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Group 22 – Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

4 August 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

On 29.07.14, a suicide bomber killed Hashmat Karzai, a cousin of President Hamid Karzai, in the city of Kandahar. The attacker had hidden the explosives under his turban. During the presidential elections, Hashmat Karzai had supported Ashraf Ghani. As yet, no-one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Pakistan

Three people killed in clash against Ahmadi members

On 27.07.14, three women and two children were killed in the city of Gujranwala (Punjab province) when an angry mob set fire to their house. Eight other women were wounded. The victims are members of the minority Ahmadiyya religious community. The incident was sparked by a young family member's Facebook posting which was deemed by Sunni Muslim extremists to be insulting Islam. The angry mob set five houses and several vehicles on fire. The police tried to calm down the crowd but did not actively intervene.

Couple killed by family members

A woman and a man were killed by relatives in Punjab province because they had married without the consent of her family. According to police reports, two brothers of the wife abducted the young couple, tortured them and dumped their dead bodies.

Iraq

Security situation

According to the website Iraq Body Count, the month of July claimed a death toll of 1,481 civilians. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) states that a total of 1,186 civilians were killed in July and another 1,511 wounded. Additionally, 551 members of the security forces lost their lives and 467 more were injured. Baghdad was the most affected province with 1,035 civilian victims (415 people killed and 620 wounded), followed by the provinces of Salahaddin (305 dead, 289 injured), Ninive (209 dead, 270 wounded), Kirkuk (689 dead, 127 wounded), Babil (77 dead, 72 injured) and Diyala (71 dead, 66 wounded). For Anbar province, no figures were given.

Islamic State (IS) makes major gains

According to press reports dated 03./04.08.14, the Islamic State (IS) has extended its area of influence in the northern parts of Iraq in the regions north and west of Mosul, seizing control of areas with predominantly Kurdish population. Lastly, these areas had been protected by Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, who, however, had retreated following fierce fights with dozens of casualties, as was reported. Apparently, IS has taken over control in several towns and villages. They were reported to have raised their black flag over the administrative buildings in the city of Samar (Sumar) and to have brought under their control two new oil fields near an important pipeline between Iraq and Turkey. One news agency cited a member of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) denying the retreat of the Kurdish troops.

UN reports say that approx. 200,000 civilians, mostly Yazidis, have fled the region.

UN extends mandate of mission in Iraq

On 30.07.14, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMI for another year.

New Iraqi President elected

On 24.07.14, the Iraqi parliament elected Kurdish politician Fouad Masoum as the new president. He is a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

Syria

Over 5,000 casualties in July

Also last week saw fierce fighting between army and rebels/IS. In the night of 27./28.07.14, dozens lost their lives, among them children, in clashes in the city of Aleppo. Apparently, barrel bombs were used in the air raids. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that on 01.08.14 seven government soldiers were killed in Qalamoun region. On 02.08.14, Syrian government forces were reported to have killed at least 50 militants; apparently, fighters from both the Nusra Front and IS participated in the clashes near the town of al-Jobeh. Before, Islamist Brigades were said to have hit a Syrian fighter jet and attacked an army checkpoint. Also on 02.08.14, it was reported that tribesmen in three eastern Syrian villages had driven out IS militants. The fights in Deir ez-Zor province seem to have claimed more than a dozen of lives. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the extremists retreated from the villages of Kishkiyeh, Abu Hamam and Grani. The fights had erupted after extremists had detained three tribal members on 30.07.14. Also, the Syrian Observatory reported the killing of Nusra chief in Idlib province, Yaacub al-Omar, who was apparently hit when a bomb went off in his car near his house in Khan al-Subul area. According to reports dated 03.08.14, at least 32 people were killed when the Syrian air force attacked rebel-held posts in the town of Douma near Damascus.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported that the month of July claimed over 5,000 lives.

Clashes at the border to Lebanon

On 02.08.14, Syrian rebels attacked the Lebanese border town of Aarsal, taking several security officers as hostages. At least eight Lebanese soldiers and two civilians as well as numerous attackers were said to have been killed in the clashes. Apparently, the fights erupted shortly after the arrest of Ahmed Jomaa, a presumed Nusra commander. Immediately afterwards, security forces have strengthened their presence in the region.

Gaza Strip/Israel

Temporary ceasefire in most of Gaza

Israel has declared a humanitarian ceasefire in most of Gaza for 04.08.14. The army announced that the ceasefire would begin at 9am CEST and last until 4pm CEST and apply to all of the Gaza Strip except the eastern part of the city of Rafah, where the fighting would be continued. At the same time, Brig Gen Mordechai warned that the army would respond immediately should the ceasefire be broken. The ceasefire is designed to give time to collect the bodies and wounded and also to give the civilians a brief period of rest. After nearly four weeks of the conflict in Gaza, Israel has started to withdraw most ground forces. On 03.08.14, Israeli media reported that most of the soldiers had left the strip, moving to grounds on Israeli territory close to the border.

