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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Security situation

On 01.02.25, an attack was carried out on the Taliban police headquarters in the provincial capital Taloqan (Takhar province). The Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) claimed responsibility for the attack and reported that five Taliban members were killed and three others were injured.

According to media reports, several members of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP) and their families have been relocated by the Taliban from the Afghan-Pakistani border to the province of Kandahar. The Pakistani army recently carried out repeated airstrikes against TTP positions in Afghanistan (cf. BN of 13.01.25).¹

Governance and persecution

According to media reports, a high-level Taliban meeting led by Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhunzada is to take place in the city of Kandahar in the coming days. One of the topics to be discussed is the new US administration under President Donald Trump. Immediately after his return to the White House, US President Trump suspended almost all foreign aid for three months, including aid to Afghanistan. As a result, the Taliban government informed all government employees that the payment of their monthly salaries would be suspended for three months. However, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid announced on 30.01.25 that the Ministry of Finance had given assurances that the salaries of public employees would be paid this month. According to him, at least 1.04 million people are employed in public institutions under the Taliban.

According to a media report released on 30.01.25, three clerics, inter alia from the provinces of Panjshir and Takhar, were taken into custody by the Taliban's intelligence agents after they had allegedly spoken out at a conference against the Taliban leader Akhunzada's monopoly on power in Kandahar.

According to media reports, the Taliban's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Stanekzai, is said to have criticised Akhunzada again for the ban on education for women and girls, whereupon the latter reportedly ordered his arrest. Other Taliban ministers asked Hibatullah Akhunzada to pardon Stanekzai, but he is said to have refused. Stanekzai is said to have left for Dubai as a result. The Taliban have not yet commented on the incident.

Last week, the Taliban arrested the former director of the National Defence and Security Forces (NDS) in Daikundi province, the son of the former head of the NDS in the Miramur district of Daikundi, a former soldier from Daikundi and two former soldiers from Baghlan province.

The Taliban's local Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in the city of Herat has banned pictures and graphics on book covers. Booksellers say they have been forced to cover book covers with stickers to comply with the new directive.²

Humanitarian situation

Almost 40 percent of households in Afghanistan are struggling with water shortages as sources dry up, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced on 31.01.25.³

Benin

North: dozens killed in deadliest attack to date

On 08.01.25, armed assailants attacked a military post in the region known as Point Triple in the Alibori department, killing around 30 soldiers of the Beninese armed forces. According to media reports, the terrorist group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), which is allied with al-Qaeda, has claimed responsibility for the attack. According to the government, this represents the deadliest attack since violent incidents of this kind began to occur in northern Benin. Security measures in the region (cf. BN of 29.01.24) are now being stepped up further. The coastal state of Benin is bordered by Burkina Faso and Niger to the north, countries in which JNIM and offshoots of the terrorist militia Islamic State (ISIS) control territories.

Several deadly attacks were carried out against military personnel in the departments of Alibori and Atakora in 2024, for example on 16.04.24, 04.06.24 and 24.07.24 (cf. BN of 22.04.24, 10.06.24 and 05.08.24). The fact that violent extremist efforts, smuggling and other illegal activities in Benin's north are interwoven (cf. BN of 25.09.23) adds to the complexity of the situation in the region.⁴

Burkina Faso / Mali / Niger

ECOWAS withdrawal

The nations Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger led by military juntas officially withdrew from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 29.01.25. The decision to leave had already been taken on 28.01.24 (cf. BN of 29.01.24). The three countries were part of ECOWAS, which was founded in 1975 with the original aim of improving economic and political relations between the member states. According to media reports, they had accused ECOWAS of being under the influence of France. The latter had imposed sanctions against the three countries following the military coups in Burkina Faso (in 2022), Mali (in 2020 and 2021) and Niger (in 2023). Since then, relations between the three Sahel countries and the other ECOWAS states have been strained. In September 2023, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger founded their own Alliance of Sahel States (AES). The AES is said to have looked to Russia as an ally in the fight against jihadism. A few days after the withdrawal from ECOWAS, Ibrahim Traoré, head of the Burkinabe military government, is said to have been the first person to receive the newly introduced AES passport. According to a statement released by the Nigerien defence minister on 21.01.25, the formation of a joint AES army with around 5,000 troops is planned to combat jihadism. ECOWAS has given the Sahel states a six-month grace period to return to the community. On 28.01.25, hundreds of people gathered in the capitals of the three Sahel countries to celebrate their withdrawal from ECOWAS.⁵

