

Group 22 - Information Centre Asylum and Migration

Briefing Notes

14 April 2014

Afghanistan

Security situation

At least 15 civilians died on 07 April 2014 in the Maiwand district of the southern province of Kandahar when their car hit a roadside bomb. Four other civilians were injured.

Elections

The Complaints Committee reported that about 1,900 written complaints had been received last week. After counting about 10% of the votes, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah is slightly ahead of ex-Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. If this trend is confirmed a run-off election will be required. The preliminary final results have been announced for 24 April 2014.

Pakistan

Attacks

At least twelve people were killed and about 40 injured in a train bombing in Balochistan province on 08 April 2014. On 09 April 2014 at least 23 people were killed and some 100 seriously injured when a bomb exploded on a market place in a suburb of the capital Islamabad. It is still unclear who was responsible for the attack. The Taliban (TTP) denied any involvement.

Fighting in north-west Pakistan

Fighting between rival groups broke out in southern Waziristan on 06 April 2014, claiming 43 lives so far. Both groups belong to the Taliban umbrella organisation Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Iraq

Security situation

Iraq Body Count reports that in April (as on 13 April 2014) 417 civilians lost their lives to date. The AFP news agency counted 309 victims, including 23 policemen, 25 soldiers, four members of the Sahwa, and 152 extremists in April (as on 12 April 2014). Only on 13 April 2014 37 people died nationwide in terror attacks and assaults on the security forces. Most affected were Kirkuk, Mosul (Ninive province), and Baquba (Diyala province).

Series of attacks in Baghdad

On 08 April 2014 at least 15 people lost their lives in several attacks. A series of terror attacks claimed at least 21 victims on 09 April 2014 and over 55 are said to have suffered injuries. Most of the bombs exploded in dominantly Shiite neighbourhoods.

Confrontations between the army and Islamists

The Iraqi Army reported that it killed 25 fighters of the grouping The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) when they attacked a military base on 08 April 2014.

The press reported that on 11 April 2014 fighting had broken out between Islamists and the Iraqi Army south of the city of Ramadi on that day. On 13 April 2014 dpa reported that four soldiers and one civilian were killed in fights between the army and alleged Islamists in Anbar province.

Assault on election workers

In Salahaddin province two election workers were injured by gun shots in the evening of 08 April 2014. They are said to belong to the campaign team of the Al-Wataniya list of former Prime Minister Ijad Allawi. The shooters escaped.

Attacks on Sunni politicians

In an attack on Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq (a Sunni) several body guards were injured on 11 April 2014. Nobody was hurt in an attack on the convoy of the Speaker of Parliament Osama al-Nujaifi (Sunni) near Kirkuk on 13 April 2014.

Candidates disqualified

The press reported the disqualification of two candidates by the Election Committee for extremist speeches during their campaign events. Fines were imposed on 14 parties for violating the rules for a fair election campaign. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 30 April 2014 in Iraq.

Syria

Poison gas attack in Hama province

Allegedly the city of Kafarsita in Hama province was attacked with poison gas on 11 April 2014, the government and the opposition are blaming each other for the attack. The Syrian Human Rights Observatory informed that government fighter jets dropped barrels with explosives from which spread "intensive smoke and smell" emanated. Syrian state TV reported that rebels of the Jabhat al-Nusra had used „toxic chlorine“. Many people are said to have been wounded and at least 2 killed. The reports cannot be verified by independent sources. After 1,400 people were killed in a poison gas attack in Damascus in August 2013 President Assad had yielded to international pressure and agreed to destroy all chemical weapons in Syria by 30 June 2014. The removal of the weapons has been delayed.

Ongoing civil war

The civil war is said to have intensified in recent days. Aleppo experienced the heaviest fighting since mid-2012. The rebels attempted to take control of the headquarters of the secret service in the quarter of Sahra, government planes dropped barrel bombs. 25 people are reported killed and 107 injured in the explosion of two car bombs in a government-controlled quarter of Homs on 10 April 2014. There are reports that the government troops and the fighters of their Hizbollah allies have taken Rankus, the last major town held by the rebels in the mountainous region of Qalamoun in the border area to Lebanon. Since November 2013 government forces have been engaged in an offensive against the rebels in this area. The government fighters succeeded in cutting the opposition's supply routes from Lebanon and in controlling important highway links.

