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Briefing Notes

Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

28 September 2020

Afghanistan

COVID-19 pandemic

All of the 34 provinces are reporting infections. Kabul remains the most affected city, followed by Herat, Balkh, Kandahar and Nangarhar (as of 24 September 2020). In the west of the country, i.e. in the provinces of Herat and Ghor, an increase in infections has been noted in recent weeks, according to press reports. Doctors in the region fear that during a second wave of infections the disease will take a serious course more often because of the colder weather, air pollution and the other diseases that are prevalent in the winter time.

WHO staff found that the proportion of women who tested positive increased, which may be related to the reopening of schools.

Food prices remain high

According to the WHO, prices for most staple foods rose only moderately from the first to the fourth week of September 2020, but remain well above pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Unskilled workers earned between Afghanis 300 and 400 (approx. EUR 3.35 to EUR 4.50) per day. The number of available working days per week ranged from two (Kabul) to six (Bamyan).

Peace Talks

No agreement could as yet be reached on the practical modalities for the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban (see BN of 14 September 2020).

Attacks, fighting, civilian victims

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) registered 19 civilians killed and 45 injured in the week after the start of the peace talks (12 to 19 September 2020). The Interior Ministry informed on 24 September 2020 that at least 98 civilians had been killed and 230 injured in the two previous weeks. The Taliban deny these numbers. On 27 September 2020, the Ministry of Defence announced that the Taliban had staged attacks in 24 provinces within 24 hours.

According to research of the New York Times at least 380 pro-government forces and 125 civilians died in September 2020 (as of 24 September 2020) in security-related incidents in different provinces.

Albania

Closure of three schools run by the Gülen movement

According to media reports, the Albanian Government decided to close a total of three schools operated by the Gülen movement on 16 and 23 September 2020. The reports said that two religious and one international school

are affected. These decisions were taken shortly after Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama had visited Turkish President Erdoğan at his summer residence. The way the Albanian authorities dealt with two asylum-seeking Turkish Gülen supporters had recently attracted media interest (see BN of 21 September 2020).

Algeria

Several boats with migrants returned

Between 20 and 25 September 2020 the Algerian coast guard returned several boats holding over 750 people from the sea to the mainland. The majority of the boats' occupants were Algerian citizens. It has been illegal to leave the country in Algeria since 2009. Up to six months' imprisonment can be imposed for illegal emigration. Nevertheless, mostly young Algerians try to get to Europe illegally.

Armenia / Azerbaijan

Numerous casualties in fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh

According to authorities and human rights activists, the violent clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on 27 September 2020 claimed several lives on both sides. The predominantly Armenian-populated region Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan under international law, but has been in Armenian hands since the beginning of the 1990s. Armenia imposed martial law and ordered the mobilization of the male population, as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said. The same measures were also announced by the president of the Nagorno-Karabakh Region, Arajik Harutjanjan. Martial law now also governs some parts of Azerbaijan. Martial law was imposed following heavy fighting, for which both sides were blaming each other: Armenia accuses Azerbaijan of taking Nagorno-Karabakh under fire from the air and with artillery. In response the country's own troops had then destroyed three enemy tanks and shot down two helicopters and three drones. Azerbaijan contradicts the information and, for its part, said it responded to an Armenian attack. The Armenian side said that 32 soldiers and 7 civilians had been killed so far. The Azerbaijani side has not yet specified how many soldiers it lost. The Foreign Ministry in Baku only announced that six civilians had been killed and 19 injured in the ongoing fighting. Prime Minister Pashinyan warned the Azerbaijani leadership of an all-out war in the South Caucasus. The Ministry of Defence in Baku said the Azerbaijani army had launched a counter-offensive to stop Armenia's military activities in the region and to ensure the safety of the population. Both the EU and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called for an immediate end to the fighting.

