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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**UN officials demand prosecutions for US torture**

All senior US officials and CIA agents who authorized or carried out torture like waterboarding as part of former President George W. Bush's national security policy must be prosecuted, top UN officials said Wednesday. It's not clear, however, how human rights officials think these prosecutions will take place, since the Justice Department has declined to prosecute and the US is not a member of the International Criminal Court. Zeid Raad al-Hussein, the UN high commissioner for human rights, said it's "crystal clear" under international law that the US, which ratified the UN Convention Against Torture in 1994, now has an obligation to ensure accountability.

**AP -** [**http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/crime/article/UN-expert-calls-for-prosecution-over-US-torture-5947201.php**](http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/crime/article/UN-expert-calls-for-prosecution-over-US-torture-5947201.php)

**2014 time ‘Person of the Year’ goes to Ebola workers**

Time magazine has named Ebola healthcare workers in West Africa its 'Person of the Year' for 2014. Doctors, nurses and other staff who show "courage and mercy" were singled out by the magazine for praise. "The rest of the world can sleep at night because a group of men and women are willing to stand and fight," said Time's editor, Nancy Gibbs. About 349 healthcare workers have died after contracting the disease.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30424300**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30424300)

**GAVI alliance commits up to $300 mln to buy Ebola vaccines**

GAVI, the global vaccines alliance, said on Thursday it was committing up to $300 million to buy Ebola vaccines and was ready to begin procurement as soon as the WHO recommends one for use. As much as $90 million more could also be made available to help affected countries introduce the vaccines and to rebuild their health systems, it added. Clinical trials with experimental shots are now underway as experts race to contain an epidemic that has killed more than 6,000 people in West Africa, though there is still uncertainty over how well they will work and how many doses are needed.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211105935-fnw9y/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211105935-fnw9y/?source=search)

**Ebola vaccine trial halted temporarily for checks after joint pains - Geneva hospital**

A clinical trial of an Ebola vaccine developed by Merck and NewLink has been halted temporarily as a precautionary measure after four patients complained of joint pains, the University of Geneva Hospital said on Thursday. "They are all fine and being monitored regularly by the medical team leading the study," it said in a statement. The human safety trials, which began in Geneva on Nov. 10, are due to resume on Jan. 5 in up to 15 volunteers after checks to ensure that joint pain symptoms in hands and feet were "benign and temporary", the hospital said. Fifty nine volunteers have been vaccinated so far.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211135112-u358o/?source=jtTheWire**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211135112-u358o/?source=jtTheWire)

**Jihadist violence killed over 5,000 people worldwide in November**

More than 5,000 people worldwide died in November as a result of jihadist violence, a BBC study has revealed. The four worst-affected countries were Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Syria, accounting for 80% of all deaths. The investigation recorded a total of 664 attacks in 14 countries. Islamic State militants, operating in Iraq and Syria, were responsible for more than 2,000 deaths. Of the 5,042 people killed in total, a majority (2,079) were civilians. Military personnel made up 1,723 deaths. Nearly 1,000 jihadis were reported killed during the attacks. Iraq was the single deadliest country, accounting for a third of all deaths and the highest number of attacks. Nigeria was the second deadliest country, with Boko Haram blamed for the killings there. Taliban violence made Afghanistan the third-deadliest country.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30420218**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30420218)

CEE/CIS

**Russia**

**Chechnya homes targeted after Grozny militant attack**

Homes have been set on fire after Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov called for the punishment of relatives of Islamist militants in response to a deadly attack on the capital Grozny. Mr Kadyrov singled out militants' families, saying that those who helped it happen or failed to stop it would be "held harshly accountable". Parents and neighbours would have to shoulder responsibility for the attacks and punishing them was in line with the "norms of Islam", he said. The streets look empty in Yandi, the Chechen village where several homes have been burnt to the ground. Amnesty International said punishing relatives was a flagrant violation of international law and urged Russia to investigate what had happened.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30414953**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30414953)

