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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Governance and persecution

According to media reports, the absence of Afghan women and civil society representatives was one of the Taliban's conditions for attending the third UN meeting on Afghanistan in Doha (Qatar), which was held from 30.06. to 01.07.24. At the meeting Taliban press spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid emphasised that the issue of women's rights is a "domestic issue" of Afghanistan.

According to media reports, the Taliban have renamed further locations in the capital Kabul. The Kabul neighbourhood of "Deh Afghanan", for example, has been renamed "Farhang Square". The decision was announced by the Taliban-led Ministry of Culture and Information. Since coming to power, the Taliban have renamed many squares and streets, especially those bearing the names of their enemies and former politicians of the republic.

According to media reports, there have been renewed protests against the Taliban in Badakhshan province (Darayim district). It is said that participants in a protest were injured by Taliban gunfire. Recently, the region experienced protests because the Taliban had destroyed the residents' poppy fields (cf. BN of 06.05.24).¹

Humanitarian situation

According to media reports from 05.07.24, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) will be withdrawing completely from Afghanistan by 2025. Thereafter projects will only be implemented via NGOs. GIZ is thus acting on a decision by the German Federal Government which is its client. Contracts for the approximately 160 Afghan employees will expire at the end of 2024. No German or international staff have been on the ground since the Taliban took power in 2021.²

Algeria

Arrests for distributing a video critical of the government

As reported on 01.07.24, the authorities briefly arrested two journalists of the online platform "Algeria Scoop" on charges of inciting hatred. The journalists had published a video in which two young female entrepreneurs had accused the government of treating them with contempt and humiliation at a public event attended by the Minister of Education. The freedom of the press has been severely restricted for years in the country.³

Angola

NGOs fearing further restriction of civil rights by the government

On 28.06.24, Deutsche Welle (DW) reported on the concerns of several NGOs and human rights representatives about further restrictions on civil rights by the Angolan government. Since the beginning of President João Lourenço's second term in office in September 2022, arbitrary arrests of opposition members have increased

significantly. A public petition is currently seeking the release of four activists in one of the most prominent cases, the report says. Each of the activists Adolfo Campos, Tanaice Neutro, Gildo das Ruas and Abraão Pensador were sentenced to two years and five months in prison at the end of 2023 for rioting and insulting the president after taking part in a protest. Another activist who was able to visit the prisoners reported that some of them were in a critical state of health and that the detainees were not receiving adequate medical assistance. The NGOs are aware of similar cases throughout the country.

The NGOs also denounce a draft law affecting the NGOs operating in the country that was adopted by the government at its first reading in 2023. The NGOs say that the law will clearly interfere with and obstruct the work of NGOs. According to the proposed law, NGOs would be obliged to submit detailed reports on their finances. On mere suspicions of money laundering or terrorist financing, the government would be able to suspend the activities of organisations.

According to the NGOs, the government is planning another initiative as an attempt to undermine the influence of the main opposition party UNITA. According to experts, a planned administrative reform, including the division of certain provinces, is a strategy to influence the local elections in 2025 in favour of the ruling party MPLA. The reform includes, for example, the division of the capital province of Luanda, where the MPLA was clearly defeated by UNITA in the parliamentary elections in 2022. The districts from which most of the votes in favour of the opposition came would therefore be carved out of the capital province.

The NGOs see many measures taken by President Lourenço's government as increasingly blatant attempts to place all state bodies at the service of the ruling MPLA party. In addition to the administrative units, this also applies to the education system, the press and all state-owned companies and runs contrary to the basic principles of democracy.⁴

Belarus

Amnesty law

According to media reports, on 02.07.24, President Aleksandr Lukashenko announced an amnesty for prisoners on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the capital Minsk from German occupation during the World War II. The amnesty includes the release of seriously ill political prisoners. Pregnant women and minors, single parents with children and prisoners of retirement age are to be released. Previously, Deputy Interior Minister Gennady Kazakevich had announced that the amnesty applied to 7,850 convicts. According to independent Belarusian media in exile, imprisoned opponents of the president will probably not be covered by the amnesty. After the law was signed, the leader of the opposition Belarusian People's Front, Ryhor Kastusy, who was serving a long prison sentence, was released.⁵

