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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Persecution situation

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has published a report on the activities of the Taliban Ministry of Virtue. The report emphasises the ministry's violation of human rights, particularly relating to women.

According to a report from 08.07.24, a former police officer in Kabul has died after having been tortured by the Taliban. He had been accused of possessing weapons and is said to have been buried by the Taliban without his family being informed.

According to reports, the Taliban prevented the Shiite population from celebrating the ceremony to mark the month of Muharran. On 10.07.24, they gave instructions that there should only be three days of mourning for Imam Hussein, who died in the Battle of Karbala, instead of the usual ten. In Kabul, the Taliban destroyed stalls that traditionally serve free drinks and prevented people from attending religious ceremonies, the reports said.¹

Government affairs

On 08.07.24, the Taliban destroyed a statue of the important Hazara personality, Abdul Ali Mazari, in Kabul. Mazari was an active Hazara political leader in the early 1990s who campaigned for peaceful multi-ethnic coexistence. He was killed by the Taliban in 1995.²

Humanitarian situation

On 09.07. and 10.07.24, more than 4,000 people were deported to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan.

The UN Coordination Office warns of a deterioration of the humanitarian crisis because of a lack of funds for humanitarian aid. The WFP announced that it is unable to continue supporting many of those affected by the floods of recent weeks due to a lack of funding. A maternity hospital in Badakhshan province had to close down after the WHO was unable to continue funding it. This not only had an impact on medical care, but also left the staff (73 people) unemployed.³

Angola

Call for a zero-tolerance policy towards FGM

As reported by the state press agency Angola Press, MP Luísa Damião spoke out in favour of a zero-tolerance policy for female genital mutilation (FGM) on 04.07.24. Her pronouncement referred to the report of the Standing Committee on Human and Social Development and the special programmes of the Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and called for legislative initiatives and increased education and awareness-raising campaigns in the communities. She also emphasised the need to involve the media and social partners in this campaign in order to create more awareness in society and thus successfully end FGM. Damião also spoke about the need for monitoring mechanisms, including for reporting incidents.

The report of the SADC Parliamentary Forum identified FGM as a blatant violation of fundamental human rights and a form of gender-based violence. A SADC model law on gender-based violence is intended to commit member states to preventing FGM. However, the report noted that the limited data on FGM in Southern Africa, particularly among minority or migrant communities, leaves a gap that makes it difficult to define successful initiatives.⁴

Burkina Faso

Draft law on the criminalisation of homosexuality

On 10.07.24, the Burkinabe military government under Ibrahim Traoré passed a draft amendment to the Personal and Family Code (CPF), which criminalises homosexuality. According to the draft law, homosexuality and related practices are prohibited and punishable. The media report that the specific penalties are not known. The law has not yet come into force as it needs to be adopted by parliament first. On 24.08.23, the Supreme Council for Communication of the Burkinabe government had already banned the broadcasting of television channels that publicly address homosexuality (cf. BN of 28.08.23).⁵

Egypt

Human rights organisation criticises continuation of travel bans

In an article published on 09.07.24, Amnesty International (AI) calls on the Egyptian authorities to immediately lift the travel ban on human rights lawyers Hoda Abdelwahab and Nasser Amin. During investigations that lasted from 2011 to 2024, the authorities froze the assets of at least seven NGOs and eleven of their employees and imposed travel bans on at least 31 human rights activists. When the proceedings were closed in March 2024, the travel ban was lifted for 29 people, but not for these two lawyers.⁶

El Salvador

Two years of state of emergency: NGO documents 79,211 arrests and 265 deaths

The NGO Cristosal analysed the effects of the state of emergency imposed by President Nayib Bukele since 2022 with the help of witness information and medical documentation. Access to public information is restricted, the NGO said. Since the state of emergency was imposed and several constitutional rights were thus suspended in response to an increase in gang violence, 79,211 people have been arrested and at least 265 deaths have been recorded in state custody. Cristosal's report documented systematic human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture and deaths that may constitute crimes against humanity. The report states that inmates are held in overcrowded cells without adequate food, water and medical care, subjected to physical abuse and deprived of basic hygiene. According to Cristosal, numerous deaths have been attributed to abuse and a lack of medical care. The NGO is calling for the improvement of prison conditions, the release of innocent people and the termination of the state of emergency.⁷

