

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	568
Land:	Myanmar
Kilde:	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF)
Titel:	Briefing Notes
Udgivet:	12. juni 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. oktober 2023



Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

12 June 2023

Afghanistan

Security situation: ISKP attack on Taliban memorial service

Media report that on 08.06.23, a suicide attack was carried out on a memorial service for a Taliban official in Badakhshan province, killing at least 11 people, including a senior Taliban official, and wounding 30 others. The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Government leadership: Opium cultivation reduced by up to 80 percent

According to the 05.06.23 report prepared by a leading expert on Afghan drug trade, who worked with Alcis, a British company specialising in satellite analysis, for this report, the annual opium cultivation in the country has fallen by up to 80 percent compared to last year.

Angola

Five demonstrators killed

On 05.06.23, five people were killed and eight others injured when Angolan police opened fire during a demonstration in the town of Huambo in the centre of the country. According to media reports, people across the country protested against the cut in fuel subsidies that came into effect on 01.06.23 and the subsequent drastic increase in petrol prices. Protests against the government's decision had reportedly already been organised by the main opposition party UNITA in the capital Luanda.

Bangladesh

Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar demand safe return to Myanmar

On 08.06.23, Rohingyas from Ukhiya and Teknaf refugee camps in Cox's Bazar formed a human chain following rumours of their immediate repatriation to Myanmar. Rohingyas from at least 13 camps took part in the rally. On 09.06.23, Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar launched a campaign demanding a dignified return to their homeland Myanmar, saying that the guarantee of fundamental rights was a prerequisite for a safe and speedy repatriation process. There are also four Rohingya families staying in a government-run repatriation facility in Kutupalong refugee camp. On 25.05.23, the group was transferred from Bhasan Char to Cox's Bazar. UNHCR assured the families that they could return to Bhasan Char if they decided not to return. The UNHCR said that it remains committed to creating enabling conditions in Myanmar for the safe and dignified return of refugees. Refugees wishing to return should be provided with clear and comprehensive information in advance so that they can make a free and informed decision. Under no circumstances should refugees be forced to return, UNHCR said.

Bangladeshi national killed at the border with India

On 10.06.23, a Bangladeshi national was allegedly shot dead by Indian border guards in Thakurgaon district. According to data from the human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra, at least ten people were killed on the Bangladesh-India border between August and December 2022. Over a period of one year, the estimated number is more than a dozen.

Energy crisis

Bangladesh is experiencing its worst energy crisis since 2013. The reasons cited are the weather, dwindling foreign exchange reserves and the devaluation of the national currency. A third of all power plants are running out of gas, coal, and fuel oil. With more heat waves predicted and the peak electricity consumption months of July to October approaching, power cuts are expected to continue.

Burkina Faso

At least 21 people killed in terrorist attack

A suspected terrorist attack claimed 21 lives on 05.06.23 in the town of Sawenga in the east of the country. According to media reports, 14 of the dead were members of the VDP volunteer army and four were soldiers of the Burkinabe army. Security officials said that more than 50 suspected terrorists were killed in a subsequent counterattack.

Central African Republic

UN: Humanitarian situation remains critical

According to the UN of 05.06.23, the humanitarian situation remains critical for large parts of the population. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic said that 3.4 million people, more than half the population, are in need of assistance and protection. In total, the survival and human dignity of 2.4 million people are at risk. As a result of the clashes between different armed groups, one in five people have fled within the country or abroad.

People often lack access to basic services. Three out of four people do not have access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Only 55 percent of children complete primary school, the coordinator said.

The humanitarian situation has been exacerbated by the conflict in Sudan, which has increased humanitarian needs. Vulnerable households are already struggling to meet their basic needs as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the coordinator added.

UN: Prevalence of gender-based violence

According to the UN, an average of two women or girls are victims of gender-based violence every hour. In the first quarter of this year alone, nearly 5,000 such cases were registered.

