

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1069
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
Titel:	Information Centre Asylum and Migration Briefing Notes
Udgivet:	17. juli 2017
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	30. august 2017

Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

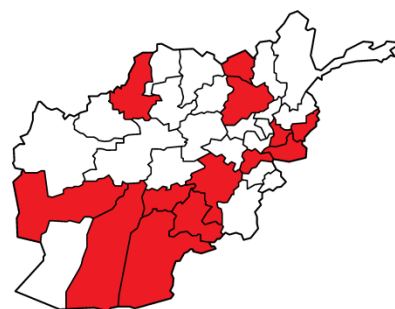
17 July 2017

Afghanistan

Armed confrontations

The fighting, purges, and raids by the security forces continue as well as the ambushes and attacks of the insurgents and sometimes also civilians are killed or injured. According to media reports the following provinces were affected in the last two weeks: Lagham, Kunar, Nangarhar (east), Kunduz, Baghlan (northeast), Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan (south), Ghazni (southeast), Faryab (north), and Parwan (centre).

The renewed outbreak of fighting in Kunduz (northeast) drove more than 350 families from their homes. Reportedly Afghan government forces reconquered Nawa district in Helmand (south). Already on 04 July 2017 the leader of the Afghan branch of IS, Abu Sayed, is said to have died in an air strike on the regional IS headquarters in Kunar (east).



Assaults and attacks

On 11 July 2017 a high ranking criminal police officer was assassinated by the Taliban in Logar (centre). In Kandahar (south) two children died in the explosion of a roadside bomb.

On 12 July 2017 the Taliban stopped a bus in Farah province (west) and shot at least seven of the 16 passengers.

On 13 July 2017 tribal elders from Faryab province (north) complained that members of the Afghan Local Police (ALP) had shot eleven civilians and burnt down their houses in Dawlatabad district.

On 14 July 2017 seven civilians, including women and children, were injured in an attack in Jalalabad (Nangarhar province, east). Furthermore two civilians were shot, one of them was a reputed poet.

It is reported that several children died in an air strike on their school in Kunduz (northeast) on 15 July 2017.

China

Nobel Peace Prize winner and dissident Liu Xiaobo dies

On 13 July 2017 dissident Liu Xiaobo succumbed to cancer in a hospital in Shenyang in northern China aged 61. His body was burnt in the morning of 15 July 2017 in Shenyang and his ashes were scattered in the sea. Meanwhile pressure is mounting from Europe and the US to release Liu Xiaobo's widow, the poet Liu Xia, and permit her to leave the country, if she wanted to do so. After the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo in 2010 she had been virtually kept under house arrest.

At the end of June 2017 Liu Xiaobo had been transferred from prison to hospital. Despite many appeals the Chinese authorities refused him to be treated abroad. The German government had also offered to treat him. Since the crackdown on the Chinese democracy movement in 1989 the writer Liu had been imprisoned several times and then sentenced to eleven years in prison in 2009. The reason for the conviction was the Charter 08, an appeal for democratic reforms, authored by Liu and his fellow campaigners.

Human rights activist Xu Zhiyong released

The well-known Chinese human rights activist Xu Zhiyong was released from prison after serving a four year sentence on 15 July 2017. Xu had established the New Citizens' Movement and fought for the rights of disadvantaged people like migrant workers without access to the education and health system.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Mass graves discovered in Kasai region

The UN reported on 12 July 2017 that investigators of the UN and Congolese Military Judiciary discovered another 38 apparent mass graves during a joint mission in week 27. The graves were found in six different locations in Kasai province in central Congo (Kamonia territory, Diboko and Sumbula areas). This discovery brings the total number of the mass graves found in the region to at least 80. The graves hold the bodies of the victims of the conflict between the Kamuina Nsapu militia and the security forces (see BN of 24 April 17). The UN investigators reportedly think that most of the victims are members and followers of the militia. Since the conflict erupted in August 2016 more than 3,300 people lost their lives and approx. 1.3m became internally displaced; about 30,000 refugees escaped to Angola.

Iraq

Babil province

Several major militias of the Popular Mobilization Forces (Hash Ash-Sha'bi), including Kata'ib Hizbollah and the Imam Ali Brigade were accused of having distributed fliers in predominantly Sunni areas in the province's north urging all Sunni to leave the area within 24 hours. There have been various attempts to change the demography of that province in favour of the Shia. For example, a large number of Sunni internal refugees have not been allowed to return to the province even several years after it has been retaken from IS and the entry of all Sunni is generally stopped.