Guinea

FNDC leader arrested again

On 09.07.24, Oumar Sylla (usual pseudonym "Foniké Menguè") and Mamadou Billo Bah were arrested by a gendarmerie unit and presumably taken to an island off the capital Conakry. Both hold leading positions in the Front national de défense de la Constitution (FNDC), a civil society-political alliance that is actually banned. Bah is also active for the Guinean branch of Tournons La Page (TLP), an alliance in favour of democratic changes of power in West and Central Africa. In a joint statement, 18 national, regional and international organisations condemned the actions of the transitional authorities and called for the two politicians' unconditional release. According to media reports of 10.07. and 11.07.24, they were arrested in Sylla's house by a large contingent of law enforcement officers and with the use of force, however, without any legal basis such as arrest warrants. There was no justification for the measure on the part of the authorities, the reports said, and also stated that on 30.07. and

31.07.24, civil society organisations including the FNDC had called for protests against the closure of certain media outlets (cf. BN of 27.05.24) and the high cost of living.

Both Sylla and Bah had already been imprisoned for around nine and four months respectively under the ruling military junta and were released on 10.05.23 (cf. BN of 15.05.23), Sylla was then acquitted of the earlier charges on 13.06.23 (cf. BN 19.06.23).⁸

Guinea-Bissau

Early parliamentary elections in November 2024; no date for presidential election

President Umaro Sissoco Embaló announced that the early elections to be held after the parliament was dissolved in December 2023 (cf. BN of 11.12.23), after merely a few months in office, will take place on 24.11.24. This was detailed in a media report from 08.07.24. Since its dissolution the parliament (Assembleia Nacional Popular, ANP) remained closed. Several parties had argued in favour of scheduling the presidential elections instead of the parliamentary elections for 2024. Embaló's mandate expires in February 2025.

According to a media report of 15.07.24, Embaló is said to have responded to a journalist's question about the scheduling of the presidential election with insults on his return from a state visit to China. In response, the media workers' union Sindicato dos Jornalistas e Técnicos de Comunicação Social (SINJOTECs) criticised Embaló's "systematic insults" and called for a boycott against him.⁹

Iran

Summons and arrest of convicted activists for execution of judgement

According to media reports, two women's rights activists were arrested in the city of Rasht (Gilan province) on 10.07.24. The two sisters were taken to Lakan prison in Rasht to serve their prison sentences. They had been sentenced to several years in prison on 28.05.24 after unsuccessful appeal proceedings. In August 2023, the women were arrested in the run-up to the first anniversary of Jina Mahsa Amini's death and subsequently sentenced in the first instance (cf. BN of 21.08.23 and 03.06.24). Both activists were accused of membership in and formation of illegal groups as well as of endangering national security. Their prison sentences are said to be for around six years and three months and nine years and six months respectively.

Furthermore, there are reports that nine other previously sentenced activists from Gilan province had been summoned in this context. They were told to report to Lakan Prison by 13.07.24. These activists had also been arrested in 2023 and sentenced to prison terms of between one and more than six years.¹⁰

Suspected fight against an armed group in western Azerbaijan

According to a state television report from 09.07.24, Revolutionary Guards Forces (IRGC) fought and destroyed an armed group in the province of West Azerbaijan. The unspecified group had attempted to infiltrate Iran in the north-western border region, it was said. The exact location of the alleged operation was not reported.