Chad

Fighting between the army and two rebel groups

Between 31.05. and 06.06.23, army units reportedly clashed with two Chadian rebel groups, the Front de la Nation pour la Démocratie et la Justice au Tchad (FNDJT) and the Conseil de Commandement Militaire pour le Salut de la République (CCMSR) in the northern region of Tibesti. According to the army, 23 rebels were killed, others were captured, military equipment was seized, and eight members of the armed forces were wounded. The FNDJT, on the other hand, claimed to have killed 15 soldiers, while only five of its own ranks were killed.

Colombia

Agreement on bilateral ceasefire between government and ELN

On 09.06.23, the Colombian government and the ELN guerrillas announced a 180-day bilateral ceasefire in Havana, starting 03.08.23. This agreement was the result of the third round of negotiations between the two parties, following a brief interruption of the process in May 2023.

Ethiopia / Somalia

Attack on Ethiopian military base

The Ethiopian military has reported that on 07.06.23, it foiled an attack on one of its bases in the Ethiopian-Somali border town of Dolow (Gedo region). Four soldiers were reportedly injured in two suicide attacks. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility and said the attack was successful.

The Gambia

NPP sympathisers blamed for attacks on journalists

The Gambia Press Union (GPU) and media reported that on 31.05.23, two journalists were jointly attacked and injured in Banjul in connection with their work. The attack reportedly occurred in connection with media coverage of the swearing-in ceremony of Mayor Rohey Malick Lowe, who is a member of the main opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) and was confirmed in office, and councillors of the Banjul City Council. The victims suspect supporters of the president's National People's Party (NPP) of being behind the attack. The cases were reported to the police. In a statement, the NPP condemned the attacks but did not confirm that NPP supporters were responsible for the assault. The GPU reiterated the continuing problem of impunity for attacks on media workers by supporters of political parties or in connection with the coverage of political events (cf. BN of 08.05.23).

Ghana

Protesters clash with army in gold mining town

Media reports indicate that on 30.05.23, Ghanaian army personnel fired shots to disperse a protest by miners and their families in the town of Obuasi in the Ashanti region. The protest apparently erupted after the authorities discovered an illegal entrance to a mine owned by AngloGold, one of the world's largest gold mining companies, and arrested seven illegal miners. However, hundreds of illegal miners were reportedly stuck in the mine for several more days, although it was unclear whether they were unable to leave the mine or were reluctant to leave for fear of arrest. President Akufo-Addo had announced his intention to crack down on the country's widespread illegal mining when he took office in 2017.

Guinea-Bissau

Parliamentary elections without major incidents; opposition wins absolute majority

In the new parliamentary elections originally scheduled for 18.12.22, but then postponed to 04.06.23, the coalition Aliança Inclusiva - Terra Ranka (PAI-Terra Ranka), led by the former ruling party Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC), secured an absolute majority with 54 out of 102 seats, according to media reports citing the national electoral commission. The Movimento para Alternância Democrática (MADEM-G15) party led by President Umaro Sissoco Embaló won 29 seats.

The elections, which took place more than a year after Embaló dissolved parliament (cf. BN of 23.05.22), were held without major incidents. International observers described the voting process as largely free, transparent, and peaceful despite some shortcomings, such as the lack of gender parity in the electoral lists. However, the leader of the Partido Africano para Paz e Estabilidade Social (PAPES), Ulisses Monteiro, reported a 'brutal' attack on four PAPES candidates on election day by members of an unspecified rival party.

A total of 22 parties participated in the election. There are currently no known electoral challenges. President Embaló has accepted the election results.

Under the current constitution, the candidate of the majority party automatically becomes prime minister. Contrary to his statements during the election campaign, Embaló agreed to appoint Domingos Simões Pereira, former prime minister and PAIGC leader, as the new prime minister.

According to media reports, the election result threatens Embaló's plans to change the country's constitution from a semi-presidential to a presidential system.

Haiti

At least 42 dead in floods

The disaster management authority said on 05.06.23 that at least 42 people have died and more than 13,000 people have been displaced from their homes following heavy rains and subsequent flooding. The country's agricultural sector has also been severely affected. Gang violence is further hampering rescue and relief efforts. Already on 11.05.23, UNICEF had warned of a 30 percent increase in child malnutrition rates compared to the previous year.

