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Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

10 February 2014

Afghanistan

Current progress report

The new progress report of the Federal German government on Afghanistan addresses the topics internal security, good governance and development of the country.

The report notes in terms of security that there are still clear regional differences. The security situation is divided into five levels of threat, ranging from “manageable security situation” to “uncontrollable security situation”. The Federal German government thinks that at least in the densely populated areas and along the important traffic routes a “sufficiently manageable security situation” can be assumed. This is the equivalent to level number three and means that the dangers in such a region have an adverse effect on the mobility and freedom of action of the population, the government and the representatives of the international community. This could mean the deterioration of the security situation, however limited in terms of region and time. In those areas, government institutions and authorities are still in general respected. About 80% of the population live in these territories. In the capital city of Kabul the security situation is mainly manageable (second best level: only slight restrictions regarding mobility and freedom of action, deterioration of the security situation in terms of region and time within narrow limits, government’s authority is respected). In particular in the rural areas of the eastern border provinces and in the traditional strongholds of the government opponents (the Taliban and others) in the south are reportedly still considerable or high levels of threat. (Information on the number of victims of the conflict, see BN dated 20 January 2014).

In terms of good governance, the report says that corruption is still the most important problem as it has been in the past. There is hardly any progress in fighting corruption. According to Transparency International’s index on corruption, Afghanistan was again in 2013 among the most corrupt countries, in line with Somalia and North Korea.

The human rights situation is still difficult, in particular the situation of women. Violence against women is still very common and widely used. 90% of all cases of violence are about domestic violence.

In 2014 the economy faces particular challenges. In the past few years, clear progress has been made in terms of reconstruction of the country and the gross national income, access to water and power supply, medical treatment and education. Problems are to be expected on the employment market as the withdrawal of the international troops will mean that up to 80,000 people could lose their jobs with ISAF. In addition, approximately 400,000 young people per year are looking for jobs.

Afghanistan remains one of the most underdeveloped countries in the field of health care.

UN report on the protection of civilians

According to the United Nations, the number of killed civilians since the beginning of the conflict has never been higher than in 2013. Last year the numbers registered were 2,959 killed civilians and 5,656 wounded civilians, the number of wounded and killed civilians increased by 14% in contrast to 2012.

New code of criminal procedure

The Afghan Parliament adopted a new code of criminal procedure which according to human rights organisations does not protect women properly. The new law which still has to be signed by the President prohibits that relatives are heard as witnesses. Therefore, the prosecution of domestic violence, forced marriages or marriages of minors will still be difficult. Human rights activists call on President Karzai not to sign the law.

Iraq

Security situation

Last week again there were attacks every day as in the weeks before. According to Iraq Body Count, the number of fatalities among civilians in February is at 238 people (status: 8 February 2014).

Situation in Anbar province

According to UNAMI, almost 45,000 families, approximately 250,000 civilians have fled from the towns of Falluja and Ramadi. Thousands of refugees are reportedly cut off from help of any kind. In addition, there are reports of a shortage of food and water and a rapid deterioration of the health care situation. The government has reportedly closed numerous roads leading to Falluja and Ramadi; several bridges have reportedly been destroyed. In general, there is hardly any detailed and reliable information on the situation in Anbar province.

Maltreatment of women

According to the human rights organisation Human Rights Watch, more than 4,500 women of mainly Sunni belief are illegally arrested in prisons at present, tortured and maltreated. Reportedly, they have often not been arrested owing to their own crimes but are often subject to a questioning on male relatives who are suspected of supporting militant groups. The Iraqi Ministry of human rights declared that these incidents are isolated cases. In other respects, they are working on fighting possible attacks in prisons.

Pakistan

Security situation

A suicide attack on 4 February 2014 onto Shiites in the town of Peshawar in north-west Pakistan killed eight and wounded 42.

Negotiations with the Taliban

Representatives of the Pakistani government and the Pakistani Taliban have started peace talks on 6 February 2014. Both the government and the Taliban called for a ceasefire. In addition and on request of the Pakistani government, the US armed forces have reduced the number of their drone missile attacks. The USA said that since December they have not carried out any more drone missile attacks in Pakistan.

Syria

Relief convoys bring help to the people in Homs; people evacuated

After the two parties to the civil war have agreed on a ceasefire for three days until 10 February 2014 with the mediation of the United Nations on 6 February 2014, from 7 February 2014 on hundreds of people were evacuated from the besieged city of Homs (numbers given vary between 420 and 600 people). In spite of the ceasefire, the relief convoys which supplied food from 8 February 2014 on to the approximately 2,500 inhabitants who have remained in Homs came under fire. Representatives of the government and the rebels accused each other of having violated the ceasefire.