The Iranian province of West Azerbaijan borders Türkiye and Iraq. In the past, there have been occasional clashes between Iranian armed forces and Kurdish separatist groups as well as militant groups with links to IS.¹¹

Announcement of criminal proceedings for calling for an election boycott

According to media reports from 10.07.24, the Iranian judiciary has announced that it will take action against people who allegedly called for an election boycott in the run-up to the early presidential election. Around 100 people were summoned and charges were brought against the operators of two Telegram channels. In addition, 500 Instagram accounts were identified which allegedly negatively influenced or prevented voter turnout, the reports said. No names or details of individuals were disclosed. Short-term arrests are said to have been made in connection with this. The majority of those affected were released again after signing cease-and-desist declarations or paying bail.

In the run-up to the presidential election in June 2024, the press regulator announced guidelines for the reporting and publication of media content on the election and corresponding penalties for violations (cf. BN of 10.06.24).¹²

Iraq

State counter-terrorism action

According to the local police, two fishermen were killed by suspected IS fighters in Tuz Khurmatu (Salah al-Din province) on 08.07.24. No information was given about the whereabouts of the suspects.

On 11.07.24, Iraqi security forces arrested nine terror suspects in towns near Baghdad. According to the authorities, all nine detainees were on wanted lists.

On 12.07.24, Iraqi security forces killed two suspected IS fighters in Diyala province after one of them allegedly threatened to detonate an explosive belt he was wearing.

On 13.07.24, Iraqi security forces and suspected IS fighters clashed in the province of Diyala. Two soldiers, three police officers and an undisclosed number of suspected IS fighters were killed.

At least one Asayish member was killed in clashes between Kurdish security forces and suspected IS fighters on 14.07.24 in the district of Qarahanjir (Kirkuk province), one IS fighter was also killed.

Parts of the provinces of Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk are among the so-called disputed territories claimed by both the Kurdish and the central Iraqi side. This unresolved balance of power has led to a security vacuum that is being exploited by IS fighters.¹³

Death sentences against IS members

On 09.07.24, a court sentenced an IS fighter in Salah al-Din to death. The convict was found guilty of killing civilians, attacking Iraqi security forces and providing logistical support to IS.

Also, the widow of former IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was sentenced to death on 10.07.24. The court considered it proven that the woman had been actively involved in the enslavement of Yazidi women and girls.

Both court rulings are based on Art. 4 of the 2005 Anti-Terrorism Act, and both the UN and various NGOs have repeatedly described proceedings under Art. 4 as non-compliant with the rule of law.¹⁴

Türkiye-PKK conflict

According to the US NGO Community Peacemakers Teams (CPT) which focusses on conflict monitoring, a total of 182 families in Dohuk were displaced from their home villages by the latest Turkish military operation from 15.06. to 12.07.24. During the same period, CPT recorded 285 air strikes in the Kurdistan Region (KR-I), most of them in Dohuk.

Türkiye intensified its ongoing military operation in mid-June and deployed hundreds of additional troops and vehicles to several areas of Iraq.

Civilian casualties are relatively rare in the conflict, but the air strikes often trigger fires that scorch agricultural land, thus destroying the livelihoods of the rural population.¹⁵

Closure of refugee camps in KR-I

On 11.07.24, the Federal Minister for Migration and Displacement announced that the last camp for internally displaced persons in Sulaymaniyah had been closed down. Around 1,800 of the 2,500 families in the now closed camp had returned to their hometowns, while the remaining 700 were still in Sulaymaniyah.

At the end of 2023, the government in Baghdad had announced its intention to close all remaining camps in the KR-I by 30.07.24. As an incentive to return to their homes, start-up aid of four million IQD (approx. EUR 2,800; as of 15.07.24) was offered. At the same time, the Iraqi government announced that the return was voluntary and that the people concerned were free to settle outside the camps in the KR-I.

There are still more than a dozen camps in Erbil and especially in Dohuk.

Many of the internally displaced persons are Yazidis from Sinjar (Nineva province), where the security and supply situation remains problematic. However, the majority of the Yazidi population in the KR-I lives outside the refugee camps. According to the law, their access to the labour and housing market as well as to educational and health facilities is at least theoretically guaranteed, however, reportedly, persistent social prejudice and everyday discrimination often make such access quite difficult.¹⁶

Lebanon

Situation in the Lebanese-Israeli border region

Hezbollah and the Israeli army continue to exchange fire. At the same time, according to various reports, there is considerable movement in the ceasefire negotiations. Hezbollah is said to have agreed in principle to accept a framework agreement of the Lebanese government. According to various sources, agreements have now been reached on several previously unresolved border issues.