Iran

Sentences against three citizens from Balochistan-Sistan

On 07.06.23, three Iranians from the Balochistan region were sentenced for 'waging war against God'. One of the defendants was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, the other two to ten years' exile in eastern Azerbaijan. This charge is regularly used for dissident activities.

Declining religiousness in society

On 01.06.23, the liaison between the Raisi government and the country's religious seminaries, Mohammad Abolghassem Doulabi, publicly stated that of the country's 75,000 mosques, some 50,000 were de facto closed due to low attendance. Doulabi is also a member of Iran's assembly of experts. He stated that the consequences of religious rule in Iran has led to a shift away from religious practices. In particular, he highlighted the mistreatment of people in the name of religion as a major factor. Whether the figures given are from a survey or a matter of rhetoric cannot be ascertained at this stage, but they would be consistent with other indicators of declining observance of religious practices in Iranian society.

Mandatory hijab law at Tehran University

On 05.06.23, representatives of the student body of Tehran University stated that repression against violations of the headscarf law increased significantly during the previous week. Several female students and eleven professors were summoned to disciplinary committees. In addition, patrols on campus have been stepped up, resulting in a significant number of assaults on women who have allegedly violated the dress code.

Iraq

Attack on barracks in Kirkuk

On 10.06.23, an attack targeted an Iraqi army barracks in Kirkuk province, killing two officers and injuring three other soldiers. The attack is attributed to IS. It took place in an area disputed between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG). Due to the weak presence of the Iraqi state in the disputed areas, they still serve as retreat areas for the remaining IS cells.

Amnesty International calls for clarification of fate of disappeared Sunni Muslims

On 05.06.23, Amnesty International reiterated its call on the Iraqi government to clarify the fate of hundreds of Sunni men who have disappeared after coming into contact with units of the PMU (People's Liberation Brigades) during the liberation from IS; particularly in Anbar province. At the time, the Shiite PMU units were widely accused of abducting and killing Sunni boys and men. There is ample evidence of abuses and human rights violations against

Sunni civilians by PMU members in IS-occupied areas. In particular, there have been calls to clarify the whereabouts of 643 men and boys from Fallujah, of whom no trace has been found since they were evacuated by the PMU in 2016.

Death sentences

On 05.06.23, a Baghdad court sentenced eight men to death for drug smuggling. They had been caught with substantial quantities of opium (34 kg according to the indictment). Three other defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment for similar offences in Maysan and Najaf provinces. In 2022, the number of death sentences handed down fell sharply, with only 44 recorded by Amnesty International. In recent years, drug offences have increasingly been the reason for heavy prison sentences or the death penalty in Iraq.

Lebanon

Deaths in prisons

On 07.06.23 Amnesty International published a report on deaths in Lebanese prisons, noting a sharp increase in deaths in 2022, with a total of 34 deaths. Prior to the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2019, the numbers had remained constant at around half (e.g. 14 in 2015, and 18 in 2018). The report lists several possible causes, including a significant deterioration in health care as a result of the crisis, continuing delays in court proceedings (over 80 percent of the detainees are held in pre-trial detention) and the massive overcrowding in prisons. The prison health budget, like many others, has seen its purchasing power radically reduced in recent years due to the huge inflation. The equivalent of 7.3 million USD in 2019 was reduced to 628,000 USD in 2022. However, medical goods in particular have to be purchased internationally for foreign currency. In addition to the economic situation, there is also evidence of torture and ill-treatment of detainees by staff. In response to the report, the interior ministry has stated that last year, 14 disciplinary proceedings were initiated against members of the security forces for extortion or mistreatment of detainees.

Libya

Several thousand migrants expelled to Egypt

Security forces in eastern Libya say they arrested and expelled some 4,000 illegal migrants to Egypt in early June. However, the Egyptian authorities said that only 2,200 people without valid residence permit were deported, most of whom had Egyptian citizenship.

