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Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

14 September 2015

Afghanistan

Security situation

The situation remains unchanged. There were more attacks targeting government representatives and more fighting between insurgents and security forces.

Fighting

In the south-eastern province of Paktia at least six border police died in an attack by insurgents on 08 September 15. Many insurgents and at least six members of the Afghan security forces were killed during a military operation in Paktika between 08 and 11 September 15 that also involved air strikes.

The Taliban took control of parts of Raghestan district in the north-eastern province of Badakhshan on 11 September 15. Currently a fierce battle is raging over this district.

At least four Afghan soldiers lost their lives when the Taliban took a military post in Baghlan (north-east) on 12 September 15.

Five days of fighting in Khak-i-Safed district in the western province of Farah displaced hundreds of families.

The Taliban stormed a prison in Ghazni (south-east) on 14 September 15 and liberated more than 430 prisoners. There was further fighting and air strikes in the provinces of Kunar, (east), Ghazni, Khost (south-east), Kandahar, and Nimroz (south).

Targeted attacks

A police officer in Kabul died in the explosion of a bomb attached to his car on 08 September 15. The Taliban shot a district head in Uruzgan province (south) on 09 September 15. On the same day two Afghan soldiers were blown up by a remotely detonated bomb in Kalakan district in Kabul province. The head of the Afghan Local Police (ALP) of the central province of Logar was shot by unknown killers in Kabul on 10 September 15. In Ghazni province (south-east) at least five policemen were killed in a bomb attack and in Logar (centre) two school children became the victims of a roadside bomb. A pro-government cleric was shot by unknown killers during service in Khost (south-east) and at least two police officers died in another bomb attack in Ghazni on 11 September 15. Four government officials were kidnapped in Jawzjan province (north) on 12 September 15. On the same day a suicide bomb assault against a member of parliament in Qarabagh district in Kabul province failed.

Internal clashes

On 08 September 15 Taliban stormed a village in Nangarhar province (east) and took several civilians prisoners during their search for IS followers. IS is reportedly holding 127 people as captives in three locations in this province. The Taliban shadow governor of Dawlana district in the western province of Ghor was assassinated by his own bodyguard on 10 September 15.

Stoning of adulterers

A couple was publicly stoned by the Taliban for alleged adultery in Suzma Kala district in Sar-i-Pul province in the north on 12 September 15.

Iraq

Children abducted in Mosul

The media spokesman of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Mosul announced on 07 September 15 that IS had kidnapped 127 children aged between 11 and 15 and taken them to a special camp to be trained in the use of arms and for terror operations.

Deputy justice minister kidnapped

The press reported on 08 September 15 that deputy justice minister Abd al-Karim (Shiite) had been abducted by unknown kidnappers in the eastern Baghdad district of Binook. He is responsible for administrative and financial matters. So far it is unknown who is behind the kidnapping and what the motives were.

Peshmerga reconquer several villages

dpa reported on 11 September 15 that Peshmerga fighters ousted IS from several villages south of the city of Kirkuk. The report said that the Peshmerga had attacked IS in a total of 13 villages around the town of Daquq with the air support of the international coalition. Many members of the Turkmen minority live in this region.

Syria

New Russian military base near Lattakia?

There are rumours that Russia intends to build a new military base near Lattakia. It is said that in September to date 25 Antonov transport planes type AN-124 landed in Jableh, a coastal town about 25 km from the port city of Lattakia. Also several ships with military material anchored there. It is assumed that a Russian military base with 1,000 Russian soldiers is to be built there by 28 September 15 as part of the operation Syria.

Fighting in Syria continues

The fighting continues unabated. Examples were the battle in which IS fighters engaged with Kurdish units near the town of Kobane in northern Syria on 13 September 15 and the Syrian air force attack on the rebels east of Damascus.

Turkey

Conflict with Kurds

Security forces reported that two policemen were killed and five wounded in the explosion of a car bomb near their base in Sirnak province on 13 September 15. Another police officer died in a PKK attack in Silvan. In response the Turkish security forces attacked a mountainous region to which the PKK fighters allegedly withdrew and killed several of the insurgents. Prior to the attack there had been violent clashes between protesters and the security forces in the provincial capital Diyarbakir.