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Fighting in the east: people dead and injured in Goma, UN calls for intervention, demonstrations in Kinshasa

Following the violent capture of the provincial capital and megacity of Goma in the eastern province of North Kivu by the M23 rebel group on 27.01.25 (cf. BN of 27.01.25), at least 700 people have been killed in heavy fighting that raged in the city, according to the UN. A further 2,800 people have reportedly been injured. The UN has warned that the number of dead and injured will continue to rise. The media report that hospitals in the city are overcrowded and are struggling to cope and that bodies are lying in the streets. The UN has called upon the international community to intervene in the escalating conflict, adding that the restricted access for aid organisations in the region and in the city of Goma in particular has heightened the risk of a humanitarian disaster. They say hundreds of thousands of people have been internally displaced.

According to reports, the rebels are now moving south towards Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province. Corneille Nangaa, who leads an alliance of rebel groups that notably includes the M23 group, has said that they would continue their offensive all the way to the capital Kinshasa. Their primary goal is to overthrow the government of President Félix Tshisekedi.

Meanwhile, the tensions surrounding the situation in the east also reached the capital Kinshasa in the west of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 28.01.25, scores of people took to the streets of Kinshasa to demonstrate. The demonstrators attacked the embassies of France, Rwanda, Belgium and the Netherlands. The crowds began

looting and setting fires. The police used tear gas to disperse the crowds and secured the buildings of the foreign missions. Embassy staff were reportedly not in any danger. The demonstrators had called on the international community to exert pressure on Rwanda so that the Rwandan government would stop supporting the rebels. The Rwandan government continues to deny both any involvement in the conflict and the allegation that it is supporting the rebels.⁶

Ethiopia

Human rights abuses in Amhara

According to reports released by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Ethiopian government carried out serious human rights violations against ethnic Amhara people in the reporting period between September and December 2024. The Commission refers in particular to the extrajudicial killing and injuring of civilians, including women and children in the course of fighting in Gondar City, Dabat, Gerchech and Quay, among other places. In addition, civilians who are thought to have links with the Fano militia have reportedly been unlawfully detained or killed. Fano are also said to have killed civilians alleged to have links to the ruling party. Fighting between government forces and the Amharic Fano militia has intensified again since September 2024 (cf. BN of 23.09.24, 07.10.24 and 11.11.24).⁷

Georgia

Two well-known opposition leaders arrested at anti-government demonstration

During protests held against the "Georgian Dream" ruling party in Tbilisi on the evening of 02.02.25, police arrested two opposition leaders, among others. Thousands of demonstrators demanding new parliamentary elections had briefly blocked a motorway on the outskirts of the capital Tbilisi. The leader of the pro-European liberal party "Akhali", Nika Melia, and the former mayor of Tbilisi, Gigi Ugulava, were arrested along with several other demonstrators. The independent television station Pirveli broadcast images showing police violently beating arrested protesters. The security forces have thus continued their violent crackdown against predominantly peaceful demonstrators, journalists and opposition politicians since the controversial parliamentary elections held on 26.10.24 (cf. BN of 02.12.24, 04.11.24 and 28.10.24). Prior to the protests, the Ministry of the Interior had warned the demonstrators that the blockade constituted a criminal offence that is punishable by four years in prison. Nika Melia was released at around midnight, after he had given written assurances that he would appear in court soon and would post bail. He told journalists that he had been kicked while being held at the police station. Both Melia and Ugulava had already spent several years in prison under the current government. Human rights groups referred to them as political prisoners at the time.⁸

Ghana

Dispute between the NDC and NPP during the Appointments Committee hearing

On the evening of 30.01.25, a dispute arose in the Ghanaian parliament in Accra between members of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the former ruling and now main opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) during the Appointments Committee hearing. At this meeting, the committee was to question three NDC MPs and assess their suitability as ministers. They had been nominated for ministerial positions following the parliamentary and presidential election victory of the NDC and its candidate John Dramani Mahama (cf. BN of 09.12.24 and 16.12.24, 13.01.25). After several hours of questioning, the NDC MPs accused the members of the opposition NPP in the committee of unnecessarily dragging out the vetting process out of revenge. The resulting confrontation was defused with the help of police forces. The parliamentary speaker apologised in a public statement, suspended four MPs for a fortnight and adjourned the vetting until 31.01.25.⁹