In this respect, international human rights organisations have criticised that the expulsions took place under inhumane and violent conditions.

Myanmar

Security situation

Between 20.04 and 26.05.23, junta forces burnt down at least 20 villages in Kanbalu Township (Sagaing Region), killing four civilians and displacing some 50,000 others. Local resistance groups (People's Defence Forces, PDFs) responded by attacking regime troops. On 10.05.23, after fighting with local PDFs and Karen National Union (KNU) troops, junta forces arrested several civilians in Htantapin Township (Yangon Region) and burned 19 of them alive, including eight children. Between 27.05. and 30.05.23, four civilians, including one child, were killed and a dozen others injured in fighting between junta troops and PDFs in Hakha and Thantlang Townships (Chin State) and Pekon and Pinlaung Townships (Shan State). Seven of 16 civilians abducted by junta troops during raids in Kawlin Township (Sagaing) on 30.05.23 were found dead on 05.06.23. During the raids, the military clashed with local PDFs and carried out air strikes on civilian targets. Between 27.05. and 05.06.23, junta troops killed nine civilians, including three children, during an operation to regain control of Moebye town (Shan). On 05.06., unidentified individuals killed two women who were said to be related to one of the killers of pro-military singer Lily Naing Kyaw in Htantapin (Yangon). On the same day, junta troops clashed with local PDFs in Thabeikkyin Township (Mandalay Region) and then set fires in Chaung Thale and Kyaw Lay villages. On 05.06 and 06.06.23, the military carried out

air strikes on three schools in villages controlled by the PDF and ethnic armies in Kale and Kani Townships (Sagaing) and Kawkareik (Kayin State), killing one person and injuring six others, including two children. During a raid on a PDF base in Monywa (Sagaing) on 07.06.23, security forces shot dead two civilians and several PDF members. Also on 07.06.23, unidentified persons shot dead a Myanmar army major and a regime-appointed village administrator in Kyauktage Township (Bago Region).

Nigeria

Sokoto State: Dozens killed in attacks on villages

Official police reports say that during the first weekend of June, unidentified gunmen on motorbikes killed more than 30 people in attacks on residents of a total of six villages in north-western Sokoto State. The media, quoting some of those attacked, reported that the assaults may have been in retaliation for refusal to pay protection money. The attacks appear to have been coordinated, coming just days after the new president, Bola Tinubu, took the oath of office (cf. BN of 05.06.23) and promised reforms to improve the security situation, which is very challenging in parts of the country.

Benue State: At least 25 killed in attacks on villages

In the early hours of 03.06.23, unidentified gunmen reportedly killed at least 25 civilians in attacks on villages in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area (LGA), central Benue State. Also, many civilians were injured and buildings were set on fire during the attacks. The chairman of the Katsina-Ala LGA reportedly believes that local criminal gangs are behind the attacks. Mass casualty attacks have not been uncommon in Benue State recently (cf. BN of 22.05.23).

Pakistan

Government steps up pressure on PTI

The government's crackdown on former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party continues unabated. In Punjab province, businesses owned by PTI supporters are now being targeted by the security forces. This development has been accompanied by an exodus of key figures from the PTI in Punjab province. Many of them have joined the political camp of Jahangir Khan Tareen, who wants to bring them together on a new platform. To this end, the new Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) has been formed, which could play an important role in Punjab politics in the next general elections.

Peru

Monetary poverty 2022

Data from a study on the development of monetary poverty by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) in May 2023, based on the results of the National Household Survey (ENAHO), indicate that the number of people affected by monetary poverty rose to more than nine million in 2022. This represents more than a quarter of the total population and is an increase of more than 7 percent compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2019 and of 1.6 percent compared to 2021. Rural areas are disproportionately affected by monetary poverty compared to urban areas, and the Andean regions of Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Huánuco, Pasco, and Puno also have high levels of poverty, with rates exceeding 40 percent. According to ENAHO, around 5 percent of the population was affected by extreme poverty in 2022. The INEI study also examined malnutrition and health, among other issues, stating that more than 35 percent of the population suffered from a calorie deficit in their diet; almost a third had health problems that were not medically treated. The study also revealed deficits in access to and receipt of education. Furthermore, only about a third of the population is covered by a pension scheme, the study says.

