

## Group 22 – Information Centre Asylum and Migration

# Briefing Notes

25 June 2018

### **Afghanistan**

#### **Ceasefire**

In the night of 18 June 2018, the Taliban put an end to the three-day ceasefire marking the end of Ramadan (see BN of 18 June 2018).

On 16 June, President Ashraf Ghani announced a unilateral extension of the ceasefire until the end of June. Afghan security forces are allowed to defend themselves, but attacks are prohibited during this time.

#### **Peace rally**

On 18 June, hundreds of people calling for peace arrived in Kabul. They had started their march in Helmand province and walked the 700 km to the country's capital.

On 24 June, supporters of the peace march started a sit-down strike in front of the headquarters of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Kabul, in order to call for UN cooperation in the peace efforts. It is planned to extend the sit-down strike after three days to the locations of the embassies of Pakistan, Iran, Russia and the U.S.

#### **Armed conflicts**

There were reports of armed conflicts between Taliban insurgents and Afghan security forces in several provinces including Kandahar, Logar, Farah, Baghdis, Nangahar, Helmand, Baghlan and Faryab.

On 20 and 21 June, Afghan security forces apparently launched a major operation against IS militants within a combined offensive that had started at the end of May. In total 106 IS followers were apparently killed.

On 22 June, several provinces reported the killings of over 100 police officers and security forces in attacks launched by the Taliban in the previous week.

#### **Attacks and assaults**

On 21 June, Taliban insurgents abducted 33 staff members of a building company in Kandahar. No details are available on the incident. Four police officers were apparently shot dead during the kidnapping.

On 23 June, the Taliban took 80 members of the security forces as hostages in Wardak province. The hostages were released in return for the pledge to give up the fight against the Taliban.

On 23 June, Shamim Katawazi, governor of Paktiya province, apparently survived an attack unhurt. Before, representatives of the province had tried to start peace talks with local Taliban insurgents.

#### **Internally displaced people**

On 20 June, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released a report stating that approx. 132,000 people have been displaced due to armed conflicts since the beginning of the year.

#### **Identity documents**

On 19 June, President Ashraf Ghani ordered local authorities to register identity documents in an online database. This order followed the distribution of electronic identity cards (so-called e-tazkira) which had started on 3 May 2018. Both the electronic ID card as well as the online database are part of a comprehensive e-government project.

## **Afghanistan/Pakistan**

The 2,500 km border fence between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Durand Line) is planned to be finished at the end of 2019. It is a double fence outfitted with infrared equipment.

## **Cameroon**

### **Crisis in the Anglophone regions: 84 security officers killed by separatists**

On 20 June 2018, Prime Minister Yang presented a government report at a press conference, stating that as of 11 June, a total of 84 security personnel (32 soldiers, 42 gendarmes, 7 police officers, two prison guards and one eco-guard) have been killed by armed Anglophone separatists since September 2017. Also, more than hundred civilians have been killed and at least 120 schools burnt down in the last 12 months.

## **China**

### **Tibet: Loyalty campaign**

Chinese authorities in the autonomous region of Tibet have launched a new loyalty campaign, urging the local population to study songs praising the Chinese Communist Party for performance on 1 July, a national holiday celebrating the foundation of the party in 1921. One member of every Tibetan family will be obliged to perform the group songs, otherwise a fine will be imposed.

## **Ethiopia**

### **Attack in the country's capital**

On 23 June, an attack on a pro-government rally in Addis Ababa for the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed left at least two people dead and another 156 injured, some of them seriously, official sources report. The attacker, who has not been identified yet, tossed a grenade toward the stage where Abiy sat after giving a speech. Media report say that nine police officers were arrested after the incident. The further background to the incident is unclear.

Tens of thousands had gathered on the central Meskel Square in the country's capital to listen to Abiy's first public appearance. After taking over office in April 2018, he had initiated several reforms and announced, among others, the release of hundreds of prisoners. He is seeking to enter into dialogue with the opposition and has made a move to end the year-long border conflict with neighbouring Eritrea.

## **Iran**

### **Women allowed in football stadiums**

On 20 June 2018, the ban on women attending sports stadiums which had been imposed in 1981 for moral concerns was temporarily lifted, allowing women to watch a screening of Iran's World Cup match against Spain. Shortly before, the authorities had cancelled the event due to 'infrastructure issues', but after sit-in blockades and negotiations with the police officers, the supporters of the national football team (Team Melli) were eventually let in shortly before the game started.

## **Iraq**

### **IS attacks near Mosul**

On 23 June 2018, two policemen were killed at a checkpoint in an attack launched by IS insurgents south of Mosul. Before the attack, the IS militants apparently seized three civilians.

### **Recount of votes**

According to a press release dated 21 June 2018, the Supreme Court of Iraq confirmed the resolution of the outgoing parliament of June to conduct a manual recount of all votes (including those of voters living

abroad, displaced persons and security forces) of the parliamentary elections held on 12 May 2018. The results of these three voter groups, so the parliamentary decision, was to be annulled for suspicion of falsification. This decision was unconstitutional, the Supreme Court ruled. The decision of the parliament to replace the nine members of the electoral commission by nine judges was confirmed. The recount of the ballots is planned to be conducted under the supervision of these nine judges.

