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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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23 February 2026

Afghanistan

Security

According to media reports, on 21 February 2026 Pakistan carried out air strikes in areas of eastern Afghanistan mainly populated by ethnic Pashtuns, targeting what it described as camps of militant fighters (the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP, and also the Islamic State Khorasan Province, ISKP) near the border. Local sources reported attacks in the provinces of Nangarhar (Khogyani, Ghani Khil and Behsud districts) and Paktika (Barmal district). The Pakistani Foreign Ministry said the attacks were "retaliation" for a series of serious suicide bombings recently carried out in Pakistan (see BN 16.02.26). According to the Taliban government, at least 17 civilians were killed in the attacks. The Pakistani government stated that it had hit seven terrorist training camps and killed more than 80 terrorists in the attacks.

The Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) announced that its fighters had attacked a Taliban checkpoint on Bala Hesar Square in Kunduz on 16 February 2026, killing two Taliban members and injuring two others. According to news reports, two people were killed and two others injured on 16 February 2026 after an explosion in a mine in the Raghistan district (Kambak mining area) in Badakhshan province. The circumstances of the explosion are unclear, but there have been frequent similar explosions recently. In recent months, employees of Chinese mining companies in particular have been repeatedly attacked and in some cases killed. The supreme leader of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada, has responded by authorising the deployment of 1,000 Taliban fighters to protect the gold mines in Badakhshan province.¹

Governance and persecution

The Taliban described Valentine's Day as a "day of moral decay and imitation of the West" and reaffirmed their ban throughout Afghanistan. In the city of Herat, residents reported that stickers reading "Valentine's Day is forbidden" had been placed on the doors of flower shops in Taraqi Park, a neighbourhood home to dozens of restaurants and several flower shops.

The Taliban burned around 600 musical instruments in the provinces of Parwan and Laghman.

A Taliban minister stated on 17 February 2026 that male doctors are considered "mahram" or permissible guardians when treating female patients.²

Azerbaijan

Further convictions in absentia against exiled political activists

According to media reports, between 14 January and 19 February 2026, five more exiled political activists were sentenced in absentia to prison terms of six to eight years under Article 281(2) of the Criminal Code (StGB) for "inciting open calls against the state – if these acts are repeated or committed by a group of persons". In one case, an additional charge was brought under Article 220(2) of the Criminal Code, "active disobedience to the lawful demands of a government representative and incitement to mass unrest and violence against citizens". In addition, on 12 February 2026, the State Security Service announced that three further individuals had been remanded in custody in absentia. In these cases, charges were brought on the basis of Article 278(1) of the Criminal Code, "violent seizure and retention of power, violent change of the constitutional order".

At the end of December 2025, seven exiled political activists were sentenced in absentia to nine to 14 years' imprisonment on various charges (see BN of 12 January 2026). Human Rights Watch describes this as an "expansion of the authorities' transnational campaign of repression".³

Burkina Faso

Jihadist attacks with fatalities

Hundreds of members of the al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadist group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) attacked the town of Titao in the northern province of Loroum on 14 February 2026, killing at least 20 people. According to media reports, the dead include seven Ghanaian tomato traders. A market, part of a military camp, telecommunications infrastructure, shops and supply trucks were burned down and destroyed. Several people were also injured. According to Ghanaian authorities, it was not possible to evacuate survivors because the access roads to the village were blocked.

A few days earlier, there were also several Islamist attacks in the north and east of Burkina Faso: on 12 February 2026, suspected JNIM militants took control of the town of Bilanga in the east and killed around 18 military personnel. In a jihadist attack on 14 February 2026 on a base of the paramilitary unit Unités Combattantes des Eaux et Forêts in the eastern region of Fada N'Gourma, more than 60 people were reportedly killed.⁴

Colombia

Security situation ahead of presidential election

According to media reports and his own statements, incumbent President Gustavo Petro is said to have escaped an assassination attempt. He was recently unable to land his helicopter in Córdoba because his security team feared he might be shot at. He also dismissed a police general who had placed psychoactive substances in his car. Petro made these statements after the kidnapping of Aida Quilcué, an indigenous senator with whom he has close political ties, by unknown assailants in Cauca on 10 February 2026. Although Quilcué was found alive shortly afterwards, Petro will change his place of residence to prevent possible targeted attacks on his person. On 5 February 2026, there was an armed attack on a senator in Arauca, in which two bodyguards were killed. Around a third of municipalities are on alert regarding the safety of candidates due to the upcoming presidential elections. According to the Foreign Office, the security situation in Colombia has deteriorated over the past year, meaning there is also a risk of collateral damage.⁵