Dengue outbreak claims many lives

According to the 'Right to Health' programme manager of the Ombudsman's office on 31.05.23, Peru is currently experiencing a severe dengue outbreak. More than 1,500 people were hospitalized at this time. According to the health ministry, the number of cases had risen to over 130,000 by 08.06.23, and more than 200 people have died.

The northern regions of the country, such as Piura, Lambayeque, and Loreto, are particularly affected. Hospitals and medical facilities there are overstrained. The outbreak is due to heavy rainfall and an increase in the number of mosquitoes, and the El Niño phenomenon might make the situation worse.

Russian Federation

New trial against Alexei Navalny

Jailed anti-Kremlin activist Alexei Navalny faces many more years in prison in a new criminal trial. In a closed preliminary hearing, the trial was set to begin on 19.06.23. A spokeswoman for Navalny said the trial would take place in the maximum-security prison where he is currently already serving a long sentence. He faces seven charges in the indictment, including founding and financing an extremist organisation. He might face up to 30 more years in prison. Navalny has already spent more than two years in prison after being sentenced to nine years for alleged fraud.

On 06.06.23, the European Court of Human Rights ordered Russia to pay Navalny EUR 40,000 in compensation for what the judges called a failure by the Russian authorities to adequately investigate his poisoning in 2020. The ruling is legally binding on Russia, as it was initiated before Russia's final withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights in September 2022. However, it is unlikely that Russia will comply with the ruling and pay Navalny compensation, as the Russian leadership has not recognised rulings by the Strasbourg court for several years.

Senegal

Deadly unrest: Domestic political situation and other developments

After the deadliest riots in years following the recent sentencing of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko (cf. BN of 05.06.23), the current domestic political situation is generally described as superficially calm but tense. Sonko remains under de facto house arrest. Further unrest and protests are feared if he is arrested.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI) have both called for independent investigations into the events, accountability, and an end to the repression. Meanwhile, the Senegalese government has announced judicial inquiries into the violence and its root causes. AI recently highlighted the lack of a criminal investigation into the deadly riots in March 2021, which were triggered by Sonko's temporary arrest on rape charges (cf. BN of 08.03.21 and 15.03.21).

On 08.06.23, AI revised the death toll from 16 to currently at least 23. Sonko's party Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité (PASTEF), last put the toll at 30. Citing testimonies and video footage, Amnesty International and others reported that armed persons in civilian clothes ('nervis') moved around in pick-up trucks without number plates and violently attacked demonstrators with the connivance and support of the security forces. The pick-ups were observed at the headquarters of the presidential party Alliance pour la République (APR). Two alleged 'nervis' told the French news agency Agence France-Presse that they had been paid to crack down on protesters. The government has denied allegations of the use of nervis.

Citing lawyers and the opposition, HRW said that at least 250 people were arrested and that some of them were beaten in Dakar and the surrounding area alone. Most of them were members or sympathisers of PASTEF, but also other members of the civil society, among them women and children. Media reports indicate that more arrests were made, including of PASTEF members, but no figures were given. The first criminal trials in this context have reportedly taken place. In the case of accused minors under the age of 14, the trials have generally resulted in acquittals.

HRW called on the government to release all demonstrators as well as all arbitrary and unlawful detainees, especially children, who were peacefully exercising their constitutional rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Private station Walf-TV suspended for reporting

According to consistent media reports, the private station Walf TV remains off the air because of its live coverage of the protests (cf. BN of 05.06.23). The station was suspended for a period of one month under questionable circumstances. Walf TV was temporarily suspended in the past for its live coverage of protests (cf. BN of 13.02.23).