Conviction of opposition activists

According to media reports from 01.07.24, the General Prosecutor's Office of Belarus has announced the conviction of 20 people associated with the Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. The Minsk Regional Court found the defendants guilty of, among other things, conspiracy to seize power and promoting extremism. The sentences range from ten to eleven years in prison.⁶

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and military manoeuvres with China

Belarus was accepted as a new member at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit held in Kazakhstan on 03.07. and 04.07.24. The regional grouping of authoritarian states is primarily promoted by Beijing and Moscow as an alternative to Western influence. The Belarusian Ministry of Defence subsequently announced that a joint military manoeuvre with Chinese military units would be held in Belarus from 08.07. to 19.07.24. No details were given.⁷

Burkina Faso

Kidnappings of media professionals

At least three Burkinabe media professionals were kidnapped in the capital Ouagadougou in June 2024: Journalist and columnist Adama Bayala has been missing since 28.06.24. According to media reports, he voiced criticism of

the military government during political debates on television programmes, among other things. Supporters of the military regime are said to have attacked him on social media.

Unknown actors allegedly kidnapped the publishing director of the newspaper L'Événement, Serge Atiana Oulon, on 24.06.24. The incident reportedly occurred after the Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (CSC) ordered a one-month suspension of L'Événement's online publication on 19.06.24 and after Oulon reported on an alleged embezzlement of funds for the army's civilian auxiliary forces. Sldo Kalifara Séré, a commentator on the BF1 Télévision television channel, has been considered as missing since 19.06.24.

In recent times, there have been repeated kidnappings and arrests of prominent opposition figures in Burkina Faso (cf. BN of 29.01.24 and 26.02.24). Burkina Faso ranks 86th in the world in terms of press freedom in 2024. In 2021, before the current head of the military government, Ibrahim Traoré, came to power in a coup in September 2022, the country still ranked 37th.⁸

Colombia

Slight decline in deadly force used against social leaders

According to data collected by the NGO Indepaz, lethal violence against social leaders (líderes sociales) in Colombia fell slightly in the first half of 2024, with 86 recorded homicides compared to 96 such offences in the same period last year. As in previous years, the regions of Antioquia, Putumayo, Cauca and Valle del Cauca were particularly affected. Since the start of the peace process in 2016, Indepaz has registered more than 1,600 homicides of social leaders. The UN and NGOs are calling on the Colombian government to take stronger protective measures and prosecute the perpetrators more consistently.⁹

DR Congo

Death penalty for 25 army soldiers

On 03.07.24, the military court of the Butembo garrison in the province of North Kivu sentenced a total of 25 soldiers of the Congolese army, including two captains, to death. The charges were "fleeing from the enemy", "embezzlement of war material" and "insubordination". The 31 defendants included four civilian wives of the soldiers who had allegedly received the embezzled materials and goods. They were acquitted for lack of evidence. On 13.03.24, the Congolese government had lifted the moratorium on the death penalty that had been in place since 2003 for military personnel found guilty of treason and for members of armed groups or criminal gangs (cf. BN of 25.03.24).¹⁰

Egypt

Arrests for statements on LGBTIQ issues on the internet

On 04.07.24, it was reported that the authorities had arrested a gender nonconforming person on charges of disseminating indecent content. The person is accused of promoting LGBTIQ issues on social media and inciting immoral behaviour.¹¹

Ethiopia

HRW report: Attack on medical facilities in Amhara

A report by HRW states that Ethiopian security forces attacked medical staff, patients and healthcare facilities in a way that can be categorised as war crimes. Since the beginning of the fighting between Ethiopian forces and the Fano militia in the Amhara region in August 2023, allegedly medical facilities in at least 13 towns have been attacked. The current security situation is severely restricting medical care and humanitarian aid. At least nine aid organisation staff are said to have been killed so far. International humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilians and protects healthcare facilities, their staff and patients.¹²