**Russia says pushing for Ukraine peace talks as soon as possible**

Russia is sparing no effort to convene another round of peace talks on the conflict in east Ukraine, Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said on Thursday, criticising Kiev's reluctance to do so. Kiev's envoy to the talks, which also bring together Moscow, pro-Russian separatists and the OSCE European watchdog, said on Wednesday that any fresh meeting was not viable as long as the rebels do not stop firing completely.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211112606-1bqa5/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211112606-1bqa5/?source=search)

**Ukraine**

**Ukraine president pleads for troop withdrawal**

Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko has publicly asked Russia to withdraw its troops from his country, the day after a Russian general said a small Russian military mission in eastern Ukraine was there at the invitation of Kiev. "Please stop the fire. Please release the hostages. Please withdraw your troops from my territory," Poroshenko said in a joint press conference with Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Poroshenko made his plea two days after a 'Day of Silence' resulted in a dramatic decrease in cross-border shelling, although some breaches of the ceasefire were still reported by Ukraine's military. Rebels in turn accused Ukrainian forces of sporadic violations of the truce that began on Tuesday.

**Aljazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/12/ukraine-president-pleads-troop-withdrawal-2014121154049558336.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/12/ukraine-president-pleads-troop-withdrawal-2014121154049558336.html)

**Pro-Russian rebels say withdrawing artillery in east Ukraine**

Pro-Russian separatists have started pulling back artillery from positions in the southern part of their Donetsk separatist region in east Ukraine, Russian news agency Interfax quoted a separatist leader as saying on Thursday.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/11/us-ukraine-crisis-artillery-idUSKBN0JP0UI20141211**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/11/us-ukraine-crisis-artillery-idUSKBN0JP0UI20141211)

**Three more Ukrainian soldiers killed as truce frays - Kiev military**

Three Ukrainian soldiers were killed and eight wounded in attacks by pro-Russian separatists in the past 24 hours, a military spokesman said on Thursday, further marring a truce which began with a "Day of Silence" on Tuesday. Military spokesman Andriy Lysenko said government forces had come under attack from separatist shells 22 times in the past 24 hours, though the army itself was still observing Tuesday's "silence regime".

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211120808-lbraj/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211120808-lbraj/?source=search)

EAP

**China**

**Hong Kong police start clearing main protest camp**

Hong Kong authorities cleared barricades Thursday from a pro-democracy protest camp spread across a busy highway as part of a final push to retake streets occupied by activists for two and a half months. The protesters reject Beijing's restrictions on the first election for the city's top leader, scheduled for 2017, but have failed to win any concessions from Hong Kong's government, and the movement's momentum has faded recently as the government stuck to its apparent strategy of waiting the protesters out.

**AP -** [**http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/12/10/hong-kong-police-clear-protest-sites/20225491/**](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/12/10/hong-kong-police-clear-protest-sites/20225491/)

**China's Urumqi bans Islamic veil, sparking rights concerns**

The capital of China's far western Xinjiang has banned the wearing of Islamic veils in public, the regional government said on Thursday, in a move experts worry could spark more unrest in the troubled region. The restriction comes as China is stepping up curbs on religious clothing amid increasing nervousness about Islamist extremism. Many Xinjiang experts say the outlawing of veils and the heavy-handed enforcement of the rules would further stigmatise the region's minority Uighurs. Uighurs have traditionally followed a moderate form of Islam, but many have begun adopting practices more commonly seen in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, such as full-face veils for women.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.dawn.com/news/1150190/chinas-urumqi-bans-islamic-veil-sparking-rights-concerns**](http://www.dawn.com/news/1150190/chinas-urumqi-bans-islamic-veil-sparking-rights-concerns)

**China police investigate vanished Vietnamese brides**

Chinese authorities are investigating the disappearance of more than 100 Vietnamese women in the northern province of Hebei, local media report. The women were married through a matchmaker to men living in rural villages near Handan, but vanished in late November, the reports said. China Daily quoted an official as saying an "organised ring" may have been involved in the mass disappearance. China's longstanding one-child policy has created a gender imbalance as Chinese culture traditionally favours male babies over female. Some poorer bachelors in rural areas have relied on matchmaking services to find brides from nearby countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar. Such demand has fuelled human trafficking.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-30426764**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-30426764)