The conflict also continued to escalate in the city of Cizre in the south last week. Reportedly up to 32 militant Kurds and one civilian lost their lives in fighting between the PKK and security forces since the Turkish authorities imposed a curfew on 04 September 15. In protest against the curfew deputies of the pro-Kurdish HDP party (Party of Democratic Peoples) started a walk to Cizre on 09 September 15 and were stopped by the security forces in front of the city. The curfew was temporarily suspended for 36 hours on 12 September 15. Cizre's HDP mayor was removed from office under allegations of engaging in propaganda for the PKK.

Turkish nationalists have been attacking HDP installations in many Turkish cities since 06 September 15. According to media reports more than 400 HDP offices and premises have been attacked, fire was set to some of them. The aggressors accuse the HDP of being close to the PKK and acting as its political arm. Bus services to the country's south-east were temporarily suspended after stones had been thrown at buses coming from predominantly Kurdish provinces and their passengers had been physically attacked in many cities. These attacks led to numerous arrests on 09 September 15.

Two battalions of a Turkish special unit supported by fighter jets entered northern Iraq in pursuit of two PKK groups in a mountain region on 08 September 15; Turkey also continued its airstrikes against the PKK in northern Iraq at the same level.

Iran

On the situation of Iranian Jews

Currently about 10,000 Iranians of Jewish faith are living in Iran as a minority recognized under the constitution. They are protected citizens, but as non-Muslims they do not enjoy equal rights, just as the Iranian Christians. They may not hold senior positions in politics and administration. When the state of Israel was established in 1948 about 100,000 Jews were living in Iran; at the time of the revolution in 1979 their number had fallen to 80,000. Over time many of the wealthier secular members of the community emigrated to the US and pious poor members to Israel. The Jews still living in Iran now intend to stay. There are public subsidies for the maintenance of synagogues, libraries and kosher restaurants. As a recognized religious minority they hold a permanent seat in the parliament, the Majlis. When Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Iran "to attempt another holocaust" in the controversy about the nuclear treaty, the representatives of the Iranian Jews responded with patriotism.

President Rohani sends greetings for the Jewish New Year

While Iran's supreme leadership regularly questions Israel's right to existence, President Hassan Rohani sent New Year's greetings for Rosh HANSHANAH ("beginning of the year") via Twitter on 13 September 15. Rohani referred to the many things Jews and Muslims had in common as both religions stem from Biblical roots.

Reporters Without Borders criticize censorship

Reporters Without Borders criticized the increasing censorship of internet applications for mobile devices in Iran. The encrypted messaging app Telegram has been jammed in Tehran and several other major cities since 29 August 15. At the same time revolutionary leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei reiterated the objective of building a national internet (Halal Internet) and vastly strengthened the powers of the Supreme Council for Cyberspace for internet surveillance and control. Iran is operating one of the world's most sophisticated systems of internet censorship and surveillance. During unrest and protests websites will regularly be blocked or all internet traffic - if need be also the mobile phone network - will be scaled down. At least ten journalists and 23 bloggers are currently in detention for their reporting activities. In the freedom of the press ranking list the Islamic Republic is number 173 of 180 countries.

Yemen

Indications of imminent ground offensive by the Saudi-led military coalition

Indications for an imminent large-scale ground offensive by the Saudi-led military alliance - which is fearing Iran's growing influence in the region - against the Houthi rebels in Yemen are mounting. The Saudi-Arabian military alliance formed to fight the war against the Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen intensified its airstrikes against the capital Sanaa. According to eye-witnesses the bombing in the night of 10 September 15 was the heaviest since the beginning of the civil war. The Saudi-led alliance might be preparing a major attack on the city.

Eye-witnesses said that alliance soldiers were moving towards contested areas in the south of Mareb province on 08 September 15. They are supported by parts of the Yemeni army and local militias. The UN stated that the conflict had caused 4,500 casualties since March, among them several hundred children. The UN is warning that Yemen is on the brink of famine.