Iran

Travel ban imposed on well-known film actress

According to a report published in a US entertainment medium on 30.01.25, the well-known Iranian film actress Soheila Golestani has been banned from leaving the country. This prevented her from serving on a jury at the International Film Festival in Rotterdam. In 2024, she took on a leading role in the Oscar-nominated film "The Seeds of the Sacred Fig Tree" by Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof. Presumably due to her role in the film, the actress has been accused of engaging in propaganda activities against the Iranian government and promoting immoral behaviour. The film uses a fictional narrative to address the nationwide wave of protests in 2022. The film director Mohammad Rasoulof, who is currently residing in Germany, had been sentenced to eight years in prison and was slapped with additional penalties in May 2024 on charges of making public statements and film productions that were critical of the government (cf. BN of 13.05.24).¹⁰

Fifty-seven kolbars (porters) killed and 282 injured in 2024

According to a report issued by a Kurdish human rights organisation based in Norway, a total of 57 Iranian kolbars were killed and 282 wounded in 2024. This marks a two percent increase from the previous year's tally. Kolbars transport untaxed goods for traders across often impassable terrain and mountainous borders, especially between Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Region and Iran.

During the period under review, more than 80 percent of the people affected were reportedly killed or injured by direct fire from Iranian border guards. At least one man was killed by Iraqi border guards and three others were injured. Most of the incidents occurred in the region around the city of Sanandaj (Kurdistan province) and in the border region of Nowsud (Kermanshah province).

According to the human rights organisation, the phenomenon of carrying goods and loads has become the only means of gainful employment for many male members of the Kurdish population in the economically disadvantaged region. The main reason for this is allegedly the security policy the Iranian government has been pursuing against the Kurdish population for decades.¹¹

Lebanon

Developments in southern Lebanon

The Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon continues. Most recently, Israeli troops left the small town of Aitaroun after the takeover by the Lebanese army had been secured. Another "March of Return" by residents of settlements that had not yet been evacuated took place on 02.02.25, although this time there were reportedly no casualties. Several Lebanese nationals were arrested by Israeli army forces.

Israel and Hezbollah have repeatedly accused each other of violating the deal. On 30.01.25, a surveillance drone thought to have been launched by Hezbollah flew into Israeli airspace and was intercepted. In return, there was an Israeli military strike in the Bekaa Valley in which two people were killed.¹²

Namibia

Study published on high number of people in detention without trial

According to recent press reports, 185 out of every 100,000 Namibians are being held in pre-trial detention, based on new results of research conducted by the Namibian University of Science and Technology (NUST). This figure is far above the African average of 33.7 per 100,000 inhabitants. The aim of the study was to assess the prevalence of potentially unlawful and unjustified pre-trial detention at three police stations in Windhoek - Wanaheda, Katutura and Otjomuise. The main findings of the study were that during the period under review, almost 50 people had been detained after their arrest, even though they could not be linked to the offence recorded on the docket, and that each individual case constituted a human rights violation. In addition, each of these cases could give rise to civil liability of the state, which would incur high financial costs for the state treasury. Overload and understaffing in the police force were highlighted as factors that directly inform the number of errors occurring, as well as the quality of investigations conducted.¹³

Nicaragua

Parliament approves constitutional reforms, tightened restriction of social space in 2024

With the final adoption of the constitutional reform by parliament on 30.01.25, a total of 148 out of 198 articles of the constitution were reformed (cf. BN of 25.11.24), and 37 others were repealed. For example, in addition to Article 36 on the ban on torture, the ban on the deprivation of nationality (formerly Article 20) was also repealed, which would render individuals stateless. Through the reform of Article 17, the constitution now allows traitors to the homeland to be deprived of their citizenship. According to Amnesty International (AI), this will pseudo-legalise the practice of withdrawing citizenship from traitors to the homeland, which has been used repeatedly in recent years and has already affected over 450 people (cf. BN of 13.02.23 and 16.09.24).

