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Briefing Notes

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Afghanistan

Security situation: Attacks in Kabul, Taliban fighting resistance groups, terrorism

On 21.09.22, a Kabul bar was bombed where most patrons were employees of the energy provider Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS). Three people were killed and 13 injured. On 23.09.22, another attack targeted Wazir Akbar Khan Mosque in Kabul during Friday prayers (seven dead and about 40 injured). No one has claimed responsibility for the attacks. Clashes between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front (NRF) continue. People continue to be accused of supporting the resistance and are regularly arrested, tortured and/or shot. For example, on 19.09.22, the Taliban took a former army man from his home in Samangan province at night and shot him dead. At the UN General Assembly on 23.09.22, the foreign ministers of Pakistan and Tajikistan said that Afghanistan was rapidly turning into a safe haven for terrorists under the Taliban. The Taliban denied the allegations.

Persecution

In Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand province, the Taliban killed two women during house raids on 17.09.22. The circumstances are unclear. Afterwards, local residents protested against the Taliban. House searches continue in other provinces as well, which often means that the Taliban enter houses unannounced at night. In some places, fear of such raids has caused residents to leave their villages.

Governance

On 21.09.22, Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada appointed a new Minister of Education after the incumbent Minister was criticised in Afghanistan and internationally for saying that the people of Afghanistan were not ready for secondary education for girls (cf. BN of 19.09.22). Other posts, including that of the governor of Panjshir province, were also reshuffled. There was no official statement on the reshuffle.

On 19.09.22, the US and the Taliban exchanged prisoners: Both the former US soldier Mark Frerichs, who had been abducted in January 2020, and the militia leader and drug trafficker Bashir Nursai, who had been imprisoned in Guantanamo since 2005, were released. The Taliban saw the exchange as a new era in their relations with the US.

On 20.09.22, the Taliban had signs in Persian (Dari) removed from ministries in the city of Herat and had them replaced with signs in Pashto and English. On 08.09.22, the Taliban subjected the employees of the Ministry of Finance in Kabul to an Islam test to test their loyalty to the state. Among other things, they were asked about the signs of the Last Judgement. In Farah province, the Taliban ordered male employees of media enterprises to wear beards and turbans on 20.09.22.

Angola

Thousands protest disputed election result

According to media reports, thousands of people took to the streets of the capital Luanda on 24.09.22 in response to a call for a protest by the strongest opposition party, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), to protest against the alleged electoral fraud in the national elections of 24.08.22, in which President João Lourenço and his party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), were able to assert their position of power once again (cf. BN of 29.09.22). The protest was peaceful and without incidents, no clashes or arrests were reported (this time).

Chad

Several dead in inter-communal conflict in the south

The authorities informed that at least 19 people have been killed and 22 others injured in three days of violent clashes affecting several villages in the Lac Iro prefecture (Moyen-Chari province) in southern Chad. The clashes between members of arable, sedentary and pastoralist nomadic communities began after a herd of cattle allegedly destroyed a farmer's crop. Violent inter-communal clashes between nomadic livestock breeders and sedentary farmers are a recurring occurrence, especially in the centre and south of Chad; both groups frequently compete for resources such as water and land (cf BN of 29.08.22).

Colombia

FARC dissident announces ceasefire

On 23.09.22, Southeast Bloc guerrilla commander Nestor Gregorio Vera, alias Ivan Mordisco, announced that all FARC guerrillas would be ordered to avoid confrontations with security forces as much as possible and only use force to defend themselves against attacks. He said the unilateral ceasefire should create the conditions for a bilateral ceasefire and negotiations. Following a bomb attack in the southwestern province of Caueta (cf. BN of 18.07.22) Mordisco was apparently falsely declared dead on 15.07.22 by then Defence Minister Molano. The Indepaz think tank stated that besides the Southeast Bloc, more than 20 illegal armed groups signalled their willingness to demobilise if they are granted legal benefits. Since August this year, Colombia's High Peace Commissioner, Danilo Rueda, has been negotiating the possible resumption of peace talks under the supervision of the UN and the Norwegian government with the ELN guerrilla group (cf. BN of 22.08.22).