Jesuit priest shot dead in Homs

The 75-year-old Dutch Jesuit Priest Frans van der Lugt was dragged into the street, beaten and executed by two shots in the head during a break-in into the Jesuit monastery in Homs on 07 April 2014 around eight o'clock. The guard of the local rebel unit was injured. In the eighties Van der Lugt had established a therapeutic farm for horticulture and viniculture for young people with mental problems who worked and lived on this farmland outside of Homs. Since 2000, also forty mentally retarded people had been living there. The motives for this crime that took place in rebel-controlled territory are unknown. Before the civil war Homs had ten churches and 60,000 Christians. The old part of town has been under siege since spring 2012. Most of the residential areas are destroyed, many people have fled the city and only 66 Christians remained.

Fighting between rebel groups

After conquering the area around the city of Bukamal (Deir ez-Zor province with oil wells) from the government troops, the rebel groups involved fought each other fiercely over the control of the area. Fighting among ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) and Jabhat al-Nursa is said to have resulted in 50 deaths.

Israel/Palestinian Autonomous Areas

Israeli minister demands nationalization of settlements/economic sanctions adopted

The Israeli Minister of Economics and Chairman of the settlers' party „HaBayit HaYehudi“! ("Jewish Home"), Naftali Bennett, proposed to integrate the major blocks of settlements on the West Bank into the territory of Israel in a letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu. On 9 April 2014 the internet portal Ynet reported that Bennett's request had been motivated by the "unilateral steps" taken by the Palestinians. He maintained that Israel had to take steps in response to the Palestinians' diplomatic UN initiative (see BN of 07 April 2014) and to expand its territorial sovereignty to Israeli-controlled areas in "Judea and Samaria" (West Bank). Furthermore the cabinet adopted economic sanctions against the Palestinians on 10 April 2014.

Confrontations between Palestinians and the police on the Temple Mount

While many Christians assembled in Jerusalem for the traditional Palm Sunday procession from the Mount of Olives to the Old Town, Palestinians and Israeli police clashed on the Temple Mount. According to police reports stones and incendiary devices were thrown at the officers when they opened the "Moroccans' Gate" that is the access for non-Muslims. The recent agitation of religious fanatics has created a very tense situation on the Temple Mount, one of the most sacred sites of Judaism and Islam. In advance of the Jewish Passover festival, that coincides with Holy Week and Easter this year, ultra-nationalists called upon the faithful to go to the Mount for prayers in large numbers. The ultra-nationalists want to build a third Jewish temple in the place of the Dome of the Rock. The Jewish Chief Rabbi prohibited visits to the Temple Mount for religious reasons.

Yemen

Attack on leading politician

According to local media reports of 8 April 2014 two of the companions of the leading member of the Yemenite al-Haqq Party, Ismail al-Wasir, were killed in an assassination attempt on him, he was taken to hospital with serious injuries. The attackers could escape.

Iran

Less women should study medicine/choice of courses for women is restricted

Vice-Minister Amir Hussein Siaei told the daily "Shargh" ("The East": a well-known paper representing reformist views) that the Ministry of Health intends to lower the rate of female students of medicine, because almost 70% of the students in this field are now women. Siaei said that the country needed doctors in the villages where women are not working, and therefore the system needed to be changed. An increasing number of women - and a decreasing number of men - succeed in attending university. By now more than 60% of the university students are women. Despite extensive criticism the government intends to change this, because in many fields the women cannot be employed after their graduation. Last year it was resolved that women will not be admitted any longer to at least 36 universities and for more than 75 subjects at the diploma and masters level, in particular engineering subjects are excluded.

Egypt

Potential further mass trials

The Public Prosecutor of Cairo referred the cases of about 300 students of al-Azhar University to a criminal court for admission to trial on 12 April 2014. The accused allegedly participated in demonstrations of the

followers of ousted President Mursi between October 2013 and March 2014, which had resulted in clashes with the security forces.

Mubarak is released from prison

85-year-old Hosni Mubarak, the ex-president ousted in 2011, was released from prison on 13 April 2014 and taken to a military hospital in Cairo by helicopter, where he is staying under house arrest.

Repressions against journalists

The Egyptian government is taking harsh action against critical journalists. It is said that dozens of journalists have been arrested since August 2013 when the camps of the protesters demanding the reinstatement of President Mursi were dispersed violently.

Already in December 2013 the police had arrested employees of the Qatar broadcasting station Al Jazeera. Currently 20 defendants are prosecuted in Cairo (including four foreigners), eight of whom are standing trial in court (among them one Australian). The others are tried in absentia. The defendants are charged with having falsified video recordings to support a "terrorist organisation", i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood. According to Al Jazeera only nine of the defendants had been working for the station. Five of the eight standing trial had been university students who had provided information.