Recruitment of child soldiers

According to the UN, the recruitment of minors for the armed conflict in Colombia has increased by 300% in the last five years. In relation to the year 2024, a child or minor would have been recruited by armed groups every 20 hours and a total of 604 times. In comparison, there were approximately 100 recruitments in the year of the peace agreement with the FARC. However, it can be assumed that there are many unreported cases, so the actual number could be significantly higher. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children and

young people in rural conflict areas are particularly affected. The FARC dissident groups are said to be recruiting minors into their ranks, particularly in the municipalities of Cauca, Huila and Guaviare, as well as the EGC (formerly the Gulf Clan) in Caldas, Sucre and Cesar.⁶

Ethiopia

Riots in southern Ethiopia

According to reports, at least 15 people were killed and around 100 arrested during inter-communal violence in the districts of Zayse Wezeka and Zayse Denbel (Southern Ethiopia Region) in the week of 9 February 2026. According to eyewitness reports, the riots, which are said to have been related to disputed administrative boundaries, were influenced by the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from the Ethiopian National Defence Forces from the region (see BN Ethiopia/Eritrea dated 23 February 2026). Troop withdrawals have also been observed in other regions, including Oromia. Reports indicate that the local population fears that the absence of government troops will create a security vacuum and thus worsen the local security situation.⁷

Ethiopia/Eritrea

Reports of mobilisation at national borders

According to local reports in the week of 16 February 2026, the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia continues to escalate. On the Ethiopian side, the mobilisation of Tigrayan troops and government troops (Ethiopian National Defence Forces) has been observed. On the Eritrean side, troops are also forming on the border with Tigray. The establishment of checkpoints, the activation of reservists and the redeployment of troops have been observed. Neither the governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia nor the regional administration of Tigray have yet commented on the events. Meanwhile, civilians continue to try to leave the Tigray region out of concern about a renewed outbreak of conflict and possible recruitment measures. Similar developments of this kind had already occurred after the end of the Tigray conflict in 2022 (see BN of 04.08.25).⁸

Iran

Memorial ceremonies for protest victims: further protests and isolated confrontations

According to media reports from 18 February and 19 February 2026, memorial ceremonies (pers.: *chehelom*) for demonstrators killed during nationwide protests have been held in several Iranian cities since 17 February 2026, marking the end of a 40-day mourning period. The funeral processions, traditionally held by the families of the deceased, often took on a festive character with singing, dancing and the throwing of flowers. However, videos on social media also showed mourners repeatedly chanting anti-government slogans, e.g. at the main cemetery in the city of Abdanan (Ilam Province). Security forces reportedly fired tear gas from armoured vehicles to disperse the mourners. A Kurdish-Iranian human rights organisation based in Norway reported on 18 February 2026 that at least three people had been injured and nine arrested. Similar incidents occurred in the cities of Tehran, Mashad (Razavi-Chorazan province) and Hamadan (province of the same name). Referring to posts on social media, it was reported that security forces had tried to prevent people from participating in some memorial ceremonies.

According to a US think tank, a total of 25 protests took place in eight provinces on 18 and 19 February 2026 as part of commemorative ceremonies. At least 1,000 people took part in five of these gatherings. In addition, many schools remained closed on 18 February 2026 due to a strike by the teachers' union.

According to media reports, students from several universities across the country held protest rallies at the start of the semester on 21 and 22 February 2026, including in Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz. Anti-government slogans were chanted in memory of those who died in the protests in January. At Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, video footage from social media showed physical altercations between protesting students and student units of the Basij volunteer militia and pro-government supporters after student Basij blocked the entrance to the university.⁹

Conflicting reports on death sentences; judiciary spokesman confirms 8,843 charges following protests

According to a report by a human rights organisation based in Norway on 19 February 2026, at least 26 people arrested in the wake of the nationwide wave of protests since 28 December 2025 have been provisionally sentenced to death. The reporting organisation stated that some of the sentences were based on confessions extracted under torture and without due process. There is a real danger that the sentences will be carried out and that further sentences will be imposed. In contrast, the human rights organisation Amnesty International (AI) reported on 19 February 2026 that at least eight death sentences had been imposed in the aftermath of the January protests. According to AI, 22 other people are facing the death penalty, including two minors. The respective information cannot be independently confirmed.

According to official statements made by an Iranian judiciary spokesman during a press conference on 17 February 2026, a total of 8,843 charges were brought in connection with the nationwide protests. Some of the charges have already been forwarded to the courts for review and sentencing. Once the verdicts are final, the Iranian population will be informed. When asked, the judiciary spokesman stated that the cases still needed time to be processed because uninvolved persons and passers-by may also have been arrested during local protests. The judiciary spokesman did not mention any provisional death sentences that may have already been imposed.¹⁰

Iraq

Kirkuk: Expulsion of Kurdish families

According to media reports, units of the Iraqi army entered several houses in the city of Kirkuk (Kirkuk Governorate) in the early hours of 22 February 2026. The units expelled the families from their homes and occupied the buildings. These are located in the southern district of Newroz, which is predominantly inhabited by Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen. However, only five buildings inhabited by Kurds were affected by the action. The military justified the measure by saying that the houses had been built illegally on land owned by the military. According to local media reports, force was used against residents who refused to comply. No information on injuries is available at this time.