DR Congo

Violent dispersal of protests of various kinds

UN Information Radio reported on the violent dispersal of protests by security forces. The police used force and tear gas to break up an unregistered protest in the Gombe neighbourhood of the capital Kinshasa on 21.09.22. The protesters demanded wages and bonuses as well as better working and living conditions for an estimated two thousand public sector doctors. There were injuries on both sides and several protesters were temporarily arrested. The National Union of Doctors and the Congolese Ministry of Human Rights both condemned the police action and the excessive use of force and called for an investigation and prosecution of police misconduct. Citing a decree from the governor of Kinshasa, the local provincial commissioner of the national police justified the dispersal of the rally by citing a general ban on protests in the area of where the rally was held. During an allegedly peaceful protest in the town of Beni in the state of emergency province of North Kivu on 21.09.22, 21 members of the civil movement Lutte pour le changement (LUCHA) were arrested. After the use of firearms against protesters in Rutshuru-Centre (North Kivu) on 22.09.22, one protester was killed and four others were injured. According to the authorities, a responsible police officer was arrested and an investigation was initiated. During the protests in North Kivu, participants demanded that the Congolese army liberate Bunagana, a border town in the territory of Rutshuru, that has been under the control of the rebel group Mouvement 23 (M23) for three months.

Eastern Ituri Province: Security situation for the civilian population, numbers of IDP, child combatants

According to the local head of the UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), non-state armed groups killed 179 civilians in the state of emergency province of Ituri in August 2022 alone. Furthermore, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced that it has registered more than 1.7 million internally displaced persons in Ituri since June 2022. The situation of the IDPs is described as precarious. They have no access to shelter, food, drinking water and medical care. MONUSCO's Child Protection Unit, which reported on the repatriation of 235 children from the non-state armed groups in Ituri since the beginning of 2022, stated that children and school-age adolescents were affected by non-state (forced) recruitment and deployment in almost all villages in the territories of Djugu, Irumu, Mambasa, Magahi and Aru. Those affected are forcibly recruited through propaganda and manipulation of their parents, or recruited with money, or have voluntarily joined non-state armed groups due to lack of employment or social support.

Western province of Maï-Ndombe, Kwilu: Ethnic conflict spreads, 100 dead in new clashes

According to media reports, the inter-ethnic conflict between the Teke and Yaka (cf. BN of 19.09.22), initially limited to the territory of Kwamouth in the western Congolese province of Maï-Ndombe, is spreading to the Bagata area of the neighbouring province of Kwilu to the south. Violent clashes in Kwamouth between 21.09 and 23.09.22 had killed nearly 100 people and triggered new waves of displacement.

Arrest and imprisonment of a lieutenant general on various charges including high treason and coup d'état

According to media reports, Lieutenant General Philémon Yav, a key figure in the military apparatus for 25 years and, most recently, also commander of operations against armed groups in eastern Congo, was arrested on 18.09.22 and has since been detained in Makala prison. Yav is charged with treason and preparing a coup d'état for allegedly collaborating with a senior Rwandan army officer involved in a possible coup d'état plot in the DRC. Yav is also accused of deliberately killing a brigadier general in Goma (North Kivu) by poisoning him. According to anonymous sources in security circles, at least 75 members of the armed forces close to the lieutenant general have been arrested in North Kivu. Other anonymous local sources of unknown nature informed that only the heavy weapons of the briefly detained servicemen were seized. Already at the beginning of February 2022, in connection with the arrest of François Beya, former special advisor to President Félix Tshisekedi on security issues and part of the DRC security system for 40 years (cf. BN of 14.02.22), rumours circulated about an alleged failed coup d'état in the DRC.

Equatorial Guinea

Abolition of the death penalty

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, the country's autocratic ruler since 1979, announced a new penal code on 19.09.22 that will abolish the death penalty and will enter into force in mid-December 2022. The last death sentence was carried out in 2014, according to Amnesty International.

Ethiopia / Eritrea

Tigray: Reports of major offensive by Eritrean forces

According to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Eritrean forces have launched a major offensive in the border area between Tigray and Eritrea. As TPLF spokesperson Getachew Reda reported on Twitter on 20.09.22, the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) were supported by the Ethiopian army and Amharic special forces. Heavy fighting is raging along the entire front. Only last week it was reported that Eritrea had mobilised large parts of its population (cf. BN of 19.09.22). No EDF operation has been officially confirmed so far. The American special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Mike Hammer, confirmed reports of the Eritrean offensive and called the situation extremely worrying.