By reforming Article 97 of the constitution, a "voluntary police force" is to be created or institutionalised in future to support the national police force. According to media reports, swearing-in ceremonies were held in various cities, including Estelí, in mid-January 2025. A patriotic reserve of the armed forces is also to be created. However, national and international organisations see this above all as the establishment of the parapolice and paramilitary groups that were deployed back in 2018 to quell the socio-economic protests.

Furthermore, the status of the flag of the ruling FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) (Sandinista National Liberation Front) party has been elevated to a national symbol. According to a report published in the newspaper El País, three individuals were allegedly already arrested for burning the party's black and red flag back in 2023.

In addition, several experts criticise the fact that the reform of various procedural guarantees is further undermining fair court proceedings. As well as this, they say the protection of press freedom is also being further restricted. For example, Article 68 would in future allow the state to monitor the media to ensure that they do not spread fake news which violates the rights of the people or that they are not subjected to foreign interests. The ban on censorship of the media enshrined in Article 67 has been by and large abolished by the reforms.

According to the NGO Monitoreo Azul y Blanco (Blue and White Monitor), there were more than 30 politically motivated arrests in November 2024 in connection with the first vote on the constitutional reform.

In addition, the practice involving the enforced disappearance of people over an extended period of time following arrests has recently been repeated and intensified. In the final weeks of 2024, various NGO reports (including Nicaragua Nunca Más) (Nicaragua Never Again) were published which, among other things, once again highlighted cases of torture in detention. Imprisonment for political reasons also continued in 2024. In this context, in addition to certain personal profiles, people who had no direct political or human rights involvement were also affected more frequently. Cases of former state employees and members of the judiciary also came to light. In a statement released in December 2024, AI drew attention to the fact that the government's repression was directed increasingly against any kind of dissenting opinions or positions that go beyond the state narrative. Last year, the UN Human Rights Office also repeatedly warned of an intensification of repression and criticised constitutional reforms.

In January 2025, the legal status of 10 NGOs, most of which are church-based, was once again revoked.¹⁴

Nigeria

Lakurawa declared a terrorist organisation

At the instigation of the Nigerian government, on 23.01.25, a court declared the Lakurawa armed group (cf. BN of 18.11.24), which operates in the northwest of the country, a terrorist organisation - a classification that allows the military to use massive force against it.

According to media reports, the activities of the individuals categorised as Lakurawa pose an increasing threat to security in the northwestern states. The categorisation as a terrorist organisation is accompanied by a nationwide ban and the prohibition of participation in any activities of the group, which is found above all in the states of Kebbi and Sokoto. Observers fear that the Lakurawa group could permanently extend its territorial influence to larger parts of the region and further destabilise the already fragile security situation in the northwest of the country.¹⁵

Pakistan

Balochistan: BLA attack on security forces

On the night of 01.02.25, eighteen security forces personnel and two dozen insurgents were killed in clashes that erupted after the insurgents blocked a motorway near the town of Mangocher in Kalat district and attacked a vehicle belonging to the paramilitary Frontier Corps operating in the region. The military said up to 80 armed assailants were involved in the attack. The separatist Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the attack. Six people were killed in a previous BLA bomb attack carried out in January 2025. In addition to security forces, the BLA also targets civilians and Chinese workers.¹⁶

Protest against the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act

Amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act came into force at the end of January 2025. The amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act have triggered protests from media organisations as they further restrict freedom of expression and were passed without the involvement of civil society. Among other things, the regulations provide for penalties of up to three years in prison and fines of up to PKR 2 million (approx. EUR 6,900, as of 03.02.25) for the "spreading of fake news". Furthermore, the creation of a new regulatory authority that will have far-reaching powers not only to block content but also to investigate cases is in the pipeline.¹⁷

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Developments in the West Bank

The Israeli "Iron Wall" operation targeting various armed groups in Jenin and other locations in the West Bank is ongoing. According to a statement issued by the spokesperson for the Israeli armed forces on 02.02.25, thirty-five militants have been killed in battles, 15 have been killed in airstrikes since mid-January, and over 100 wanted individuals have been arrested. In addition, several buildings were blown up which, according to Israel, were being used for terrorist activities. According to UNRWA, around 20,000 residents of Jenin have been internally displaced. Both Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad report ongoing fighting against the Israeli army. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, at least 25 people have been killed since the operation was launched, at least nine of whom were members of militant groups. At the same time, there are reports of multiple attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian facilities in the West Bank, including most recently the burning of a mosque northwest of Jericho on 02.02.25.¹⁸

Developments in Gaza

The ceasefire continues to hold. Further hostages were released on 30.01.25 and 01.02.25, including the two German nationals Arbel Yehoud and Gadi Mozes. In exchange, several hundred Palestinian prisoners, some of whom are high-ranking members of terrorist organisations sentenced to multiple life sentences, were released from Israeli prisons. However, a total of 72 prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment were not released to the Palestinian territories, but to Egypt for the time being. Türkiye and Qatar have agreed to host the murder convicts on a long-term basis.

