



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Warlords ready to support the Afghan army against the Taliban

In case the Taliban would boycott the peace process, some of the old Mojahedin and warlords from the civil war period (1992-96) and/or their successors have announced to support the Afghan army with their militias in the fight against the Taliban. Ethnic Tajik Ahmad Massoud, the son of the well-known Mojahed Ahmad Shah Massoud, has reportedly announced that he would lead a new resistance movement against the Taliban in the provinces of Takhar, Baghlan, Kunduz and Samangan. The same applies to ethnic Tajik warlord Ismail Khan in Herat, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami supporters in Badakhshan and Baghlan, and other militias in Maidan Wardak and Daikundi (including the Hazara Resistance Front). In view of these developments, some observers fear a new fragmentation of the parties; they see a second civil war looming in a situation similar to that after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1989 and call for unconditional joint action against the Taliban. So far, only the international troops have been able to keep under control the numerous and ethnically diverse warlords, the observers say. Neither the Afghan government nor the military is thought capable of accomplishing this. It seems likely that the warlords will begin to strive for more power in the country.

ISIS and al-Qaida fighters in Afghan prisons

On 27.04.21, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) reported that 408 ISIS militants, among them and children, from at least 13 countries are being held in Afghan prisons. The majority are from Pakistan (299), followed by Uzbekistan (37) and China (16). Furthermore, 309 foreign al-Qaida fighters are imprisoned in Afghanistan, the NDS stated.

Attacks on civilians

On 01.05.21, a university lecturer was gunned down in Kabul; three women and a child were killed by a grenade impact in Nangarhar province. On 30.04.21, a car bomb exploding in front of a guesthouse killed 26 civilians and injured about 110 more in the town of Pul-e Alam, Logar province. The victims were mainly students preparing for their exams. The Afghan government has condemned the attack as a crime against humanity. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. On 29.04.21, four employees of an energy company and two other civilians were injured in an attack in Nangarhar province. Also on 29.04.21, seven civilians, all of them young men and relatives of an army soldier, were reported killed by the Taliban in Baghlan province. On 28.04.21, it was reported that in the Arghandab district of Kandahar province, 28 civilians had been killed and 151 injured by Taliban landmines in the previous ten days. On 26.04.21, a religious event (a Quran recitation competition attended by 150 mainly young people) was shelled with rockets in Kunar province; 16 people were injured, most of them students between the age of ten and 18. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Also on 26.04.21, five civilians were killed and three others injured by gunmen in Nangarhar province.

After Prime Minister Abiy had removed the Ginbot 7, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other groups from the list of terrorist organisations in mid-2018, only al-Qaida and al-Shabaab were recently listed as militant groups.

Gambia

Conviction for homosexuality

The Gambian news portal The Voice reports that the Kanifing Magistrate Court ruled on 26.04.21 that Senegalese national Mustapha Jai was guilty of an 'attempted unnatural offence' under Article 145 of the Criminal Code 1965 (as amended in 2005), and sentenced him to the maximum prison term of seven years or a fine of 100,000 Dalasi (approx. 1.995 USD, as of 03.05.21). The court also ordered the convict to pay damages in the amount of 50,000 Dalasi (approx. 977 USD, as of 03.05.21) to the victim. For the first time, the Gambian news portal The Standard had reported about an arrest on charges of homosexuality on 01.07.20. One day later, the news website The Point reported on the formal indictment of the accused on charges of attempted homosexual acts.

Guinea

Hundreds still in detention without charge

Around six months after the presidential election of 18.10.20 and the subsequent protests (cf. BN of 02.11.20 and 21.12.20), many of those arrested are still held in detention. Apparently, there are nearly 400 detainees, among them party officials of the Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG). Some of them are in a precarious state of health; others have apparently died in custody. Court hearings have not yet been set, and many detainees have not yet been formally charged. The government rejects the opposition's accusations that the detainees are political prisoners. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights has reportedly condemned the continued detention.

India

COVID-19 pandemic: tense situation; relief supplies have arrived

Last week, India recorded the highest number of daily deaths from COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic. The health system is near collapse, hospitals and crematories are overcrowded. In January 2021, India had launched a vaccination campaign. Since 01.05.21, all adults are eligible for vaccination; before that date, only those over 45 received the vaccine. However, several states have run out of vaccines. Relief supplies have arrived from various countries, e.g. ventilators from Germany and a vaccine shipment from Russia, which had already delivered ventilators, oxygen generation equipment and medicines. Additional medical equipment and medicines have also arrived from France and Belgium. Media report that India plans to increase its own vaccine production by June 2021. The state railway company has announced to provide 4,000 coaches with 64,000 temporary beds for Corona patients. Meanwhile, regional elections have been held in some states and there have been large rallies in West Bengal, among other places.

BJP defeated in in West Bengal regional elections

According to the provisional vote count of 02.05.21, Mamata Banerjee was elected Chief Minister of the state of West Bengal for a third term. Her regional Trinamool Congress Party (TMC) secured a two-thirds majority in the 294-seat regional assembly before the final count ended. Banerjee is currently India's only female chief minister. Prime Minister Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) made significant gains, securing at least 77 seats, compared to just three seats in the 2016 regional elections.