On the night of 12.07. to 13.07.24, a firefight between Lebanese and Israeli forces in al-Ghajar is reported, no casualties were reported on either side.

In the meantime, at least 500 people have been reported dead on the Lebanese side, including at least 90 civilians; on the Israeli side there were 29 victims, most of them soldiers.¹⁷

Libya

Activist kidnapped by unknown persons

According to media reports, the political activist Al-Moatassim Al-Areebi was abducted together with another person by an unknown armed group in the western Libyan city of Misrata on 08.07.24. His companion was released a short time later and reported mistreatment and torture in the custody of the kidnappers. Al-Areebi himself is said to have been released two days after his abduction. The abduction of the activist was strongly condemned by the UN, foreign diplomatic missions and local politicians.¹⁸

Mozambique

Gender-based violence in Cabo Delgado

According to reports, the number of child marriages in northern Mozambique rose by 10 % in 2023. The conflict between Mozambican security forces and an IS-affiliated terrorist group that has been ongoing since 2017, led to systematic abductions, rapes and forced marriages of minors.¹⁹

Myanmar

Security situation

Between 03.07. and 08.07.24, at least 15 civilians were killed in Lashio (Shan State) in fighting between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Myanmar military. Around 50,000 people fled. The military responded to the capture of the town of Nawngkhio (Shan) by MNDAA ally Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA with over 100 air strikes on Nawngkhio on 10.07.24, the TNLA informed. Ten civilians died, nine others were injured and almost the entire population of Nawngkhio (around 16,000 people) was displaced.

During a raid in the community of Yebyu (Tanintharyi region) on 01.07.24, military troops arrested eight civilians and had killed at least four of them by 04.07.24.

As a result of fighting between the Karenni Army and the military around Loikaw, the capital of Kayah state, at least three civilians were killed on 05.07.24.

In Madaya (Mandalay region), armed clashes between local resistance groups (People's Defence Forces, PDFs) and the military claimed at least one civilian life on 08.07.24. At least four people, including two children, were injured. On 10.07.24, the military killed six people and injured numerous others in drone attacks on a clinic in Budalin (Sagaing region), where local PDF fighters were being treated at the time.

In Rakhine State, the Arakan Army captured two military outposts in Thandwe and Maungdaw on 09.07. and 11.07.24. Civilian buildings, including two schools, were also hit during the fighting.²⁰

Economic situation

At the beginning of July 2024, banks in Myanmar began to restrict cash withdrawals to between MMK 500,000 and a maximum of MMK 2,000,000 (approx. EUR 141 to EUR 566; as at 15.07.24) per day to counter the rising inflation. At least ten business owners who had announced wage increases for their employees due to the difficult economic

situation were arrested in June 2024 for inciting public disorder. In the same period, eleven people were arrested for selling rice above the prices prescribed by the military government. According to the World Bank, Myanmar's economic output has fallen by 9 % since 2019. In early 2024 the poverty rate rose to over 32 %, the highest level since 2015.²¹

Niger

Prison break

On 11.07.24, an unknown number of armed prisoners escaped from Koutoukale high-security prison in the Tillabéri region, near the capital Niamey. This is where members of Islamist groups are interned among others. According to media reports, members of al-Qaeda, IS and Boko Haram are among the prison's inmates. The Nigerien Ministry of the Interior has dispatched search units. In 2016 and 2019, attempts to break out of the facility were fended off. The local authorities are said to have imposed a night-time curfew for the Tillabéri region.²²

Nigeria

Lagos: Prisoner released without charge after 15 years

On 01.07.24, the Lagos State High Court ordered the release of a man who had been detained for 15 years without trial. According to media reports, the man had been held at the Kirikiri Medium Correctional Centre in Lagos without any criminal trial ever being initiated. To justify the unconditional release that has now been ordered, a judge of the Lagos State High Court stated that the continued detention was illegal and violated fundamental human rights. The reason for the considerable delay in the indictment was irrelevant, the judge said.