Gabon

Indictment of the leader of the largest opposition party in parliament

According to media reports, the Franceville public prosecutor's office brought charges for money laundering, criminal association and "collaboration with a foreign power" against Guy Nzouba-Ndama, the leader of the main parliamentary opposition party Les Démocrates (LD), who was placed under house arrest and stripped of his passport on 20.09.22. The prosecution of this high-potential candidate for the presidential elections scheduled for August 2023 (cf. BN of 19.09.22) has drawn criticism from the opposition.

The Gambia

UNDP: Access to education and nutrition, significant challenges for health care

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The Gambia has made significant progress in access to education and nutrition during the 2019 to 2021 reporting period. There has been progress in enrolment and retention rates on the one hand, and the prevalence of children under five years of age suffering from underweight, emaciation and stunting on the other. Serious challenges remain in the area of health care. There is an acute shortage of health workers and they are unevenly distributed. According to UNDP, the density of health workers was only 5.15 per 10,000 inhabitants, which is well below the recommendation of 23 per 10,000 inhabitants. Almost 50 % of the medical professionals and other health workers are to be found in the most densely populated West Coast region. According to UNDP, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need to strengthen the already weak national health system to ensure adequate responses to COVID-19 and treatment of other diseases. UNDP also pointed out that 66.2 % of the total population does not have access to a safe water supply.

Increase in the unemployment rate

The 2018 Labour Force Survey conducted by the Gambia Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with UNDP reported an unemployment rate of around 35%, according to President Adama Barrow the current rate is 41.5%.

Iran

Nationwide protests: Arrests and deaths

During the almost nationwide spread of protests following the death of a 22-year-old woman in police custody (cf. BN of 19.09.22), security forces and protesters clashed violently in numerous cities, including Tehran, Rasht, Tabriz, Sanandaj, Shiraz and Karaj. According to unconfirmed reports, between 41 and 57 people have been killed so far. Among them were both protesters and security forces. Numerous other people have been injured in the unrest. According to official reports, people were shot and killed by security forces when they tried to enter highly secured facilities. There are reports, however, unconfirmed by foreign media that a larger number of people were arrested in Kordestan province, including a high proportion of women. State media reported the arrest of around 1,000 people in the region. According to the Iranian Journalists' Association, journalists who wanted to cover the protests were arrested as well. President Ebrahim Raisi and head of the judiciary Ezhei had previously announced decisive action against protesters. According to a monitoring organisation, internet access has been severely restricted since 17.09.22, in particular mobile radio networks hardly worked at all. In the city of Oshnaviyeh (western Azerbaijan), internet and landline connections were temporarily completely down on 24.09.22 after massive protests and numerous arrests. Foreign media stressed that it was difficult to report under such circumstances.

According to media reports, expressions of solidarity with the protesters included calls for strikes and announcements by teachers and students not to hold classes to protest against the arrests. State media, on the other hand, reported counter-protests in Tehran and other cities on 25.09.22. Thousands of people had taken part to condemn the ongoing protests by critics of the regime, these reports said.

Kyrgyzstan / Tajikistan

Ceasefire agreed after heavy fighting

After heavy fighting on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan between 16.09.22 and 18.09.22, mostly around the Kyrgyz border town of Batken (cf. BN of 19.09.22), both sides agreed to a ceasefire on the evening of 19.09.22 in which, according to the head of the Kyrgyz State Security Committee, "measures were taken to restore stability". Since then, the situation seems to have normalised and there has been no more fighting so far. Both states accused each other of aggression. According to the latest figures, 59 people were killed and 163 injured on the Kyrgyz side, while the Tajik authorities spoke of a total of 41 casualties.

Libya

Fighting in Zawiya causes several deaths and injuries

On 25.09.22, fighting between armed groups, both supporting the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU), left many people, including several civilians, dead and injured, in the western Libyan city of Zawiya, as local media reported.

Morocco

Three years imprisonment for human rights activist Saida El Alami

On 21.09.22, human rights activist Saida El Alami was sentenced to three years in prison in the second instance. She had been charged with insulting a constitutional body, insulting public officials in the performance of their duty, attacking the judiciary and spreading false allegations. In the first instance, she had been sentenced to two years in prison and a fine. The 48-year-old regularly posted reports on social issues critical of the authorities.

