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Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

1 October 2018

Ethiopia

Violent disturbances - around 1,200 arrests

According to official information, around 1,200 people have been detained following the disturbances involving the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, the Oromo, and minorities (cf. BN of 24.09.18). Amnesty International has referred to arbitrary mass arrests which could seriously jeopardise progress on human rights issues under prime minister Abiy Ahmed. According to the Fana TV station, 107 people have been charged. The others are to be released after undergoing “rehabilitation training”. They are accused of plundering shops, driving hundreds of people from their homes and killing dozens of people in the town of Burayu, north of Addis Abeba.

Ethiopia/Eritrea

Influx of Eritreans into Ethiopia

According to information from the European Union, some 15,000 Eritreans have entered Ethiopia since the official opening of the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea in the middle of September 2018. The corresponding report, published on 28.09.18, states that the combination of unaltered conditions in Eritrea and the opening of the border has led to this strong increase. The total number of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia is reported to currently total 175,000, a large proportion of whom are unaccompanied minors. 500 new arrivals are reportedly registered every day. As the influx is likely to continue or even increase, the EU is calling for humanitarian aid and the provision of resources to be stepped up.

Afghanistan

Armed clashes and attacks

Hostilities, air raids and drone attacks, raids by the security forces and attacks by insurgents occurred in numerous provinces last week, in some instances also involving fatalities or injuries among the civilian population.

In the wake of two air raids in the central provinces of Kapisa and Wardak in which at least 20 civilians were killed last week, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) expressed its concern over the rising numbers of civilian casualties in air raids. According to UNAMA, the toll of civilian casualties in the first half of 2018 stood at 353 - 52 % more than in the first half of 2017.

At least 48 fighters, including one Tajik national, were killed or injured in a military operation in the northern province of Kunduz.

Two rockets hit the capital of the state province of Ghazni during a visit by president Ashraf Ghani on 27.09.18.

On 28.09.18 four civilians were killed in an air raid in the northern province of Faryab and two police officers were killed by a colleague in the southern province of Kandahar.

On 29.09.18 four soldiers belonging to the Afghan armed forces died when their helicopter crashed in the central province of Parwan. On the same day, a Taliban leader and two of his escorts were also killed in Parwan, and a candidate running in the parliamentary elections was killed in the eastern province of Khost.

On 30.09.18 a traffic policeman was shot dead in Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, as was a candidate running in the parliamentary elections in the southern province of Ghazni. On the same day, a US drone attack killed around 20 IS fighters.

Election campaign underway

Campaigning has begun for the parliamentary elections which are planned for 20.10.18. Some 2,700 candidates, including 418 women, are contesting the 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People), the lower house of Afghanistan's two-chamber parliament. 68 seats are reserved for women. The elections are to be held in all provinces apart from Ghazni. According to official figures, nine million voters are registered.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Wave of protests to air grievances

Various mass demonstrations have taken place in Banja Luka in recent months. For six months now, hundreds of people have been assembling daily in Banja Luka to air their grievances against the police and the judiciary.

The protests stem from the violent death of a student in March 2018, whom the authorities initially described as a drug addict, classifying his death as an accident. This proved to be false. Evidence had clearly been manipulated. It appears that the authorities and influential families are involved in the case. At the end of August, a journalist who had regularly reported on the case was beaten up in broad daylight. The matter is increasingly becoming a political issue. A mass movement against corruption, crime and the arrogance of the powerful has come into being. The Facebook page "Justice for David" now has 300,000 followers.

According to the most recent EU report, the rule of law and the way in which the judiciary works remain weak points. The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) continually criticises judges' lack of independence and impartiality, stating that this is primarily a consequence of political influencing and pressure.

Burkina Faso

Attack claims lives

At least eight soldiers died when their vehicle hit a booby trap near the town of Baraboulé (Soum province) close to the border with Mali on 26.09.18. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Mine employees abducted

On 23.09.18 unknown assailants abducted three employees of the Inata gold mine, including one South African and one Indian, on the route between the mine and the town of Djibo (Soum province). Three police officers who pursued the kidnappers were killed.

China

Ban on religion for civil servants

In several areas of the province of Zhejiang, medical staff and teachers at secondary schools are being required to sign declarations in which they undertake, among other things, to refrain from adhering to any religious faith. There are reports of similar requirements from the province of Jianxi.

Tibetans arrested

Security forces arrested three Tibetan monks at the beginning of September 2018. It became known on 24.09.18 that they had each individually protested against Chinese rule. The monks are from the Kirti monastery.