India

Heatwave and flash floods claim lives

India is currently experiencing the worst heatwave in over a decade with temperatures above 50 degrees Celsius. According to media reports, there have been hundreds of deaths and illnesses, and the number of unreported cases is said to be much higher. A stampede at a religious gathering in the state of Uttar Pradesh (Hathras district) with 116 dead, mainly women and children, and many injured is also said to have been triggered by the heat under a tent. According to media reports from 03.07.24, another four people were killed by heavy rainfall and flash floods in the state of Assam.¹³

Iran

Presidential election: Pezeshkian becomes new president

The run-off election between the two presidential candidates Masoud Pezeshkian and Saeed Jalili took place on 05.07.24. Pezeshkian emerged victorious with around 53.7 % of the vote, making him the new president.

According to the Iranian electoral authority, voter turnout for the run-off election was around 49.8%. In the first round of voting, voter turnout had been around 40% (cf. BN of 01.07.24).

The 69-year-old Pezeshkian, who hails from the province of West Azerbaijan, is considered moderate to reformist in orientation. However, following his admission as a candidate, he also spoke out clearly in favour of the current balance of power with revolutionary leader Ali Khamenei as the head of state. Pezeshkian's announcements during the election campaign included the improvement of relations to the West, the lifting of sanctions and an economic upturn as well as the curbing of state corruption. He also criticised internet censorship and the treatment of women with regard to the Muslim dress code (hijab obligation) and campaigned for a new relationship of trust between the people and the government.

According to the press and observers, it remains unclear to what extent an actual change of course can be expected with the new president. This will largely depend on the revolutionary leader and the influence of the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), an elite state-run armed organisation with extensive economic power.

According to media reports, the new president will be sworn in at the beginning of August 2024 and will then have 15 days to form a cabinet which is to be confirmed by the conservative-majority parliament on 22.08.24. Following the election results, Supreme Leader Khamenei called for moderation between the rival political camps.¹⁴

Imprisoned trade union activist receives death sentence

According to media reports from 04.07.24, a labour activist detained in the city of Rasht (Gilan province) was sentenced to death in the first instance. The sentence was imposed on charges of armed rebellion against the government (Persian baghi). The woman was accused of being a member of an independent association supporting the founding of labour organisations. This is a legal organisation to which she had not belonged for ten years. The convicted woman is also accused of being a member of a banned Kurdish opposition party (Komala). Members of the woman's family have denied the latter accusation. The convicted activist has been imprisoned since her arrest on 05.12.23 and has spent several months in solitary confinement.¹⁵

Prison sentences for a student activist and an activist

According to a report by a Persian-language foreign broadcaster on 03.07.24, two politically active students were each sentenced to one-year prison terms. Both convicts, a music student and a social sciences student from Tehran, were accused of organising a sit-in protest against the death sentence of the well-known anti-government rapper Tomaj Salehi (cf. BN of 29.04.24). The death sentence imposed on the rapper in April 2024 was overturned at the end of June 2024 following a decision by the Supreme Court and criminal proceedings were resumed.¹⁶

Iraq

Violence against women

According to the local police, a woman in Dohuk was first severely beaten and then set on fire on 25.06.24. She succumbed to her injuries on 30.06.24. The suspected perpetrator is her brother, who is in police custody.

Domestic violence and so-called "honour crimes" are widespread throughout Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). In a report on gender-based violence published on 03.07.24, Amnesty International (AI) stated that despite the improved legal framework in the KR-I, the protection of women from violence remains difficult in practice. AI cites the bias of law enforcement authorities in favour of perpetrators as one of the reasons, meaning that victim protection is in fact not a priority. In addition to inadequate training, the Iraqi administration also lacks financial resources, e.g. for sufficient women's shelters, according to AI.¹⁷

Arrest after comment on social media

On 25.06.24, a man was arrested in Halabja after he criticised the local authorities on Facebook. According to the authorities, he was arrested for his "defamatory" and "disrespectful" comments.

