-Shabaab which are to be liberated and placed under a civilian government.

In Mogadishu, in recent days the heavily-fortified "diplomatic zone", the Halane Camp, Aden Adde International Airport and the presidential palace have been attacked with mortar fire. Nothing is said to be known about any victims of the attacks. Al-Shabaab is said to have already claimed responsibility for the attacks, which are said to be part of the militia's latest offensive. The Halane Camp is said to have already been attacked several times in recent months, and to host diplomatic as well as military missions of the US, UK, the United Nations and others.

The intensified action taken by al-Shabaab in the capital region has led to several military setbacks for the SNA. The Army is said to additionally be confronted by the absconding of some soldiers from service and their refusal to fight. The government and religious leaders are said to have threatened the soldiers with consequences, including for their families, should they desert.²⁴

Syria

Prisoner exchange between SDF and the transitional government

As part of an agreement which had been previously concluded, there was an exchange of prisoners on 03.04.25 between the SDF and the Syrian transitional government in Damascus. Both sides were to hand over roughly 250 prisoners each. According to reports, the SDF initially handed over 97 prisoners, and the transitional government another 110. Further exchanges are to follow.

On the next day, SDF fighters left the enclave in Aleppo City which had been under their control until then. Sheikh Maksoud and Ashrafiyyeh neighbourhoods had both remained under SDF control in recent years, although large parts of the Aleppo Governorate had been under the control of other forces or of the Assad government. Individual reports stated that former members of the internal security forces of the SDF (also known as Asayish) had been integrated into the local police forces.

Media further reported that the fighting between the militias of the Türkiye-backed so-called Syrian National Army (SNA) and the SDF had become less frequent since the agreement had been reached. Moreover, on 31.03.25 there were once more Turkish airstrikes on targets of the SDF, following a pause of several days that had commenced on 23.03.25. Shortly thereafter, the SDF is said to have withdrawn from strategically-contested positions close to the Tishreen dam and the Qaraqouzak bridge. Other sources however stated that SDF troops continued to maintain a presence.²⁵

Continual killings and acts of retaliation against Alawites

On 31.03.25, at least four civilians were killed, including a 12-year-old boy, in attacks carried out by members of armed groups acting as part of the new security forces, in the Tartous Governorate.

The Department for General Security in Tartous announced that there would be investigations, and according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) shortly thereafter arrested two members who are alleged to belong to groups under the patronage of the Department for Military Operations. Accordingly, the shooters are said to have driven from a military base into the locality, where they had opened fire on a village chief. SOHR reports of six casualties and more injuries from the Alawite community. Several families are said to have fled because of the events.

Alawites have continued to be exposed to increased acts of revenge and extrajudicial killings since the fall of the Assad government, after there were massacres among the Alawite population in the coastal governorates in March with more than 1,000 dead (cf. BN of 10.03. and 17.03.25).²⁶

Ongoing fighting between Assad loyalists and security forces

Fighting goes on in various parts of the country between groups which were loyal to the Assad government and are frequently referred to as “remnants of the regime”, and the troops of the transitional government.

In many cases, the groups attack the units of the transitional government, whereupon search and arrest campaigns are instigated against them. There are however also attacks on the population in this context. After on 30.03.25 two soldiers were killed in Talkalakh, near to Homs, individuals from the civilian population are said to have been mistreated and even killed in the subsequent reconnaissance operation.

A US think-tank furthermore reports that in western areas of Syria the actions of security forces at checkpoints, including the extrajudicial as well as unintentional killing of people, is widening the gulf between the local population and the troops of the transitional government, and that this is enabling armed groups previously loyal to Assad to present themselves as a protective force for the population.²⁷

Israeli airstrikes and military presence

A total of nine people were killed in Israeli airstrikes on targets in southwestern Syria on 03.04.25. The state news agency SANA stated that they had been civilians, whilst SOHR reported of armed residents.

According to reports, an Israeli military convoy is said to have been attacked when travelling near to Nawa, a place in the Dar'a Governorate. This led to fighting on the ground with air support by the Israeli military. An anti-Israel militia announced shortly thereafter that its combatants had been involved in the fighting. Protests against the Israeli actions were held in many places all over the country.

According to information provided by the Syrian Foreign Minister, Hama Airport had already been almost completely destroyed in airstrikes carried out on several cities on the previous day. Dozens of civilian and military employees are said to have been injured in this operation.