Turkey

First balloting for Turkish presidential elections in Germany

After four days, the first elections for Turks living abroad came to an end. So far, voters had to go to their country of origin in order to cast ballots. Throughout Germany, roughly 1.4m Turks were asked to elect the new President of their home country. To accomplish this, the Turkish government had organised voting centres in the Berlin Olympic Stadium and in big halls in the cities of Hannover, Düsseldorf, Essen,

Frankfurt, Munich and Karlsruhe. Information on turnout was sparse, there was only a first trend reported from Düsseldorf, where Turkish Vice-Consul provided estimates that up to 25,000 of 260,000 persons entitled to participate in the elections had cast their vote. The ballot boxes will be transferred to Turkey. Counting will not start before the end of the Presidential elections on 10.08.14.

Libya

Situation continues to be dangerous

After a two-day-ceasefire to allow firefighters to control a huge blaze at a fuel depot at Tripoli airport, the situation has been deteriorating again. Fights to control the capital's airport have erupted again; also, the rebels were able to seize an army post southeast of Benghazi. Several Western governments have evacuated their embassies and urged their citizens to leave the country. On 30.07.14, also the European Union temporarily pulled out their international staff. The number of Libyans seeking refuge in Tunisia is on the rise.

Mass exodus of foreign workers

The deteriorating security conditions have prompted tens of thousands of foreign workers from Muslim neighbouring countries to return to their homes, despite the fact that Libya is in need of experts in nearly all areas of economy. As the major airports have been closed down, the mass exodus is taking place via land and sea routes, leading to chaos at the border crossing points, particularly at the Raz Ajdir border crossing into Tunisia. The neighbouring country wants to prevent refugees from stranding on their territory, and, like Egypt, is worried about a possible influx of Islamist extremists. Neither country is keen on having refugee camps like in 2011 during the war against the Gaddafi regime.

Nigeria

Kano: Three attacks launched by female suicide bombers

On 30.07.14 at around 2.30pm, a young female suicide bomber blew herself up in the administrative building of a polytechnic school in the midst of a group of students in Kano (capital of northern Kano State). The blast claimed the lives of six people and injured another seven.

On 28.07.14 at around 10pm, a 17-year old woman (other sources gave her age as 19) joined the queue of customers waiting to buy kerosene from the state NNPC petrol station in Hoto district, Kano city. She then detonated a bomb which killed her and three others, seven more people were wounded.

On the same day around 2pm, a 19 year-old female suicide bomber blasted herself while she was about to be checked by police officers. Accounts on the place of the incident are varying, with some sources giving the entry of the Kano Trade Fair Complex, others stating the entry of the shopping centre Ado Bayero Mall. The explosion killed the attacker and wounded six persons, among them two police officers.

Since 27.07.14, the number of suicide attacks by female 'teenage bombers' in Kano has risen to four.

Boko Haram attacks in Adamawa claim the lives of at least 50

On 27.07.14, at least 50 people were killed in attacks launched by Islamist terror organisation Boko Haram on three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in northeastern Adamawa State. One of the attacks launched on the village of Garkida, Gombi LGA, killed four soldiers deployed there and several civilians. In Madagali LGA, six people lost their lives. In Hong LGA, attacks on Zar, Lube and Mubeng villages claimed the lives of approx. 30 people.

Dozens killed during Islamic Movement of Nigeria sect rally

On 25.07.14, the Shia Muslim sect Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) organised a procession in the city of Zaria (northern Kaduna State) both for the annual al-Quds Day and against the military operations launched by Israel in Gaza. According to army reports, the march had caused a gridlock on a major road, delaying a military convoy passing by. When the soldiers made way for their convoy, they were shot at by participants of the rally, whereupon the military responded to the fire. Sect leader Sheikh Ibraheem El-Zazzaky, however,

denied that it was the marchers who had opened the fire. According to a list of names published on the sect's internet site, a total of 32 INM members were killed, among them three sons of El-Zazzaky.