Belarus

Ongoing protests against President Lukashenko

Protests against the continuation of the government of President Alexander Lukashenko took place again last week. Lukashenko was officially inaugurated as president for the sixth time on 23 September 2020, after he had been officially declared the winner shortly after the presidential election that ended on 09 August 2020. In a women's protest march on 26 September 2020, police arrested more than 100 participants. On 27 September 2020, a total of around 100,000 people assembled for several protest events in the country. Hundreds of people were arrested.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Adoption of a policy to deal with war crimes

According to current media reports, the Council of Ministers adopted a revised national policy for handling war crimes at an extraordinary meeting on 24 September 2020. Justice Minister Josip Grubesa said that this should help to catch up with the huge backlog in processing the numerous cases of war crimes pending in the country. One of the goals is to ensure a more efficient distribution of cases to the lower level courts, a process that has so far been unsatisfactory. The intention is to finalize the processing of these cases by 2023, the minister said. More than 550 unsolved war crimes cases involving 4,500 known perpetrators and just as many cases with unknown perpetrators

are currently on record with the public prosecutor's office, he said. A total of around 200 cases are pending in the courts of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federation and the Republika Srpska, as well as in the Brcko district.

Cameroon

Security forces forcibly disperse opposition protests

On 22 September 2020, anti-government rallies of the opposition under the leadership of the largest opposition party Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun (MRC) were held in several cities, these protests had previously been banned by the government. The protesters demanded the resignation of President Biya and the cancellation of the regional elections scheduled for 06 December 2020. The security forces used force against the demonstrators. In the Ndokoti district of Duala, for example, the police used tear gas and water cannons against hundreds of protesters demanding the resignation of President Biya. According to the MRC, one protester was killed and several were beaten by the security forces in Duala. Hundreds of people across the country are said to have been arrested, including Olivier Bibou Nissack, the spokesperson for MRC chairman Maurice Kamto, and Alain Fogue, the party's treasurer. Kamto's residence in Yaoundé had been cordoned off by the security forces to prevent him from taking part in the protests there. Kamto had called for nationwide non-violent protests on 08 September 2020. Seven other opposition parties and civil society organizations joined the call. The call to protests had been triggered by President Biya's announcement on 07 September 2020 to hold regional elections for the first time in all ten regions of Cameroon on 06 December 2020. According to Kamto, ending the violent conflict in the two Anglophone regions is a prerequisite for holding the elections and changing the electoral law that currently favours the ruling party.

China

Hong Kong: Temporary arrest of prominent activist

The police arrested activist Joshua Wong, one of the best-known representatives of the Hong Kong democracy movement, on 24 September 2020. He is accused of having participated in an unauthorized meeting on 05 October 2019 and of violating the ban on face covering that applied to demonstrations at the time. He was released on the same day.

Tibet: Labour recruitment programme

A study published by the American Jamestown Foundation on 22 September 2020 suggests that Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region have been subjected to large-scale measures that sometimes border on forced labour. The evaluation of government documents and reports from state media as well as satellite images suggest that 543,000 Tibetans, mainly farmers and nomads, were subjected to vocational training measures between January and July 2020 as part of a programme to eradicate poverty for Tibetans without employment ("surplus labourers"). Thereafter about 50,000 of them were allocated as labour within Tibet and about 3,000 to jobs in other parts of the country. While some of those affected may have accepted this voluntarily, the study assumes that pressure was also exerted to give up the traditional rural and nomadic way of life in favour of waged employment. However, there is no evidence that these measures are associated with forced internment in camps, as are reported from Xinjiang (see BN of 09 March 2020 and 16 December 2019).

Xinjiang: Investigation into camps

According to a study by the Australian think tank Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), published on 24 September 2020, 380 suspected internment camps for members of Muslim minorities have been set up in Xinjiang since 2017. This is around 40% more than previously estimated. In addition, at least 14 more camps are under construction, the study said. The camps were identified using satellite images, among other things. According to the ASPI, the results of the investigation contradict official statements that all inmates had ended their stays in the camps.

