**UNICEF OPSCEN Brief - Thursday, 16 October 2014**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [GENERAL](#GENERAL) | **Across Regions** | New Zealand, Spain, Turkey vie for UN council |
| [CEE/ CIS](#CEECIS) | **Across CEE/CIS** | No big Russian withdrawal near Ukraine |
|  | **Serbia** | Government condemns drone flag stunt at Albania match |
| [EAP](#EAP) | **China** | Hong Kong leader says hopes talks with students can take place next week |
| [ESA](#ESA) | **Somalia** | Car bomb in Mogadishu kills 5 people, mostly children |
|  | **South Sudan** | Over 900 homes flooded in Jonglei's Bor: Red Cross |
| [LAC](#LAC) | **Guatemala** | Drought induced food crisis |
|  | **Venezuela** | Government probes spate of infant deaths at public hospital |
| [MENA](#MENA) | **Iran** | Western region earthquake leaves 16 people injured |
|  | **Iraq** | Islamic State 'retreating' in key Syria town of Kobani |
|  |  | Over 7,300 Syrians fled Kobane since September |
|  | **Lebanon** | Lebanon at risk for polio – UNICEF mention |
|  | **Libya** | Benghazi sees battles for control |
|  | **State of Palestine** | Palestinian Mosque in West Bank Torched in Suspected Arson |
|  | **Syria** | Multiple US airstrikes on IS targets |
|  |  | UNHCR Chief says Europe must open borders to Syrian refugees |
|  | **Yemen** | AQ militants and Houthi rebels seize Yemen towns |
| [SA](#SA) | **Sri Lanka** | Government bans foreigners from old war zone amid UN probe |
| [WCA](#WCA) | **Across regions** | Ebola crisis puts pressure on human rights |
|  | **CAR** | Violence flares in Bangui |
|  | **DR Congo** | UN says rebels kill 6 people, kidnap 47 |
|  |  | Rebel group attack kills 40 in eastern Congo |
|  | **Mali** | NGO employees reported kidnapped |

GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**New Zealand, Spain, Turkey vie for UN council**

Venezuela has taken the spotlight in this year's campaign for coveted seats on the U.N. Security Council but the hottest race is between New Zealand, Spain and Turkey whose foreign ministers are in New York this week lobbying for votes. The U.N. General Assembly's 193 member states will vote Thursday to elect five new members to the U.N.'s most powerful body and Venezuela's socialist government is virtually certain to win because it is unopposed for the single seat allocated to Latin America and the Caribbean. The five winners in Thursday's elections will replace Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, South Korea and Rwanda on 1 January and will serve until the end of 2016.

**Yahoo news -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/zealand-spain-turkey-vie-compete-un-council-175310769.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/zealand-spain-turkey-vie-compete-un-council-175310769.html)

CEE/ CIS

**Across CEE/CIS**

**No big Russian withdrawal near Ukraine**

NATO's top military commander said on 15 October that the alliance would welcome the withdrawal of Russian troops from a Russian region bordering Ukraine, but that it has seen no "major movement" so far. Last week the Russian President ordered about 17,600 Russian troops to return to their bases from Rostov.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/nato-chief-no-big-russian-withdrawal-near-ukraine-123723649.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/nato-chief-no-big-russian-withdrawal-near-ukraine-123723649.html)

**Serbia**

**Government condemns drone flag stunt at Albania match**

The Serbian Foreign Minister has said a flag incident that halted a Euro 2016 qualifier against Albania was a "political provocation". The match in Belgrade was stopped after 41 minutes when a drone carrying an Albanian flag sparked a brawl. UEFA is opening disciplinary cases against both Serbia and Albania, according to news reports. A brother of the Albanian Prime Minister denied being detained in Serbia on suspicion of controlling the drone. He flew back to Albania after the match in Belgrade, Serbia, which he had reportedly attended as a VIP.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29627615**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29627615)

EAP

**China**

**Hong Kong leader says hopes talks with students can take place next week**

Hong Kong's leader has said he is ready to start talks with protest leaders as soon as next week, suggesting a breakthrough in a political crisis that has seen activists occupy the city's key business districts for almost three weeks. The protesters are demanding free elections in 2017 and calling for Leung to step down, but Beijing insists on screening candidates first. Chief Secretary Carrie Lam cancelled talks with student leaders earlier this month, saying it was impossible to have constructive dialogue.