FYR Macedonia

Referendum on change of the country's name failed

The referendum of 30.09.18 on changing the country's name to the Republic of North Macedonia failed due to an insufficient turn-out (36 %) (cf. BN of 17.09.2018). Of the votes cast, 91.3 % were in favour of the change of name. As the poll was not binding, the parliament can accept the agreement with Greece on the new name with a two-thirds majority. Prime minister Zaev intends to put the matter to a parliamentary vote. He announced that early parliamentary elections would be held this December if the opposition withholds its approval. The opposition rejects the agreement on the grounds that it amounts to sacrificing the country's national identity.

The UN and the EU consider the referendum result a success, despite its lack of validity.

India

Adultery no longer a punishable offence

On 27.09.18 the Supreme Court unanimously declared the 158 year-old law on adultery to be unconstitutional. In accordance with Section 497 of the Indian penal code, a man who had sexual intercourse with another man's wife without his consent was liable to a prison term of up to five years. The wife was punished as an instigator. In its judicial opinion, the court found the provision to be based on gender stereotypes and to assign the woman a subordinate status. It found this to conflict with human dignity and women's right of sexual self-determination. In civil law, adultery is to remain a ground for divorce.

Kashmir: Police death toll up on last year

According to official figures, 37 police officers have purportedly been killed by rebels in the northernmost federal state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2018. The total in 2017 stood at 32.

Shots fired at Pakistani helicopter in Kashmir

On 30.09.18 a helicopter carrying the prime minister of Azad-Kashmir, which is under Pakistani administration, came under fire in the Indian-Pakistani border region of Kashmir, probably from the Indian military.

Iraq

Influential women killed

Human rights activist Suad al-Ali was shot dead in Basra on 25.09.18. Al-Ali was involved in the summer protests in Basra (cf. BN of 30.07.18) and was the director of the Al-Weed al-Alaiami organisation for human rights, with a focus on women's and children's rights.

On 27.09.18 the model and Instagram star Tara Fares was shot dead in Baghdad. The 22 year-old had 2.8 million followers. Daryna Sarhan, founder of a lifestyle magazine in Erbil, fears that there is a message behind the murder: "Don't be like Tara or you'll end up like Tara", she told the American newspaper New York Times.

On 16.08.18 Rafeef al-Yasiri, a plastic surgeon, was found dead in her apartment in Baghdad.

Shortly after al-Yasiri's death, Rasha al-Hassan, the owner of a well-known beauty salon, was found dead in her apartment. The cause of death remained unknown after initial investigations.

The interior ministry has ordered an investigation into Fares' murder. According to media reports, prime minister Haider al-Abadi has said that the killings and other fatalities and abductions in Basra and Baghdad should be investigated in order to establish any links. No group has claimed responsibility for the crimes as yet. Nibras al-Maamouri, director of the forum for female Iraqi journalists, has stated that influential women are increasingly being targeted.

Security situation

On 25.09.18 at least two people were killed and nine injured in several explosions in Baghdad.

On 25.09.18 security forces in the province of Salah ad-Din reported that they had destroyed six tunnels used for terrorist activities.

In Hamrin, security forces found uniforms which had allegedly been used to set up false checkpoints. Abductions and killings occasionally take place at false checkpoints.

On 26.09.18 the police in the province of Diyala stated that they broke up 95 terrorist networks and arrested more than 600 people in the first six months of 2018. They further reported that twelve people had been sentenced to death and 33 to life imprisonment. Iraqi security forces are carrying out operations to arrest IS supporters above all in the provinces of Anbar, Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, Kirkuk and Diyala.

Iran

Alcoholic poisoning

Since 28.09.18, hundreds of people have been admitted to hospital in various provinces with alcoholic poisoning, allegedly as a result of drinking unprofessionally produced and adulterated alcohol. 27 have died. Alcoholism is a widespread problem. There is speculation that some 5 million Iranians may be addicted to alcohol. The ban on drinking, possessing and producing alcohol for drinking purposes has given rise to a flourishing black market and large-scale uncontrolled production.

Yemen

Hodeida: More civilians killed

According to the NGO Save the Children, 349 civilians have been killed in Hodeida since 13.06.18, following the launch of a military campaign by the Saudi-led coalition to recapture the region from the Houthi rebels. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, more than half a million people have fled their homes over the same period.

UN extends its mandate to investigate human rights violations

The UN Human Rights Council has extended by one year the mandate of the Group of Independent Eminent International and Regional Experts to investigate human rights violations in Yemen.