Xinjiang: Study on religious sites

Another ASPI study published on 24 September 2020 is based on an analysis of satellite images and found that in Xinjiang an estimated 8,500 mosques have been destroyed and another about 7,500 mosques have been damaged since 2017. As a result about 65% of all mosques were been affected by these government-ordered measures. In addition, about 30% of other types of Muslim religious sites, including shrines or cemeteries, have been destroyed and 28% have been damaged or modified over the same period.

Colombia

Internally displaced persons

Colombia remains the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons in the world. According to latest media reports, it is currently assumed that up to eight million people are affected. According to observers of the global situation of displaced persons, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are ranking directly after Colombia in absolute numbers.

Egypt

Nationwide protests against corruption and poor living conditions

Last week hundreds of people gathered in central locations in several cities to protest against President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the Egyptian military. The building contractor Mohamed Ali, who lives in Spain, alleged in several videos that al-Sisi and the Egyptian military leadership abused public funds for personal spending and called on the population to take to the streets against corruption. 2,000 people are said to have been arrested at the first rally. In Cairo, controls by security forces have already been tightened.

India

Kashmir: Protests against military and police violence

It is said that on 22 September 2020 a shopkeeper from Sopore who had been arrested on suspicion of terrorism, was killed in police custody and his death was subsequently reported as an accident. According to the police the arrested man had intended to flee. After the incident became known protests erupted on 23 September 2020. In response, the government switched off the internet in Sopore. The victim was buried far from his home town. According to a new regulation issued in Kashmir, the government takes care of the burial of alleged insurgents in remote forest areas, even excluding the family members, in order to prevent large crowds. Previously, a major protest had been held in Srinagar on 17 September 2020 in response to a military operation in which three suspected rebels and a woman were killed.

Kashmir: Activist for Kashmir's autonomy assassinated

On 24 September 2020, an activist advocating autonomy for Kashmir was killed in Srinagar. It is said that the lawyer was shot in his house by two unknown perpetrators who had posed as clients. He had gained fame through appearances on Indian television, where he had advocated autonomy for Kashmir in panel discussions.

COVID-19 Pandemic: Distribution of a potential vaccine

An Indian pharmaceutical company has decided to distribute 100 million doses of a potential corona vaccine together with the Russian State Fund. If the phase 3 tests, to verify the efficacy and safety of the vaccine for the Indian population, are successful, the vaccine could be ready by the end of 2020, subject to approval by the authorities.

Series of abuse cases sparks discussion about the position of Dalits

Since mid-August 2020, a series of serious cases of abuse against young girls in the Lakhimpur Kheri district in the state of Uttar Pradesh on the border with Nepal, became known. A 13-year-old girl was abused and killed there on 14 August 2020, a 17-year-old girl on 24 August 2020 and a few days later a three-year-old girl. In early September 2020, media reported that another 14-year-old abuse victim was found hanged from a tree. The incidents sparked

both the public discussion about the position of women in India and about sexual violence as an instrument of oppression of lower castes. Two of the victims were Dalits and thus belonged to the lowest caste in the Hindu system of social hierarchy. According to local human rights activists, Dalit women are viewed as impure and are socially discriminated. The activists said that these cases of abuse were motivated by revenge against the Dalit community after the Dalits are increasingly revolting and demanding civil rights. Nor were the incidents against the Dalit girls followed up, they said. Members of the upper castes also denied access to the crime scenes to the human rights activists.

India is one of the most unsafe countries in the world for women. Women from lower castes are particularly affected by violent assaults and abuse because the perpetrators, usually from higher castes, are not prosecuted in most cases. According to official statistics, at least four Dalit women are abused in India every day. According to estimates by human rights activists, the real number is much higher.