**Philippines**

**Philippine politician injured, 4 aides killed in ambush**

A member of the Philippines parliament was wounded in an ambush Thursday that left four of his aides dead. Vicente Belmonte Jr. said his two-car convoy was travelling on the national highway from the airport in the southern coastal province of Misamis Oriental when gunmen in a vehicle fired at them, killing his two drivers and two bodyguards. He denounced it as "politically motivated", adding that he had recently received threats to his life. Political violence, especially at the local levels, is common in the Philippines, with dozens killed every three years during election season.

**AFP -** [**http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/philippine-politician/1524166.html**](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/philippine-politician/1524166.html)

ESA

**Kenya**

**Kenyan women with HIV sue over sterilization**

A group of HIV-positive women in Kenya has taken legal action against the government, accusing it of arranging for them to be forcibly sterilised. The five women are demanding compensation from the government and the non-governmental organisations they say carried out the sterilisations. Activists protested in the capital, Nairobi, to call for the practice to be banned, claiming it was widespread. The women marched from Nairobi's High Court to Uhuru Park with T-shirts bearing the words: "Enforced and coerced sterilization of women living with HIV". Lawyer Allan Machele said the reproductive rights of the women had been breached, along with their right to dignity. Health officials had denied that the women had been forcibly sterilised.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30417266**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30417266)

**Somalia**

**Five women killed by army soldier**

A soldier in Somalia has avenged the killing of his wife by shooting dead five women related to militant Islamists, an official has said. He suspected that the women had colluded with the murderers of his wife, who was also a soldier. The killing of all seven women has shocked women's rights groups in Somalia, who have noted that it is extremely rare for so many women to be shot dead.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30411893**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30411893)

LAC

**Colombia**

**Sworn enemies make peace in Colombia after putting down their guns**

During seven years of night guard duty as a rebel child soldier in Colombia's jungle hideouts, Jhon Jairo Obando was kept awake knowing that if he did not shoot first his enemy would. "It was me or the paramilitaries. It was a question of survival," said Obando, now 27, who joined Colombia's leftist guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), at the age of 10 to escape abuse at home. In another part of Colombia, right-wing paramilitary fighter Hector Fabio Perea felt the same fear and hatred during his five years in the now defunct United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), an umbrella group of fighters set up to defeat the FARC.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141210150414-lht0d/?source=jt**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141210150414-lht0d/?source=jt)

**Brazil**

**Brazil truth commission: Abuse ‘rife’ under military rule**

Brazil's national truth commission says illegal arrests, torture, executions and forced disappearances were performed systematically by state agents under Brazil's military rule. In its final report, the commission also called for the armed forces to recognise their responsibility for the "grave violations" that happened. More than 400 people were killed or disappeared between 1964 and 1985. Many others, among them President Dilma Rousseff, were arrested and tortured. The seven-member truth commission spent more than two years investigating human rights abuses from the period from 1946 to 1988, with the main focus on the military era from 1964 to 1985. It delivered its final report to President Rousseff on Wednesday.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-30410741**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-30410741)

MENA

**Algeria**

**Algerian troops kill militant involved in Frenchman's beheading**

Algerian security forces have killed a second militant involved in the kidnapping and beheading of a French tourist in September, the Algerian justice minister said on Thursday. Militants claiming loyalty to Islamic State militants fighting in Iraq and Syria killed Herve Gourdel in the mountains east of Algiers, where the Frenchman had been planning a trekking trip before he was kidnapped in September.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211131011-dh9jv/?source=jtTheWire**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211131011-dh9jv/?source=jtTheWire)

**Egypt**

**Egypt imposes travel restrictions for Turkey, Libya**

Egypt has imposed restrictions on male citizens traveling to Turkey, and Libya to stop them joining jihadi organizations like ISIS, a security official said Wednesday. Men aged between 18 and 40 years who plan to travel to the two countries need prior clearance from Egyptian immigration under the new rules which came to effect on 3 December.