Syria peace talks in Geneva continue

On 10 February 2014 the negotiations in Geneva continue with moderate optimism with the aim to put an end to the civil war between the government and the opposition.

Fighting continues

Islamist fighters who had started an attack in order to cut off the supply routes from Damascus into the north of the country, captured an Alawite village in Hama province and killed 25 people in the built-up area of Maan, who were mainly members of a militia which supports Head of state Mr Bashar al-Assad, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights on 9 February 2014 which belongs to the opposition.

Al Qaida dissociates itself from ISIS

On 3 February 2014 head of al Qaida Mr Zawahiri dissociated himself from the group “The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria” (ISIS) or “The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” (ISIL) which is active in Syria and which has recently had heavy fighting with other rebels. This organisation which is under the leadership of the Iraqi Mr Abu Bakr al-Bagdadi, controls part of the ar-Raqqa province - which is rich in mineral oil - in Syria and territories in the bordering Iraq. Experts say that this declaration is an attempt to increase the importance of the extremist organisation Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Nusra Front) as the official branch of al Qaida among the fragmented rebel groups in Syria. In addition, al Qaida is reportedly trying to concentrate the power of the Islamist rebel groups in their fight against the Syrian President Mr Bashar al-Assad instead of weakening them by fighting against each other.

Egypt

16 people killed on the Sinai

On 7 February 2014 the Egyptian armed forces killed 16 Islamists in an operation against extremist Islamists on the Sinai Peninsula near the border to the Gaza Strip, as they themselves reported. In the north of the Sinai, the extremist organisation Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis which is reportedly linked to Hamas and al Qaida, has always again executed attacks onto the Egyptian security forces.

Tunisia

Success of the security forces

On 4 February 2014 the Minister of the Interior said that the Tunisian National Guard killed the alleged murderer of the well-known opposition member Mr Chokri Belaid in a special operation. The security forces have reportedly killed “seven heavily armed terrorists” in total. Among them was reportedly Mr Kamel Gadhgadhi who was suspected to have killed Mr Belaid in February 2013. At that time, the murder triggered off a severe internal political crisis. The Tunisian Minister of the Interior published pictures taken in a house which was subject of the fighting and which was full of weapons and explosive devices. Mr Gadhgadhi himself had reportedly in addition worn an explosive belt.

On 9 February 2014 in addition, four people were arrested in an anti terror operation in Ariana near the capital of Tunis. Among them was reportedly Mr Ahmed al Melki who was suspected to have participated in the murder of the Tunisian opposition politician Mr Mohamed Brahmi in July 2013.

Nigeria

Many fatalities due to attacks on villages in the federal states of Plateau and Kaduna

On 6 February 2014 alleged members of the Fulani (ethnic group in Nigeria) attacked around two a.m. in the federal state of Plateau in central Nigeria the village of Mavo (Wase Local Government Area, LGA). They killed 22 ethnic Taroh (Tarock) and burnt down about 10 houses.

On 4 February 2014 alleged members of a Fulani militia had attacked the villages of Dajak and Atakar (Riyom LGA) in Plateau. They had killed 30 people (19 in Dajak and 11 in Atakar). More than 50 houses were burnt down.

In the night of 3 to 4 February 2014 alleged members of a Fulani militia attacked the villages of Zangang und Mayit (Kaura LGA) in the neighbouring federal state of Kaduna. 22 people died, among them one policeman and one soldier.

In the middle of January already, 14 alleged members of the Fulani had attacked the village of Shonong (Riyom LGA) in Plateau and killed 23 people.

This region has always again been the setting of attacks of mainly Muslim Fulani onto mainly Christian crop farmers due to disputes regarding land.

Kenya

People killed when a gathering was dissolved

On 2 February 2014 the police forcibly broke up a gathering of young Muslims in the Musa mosque in Mombasa. Thereby, at least two people were killed, among them one policeman. More than 100 people were arrested. When Muslims wanted to bury one of the victims, an incident on 5 February 2014 happened in which Muslims killed one person.

According to the Kenyan secret service "National Intelligence Service", it was the intention to recruit young people in the Musa mosque for the Somali militia al-Shabaab. The controversial militant cleric Mr Aboud Rogo Mohammed who was murdered in August 2012, had been preaching in this mosque (see BN dated 3 September 2012).

