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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

20 March 2023

Afghanistan

Security situation

According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) published on 14.03.23, Afghanistan remains the country most impacted by terrorism for the fourth consecutive year. On 14.03.23, fighters of the National Resistance Front (NRF) claimed to have killed eight Taliban insurgents in Baghlan province. On 16.03.23, the NRF reported killing two Taliban members in Jawzjan province. On 19.03.23, according to media reports, a local Taliban manager of religious affairs and Hajj (pilgrimage) was killed by unknown individuals in Aqcha district (Jawzjan province).

Persecution events

On 15.03.23, five people convicted of various offences were flogged by the Taliban in Paktia province. Afghanistan International reported that the Taliban had paraded people wearing women's clothing who were accused of theft through the streets of Kabul on 15.03.23. The same day, it was reported that a teacher who had posted critical comments about the Taliban on social media was arrested by the Taliban in Takhar province almost three weeks ago. Hasht-e Subh reports that on 14.03.23, two hospital workers of Hazara ethnicity were arrested by the Taliban in Parwan province.

On 13.03.23 and 14.03.23, three former soldiers were arrested by the Taliban in Baghlan and Khost provinces. A video that has been widely circulated on social media claims to show the Taliban suffocating a former soldier by putting a plastic bag over his head and face.

On 13.03.23, it was reported that four Taliban members raped a woman and her 11 and 13-year-old daughters in Sar-e Pul province. When the victims reported the case to local authorities, they were threatened and told not to speak to the media. On the same day, the only women's library in Kabul, which had about 5,000 books, was closed by the Taliban who had already sealed the library three times before, although it is reported that this did not stop women from visiting it.

Government business

On 20.03.23, local employees of the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in Daikundi province (which is mainly inhabited by Shia Hazara) declared the Persian New Year festival Nowruz to be un-Islamic and unlawful in the province. They met with worshippers from 35 mosques in the province and warned residents that they would face punishment if they were caught celebrating the festival. In March 2022, the festival had already been removed from the official calendar nationwide by the Taliban. On 18.03.23, the Taliban leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhunzada banned the cultivation of cannabis in Afghanistan by decree. It was reported on the same day that the Taliban had detained around 20 barbers in Farah province the previous week for trimming beards. After the Afghan embassies in Tehran (Iran) and Istanbul (Türkiye), the embassy in Dubai has now been officially handed over to the Taliban with the complicity of the government there (cf. BN of 27.02.23 and 06.03.23). On 15.03.23, the Taliban launched a polio vaccination drive in the country.