After failure to release the civilian Arbel Yehoud as agreed on 25.01.25, Israel initially closed the Netzarim Corridor, which separates northern and southern Gaza, on 27.01.25, blocking the return of other residents to the north, whereupon a large queue of tens of thousands of people formed. After Hamas agreed to the additional exchange on 30.01.25, the corridor was initially reopened. Since then, it is unclear how many residents have returned to northern Gaza, but it is probably a six-figure number. They are encountering difficult humanitarian conditions there, as large parts of the infrastructure have been destroyed. The chaotic scenes at the handover of Yehoud and Mozes and five Thai hostages, who were released without demands for anything in exchange, initially led to the suspension of the release of further Palestinian prisoners until guarantees were given that no further exchanges would take place under comparable conditions. On 01.02.25, the Rafah border crossing to Egypt was reopened for individuals. For the time being, Egyptian and Israeli authorities are allowing the evacuation of sick and injured children and some family members. The release of prisoners continues to be highly controversial in Israel, as many of those convicted are responsible for the deaths of, in some cases, dozens of people. However, 100 people who had been

imprisoned since Hamas carried out the attack on Israel on 07.10.23 and who had not yet been charged or convicted were also released.¹⁹

Republic of Moldova

Energy supply situation in Transnistria

After the Russian Federation suspended its natural gas supplies to the Republic of Moldova at the turn of the year because the transit contract with Ukraine had not been extended, the political leadership of the pro-Russian separatist region of Transnistria declared its willingness to buy gas from the central government of the Republic of Moldova, according to media reports published on 21.01.25. The latter in turn announced that it would examine Transnistria's request. According to media reports published on 26.01.25, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky offered to support the Republic of Moldova, which has been affected by higher energy prices, with coal supplies. According to a statement issued by the EU Commission on 27.01.25, the EU also wants to support the Republic of Moldova with EUR 30 million to help overcome the energy crisis. The purchase and transport of natural gas to Transnistria is reportedly also to be financed in this way. Two days later, the Moldovan gas supplier Moldovagaz announced an agreement with the Transnistrian gas supplier, according to which an initial delivery of a total of three million cubic metres of natural gas is to be made on loan every day from 01.02.25 to 10.02.25. The energy crisis is severely affecting the lives of the population of Transnistria in particular, whose limited electricity supply is being rationed and switched on and off cyclically to counteract shortages.²⁰

Somalia

At least 46 killed in US airstrikes on ISIS positions

According to media reports published on 01.02.25 and 02.02.25, at least 46 terrorists were reportedly killed in a US airstrike carried out against positions of the terrorist militia Islamic State (ISIS) in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. Twelve of these are believed to be foreign fighters. According to estimates made by the UN, the US and the Somali government, between 300 and 700 ISIS fighters are believed to be in the country. Half of these are said to be ISIS fighters from abroad. One of the targets of the attack was reportedly a "high-ranking member responsible for ISIS attacks".²¹

South Africa

Daughter of ex-president arrested on suspicion of terrorism

According to recent press reports, Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, the daughter of former South African President Jacob Zuma, was arrested on 30.01.25. Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla is a member of the South African parliament and is accused of inciting violence via social media during the riots that took place in July 2021, in which more than 350 people died. The prosecution based the charges on messages she posted on Twitter at the time, in which she allegedly called on protesters to cause further damage during the nationwide unrest that began after her father Jacob Zuma was imprisoned. It was reported that Zuma-Sambudla had voluntarily surrendered to the police after being informed of the allegations. On 30.01.25, she appeared before the Durban Magistrate's Court and denied the charges of incitement to terrorism and two counts of incitement to public violence. The court declined to set bail and released her on a warning. The trial was adjourned to 20.03.25 and transferred to the High Court in Durban.²²

