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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**World in danger of food insecurity: FAO report**

The FAO has issued a warning about the worsening food insecurity across the globe. According to the latest Crop Prospects and Food Situation Report by the FAO, food insecurity threatens as many as 39 countries, including 29 in Africa, although an all-time record of more than 2.5 billion tons of cereal have been produced in 2014. The UN food agency named civil conflicts, adverse weather and the Ebola outbreak as the root causes of the global food insecurity.

**FAO -** [**http://www.fao.org/3/a-I4256E.pdf**](http://www.fao.org/3/a-I4256E.pdf)

**500+ Organizations Launch Global Coalition to Accelerate Access to Universal Health Coverage**

A new global coalition of more than 500 leading health and development organisations worldwide is urging governments to accelerate reforms that ensure everyone, everywhere, can access quality health services without being forced into poverty. The coalition was launched on December 12, 2014, on the first-ever Universal Health Coverage Day, to stress the importance of universal access to health services for saving lives, ending extreme poverty, building resilience against the health effects of climate change and ending deadly epidemics such as Ebola.

**WTRF -** [**http://www.wtrf.com/story/27611110/500-organizations-launch-global-coalition-to-accelerate-access-to-universal-health-coverage**](http://www.wtrf.com/story/27611110/500-organizations-launch-global-coalition-to-accelerate-access-to-universal-health-coverage)

**Daily Star -** [**http://www.thedailystar.net/health/accelerating-access-to-universal-health-coverage-55148**](http://www.thedailystar.net/health/accelerating-access-to-universal-health-coverage-55148)

CEE/CIS

**Turkey**

**Police raid media offices of backers of President's rival**

Turkish police on 14 December launched a sweeping operation to arrest supporters of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rival, US-exiled imam Fethullah Gulen, including a raid on the offices of the Zaman daily, which is close to the cleric. Anti-terrorism police conducted early morning raids in 13 cities across Turkey, including Istanbul, and detained at least 14 people including a top executive, producers and directors of a television channel close to Gulen, the state-run Anatolia news agency said.

**AFP -** [**http://www.france24.com/en/20141214-turkish-police-raid-media-offices-backers-erdogan-rival/**](http://www.france24.com/en/20141214-turkish-police-raid-media-offices-backers-erdogan-rival/)

**Ukraine**

**UN says death toll surpasses 4,600**

Fighting between government troops and pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine has left more than 300 people dead in less than a month, taking the overall toll to 4,634, the UN said on 13 December in its latest report on the conflict. Some 10,243 people have been wounded since the conflict erupted in the east in April, OCHA said in a statement. More than 1.1 million people have been displaced, 542,080 internally and 567,956 fleeing to neighbouring countries, the vast majority, 465,721, to Russia, it said. Some 5.2 million people live in conflict-afflicted areas, it said.

**AFP -** [**http://www.straitstimes.com/news/world/europe/story/ukraine-separatist-conflict-toll-tops-4600-un-20141213**](http://www.straitstimes.com/news/world/europe/story/ukraine-separatist-conflict-toll-tops-4600-un-20141213)

**DPA -** [**http://www.dpa-international.com/news/international/un-says-death-toll-in-ukraine-surpasses-4600-a-43555983.html**](http://www.dpa-international.com/news/international/un-says-death-toll-in-ukraine-surpasses-4600-a-43555983.html)

**Army says that 11 attacks and drone spotted despite truce**

The Ukrainian army on 13 December said a ceasefire with Russia-backed separatists has been violated 11 times in the past 24 hours. The Ukrainian army reported that the attacks against its positions in the east and said a drone was spotted over Mariupol, the last major eastern town under its control. Around the airport in Donetsk, "the night was rough", a voluntary soldier with the Pravy Sektor group reported. "Snipers fired on us and explosions were coming from the airport. But everything is calm this morning," he said.