According to reports, the same five houses belonging to Kurdish families had already been seized by military units at the beginning of 2024. After their withdrawal, the families returned to their homes at that time.

Many of the houses in the Newroz district were formerly owned by members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. Following the fall of the government in 2003, ownership was transferred to the Iraqi Ministry of Finance by decree of the Coalition Provisional Authority. From 2003 onwards, the displaced Kurdish families returned to Kirkuk and settled in these houses in Newroz, among other places. A subsequent decision by the former Kirkuk Provincial Council allows the families to remain in their homes until the Iraqi central government pays compensation. According to Rebwar Taha, the governor of Kirkuk, many of the buildings do not have formal title deeds, so from a legal point of view they are still state property, even though many families have been living in these houses for over 20 years.

Following consultations between the Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Army and Governor Taha, the army units left the occupied buildings late in the evening of 22 February 2026, allowing the families to return. Governor Taha stated that the administration of the disputed buildings and land is now under the supervision of the Kirkuk provincial administration. A final court decision on ownership has not yet been made.¹¹

Kyrgyzstan

Dismissals and arrests following request for early presidential elections

According to reports, 75 people from the political and public spheres submitted a request for early presidential elections to President Sadyr Japarov on 9 February 2026. As a result of the request, between 10 February and 17 February 2026, at least seven high-ranking politicians were dismissed and another six were arrested and charged with "organising mass unrest" under Article 278(1) of the Criminal Code. They are currently in pre-trial detention for two months. Four employees of the State Committee for National

Security were arrested under Article 336(1) of the Criminal Code for "corruption". In addition, the Speaker of Parliament resigned from his post on 12 February 2026 and returned his mandate on 19 February 2026. Through a constitutional amendment in 2021, the president made changes to the duration and frequency of presidential terms. Instead of a six-year term, two five-year terms are now possible. This has sparked a debate about the length of Sadyr Japarov's term in office. In response to a request from the president on 11 February 2026 regarding the interpretation of the constitution, the Constitutional Court publicly stated on 17 February 2026 that the current presidential term of office is six years and counts as the first term of office after the constitutional amendment. This means that Sadyr Japarov could serve another five-year term after his term expires in January 2027.¹²

Malawi

Measures against corruption in the health sector

According to recent press reports, President Lazarus Chakwera issued measures on 16 February 2026 by executive order (Executive Order No. 1 of 2026) to combat conflicts of interest and corruption in the public health service. According to the order, employees of public health facilities are no longer allowed to accept payments from patients for services that are actually free of charge. The order also requires healthcare workers to relinquish their shares in private clinics and pharmacies in order to prevent corruption. The Human Rights Defenders Coalition and the Malawi Health Equity Network welcome this step towards protecting the constitutional right to access public healthcare services.¹³

Mexico

Leader of the "Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación" killed in military operation

According to media reports, Mexican armed forces carried out an operation in the state of Jalisco on 22 February 2026, during which Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, the long-time leader of the criminal organisation Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG), was killed. According to reports, Oseguera Cervantes, also known as "El Mencho", was wounded in the city of Tapalpa and subsequently died while being transported to Mexico City. At least nine other cartel members were also killed. Oseguera Cervantes, for whose capture the US had offered a reward of USD 15 million, was considered one of the most violent criminals in the country. Under his leadership, the CJNG developed into one of Mexico's dominant drug trafficking organisations, fighting rival groups in several states and involved in the smuggling of synthetic drugs. Numerous murders are also attributed to the CJNG (see BN v. 10.11.25).

Following Oseguera Cervantes' death, there were reports of violent reactions by his supporters in several states, including road blockades and arson. Several people were reportedly killed in the retaliatory actions, including members of the National Guard. In some cities, residents and tourists were instructed not to leave their homes and accommodations. According to reports, several airlines cancelled their flights to Puerto Vallarta and Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco. On 22 February 2026, President Claudia Sheinbaum called on the population to remain calm and announced that coordination with the governments of all states was taking place. She also assured that, despite the blockades and violent riots, normality prevailed in most of the country.¹⁴

Mozambique

Humanitarian situation: cholera outbreak

According to various reports, the humanitarian situation in Mozambique remains tense (see BN of 2 February 2026). After many parts of the country were recently affected by flooding, a tropical cyclone caused severe damage in the coastal region of Inhambane on 13 February 2026. At least four people died and hundreds were injured or left homeless. The government warned that food shortages would worsen as a result of the two events. Important farming areas have been so badly affected that harvests have been lost.