Sudan

Over 50 killed in attack in Omdurman

On 01.02.25, over 54 people are reported to have been killed and 158 others injured in an attack carried out by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the Sabrein market in Omdurman, Khartoum. However, the number of casualties could potentially be higher. This is according to media reports published on 01.02.25 and 02.02.25. The casualties reportedly included many women and children. According to the organisation "Doctors Without Borders", the

mortuary at Al Nao hospital has been filled with dead people and there are large numbers of people with serious injuries. The RSF militia is said to have used explosive devices and grenades to carry out the attack. The RSF itself denies having carried out the attack.²³

Syria

Ahmed al-Shara declared president

Syrian state media announced on 29.01.25 that the rebel coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) had declared its leader Ahmed al-Shara, formerly known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, interim president of the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, the constitution from 2012 was cancelled and the previous legislative bodies and armed forces were dissolved. Accordingly, all armed groups are to be dissolved and transferred to state structures.

The decisions were not based on a public procedure. It therefore remained unclear which actors were involved and to what extent they supported them. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which control northeast Syria, were not represented in Damascus at the time of the announcement. It also remains unclear how long the transitional period will last until a new government is appointed. According to the state news agency SANA, al-Shara will next appoint a legislative council to govern the country during the transitional period. In December 2024, HTS announced that it would hold a conference with representatives from society, academia, various denominations and other areas by 01.03.25 in order to create a representative new government. At the present time, however, it is still unclear whether such a conference will still be held.²⁴

Manbij: 15 killed in bomb attack

According to local rescue workers, four women and one man were killed when a car exploded in Manbij in northeast Syria on 03.02.25. A further 15 women were reportedly injured. This was the second attack of this kind to be carried out in three days, after four civilians were killed and nine others were injured in a car explosion in the centre of the city on 01.02.25.

So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the crimes. Manbij was under the control of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) until it was captured by the Turkish-backed rebel militia Syrian National Army (SNA) in December 2024 (cf. BN of 16.12.24).²⁵

Türkiye

Reopening of court proceedings

In a decision dated 22.01.25, the Turkish Constitutional Court ordered the retrial of former teacher Hasan Sarıcı, who was dismissed from his post by government decree following the attempted coup in 2016 and sentenced to six years in prison for membership of the Gülen movement. Sarıcı's conviction before the First High Criminal Court in Kırklareli was based on his membership of a Gülen-affiliated trade union, financial transactions at the now-closed Bank Asya and a subscription to the now-defunct Zaman newspaper. The court cited violations of constitutional rights and insufficient evidence as reasons for the retrial order. The decision emphasised that Sarıcı's alleged activities did not constitute a crime at the time of his conviction. Accordingly, the court could not establish a direct link between Sarıcı's actions – such as his use of a legally operating bank and his membership in a trade union – and alleged active participation in criminal activities. Furthermore, the court noted procedural gaps, in particular the lower court's failure to adequately address Sarıcı's statement that his financial and professional decisions were unrelated to the movement. The Constitutional Court emphasised that criminal liability requires clear evidence of intent and active participation in organisational activities. As part of the ruling, the court awarded Sarıcı compensation of TRY 30,000 (approx. EUR 810, as of 03.02.25) for the legal costs incurred.²⁶

Ukraine

Civilian casualties

According to media reports published on 28.01.25, two people were killed by Russian artillery fire in the Donetsk region. According to the authorities, at least nine people died as a result of a Russian drone strike carried out on the northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy on 30.01.25. According to the emergency services, 14 civilians in the central Ukrainian city of Poltava, three police officers in the Sumy region and one person in Kharkiv were killed by Russian airstrikes on 01.02.25.²⁷

War events, abuses in the military administration, violence against military personnel and recruitment

According to media reports, several parts of the country, including the western Ukrainian Carpathian foothills, were attacked by Russian combat drones on the night of 27.01.25, targeting infrastructure facilities in particular and causing fires in some areas. According to the Ukrainian air force, 54 of the more than 100 drones were shot down. A further 39 were drones without explosives used to deceive air defences, which were electronically disabled.

While the heavy fighting in eastern Ukraine continues and Ukrainian defences remain under pressure, Russian troops are attempting to conquer several islands in the Dnipro estuary in order to establish a bridgehead, according to media reports published on 27.01.25. The river flows into the Black Sea west of the city of Kherson.