Journalist associations say that reporters are facing a significantly higher the risk of injury or of being killed when reporting from Egypt, because they were being attacked by the army, the Muslim Brotherhood, and by citizens. Within one year ten journalists had been killed, almost all of them were shot in the head.

Algeria

Amnesty International (AI) criticizes violations of freedom of opinion

In the run-up to the presidential elections on 17 April 2014 AI criticized massive restrictions of the freedom of opinion. The authorities had increased their pressure on anti-government forces and made it clear that they are not prepared to tolerate any public criticism. AI stated that any attempt to challenge the leadership was "nipped in the bud", which made the entire election doubtful already now. Despite his serious health problems the Head of State Bouteflika (77) is still considered the favourite.

Unrest prior to the presidential elections

In tribal conflicts two people were killed and 30 wounded on 13 April 2014. The tribes are fighting over religious differences, scarce resources and the issue of whether President Bouteflika should be supported for a fourth term.

Nigeria

Boko Haram: Many victims in attacks in the Federal State of Borno

On 13 April 2014 armed men attacked the village of Kaigamari (Konduga Local Government Area, LGA) in the North Eastern State of Borno, killing eight people. About 30 people lost their lives in an attack on the village of Ngoshe (Gwoza LGA) on 12 April 2014. On 12 /13 April 2014 60 people died in Bama LGA when the village of Amchaka and several surrounding villages were attacked. In the morning of 10 April 2014 a teacher training centre in the town of Dikwa (main seat of the LGA of the same name) was attacked and up to six teachers and two members of the security forces were killed. Several women are said to have been kidnapped. It is assumed that Boko Haram is behind all of these attacks.

Democratic Republic of Congo

More than 3,600 rapes committed by the rebels and the security forces.

On 9 April 2014 the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNJHRO) published a report on "Progress and obstacles in the fight against impunity for sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo". According to the report UNJHRO registered 3,635 victims of sexual violence in all of Congo from January 2010 to December 2013. But certainly the number of unreported cases is much higher, it says. 1,820 cases of sexual violence are attributed to armed groups and 1,815 cases to state agents. 73 percent of

the victims were women, 25 percent children, and 2 percent men. In eastern Congo mass rape had been used as a weapon of war to intimidate local communities, and to punish civilians for their perceived collaboration with the enemy. During the period under investigation slow but persistent progress had been observed in the prosecution of crimes of sexual violence. The UNJHRO registered 187 convictions by military jurisdictions for sexual violence, mostly rapes, between July 2011 and December 2013. 73 percent (136) of the convicted perpetrators had been members of the military, including three senior officers. Several senior officers are currently prosecuted. Another 17 percent (32) of the convicted has been policemen, and 2 percent (4) members of armed groups. They received sentences ranging from 10 months to 20 years of imprisonment.

Central African Republic

Renewed violence claiming 30 victims

According to police reports 30 civilians were killed and ten injured when Christian anti-Balaka militias attacked the Muslim Seleka rebels in the city of Dekoa (300 km north of Bangui).

UN adopts peacekeeping mission

As of September 12,000 soldiers are to be deployed to the Central African Republic to provide stability. The UN Security Council adopted the resolution on the operation that had been submitted by France.

Kenya

Raids of Somalis

A government representative announced that Kenyan security forces had arrested almost 4,000 Somalis in Nairobi and Mombasa since 02 April 2014 in the course of their operation against Islamists code-named "„Operation Usalama Watch“. A police spokesperson said that most of the 3,000 people arrested had been held only temporarily and checked, while 467 of them were detained pending further investigations. Several hundreds of Somalis are detained in Nairobi's Kasarani stadium. According to Human Rights Watch there are credible reports of abuses of detained persons, money had been extorted from some of them. On 09 April 2014 82 Somalis without documentation were deported to Somalia.

Somalia

Two UN consultants shot dead

Two personnel of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) were shot by unknown gunmen at Galkayo Airport in central Somalia on 07 April 2014.

Several casualties in bombings

Unknown attackers exploded several bombs in Mogadishu on 08 and 09 April 2014. A Koran teacher was killed in the quarter of Wardhigley on 8 April 2014. A Somali secret serviceman was injured by gun shots in the Hawl Wadag quarter. The district secretary of the Wadajir quarter was killed by a car bomb on 09 April 2014.

In Beled Hawo in the Gedo region unknown gunmen shot a tribal elder on 09 April 2014.

Other unknown attackers fired rockets at the construction site of the Turkish embassy in Mogadishu on 10 April 2014, injuring three construction workers, two of them Turkish citizens.

