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Briefing Notes

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

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Afghanistan

Second anniversary of Taliban takeover of power

On 15.08.23, the Taliban celebrated the second anniversary of their takeover with rallies and parades. The Taliban government designated 15 August as a public holiday. They stated that they had established an "Islamic system", expelled the invaders and restored security in the country. At the same time, strict security checks were in place on the anniversary day. A parade in the city of Kandahar was cancelled; according to official statements, to avoid disturbing the public. Numerous international organisations published statements and reports criticising the Taliban. For example, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Benet, stated that the Taliban had committed numerous and at the same time systematic human rights violations in the last two years, refuting assumptions that they were more moderate now than during their first rule (1996 - 2001). Furthermore, restrictions originally declared to be temporary contributed to an "accelerated, systematic and all-encompassing system of segregation, marginalisation and persecution". The Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, TTP), on the other hand, congratulated in a statement on social media and called on the "oppressed people" of Pakistan to wage jihad against the government in order to establish an "Islamic system" there as well.

Security situation

According to media reports on 19.08.23, a senior commander of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), Dost Mohammad, was killed in an air strike in Nangarhar province. On 14.08.23, there was an explosion at a hotel in Khost. At least three people died. Pakistani media report that this may have been a drone attack by the Pakistani army on Hafiz Gul Bahadur, one of the commanders of the TTP. The Pakistani government accuses the Taliban of doing too little against the TTP, whose attacks are planned on Afghan soil and have increased drastically since the Taliban took power. In Taloqan, capital of Takhar province, a car bomb exploded on 15.08.23 under unclear circumstances. According to different reports, two people were injured or four Taliban were killed and three others and two civilians were injured. The Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) announced an attack on a Taliban base in Parwan province on the same day, killing five Taliban fighters and injuring three others.

Governance

Abdul Hakim Sharai, the Taliban's acting Minister of Justice, banned any activities of political parties in the country at a press conference on 16.08.23. He said that the existence of political parties in the country was neither based on Sharia nor beneficial to the nation. According to the BBC, the number of religious schools in the country has increased fivefold under the two-year Taliban rule.

Persecution & Humanitarian Situation

According to a report by the exile press medium Hasht-e Sobh on 20.08.23, eight women who wanted to hold a protest march were detained by the Taliban in Kabul. According to a report by the Taliban Supreme Court on

17.08.23, 19 people convicted of adultery and robbery, among other charges, were publicly flogged in a sports stadium in Sarpul province. According to a report by the NGO Afghan Witness on 15.08.23, 3,329 human rights violations by the Taliban have been reported since 15.01.22, including violations of the right to life, the right to freedom from torture, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and women's rights.

Save the Children has published a report that points to a dire humanitarian situation. 38.4 % of 1,205 children surveyed in six provinces work to support their families. 76.1% of them said they currently had less food than a year ago, the report said. IOM pointed out that 79% of people in Afghanistan do not have adequate access to clean water. Women's groups in Afghanistan protested on social media and released statements drawing attention to the human rights violations against women by the Taliban.

Bangladesh

Pressure on opposition; arrests of BNP members

In the northeastern town of Habiganj, police used batons and tear gas during a protest by thousands of supporters of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on 19.08.23. Hundreds of people, including security personnel, were injured. The BNP, led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, is demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the formation of an independent caretaker government until the next national elections in January 2024.

In a statement on 19.08.23, ai expressed concern about the disappearance of six leaders of the Chhatra Dal, the student wing of the BNP. They were arrested by civilian police in the Azimpur district of Dhaka on 18.08.23.

Furthermore, more than 15 BNP leaders and activists were arrested by civilian forces in front of the party office in Dhaka's Nayapaltan district on 19.08.23. The BNP general secretary said that in view of the current political situation in Bangladesh, recent developments indicated that the Awami League-led government is trying to stay in power by all means and is using the state machinery to eliminate opposition members in the run-up to the elections.

Police violence in Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar

The human rights organisation Fortify Rights accuses the Armed Police Battalion security forces deployed in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar of human rights violations, citing arbitrary arrests, physical violence, even torture and extortion.

Benin

Criminal proceedings against numerous terror suspects discontinued

According to media reports, a total of 127 people suspected of being terrorists by the Beninese judiciary were released from pre-trial detention on 10.08.23. The persons released had been apprehended between 2019 and 2022 and investigated for membership of a terrorist organisation. Thereafter, the investigation commission Cour de Répression des Infractions Économiques et du Terrorisme (CRIET) initiated proceedings against most of them. They were released from custody because the proceedings were stopped. The 127 persons are nationals of Benin, Niger, Togo, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ghana and Chad. The non-Benin nationals are to be handed over to the diplomatic missions of their respective home countries. According to reports referring to information provided by the CRIET president in May 2023, over 700 people were detained in connection with suspected terrorism in Benin at the time. Benin and other West African coastal states fear that extremist groups active in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, in particular, might extend their radius of action to their countries (cf. BN of 19.06.23).

Burkina Faso

Suspected jihadists killed

According to the army, the police killed 40 suspected jihadists in a violent clash. The jihadists allegedly ambushed a police reconnaissance mission near Diougo-Yourga in Koulpelogo province in the northeast of the country on 19.08.23. In the same incident, five police officers died and four were injured.