According to the Nigerian Correctional Service's official figures Nigerian prisons housed a total of 82,895 people as of 08.07.24, of these 80,984 men and 1,911 women. Around 69 % of the inmates are not convicted criminals but pre-trial detainees. This rate is slightly higher than in 2022 and 2023 (cf. BN of 31.10.22 and 08.01.24). According to the UN, one of the reasons for the overcrowding of detention centres in Nigeria is the frequent imposition of pre-trial detention, which can last several years. To ease the pressure of the overcrowding in detention centres, 4,068 detainees, held for non-payment of relatively minor fines, were released nationwide on 18.11.23 (cf. BN of 20.11.23).²³

Nigeria / Côte d'Ivoire

Human trafficking: Nigerian women freed

Five young women trafficked from the central Nigerian state of Benue to Côte d'Ivoire on 15.06.24 have been rescued from the clutches of a human trafficking syndicate. According to media reports of 03.07.24, the women, aged between 18 and 21, were taken into the care of the Nigerian embassy in Côte d'Ivoire. They stated that they had been abducted by a syndicate directed by a woman from the Nigerian Local Government Area (LGA) of Kwande for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The liberation of another Nigerian woman, still a minor, who was abducted together with the five freed women, is still pending. All six are related to each other. A representative of the Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) reported on 02.07.24 that the woman considered to be the head of the human trafficking syndicate had been arrested in the meantime. NAPTIP success reports regularly mention the number of victims of human trafficking freed during rescue operations and the number of people convicted of human trafficking (cf. BN of 04.10.21, 25.04. and 25.07.22 as well as 07.08. and 09.10.23). On 23.06.24, 25 Nigerian female victims of human trafficking were freed in Senegal (cf. BN of 01.07.24).²⁴

Pakistan

Partial temporary halt to the repatriation of Afghan nationals

On 10.07.24, following a three-day visit by the UNHCR to Islamabad, the Pakistani government said that it was prepared to extend the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards which had expired on 30.06.24 for another year for more

than 1.3 million Afghan nationals. It was clarified that the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan remains in force (cf. BN of 01.07.24). Specifically, persons residing in Pakistan with an (expired) Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) and those without residence papers are still at risk of being forcibly returned to their home country. In addition, according to media reports from 11.07.24, at least 44,000 Afghans in Pakistan are waiting to be resettled in Western countries.²⁵

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Protest against planned military offensive; security situation

On 05.07.24, peace protests took place in the Swat Valley and in the tribal district of Orakzai. They were triggered by the plans for the military operation "Resolve For Stability" to contain the extremist threat in the region presented by the Pakistani federal government on 22.06.24. The operation has not yet started. Previous military operations along the Afghan border in the 2010s already led to the displacement of millions of people and significantly impacted the lives of the ethnic Pashtuns who predominantly live there.

On 05.07.24, at least three people were killed and eight others, including two police officers, were injured in an attack by unknown perpetrators in the district of Mardan.²⁶

Palestinian Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: Current developments, humanitarian situation

On 14.07.24, the Hamas-led Ministry of Health stated that more than 38,584 Palestinians had been killed and 88,881 others wounded in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war. The ministry does not differentiate between combatants and civilians. According to Israeli figures, around a third of the Palestinian dead are said to have been combatants.

On 14.07.24, the Israeli military informed that a total of 326 military personnel were killed and 2,069 others wounded since the ground offensive started. Around 120 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The fighting in the Gaza Strip continues. On 10.07.24, Israel ordered the evacuation of large parts of Gaza City. Two escape routes were designated and it was stated that this time there would be no checks at the Netzarim checkpoint when fleeing to the south. The Hamas-led Ministry of Health called on residents to ignore the evacuation order.