Human rights situation

Carine Kaneza Nantulya, deputy director of HRW's Africa division, called for an end to arbitrary arrests and repression of demonstrators, media representatives and anti-government and opposition figures in the country. Alioune Tine, Senegalese human rights activist and founder of the AfrikaJom think-tank, told HRW that never before since the 1960s have there been so many political prisoners in Senegal.

Somalia

Terrorist attack on hotel

According to the Somali government, several people were killed in an attack by Al-Shabaab on a hotel in Mogadishu on 09.06.23. Apparently, the dead include six civilians and three security personnel, as well as all seven attackers. Two suicide bombers blew themselves up at the entrance to the hotel before other militia members stormed the building. By the next morning, security forces had ended the siege and rescued over 120 hotel guests and staff.

Children killed in detonation of unexploded ordnance

On 09.06.23, at least 27 people, most of them children, were killed and more than 50 others injured when a grenade exploded on a football field near the town of Qoryooley in southern Lower Shabelle region. The iron object was an unexploded ordnance from earlier fighting, which, according to local sources, became visible after rainfall.

Attack on former police commander

On 05.06.23, a bomb attack targeted the house of Abdifitah Qoslaye, the former commander of the Hodan district police station in Mogadishu. Officials say he escaped the attack unhurt, but four of his bodyguards were killed and several others injured. Qoslaye was recently dismissed after one of his bodyguards killed a businessman. A person believed to be responsible for the attack has reportedly been arrested.

Violent clash between rival clans in Lower Shabelle

Local sources say that on 07.06.23, militias from two rival clans, Shan Alemod and Galjeel, clashed over disputes over resources and territorial control in Yaaqbiri Weyne (Lower Shabelle region). At least 15 people were reportedly killed and many civilians injured. The two militias reportedly obtained weapons and ammunition from military depots in Mogadishu intended for the offensive operations against al-Shabaab.

South Sudan

Fighting between communities in Upper Nile State

On 06.06.23, fighting broke out between members of the Shilluk and Nuer communities at the UN camp for refugees in Malakal (Protection of Civilians site). The clashes were apparently triggered by a knife attack which turned deadly. More than 20 people were killed and over 50 injured in the escalating violence. As of December 2022, the IOM reported that approximately 37,032 displaced people were living in the camp, with media reports varying between 41,000 and 50,000 people staying there.

Impact of the fighting in Sudan

The conflict in Sudan, which has been ongoing since April 2023, is increasingly affecting neighbouring countries such as South Sudan. The UNHCR estimates that more than 100,000 people have fled to South Sudan since the outbreak of fighting. Their care is becoming a growing challenge for local authorities and international organisations. The refugees include many returnees who had previously fled from South Sudan to Sudan. South Sudan's economy is also suffering as a result of conflict, as the northern parts of the country in particular are heavily dependent on the Sudanese economy.

Sri Lanka

Student protest in Colombo

Last week, security forces used tear gas and water cannons against hundreds of students protesting in Colombo. They were demanding the release of people arrested in connection with the mass anti-government protests in 2022, which were triggered by the worst economic crisis in the country's history and led to the resignation of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Sudan

Efforts to maintain ceasefire

After both the Sudanese Army (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) agreed on 06.06.23 to new but indirect talks moderated by the US and Saudi Arabia, a 24-hour ceasefire was agreed on 09.06.23, starting on 10.06.23 at 06:00 hrs.

On 06.06.23, General Al-Burhan declared Volker Perthes, the UN Special Representative and head of the UN Mission for Sudan (UNITAMS), persona non grata and called for his dismissal. For more than a year, Perthes had been accused by the interim military government and its supporters of promoting foreign interference in Sudanese affairs. In May 2023, Al-Burhan accused Perthes of exacerbating the fighting between the SAF and RSF and of contributing to RSF's feeling of encouragement to carry out attacks.