Cameroon

Curfew

On 30.09.18 the authorities imposed a curfew which is to apply for the South-West and North-West regions until 01.10.18. This date marks the one-year anniversary of the symbolic declaration of independence for the Anglophone part of Cameroon.

Prisoners freed in attack on prison

Militant separatists reportedly attacked a prison in the North-West region on the night of 25.09.18, freeing more than 100 prisoners.

Kazakhstan

Foreign journalist briefly detained

On 27.09.18 French TV journalist Vincent Prado was detained with his translator by the Kazakh police in the Aktau region. A court fined him approx. KZT 61,000 (approx. EUR 140) for violating immigration law and banned him from filming in the Aktau region. Prado was working on a documentary about the events in the town of Zhanaozen in December 2011. At least 16 demonstrators died when oil industry workers protested in the West Kazakh town against low wages. Human rights organisations and independent media criticised the police's violent actions at the time. Apart from opposition activists, police officers and local civil servants also received prison sentences.

Kenya

Al-Shabaab fighters killed

The Kenyan military has reported that at least ten Al-Shabaab fighters were killed in a military operation in Pandanguo in the west of the Lamu district on 24.09.18.

Libya

Tripoli

The situation having calmed, Mitiga Airport was reopened on 26.09.18. The closure resulted from a series of sudden developments which are difficult to assess: on 24.09.18 the Samoud brigade from Misrata and the 7th brigade from Tarhouna appear to have withdrawn from several positions in Tripoli. This was probably attributable to strategic, political and practical reasons: both brigades seemingly ran out of ammunition. The Samoud brigade failed to receive any further support from Misrata, while no support was forthcoming from Tarhouna for the 7th brigade. This lack of support is being attributed in each instance to the substantial prevailing international pressure.

Fajez as-Serraj, the president of the GNA (Government of National Accord, internationally recognised government in Tripoli) had previously ordered by decree the release of all prisoners awaiting trial who had been held beyond the maximum permissible term. It is suspected that this formed part of the negotiations which have led to an extensive ceasefire, as it allowed the release of a number of members of various militias.

The involved militias from Tarhouna and Misrata have now agreed to lay down their weapons for several months and to give the GNA an opportunity to develop its own security institutions in this period.

Mali

Soldiers killed

Seven soldiers and a civilian driver were killed on 26.09.18 when their vehicle was hit by an explosive device.

Attack on Tuareg camp

According to varying sources, an attack near to Inékar (region of Ménaka) on 25.09.18 claimed between 16 and 27 lives. Armed men on motorcycles reportedly attacked a camp of the nomadic Tuareg. No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack to date.

Moldova

Simplified return

An agreement between the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, the German Federal Foreign Office and the interior ministry of the Republic of Moldova on the application of a simplified process for the return of Moldovan nationals was signed on 26.09.18. Under the terms of the agreement, Moldovans who are illegally resident in Germany can now be returned to their country of origin by means of a simplified process (issuance of an EU laissez-passer document).

In July 2018 Moldova ranked 10th among the countries of origin of foreigners entering Germany.

Myanmar

Violence against Rohingya

A report by the US foreign ministry, based on more than a thousand interviews with Rohingya refugees in Bangladeshi refugee camps, does not classify the military action as genocide or a crime against humanity, but it does assess it as constituting terror and forced removal. The USA promised to increase its support for Rohingya in Myanmar and Bangladesh to USD 389 million (EUR 331 million).

Nigeria

Flooding

Following heavy rainfall in mid-September 2018, the Niger and Bénoué rivers burst their banks and caused widespread flooding. According to the Nigerian disaster control authority, at least 199 people have died and some 285,000 have lost their homes. The government has imposed a state of emergency in four federal states (Kogi, Niger, Anambra, Delta) and is monitoring the situation in eight other federal states.

Cholera outbreak

Cholera has broken out in the north-east of the country. At least 97 people have reportedly already died of the disease and 1,000 are ill. The federal states of Yobe and Borno are particularly severely affected. According to the UN, up to six million people will be at risk if the outbreak cannot be contained immediately.

Pakistan

Right to stay extended for Afghan refugees

The permission to stay in the country for hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees is to be extended until July 2019. Prime minister Imran Khan only recently offered Pakistani citizenship for Afghan refugees who were born and have grown up in Pakistan (cf. BN of 17.09.18).

Kashmir: Protests

The shooting of a Pakistani civilian by security forces sparked widespread anti-government protests in Kashmir on 27.09.18. This prompted the government to impose curfews in individual regions and to shut down the mobile internet in some areas. The protesters claim that the security forces opened fire on the 26 year-old without any reason.