On 13.07.24, an air strike within an evacuation zone targeted a meeting between Rafeh Salama, the commander of the Khan Younis Brigade, and Mohammed Deif, the commander of the Qassam Brigades. Both men belong to the innermost circle of the Hamas leadership in Gaza.

In a press conference in the evening of 13.07.24, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu confirmed Salama's death, but Mohammed Deif's death could not be confirmed. Nor has Hamas confirmed the death yet. According to Palestinian reports, at least 90 people were killed in the air strike, which Israel denies.

In a press release on the air strike against Mohammed Deif, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas criticised not only Israel and the U.S. but also Hamas, which he said was partly to blame for the Israeli military operation by continuing the war.

The amount of humanitarian aid and the intensity of hunger in the Gaza Strip remains unclear. A comprehensive UN study based on the Integrated Classification of Food Security Phases (IPC) attested to a measurable improvement in the situation the previous month. At the same time, it said that data were insufficient for an assessment. A press statement by several UN experts published on 09.07.24 confirmed widespread famine. However, this was based by three case studies of minors aged six months, nine and 13 years who starved in different months of 2024. According to Hamas, 32 people have died of starvation so far, although several cases are known to have had pre-existing conditions that would have required special nutrition. Due to different counting methods, the figures on the amount of food reaching Gaza vary greatly. For example, the UN only counts humanitarian deliveries, while the Israeli occupation authority COGAT also counts private shipments to Gaza. Thus, the overall situation remains unclear, in particular since the seemingly different data sets and figures are not necessarily mutually exclusive and even if the situation improves, especially vulnerable groups such as babies or people with pre-existing conditions will continue to face a significantly more difficult supply situation.

On 08.07.24, it became known that the well-known Palestinian Hamas critic Amin Abed was attacked and beaten so severely that he needed to be hospitalized in the Gaza Strip. He is known for organising Hamas-critical protests in Gaza and repeatedly condemned the attack on Israel on 07.10.23.²⁷

Somalia

Attack in Mogadishu

On 14.07.24, at least five civilians were killed in a suicide attack and 20 others were injured. The attack took place in front of the "Top Coffee" in the centre of Mogadishu. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁸

Sudan

Ongoing battles

On 11.07.24, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) announced on Facebook that attacks by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the city of Sennar (Sennar state) had been repelled. Following the capture of the regional capital Singa on 29.06.24, this was considered a success.

The fighting is not only taking place in the city, but also in other regions of the state. The SAF is supported by various militias and Islamist groups such as the El Baraa Bin Malik Brigade. Despite the reported successes, the situation remains tense and uncertain. According to UN OCHA, up to 136,000 people have already been displaced due to the fighting in Sennar.

The NGO Sudan War Monitor warns that the RSF is advancing on the city of Sennar from the north, south and west and could soon encircle it. The NGO also said that there is increasing concern that the RSF could advance further into the state of Gedaref.²⁹

Humanitarian situation

According to media reports, the supply situation in two towns of Ed Damazin and El Roseires in Blue Nile state is deteriorating as they are isolated from the surrounding area. Due to the advance of the RSF in the northern state of Sennar, more and more people are fleeing to the two towns. In addition, the onset of the rainy season has restricted the movement of goods from the south, causing supply bottlenecks and price increases. The rain has currently cut the connections to South Sudan and Ethiopia. Another problem is that the communication networks in Blue Nile have been down for around twelve days. The only option is to use the Starlink service which is very expensive.

On 10.07.24, the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) announced the withdrawal of its team from the Turkish hospital in Khartoum. The hospital is located in the RSF-controlled El Kalakla neighbourhood. According to MSF, several violent incidents inside and outside the hospital over the past twelve months and multiple threats against medical staff led to the decision to withdraw the team. As areas controlled by the RSF are sanctioned and isolated by the SAF, no medical supplies can be delivered there. This also makes it impossible to rotate the MSF team. According to MSF, the hospital is still in operation after the team's withdrawal, but surgery is no longer possible. The Bashay Teaching Hospital, which is also supported by MSF, was repeatedly targeted by violence in the form of attacks and looting in recent months. Surgery was suspended between October 2023 and January 2024 due to the poor security situation.³⁰

Türkiye

Broadcasting licence for Açık Radyo revoked

According to media reports, the Supreme Radio and Television Council (RTÜK) revoked the broadcasting licence of the independent radio station Açık Radyo (Open Radio) on 03.07.24 because it had referred to the Armenian genocide in one of its broadcasts and had subsequently not complied with a five-day broadcasting ban.