Freedom of the press and freedom of expression are being increasingly restricted throughout Iraq, including in the KR-I. This was recently noted including by the US government in its report on the human rights situation in Iraq of 22.04.24.¹⁸

Situation of Yazidis

As part of the camp closures in the KR-I announced by the central government for the end of July 2024, around 1,000 internally displaced persons from Sinjar/Shingal (Nineva province) returned to their homes at the end of June 2024. Nevertheless, comparatively few people are still willing to leave the camps for Sinjar/Shingal, despite the support offered by the central government in the amount of IQD 4 million (approx. EUR 2,821; as of 08.07.24). This is due to the persistently poor security situation, the faltering reconstruction and a lack of basic public services on the ground.

There are still around 26,000 families living in the remaining 23 Kurdish camps, most of whom are of Yazidi faith. At least as many are living outside the camps in the KR-I. Meanwhile, Masrour Barzani, Prime Minister of the KR-I, has announced his intention to provide financial aid for around 3,000 Yazidi IS survivors. In addition, new job opportunities are to be created for Yazidi people in the KR-I and their access to educational and health facilities is to be improved.¹⁹

Iraq / Syria

Deportation of Syrian nationals

According to a report by HRW of 27.06.24, several Syrian individuals have been deported to Damascus and the north-eastern areas of Syria under Kurdish control, despite a ruling by the Iraqi Supreme Court in August 2023 prohibiting the deportation of Syrian nationals and despite the fact that the individuals concerned were in possession of valid residence documents or registered as asylum seekers with the UNHCR.

In March 2024, Iraq launched a campaign to expel foreign nationals without valid residence permits. In April 2024, the issuing of visas for Syrian nationals in the KR-I was suspended to limit the influx of foreign labour.

Around 280,000 Syrians are still living in Iraq, most of them in the KR-I.²⁰

Mali

Attack on a village in central Mali causes fatalities

According to media reports, armed men attacked the village of Djiguibombo (Mopti region) on 01.07.24. A wedding was taking place in the village at the time of the attack. At least 40 people are said to have died in the attack for which no one has claimed responsibility as yet.²¹

Mauritania

Violent protests and internet shutdown after presidential election

Following the announcement of the provisional results of the presidential election, according to which the incumbent Mohamed Ould Ghazouani won with around 56% of the vote (cf. BN of 01.07.24), violent protests broke out, particularly in the opposition stronghold of Kaédi (Gorgol region on the border with Senegal). According to

press reports, the runner-up candidate Biram Dah Abeid had previously voiced allegations of electoral fraud. Following looting and vandalism, security forces intervened and arrested an unspecified number of protesters. Without specifying the causes of death the government informed on 02.07.24 that two of those arrested died in custody and another one after being transferred to hospital, the reports said. Two security forces were also injured. According to reports of 03.07.24, a mobile internet shutdown that began on the evening of 01.07.24 continued in the capital Nouakchott. Dozens of people are also said to have been arrested there and in Nouadhibou (an important harbour town on the border with Western Sahara).

On 04.07.24, the Constitutional Council announced the official election results, which confirmed the election commission's count. According to media reports, no opposing candidate had lodged a complaint against the results of the electoral commission by the deadline. In preliminary statements election observation missions also stated that the ballot was held in a "peaceful and transparent atmosphere" on 03.07.24. In the meantime, Abeid has offered to engage in a dialogue with the authorities, the reports said.²²

Nigeria

Northeast: Dozens killed in suicide attacks

On 29.06.24, several female suicide bombers used explosives to kill over 30 people and injure dozens more in the town of Gwoza near the border with Cameroon. According to media reports, the suicide attacks took place at a wedding party, a funeral and a hospital. Authorities and the media assume that one of the two Islamist groups active in the region, Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), commissioned the attacks, the reports said. Already in the past Boko Haram had used women and girls to carry out suicide attacks in northeastern Nigeria.²³

Benue State: Thousands dead within a year

In the period from January 2023 to February 2024, around 2,600 people, mostly women and children, were killed in at least 135 attacks on 50 villages in the state of Benue. This is according to media reports from 26.06.24, which refer to figures researched by Amnesty International. Of the 23 local government areas (LGAs) in the state, which is located in the eastern part of the Middle Belt, 18 are regularly threatened by armed assailants. The identity of the perpetrators usually remains unknown (cf. BN of 05.02.24).²⁴