**The Daily Star-** [**http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-10/280593-egypt-imposes-travel-restrictions-for-turkey-libya.ashx**](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-10/280593-egypt-imposes-travel-restrictions-for-turkey-libya.ashx)

**Iraq**

**Suicide attack on Iraqi military base kills 9**

A suicide attack outside a military base in Samarra, north of Baghdad, killed nine people and wounded 15 others Wednesday, security officials said. Iraqi soldiers were among the dead and wounded, according to the officials, who blamed the truck bombing on ISIS.

**CNN-** [**http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/10/world/meast/iraq-violence/index.html?hpt=imi\_c2**](http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/10/world/meast/iraq-violence/index.html?hpt=imi_c2)

**Libya**

**Libya’s side-lined IDPs**

Libya has an estimated 35,000 IDPs sheltering in temporary camps in Tripoli and Benghazi. The IDPs claim they have been neglected both by the international aid community and the various factions that now make up Libya's parallel governments. The deterioration of the security situation in Libya earlier in the year means that most international aid organizations are now running operations remotely from Tunisia, although the UN, working as a joint humanitarian team, has made some distributions. According to the UN, more than 390,000 people have been displaced since May this year, and close to quarter of those since October.

**IRIN -** [**http://www.irinnews.org/report/100931/libya-s-sidelined-idps**](http://www.irinnews.org/report/100931/libya-s-sidelined-idps)

**Libya's recognized PM vows military campaign to seize Tripoli**

Libya's recognized government will continue a military campaign to claim back the capitalTripoli, Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni said on Wednesday. Libya is divided between two governments since a group called Libya Dawn seized Tripoli in August after a month-long battle with a rival group, setting up its own parliament and government. PM Abdullah al-Thinni has been forced to work from the East where the elected House of Representatives is also based, part of turmoil three years after the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211001100-b6l2v/?source=jtHeadLinkStory**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211001100-b6l2v/?source=jtHeadLinkStory)

**Saudi Arabia**

**Saudi Arabia says arrests three over shooting of Dane, link to Islamic State**

Saudi Arabian security forces have arrested three Saudis over the Nov. 22 shooting of a Danish man in Riyadh and investigations show the attack was carried out in support of the Islamic State militant group, the state news agency said. The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) quoted an interior ministry spokesman as saying security forces also recovered the handgun used in the shooting.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/11/us-saudi-attack-arrests-idUSKBN0JP1K520141211**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/11/us-saudi-attack-arrests-idUSKBN0JP1K520141211)

**State of Palestine**

**Palestinian minister dies after confrontation with Israeli police**

A Palestinian minister died on Wednesday shortly after an Israeli border policeman shoved and grabbed him by the throat during a protest in the West Bank. Ziad Abu Ein was among scores of Palestinian and foreign activists who were confronted at an Israeli checkpoint while heading to a demonstration against Jewish settlements. Around 30 Israeli soldiers and border policemen fired tear gas and sound grenades at the group and a scuffle ensued. It was not clear what caused his death. An autopsy is being carried out with Palestinian, Israeli and Jordanian pathologists present, with the results expected later on Wednesday.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/10/us-mideast-israel-palestinians-idUSKBN0JO10720141210**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/10/us-mideast-israel-palestinians-idUSKBN0JO10720141210)

**Syria**

**Three journalists killed in missile attack in Syira**

Three journalists from the Syrian opposition TV channel Orient News have been killed while covering clashes in the country's south-west, reports say. A missile hit their vehicle while they travelled to Sheikh Miskeen in Deraa province. The channel said it believed they were directly targeted by government forces. Minutes before they were killed they had driven past government forces in the village of Qarfa, from where the missile was launched. More than 70 journalists have been killed while covering the conflict in Syria over the past three years. The vast majority of them are local reporters. The car was not marked as a press vehicle, but Orient News said it was identifiable because it was carrying a satellite dish almost 1.8m (6ft) in diameter.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30411516**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30411516)