Protests against liberalization of the agricultural sector

On 25 September 2020, hundreds of thousands protested in the states of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh against the liberalization of the agricultural sector stipulated by new agricultural laws. Wheat and rice have so far not been traded on the free market, but in state-controlled markets (*mandis*) in India. Since the *mandis* guaranteed a state-controlled minimum price for the products, farmers now fear a drop in prices. Most farmers in India cultivate smaller fields and do not have any negotiating power vis-a-vis large, powerful corporations. Although the government maintained that the *mandis* will continue to exist, union representatives believe that the *mandis* will ultimately be crowded out by the competition.

Iran

Islamic dress code

The cleric and ex-editor-in-chief of the ultra-conservative daily Keyhan, Mehdi Nassiri, recently announced that 70% of Iranians are against the Islamic dress code. In particular Iranian women specifically reject compulsory veiling. In the provinces of Khorasan and Qom, which include the pilgrimage cities of Mashad and Qom and are considered especially religious, the number of opponents and supporters of veiling is balanced, he said. The findings were based on a survey by the Iranian Ministry of Culture. Nassiri is one of the most influential figures of Iran's conservative wing. According to him, the survey was carried out in 2015. Nassiri did not give any reasons why the survey results have only been published with such delay.

COVID-19 pandemic: Further curfews

Iran plans to order temporary curfews due to the continued increase in new COVID-19 infections. At a meeting of the national COVID-19 crisis committee on 26 September 2020 President Hassan Rohani said that provinces showing a high number of infections should be put under a one-week lockdown. In addition, higher penalties are being considered for violations of the mask-wearing requirement, according to the president's website.

Iranian health experts fear that a further increase in the number of cases will cause critical bottlenecks in caring for infected patients. According to the Ministry of Health, daily deaths lately numbered up to 200 and new infections 3,500.

Germany lifts landing ban for Iran Air flights

Due to the spread of COVID-19, Germany had stopped all flights from Iran in March 2020. According to the latest information, air traffic is to resume, although the country is still classified as a risk area. The Federal Government justified the lifting of the strict ban with the current infection rate, but above all the changes in the Iranian regime's information policy.

Iraq

Security operations against IS fighters

On 24 September 2020, the US-led coalition carried out air strikes against hiding places of IS fighters in remote areas in the south-east of Kirkuk province. One cave and three hideouts were destroyed.

Also on 24 September 2020, Iraqi armed forces announced the start of a new security operation against the IS in the desert areas north of Baghdad, in the region between the provinces of Salahaddin and Diyala.

On 27 September 2020, Iraqi security forces captured three IS fighters in Diyala province, Baquba district. Iraqi security forces said the IS fighters had sneaked into the area with the intention of reorganizing sleeper cells.

COVID-19 pandemic

According to data announced by the Ministry of Health on 27 September 2020, the number of infections has risen to 349,450. The number of people recovered amounts to 280,673 and the death toll is 8,990.

In the Kurdistan-Iraq region, the number of registered cases was 45,731 on 27 September 2020, of which 29,422 have recovered. The death toll is said to be 1,671. The province of Erbil is hardest hit.

According to WHO data of 20 September 2020, COVID-19 has blocked almost 50% of hospital capacity.

Kazakhstan

Arrests at opposition protests

In Nur-Sultan and Aqtöbe, security forces arrested several people during anti-government protests on 25 September 2020. The leading opposition politician Mukhtar Ablyazov had called for protests against the government from his exile in France.

Kosovo

First arrests by the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Special War Crimes Chambers

For the first time, a person indicted by the Special War Crimes Chambers for Kosovo (KSC; see BN of 31 August 2020) was arrested on 24 September 2020. On the basis of a KSC arrest warrant, the former officer of the Liberation Army of Kosovo (UÇK), Salih Mustafa, was arrested by the Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO) in Kosovo's north east and shortly afterwards taken to The Hague, where the headquarters of the KSC and the Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO) are located. Mustafa is charged with war crimes like arbitrary arrests, cruel treatment and torture of six people and murder of one person in April 1999. International and Serbian media also reported on Mustafa's arrest.