The Israeli military continues to occupy territories in the southwest of the country, holding at least nine outposts from where it carries out ground operations.²⁸

Nationwide power outage

On 01.04.25, there was a nationwide blackout because of malfunctions in several places in the grid. The Syrian transitional government is experiencing difficulties when it comes to generating sufficient electricity for the population and distributing it via the dilapidated infrastructure.

Because of the electricity grid and equipment, which have suffered considerably and been neglected over the years, most households in any case only have two to three hours of electricity per day. Most of this was supplied by Iran prior to the toppling of the Assad government. These deliveries however ceased after the toppling and the seizure of power by the Islamist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham.²⁹

Togo

State of emergency extended by another twelve months

According to media reports, the Togo parliament on 06.03.25 extended the state of emergency in the northern Savanes region by another year up to March 2026. This is the fourth extension of the state of emergency since one was first declared in the region in June 2022 (cf. BN of 20.06.22, 12.09.22, 17.04.23 and 18.03.24).

Savanes has been confronted with terrorist attacks and raids for more than three years, which are presumed to be carried out by Jihadi groups from neighbouring Burkina Faso. The Togo authorities are said to communicate little

with regard to the attacks. The government is said to have most recently in November 2023 read out a summary in a declaration on state television on the terrorism-motivated attacks in the country in 2023, and to have reported 31 casualties (cf. BN of 11.12.23). The government stated that the state of emergency made it possible to adapt their actions against the terrorist threat, step up the protection of citizens and their property, and better maintain public order.³⁰

Türkiye

Criticism of detention conditions

Various Turkish and foreign media reports have related to detention conditions of people contrary to human rights who have been arrested in connection with the apprehension of the mayor of the metropolitan municipality of Istanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu (cf. BN of 24.03. and 31.03.25).

The deputy secretary general of the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Mahir Polat from the Kemalist and social democratic Republican People's Party (CHP), was arrested on 23.03.25, as was İmamoğlu. According to Polat's lawyer, his client was in constant danger of suffering a heart attack or brain haemorrhage. Given the fact that his health condition had worsened in detention, and that he had been hospitalised several times, his lawyer called on 04.04.25 for Polat to be released immediately. The allegations were rejected by the Justice Minister on the same day.

In a further case, according to the statement of a lawyer of 03.04.25, a student detained in Silivri Prison who had taken part in demonstrations was being denied vital medicines. Furthermore, his client's fundamental needs could not be met in the prison. There had also been violent attacks on him during a prisoner transfer.

The Turkish Medical Association meanwhile stressed that it was a crime to deny prisoners their right to health.³¹

Action against media

According to media reports issued on 20.03.25 and 27.03.25, the state media supervisory authority RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council (Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu)) is said to have imposed fines and broadcast bans on several stations because they had reported on the demonstrations after the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu (cf. BN of 24.03.25).

Furthermore, since İmamoğlu's detention, according to press reports some accounts of journalists and opposition members in the social media had been blocked by the Meta internet group on order from the Turkish government. It was said that a fine had nonetheless been imposed on Meta on 01.04.25, since not all user accounts that the Turkish government had demanded to be blocked had been included.³²

Tunisia

Removal of illegal refugee camps announced

The authorities announced on 04.04.25 the start of an evacuation operation for illegally-constructed refugee camps in Sfax Province in which according to estimates more than 20,000 African migrants from sub-Saharan countries are living.

National Guard spokesperson Houssam Eddine Jebabli said that the operation in the Al-Aamra and Jebeniana areas had already begun on Thursday with the removal of the largest camp, which housed 4,000 people. He stressed that the evacuation had been carried out "peacefully without security intervention", with the participation of Red Crescent teams, the Health Ministry and the Civil Protection agency. Vulnerable people were receiving medical assistance. No information was provided as to where the migrants would be taken after the camps had been cleared. According to media reports, other accommodation was to be allocated to the migrants, distributed across different regions of the country, until their voluntary return to their home countries. There are however also reports according to which migrants had been taken to the Algerian border in the desert and abandoned there.³³