**AFP -** [**http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/ukraine-says-11-attacks/1527588.html**](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/ukraine-says-11-attacks/1527588.html)

**Truce under pressure as Europe raises Russia fears**

A ceasefire in eastern Ukraine was under pressure, while European nations raised new fears about Russia's "unprecedented" military build-up. On some parts of the frontline, there appeared to be a determined effort to keep the shaky truce from collapsing. Government soldiers could be seen blithely ignoring rebel forces firing on their position at the hotly contested Donetsk airport. Rebel commanders in Donetsk denied they had carried out any attacks and said government forces had breached the ceasefire on five occasions.

**AFP -** [**https://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-truce-under-pressure-europe-raises-russia-fears-192614839.html**](https://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-truce-under-pressure-europe-raises-russia-fears-192614839.html)

**Defense chief wants budget doubled to fight separatists**

Ukraine's defense minister called for a doubling of the military budget next year to allow the army to buy weapons abroad and better equip itself to fight Russian-backed separatists in the east. Numbers of soldiers serving in the east, where government forces have been battling separatists since April, would also be increased to a quarter of a million next year from 232,000 currently, the minister told parliament. He said the armed forces planned to spend about $110 million on buying new weapons abroad next year in addition to $365 million spent on domestic arms procurements.

**AFP -** [**http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/ukraine-to-call-up-40-000/1526824.html**](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/ukraine-to-call-up-40-000/1526824.html)

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/12/us-ukraine-crisis-defence-idUSKBN0JQ14G20141212?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/12/us-ukraine-crisis-defence-idUSKBN0JQ14G20141212?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews)

**New Russian humanitarian aid convoy enters the east**

A new Russian humanitarian aid convoy entered eastern Ukraine on 12 December through the border section controlled by pro-Russian separatist militias, the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations announced on 12 December. More than 50 trucks were heading towards Donetsk and another 80 towards Luhansk, said a ministry spokesperson. It is the ninth convoy sent by Russia to the region since the aid shipments began last August. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian military command said that the separatists had fired six times at government forces but there were no injuries. The Ukrainian military command said the incidents involving light weapons occurred overnight.

**EFE -** [**http://www.laprensasa.com/309\_america-in-english/2839443\_new-russian-humanitarian-aid-convoy-enters-eastern-ukraine.html**](http://www.laprensasa.com/309_america-in-english/2839443_new-russian-humanitarian-aid-convoy-enters-eastern-ukraine.html)

**OSCE -** [**http://www.osce.org/om/131756**](http://www.osce.org/om/131756)

**Russia protests US aid for Ukraine military**

Russia is criticizing legislation passed by the US Congress authorizing $350 million in military aid to Ukraine and new sanctions against key state-controlled Russian companies. If President Barack Obama signs into law the Ukraine Freedom Support Act, the US will provide Ukraine with anti-tank and armor-piercing weapons, counterartillery radars, tactical troop-operated surveillance drones, communications equipment and ammunition. The bill, which was passed unanimously by both houses of Congress, also authorizes the Obama administration to impose new sanctions on Russia's state arms exporter Rosobornexport and state-controlled natural gas producer Gazprom.

**VoA -** [**http://www.voanews.com/content/russia-protests-passage-of-pro-ukraine-bill-by-us-congress/2557035.html**](http://www.voanews.com/content/russia-protests-passage-of-pro-ukraine-bill-by-us-congress/2557035.html)

EAP

**Indonesia**

**Indonesian Landslide Death Toll Rises to 51**

Indonesian rescuers dug through mud with shovels and their bare hands for a third day on Monday in the hunt for dozens of people still missing after a landslide engulfed a village, as the death toll rose to 51.

Fifty-seven people are still unaccounted for after heavy rain triggered the landslide that swallowed up houses in Jemblung village on Java island late Friday. Officials say the chances of finding anyone alive are now slim. More than 1,000 rescuers, including police and soldiers, have been digging through huge mounds of red mud that cascaded onto the village, which lies in a valley surrounded by hills, with a sound like thunder.