Kogi State: Passenger bus hijacked

On 03.07.24, unknown criminals hijacked a coach travelling from Benin City to Abuja in Kogi State. According to media reports, it was a bus with 13 seats and the driver was also kidnapped. A representative of the bus company stated that the exact number of people kidnapped is not yet known. Should the relatives receive ransom demands they should contact the bus company, he said. The company cooperates with the police. Kidnappings to extort ransom money are quite regular in various regions of Nigeria (cf. BN of 13.05., 17.06. and 01.07.24).²⁵

Pakistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Former senator killed in bomb attack

According to media reports of 03.07.24, former senator Hidayatullah Khan was killed by a remotely detonated bomb during an election campaign tour in the Bajaur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (around 45 kilometres from the Afghan border). A government official confirmed the use of an improvised explosive device, which also killed two of Khan's companions and two policemen.²⁶

Palestinian Territories / Israel

Gaza Strip: Latest developments, humanitarian situation

On 04.07.24, the Hamas-led Ministry of Health stated that more than 38,011 Palestinians had been killed and 87,445 others wounded in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war. The ministry does not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

According to information provided by the Israeli military on 05.07.24, a total of 323 military personnel have been killed and 2,069 others wounded since the start of the ground offensive. Around 120 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The fighting in the Gaza Strip continues. In an appeal issued on 01.07.24, the Israeli military again called on around 250,000 people in certain areas in Rafah and Khan Younis to evacuate to the already overpopulated al-Mawasi area. Shortly beforehand, rockets were reportedly fired at Israel from areas in Khan Younis again.

According to press reports, nine members of a family who responded to the calls and fled further north were killed in an airstrike on the relatives' house where they were staying.

On 06.07.24, according to the Hamas-led Ministry of Health, 16 Palestinians living in a school in al-Nuseirat were killed in an airstrike that hit the school. 50 others were reportedly wounded. The Israeli military claimed to have targeted armed militants in the area and made maximum efforts to protect civilians.

Gaza's second largest hospital in Khan Younis had already been evacuated before it became clear that it was not affected by the evacuation orders. According to UN figures, only 15% of the 36 hospitals in the Gaza Strip are partially or fully functional. The difficult security situation makes access to the hospitals considerably more difficult, the UN said. There is still a shortage of medication, medical equipment and fuel. This also affects the WASH sector, which includes the supply of drinking water and the provision of sanitation services.

In addition, the poor security situation continues to hamper the distribution of aid within the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, 56 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who had been detained by Israeli security forces during the war were released and reported poor conditions and torture during their detention. The Israeli authorities denied the allegations.²⁷

West Bank: Land confiscations and authorisation of settlement expansion; several dead and injured

On 27.06.24, the Israeli authorities initiated the legalisation of five settlements on the West Bank that were previously considered illegal under Israeli law. Since the beginning of 2024, UN OCHA has recorded 27 attacks by residents of three of these settlements against Palestinian people or their property. Between 07.10.23 and 01.07.24, a total of 1,050 such attacks were recorded, 107 of which resulted in injuries. More than 12.7 sqkm were confiscated by the Israeli authorities. According to the NGO Peace Now, a new high for 2024 was reached after further seizures of 8 sqkm in March and 2.6 sqkm in February. In addition, the construction of 5,295 more housing units in existing settlements in the West Bank was authorised.

On 26.06.24, an Israeli soldier was killed and 16 others were wounded when booby traps detonated during a military operation in Jenin. One Palestinian was wounded in the subsequent fighting.

According to rescue workers, seven Palestinians were killed in armed clashes and airstrikes by the military during a military operation in Jenin on 05.07.24.