Myanmar

Dead in army attack on school

Junta forces killed at least 13 people, including 11 children who were in a convent school at the time of the attack, in air and ground attacks on Let Yet Kone village in Depayin Municipality (Sagaing Region) on 16.09.22, according to UN reports. Local media reported that a total of 17 people were killed and 17 others, including 14 students, were injured in the village. The military said the action was directed against insurgents who were holed up in the school.

Nigeria

More than 600 schools closed nationwide

Although Nigeria's new school year starts this month, over 600 schools will remain closed nationwide due to concerns about student safety. According to UNESCO, more than 20 million students are therefore not in school this month. Compared to a similar survey in May 2022, this is an increase of almost 2 million children.

Villages are frequently attacked and robbed by armed groups. As a result, families usually have to leave their homes and live in emergency shelters without access to a school. In addition, pupils are often kidnapped during such attacks in order to extort a ransom.

Heavy flooding

According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), at least 20 people died in the current floods last week alone. In total, more than 300 people have already died this year. More than 500,000 people in 27 states are currently directly affected by the floods (cf. BN of 19.09.22).

NEMA warns that the situation will worsen in the coming weeks, as some dams have reached a critical state. In addition, food supplies are threatened as large areas of agricultural land, especially in the north of the country, have

been flooded and cultivated crops destroyed. The Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency predicts an increase in flooding for the whole of 2022 compared to last year due to excessive rainfall.

Katsina State: Abductions

On 14.09.22, about 50 people were abducted from Bakiyawa village in the northwest of Katsina State by unknown armed persons (cf. BN of 19.09.22). Four people were killed during the attack and some of the villagers' houses were looted. According to media reports, the kidnappers are still holding 43 people and are demanding a ransom of NGN 250 million (about EUR 590,000, as of 26.09.22) from the residents of the kidnap victims' home village. The villagers stated that they are unable to finance the amount. They said that they had not received any information or assistance from the government regarding the case, while the police said that they were not aware of the ransom demands. However, they are working on a solution to free the abducted persons, it was said.

Pakistan

Humanitarian situation: Floods

As of 22.09.22, most of the flooding has receded across the country and the risk of rivers overflowing is considered low. However, it could take three to six months for the water to recede completely. Meanwhile, 84 districts have been classified as stricken by the disaster, including three districts in Gilgit-Baltistan. More than 1,550 people have died so far. An estimated 7.6 million people have been temporarily displaced. More than two million houses have been damaged, of which 800,000 have been completely destroyed, a sharp increase of 70% since 01.09.22 due to renewed flooding in Lower Sindh. At least 23,900 schools have been damaged or destroyed by the floods nationwide, most of them in Sindh, with more than 5,500 schools still being used as temporary shelters. The country is short 2.6 billion tonnes of wheat. However, according to the National Flood Response Coordination Centre, stocks are sufficient to meet annual demand of 30.5 million tonnes of wheat in 2022. Two out of three internally displaced people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan lack access to basic services. There has been an increase in mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. Since 01.07.22, over 2.7 million people have been treated for these diseases in the flood-affected regions. In Sindh province, gastroenteritis and malaria are major diseases among IDPs. This is where the health system is particularly strained. According to official figures from the provincial government, an additional 450 camps have been set up for the purpose of medical treatment. UNHCR has delivered 1.1 million of the planned 1.2 million life-saving relief goods (cf. BN of 19.09.22). In addition, the World Bank pledged USD 2 billion in aid.

Attacks in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts

On 18.09.22, civilians demonstrated in Swat district against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), after TTP had attacked and killed a member of a peace committee there.

On 20.09.22, a young man was shot dead in front of his house by unknown armed men in North Waziristan tribal district. In targeted attacks in North Waziristan, more than 50 exposed persons such as local tribal leaders, human rights activists, members of the Youth Organisation of Waziristan, religious scholars and security forces have already been killed this year.

On 22.09.22, unknown armed men killed a tribal elder in Khyber District.

Palestinian Territories / Israel

West Bank: Violent intra-Palestinian clashes

On 20.09.22, one person died in violent clashes between Palestinian security forces and residents in Nablus, in the north of the West Bank. The clashes were triggered by an arrest raid by security forces against militia members. The clashes continued until a ceasefire on 21.09.22.