### **Government formation**

On 24 June, German news agency dpa reported that on the previous day a coalition was formed between al-Sadr's Sairun list (which had gained most votes) and the list of PM Haidar al-Abadi (who had come third). Already after the vote, al-Sadr had formed an alliance with al-Amiri's list who had come second. Al-Abadi stated that the new coalition would not compromise other alliances.

## **Kazakhstan**

### **Arrests during protest march**

On 23 June 2018, dozens of protesters were arrested in Almaty, with exact figures varying between 30 and 50 individuals according to different sources. The protest had been called for by exiled oligarch Mukhtar Ablyazov, the most significant opponent of President Nursultan Nazarbayev who has been ruling the central Asian country for nearly 30 years now with an iron fist and enjoys lifetime immunity. Protests staged by the opposition are extremely rare in Kazakhstan. From 2005 until 2009, Ablyazov had been the leader of the Kazakh national bank; he is accused by Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine of having embezzled around 7.5 million dollar in this period. In 2009, he escaped to England; meanwhile, he is living in France. In December 2017, he announced his plans to topple the Kazakh government within the next three years.

Local media report that apart from the protest marches in the economic hub of Almaty, demonstrations and arrests have taken place also in the country's capital Astana. In the city of Uralsk, a correspondent of the US state broadcaster Radio Free Europe and four journalists were arrested who wanted to report on a protest march.

## **Libya**

### **Fights over Ras Lanuf/Sidra**

On 21 June 2018, General Khalifa Haftar's forces claimed to have regained control of the towns of Ras Lanuf and Sidra (see BN of 18 June 2018). In the heavy fights to recapture these key oil ports, two storage tanks were severely damaged, the state oil company NOC said.

## **Mali**

### **Dozo fighters kill Peul civilians**

On 23 June 2018, at least 32 civilians of the Peul ethnic group were killed by so-called Dozo fighters (traditional hunters). Apparently, the Dozo surrounded the village of Koumaga in Djenné district (Mopti region), separated the Peul from other villagers and killed them; 10 ethnic Peul are missing.

## **Nigeria**

### **Conflict between herdsmen and farmers claims scores of lives**

On 24 June 2018, the police command of the central Nigerian Plateau State confirmed that on 23 June, armed men attacked the inhabitants of several villages (Razat, Ruku, Nyarr, Kura and Gama-Ropp in Gashish district of the Barkin Ladi Local Government Area – LGA). Apparently, 86 people were killed and six others injured, 50 houses were burned down. Unconfirmed Nigerian press releases issued on 25 June cited village representatives and eye witnesses saying that about 120 people were killed and more than 200 others suffered gunshot wounds in several villages of the three LGAs Barkin Ladi, Mangu and Riyom located in Plateau State. On 24 June, the governor imposed a curfew in the LGAs to maintain order. Semi-

nomadic Muslim ethnic Fulani herders are held responsible for the attacks against the villages of the sedentary ethnic Berom farmers who are Christians. Apparently, the attacks of 23 June were preceded by a Berom assault on ethnic Fulani on 21 June, in which five ethnic Fulani were killed.

### **Attacks of Boko Haram**

In the evening of 20 June, two female suicide attackers on a tricycle tried to enter the former 333 Artillery Mammy Military Market in Maiduguri, capital of Borno State. In the evenings, this market is busy with the sale of alcohol and commercial sex workers. One of the attackers was shot dead by soldiers at the entrance to the market where she wanted to buy a ticket, and her explosive device detonated. When the other attacker saw this, she also ignited her explosive belt. The explosion killed the two assailants and injured 15 people.

On 18 June, Boko Haram fighters attacked the city of Gajiram (administrative headquarters of the Nganzai Local Government Area) in eleven trucks carrying heavy arms. AFP reports that nine soldiers died in fights with the security forces. Locals said that ten to twelve terrorists were killed or injured in the incident.

### **Violent clashes during IMN rallies in Kaduna**

On 20 and 21 June, supporters of the Shiite sect Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) organised rallies in Kaduna city (capital of the northern federal state of the same name), demanding the release of their leader Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and his wife Zeenah who have been detained since December 2015. On 21 June, the police tried to dissolve the rally, and clashes occurred. According to police information, one policeman was stabbed and stoned by IMN supporters. Eleven individuals were said to have been arrested in connection with the murder. Five more people had been arrested during the protests on 20 June. IMN states on its website that the police used live ammunition against the protesters, killing two persons and injuring over 40 others. During the previous day, nearly 40 people were injured and several individuals arrested, the website says.

On 21 June, the trial against El-Zakzaky and his wife was scheduled to continue before the Kaduna State High Court in Kaduna with the hearing on their application for provisional release on bail. Due to the absence of the judge, the hearing was adjourned until 11 July 2018. In April 2018, the government of the federal state of Kaduna had brought against El-Zakzaky, his wife and two more individuals an eight-count charge including murder of a soldier and illegal assembly (see also BN of 7 May 2018).