**AP -** [**http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/indonesian-landslide-death-toll-rises-to-51-634776**](http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/indonesian-landslide-death-toll-rises-to-51-634776)

**BNPB -** [**http://bnpb.go.id/berita/2311/update-longsor-banjarnegara-20-tewas-15-selamat-88-hilang?lang=EN**](http://bnpb.go.id/berita/2311/update-longsor-banjarnegara-20-tewas-15-selamat-88-hilang?lang=EN)

ESA

**Kenya**

**One policeman killed, two wounded in attack on coast camp**

Suspected separatists killed a Kenyan policeman and critically wounded two more when they attacked a camp in the coastal county of Kilifi, a senior regional official reported. The county commissioner for Kilifi, said machete-wielding attackers raided the police camp in the Mwanamwinga area late at night, killing the corporal in charge. The county commissioner said that four of the attackers went to the camp posing as members of the public seeking help. "Over 20 men then suddenly appeared from the darkness and started attacking the officers who were on duty. They escaped with two guns," he said. "We think the MRC are involved," he said, referring to the Mombasa Republican Council. However, the secretary general of MRC, rejected the accusation.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/kenyaNews/idAFL6N0TW05920141212**](http://af.reuters.com/article/kenyaNews/idAFL6N0TW05920141212)

**Somalia**

**'Al-Shabab journalist' returned to Somalia**

A Somali journalist accused of murdering colleagues and working for armed group al-Shabab has been extradited to Mogadishu to stand trial, Somalia's information minister has said. "Somali security forces helped the capture of Hassan Hanafi Haji who was hiding in Nairobi," he said in a statement on Saturday. Hanafi, arrested in Kenya in August, was extradited to Somalia on December 9 to "face justice", the minister added, calling him "a well-known senior al-Shabab member who was responsible for the killing of Somali journalists."

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/journalist-returned-somalia-2014121313440342577.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/journalist-returned-somalia-2014121313440342577.html)

**South Sudan**

**One year after conflict, children still under daily threat: UNICEF**

The future for a generation of children in South Sudan is being stolen by the year-long conflict in the country, which has driven hundreds of thousands of children from their homes, schools and communities; subjecting them to violence, malnutrition and disease, UNICEF said. The scale of the crisis in the country is staggering, said UNICEF. Since the violence erupted on 15 December 2013, almost 750,000 children have been internally displaced and more than 320,000 are living as refugees. An estimated 400,000 children have been forced out of school and 12,000 are reported as being used by armed forces and groups in the conflict. With traditional social structures damaged, children are also increasingly vulnerable to violence and to sexual abuse and exploitation.

**UNICEF -** [**http://www.unicef.org/southsudan/media\_15898.html**](http://www.unicef.org/southsudan/media_15898.html)

LAC

**Across LAC**

**UN warns of humanitarian crisis in drought-hit Central America**

A long drought in Central America has slowly turned into a humanitarian crisis, as 2.5 million people are no longer able to feed themselves, OCHA reported. The drought has affected Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. "In the coming months, food insecurity is expected to get worse as families deplete their food stocks," said the OCHA spokesperson. In eastern Guatemala, a quarter of households suffer malnutrition, while nearly 20,000 children in Honduras are malnourished because of the drought. Both countries have declared a state of emergency in the past months. In the hardest-hit parts of El Salvador, 80% of farmers have lost their entire crops, according to the ministry of environment. The UN and the three countries are working on securing UN financial aid, according to OCHA.

**AFP -** [**http://www.expatica.com/ch/news/country-news/Creeping-humanitarian-crisis-in-drought-hit-Central-America-UN\_442611.html**](http://www.expatica.com/ch/news/country-news/Creeping-humanitarian-crisis-in-drought-hit-Central-America-UN_442611.html)

**Haiti**

**UN to probe excessive force allegations**

The UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti will investigate allegations its troops used excessive force on a crowd during a violent protest. UN peacekeepers on 12 December opened fire on protesters who marched through Port-au-Prince to demand new leadership and long-delayed elections. Some protesters burned tires and clashed with UN troops and police, who also fired tear gas. Journalists did not observe any injuries or deaths. MINUSTAH said in a statement late on 12 December that it is taking the allegations very seriously.