According to media reports, the escalation shows the population's rejection of the Palestinian Authority. The reports said that many Palestinians accuse the Palestinian Authority and especially President Abbas, who was elected for a four-year term in 2005, of condoning and supporting the Israeli occupation.

On 24.09.22, the Israeli military shot and killed a Palestinian man who, according to the military, tried to drive his car into a group of soldiers near the city of Nablus. His family claimed that it must have been an accident.

On the night of 24.09.22, a Palestinian on a motorbike was killed by the Israeli military. According to the military, they opened fire on armed persons in a car and on a motorbike as the vehicles approached the site of their military operation near Nablus. The umbrella organisation of militant groups 'Lion's Den' announced that one of its members had been killed in clashes with the military.

Russian Federation

Partial military mobilisation, subsequent protests and arrests

On 21.09.22, President Putin ordered the partial mobilisation of the Russian armed forces in response to the military setbacks in the Ukraine war. Contrary to official statements that 300,000 military reserve personnel are to be called up who are mainly reservists with relevant specialisation and combat experience, independent Russian media in exile, citing government sources, put the actual target at between one and 1.2 million persons. Moreover, the mobilisation is reportedly not limited to the above-mentioned categories of people. Rather, reserve members who have not done military service or who are legally entitled to a deferment due to illness or having children are also receiving call-up notices. Furthermore, the mobilisation decree also has an impact on contract soldiers, henceforth they may not terminate their contracts, as they often wished to do in the past; there are only few exceptions to the termination ban (e.g., reaching the age limit).

According to the civil rights portal OWD-Info, the declaration of mobilisation on 21.09.22 was followed by protests in at least 38 cities nationwide with a total of several thousand participants, making it the largest protests since March 2022 (cf. BN of 21.03.22). By 25.09.22, a total of around 2,250 people are reported to have been arrested, including in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. According to press reports, the security forces used rubber truncheons and stun guns against the protesters, in some cases violently, and in several cases directly initiated the conscription of young male protesters.

Somalia

US air strike

On 18.09.22, a US air strike killed 27 al-Shabaab fighters near the town of Bula-Barde in the Hiiraan region, a statement of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) released on 21.09.22 says. Civilians were not harmed. In Hiiraan, the Somali National Army and its allies launched an offensive against al-Shabaab in recent weeks (cf. BN of 19.09.22). According to AFRICOM, this was the sixth air strike in 2022.

Attack

On 25.09.22, several people were killed and injured in a suicide attack near a military base in Mogadishu. Casualty figures range from one person to 15 people. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.

Somaliland: Postponement of presidential elections

Elections scheduled for 13.11.22 will be postponed until the end of next year due to technical and financial problems, according to the Election Commission. The media report that for the opposition this is an attempt by incumbent President Muse Bihi Abdi to extend his term in office.

Sri Lanka

Security forces disperse Colombo protest

According to reports, on 24.09.22, several hundred students demonstrated in Colombo demanding the release of arrested protesters. The day before, the president had declared the city centre a high-security zone and banned protests around key government institutions, including the presidential palace and parliament. Police reportedly used tear gas and water cannons. Several people were taken into custody.

Meanwhile, the economic situation remains tense. The inflation rate rose to 70.2 % in August. Food prices went up by 84.6 % against the previous year.

Sudan

Supply situation deteriorates

According to UN data of 23.09.22, 650,000 children are currently suffering from severe malnutrition. UNICEF forecasts that half of these children will die without support and aid.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) currently estimates that 15 million people suffer from hunger every day and the number will rise to 18 million by the end of September. From July to August 2022 alone, 177,350 people are believed to have been displaced due to internal conflicts and are now in need of aid.

According to the UN and WFP, the causes of the current situation include the military coup of October 2021, as a result of which international aid funds were frozen, the ongoing political unpredictability and protests, which are weakening state structures and aid delivery capabilities. Added to this is the persistently poor economic situation, which is reinforced by inter-communal conflicts in Sudan and the effects of the war in Ukraine.

Furthermore, financial support to UN agencies is decreasing, and they have so far received only one-third of the aid money targeted for 2022, totalling USD 348.9 million.