Somalia

Attacks

Ten soldiers of the federal state of Jubaland died when an Al-Shabaab booby trap exploded near to the town of Abdale-Birole (Lower Juba region) on 19.09.18. IS fighters murdered a member of the presidential guard in Boosaaso (Puntland) on 24.09.18. IS has also claimed responsibility for a bomb explosion at the Bakara market in Mogadishu in which three civilians and two soldiers were killed on 24.09.18. An Al-Shabaab booby trap exploded in Afgooye (Lower Shabelle region) on 25.09.18, killing one soldier and injuring two others. On 27.09.18 an Al-Shabaab booby trap exploded in a tea shop in Elwaq (Gedo region), killing two people and injuring six. Three soldiers died when a Somali army vehicle hit an Al-Shabaab booby trap in Mogadishu.

Hostilities

On 21.09.18 the US Africa Command killed 18 Al-Shabaab fighters in an air raid approx. 50 km north-west of Kismayo (Lower Juba region). On 24.09.18 Somali and AMISOM units killed 35 Al-Shabaab members in a security operation on Qoryoley (Lower Shabelle region). On 27.09.18 Somali units killed 16 Al-Shabaab fighters in the town of Jilib-Marka (Lower Shabelle region). Puntland security forces killed twelve Al-Shabaab members in a security operation in the Galgala mountains and arrested several persons suspected of belonging to Al-Shabaab and IS in Boosaaso and Galkayo on 23.09.18. Two civilians and one prisoner were killed in a violent clash in Boosaaso on 27.09.18 between Puntland security forces and prison staff who were unsatisfied with their pay. The security forces took control of the prison.

Death sentences in Puntland

On 28.09.18 a military court in Puntland sentenced three persons with links to Al-Shabaab and IS to death and handed down life sentences to three others.

President cancels visit to UN General Assembly

President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo cancelled his trip to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York on 23.09.18 on account of the continuing political crisis between the central government and the federal states (cf. BN of 17.09.18). So far, an agreement on the restoration of relations has only been achieved with the federal state of Hirshabelle.

Russia pledges support

Foreign minister Ahmed Awad Issa met with the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, at the UN General Assembly. Lavrov stated that Russia supported Somalia's and AMISOM's efforts to combat terrorism. The two foreign ministers reiterated their earlier undertakings to consolidate their diplomatic and economic cooperation.

Support from the World Bank

On 26.09.18 the World Bank approved grants to the tune of 80 million dollars to finance the reform of public finances in Somalia. This is the first time since the beginning of the civil war in 1991 that the World Bank has granted direct financial support to Somalia's government. It has been supporting measures such as programmes to combat HIV/AIDs since 2003, however, and established contact with the central government in 2013.

South Sudan

Civil war cost around 383,000 lives

British scientists at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine estimate that some 190,000 people met violent deaths in the civil war between December 2013 and April 2018. Diseases and a lack of healthcare claimed roughly the same number of lives.

Syria

Idlib: Contradictory reports on retreat by rebels

The rebel alliance Failak al-Scham, which belongs to the pro-Turkish National Liberation Front (NLF), has refuted a report by the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights regarding a retreat from the demilitarised zone around Idlib. Following the denial, the Observatory stood by its account. The majority of the territories are controlled by fighters of Hajat Tahrir al-Scham (HTS), which is led by former members of the Al Qaeda network. HTS has yet to comment on the agreement. The Hurras al-Din rebel group, which is loyal to Al Qaeda, and Jaysh al-Issa, which was formerly supported by the USA, are refusing to accept the agreement.

In mid-September, Turkey and Russia agreed to set up a demilitarised zone covering a 15- to 20-mile strip by 15.10.18. If the rebels were to fail to adhere to the agreement, a major offensive by the Syrian army would become more likely once again.

Conference on Syria in October

The German, French, Russian and Turkish heads of state and government are planning to discuss the situation in Syria before the end of October 2018. Angela Merkel stated at a press conference with Turkish president Erdogan in Berlin on Friday that the central point on the agenda would be the critical situation in the final rebel stronghold, Idlib.

Vietnam

Prison terms for activists

15 people received prison terms of between two years and four and a half years in Binh Thuan province on 26.09.18 for participating in violent demonstrations against a law to establish special business zones for

foreign investors. Dozens of people who took part in demonstrations in other towns and provinces in June 2018 have already been sentenced or are awaiting trial.

On 22.09. and 24.09.18, three activists received prison terms for anti-government publications of between one year and two years and three months independently of one another in Can Tho province.

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