According to media reports, there is a dispute in the Ukrainian government over the procurement of weapons. Following criticism by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov of the Defence Procurement Agency, which was set up to coordinate arms purchases and combat corruption, Deputy Defence Minister Dmytro Klimenkov was dismissed. According to a statement issued by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau on 28.01.25, an investigation was subsequently launched against Umerov for abuse of power after a supervisory authority accused him of refusing to renew the agency management's contracts following a dispute with them. According to reports, Umerov's criticism was aimed at the leaking of contracts and information by the agency's management in addition to inadequate equipment and unreliable ammunition supplies. The G7 states called on the Ukrainian authorities to resolve the dispute quickly.

In another case, according to media reports published on 29.01.25, Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko criticised the current high level of interference by the military administration in the affairs of the city administration, which he said was being comprehensively destabilised as a result. The criticism was thus also indirectly aimed at President Zelensky, who had replaced the head of the Kyiv military administration at the beginning of the year.

Meanwhile, President Zelensky has announced a further modernisation of the armed forces. The formation of army corps is intended to drive forward the development of combat brigades and strengthen defence capabilities.

At least one person died on 01.02.25 as a result of an explosion at a Ukrainian army recruitment centre in the western Ukrainian city of Rivne. According to the responsible governor, there was no air raid warning over the city at the time. No further details were given as to the cause of the explosion. The media also reported another explosion that occurred on 02.02.25 near a recruitment centre in Pavlohrad (Dnipropetrovsk region), in which one person was injured. In addition, according to information issued by the public prosecutor's office, a man in the Poltava region shot and killed a recruiting officer who was taking conscripts to a training centre on 01.02.25. After the man attempted to flee with a conscript, both were reportedly captured by the police, according to the authorities. In view of these incidents, Major General Mykhailo Drapaty, commander of the Ukrainian Ground Forces, lamented growing violence against military personnel behind the front line and called for a swift and tough response from the state.

According to media reports published on 02.02.25, a discussion is taking place in Ukraine about lowering the conscription age from 25 to 18 in light of the lack of soldiers. Most of the population are reported to be against this. According to a statement issued by the deputy head of the Office of the President, Colonel Pavlo Palisa, young men are to be motivated to do military service with one-year contracts and with permission to enter and leave the country freely afterwards. He said that adequate military training was also to be guaranteed in the contract. The quality of training had previously been criticised.²⁸

Energy infrastructure

According to media reports published on 01.02.25, the national energy operator Ukrenerho reported emergency power outages in several regions due to Russian missile strikes carried out on the night of 01.02.25. The regions reportedly affected were Kharkiv, Sumy, Poltava, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kirovohrad.²⁹

Judicial sentences

According to the public prosecutor's office, a woman from the Kharkiv region was sentenced to 11 years in prison on 27.01.25 for passing on information about air defence systems and supporting the Russian invasion on social media. In addition, a Russian citizen was sentenced to 10 years in prison for spying on the Ukrainian military in the city of Kharkiv.³⁰

Financial aid

After US President Donald Trump halted almost all foreign humanitarian programmes for 90 days, President Volodymyr Zelensky announced a review of the humanitarian programmes that had previously been financed by the US, according to media reports published on 28.01.25. According to Zelensky, some humanitarian projects run by Ukrainian and international organisations have been discontinued. Others have announced their closure. He said the government could provide some of the required funds from public finances. Priority for support would be given to projects relating to children, veterans and the protection of the infrastructure. Zelensky also emphasised that military support was not affected by the spending freeze.³¹

Venezuela

Tren de Aragua: raids in Chile - arrests, declaration of terrorist organisation

According to Chilean security authorities, several members of a local cell (Los Piratas) of the Venezuelan transnational criminal group Tren de Aragua have been arrested in raids carried out in Santiago since 22.01.25. Members of this cell are alleged to have been involved in the killing of former Venezuelan military officer and refugee Ronald Ojeda in February 2024 (cf. BN of 22.04.24). In addition, the leader of Los Piratas, Gámez Salas (alias El Turco), had previously been arrested in the US. On 20.01.25, US President Donald Trump had already signed a decree to have the Tren de Aragua organisation, among others, classified as a foreign terrorist organisation.³²

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