Persistent rainfall and flooding

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), nearly 349,000 people are currently directly affected by heavy rains and flooding. In addition, at least 24,800 houses have been destroyed and 48,200 damaged in 16 of the 18 states. The number of people killed by the floods and rains has risen to 146 so far (cf. BN of 19.09.22). In addition, more than 5,000 hectares of agricultural land have been destroyed.

Due to the generally poor state of the infrastructure and roads damaged or destroyed by the water, many people can only be supplied inadequately and with delays. So far, 125 schools have been completely destroyed by the floods, which is why more than 140,000 children are currently unable to attend school.

Syria

Crop losses due to climate change and conflict-related resource and infrastructure failures

According to media reports, drought and lack of rain in 2022 reduced Syria's already vulnerable harvest. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), only a quarter of the pre-conflict harvest will be harvested this year, with an estimated 1 million tonnes of wheat. The causes for this decline originated already in the past years. The conflict has affected the infrastructure of many farms, whether through destruction or due to the poor economic situation or lack of modernisation, such as the establishment of irrigation systems. Furthermore, agricultural land also suffers from the poor security situation as well as from remnants of war. Due to the global increase in prices for wheat and other crops, the crop failures and the necessary purchases from abroad represent a further burden for Syria's already economically weak population. According to UN figures of February 2022, about 97% of the population was already living below the poverty line at that time and more than half of the population was food insecure.

Northwest: HTS violently stops 'Peace Caravan'

On 12.09.22, more than 400 people who were collectively trying to pass the Bab al-Hawa border crossing from northwestern Syria into Türkiye were forcibly stopped by the forces of the Islamist Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham (HTS), which is in control there. The people had set out together as part of the 'Peace Caravan' movement launched on social media, with the aim of reaching European countries. According to media reports, journalists were prevented from reporting. Other sources say that they were even violently attacked. The people participating in the caravan were also beaten and dispersed.

Türkiye

RSF report on the murder of journalist Musa Anter

On 20.09.22, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published a report on the murder of Kurdish journalist Musa Anter. The columnist of the newspaper Özgür Gündem had been shot dead on 20.09.1992 in Diyarbakır in southeastern Türkiye. Although the statute of limitations in the case was due to expire on 20.09.22, the 6th High Criminal Court

in Ankara did not decide at its last hearing on 15.09.22. The case was adjourned to 21.09.22, and thus one day after the expiry of the limitation period. According to the report, nearly 40 media workers have been killed or disappeared in Türkiye since the 1990s. RSF says that impunity for crimes against journalists remains an alarmingly common problem. Perpetrators and collaborators are said to have gone unpunished for some 20 murders that took place in southeastern Anatolia between 1990 and 1996.

Tunisia

Protests against economic situation

According to media reports, hundreds of people demonstrated against poverty, sharp price increases and the shortage of food in Tunis on 25.09.22. They demanded support from President Kais Saied. Police forces used tear gas against the protesters.

Criticism of new media law

The new so-called law against rumours and fake news issued by the President of the Republic on 16.09.22 has met with sharp criticism. The dissemination of false information or rumours on the internet will in future be punishable by prison sentences of up to five years. Untrue allegations against state representatives can be punished with up to ten years in prison. According to official statements, the new law is intended to prevent a person's reputation from being ruined, public safety from being impaired or terror from being spread. In addition, the law can also be applied against people who report critically or allegedly negatively on developments in Tunisia from abroad.

Definitions of rumours and fake news are not included in the decree. Critical voices fear strong (self-) censorship, as well as the further repression of journalists.