The total number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank between 07.10.23 and 01.07.24 rose to 539. More than 5,420 other people are said to have been wounded. During the same period, 14 Israelis, including nine military personnel, were killed and 105 others were wounded.²⁸

Peru

LGBTIQ rights: Widely criticised health decree, adjustments announced

According to media reports, the Ministry of Health announced on 25.06.24 that transsexuality, among other things, would no longer be classified as a mental illness. In recent weeks, there had been repeated protests in the country in connection with a decree on healthcare. Supreme Decree No. 009-2024-SA, which was published on 10.05.24, updated a list of illnesses and treatments that are covered under the basic health insurance plan (PEAS) for insured persons in public and private healthcare facilities. The list of mental and behavioural disorders in the version published at the time included transsexuality. The Ministry of Health defended this step with the implementation of a corresponding, but already outdated, WHO protocol and the guarantee of free access to mental health care for such groups of individuals. LGBTIQ support groups strongly criticised this equation of trans people with mentally ill people and said that this part of the plan update was unnecessary as mental health care was already accessible.²⁹

New law on de facto statute of limitations for crimes against humanity

On 04.07.24, bill no. 6951/2023-CR was passed by the Peruvian Congress, which would de facto introduce a statute of limitations for crimes against humanity. President Boluarte's signature is all that is needed for it to come into force. By means of this law, which has been heavily criticised by human rights organisations, crimes against humanity committed before 2002 and therefore before the Rome Statute came into force (July 2002) or before the agreement on the non-applicability of statutes of limitations for crimes against humanity (November 2003) would become time-barred under national law and could therefore no longer be prosecuted. Specialists in the field presume that this will lead to the termination of hundreds of proceedings for offences committed during the armed conflict between the army and members of the guerrilla organisation Sendero Luminoso from the 1980s onwards. Also, former President Fujimori might possibly benefit from such a law.³⁰

Sierra Leone

Law banning child marriage signed

On 02.07.24, President Julius Maada Bio signed a law criminalising child marriage. Men who marry a girl under the age of 18 now face 15 years in prison and a fine. Parents or people who take part in such a marriage ceremony can be fined.

According to data from the Ministry of Health, a third of girls in Sierra Leone are married before their 18th birthday. Supporters of the new law are hoping for better protection for girls.³¹

Somalia

Attack in central Somalia

On 31.07.24, at least four people were killed in a suicide attack in Beledweyne (Hiiraan region). The attack targeted a military base of the Somali National Army. It is unclear to what extent civilians were affected. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.³²

Syria

Northwest: Protests after riots in Türkiye

Following riots against Syrian refugees in Türkiye, protests broke out in northern areas of the Aleppo governorate on 01.07.24. According to media reports, protesters initially blocked the Bab al-Salama border crossing on the Turkish-Syrian border. Furthermore, armed clashes ensued between Turkish troops and unknown gunmen in the city of Afrin. Units of the Turkish riot police were deployed to north-west Syria to bring the situation under control. The military police of the local so-called Syrian Interim Government, which is close to Türkiye, announced the following day that four people had been killed in the fighting in Afrin. A North Press Agency media report, however, stated that five people had been killed and 40 wounded.

Most of the border crossings between the north-western areas and Türkiye, including the Bab al-Hawa, Jarabulus and Bab al-Salama crossings, were initially closed to Syrian nationals. The operation of the crossings between areas under the control of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and the areas under the control of the Islamist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) was also suspended for the time being.

According to media reports, the protests were followed by a temporary suspension of internet and electricity services, which were then gradually restored, although they started out at a lower level than before.³³

Syrian man died in custody after deportation from Lebanon

The NGO Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported on 28.06.24 that a Syrian man who had been deported from Lebanon to Syria in April 2024 along with other refugees had been detained upon his return and handed over to Palestine branch number 235 of the military intelligence agency. After being transferred from a location in Damascus to the military intelligence unit in Deir ez-Zor, his family received no further information about his condition or whereabouts. On 25.06.24, they were informed that he had died in custody. His body was handed over to his relatives the following day. The report does not provide any specific information about the cause of death.

However, because the deceased had previously been in good health, SNHR considers it highly probable that torture and medical neglect may have been the cause of death.