Mosul

A taking stock found that about one third of all of the town's residential buildings and residences have been destroyed; furthermore the major elements of infrastructure such as all bridges across the river Tigris are destroyed or badly damaged. There are still some niches of resistance and there were several attacks last week. Just as in Fallujah and Ramadi, the mine clearing units will be kept busy for years to clear all the mines left by IS. It is assumed that IS is still holding about 3,400 Yezidi.

Iran

Iranian President Rohani's brother arrested

The brother of Iranian President Rohani was arrested on 16 July 2017. The deputy head of the judicial authorities, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, said that Hossein Fereydoun is charged with financial crimes. Bail had been set, but had not yet been paid by Fereydoun. Fereydoun was accused of exerting pressure to have a confidant appointed as director of a bank.

Israel

Israel reopens access to Jerusalem Temple Mount after attack

After a two-day closure the Israeli government again allowed access to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on 16 July 2017. The security forces had blocked access in response to an attack on 14 July 2017. Three Arab Israelis had shot two Israeli policemen and were subsequently killed by the security forces. It was the first time since 2000 that Friday prayers at al-Aqsa Mosque had been banned.

Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Areas/Gaza Strip

Gaza Strip without power

On 12 July 2017 the only power plant in the Gaza Strip was again turned off due to lack of fuel. The about two million people in the Gaza Strip have been experiencing frequent black outs for several years and power is only available for a few hours every day. The energy crisis is the result of a power struggle between the al-Fatah of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas that took control of the Gaza Strip by use of

force ten years ago. Al-Fatah refuses to pay for the power Israel has been supplying to Gaza to exert pressure on Hamas.

Yemen

Shortage of medication to treat cholera patients in Yemen

The NGO Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is trying to control the cholera epidemic in Yemen that broke out in March and has already resulted in 1,700 casualties.

Cameroon

Boko Haram: At least twelve casualties from suicide bombings in border town

In the small town of Waza (Far North region) located about eight kilometres from Nigerian border two female suicide bombers blew themselves up in the evening of 12 July 2017 killing 14 people and wounding 30.

Morocco

More shows of solidarity for the Rif "Hirak" protesters were organized by human rights organizations on 8 July 2017. The protesters assembled in front of the parliament building in the Moroccan capital Rabat demanding political, social, and economic reforms as well as the release of the protesters arrested in Al Hoceima. The police's attempts to prevent the protest by a massive presence, harassment and violence can be seen on YouTube and several Moroccan news portals. Reportedly at least a dozen people were injured, including the prominent lawyer Abdelaziz Nouidi, one of the defence counsels of the detained Al Hoceima protesters.

Earthquake in the northeast

On 10 July 2017 an earthquake magnitude 4.6 occurred in Morocco's northeast and on 11 July 2017 another one of magnitude 4.9.

Nigeria

Boko Haram: Again suicide bombings in Maiduguri

The police report that four female suicide bombers blew themselves up in the Maiduguri (capital of the northeastern state of Borno) suburbs of Moloi, Judumeri, and Polo-Sabongari on 11 July 2017. They killed twelve members of the vigilantes (CJTF) and seven civilians who were mourning the murdered CJTF members. As recently as 25 June 2017 eight people had been killed by five female suicide bombers in Maiduguri.

Russian Federation/Chechenya

Reports of the murder of 27 prisoners

Human rights activists are alarmed by reports about the alleged execution of 27 prisoners in the Russian autonomous republic of Chechenya. Last week the anti-Kremlin paper Novaya Gazeta published the names of the young men who had been arrested without charges and were allegedly killed in the night to 26 January 2017. The paper cites high-ranking informants in Chechen authorities. The human rights organization Amnesty International (ai) considers the reports to be credible and demanded full explanations. ai has documented executions in the Russian North Caucasus for several years. The media had first reported that the alleged execution victims were homosexuals. The report was later corrected by saying that an error had occurred in the translation and that the motive had not been homosexuality.

In recent months Novaya Gazeta journalists had repeatedly reported abductions, abuse, torture and even murders of homosexuals in Chechenya. As a result the journalists received death threats. Chechenya's

leadership around the leader of the republic Kadyrov denied the allegations. Russia's human rights ombudsman Tatyana Moskalkova said that she already sent a request for information about the recently published names to the investigation authorities. Novaya Gazeta had accused the authorities of procrastinating the investigations.

