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Niger

Tillabéri Region: civilians killed in attack

According to media reports, the villages of Amara and Loudji, which are located in the Tillabéri Region near the border with Burkina Faso, were ambushed by suspected jihadists on 29.12.2013; eleven civilians were killed. So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.²⁸

Nigeria

Plateau State: over 100 people killed in attacks on villages

Armed groups killed almost 200 people and destroyed several houses in a spate of at least 20 attacks carried out on various villages in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Bokkos and Barkin Ladi in the central Nigerian state of Plateau between 23.12.23 and 25.12.23. According to media reports, more than 300 people were injured. Amnesty International (AI) has criticized the slow response of the security authorities and the failure of the Nigerian government to stop the attacks.

Plateau State is located between the north of Nigeria which has a large Muslim population and the south which has a mainly Christian population. Violent clashes occur frequently between mostly Muslim nomadic herdsman and mostly Christian sedentary farmers (cf. BN of 22.05.23, 26.06.23 and 24.07.23). It is possible the attacks are being fuelled, inter alia, by the ongoing conflict over access to land, grazing areas, water and natural resources, but they may also constitute revenge for former acts of violence or – simultaneously – simmering ethnic rivalry. According to media reports, they represent the worst outbreak of intercommunal violence in Plateau State since May 2023 (cf. BN of 22.05.23).²⁹

Borno State: persons killed in Boko Haram attack

On 01.01.24, members of the Islamist Boko Haram group attacked two communities in Chibok Local Government Area (LGA) in Borno State in the northeast of the country, killing around 15 persons and kidnapping one woman. According to media reports, they also set fire to houses and stole livestock, food and medicine. Several people were reportedly wounded in the attack. Those killed include people who were returning from a funeral. For years, the Islamist Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) groups have been carrying out attacks and committing other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population, above all in the northeast of Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 27.03.23). Boko Haram kidnapped more than 270 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014. The incident sparked an international outcry and triggered the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Around 100 of the schoolgirls remain in captivity. Several of them have been forced to marry members of the Islamist groups.³⁰

Latest figures on the number of inmates held in custodial facilities

As of 18.12.23, a total of 77,849 persons were detained in prisons in Nigeria, 76,081 men and 1,768 women, according to media reports citing official figures provided by a spokesperson for Nigerian custodial centres issued on 22.12.23. No less than 3,413 prisoners are currently on death row and 53,836 prisoners are awaiting trial. According to a media report issued on 19.12.23, around 4,000 inmates have been sentenced to death, 353 of whom are being detained at Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison in Lagos alone. Media reports cite information provided by AI that seven executions have been carried out in Nigeria since 2007, the most recent one in 2016 (cf. BN of 16.10.23). On 18.12.23, around 4,068 inmates sentenced to various terms of imprisonment were released in a bid to prevent overcrowding at custodial and correctional facilities (cf. BN of 20.11.23). The spokesperson of the Nigerian Correctional Services stressed that no riots had taken place at any of the custodial and correctional facilities since 2023. He thinks this is due to the deployment of enhanced surveillance systems and partly also to improved prison conditions.³¹

Pakistan

Ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan barred from National Assembly election

Pakistan's election commission has disqualified imprisoned ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan and most of the candidates of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party from the National Assembly elections. The politician has

been embroiled in a series of political and legal disputes since he was ousted as Prime Minister in April 2022. In August 2023, he was initially arrested for, among other things, unlawfully selling state gifts during his term of office from 2018 to 2022 and was subsequently sentenced to three years in prison for corruption (cf. BN of 07.08.23). According to media reports, this sentence was suspended, but Khan remained in prison in connection with charges of leaking state secrets. In addition, the interim government took action against leading PTI members following Khan's arrest, triggering demonstrations (cf. BN of 18.09.23). On 22.12.23, the Supreme Court granted Khan bail on charges of leaking state secrets. It is still unclear whether he has been released from prison. On 07.01.24, access to well-known social media platforms was blocked in order to prevent a fundraising telethon organised by the PTI. Meanwhile, on 05.01.24, the Senate approved a resolution to further delay national elections, which for the moment is not binding. Elections were originally due to be held in November 2023 but were recently postponed until 08.02.24 due to the fresh demarcation of constituencies as part of a census.³²

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: girls' school torched; attack on barbers; bomb blast

On 30.12.23, unknown perpetrators set a girls' school on fire in the Bannu district. A note was allegedly left, threatening "significant harm" if the school was not closed down. No one has claimed responsibility. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has targeted girls' and women's institutions in the past.

On 02.01.24, unidentified perpetrators shot and killed six barbers in Mir Ali in the tribal district of North Waziristan, a former stronghold of the TTP near the border with Afghanistan.

On 08.01.24, five people were killed and more than 20 others injured in the Bajaur tribal district when a roadside bomb exploded, hitting a police vehicle.³³

Activist for the rights of the Baluch ethnic group arrested

In mid-December 2023, a Baluch activist wrote on social media that she had been arrested during a protest march from the province of Balochistan to the capital, Islamabad. She said the protest had been violently dispersed by security forces, and other demonstrators had been injured and some had also been arrested. The demonstrators were predominantly women who were drawing attention to police violence and arbitrariness against the Baluch ethnic group in the province.³⁴

Data on the security situation in 2023; in particular in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

According to data provided by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), at least 645 militant attacks were carried out across the country in 2023 (2022: 380), in which 976 people were killed (2022: 539) and 1,354 injured (2022: 836). Conversely, the security forces also increased the number of operations against militant groups, in which 612 suspected militants were killed and at least 625 were arrested.

As in previous years, most security-related incidents in 2023 occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, although not predominantly in the tribal districts belonging to the province, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts, but rather in the heartland of KP. PICSS counted 423 incidents in KP, in which 621 people were killed, including 307 members of the security forces, 222 civilians and 92 suspected militants. 980 people were injured, including 525 members of the security forces, 405 civilians and 50 suspected militants.³⁵

Palestinian Autonomous Territories / Israel

Deaths in airstrike in Rafah / latest developments

Israeli forces continue to attack targets in all parts of the Gaza Strip, including the southern city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons are currently living. In an airstrike carried out on 04.01.24, a home in Rafah was hit, killing at least six people.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Defence, several thousand Hamas fighters remain in the northern Gaza Strip, where entire districts have now been destroyed by airstrikes. Heavy fighting is also taking place in the centre of the Gaza Strip and in the southern city of Khan Younis, where, according to the Israeli military, Hamas' military structure is still largely intact, unlike in the north around Gaza City.

According to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory, the Israeli military's attacks on the Gaza Strip by air, land and sea have so far killed more than 22,400 people, two thirds of them women and children. The Hamas-run Ministry of Health does not differentiate between civilians and fighters when counting the number of casualties.