**Syria's southern rebels take step toward unity**

Rebels in southern Syria say they have taken a step toward unity that may attract more support from their Western and Arab backers, forging a joint defense pact to help shield them from government forces and Islamic State. The south is the last major stronghold of the mainstream opposition to President Bashar al-Assad following the expansion of Islamic State in the east and north and gains by the al Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front in the northwest.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/11/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0JP1FP20141211**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/11/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0JP1FP20141211)

**Yemen**

**Al-Qaeda attacks Yemeni airbase to avenge US rescue raids**

The al-Qaeda affiliate in Yemen, Ansar al-Sharia, said Thursday it had fired rockets at a Yemeni-US airbase in retaliation for recent US rescue raids to release an American hostage. The militant group said in a tweet that its fighters had fired overnight six grad rockets on the al-Annad airbase in the province of Lahj in southern Yemen. The attack targeted the US section of the airbase, the group added without reporting casualties. The US has carried out two failed operations in Yemen to free American photojournalist Luke Somers, who has been held by al-Qaeda militants for more than a year. The last operation was on Sunday, resulting in the death of Somers and a South African hostage. Several al-Qaeda operatives were killed in the raid, according to US officials.

**DPA** - [**http://www.lse.co.uk/AllNews.asp?code=v4zzh4yc&headline=AlQaeda\_Attacks\_Yemeni\_Airbase\_To\_Avenge\_US\_Rescue\_Raids**](http://www.lse.co.uk/AllNews.asp?code=v4zzh4yc&headline=AlQaeda_Attacks_Yemeni_Airbase_To_Avenge_US_Rescue_Raids)

**Al-Qaeda blames Obama over hostage deaths**

Al-Qaeda has blamed US President Barack Obama for the deaths of two hostages - an American photojournalist and a South African teacher - during a failed rescue attempt by US troops over the weekend. Luke Somers and South African national Pierre Korkie were killed by their captors on Saturday when US and Yemeni troops stormed an al-Qaeda base in southwestern Yemen. "Obama made the wrong decision, and signed the death warrant for his American compatriot [Somers]", Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) official Nasser bin Ali al-Ansi said in the video released on Thursday. The failed US raid came just a day before Korkie was due to be released under a deal with the kidnappers.

**Al Jazeera-** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/al-qaeda-blames-obama-over-hostage-deaths-20141211620244102.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/al-qaeda-blames-obama-over-hostage-deaths-20141211620244102.html)

SA

**Afghanistan**

**Bomb hits French-run school in Kabul, 6 soldiers also killed on bus**

A suicide bomber attacked a French-run high school in Afghanistan's capital on Thursday, killing at least one person hours after another bomb left six Afghan soldiers dead on the outskirts of Kabul, officials said. The Afghan capital has been hit by a series of bombings and armed attacks this year as most foreign combat troops prepare to withdraw at the end of the month. Deputy Interior Minister General Ayoub Salangi said the suspected school bomber was about 17 years old and detonated his explosive vest inside the venue, killing at least one person and wounding 16 others during an event at the school.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211140142-wv7d4/?source=jtTheWire**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211140142-wv7d4/?source=jtTheWire)

**Unable to pay salaries, Afghanistan asks donors for more money**

Afghanistan does not have enough money to pay salaries this month and has asked aid donors for a bailout before the end of the year, the treasury chief told Reuters on Thursday. "Salaries are our priority," Alhaj Mohammad Aqa said, explaining that teachers, civil servants and other government workers had not been paid their salaries this month. In September, Afghanistan asked for a $537 million bailout but donors had only responded with $170 million, he said, adding that the remainder was needed because the budget for state salaries had run out.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211125940-7q81p/?source=jtTheWire**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211125940-7q81p/?source=jtTheWire)

**Pakistan**

**Polio campaign suspended in parts of Lahore**

A Polio campaign has been suspended in six towns of Lahore due to security concerns, however, the campaign will continue in three towns of the city. The decision comes a day after a three-day polio campaign was halted in Faisalabad by the district administration after a teacher volunteering in the polio campaign was murdered.