Egypt

Tourists shot

The Egyptian police mistakenly shot twelve tourists and their Egyptian guide when pursuing Islamist extremists in Wahat in the country's west on 13 September 15. Reportedly the tourists were Mexican nationals.

Somalia

Security situation in central and southern Somalia

The local governor stated that al-Shabaab took control of the villages El Saliindi (about 40 km south of Mogadishu on the road from Mogadishu to Marka) and Kuntuwa (on the road from Mogadishu to Barawe) in Lower Shabelle region on 05 September 15. AMISOM and Somali army units fended off an al-Shabaab attack in the village of Qoryooley (Lower Shabelle). On 09 September 15 the al-Shabaab operated radio station Andalus reported that al-Shabaab had taken several Ugandan AMISOM soldiers as hostages in an attack on an AMISOM base in Janale district on 01 September 15 (see BN of 07 September 15). Uganda denies the hostage taking. Radio Andalus reported on 09 September 15 that the Islamists had taken the village of Bulo Marer (Lower Shabelle region).

In the city of Abudwak (Galguduud region) in central Somalia about one dozen Islamists lost their lives in fighting between Galmudug interim government units and fighters of the moderate Islamist militia on Ahlu Sunna wal-Jamaa (ASWJ) 15 and 16 September 15. Reportedly the interim government took control of Abudwak. The government in Mogadishu denounced the armed clashes as futile violence. Galmudug comprises parts of the regions Mudug and Galguduud. For several years the local government has been trying to win recognition as an autonomous federal state from the Somali government. The headquarters of ASWJ fighting against al-Shabaab is located in Abduwak.

Inauguration of President „Madobe" in Kismayo

Sheikh Ahmed Islam „Madobe“, a former warlord, was introduced into office as president of the autonomous interim government of Jubaland (Interim Jubba Administration - IJA) on 10 September 15. Jubaland comprises the regions Gedo, Middle Juba and Lower Juba. Nicholas Kay, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General attended the ceremony in Kismayo together with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, representatives of the neighbouring countries Kenya and Ethiopia and regional organisations, such as the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Guinea-Bissau

Constitutional court dismisses government

On 9 September 15 the constitutional court of Guinea-Bissau declared illegal the new government under Prime Minister Baciro Djá that had been appointed by President Jose Mario Vaz on 07 September 15. In the formation of the new government President Jose Mario Vaz had not considered his own party, PAIGC, but entered into an alliance with the opposition party Social Renovation Party (PRS). The constitution of Guinea-Bissau provides for a semi-presidential system of government under which the president needs to consult the leadership of the majority party in parliament before appointing a government.

Ghana

Corruption in the judiciary disclosed

A report in the media of 08 September 15 says that a journalist over the last two years documented in photos and audio recordings how more than 180 judges and other judicial officers secretly demanded money from litigating parties and accepted bribes. Based on these allegations 22 judges were suspended already on 09 September 15.

Corruption is a major problem in this sub-Saharan country that is considered exemplary for its democracy. In the 2014 corruption perceptions index compiled by Transparency International Ghana ranks 61 of 174.

Burundi

Opposition member assassinated

The spokesman of the opposition party Union for Peace and Development (UPD-Zigamibanga), Patrice Gahungu, was shot by unknown assassins in Bujumbura on 07 September 15. Party leader Zedi Feruzi had also been shot by unknown killers in Bujumbura on 23 May 15.

Head of army escapes assassination attempt

Army head General Prime Niyongabo escaped an assassination attempt in Bujumbura on 11 September 15. Four body guards, a policewoman and two assassins were killed, another one arrested. The attackers were wearing military uniforms and driving a military vehicle.

Cameroon

Casualties in suicide bombings

In two bomb attacks in the city of Kolofata near the border to Nigeria at least nine people died on 13 September 15. Boko Haram is suspected to be the originator of these assaults that happened near a well and a church.

Nigeria

Boko Haram camps destroyed

Defence ministry spokesman Rabe Abubakar announced on 09 September 15 that all known camps and cells of the Boko Haram terror organization in the country's north-east had been destroyed. He said that the group was militarily too weak to keep any Nigerian territory occupied.