Chairman and vice-chairman of UÇK war veterans arrested

The KSC are the subject of an ongoing controversy in Kosovo (see BN of 31 August 2020). In recent weeks, a total of three sets of confidential KSC documents had been leaked to the UÇK war veterans. The organization rejects the KSC's authority. On 25 September 2020 its chairman, Hysni Gucati, was arrested by police forces working for the SPO. Security forces from the European Union's Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) were also involved in the arrest, which is why some reports said that Gucati had been arrested by the EU. His deputy, Nasim Haradinaj, was arrested on the next day. Both of them are suspected of obstructing justice by intimidating witnesses and disclosure of investigative secrets in connection with the leaked documents; Haradinaj is said to have made the names and addresses of witnesses for the prosecution public. Gucati and Haradinaj were taken to The Hague. On 18 September 2020, the ambassadors of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the USA issued a joint statement calling on the Kosovo government and parliament to take action against attempts to undermine the KSC.

Lebanon

Fighting in Araman-Miniyeh

In the Araman-Miniyeh region on the northern border with Syria the Lebanese army and a terrorist group engaged in an exchange of fire on 26 September 2020, it is assumed that the terrorist group were supporters of the IS. The clashes included an attack on a military post in the region and fighting gunmen holed up in a house. At least two soldiers were killed, and according to the army, at least 15 terrorists were killed. The area was cordoned off and the presence of security forces in the region was stepped up.

Resignation of the Prime Minister

Mustapha Adib resigned as Prime Minister on 26 September 2020 after 26 days. His attempt to form a new government has thus failed for the time being. This was one of the prerequisites for the remaining possible international donors led by France to hold a donor conference and to release funds that have been available since 2018. The release of the funds has failed for two years because the Lebanese governments have been unable to implement the required reforms during this period. The position of the Shiite parties Hezbollah and AMAL, which claimed essential departments, especially finance and health, for themselves or at least for Shiite candidates, is seen as the main reason for the failure.

The political situation in Lebanon is back to a point where there is no obvious way out of the crisis and another prime minister has to be appointed. France made it clear that it is expecting a new government to be in office within four to six weeks. Commentators of all denominations in Lebanon, as well as international observers, consider it a very likely possibility that France will withdraw from aid efforts due to the ongoing refusal of the Lebanese political elite to implement substantial reforms.

Mali

New interim government appointed

One month after the military coup on 18 August 2020 (see BN of 24 August 2020) the military junta appointed a new government. On 21 September 2020, the leader of the military junta announced that Bah N'Daw, a former air force chief and former defence minister, is to become interim president. The 70-year-old has spent his entire professional life in the military until he retired in 2012. Bah N'Daw was sworn in as transitional president on 25 September 2020. Assimi Goïta, the leader of the military junta, is designated to become his deputy. Bah N'Daw nominated former foreign minister and diplomat Moctar Ouané as the new interim Prime Minister on 27 September 2020. The decision to have N'Daw as interim president conflicts with the international community's demand for a civil interim government. The West African Economic Community (ECOWAS) had also demanded a civilian interim government after the military coup. ECOWAS announced that the sanctions imposed will remain in place until a civilian takes over as head of government. ECOWAS will meet Mali representatives for further discussions on 30 September 2020.

The transition period leading to new elections is scheduled to last 18 months. In previous talks between politicians and representatives of the military and civil society, it was agreed that neither the interim president nor his deputy may assume public office after the end of the transition period.

Montenegro

Violation of personal rights in connection with the pandemic

According to current media reports, the office of the ombudsman accused the police of violating the privacy of MP Nebojsa Medojevic (then of the opposition block "Democratic Front") by publishing a video of his transfer to quarantine in March 2020. The release of the video to the media and the public mentioning of the names of those affected, represents an encroachment on the right to respect for private life, he said. Already on 23 July 2020 the constitutional court had ruled to set aside a decree of the government at the time to publish the names of those citizens who had been required to self-isolate during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, without finding a violation of human rights. According to the previous government, anyone infected who does not adhere to self-isolation poses a threat to the entire community. The media are reporting that COVID-19 cases in Montenegro have skyrocketed again.