Fighting between al-Shabaab and AMISOM/SNA

It is reported that eleven people were killed in the Galguduud region near El Bur in fighting between AMISOM and Somali Army (SNA) units on one side and al-Shabaab fighters on the other, after an ambush by the Islamists on 10 April 2014, six of the fatalities were al-Shabaab fighters.

Relief organization workers liberated

On 11 April 2014 Kenyan AMISOM forces announced that their soldiers succeeded in liberating two staff members of a Kenyan aid organization from al-Shabaab near Dhobley in Lower Juba. The two men who had been working in the border region between Kenya and Somalia had been kidnapped in September 2011.

Sudan

Humanitarian emergency

The United Nations estimate that about 6.1m people in Sudan will require assistance in 2014, an increase of 40% over last year. Only 3% of the total relief of USD 995m required by Sudan this year had been received so far. The UN reported that in Darfur alone the number of people that became homeless in 2013 was the highest since 2004. More than 200,000 refugees were added thereto in the first months of 2014.

UN representative expelled

On 09 April 2014 the Sudanese government expelled the representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). According to a spokesman of the Foreign Ministry she did not abide by the law and interfered with domestic affairs.

Serbia

Roma most discriminated population group

The Serbian Equality ombudsperson thinks that the Roma are still the most discriminated ethnic group within Serbia, although their situation has improved in recent years. The Ministry of the Interior reports that 33 ethnically motivated incidents had been registered last year in which Roma had been the victims. According to the 2011 census figures there are 147,000 Roma, but the local governments estimate that the actual number is almost twice as high.

Amnesty International said that on the occasion of International Roma Day (8 April) many organizations drew attention to daily discrimination and increasing violence against the Roma in Europe.

FYR Macedonia

Presidential elections - Incumbent Ivanov faces run-off election

Presidential elections took place on 13 April 2014. Although the incumbent Gjorge Ivanov of the governing national conservative VMR-DPME party (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) achieved a surprisingly clear majority of about 52% in the first election round, a run-off election will be required on 27 April 2014, because to be elected in the first round a candidate must win more than 50% of the votes of all people entitled to vote. The candidate of the opposition Social Democrats (SDSM), Stevo Pendarovski, came in second with almost 37%. The voter turnout was 48 per cent %.

Early parliamentary elections will take place at the same time as the run-off elections. The national conservative Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski of the VMRO-DPMNE is expected to win these elections.

The entire election campaign focused on the difficult economic situation. The unemployment rate exceeds 25 percent. With the support of his partner in government, the Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), Gruevski has been in office since 2011. About one quarter of Macedonia's population are ethnic Albanians.

Russian Federation

Protests for freedom of the press in Moscow

Accompanied by a strong police presence about 5,000 people demonstrated for more freedom of the press in Russia in Moscow on 13 April 2014. The protesters accused the government of silencing all independent media to stifle any debate about the crisis in neighbouring Ukraine. Pro-government TV represented the new pro-Western government in Kiev as a Washington-controlled "fascist junta" attempting to suppress the Rus-

sian-speakers in eastern Ukraine. The protesters bore banners reading "Give us back our freedom of opinion" and „Down with the lying media“. The slogan "We love TV Dozhd" referred to the largest Russian opposition TV station that is threatened by closure. Some participants in the rally that was called the "March of Truth", bore blue-yellow Ukrainian flags. The Kremlin stated that it did not exercise any censorship or put pressure on the media. Human rights organizations regularly accuse Russia of violations of the freedom of speech and of the press, and the authorities' blocking of access to critical websites.

Ukraine

Kiev takes action against separatists in eastern Ukraine

Tension mounted in eastern Ukraine on 12/13 April 2014. Pro-Russian activists had set up checkpoints around the city of Sloviansk on 12 April 2014 and seized the headquarters of the police and the secret service. The occupiers raised the Russian flag on the town hall. At least three people were injured by tear gas and smoke grenades. It is said that the activists captured hundreds of weapons in Sloviansk. The situation escalated also in other towns in eastern Ukraine. The Kiev government informed that activists in Kramatorsk had taken control of the local police headquarters after a shootout. At least one person was injured in the process. An organized group of over 20 men wearing identical camouflage fatigues reportedly arrived in two buses and took the building armed with automatic rifles. Video footage shows how the men receive orders from a commander and are shooting on their way to the building. The head of police of Donetsk resigned yielding to the protesters' pressure who had occupied several administrative buildings in this industrial metropolis.