First bomb attack in a refugee camp

An explosive detonated in a tent in Malkohi camp near the city of Yola (capital of the north-eastern state of Adamawa) on 11 September 15, killing seven people and wounding about 20. This was the first bombing in a refugee camp and Boko Haram is assumed to be responsible.

On the same day a female suicide bomber blew herself up in a bus station in the city of Madagali, the administrative seat of the Local Government Area of the same name. Five people died.

Serbia

Charges brought for massacre at Srebrenica

Serbia's special prosecutor brought charges against eight persons for the massacre at Srebrenica on 10 September 15. They are former members of a special police unit stationed at the Bosnian Mount Jahorina near Sarajevo who had been arrested in March 2015 in various places of the country. After taking control of Srebrenica in July 1995 Bosnian-Serbian troops murdered about 8,000 people.

Refugees on the Serbian-Hungarian border

It is said that over 20,000 people crossed the Serbian border to Hungary on the weekend of 12 and 13 September 15. Another strong influx is expected for 14 September as well, because the border fence of several meters height along the Hungarian-Serbian border is almost complete (see BN of 24 August 15) and stricter laws against refugees have been adopted. Emergency laws are to enter into force on 15 September 15. Under these laws asylum applications can only be filed at a few border crossings and illegal entry into Hungary will be considered a crime and not an administrative offence anymore. Serbia is afraid of a high number of deported migrants from Hungary.

FYR Macedonia

Opposition ends boycott of parliament

After 15 months of boycott the opposition resumed its work in parliament. The resumption of parliamentary work is part of a compromise brokered by the EU between the opposition and the national conservative government of Nikola Gruevski (see BN of 26 May 15). The next step is the appointment of an independent prosecutor to investigate the serious charges of corruption against the government. At the end of the year the government is to step down and make way for early parliamentary elections in April 2016.

Background

For years now internal policy has been suffering from the confrontation between the strongest party which is the ethnic Macedonian party, the rightist conservative VMRO/DPMNE and the socialist party SDSM. The opposition has been boycotting parliament since April 2014 due to alleged election rigging and published illegally tapped telephone conversations as evidence of the government's intensive involvement with corruption and crime. Protests against the government had become increasingly frequent, some of them were violent. After the incident in Kumanovo in May 2015 in which several people died or were wounded in heavy fighting between security forces and a group of armed Albanians, the situation escalated and several ministers resigned. The government and the opposition were only able to reach an agreement on early parliamentary elections in April 2016 after the EU had stepped in as an intermediary.

Macedonia considering border fence

Macedonian Foreign Minister Poposki said on 10 September 15 that the country is considering to secure its borders with a fence and/or soldiers against the influx of refugees.

Russian Federation

Security situation in North Caucasus

As in recent years the number of victims in North Caucasus continued to fall in 2014 as well. The Russian internet paper Caucasian Knot reported that there had been at least 341 casualties (2013: 529; 2012: 700) as a result of fighting and attacks. Despite a clear reduction in the number of victims in Dagestan, this North Caucasus republic remains one of the hot spots of violence with 208 victims (2013: 341) in 2014.

The number of casualties continues to fall in 2015 as well. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported that in the North Caucasus region 77 people - 52 of these in Dagestan - were killed during the first six months of the year, therefore the number of victims should not exceed 200 by the end of the year. The considerable reduction in fighting and casualties is probably due to the increasing number of North Caucasian fighters that joined the terror militia IS in Syria and Iraq.

Thailand/Malaysia

Further suspects arrested

According to official statements by Thai sources one of two arrested suspects confessed to have handed a backpack with a bomb to a man named Yusuf Mieraili three weeks after the attack on Erawan Shrine. At the time of his arrest Mieraili allegedly held a Chinese passport showing Xinjiang as his place of birth. This is the region where the minority of the Uyghurs is living. The media reported that the police in Malaysia arrested one Pakistani and two Malaysian citizens in relation to the investigations of the fatal bomb attack.