Furthermore, cholera is spreading. Since September 2025, over 4,000 people have been infected and more than 60 have died. On 20.02.26, the government classified the situation as an "epidemic".¹⁵

Nigeria

Kebbi State: Deaths caused by attacks by Islamist militants

On 18 February 2026, suspected members of the Islamist group Lakurawa killed a total of around 35 people in several attacks on the rural villages of Mamunu, Awashaka and Masama, Gorin Dena, Kamzo, Dan Mai Rago, Tungar Bature and Tungar in the Arewa Local Government Area (LGA) in the north-western state of Kebbi. According to media reports, the armed actors overpowered local security forces and stole livestock, among other things. Several people were forced to flee. Lakurawa militants have been settling in communities along the border between Nigeria and Niger for years. At the instigation of the Nigerian government, a court declared the armed group (see BN of 18 November 2024) a terrorist organisation on 23 January 2025. This classification allows the military to take massive action against them. The categorisation as a terrorist organisation goes hand in hand with a nationwide ban and the prohibition of participation in any activities of the group, which is mainly active in the states of Kebbi and Sokoto. Lakurawa was the target of US air strikes on 25 December 2026 in Sokoto State (see BN of 13 January 2026).¹⁶

Borno State: Islamist attack leaves several dead

On 16 February 2026, around 70 members of the Islamist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) attacked a military base in the village of Cross Kauwa in the north-eastern state of Borno, killing at least eight Nigerian military personnel and injuring around 23 others. According to media reports, the military base was considered a security buffer against the advance of militant groups. The ISWAP members also destroyed eleven armed trucks belonging to the Nigerian military and stole several weapons. They are said to have come from a camp near Lake Chad. Both ISWAP and the rival Islamist group Boko Haram are said to have intensified their attacks on military positions throughout the region. On 14 and 15 February 2026, further attacks took place near the Sambisa Forest and in the village of Pulka, in the LGA Gwoza, near the border with Cameroon.¹⁷

Pakistan

Bomb attacks in the northwest

On 16 February 2026, eleven security forces and one child were killed in a suicide attack in the Bajaur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province near the Afghan border. According to the military, militiamen drove a vehicle loaded with explosives into an army post after being prevented from entering a soldiers' housing estate. Twelve attackers were also killed. Seven other people, including women and children, were injured. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Also in the Bajaur district, according to media reports, a suicide bomber drove a vehicle loaded with explosives into the wall of a religious college on 16 February 2026, killing several people. It is unclear whether the two attacks are connected.

In another incident reported by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police, three police officers and three rebel fighters were killed during a search operation in the Shangla district. The police stated that the fighters who were killed had been involved in "attacks on Chinese nationals".

In a statement on 19 February 2026, a spokesperson for the Pakistani Foreign Ministry said that the deputy head of the Taliban mission at the Afghan embassy in Islamabad had been summoned in connection with the TTP attack in Bajaur (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). He added that Islamabad had expressed its "serious concern" that the TTP, whose leadership, according to Pakistan, is based in Afghanistan, continues to operate "with impunity" from Afghan territory. On 19 February 2026, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that Pakistan would not hesitate to carry out further air strikes in Afghanistan if Kabul did not guarantee peace. On 21 February 2026, Pakistan carried out air strikes against targets in eastern Afghanistan, resulting in several deaths and injuries (see BN of 23 February 2026).¹⁸

HRCP report: Punjab police special unit killed several hundred people

A fact-finding mission report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) dated 17 February 2026 states that the Crime Control Department of Punjab Province (CCD) is pursuing a "systematic policy of extrajudicial killings in violation of the law and the constitution". The CCD is a special unit of the Punjab Provincial Police, established in April 2025 as part of the "Safe Punjab" campaign, whose task is to combat serious and organised crime. The HRCP documented at least 670 "clashes with suspects" between April and December 2025, resulting in 924 suspected deaths. The highest concentration of killings was in Lahore with 139 incidents, followed by Faisalabad with 55 and Sheikhupura with 47.¹⁹

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Gaza: Violations of the ceasefire

According to media reports, there continue to be violations of the ceasefire on both sides. More than 50% of the Gaza Strip remains under Israeli military control. Along the so-called yellow line, which marks the internal border between the area controlled by Hamas and that under Israeli control, there are repeated incidents of gunfire and air strikes. But beyond that, there are also repeated bombings throughout the Gaza Strip by the Israeli military.

According to US President Donald Trump, the first meeting of the so-called Peace Council on 19 February 2026 resulted in aid pledges totalling over USD 7 billion. However, according to media reports, there is no timetable for the use of the funds. In the past, the UN, EU and World Bank estimated the cost of reconstruction at approximately USD 70 billion. In addition, five countries are said to have agreed to provide military and security forces for the so-called International Stabilisation Force. In total, the stabilisation force would require 12,000 police officers and 20,000 soldiers. Hamas had previously announced its intention to integrate 10,000 of its own police officers into the stabilisation forces.