## **Somalia**

### **Attacks**

On 15 June 2018, four soldiers died and five more were wounded when a booby trap exploded in Mogadishu's Daynile quarter. In their news outlet Amaq, IS claimed responsibility for the act. On 20 June, two civilians were injured when a car bomb exploded in Mogadishu. Nobody has claimed responsibility for the attack. It is likely that the attack was committed by al-Shabab fighters.

### **Fighting**

On 18 June 2018, units of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) stormed a base of the intelligence service of al-Shabab in Awdheegle (Lower Shabelle region), killing two members of al-Shabab and arresting seven more. On 19 June, al-Shabab fighters attacked units of the Somali army and the Jubaland security forces in Sanguni town (Kismayo district, Lower Juba region). Seven extremists lost their lives in the fight.

## **South Sudan**

### **Peace negotiations failed**

Negotiations brokered by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to promote a peaceful solution to the civil war in South Sudan have failed. South Sudan's President Salva Kiir refused any cooperation with rebel leader Riek Machar, the former vice president who has been living in exile since 2016. The two met in Addis Ababa to negotiate some degree of power-sharing. The meeting was also attended by representatives of IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a regional organisation of North East African countries). Despite the failure, IGAD plans new peace talks.

In the state which had only gained independence in 2011, a civil war broke out at the end of 2013 between Kiir's supporters from the Dinka ethnic group and Machar's rebels belonging to the Nuer tribe. Tens of thousands of people have lost their lives since; about four million of the total of approx. 13 million South Sudanese have fled abroad, and roughly five million are dependent on food aid. A power-sharing agreement concluded in 2015 failed. In 2016, new fighting erupted. Since 24 December 2017, a fragile cease fire is in force.

## **Syria**

### **Air attack in eastern Syria**

On 18 June 2018, an air attack at the village of Al-Hari near Al-Bukamal city bordering Iraq killed at least 52 fighters loyal to the government, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports. 36 of the victims were apparently Libanese or Iraqi members of the Shiite Hezbollah militia, the other dead were Syrians, the organisation said.

It is unclear who is responsible for the shelling. Syrian state news agency Sana has accused the US-led international anti-IS coalition. However, a spokesperson of the US-led coalition has stated that no airstrikes were conducted in the area.

### **Thousands flee air strikes in southern Syria**

In the south, a new refugee drama is imminent, the Syrian observatory for Human Rights reports. Last week, more than 12,000 people fled the fights between government troops and opposition units, at least 14 people including 8 civilians lost their lives in the clashes. Recently, the war scenario has shifted to the south where rebels control a large area on the border with Jordan. Apart from Idlib province in northwestern Syria, this is one of the few regions still under rebel control.

According to the Syrian observatory for Human Rights, the Russian air force flew at least 25 air raids on 23 June 2018, targeting rebel-controlled villages in the east of Daraa province (other sources put the number at almost 70 attacks). These have been the first raids of the Russian air force for about a year, the observatory says, continuing that five civilians were killed and a hospital is now out of operation due to heavy damages. Also on 23/24 June, Syrian government troops seized two villages in Daraa province.

## **Syria/Iraq**

### **IS fighters killed in Syria**

On 23 June 2018, the Iraqi military said it had killed about 45 IS fighters, including senior members, in an air strike in eastern Syria. The strike which hit a meeting of IS leaders was carried out based on 'intelligence'. At present, there is no independent confirmation of the incident. For some time now, the Iraqi air force has regularly been conducting raids in Syria. The extremists are still believed to be active particularly in the border area between Iraq and Syria.

## **Thailand**

### **First execution in several years**

On 19 Jun 2018, the Department of Corrections communicated that Theerasak Longji was executed by lethal injection. He had been convicted of murder for stabbing a 17-year-old. This is the first execution in nine years. Department Leader Naras Savestanan stated that it was the seventh execution carried out in this way. The new method had replaced the old one of execution by firing squad in 2003.

## **Turkey**

### **Elections**

On 24 June 2018, presidential and parliamentary elections were held. The election commission stated that after counting 98 percent of the votes cast (at 08:00 hours CET), it was clear that President Erdoğan won the presidential election with 52.55 percent. This would be a slightly better result compared to the last elections

four years ago. The candidate of the major opposition party CHP, Muharrem İnce, received 30.67 percent. HDP candidate Selahattin Demirtaş who ran his election campaign from jail, came in third with 8.36 percent. Meral Akşener, candidate of the small İyi party, reached 7.33 percent.

The parliamentary elections ended with the election alliance of AKP (42.49 percent) and MHP (11.13 percent) reaching the majority. The pro-Kurdish HDP party gained 11.62 percent, the CHP 22.67 percent, and the İyi party received 10.01 percent.

Irregularities and accusations of electoral manipulations were reported from eastern and southern Turkey.

Erdoğan's result among Turks living in Germany was above average. After counting almost 80 percent of votes he received 65.7 percent, about three times more than his major competitor Muharrem İnce (21.5 percent).

## **Yemen**

### **Torture in prisons**

AP press agency reported on 20 June 2018 that hundreds of detainees and terror suspects are being tortured and sexually abused by Yemeni guards in prisons in southern Yemen run by the United Arab Emirates.

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