Ongoing fighting

Media reports indicate that while the ceasefire was respected on 10.06.23, fighting resumed immediately afterwards with undiminished intensity. Overall, the SAF continues to focus more on air strikes and less on ground operations. In Omdurman city, the SAF now reportedly controls only the immediate vicinity of a military barrack, with the rest of the city largely under RSF control. Residents report looting, theft and squatting by RSF forces. With the exception of the 24-hour ceasefire on 10.06.23, aid deliveries to civilians in the capital have been difficult to guarantee, as aid workers have been unable to move around the city due to continued air and artillery strikes. Supplies of electricity, drinking water and basic commodities are also becoming increasingly difficult and patchy.

According to recent reports, the conflict, which has been simmering since April 2023, has claimed at least 1,800 lives and displaced more than 1.5 million people. Reports of sexual violence against women are also on the rise. In the first two weeks of the conflict, 49 attacks on women and children were officially registered. Although both actors are held responsible, the majority of the assaults are attributed to RSF units. Recently, there have been increasing reports of gang rapes by RSF units in the Darfur regions.

Security situation in Darfur

The security situation in Darfur remains fragile. Media reports indicate that on 05.06.23, the RSF launched a major offensive in the area between the towns of Al-Fashir and Kutum in North Darfur, capturing Kutum and a military barrack of the SAF's 22nd Brigade. The attack was triggered by the killing of a relative of a former Janjaweed militia leader and of a current leader of the Revolutionary Awakening Council. The offensive claimed at least 40 lives in Kutum alone.

Media reports based on eyewitness accounts describe a continuing bad situation in the town of El-Geneina. Apparently, the town has become a lawless place since the end of May 2023, with armed individuals going from house to house and robbing, abusing and/or killing the people living there. There are no security forces able or willing to intervene. However, more detailed reports from the city are currently unavailable, as the communication networks in El-Geneina have collapsed.

Syria

Several hundred IS fighters to be brought before a tribunal

On 10.06.23, the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria (AANES; a.k.a. Rojava) announced that it would prosecute hundreds of detained IS fighters from abroad after their home countries have refused for years to take them back.

AANES is the civilian counterpart to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). They are currently holding more than 10,000 suspected IS fighters, including 2,000 foreign nationals from around 60 different countries, and a further 51,000 family members, mainly women and children, in detention centres, some of them improvised, in north-eastern Syria.

AANES said it still hoped for the establishment of an international tribunal to prosecute IS militants involving the UN and international and local human rights organisations. An international criminal trial has so far failed, mainly due to the fact that AANES is not a recognised entity under international law.

Two days earlier, the foreign ministers from more than 80 countries in the international coalition against the IS met in Saudi Arabia. There, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged a further 150 million USD for stabilisation in Syria and Iraq. Around 900 US soldiers are currently stationed in north-eastern Syria.

Togo

Journalist detained for several days

On 30.04.23, journalist Edouard Kamboissoa Samboe was briefly detained by the army in the north of the country. This was reported in the media in May 2023. A report by the Committee to Protect Journalists said on 10.05.23 that members of the Togolese armed forces arrested Samboe, who runs the news website Laabali, because he wanted to report on the aftermath of the alleged terrorist attack of 20.04.23 on the village of Waldjouaque (cf. BN of 24.04.23). Reportedly, Samboe himself stated that he was taken to a nearby army base and interrogated there. His phones and computer were confiscated and the audio and video recordings he had made that day were erased. He was then taken into the custody at the gendarmerie station in the northern Togolese town of Dapaong and released on 02.05.23 after signing a document promising not to return to the area without first informing the authorities. His telephones and computers were subsequently returned to him. According to the latest Press Freedom Index for Togo, Reporters Without Borders had recently noted an improvement in press freedom (cf. BN of 08.05.23).

Türkiye

HDP mayors arrested

On 09.06.23 Müserref Gecer and Emrah Kilic, the two co-mayors of the HDP of Patnos, were arrested in eastern Agri province. No reasons for the arrests have been made public. According to a HDP report, the Turkish government has removed a total of 48 HDP mayors from office since 2019 and appointed trustees in their place. Since the first appointment of a trustee in June 2019, a total of 72 HDP mayors have been arrested, and 15 of them remain in detention, according to the party.