Ukraine

Efforts to reach a ceasefire

According to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), a general ceasefire is unlikely to be reached between the two warring parties in the near future. The Russian Federation (RF) was attempting to block a temporary ceasefire in the Black Sea in order to stall efforts towards a general ceasefire and extract additional concessions from the west. Whilst Moscow was unable to accept the US ceasefire proposals in their current form, President Trump was considering imposing secondary sanctions on all oil coming out of Russia. According to reports, the Kremlin referred to the peace efforts as “very complex” and a “longwinded process”. Russia was however said to still be keen on cooperating with the USA and establishing bilateral relations. For this reason, according to media reports, Washington received the Russian Presidential Envoy on Investment, Kirill Dmitriev, who has long since been subject to sanctions and who is lobbying in the ceasefire negotiations for sanctions to be lifted. According to media reports, there are no plans as yet for a personal meeting between Presidents Trump and Putin. According to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, President Trump was not “going to fall into the trap of endless negotiations” with the RF.

According to media information, the RF is not mentioned in the list of countries published by Trump on 02.04.25 on which high tariffs are to be imposed. The US Administration is said to justify this with the ongoing negotiations. On the other hand, according to a fact sheet released by the White House, a 10 % levy is to be imposed on Ukraine. As to the planned Ukraine-US agreement on raw materials, Ukraine wished to submit a counterproposal to the US draft, and continued to hope that the project could be linked to US security guarantees.³⁴

Civilian victims

According to information from the regional governor, one person each died in Russian attacks on 31.03.25 and 02.04.25, respectively, in the Zaporizhzhia Region. According to media information of 03.04.25, at least four people were killed in Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk Region) as a result of a Russian rocket attack. According to information from the authorities, at least five people were killed and more than 30 were injured by Russian drone attacks in the night of 03-04.04.25 in Kharkiv. According to media information of 04.04.25, one person died in the Sumy Region in a Russian drone attack. In a further Russian rocket attack on President Zelensky's hometown of Kryvyi Rih on 04.04.25, according to media information, the number of casualties rose to 20, including nine children. At least 70 people were said to have been injured. According to information from the responsible regional governor, the rocket struck a residential area with a playground, whilst the Russian Defence Ministry stated that large numbers of Ukrainian soldiers and their foreign trainers had been killed with a “high-precision strike”. According to the Mayor of Kyiv, Russian rocket attacks in the night of 05-06.04.25 caused one casualty in the capital city.³⁵

War events

Quoting Russian military observers, the media reporting on 02.04.25 refers to the blasting of a Russian dam by Russian armed forces in the Belgorod Region in the immediate vicinity of the Ukrainian border. This was intended to prevent the relocation of Ukrainian tanks. The Ukrainian side referred to the territory as contested, and did not comment on any possible advance into the Russian border territory of Belgorod. The Russian Defence Ministry is reported to have stated that its troops had advanced in the Sumy Region. The Ukrainian side had rejected this, alleging Russian disinformation.

According to reports, the NATO allies have already pledged more than 20 bill. EUR in military aid to Ukraine in the first quarter of 2025. The Allies are said to have provided support to the tune of 50 bill. EUR in the entire previous year.³⁶

Energy infrastructure

Whilst according to media reports, the RF on 31.03., 02.04. and 05.04.25 accused Ukraine of firing at Russian energy installations in the Brjansk and Kursk border regions, as well as in other regions in western Russia, and submitted a list of Ukrainian violations of the agreed ceasefire in energy infrastructure attacks to the USA, the UN and the OSCE, Ukraine in turn accuses the RF of similar violations. Ukraine claims to have attacked exclusively military targets. The Ukrainian side is hence said to be demanding that the sanction pressure on the RF be

stepped up, referring to attacks on an electricity substation in the Sumy Region, a power line in the Dnipropetrovsk Region, and a thermal power plant in Kherson. The 30-day suspension of the attacks which has been in force since 18.03.25 is a moratorium mediated by the USA, and not a formal contractual agreement. Each side has accused the other of failing to comply with the ceasefire from the outset.³⁷

Financial aid

According to media information of 01.04.25, Ukraine has received a further 3.5 bill. EUR instalment from the “Ukraine Facility” support programme, which totals 50 bill. EUR and is set to run until 2027. The amount, which is conferred partly as a loan and partly as a grant, could help to maintain the country’s macroeconomic stability, according to Prime Minister Shmyhal.³⁸

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Imprint

Published by

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge,
90461 Nürnberg

ISSN

2943-0682

Valid as of

CW 15/2025

Printed by

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

Design

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

Reference source

Publikationsstelle Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
www.bamf.de/publikationen

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