Key questions about the future of the Gaza Strip remain unanswered, including the disarmament of Hamas, which Israel has made a condition for the start of reconstruction measures. The members of the Palestinian committee, which is to take over the administration for the time being, have not yet been able to enter the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Furthermore, the Hamas-led authorities are currently collecting tax revenues and paying the salaries of government employees.²⁰

West Bank: One dead in settler attack

According to media reports, violent clashes broke out on 18 February 2026 during attacks by Israeli settlers on the Palestinian village of Mukhmas in the West Bank after Palestinian farmers were attacked and the local population intervened. During the clashes, a 19-year-old Palestinian, who is also said to have had US citizenship, was shot dead by armed settlers. Other people were wounded.

According to UN figures, a total of 240 Palestinians were killed in attacks by Israeli settlers last year. Palestinian attackers killed 17 Israelis, including six military personnel.²¹

Peru

José Balcázar elected new interim president

After President Dina Boluarte was removed from office on 10 October 2025 and José Jerí was subsequently elected interim president until the presidential elections on 12 April 2026 (see BN of 20 October 2025), he was removed from office by parliament on 17 February 2026 following a vote of no confidence. The impeachment was preceded by corruption allegations known as "Chifagate" (), which were related to Jerí's unofficial meetings with Chinese businessmen and the resulting allegations of bribery.

On 18 February 2026, José Balcázar, a member of the Marxist party Perú Libre, was elected president of Congress, automatically becoming interim president in the absence of an office holder legitimised by a general election. According to reports, Balcázar, at 83, is the oldest president in the country's history and the eighth head of government in a political crisis that has lasted ten years and has been marked by an increase in violent crime and rising murder rates, as well as the impeachment and imprisonment of presidents,

particularly on corruption charges. According to the report, four former presidents are currently in custody: Pedro Castillo, Ollanta Humala, Alejandro Toledo and Martín Vizcarra.²²

Russian Federation

Repression at memorial events for Navalny

On 16 February 2026, commemorative events were held in several Russian cities to mark the anniversary of the death of Alexei Navalny, the opposition politician who, according to the latest findings, was poisoned with a lethal toxin in 2024. According to media reports, visitors to Navalny's grave at the Borisovskoye Cemetery in Moscow were systematically filmed and photographed by employees of the Centre for Combating Extremism (Centre "E"), which is also used to persecute forces critical of the regime. In addition, according to OVD-Info, as in 2025 (see BN of 03.03.25), at least 19 people were arrested in several cities, including Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Ufa and Yaroslavl. According to the report, those arrested had laid flowers, messages such as "Navalny lives" or portraits of the deceased, mostly at well-known memorial sites for victims of political repression. While some of those arrested were reportedly released from police custody on the same day without charge, individuals who had commemorated Navalny with slogans and photos were reportedly sentenced to up to twelve days of administrative detention on charges of displaying extremist symbols (Art. 20.3 OWiG).

According to research by the independent news portal Verstka, Russian courts have heard at least 213 cases involving the use of symbols related to Navalny (including portraits of the politician since his death) since Navalny's organisations were classified as "extremist" in 2021. As a result, in 2025 alone, 14 people were given minor fines and eight people were sentenced to administrative detention of between one and 15 days; in only one case did the court dismiss the case.²³

Senegal

Death of a student after police operation

On 9 February 2026, a student died as a result of police violence during an operation at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. According to media reports, an autopsy revealed multiple injuries caused by beatings. Clashes between police and students continued throughout the day, with tear gas being used and stones and Molotov cocktails being thrown. More than 100 students were arrested and numerous others were injured. Student leaders were released after a week in custody under judicial supervision. The University of Dakar suspended student associations "until further notice" and closed the campus.

Several days earlier, protests had taken place over the payment of outstanding student grants. Students regularly demonstrate to demand the payment of outstanding scholarships. In the past, this has repeatedly led to clashes with the security forces.²⁴

Situation of homosexuals

In early February 2026, twelve people were arrested in a suburb of Dakar on charges of criminal conspiracy, unnatural acts, deliberate transmission of HIV/AIDS through unprotected sexual intercourse () and endangering the lives of others. According to media reports, they have since been held in Rebeuss prison in the capital Dakar. Two prominent figures are among those detained: Pape Cheikh Diallo, a radio and television presenter, and Djiby Dramé, a singer. Same-sex sexual acts of any kind are described as "lewd and unnatural acts" and are punishable by law in Senegal. Arrests for these offences are not uncommon. On 18 February 2026, the Senegalese government passed a bill to tighten legislation against "unnatural acts", which still requires parliamentary approval.²⁵

Somalia

Security situation in Mogadishu and Lower Shabelle

On 20 February 2026, an explosive device attached to a car exploded in a heavily guarded district of Mogadishu. It remains unclear whether this was a terrorist attack or an assassination attempt specifically targeting the driver of the car, a police officer. No one was injured. There is no information about the source of the explosive device. Against the backdrop of improved security in Mogadishu since 2023, this event illustrates how dynamic the situation remains.