Ukraine

Development of warfare

In the areas of the Donbass controlled by pro-Russian separatists, i.e., "DNR" and the "LNR", as well as in the oblasts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhya, referendums on the accession of these areas to the Russian Federation have been taking place since 23.09.22 until probably 27.09.22 inclusive. The referendums are contrary to the Ukrainian legal order. The press spokesperson of the Russian president, Dmitrij Peskov, announced the regions' speedy integration after the expected positive result. In a prisoner exchange on 22.09.22, 55 members of the Armed Forces of Russia, the "DNR" and the "LNR", as well as the former head of the now banned pro-Russian party "Opposition Platform - for Life" Viktor Medvedčuk were exchanged for 215 members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This is the largest exchange of prisoners since the beginning of hostilities on 24.02.22. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian counter-offensive continues. In Donetsk oblast, the action is mainly around Bakhmut, which continues to be attacked by Russian forces. Ukrainian forces are storming the town of Liman, which was captured by Russian troops in May. Further north, the offensive against the Russian defence line on the left bank of the Oskil continues. If the Ukrainian army captures Liman and gains a foothold on the left bank of the Oskil, this will clear the route for advances to Luhansk oblast. Against the background of the partial mobilisation currently taking place in Russia, Oleksij Arestowytsch, advisor to the head of the Ukrainian president's office, stated that further mobilisation measures in Ukraine are not ruled out, which would then particularly affect (male) students. Already since 14.09.22, students studying at foreign universities have been banned from leaving Ukraine.

Venezuela

Third report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission

In its third report for the UN Human Rights Council, published on 20.09.22, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela concentrated its examination on the role of the state intelligence services SEBIN (Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional) and DGCIM (Dirección General de Contrainteligencia Militar). Already in its 2020 report, the investigative commission considered that it can be fairly assumed that the state, as part of its systematic policy to suppress dissidence, at times by means of human rights

violations, relied on various security organs, including the two intelligence services which constitute two of six structures and are the subject of a detailed analysis. The current report is based on more than 240 newly conducted interviews with victims, their relatives and former employees of the secret services, as well as on background information gathered for previous reports through earlier interviews and document reviews. According to the report, the Venezuelan state has been using both intelligence services since 2014 to suppress actual or presumed opposition figures. Witnesses testified that the executive staff of the secret services and their subordinates have acted to suppress critical and oppositional opinions, also with the knowledge or on the instructions of the highest political leadership, including President Maduro and the vice-president of the ruling party (PSUV) Diosdado Cabello. However, such orders were never issued in writing. The team of experts finds that in addition to the interviews, there are indications for the involvement of the top political leadership, in the form of promotion patterns, equipping security operations with appropriate resources and announcing arrests, in some cases shortly before they are actually made. The targeted opposition members were victims of arbitrary arrests and detentions, sometimes based on falsified evidence or forced confessions, and allegedly there were various acts of torture and sexual violence, the report says. The arrests were often preceded by shorter or longer surveillance phases of the target subject. Numerous human rights violations were allegedly committed, especially in the cells of the two secret service headquarters, the Helicoide (SEBIN) and the Boleíta (DGCIM), but also in hidden houses (so-called casas de seguridad) spread throughout the country, in which the persons concerned were temporarily detained. Furthermore, there is evidence of crimes against humanity being committed by the secret services. Although the Helicoide prison has officially been under the control of the civil prison administration since November 2021, the SEBIN continues to exercise de facto control over the political prisoners, according to witness reports. In addition, the report includes a detailed discussion of the hierarchical structure including chains of command and the modus operandi of the secret services. There are indications that employees who disobeyed orders to commit such offences were forced to carry them out.

In addition, another report submitted by the commission also lists numerous violations of human rights of the local population, including numerous indigenous groups in the mining belt (Arco Minero del Orinoco) and other regions of Bolívar. Civilians living there and people working in the gold mines are repeatedly victims of sexual exploitation, homicides, kidnappings, forced labour and human trafficking. Not only armed irregular groups, but also state security forces, such as members of the armed forces (Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana, FANB), are responsible for human rights violations.

Joint decision on checkpoints in the country, criminal investigation initiated after video recordings

According to Art. 20 of a joint resolution (N° 109) of the Ministries of Defence and Interior and Justice of 07.09.22, citizens are henceforth allowed to "record by video or audio the procedures to which they are subjected at police and military checkpoints [alcabalas] in the country, as part of exercising their constitutional and legal rights, they may not be prevented from doing so". According to Art. 20, no one can be obliged to hand over his or her mobile phone at such points, nor to delete any content saved on it. On 17.09.22, an investigation was launched against officers of La Guaira state police because of a video published on social media documenting irregularities during a roadside check by the police and their attempt to prevent the filming.

Vietnam

Facebook user arrested

On 22.09.22 a Facebook user was arrested in Quang Ngai province for publishing posts critical of the government. He is accused of "abuse of democratic freedoms" (Art. 331 Vietnamese Penal Code).