**AP -** [**https://news.yahoo.com/un-probe-excessive-force-allegations-haiti-134649428.html**](https://news.yahoo.com/un-probe-excessive-force-allegations-haiti-134649428.html)

**Prime Minister resigns after protests**

"I am leaving the post of prime minister this evening with a feeling of accomplishment," Laurent Lamothe said in a televised address. Protesters had called for President Michel Martelly and Mr Lamothe to resign. Opposition politicians accuse President Martelly of wanting to rule by decree and that legislation that would authorise the vote unfairly favours the government. The government argues that opposition politicians are dragging their feet in the hope of extending their time in office without elections.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-30468424**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-30468424)

**Reuters -** [**http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN0JR03820141213**](http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN0JR03820141213)

**One person shot dead in new protests**

A man was shot dead during a new round of anti-government protests in Port-au-Prince calling for the President and Prime Minister to resign. Clashes broke out when hundreds of youth tried to break through police barricades to enter the presidential palace. "We found a body. The victim was in his thirties. We have not yet identified him, but he was not participating in the demonstrations," a police spokesperson reported. It was unclear who fired the deadly shot.

**AFP -** [**https://news.yahoo.com/one-shot-dead-fresh-haiti-protests-022906787.html**](https://news.yahoo.com/one-shot-dead-fresh-haiti-protests-022906787.html)

**Mexico**

**Mexican police clash with protesters at site of concert for missing students**

Clashes between federal police and protesters organizing a concert in solidarity with 43 missing college students left at least 21 people injured and several cars in flames on Sunday in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero. The Tlachinollan human rights group, which supports the relatives of the missing students, said the violence left at least 13 people injured, including students, teachers, parents of the missing students and two journalists, including a photographer who was working with Associated Press.

**The Guardian -** [**http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/15/mexican-police-clash-with-protesters-at-site-of-concert-for-missing-students**](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/15/mexican-police-clash-with-protesters-at-site-of-concert-for-missing-students)

MENA

**Algeria**

**Mayor shot dead, throat slit by 'terrorists'**

The mayor of a town in Algeria was shot dead and had his throat slit by unidentified "terrorists", police were quoted by the APS news agency as saying. The body of the mayor was found at his farm in Fercha, just outside Bordj El Emir Abdelkader, of which he was mayor. The town is 213 kilometres southwest of Algiers. The report gave no further details about the murder, including any explanation as to why "terrorists" were blamed.

**AFP -** [**http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/117787/World/Region/Algerian-mayor-shot-dead,-throat-slit-by-terrorist.aspx**](http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/117787/World/Region/Algerian-mayor-shot-dead,-throat-slit-by-terrorist.aspx)

**Iraq**

**Iraq police crackdown on kidnappings in east**

Police operations in Iraq's eastern region of Diyala have led to three hostages being freed and the dismantling of several extortion gangs, the local police chief said on Sunday. Kidnapping for ransom in Baghdad and elsewhere in the country is a phenomenon that has grown to such an extent that the government has publicly declared tackling it would be one of its priorities. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi recently announced the creation of special crisis cell to tackle kidnappings, which Baghdad's top security official said were a greater threat to the capital's security than the jihadists.

**AFP -** [**http://www.france24.com/en/20141214-iraq-police-crack-down-kidnappings-east/**](http://www.france24.com/en/20141214-iraq-police-crack-down-kidnappings-east/)

**State of Palestine/Israel**

**Palestinians to seek UN resolution 17 December on occupation**

The Palestinians are to present a draft resolution to the UN Security Council on 17 December that would set a two-year deadline for Israel to end its occupation, an official said. "The Palestinian leadership took a decision to go to the Security Council next Wednesday to vote on their project to end the occupation," a senior Palestine Liberation Organisation member reported on 15 December after a meeting in Ramallah.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/palestinians-seek-un-resolution-wednesday-occupation-205109153.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/palestinians-seek-un-resolution-wednesday-occupation-205109153.html)

**Syria**

**Kurdish child soldiers battle ISIL**

After a scathing Human Rights Watch report in June that criticised the Kurds' use of child soldiers, the YPG (People's Defense Units) and the region's self-declared autonomous government signed the "Deed of Commitment", a document produced by the Switzerland-based organisation Geneva Call, aimed at protecting children in armed conflict. As a result, the YPG was forced to demobilize 149 child soldiers from its ranks. The YPG also created a new "non-combat" category for children between 16 and 18, allowing them to be involved in the group's political and educational activities. Despite this commitment, Al Jazeera met countless underage fighters at bases, checkpoints and frontlines across the region. The YPG's official spokesperson said that while efforts had been made to demobilize all children from its ranks, cases still existed.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/underage-kurds-battle-isil-syria-201412793714184188.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/underage-kurds-battle-isil-syria-201412793714184188.html)