Açık Radyo broadcasts from Istanbul and had already been subject to RTÜK sanctions on 22.05.24 due to a guest speaker's statement regarding the genocide in a programme on 24.04.24, Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. The sanctions included a five-day broadcasting ban and a fine of 189,000 TL (approx. EUR 5,255; as of 15.07.24). The guest, a political scientist, explained in the programme that the commemoration of the Armenian genocide will be banned in Türkiye. He said that the Turkish government denied a deliberate policy of genocide and in its statements pointed out that the term had not been legally defined at the time. When announcing the revocation RTÜK explained that the guest speaker had openly used the term "genocide" during the interview and that the

programme presenter had failed to correct him in accordance with the principles of responsible reporting. As a result, RTÜK found that the exchange had the potential to fuel hatred and enmity among the population. The broadcaster then declared that it had taken legal action before an administrative court to challenge RTÜK's sanctions. Also the NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF) criticised the Broadcasting Council's decision and called on it to uphold media pluralism. According to media reports, other international NGOs that campaign for press freedom, such as the International Press Institute (IPI), PEN International and Freedom House, have condemned RTÜK's decision as well. On 10.07.24 Açık Radyo announced on its website that an administrative court in Istanbul had stayed RTÜK's decision to withdraw its broadcasting licence. However, the proceedings against the broadcaster are still ongoing and RTÜK can apply for this decision to be annulled, the station said.³¹

Prison sentences for media professionals

According to a report published in the Turkish daily *Birgün* on 08.07.24, a total of 515 media professionals were prosecuted in the first six months of 2024. 36 of them were sentenced to prison terms or fines. In addition, 32 news websites were shut down and access to 3,747 news reports was blocked. According to *Birgün*, 41 media professionals are currently in prison.

Among the detainees are eight Kurdish journalists who were sentenced to six years and three months in prison on 03.07.24 because, according to the Fourth High Criminal Court in Ankara, they are alleged to have links to the PKK and were therefore convicted of membership of a terrorist organisation. In addition, on 10.07.24, the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hayko Bağdat, who lives in Germany, was sentenced in absentia to a 14-month suspended sentence for insulting President Erdoğan. Türkiye ranks 158th out of 180 countries in RSF's World Press Freedom Index, which is published annually on 03 May to mark World Press Freedom Day (cf. BN of 06.05.24).³²

Ukraine

Civilian victims

According to media reports, a children's hospital in Kyiv and civilian infrastructure in Kyiv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih and Kropivnytskyi (Kirovohrad region) were damaged by Russian missile fire on 08.07.24. According to the reports, at least 27 people were killed in the capital, ten in Kryvyi Rih and one person in Dnipro. On 10.07.24, President Zelenskyi spoke of a total of 43 dead and 200 injured. Moscow has rejected the accusations that it attacked a children's hospital in Kiev and cited a Ukrainian defence missile as the cause. According to further media reports, a preliminary investigation by the UN Human Rights Office as well as the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice and several unnamed military experts concluded that it was a Russian missile after analysing images and videos. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) condemns the Russian attack, as the hospital uses radioactive material for cancer treatment. Furthermore, according to the responsible governor, two people were killed in a Russian missile attack on the Odesa region on 10.07.24. According to the authorities, two people were killed in Russian attacks on smaller towns in eastern and southern Ukraine on 13.07.24 near the city of Kharkiv, four in the Donetsk region and two in the Kherson region.³³

War and recruitment

The Ukrainian public prosecutor's office stated that it has opened an investigation into the suspected shooting of two unarmed Ukrainian prisoners of war, which was allegedly carried out by Russian soldiers in the Zaporizhia region in June 2024.