Somalia

Attacks

Al-Shabaab declared itself responsible for the death of an official of the Ministry of Finance who was assassinated on 09 July 2017. On 10 July 2017 the extremists fired mortars at the administrative building of Yaqshid district in Mogadishu killing one soldier and wounding another.

On 11 July 2017 al-Shabaab booby trapped an AMISOM convoy in the Heliwa district of Mogadishu. The extremists also claimed responsibility for another attack in Mogadishu's Yaqshid district to which a soldier fell victim on 12 July 2017. The car bombing of an AMISOM convoy in Sinka Dher near Mogadishu claimed an unknown number of victims. Al-Shabaab maintained that they killed staff of the US security firm Bancroft. Al-Shabaab further claimed responsibility for attacks in and around Mogadishu on 12 July 2017 in which two soldiers were killed at the airport and one in Afgoi and two children were injured near a police station in Hawl Wadag district.

Fighting

On 09 July 2017 Puntland security forces destroyed several al-Shabaab bases in the Galgala mountains near Boosaaso (Bari region) killing 18 extremists. Puntland soldiers arrested 14 al-Shabaab members in a security operation near Garowe (Nugaal region) on 11 July 2017. On 11 July 2017 Somali and Kenyan AMISOM units attacked extremist bases in the Gedo region. Two extremists were killed in an exchange of fire in Daar Maclin near Bardhere (Gedo region) on 12 July 2017. Al-Shabaab announced the killing of two soldiers in an attack on Ethiopian AMISOM soldiers at a checkpoint in Halgan (Hiiraan region) 10 July 2017. Al-Shabaab attacked a Somali army convoy in Hodur (Bakool region) on 13 July 2017 killing two officers. Special US forces and Somali units jointly advanced against al-Shabbab in Kunya Barrow (Lower Shabelle region). They liberated an unknown number of inmates and detained extremists from a prison. According to unconfirmed reports al-Shabaab spokesman, Ali Mohamed Rage (Ali Dheere) lost his life in this attack.

Soldiers kill civilians

On 10 July 2017 a Somali soldier opened fire at a crowd in Jalalaqsi (Hiiraan region) killing one civilian and wounding two others. Similar incidents in which security forces killed civilians had occurred in Mogadishu on 09 and 10 July 2017. In Arbacow near Mogadishu AMISOM soldiers shot a female civilian dead after al-Shabaab fighters had booby trapped a convoy.

Internet blackout in central and southern Somalia

According to the telecommunications minister an internet blackout costs Somalia USD ten million every day. It is said that the anchor of a container vessel sailing under the flag of Panama and owned by a Geneva company severed a glass fibre cable off the Somali coast on 25 June 2017. Allegedly the country suffered USD 130m in damages for which the Somali government is seeking compensation.

Syria

New talks scheduled for September

Also after round seven of the indirect Syrian peace talks in Geneva UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura sees no willingness on the part of the Assad government to agree to a political change. Despite the minimal progress made the peace talks are to be continued in September. De Mistura said that he would be working towards direct talks between the Syrian leadership and the opposition.

Turkey

Arrests and dismissals

The wave of arrests continues also right before the first anniversary of the attempted putsch. More than 100 persons were arrested on 11 July 2017, including former staff of the research council, the telecommunications agency, and other technical experts. Warrants of arrest were issued for 105 technology and IT experts suspected of providing technical support to the backers of the coup.

The media reported on 14 July 2017 that another 7,563 police, soldiers, and ministerial staff had been dismissed, at least 2,300 of them are police. All of them are accused of having ties to the Gülen movement.

At the anniversary day celebrations President Erdogan announced his intention to extend the state of emergency once again and that he is prepared to sign a law on the restitution of capital punishment if the parliament voted for it.

Western Balkans

The fourth conference for the countries of the Western Balkans was held in Trieste on 12 July 2017. The German Government had initiated the series of Balkans conferences (Berlin Process) in 2014. The conference was attended by Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and several EU countries. The major topics were transport and power supply, youth, civil society, economic cooperation, and fighting corruption. The EU encouraged the Balkan countries to form a common market which could create more than 80,000 jobs in the region. The EU is prepared to invest €1bn specifically for the construction of motorways and gas pipelines and the harmonization of customs regulations.

In closing the participants confirmed the EU perspective. This region is, however, losing more and more of its lustre. Russia is strengthening its traditional ties with the Slavic population, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia are courting the Muslims in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania. Furthermore the region is characterized by tensions and crises, extreme poverty and unemployment, nationalism and corruption, lack of the rule of law, weak democracies, and controlled media. No further accessions to the EU are to be expected in the long-term.

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