Arrests on suspicion of links to the Gülen movement

Between 05.06.23 and 09.06.23, arrest warrants were issued for more than 90 people in several provinces for alleged links to the Gülen movement.

As part of an investigation launched by the Konya chief public prosecutor's office, arrest warrants were issued on 05.06.23 for 19 people, including businessmen and military officers. Some of them were accused of using the smartphone app ByLock. The Turkish police carried out operations in seven provinces and arrested 18 of the suspects.

In two further investigations, the Ankara public prosecutor's office issued arrest warrants on 06.03.23 for 30 people, including lawyers and former civil servants. The suspects are being sought.

A total of 19 people were arrested in nine provinces after the Izmir general prosecutor's office issued arrest warrants for 23 suspects, among them military officers and former military cadets. 15 of the suspects have been arrested.

On 09.06.23, the chief public prosecutor's office in Istanbul issued arrest warrants for a further 19 people, including medical doctors, nurses, teachers, and lawyers.

Ukraine

Massive flooding after dam collapse in southern Ukraine

The collapse of the dam at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station in the early hours of 06.06.23 caused widespread flooding in the adjacent areas on both sides of the Dnipro River in the disputed southern region of Kherson. Russia and Ukraine blamed each other for the incident at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on 06.06.23. UN Secretary-General António Guterres called the collapse a 'monumental humanitarian, economic and ecological disaster' on the sidelines of the meeting. According to the Ukrainian military administration of Kherson oblast on 09.06.23, a total of 3,624 houses in 32 localities of the region have been flooded and more than 2,300 people evacuated from Ukrainian-controlled areas on the right bank of the Dnipro River. Ukrainian sources say that a total of 42,000 people are affected by the floods in an area of 600 km² on both sides of the Dnipro. According to Russian reports of 07.06.23, around 2,700 houses have been flooded on the Russian-occupied left bank of the Dnipro; a state of emergency has been declared in the town of Nova Kakhovka, which borders the dam. Parts of the Ukrainian-controlled regional capital of Kherson are also severely affected by the floods, according to the authorities.

Ukraine has accused Russia of targeting civilians and rescue workers during the evacuations. According to the Kherson military administration, at least three people were killed and at least 23 others injured in an attack on an evacuation boat on 11.06.23. According to Ukrainian and Russian authorities, at least 14 people have died as a result of the flooding. Evacuees from the affected areas are to find temporary shelter in other areas of Ukraine; the military administration of Kyiv oblast announced on 09.06.23 that it would temporarily house up to 3,000 people. In a statement, the Ukrainian agriculture ministry said that the flooding had serious consequences for agriculture in southern Ukraine and for water supplies in the Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions. According to the ministry, at least 10,000 hectares of agricultural land on the right bank of the Dnipro River have been flooded. In this context, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator warned of possible global consequences in terms of worsening hunger crises; the number of people affected by insufficient access to drinking water in Ukraine is currently estimated at 700,000. The incident also put the spotlight back on the security situation around the nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia further north on the Dnipro River. In a statement on 11.06.23, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expressed concern about the continuing drop in the level of the river water needed to cool the nuclear reactor's fuel rods.

Development of the war

Media reports indicate that the Ukrainian forces are advancing in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions. Ukrainian sources say that several smaller towns along the south-eastern front line have been retaken.

According to a statement from the Ukrainian general staff, heavy fighting continues in the embattled Donetsk region, particularly near the towns of Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Marinka. Ukrainian sources say that overnight airstrikes on 08./09.06.23 on areas including Zhytomyr, Cherkassy and Dnipropetrovsk caused civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure.

Venezuela

Announcement: Opening of an International Criminal Court Office in Venezuela

On 09.06.23, Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan announced the opening of a technical assistance office of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Venezuela. In particular, ICC staff will provide expertise on judicial reforms and assist the Venezuelan authorities in their implementation. In November 2021, the ICC had formally opened an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity committed by the Venezuelan state.