Ukrainian interim president Olexander Turtchynov issued an ultimatum to the pro-Russian separatists to put down their arms until the morning of 14 April 2014 and to leave the occupied administrative buildings. He accused Russia of waging war against his country. Turtchynov also announced a major "anti-terrorist operation" to put an end to the unrest in the country's east in which the army is to be involved as well. Previously the pro-Western government in Kiev had already ordered the advancement of special units after armed groups had occupied several administrative buildings in Sloviansk and other cities in eastern Ukraine. Several people were killed and wounded in confrontations between the police and pro-Russian separatists in Sloviansk on 13 April 2014. According to information provided by ARD, military helicopters flew special units into the town who then engaged in heavy fighting with the separatists. So-called Berkut units are said to be fighting on the pro-Russian side. The Berkut was a para-military special force headed by ex-president Viktor Yanukovitch. Their disbandment had been ordered after the change of government.

Georgia/Moldavia

Pro-EU course confirmed

Despite Russian pressure on Ukraine the former Soviet republics of Moldavia and Georgia want to continue their accelerated rapprochement to the EU. During a visit to Berlin on 10 April 2014 Moldavian Prime Minister Iurie Leanca said: "We will sign the association agreement with the EU no later than in June 2014". Also Georgian Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze stressed that her country will sign the agreement in June 2014 at the latest after a meeting with had met German Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier in Berlin on 10 April 2014. "I assured the Foreign Minister that Georgia will not deviate from this plan", she said. The agreements provide for significantly better access to the EU's internal market. In this way both countries, that are part of the so-called Eastern Partnership of the EU, demonstrated their intention to maintain their western course despite Russian criticism and to move closer to the EU in the long-term with the perspective of ultimately becoming members.

India

Rapists sentenced to death

A Mumbai court sentenced three men to death for gang rape. They had assaulted and sexually abused two women last year. This is the first time after rape laws had been toughened last year that someone convicted

of multiple rapes is given the maximum sentence in India. Harsher penalties for sexual crimes were adopted after a gang rape in a bus in New Delhi that had shocked the entire country and triggered large-scale protests. The grounds for the judgment said, "There needs to be zero tolerance for such incidents," and "A loud and clear message needs to be sent to society". The judgment is not yet final.

About 130 death sentences are handed down in India every year, but they are only rarely executed. The first executions since 2004 were those of two Muslim terrorists in November 2012 and in February 2013.

Several casualties in bombings

Maoist rebels killed at least 14 people in two attacks. Authorities stated that the victims in the Union State of Chhattisgarh included election workers and members of the paramilitary security forces. In both cases land mines exploded under their vehicles. The insurgents called for a boycott of the on-going parliamentary elections and had killed about 50 people already during the 2009 elections.

China

Sentence against renowned civil rights activist confirmed

On 11 April 2014 a Beijing court confirmed the four year prison sentence imposed on Xu Zhiyong, the best known representative of the "New Citizens' Movement", on 26 January 2014. The movement speaks out against injustice, corruption, and the abuse of power. It had also called upon party officials to disclose their financial situation.

Myanmar

Situation in Rakhine State

International aid organizations withdrew their staff from Rakhine State after a mob had attacked their offices at the end of March 2014. Special Rapporteur Tomás Ojea Quintana warned against the deterioration of the human rights situation on 07 April 2014, because the organizations had provided critical humanitarian aid. He said that consequences for the medical care for the 140,000 internally displaced persons (mostly Muslim Rohingya) living in camps were especially serious, just as for about 700,000 vulnerable persons.

A government representative of Rakhine State said at the beginning of April that the relief organizations would be allowed to return to Rakhine State after 21 April 2014, provided that the terms for their various activities would be renegotiated.

Ceasefire negotiations

Representatives of the armed ethnic rebel groups, the government, and the military agreed a first joint draft for a nationwide ceasefire agreement during negotiations held from 5 to 8 April 2014. Currently 14 separate bilateral agreements between the government and individual rebel groups are in place. Negotiations on the draft shall be resumed in May and a political dialogue shall follow the agreement's signature.

Despite the on-going negotiations fighting continues, in particular between the military and the Kachin Independence Army, of the Kachin ethnicity, most recently in the south of Kachin near the border to China on 10 April 2014.

North Korea

Kim Jong Un confirmed as the state's leader

As expected, ruling Kim Jong Un was confirmed as the state's top leader by the Supreme People's Assembly after the government-controlled parliamentary elections. At the constituent session of the Assembly Kim was appointed as First Chairman of the National Defence Commission. It is important to note the addition "First" Chairman, because Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Un's father who died in December 2011, continues to officially hold the office of "Chairman" of the country's most powerful body. Just as his father, Kim Jong Un is both Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Secretary General of the Korean Workers' Party.