Morocco

COVID-19 pandemic

In Morocco, the number of new infections and the number of people suffering from COVID-19 is at the highest level since the beginning of the pandemic. Traffic in and out of the big cities is prohibited and is controlled by

security forces. 2,265 schools were closed three weeks after school started, because more than 800 teachers were infected with SARS-COV-2.

Nigeria

Many die in the ISWAP attack

On 25 September 2020, fighters from the jihadist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which had split off from the terrorist organization Boko Haram, attacked a vehicle convoy of officials from the state of Borno escorted by security forces. They were on their way from Maiduguri to the city of Baga on Lake Chad to make final preparations for the return of residents who had fled Baga. According to official military information, four soldiers, ten police officers and four civilians died in the attack on the section of the road between Monguno and Baga. According to other sources, around 30 people, including 10 police officers and four soldiers, are said to have been killed. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

Pakistan

Kashmir: Civilian casualties at the line of control

On 11 September 2020, Indian soldiers on the border dividing Kashmir (Line of Control) shot at the village of Rakh-chikri in the part of Kashmir administered by Pakistan, the Pakistani military said. An eleven-year-old girl was killed and four other people were injured.

Reactions after abuse cases

In response to the incident involving a woman who was abused and subsequently robbed on the road from Lahore to Gujranwala in Punjab province on 10 September 2020, as well as to the incident involving a 5-year-old girl in Karachi who was abused and then set on fire a few days earlier, women started to protest, not only on social media, but also in major cities including Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Islamabad. They demanded that women's safety be ensured in public spaces and that the rights of victims in cases of abuse be strengthened. In the first press releases after the incident of 10 September 2020 the police chief of Lahore had voiced his opinion that the victim had been at fault. Following public criticism he is now about to resign. According to human rights activists, Pakistan has so far done too little to protect women and children. They are calling for tougher sentences and a police reform.

Joint party alliance of the opposition

The main opposition parties, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), have joined forces with other, smaller parties to form the new Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) in response to the launch of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Justice Movement, by incumbent Prime Minister Imran Khan and his government.

Conference on the unity of Muslims

At a conference on Muslim unity (Wahdat-e-Ummat Conference) on 21 September 2020 in the Presidential Palace (Aiwan-e-Sadr) in Islamabad, which was attended by leading Muslim religious and government representatives, Pakistani President Arif Alvi spoke out for better protection of religious minorities, which should include not only the protection of life and property, but also the preservation of holy places. Extremism, terrorism, sectarian violence and murders in the name of religion must be prevented, he said.

The event was held a few days after rallies by Sunni traditionalists in Karachi and Islamabad against the Shiite minority. The participants had called for a boycott of Shiites, for a ban on mourning ceremonies on Muharram and praised several dozen blasphemy charges against Shiites in Punjab province. The non-governmental organization Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP) recently expressed concern about the increase in blasphemy charges against religious minorities, including against Ahmadis and Christians.

Somalia

Children liberated from al-Shabaab captivity

Forty children held by al-Shabaab in the city of Barire, Lower Shabelle region, were freed during a government military operation on 26 September 2020. According to the Somali military, the children come from different parts of the country and were to be used as suicide bombers or soldiers.

Attack on cattle market

Al-Shabaab is said to be responsible for an explosion on a cattle market in Afgoye on 23 September 2020. One person was killed and four injured, including civilians. Two soldiers from the Somali army were wounded.

Executions by al-Shabaab

There are reports that on 25 September 2020 al-Shabaab publicly executed two men who were accused of spying for the government and a government soldier in the town of Buale, Hiiran region.

Another man was executed by al-Shabaab on 24 September 2020 after he had been sentenced to death for witchcraft and therefore apostasy in the town of Jilib in Middle Juba region.