**Reuters -** [**http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/10/16/hongkong-china-leung-idINKCN0I50J420141016**](http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/10/16/hongkong-china-leung-idINKCN0I50J420141016)

[**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/10/hong-kong-leader-ready-meet-demonstrators-20141016108453456.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/10/hong-kong-leader-ready-meet-demonstrators-20141016108453456.html)

[ESA](#ESA)

**Somalia**

**Car bomb in Mogadishu kills 5 people, mostly children**

At least five people were killed and several wounded when a car bomb planted by al-Shabaab exploded near restaurants on a busy street in the Somali capital on Wednesday. Most of the dead and wounded were children leaving a video arcade.

**AP -** [**http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2014/10/15/car-bomb-in-somali-capital-kills-5-mostly-kids**](http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2014/10/15/car-bomb-in-somali-capital-kills-5-mostly-kids)

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/15/us-somalia-blast-idUSKCN0I426B20141015**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/15/us-somalia-blast-idUSKCN0I426B20141015)

**South Sudan**

**Over 900 homes flooded in Jonglei's Bor: Red Cross**

Red Cross officials in Bor, the capital of South Sudan’s Jonglei state, said at least 900 households have been displaced from their homes following heavy rains last Tuesday night. At least half of Bor’s population of 300,000 population, which were forced to flee their homes when violence peaked in January, have returned, according to local officials.

**Sudan Tribune -** [**http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article52746**](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article52746)

**LAC**

**Guatemala**

**Drought induced food crisis**

Guatemala, one of the worst affected countries by climate change, is now facing a food crisis due to the significant impact of drought, which according to a number of experts will further increase in the next year. The drought is causing high losses of corn and beans, the basic grains for the population, in the dry corridor affecting 236,000 families due to their dependence on these for subsistence farming. The government declared a State of Calamity, in 16 of the 22 departments. The eastern side of the country is the most affected, specially the Chortí indigenous people.

**ACT Alliance -** [**http://www.actalliance.org/resources/appeals/GUA141Prel\_Guatemala\_Drought.pdf/?searchterm=Guatemala**](http://www.actalliance.org/resources/appeals/GUA141Prel_Guatemala_Drought.pdf/?searchterm=Guatemala)

**Venezuela**

**Government probes spate of infant deaths at public hospital**

Venezuela's National Assembly approved a motion by a lawmaker to create a special panel to investigate the recent deaths of 16 newborns (which occurred between Friday and Monday of the same week) at a public hospital in the eastern part of the country. The assembly voted to refer the matter to the Committee on Social Development for investigation. All of the newborns who died were suffering from serious conditions, the lawmaker said, citing comments from the physicians who treated the infants.

**EFE -** [**http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/health/2014/10/15/venezuela-probes-spate-infant-deaths-at-public-hospital/**](http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/health/2014/10/15/venezuela-probes-spate-infant-deaths-at-public-hospital/)

MENA

**Iran**

**Western region earthquake leaves 16 people injured**

A strong 5.6 earthquake rocked two cities in western Iran on 15 October, injuring at least 16 people but causing only minor damage to homes. The quake occurred just after 5:00 pm, with the epicenter 51 km east of Dehloran in Ilam province, close to the border with Iraq. It hit at the relatively shallow depth of 10 km. The Iranian Red Crescent Society said the cities of Dehloran and Abdanan, and a total population area of 65,000, were affected. "No deaths are reported," it said in an initial statement, classifying damage to houses and residential areas as minor. But the statement said that, due to cold weather, Abdanan's governor had issued an appeal for tents for families whose homes had been damaged.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/151362-western-iran-quake-leaves-16-injured**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/151362-western-iran-quake-leaves-16-injured)

**Iraq**

**Islamic State 'retreating' in key Syria town of Kobani**

IS has lost control of more than 20% of Kobani town in recent days. US defence officials say hundreds of militants have been killed around Kobane as US-led air strikes intensify. Mr Nassan, deputy head of Kobane's foreign relations committee, said the Kurdish the Popular Protection Units (YPG) had made progress against IS in the town since the US-led air strikes were stepped up.

"Maybe in the few past days [Islamic State] was controlling about 40% of the city of Kobane, but now... less than 20% of the city is under control of [IS]," he said. "[On Wednesday], YPG started cleaning [up]operations in the east and south-east of Kobane."

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29629357**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29629357)

**Over 7,300 Syrians fled Kobane since September**

The arrival of nearly 1,500 refugees from Syria's Kobane Tuesday due to the IS militants' attacks brought the total number of people to flee the northern Syrian town to Iraq to 7,318 since late September. The majority of these refugees are traveling through Turkey, where there are now about 200,000 Syrian refugees from Kobane. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed its alarm over the situation, noting that the reported intensification of indiscriminate shelling by ISIL of various parts of the town of Kobane has caused 10,000 civilians who had remained in the border area to cross into Turkey about one week ago.