**Yemen**

**Attack kills six Shiite militiamen**

Six Shiite Huthi militants were killed in an attack in central Yemen, tribal sources said, as Al-Qaeda claimed it had killed dozens. The Ansarullah militiamen, also called Huthis, have captured many communities in western and central Yemen since taking Sanaa in September. But they have been met by fierce resistance from Sunni tribes and Al-Qaeda militants. Tribal sources reported that "unknown gunmen" killed six militiamen at a Huthi checkpoint in the province of Baida, the scene of fighting between the group and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

**AFP -** [**http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-12/280936-yemen-attack-kills-six-shiite-militiamen-tribal-sources.ashx**](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-12/280936-yemen-attack-kills-six-shiite-militiamen-tribal-sources.ashx)

SA

**Afghanistan**

**At least 21 people die in attacks in Kabul, other parts of the country**

Multiple attacks killed at least 21 people in the country, including two NATO service members, six Afghan soldiers and a senior officer of the nation’s highest court, Afghan officials said on 13 December. They were the latest in a spate of assaults that have sparked new security concerns and placed Afghans and foreigners on edge, as most US and international troops are prepared to leave in less than three weeks.

**Washington Post -** [**http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/at-least-21-die-in-attacks-in-kabul-other-parts-of-afghanistan/2014/12/13/927ee56a-a3b6-4ed4-9075-c6f71b381457\_story.html**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/at-least-21-die-in-attacks-in-kabul-other-parts-of-afghanistan/2014/12/13/927ee56a-a3b6-4ed4-9075-c6f71b381457_story.html)

WCA

**CAR**

**Warring faction chiefs must be arrested - rights group**

Suspected war criminals in CAR are carrying out atrocities and terrorising people, and the United Nations and CAR government must try harder to bring them to justice, rights group Amnesty International said on Thursday. Amnesty said none of the 20 suspected war criminals it had identified in a report in July had been brought before a court of law and some were still committing crimes and interfering with the justice system.

**Defence Web -** [**http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=37365:warring-faction-chiefs-in-central-african-republic-must-be-arrested-rights-group&catid=56:diplomacy-a-peace&Itemid=111**](http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37365:warring-faction-chiefs-in-central-african-republic-must-be-arrested-rights-group&catid=56:diplomacy-a-peace&Itemid=111)

**DRC**

**Slow progress in M23 rebel deal risking peace**

Slow implementation of a critical peace deal for DR Congo's M23 rebels is jeopordizing peace in the region, the UN, US and AU warned on 13 December. The rebels' 18-month war, during which they briefly seized the town of Goma, North Kivu province, was brought to an end a year ago by government troops and UN peacekeepers, with fighters fleeing into Uganda and Rwanda. But top international envoys, including from the AU, EU, UN and US, warned in a statement they "note with concern that while important steps have been made, the overall implementation of the Nairobi declarations remains slow."

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/slow-progress-dr-congos-m23-rebel-deal-risking-081752501.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/slow-progress-dr-congos-m23-rebel-deal-risking-081752501.html)

**Death toll spikes in DRC boat tragedy**

At least 129 people have drowned after a boat capsized on Thursday night on Lake Tanganyika in the southeast of Democratic Republic of Congo, according to a new official death toll, the AFP news agency said. "Rescue workers recovered a total of 129 bodies," an official said. On Saturday, the provincial government said at least 26 people had died after the boat packed with passengers and goods capsized.

The vessel, which was travelling north from Kalemie in Katanga province to Uvira in South Kivu province, sank in the early hours of Friday, survivors speaking by telephone from Katanga's capital Lubumbashi said.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/death-toll-spikes-drc-boat-tragedy-201412141415451910.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/death-toll-spikes-drc-boat-tragedy-201412141415451910.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.

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