In the southern Somali state of Lower Shabelle, a delegation from the Somali federal government and the military reportedly assessed the situation on 17 February 2026 with regard to the possible return of former residents who had fled their homes because of al-Shabaab. In some districts, the situation is said to be calm and stable enough for the government to implement programmes to resettle the displaced population.²⁶

Sudan

Signs of genocide in al-Fashir

In a report published on 17 February 2026, UN experts stated that there are signs of genocide in al-Fashir. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia had taken the city, which had been under siege for over 18 months, on 26 October 2025 and murdered several thousand to tens of thousands of civilians within a few days (see BN of 27 October, 3 November, 24 November and 8 November 2025). The militia reportedly targeted people belonging to the non-Arab Fur and Zaghawa ethnic groups in particular. Survivors reported that RSF fighters had said they would kill all Zaghawa. In addition, Zaghawa and Fur women and girls were specifically targeted by the RSF, while Arab women were spared. The UN report found that three of the five criteria for determining genocide set out in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide had been met.²⁷

Sudanese army ends siege of Dillings and Kadugli

On 26 January 2026, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) reportedly announced that it had broken the siege of Dilling (South Kordofan). The RSF then carried out drone strikes on the city. Just under a week later, on 3 February 2026, the army also captured Kadugli (South Kordofan). According to reports, the RSF's siege of the city is said to have led to famine (IPC phase 5) in Kadugli; Although no famine could be declared in Dilling due to a lack of data, it was assumed that conditions there were similar to those in Kadugli (see BN of 1 December 2025). In the course of capturing the besieged cities, the SAF is said to have executed approximately 240 civilians in Kordofan whom it accused of collaborating with the RSF.²⁸

Syria

Northeast: Residents of al-Hol resettled

After the majority of residents had already left the al-Hol camp in north-eastern Syria in recent weeks (see BN dated 15.02.26), the transitional government announced on 22.02.26 that it had completed the resettlement of all remaining residents to the Akhtarín camp in Aleppo Governorate in the north-west of the country.

According to media reports, many of those who had already left the prison camp for (suspected and actual) relatives of IS fighters due to the security chaos, smuggling or permission from security forces are said to have travelled to the governorates of Idlib and Aleppo. However, foreign nationals in particular are also said to have already attempted to leave Syria.²⁹

Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa: four dead and injured in IS attacks

IS claimed responsibility for an attack on Syrian security forces on 19 January 2026 in the governorate of Deir ez-Zor. One member of the security forces was killed and another wounded. In a second attack shortly afterwards, more people were wounded.

A few days later, an audio recording of the IS press spokesman was released in which he described the transitional government as secular and called on IS supporters to take action against it. According to a statement dated 22 February 2026, three more members of the Syrian army were killed and others wounded in two further attacks claimed by IS in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor.³⁰

Northeast: Status clarification processes for former SDF fighters by the end of February

On 16 February 2026, the transitional government announced that former fighters of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) would still be able to undergo status clarification processes in designated centres in the northeast of the country until the end of February. From March onwards, the centres in Aleppo, Idlib, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa would remain closed.

These status clarification processes were already opened to former military personnel and security apparatus employees after the fall of the Assad government and are intended to enable those affected to return to civilian life. To do so, military documents and weapons must be surrendered.³¹

General amnesty for certain crimes

On 18 February 2026, the president of the transitional government, Ahmed al-Sharaa, issued a general amnesty for offences and certain crimes committed before that date. These include drug trafficking, smuggling and kidnapping, provided that the kidnapped person was not released for ransom or harmed. Under the decree, life sentences are also to be converted to 20 years' imprisonment. However, this does not apply to crimes in which another person was harmed, unless the injured party waives this right. Prisoners who have reached the age of 70 or suffer from serious illnesses are to benefit from the amnesty regardless of the nature of their crimes.

However, persons who have committed serious violations of the rights of the Syrian people are explicitly excluded from the amnesty. Observers understand this wording to refer to members of the Assad government who are alleged to have committed crimes.

The amnesty was granted one day before the start of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.³²

Türkiye

Presentation of the parliamentary commission's report on peace negotiations with the PKK

On 18 February 2026, the commission responsible for the peace process with the PKK in the Turkish National Assembly adopted its final report by a clear majority. It proposes the rehabilitation of disarmed PKK fighters, legislative changes to allow the early release of elderly and sick prisoners after a reduced sentence, an end to the practice of trusteeship in many of the country's municipal administrations, the strengthening of civil liberties and individual rights, and the implementation of ECtHR and Constitutional Court rulings. All proposals are linked to the PKK's complete disarmament. It is noteworthy that a general amnesty for PKK fighters is not planned. This was also made clear by the designated Minister of Justice, Gürlek, in an interview with a pro-government newspaper.