**Tribune -** [**http://tribune.com.pk/story/804612/polio-campaign-suspended-in-parts-of-lahore/**](http://tribune.com.pk/story/804612/polio-campaign-suspended-in-parts-of-lahore/)

WCA

**Across WAC**

**UN peacekeepers arrest Chadian warlord in CAR**

UN peacekeepers in Central African Republic have arrested a Chadian warlord wanted by authorities for abuses against the population in the north of country, the UN mission and the government said. Abdel Kader Baba-Ladde was captured by peacekeepers in the northern district of Kabo, close to the Chadian border, Myriam Dessables, spokeswoman for the UN mission (MINUSCA), said.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211132841-jd3zl/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211132841-jd3zl/?source=search)

**DR Congo**

**Massacres highlight complexity of violence in Beni Territory**

The murders of more than 250 men, women and children in eastern DRC’s Beni Territory in recent weeks have widely been blamed on an insurgency of Ugandan origin known as the Alliance of Democratic Forces-NALU. But several armed groups and gangs are active in the area and the culprits of these killings have not been incontrovertibly identified. The killings were carried out, in various episodes between 2 October and 7 December, in parts of Nord Kivu Province. The attacks have led more than 88,000 people to flee their homes.

**IRIN -** [**http://www.irinnews.org/report/100932/massacres-highlight-complexity-of-violence-in-drc-s-beni-territory**](http://www.irinnews.org/report/100932/massacres-highlight-complexity-of-violence-in-drc-s-beni-territory)

**Mali**

**French forces in Mali kill Islamist on US wanted list**

French forces in northern Mali have killed a senior commander of the al Mourabitoun Islamist group who was wanted by the US, a defence ministry spokesman said on Thursday. The US has offered a $5 million reward for information leading to the arrest of Ahmed al Tilemsi, who took part in the 2011 kidnapping of two French nationals in Niger and of three aid workers in Algeria later that year. Al Tilemsi was a founding member of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), which merged with fightersloyal to veteran Islamist leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar to form al Mourabitoun last year.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141211121739-y2b7n/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141211121739-y2b7n/?source=search)

**Niger**

**Faced with Boko Haram refugees, poor harvest Niger calls for help**

Niger needs more international assistance to help it confront a looming food crisis compounded by an influx of refugees fleeing attacks by Boko Haram Islamist fighters in neighbouring Nigeria, the country's prime minister said. The twin crisis highlights the strain being put on Niger, a uranium producer straddling the Sahara that is one of the world's poorest nations, by recurrent poor harvests and the spillover from its neighbour's conflict with militants.

Reuters - <http://www.trust.org/item/20141211113907-lnhut/?source=fiHeadlineStory>

**Nigeria**

**Deadly blast hits city of Kano**

A blast has struck a busy textile market in the north Nigerian city of Kano, killing four people and wounding seven others. The explosion happened on Wednesday in the Kantinkwari market, which is typically packed with crowds of traders, shoppers as well as traffic. Reports said two female suicide bombers were behind the attack.

**Aljazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/explosion-reported-nigerian-city-kano-20141210152853475572.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/explosion-reported-nigerian-city-kano-20141210152853475572.html)

**Sierra Leone area to hold 2-week Ebola 'Lockdown'**

Health workers sent to Sierra Leone to investigate an alarming spike in deaths from Ebola have uncovered a grim scene: piles of bodies, overwhelmed medical personnel and exhausted burial teams. The WHO says the health workers from several local and international agencies are racing to the latest Ebola hotspot, a diamond-mining area that Sierra Leone put on "lockdown" Wednesday.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/sierra-leone-area-hold-week-ebola-lockdown-27497818**](http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/sierra-leone-area-hold-week-ebola-lockdown-27497818)

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.

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