**Xinhua –**  [**http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC4QqQIwAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fnews.xinhuanet.com%2Fenglish%2Fworld%2F2014-10%2F16%2Fc\_133719608.htm&ei=QsA\_VLXFKofWatvFgLgN&usg=AFQjCNHj0OpMYDlxuvVjMNnrq7BEeNtDYg&bvm=bv.77648437,d.d2sf**](http://www.california.statenews.net/index.php/sid/226703537#sthash.ny4zJnC7.dpuf)

**Lebanon**

**Lebanon at risk for polio –** UNICEF mention

Lebanon has become extremely susceptible to a polio outbreak as a result of the Syrian civil war, Health Minister Wael Abu Faour. The Health Ministry, in collaboration with UNICEF and the WHO, launched the fifth national immunization campaign against polio Tuesday. According to health minister, the polio vaccine reached 96 percent national coverage before the onset of the Syrian civil war. However, Lebanon has become extremely susceptible to a polio outbreak after the disease started spreading in Syria in October 2013 to Iraq in February 2014. Today Lebanon launches the fifth national vaccination campaign.

**Daily star -** [**http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Oct-14/274039-health-minister-lebanon-at-risk-for-polio.ashx#axzz3GIer2Tpb**](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Oct-14/274039-health-minister-lebanon-at-risk-for-polio.ashx#axzz3GIer2Tpb)

**Libya**

**Benghazi sees battles for control**

Forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar, a former Libyan general, have relaunched a bid to reclaim Libya’s second city Benghazi from Islamist fighters, amid reports of assistance from Egypt and support from Libya’s recognised government. Sources told Al Jazeera that gunfire and explosions were heard early on Wednesday and that aircraft belonging to Haftar's forces were striking targets around the eastern city. Witnesses said tanks and jets had targeted the February 17 Martyrs Brigade, a rival to Haftar's forces which operates in parts of Benghazi.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/10/libyas-benghazi-sees-battles-control-20141015175237264895.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/10/libyas-benghazi-sees-battles-control-20141015175237264895.html)

**State of Palestine**

**Palestinian Mosque in West Bank Torched in Suspected Arson**

A mosque was set alight in a suspected arson attack in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday and the name of an Israeli vigilante group called "price tag" was found scribbled on an outside wall. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin urged Israel's police chief to head an investigation adding that the case "should be treated as terrorism". The "price tag" group has carried out scores of attacks on Palestinian, Israeli Arab, and church property in the West Bank and inside Israel since 2008.

**Newsweek -** [**http://www.newsweek.com/palestinian-mosque-west-bank-torched-suspected-arson-277334**](http://www.newsweek.com/palestinian-mosque-west-bank-torched-suspected-arson-277334)

**Syria**

**Multiple US airstrikes on IS targets**

The US military's Central Command said US aircraft carried out 18 airstrikes on "Islamic State" (IS) positions near the besieged Syrian border town of [Kobani](http://www.dw.de/battle-for-kobani-is-merciless/a-17987797) on Tuesday and Wednesday. US officials said several rebel positions were destroyed and 16 buildings, occupied by the militants, were hit in this latest operation to stop the advance of the IS group. Earlier, the Pentagon said 21 airstrikes against IS targets near Kobani overnight Monday marked the largest number in the region in a 24-hour period since the air campaign began in Syria last month.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.dw.de/multiple-us-airstrikes-on-islamic-state-targets/a-17998243**](http://www.dw.de/multiple-us-airstrikes-on-islamic-state-targets/a-17998243)

**UNHCR Chief says Europe must open borders to Syrian refugees**

The head of UNHCR on Wednesday urged countries, particularly in Europe, to review their laws to allow entry to more Syrians fleeing their country's civil war. He urged more legal avenues for Syrian refugees to resettle in Europe, and avoid risking their lives with smugglers. This is not only the worst humanitarian crisis in the last decades, it is also the biggest threat to regional peace and security. The U.N. estimates that nearly 2.7 million Syrians have fled abroad, mostly to neighboring countries, and another 6.5 million are internally displaced.