According to media reports, tensions on the Ukrainian-Belarusian border have eased. President Alexander Lukashenko announced that after the Ukrainian troops left the sensitive area, his troops will also withdraw. Kyiv stated that Ukrainian units had merely expanded their defence positions along the border.

The Ministry of Defence in Kyiv has announced that Ukraine is seeking to recruit its male citizens subject to military service who are living in other European countries. As part of the recently signed Ukrainian-Polish security agreement, a unit called the "Ukrainian Legion" is to be created in Poland. All Ukrainians in Europe are to join this legion, according to an appeal by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov. The members of the unit are to be trained and equipped in Poland. According to Polish government information, several thousand Ukrainians living in Poland have signed up for such a planned volunteer brigade. According to Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, they

have the right to return to Poland once they have left the front. Sikorski also hailed this initiative as an exemplary approach for other European countries.

In view of the mobilisation efforts of the Ukrainian armed forces, numerous conscripted men have gone into hiding to avoid the increasingly frequent checks in public areas. According to data of the Moldovan border police, around 15,000 Ukrainians of military age entered the Republic of Moldova illegally between 24.02.22 and 31.12.23. The trend gained considerable momentum in connection with the mobilisation law. Thus, more than 7,700 Ukrainians crossed the Ukrainian-Moldovan border illegally in the first five months of 2024.³⁴

Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant

In a resolution dated 11.07.24, the UN General Assembly called on Moscow to withdraw from the Ukrainian nuclear power plant in Zaporizhia. The legally non-binding resolution demands, among other things, "that the Russian Federation urgently withdraw its military and other unauthorised personnel from the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and immediately return the plant to the full control of the sovereign and competent authorities of Ukraine".³⁵

Justice

According to the Russian public prosecutor's office, a court in Russian-occupied Donetsk sentenced a former OSCE employee to 14 years in prison for espionage. The Ukrainian, who comes from the region, is said to have collected data on industrial objects for a "foreign intelligence service" at the end of 2021. He was arrested in April 2022 together with other former members of the OSCE mission.³⁶

Venezuela

Official election campaign launch: further acts of repression, arrests, obstacles for voter registration

Since the official start of the election campaign on 04.07.24, various opposition members, supporters and service providers in several federal states have been arrested, including members of the parties Voluntad Popular, Un Nuevo Tiempo and Causa R. Several of those arrested were merely providing logistical support to the campaign of the opposition unity candidate González Urrutia and to Maria Corina Machados. According to the opposition, another eight persons were arrested in the states of Anzoátegui, Carabobo, Monagas and Portuguesa between 13.07. and 14.07.24. One of the arrested persons was the owner of a vehicle that González Urrutia and Machado used for their campaign in Valencia. The public prosecutor's office accuses the owner and two other people of blackmail and alleged offences against public officials, among other things. In addition, the house and business premises of a businessman were searched and he himself was arrested on 11.07.24 after hosting Machado in his house in the state of Táchira at the end of June as part of her campaign. According to the Attorney General's Office, he is accused of the theft of strategic material to sabotage the power supply, among other things. In addition, other businesses that had offered González Urrutia and Machado services in various states, such as hotels and restaurants, had been closed by the tax authority SENIAT, at least briefly. In addition, there have been repeated roadblocks on opposition routes. Furthermore, the blocking of websites, such as that of the Observatory for Fake News, by various internet providers has been reported recently.

Already for several weeks, there were numerous reports and criticism of bureaucratic hurdles that made it quite difficult to register in the electoral register and to update data, especially for Venezuelans abroad. A large proportion of the Venezuelan diaspora of legal age have been unable to register at foreign representations or their polling stations, because these are inactive due to the lack of foreign representations. According to the Supreme Electoral Council, only around 69,200 Venezuelans abroad are registered for the elections on 28.07.24.³⁷

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