West Africa

Measures against Ebola virus outbreak

On 01.08.14, the WHO convened an emergency meeting in the Guinean capital of Conakry, which was attended by the heads of state of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. The focus of discussions was an emergency programme totalling 100m US\$ (approx. 75m EUR). According to the WHO, several hundred more medical experts need to be deployed to the epidemic region, to support the overstrained authorities and relief agencies. Meanwhile, the three affected countries, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, have quarantined the common border region. New information provided by the WHO says that since February, at least 729 people have died from the disease, among them 60 medical personnel, with more than 1, 300 cases of confirmed or suspected infections. Also in Nigeria, the first suspected cases of the highly-infectious and deadly disease have been confirmed. On 03.08.14, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced the deployment of 50 public health experts to West Africa. On 06.08.14, the WHO Emergency Committee will meet to discuss the international consequences and decide whether the disease constitutes a 'public health emergency of international concern' (PHEIC).

Uganda

Constitutional Court annuls anti-gay law

Uganda's tough anti-gay law has been declared null and void. The presiding judge stated that the bill had been passed by parliament without the requisite quorum and was therefore illegal. The supporters of the anti-gay law announced to appeal the decision before the Supreme Court.

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, who is deemed to be a fierce opponent of homosexuals, had enacted the law in February 2014. Among others, the law provided for life imprisonment for homosexuals and obliged citizens to denounce gays to the authorities. The law had caused an international protest wave. Already before the bill was passed, homophobia and discrimination of LGTBs had been widespread in Uganda. Originally, the death penalty for repeated homosexual acts was planned to be included in the bill. It was only after the removal of this clause that parliament passed the bill in December 2013.

Rwanda

New Prime Minister appointed

On 24.07.14, Anastase Murekezi was appointed new Prime Minister of Rwanda. The former labour Minister is successor to Pierre Habumuremyi who had been dismissed by President Kagame for suspected connection to Rwandan Hutu rebel group FDLR (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda) operating in eastern DR Congo. Mr Murekezi is the third PM since 2000.

Somalia

Formation of semi-autonomous state of Central Somalia agreed

On 30.07.14, representatives from the regional administration of Galmudug (parts of Galgaduud and Mudug region) and Himand & Heeb (part of Galgaduud) and the paramilitary group of Ahlu Sunna wal-Jama'a signed an agreement in Mogadishu to endorse the formation of a semi-autonomous federal state in central Somalia. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Somalia, Nicholas Kay, welcomed the agreement as a first step in a process of state formation in central Somalia. Also the representatives of IGAD, EU und AU welcomed the agreement and pledged their cooperation for the successful implementation.

Member of Parliament killed

Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the killing of a MP in Mogadishu on 01.08.14, stating that this was the fifth MP they had killed so far this year. An al-Shabaab spokesman said the MP was killed because he had consented to the deployment of foreign soldiers in Somalia and because parliamentarians in general were serving as pillars to the 'unlawful government'.

Women killed in bomb blast

On 03.08.14, at least four women were killed and another six wounded in Mogadishu, when a bomb was detonated by remote control in a pile of garbage. The victims were street cleaners. Although no-one has yet claimed responsibility, the attack is attributed to al-Shabaab members.

Al-Shabaab members executed

On 03.08.14, a firing squad of the security forces executed three al-Shabaab members. A military tribunal had found them guilty of killing civilians. One of the convicts was allegedly involved in the attack on the presidential palace in the beginning of July (see BN of 14.07.14).

Armenia/Azerbaijan

Fierce fights around Nagorno-Karabakh

Since 31.07.14, both the demarcation line between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and the regular Armenian-Azeri border have seen the fiercest fights in years between Armenian and Azeri troops. At least 15 soldiers have been killed until 03.08.14, apparently most of them members of the Azeri forces. Upon mediation by Russia, talks between Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and his Azeri counterpart Ilham Aliyev have been scheduled in the city of Sochi for 08./09.08.14 to settle the conflict.

Ukraine

Refugee flow

The UNHCR stated that as of 18.07.14, a total of 130,000 Ukrainians have fled to Russia to escape the fights in the eastern parts of the country. Additionally, there are some 100,000 internally displaced persons, among them at least 12,000 Muslim Crimean Tatars. Most refugees come from the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions. UN findings on the human rights situation provide little evidence in support of the claims made by the rebels and Moscow that Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine are in danger.

China

Dozens killed in unrest in Xinjiang region

Dozens have been killed in attacks in China's troubled Xinjiang region. The state news agency Xinhua cited police reports speaking about a 'terrorism attack' when on 28.07.14, an armed group killed dozens of civilians in Shache county. Many of the attackers were subsequently shot dead by the police, the report went on. Apparently, both Han Chinese and ethnic Uyghurs were among the victims.

The province in the far western part of China has seen repeated violent clashes, lastly in May, when a total of 39 people were killed in the capital city of Urumqi.