Since the beginning of 2024, SNHR has recorded the detention of at least 126 Syrian refugees who were returned from Lebanon. Including four children and three women.³⁴

Türkiye

Ban on Pride parade in Istanbul

According to media reports, several hundred people participated in a LGBTIQ Pride march in Istanbul on 30.06.24 despite a ban. The governor of Istanbul had banned a Pride parade on 30.06.24 on the grounds that "illegal groups" wanted to hold a protest march without permission. The governor's office then declared that the area around Taksim Square and some metro stations had been closed on 30.06.24. According to press reports, police broke up the protest after ten minutes; 15 participants were temporarily detained and released the same evening.

According to a Rainbow Europe Map for 2023 published by ILGA, the global umbrella organisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex organisations, Türkiye ranks 48th out of 49 countries in terms of human rights for LGBTIQ people.³⁵

Türkiye / Syria

Anti-Syrian riots in Türkiye

During riots in the Turkish city of Kayseri on 30.06.24, shops, houses and cars belonging to Syrians were burnt down. According to press reports, xenophobic slogans were shouted during the riots. On 01.07.24, Syrian businesses were also attacked in other cities and provinces, such as Hatay, Gaziantep and Bursa. The riots broke out after a video allegedly showing a Syrian man sexually abusing a seven-year-old Syrian girl in Melikgazi, a township of Kayseri, surfaced on the internet. The authorities announced that the alleged perpetrator had been arrested and the girl had been taken into state guardianship.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya stated that the people who had gathered in Kayseri and caused the unrest had acted illegally and in a way that was not in keeping with "our human values". President Erdoğan also condemned the violence and xenophobia. In addition, the Kayseri Chief Public Prosecutor's Office said an investigation was underway into the incident and the social media users who shared provocative posts during the incident.

In this matter, Minister Yerlikaya announced on 05.07.24 that 855 people had been taken into custody in Kayseri and 1,065 people throughout Türkiye. A total of 41 people were arrested and 187 were placed under judicial control measures. Of those arrested, 468 had criminal records for 50 different offences, including theft, looting, sexual abuse and smuggling.

According to press reports, a 17-year-old Syrian was fatally stabbed by three people in Antalya on 02.07.24. According to the police, the alleged perpetrators were minors with criminal records and it is being investigated whether there was a racist motive. Furthermore, according to media reports, all the personal data of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, such as names, addresses, passport details and phone numbers, were leaked on a widely used messaging app during the night of 05.07.24. The Ministry of the Interior confirmed the data leak and the disclosure of the personal data of more than 3.3 million Syrian refugees on 05.07.24. According to the Directorate General for Migration Management, the disclosure constitutes a serious breach of privacy and security, and action is being taken against it. A 14-year-old person has been arrested in connection with this incident. The person had offered to pass on the information to interested parties via their social media account, the Directorate General said.³⁶

Tunisia

Presidential candidate arrested

As reported on 04.07.24, the public prosecutor's office has opened an investigation into Lotfi Mraihi, president of the Union Populaire Républicaine (UPR) party and candidate for the presidential election in 2024. Mraihi and the party's secretary general are suspected of money laundering, transferring goods and opening accounts abroad

without the authorisation of the central bank. The secretary general is in custody. An arrest warrant has been issued for Mraihi who is one of President Saïed's critics and was already sentenced to six months in prison in January 2024. Saïed is accused of taking action against political opponents and other critics since the spring of 2023.³⁷

Ukraine

Civilian victims

According to the regional governor, two people were killed in a Russian attack on the city of Nikopol (Krivyi Rih region) on 02.07.24. The mayor of the city of Dnipro reported that at least five people died in a Russian missile and drone attack on the city on 03.07.24. According to local authorities, Russian attacks on 04.07.24 killed one person each in the regions of Odessa and Kharkiv. According to the governor, two people were killed in another Russian attack on the Zaporizhzhya region. In addition, according to the regional governor, a Russian bomb attack in the city of Selydowe (Donetsk region) on 06.07.24 claimed five lives. According to the authorities, another three civilians were killed by Russian shelling near the city of Kherson on 06.07.24.³⁸