The commission's proposals for legislative changes must first be approved by the plenary session of the National Assembly before they can be implemented. The text's description of the historical brotherhood between Kurds and Turks, which spans many historical eras but makes no mention of the period of the Republic of Türkiye, was particularly criticised. The PKK's umbrella organisation, the KCK, was critical of the report. The KCK continues to demand Öcalan's release and criticises the fact that the report focuses less on the Kurdish question and more on the problem of terrorism.³³

Official ban on concerts in Istanbul

In Istanbul, concerts by two rock bands were cancelled on 10 and 11 February 2026. The Beşiktaş district administration, which reports to the provincial governor, announced that the bands' stage shows were contrary to the values of the Turkish population. The district governor imposed a two-day ban on events at the concert hall, citing Law 2911. On 13 February 2026, a concert by an Irish band at the same venue was also cancelled without further explanation.³⁴

Investigations against campaign for a secular Türkiye

On the hundredth anniversary of the adoption of the Turkish Civil Code on 17 February 2026, 168 academics called for adherence to the principle of secularism in an open letter. The appeal quickly gained tens of thousands of supporters. President Erdoğan sharply criticised the signatories. Education Minister Yusuf Tekin announced a judicial investigation into the campaign. In response, several professional associations expressed their solidarity with the signatories of the appeal in a joint press statement on 22 February 2026. The campaign was launched after the Ministry of Education called on schools nationwide to celebrate the fasting month of Ramadan, which had already led to criticism from teachers' associations. In addition, a scene from a series on the pro-government channel A-TV, which was frequently shared on social media, caused discontent: it shows a secular family offering pork to their conservative guests at a banquet. Observers see the dissemination of this scene as a provocation.³⁵

Arrests of suspected Gülenists in Kayseri

According to media reports, 70 people were arrested in the province of Kayseri on 17 February on suspicion of being Gülenists.³⁶

Arrests of DW journalists

On 20 February 2026, journalist Alican Uludağ, who works for DW among others, was arrested in Ankara and taken to Istanbul to appear before a magistrate. Uludağ is currently in custody on the grounds that he is a flight risk. He is accused of insulting the president. The allegations relate to comments he made on a television programme and on social media in 2024, in which he criticised the release of IS members from prison and corruption. Commentators believe that the arrest of the investigative journalist, who has good connections, particularly in judicial circles, could be a first sign of a tougher stance under the newly appointed Minister of Justice Gürlek (see BN of 16 February 2026).

The website of the German international broadcaster has been blocked in Türkiye since 1 July 2022 and can only be accessed from Türkiye with the help of VPNs (see BN of 4 July 2022).³⁷

Ukraine

Efforts to achieve a ceasefire

In an interview on 20 February 2026, President Zelensky stated that, in addition to the Russian Federation (RF), the US was also putting pressure on Ukraine to give up the entire Donbas region in order to end the war. President Zelensky rejected this and demanded that the front line be frozen. According to reports, EU foreign ministers will discuss, among other things, Hungary's blockade of a €90 billion EU loan on 23 February 2026. Prime Minister Orbán has stated that "as long as Ukraine blocks the Druzhba pipeline, Hungary will block the €90 billion war loan". Hungary also wants to veto the 20th package of sanctions against the Russian Federation if Ukraine does not allow Russian oil deliveries through the country to resume. Slovak Prime Minister Fico has threatened Ukraine with cutting off electricity supplies to the country if oil deliveries are not resumed by 23 February 2026. According to Ukrainian sources, the pipeline was shut down as a result of a Russian attack at the end of January 2026 and is currently being repaired. According to reports, President Macron, Prime Minister Starmer and 35 members of the coalition of the willing will discuss further support for Ukraine on 24 February 2026, the fourth anniversary of the start of the war in Ukraine. The trilateral peace talks between the RF, Ukraine and the US are set to continue in Geneva on 26 February 2026.³⁸

Civilian casualties

According to media reports, Russian attacks between 16 February and 22 February 2026 claimed several civilian lives in the following Ukrainian regions: 22 February (Kyiv: 1), 21 February (Donetsk: 3, Kostyantynivka: 1, Sumy 2), 20 February (Kirovohrad: 3, Kharkiv: 3), 19 February (Kharkiv: 1), 18 February (Zaporizhzhia: 1), 17 February (Donetsk: 3, Sloviansk: 3). According to reports from 20 February 2026, Vadym Filashkin, head of the Donetsk military administration, said that 4,056 civilians had been killed in the Donetsk region since the start of the war. According to media reports from 19 February 2026, Olena Zelenska reported that 684 children had been killed as a result of Russian attacks since the start of the war. According

to UN Women on 20 February 2026, more than 5,000 women and girls have been killed and another 14,000 injured in Ukraine since the start of the war. According to this, 2025 saw the highest number of female fatalities in Ukraine. In general, the situation for women in the country is expected to deteriorate, as financial cuts to aid organisations mean that an estimated 63,000 women will lose access to support services in 2026. According to the WHO, there have been 2,870 confirmed attacks on medical facilities since the start of the war, resulting in 233 deaths and 937 injuries among medical staff and patients. In addition, according to the WHO, the reported number of people with disabilities in Ukraine has increased by almost 390,000, or more than 10%, since February 2022.³⁹