Syria

Attack in Ras al-Ayn

Syrian state media and opposition media unanimously reported the detonation of a car bomb in Turkish-occupied Ras al-Ayn on 26 September 2020. At least seven people are said to have been killed in the explosion in the city's south.

The city is located on the border with Turkey in the north of Hassakah province and has been under the control of the Turkish military and associated Syrian-Arab rebel groups since October 2019.

Turkey

Proceedings against HDP politicians

According to reports from the state news agency Anadolu, raids ordered by the Public Prosecutor General were carried out in seven provinces on 25 September 2020 to arrest officials, elected officials and activists of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP: Halkların Demokratik Partisi). A total of 82 arrest warrants are said to have been issued and 19 people have already been arrested. It was also announced that the waiver of the immunity of seven HDP MPs would be requested. The reasons given for the arrest warrants were protests and clashes in Diyarbakır and other predominantly Kurdish cities in October 2014. At the time, the IS had attacked the Kurdish city of Kobane, which is located on the Syrian side directly on the Turkish border. The Turkish government then moved troops to the border, however, these did not fight the IS, but prevented supporters from coming to the aid of the residents of Kobane from Turkey. This triggered several days of protests with violent clashes in various Kurdish-majority cities in Turkey for several days, in which a total of 40 people were killed. The public prosecutor has not yet explained why, almost six years after the events, another 82 people should be charged with this. In this context, the parliamentary immunity of a large part of the then HDP parliamentary group had already been lifted in 2014 and the popular HDP chairman Selahattin Demirtaş and the then co-chairwoman Figen Yüksekdağ were arrested and have been held in custody since 2016 and 2017.

Further arrests of Gülen supporters

According to media reports, the Turkish authorities again took action against suspected Gülen supporters on 22 September 2020. A total of 55 suspects were arrested, including 27 lawyers in 19 provinces.

Venezuela

Another nationwide power failure

On 23 September 2020, at around 4 p.m. local time, another nationwide power outage affected at least 14 of the country's 20 regions for a longer period. Some regions and large parts of the capital remained without electricity for up to 60 hours. As a result, also the water supply, which often depends on electric pumps, failed widely.

Without producing any evidence, government spokesmen referred to terrorist activities or an EMP (EMP: electro-magnetic pulse) attack by the US or other enemies of the country on the Guri Dam, which produces 80% of the country's energy supply. The opposition, on the other hand, cited a lack of investment in infrastructure and faulty management as the causes.

The blackout caused nationwide protests against the supply situation, which also resulted in clashes with security forces and violence on both sides. In the city of Chivacoa, Yaracuy state, the town hall was reportedly set on fire.

Vietnam

Prison sentences

On 22 September 2020, a court in Ho Chi Minh City handed down prison sentences ranging from two to 24 years for 20 people charged with terrorism and other crimes. They were charged with a bomb attack on a police station in the city in June 2018, in which, according to various sources, one or more people were injured. The convicted are said to have been instigated by the Canada-based exile organization Trieu Dai Viet (also: Trieu Dai Viet Nguyen - Viet (Nguyen) Dynasty).

Yemen

Humanitarian situation deteriorates further

On 23 September 2020 the UN warned of a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Many important aid programmes focusing on health and food distribution had to be suspended since April 2020 due to a lack of funds. More than three quarters of the population are in need of some form of humanitarian aid. On 14 September 2020, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report describing how the various parties to the conflict, but most of all the Houthi rebels, are interfering with the distribution of humanitarian aid.

Prisoner exchange

The Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels agreed on the exchange of more than 1,000 prisoners in UN-supported talks in Switzerland. Both parties had agreed the exchange of 15,000 prisoners already in 2018, however only sporadic and minor exchanges have been made so far. Under the agreement, the Houthis are expected to release around 400 prisoners, including a few Saudi and Sudanese soldiers, while the Saudi-led coalition backing the Yemeni government is expected to release nearly 700 Houthi fighters. The exchange is scheduled to begin in mid-October 2020.