South Sudan

Numerous people killed in attack onto a village

28 people were killed on 6 February 2014 in an attack onto the village of Konyang near the town of Bor in the federal state of Jonglei, eleven children were kidnapped. Eye witnesses said that the offenders were reportedly not Nuer rebels of Riek Machar, but members of the ethnic group of Murle under the command of David Yau Yau. Mr David Yau Yau leads the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Defense Army (SSDM/A), Cobra Faction. Only on 31 January 2014 the SSDM/A had signed a ceasefire agreement in Addis Abeba with representatives of the government of South Sudan after several months of negotiations. According to Lieutenant General Mr Malual Ayom Door, Head of the South Sudanese troops in Jonglei and prior to the attack the village chief had asked for the presence of soldiers in and around Konyang in order to protect the village. However, the transfer of troops had not been made in time. After the attack, hundreds of civilians fled into the capital of Bor and into the federal state of Lakes.

Mr David Yau Yau started his rebellion in 2010 when he had not been elected to parliament of the federal state. In June 2011 he accepted an amnesty offered by the government and he accepted that his militia - made up of members of the ethnic group of Murle - and he himself were integrated into the armed forces of South Sudan. In April 2012 he deserted and since then he has again been fighting against the government of South Sudan. He said that he aims at the separation of the federal state of Jonglei *[into two parts]* as the ethnic minorities living there - Murle, Anyuak, Kachipo and Jie - are deprived of their rights.

Central African Republic/Cameroon

New acts of violence

On 3 February 2014 the police reported fighting between Muslims and Christians in the town of Boda (approximately 100 km west of the capital of Bangui) in which more than 70 people died. Christians, armed with machetes and guns, have reportedly attacked Muslims after Muslim Seleka rebels had crossed the territory. There are also reports of firesetting at approximately 30 houses.

According to Human Rights Watch, ten people died in clashes between Christians and Muslims on 8 and 9 February 2014 in the capital of Bangui.

Lynching in military ceremony

Only a few minutes after the end of a military ceremony with the interim President Ms Catherine Samba-Panza in the capital of Bangui soldiers of the Central African Armed Forces (Faca) killed a man, they stabbed him, kicked him and pelted him because they thought that he was a Muslim ex-rebel of the Seleka.

Influx of refugees continues

According to the UNHCR, thousands flee to Cameroon in order to escape the violence. Only since the end of January about 8,800 people have come to the town of Kentzou in eastern Cameroon. Now the number of refugees since the beginning of the fighting has increased to more than 20,000. The registered Central African refugees are mainly Muslim women and their children.

Turkey

Increased control on the internet

On 5 February 2014 the Turkish Parliament adopted a government bill which will allow Turkey's telecommunications authority to block any website without first seeking a court ruling. In addition, authorities shall be given the right to track the behaviour of web users and to store all data on web users' activities for two years without having to inform the people concerned accordingly.

There are very controversial opinions regarding the new rules, the opposition parties are accusing the government of wanting to introduce censorship. Government representatives declared that the law will support an improved protection of young people and of privacy rights on the internet. The blocking of websites has already been relatively simple on the basis of the previous internet law however, in general, a court ruling was necessary to do so.

Protests against the new internet law in Istanbul on 8 February 2014 led to heavy clashes between several thousand protesters and the security forces.

The EU Commission said that the new law which needs to be signed by the Turkish president Mr Gül is not in accordance with EU standards.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mass protests in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Protests in Bosnia against the government have developed to the heaviest unrests for years. In the capital of Sarajevo protesters set fire on the President's office. The police have reportedly tried to dissolve the protests by using a water cannon, as media reports said. In several other cities fire was set on government buildings. Thousands participated in street fighting with the police who fought back against the protesters with teargas, rubber bullets and stun grenades. The government came together to an extraordinary session and called on the protesters to start negotiations.

The reasons for the protests since Wednesday are the poor economic situation and high unemployment rates. Bosnia is the country with the highest unemployment rate on the Balkan. An economic recovery is in addition difficult because jobs in the industry and politics must be distributed according to a quota system among the three ethnic groups of Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks.

Myanmar

Political prisoners

In contrast to an announcement made by President Thein Sein to release all political prisoners by the end of 2013, human rights organisations still say that 55 political prisoners will remain arrested. There are reportedly 33 of them on a list of the Political Prisoners Assessment Committee established by the government which identifies political prisoners in Myanmar's arrest institutions. Another 22 are reportedly members of armed rebel groups. The people concerned have reportedly not only been convicted owing to political offences, but also due to other crimes, something which makes their release difficult.