Recruitment

According to media reports from 22 February 2026, kidnappings on the open street and the use of violence are becoming increasingly common in the course of recruitment. In some cases, people who are actually exempt from military service are being forcibly abducted from the street.⁴⁰

Energy infrastructure

According to media reports from 22 February 2026, Russian air strikes damaged energy infrastructure, which, according to the network operator Ukrenergo, led to emergency shutdowns in several regions, including the Kyiv metropolitan area. According to information from UN Women on 20 February 2026, 65% of Ukraine's energy production capacity has been destroyed by targeted Russian attacks. Mothers are particularly affected by the power cuts, as school lessons are cancelled when there are power cuts, meaning that mothers are unable to go to work and suffer financial losses. According to information from the IFRC on 20 February 2026, Kyiv is currently experiencing an average of 22 hours of power cuts per day, affecting up to 1.8 million people.⁴¹

Venezuela

Amnesty law passed; hunger strike by political prisoners

According to media reports, the National Assembly unanimously passed the amnesty law on 19 February 2026 (see BN of 16 February 2026). The adopted text limits the scope of the amnesty to 13 periods of political and social unrest between 1999 and 2026. Persons accused of crimes against humanity are completely excluded. Although the law contains many of the legal provisions negotiated by opposition MPs to ensure broader coverage, it expressly excludes military personnel accused of "rebellion". The amnesty also does not cover those who advocate "armed or violent actions against the people, sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the country by foreign states. This could therefore also affect opposition politician María Corina Machado. According to further reports, the relatives of political prisoners insist that the aim of the amnesty must be to remove the criminal status of acts that should never have been considered criminally relevant. They demanded that the process include compensation for victims of arbitrary detention, torture and persecution, and that there must be guarantees of non-repetition.

On 20 February 2026, opposition politician Juan Pablo Guanipa announced that he was in "complete freedom" after being arrested on 26 May 2025, released on 8 February 2026 and finally placed under house arrest (see BN of 16 February 2026).

On 21 February 2026, the President of the National Assembly, Jorge Rodríguez, assured that "hundreds of releases" would take place, without specifying the number or the names of the beneficiaries. However, the opposition political group Plataforma Unitaria Democrática stated on the same day that it had only been able to confirm 19 releases following the announcement of the amnesty.

It is also reported that on 22 February 2026, a total of 213 political prisoners in El Rodeo prison in Caracas went on hunger strike to demand their release and draw attention to their inadequate medical care. The prisoners would not benefit from the amnesty law, as El Rodeo mainly holds former military personnel.⁴²

Yemen

Dead and injured in protests in Aden

According to media reports, several demonstrations by opposition groups took place in Aden on 19 February 2026 on the occasion of the first cabinet meeting of the new internationally recognised government (IaR) under Prime Minister al-Zindani. This led to clashes between suspected supporters of the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) and Yemeni security forces. According to security forces, armed demonstrators attempted to storm the al-Maashiq Presidential Palace, where the cabinet was meeting. However, they were prevented from doing so, including through the use of armed force.

According to security forces, one person was killed and eleven others injured. According to a statement by the STC, at least 21 people were injured. The STC also criticised the use of live ammunition and spoke of systematic repression against the population of southern governorates.

Even after the STC's political defeat in January 2026 (see BN of 12 January and 19 January 2026), its supporters continue to demand an independent state of South Yemen and deny the legitimacy of the newly formed government under Prime Minister al-Zindani. Clashes with security forces had already occurred last week during protests in front of local government offices (see BN of 16 February 2026).⁴³

Closure of STC facilities in Aden

According to media reports, following the alleged attempted storming of the presidential palace, Yemeni security forces began closing all facilities and offices of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) in Aden on 22 February 2026 on the instructions of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) ().

STC employees and representatives were denied access to the buildings, which were cleared and sealed off by armed members of the Southern Giants Brigade. The STC criticised the measure and also renewed its criticism of the action taken against what it considered to be peaceful demonstrators (see BN of 23 February 2026).⁴⁴

Zimbabwe

Constitutional amendment to extend the presidential term of office

According to recent media reports, on 10 and 11 February 2026, the cabinet approved a draft constitutional amendment that would, among other things, allow President Emmerson Mnangagwa to remain in office beyond his constitutional term until 2030. The opposition and NGOs have criticised the amendments, which provide for a seven-year term of office for the president and parliament and no referendum, as undermining democracy. According to reports, attempts to demonstrate against these plans in October 2025 were suppressed by the police, leading to arrests. A report by the Zimbabwe Peace Project covering the period January 2026 indicates that over 45% of human rights violations in Zimbabwe were linked to state and ruling political actors.⁴⁵

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