War effort

According to Ukrainian military sources, the Russian Federation is maintaining a military presence on the border with the northern Ukrainian regions of Chernihiv and Sumy. Russian units are laying more and more minefields and carrying out acts of sabotage there. This section of the front is being closely monitored to spot any signs of Russian plans to open a new front there with the aim of exerting pressure on the numerically inferior Ukrainian troops, the sources said.³⁹

Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and energy infrastructure

According to the Russian nuclear authority, on 03.07.24 eight employees of the nearby Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant were injured in drone attacks on a substation in the city of Enerhodar during repair work. The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, repeatedly called for an end to the drone attacks on the nuclear power plant. The Ukrainian side has not yet issued any statement. Both sides have repeatedly blamed each other for attacks on or sabotage of the nuclear power plant.

According to media reports of 06.07.24, Russian drone attacks on the city of Sumy have disrupted the city's electricity and water supply. The media reports say that the Sumy region is being shelled almost daily from Russian positions on the other side of the border. In view of the ongoing Russian attacks on the energy infrastructure, the Ukrainian government is reportedly preparing an agreement with the EU to increase electricity imports.⁴⁰

Court rulings and the prosecution of the "crime of aggression"

On 02.07.24, a special Ukrainian court sentenced the separatist leader of the Russian-occupied Luhansk region, Leonid Pasechnik, in absentia to twelve years in prison for "collaboration" with Moscow on the grounds that he had signed an agreement with the Kremlin on 21.02.22 that paved the way for the Russian invasion three days later. On 03.07.24, a Russian court sentenced an unnamed Crimean resident to 16 years in prison for preparing an explosive attack on a railway line. Furthermore, according to a Russian military court, the well-known Ukrainian journalist Dmytro Gordon was sentenced in absentia to 14 years in prison for calling for the assassination of the two presidents Putin and Lukashenko.

The EU judicial authority Eurojust issued a statement saying that the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA), established in 2023, has received over 2,000 files of evidence from 14 countries. The centre intends to collect and secure documents relating to alleged violations of international law by the Russian Federation in its war of aggression against Ukraine to prepare for any potential later criminal proceedings. The ICPA therefore faces a difficult task, as there is currently no international judicial experience with the prosecution of the "crime of aggression". The offence was only added to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which forms the basis for criminal proceedings under international law, in 2010. Neither Ukraine nor the Russian Federation have ratified the Statute.⁴¹

Venezuela

Tren de Aragua co-founder arrested in Colombia

On 01.07.24, Colombian police arrested one of the co-founders and leading members of Tren de Aragua, Larry Álvarez Nuñez alias Larry Changa, in the department of Quindío in Colombia. According to various sources, Álvarez, who escaped from Tocatorón prison in the state of Aragua in 2015, had initially stayed in Chile and, according to the Colombian Ministry of Defence, had recently lived in Colombia, where he was responsible for the criminal gang's expansion strategy. According to Chilean police, however, he was also still in charge of managing Tren de Aragua's business in Chile from Colombia. Insight Crime therefore sees his arrest, alongside the prison raid in Tocatorón prison in September 2023, as the most important blow against the criminal gang in recent times, which might well lead to further fragmentation of the group.⁴²

Yemen

Food security

In an update published on 01.07.24, the WFP reported that 57% of all households in the north, i.e. in areas under Houthi control, and 60% of households in the south, i.e. in areas under the control of the internationally recognised government, have suffered from a lack of food supplies.

This represents a new negative record caused by the deterioration of the economic situation and the cessation of humanitarian aid in the north of the country in December 2023. The prevalence of malnutrition has also risen sharply and now affects 32% of households in the north and 31% in the south. The governorates of al-Jawf, al-Bayda, Hajja, Amran and Hodeida are affected most seriously.

The WFP discontinued its aid in northern Yemen in December 2023, partly due to funding shortfalls as well as due to the Houthis' unwillingness to cooperate. Around two thirds of the Yemeni population live in Houthi-controlled areas.⁴³

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Briefing Notes

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