**ABC -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/refugee-chief-europe-open-borders-26218033**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/refugee-chief-europe-open-borders-26218033)

**Yemen**

**AQ militants and Houthi rebels seize Yemen towns**

Suspected Al-Qaeda militants have seized control of a town in southwest Yemen, hours after Shiite rebels (Houthi) overran a nearby provincial capital, 20 kilometers west of the now rebel-controlled Ibb. Houthi gunmen entered areas in Ibb, facing little resistance from government forces. Only hours later Fighters from the Sunni al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) overran the town of Hazm al-Adeen in Ibb. Yemen lost two cities to different rebels (AQAP) & Houthi) in one day. Further clashes between the groups are expected.

**Maktoob -** [**https://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/qaeda-militants-seize-yemen-town-security-official-083400049.html**](https://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/qaeda-militants-seize-yemen-town-security-official-083400049.html)

SA

**Sri Lanka**

**Government bans foreigners from old war zone amid UN probe**

Sri Lanka banned foreigners from a former battle zone, the government said, weeks after the UN began an investigation into alleged war crimes in the final phase of a 26-year conflict between the army and separatist rebels. The UN launched its inquiry into accusations of war crimes committed by both state forces and ethnic Tamil rebels during the conflict that ended in 2009, saying the government had failed to investigate properly. The UN estimated in a 2011 report that about 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final weeks of the war, mostly by the army.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/15/us-sri-lanka-north-ban-idUSKCN0I41HW20141015**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/15/us-sri-lanka-north-ban-idUSKCN0I41HW20141015)

WCA

**CAR**

**Violence flares in Bangui**

Violence flared in Bangui after anti-Balaka militia’s attacked with grenades and automatic weapons, leaving four civilians killed, many wounded and houses burned in a late night attack. In addition, Cameroonian peacekeepers were fired on by the anti-Balaka militia who are pressing for the president to resign, a UN peacekeeping spokeswoman said. Barricades have gone up throughout Bangui on 15 October and there has been a great deal of gunfire, said witnesses.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/violence-flares-african-republic-capital-26211071**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/violence-flares-african-republic-capital-26211071)

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/four-un-peacekeepers-wounded-c-africa-ambush-173256010.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/four-un-peacekeepers-wounded-c-africa-ambush-173256010.html)

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/15/us-centralafrica-violence-idUSKCN0I41U920141015**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/15/us-centralafrica-violence-idUSKCN0I41U920141015)

**DR Congo**

**UN says rebels kill 6 people, kidnap 47**

The spokesperson for the UN peacekeeping mission in DR Congo says there has been a resurgence of rebel activity in the northeast where six people were killed and 47 kidnapped. He said on 15 October that the Maimai-Simba group burned six people to death and abducted 40 women and seven boys from a northeastern village. He added that the rebels pillaged the village, which is seven days walk from the regional center of Mambasa.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rebels-kill-kidnap-47-congo-26212538**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rebels-kill-kidnap-47-congo-26212538)

**Rebel group attack kills 40 in eastern Congo**

At least 40 civilians have been killed in a rebel attack on a village in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Head of civil society North Kivu province, said the attack by The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and The National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) rebel group on Wednesday had killed 40 civilians and destroyed many homes in Kamango, a village near the Ugandan border. However, local sources suggested it was not ADF-NALU but remnants of the M23 rebel group which carried out the attack.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/26/us-congo-democratic-rebels-idUSBRE9BP0AW20131226**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/26/us-congo-democratic-rebels-idUSBRE9BP0AW20131226)

**Mali**

**NGO employees reported kidnapped**

Several employees of the Handicap International NGO have been kidnapped in Dar Salam, a small town in northern Mali near Timbuktu, police and diplomatic sources in Bamako reported. The employees, who were travelling in two vehicles, were reported missing late on 13 October and so far no one has claimed responsibility for the abduction. Gunmen on 12 October stopped a vehicle of Minusma carrying an Indian mechanic and a Malian driver in the same area and held them for several hours before releasing them.

**EFE -** [**https://in.news.yahoo.com/ngo-employees-reported-kidnapped-mali-165007114.html**](https://in.news.yahoo.com/ngo-employees-reported-kidnapped-mali-165007114.html)

The Brief is produced by UNICEF's Emergency Operations Centre (OPSCEN) and is a daily compilation of the main humanitarian, political and security-related media stories from around the world. It aims to provide field offices and senior decision-makers with critical information related to humanitarian emergencies and staff security.

Disclaimer: The views presented here are those of the original authors and are not necessarily shared by UNICEF. Please note that these news stories should be used solely for official purposes. Our license agreement does not permit users to store, post or redistribute the contents beyond personal use. We kindly ask that UNICEF colleagues be responsible users of copyrighted material. For information on this service please contact: