**UNICEF OPSCEN Brief – Tuesday, 30 December 2014**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [CEE/CIS](#CEECIS) | **Russia** | A top Russian opposition leader has been given a suspended jail sentence |
|  |  | US adds four more Russians to human rights sanctions list |
|  | **Ukraine** | Ukraine drops non-aligned status |
| [EAP](#EAP) | **Across EAP** | Dozens die as Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines battered by storms |
|  | **Indonesia** | Forty bodies found in missing plane search |
|  | **Philippines** | Storm Kills 29 in Philippines, Leaves 10 Missing |
| [ESA](#ESA) | **Madagascar** | Madagascar's former president under house arrest |
|  | **Somalia** | US air strike 'targets al-Shabaab leader' |
|  | **South Sudan** | WFP reopens Nile route to bring aid to hunger-hit South Sudan |
| [LAC](#LAC) | **Colombia** | Colombia rebels begin indefinite, unilateral ceasefire |
|  | **Mexico** | Mexico calls for larger, more diverse UN Security Council |
| [MENA](#MENA) | **Iraq** | Suicide attacks kill 26 in Iraq, Syria as US-led airstrikes pound ISIL targets |
|  | **Syria** | ISIL releases interview with captured pilot |
|  | **Libya** | Car bomb explodes outside Libyan parliament |
|  | **Bahrain** | Clashes erupt outside house of detained Bahraini opposition leader |
|  | **State of Palestine** | Arabs meet on Palestinian call for swift UN vote to end Israel occupation |
|  |  | West Bank Ministers Visit Gaza to Unite Ministries |
|  |  | Palestinian teen killed by IDF in West Bank after throwing rocks |
| [SA](#SA) | **Afghanistan** | Taliban declare "defeat" of US, allies in Afghanistan |
|  | **Bangladesh** | Top Bangladesh Islamist sentenced to hang for war crimes |
|  | **Pakistan** | Pakistani 'mastermind' bailed over Mumbai terror attacks is rearrested for kidnapping |
|  | **Sri Lanka** | Sri Lankan Tamil party backs opposition for president |
| [WCA](#WCA) | **Across WCA** | Researchers: IMF Policies Hindered Ebola Response |
|  | **CAR** | Militants kidnap six |
|  | **Gambia** | Gunfire reported at Gambia presidential palace as coup attempt is foiled |
|  | **Nigeria** | Boko Haram kills 15 in northeast Nigerian town |
|  | **Liberia** | Liberia sees surge in new Ebola cases in border county |
|  | **Burundi** | Eight killed in clash on Burundi-DRC border |

CEE/CIS

**Russia**

**A top Russian opposition leader has been given a suspended jail sentence**

A Russian court gave Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny a suspended sentence of three and a half years on Tuesday and jailed his brother. Alexei Navalny led mass protests against President Vladimir Putin three years ago, and his trial is seen as part of a campaign to stifle dissent. His brother Oleg was given three and a half years in jail. The Navalny brothers were accused of stealing 30 million rubles from two firms, including an affiliate of the French cosmetics company Yves Rocher, between 2008 and 2012. The Kremlin denies allegations that it uses the courts to persecute opponents.

**Business Insider -** [**http://www.businessinsider.com/r-kremlin-critic-navalny-given-suspended-sentence-brother-jailed-2014-12**](http://www.businessinsider.com/r-kremlin-critic-navalny-given-suspended-sentence-brother-jailed-2014-12)

**US adds four more Russians to human rights sanctions list**

The US imposed sanctions on Monday on four more Russians for alleged human rights abuses, including two officials said to be involved in the cover-up of the death of a lawyer who died in prison after exposing large-scale corruption. Visa bans and asset freezes were also imposed on two senior officials of the Chechen Republic implicated in the kidnapping and torture of a Chechen activist, Ruslan Kutayev, a senior official of the US State Department said.

**Reuters -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/u-adds-four-more-russians-human-rights-sanctions-222638722.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/u-adds-four-more-russians-human-rights-sanctions-222638722.html)

**Ukraine**

**Ukraine drops non-aligned status**

Ukraine's president has signed a bill dropping his country's non-aligned status but also signalled that a referendum will be held before seeking NATO membership. The bill, which the Ukrainian parliament adopted last week and Petro Poroshenko signed into law on Monday, has angered Moscow which called it a threat to its own and Europe's security. Poroshenko said he was working to reform the Ukrainian economy and its military forces to meet European Union and NATO standards, but he would leave it up to Ukrainian citizens to decide in a popular vote whether to join the NATO alliance or not.

**Al Jazeera –** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/12/ukraine-drops-non-aligned-status-2014122915115570907.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/12/ukraine-drops-non-aligned-status-2014122915115570907.html)

EAP

**Across EAP**

**Dozens die as Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines battered by storms**

Malaysia, southern Thailand and parts of the Philippines have been battered by heavy rain and flash floods in recent days, killing dozens. Malaysia's worst flooding in a decade forced nearly a quarter of a million people from their homes, officials said, with the government coming under renewed fire for its perceived slow response. The National Security Council said that "exceptionally high" water levels had cut off rescuers from relief centres as the death toll rose to 21 across the northeast. Fifteen people have been killed in neighbouring southern Thailand.

**Reuters-** <http://www.trust.org/item/20141230103624-ikdr4/?source=jtHeadlineStory>

**Indonesia**

**Forty bodies found in missing plane search**

At least 40 bodies have been recovered from the sea in the search for missing AirAsia Flight QZ8501, the Indonesian navy says. The bodies were spotted along with debris floating in the Java Sea off the Indonesian part of Borneo, in one of the search zones for the plane.

**ABC -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/indonesia-bodies-found-site-plane-disappeared-27892739**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/indonesia-bodies-found-site-plane-disappeared-27892739)

**Philippines**

**Storm Kills 29 in Philippines, Leaves 10 Missing**

Flash floods and landslides triggered by Tropical Storm Jangmi left at least 29 people dead and 10 missing in the Philippines, including in areas still recovering from last year's Typhoon Haiyan, officials said Tuesday. Jangmi, packing winds of 65 kilometers (40 miles) per hour and gusts of 80 kph (50 mph), dumped heavy rains Monday on southern Mindanao Island, where floods destroyed bridges and highways, sending thousands of residents to evacuation centers.

**New York Times -** [**http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2014/12/30/world/asia/ap-as-philippines-storm.html?\_r=0**](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2014/12/30/world/asia/ap-as-philippines-storm.html?_r=0)

ESA

**Madagascar**

**Madagascar's former president under house arrest**

Madagascar's former president has been moved to house arrest in the capital Antananarivo, following months of detention, according to a representative on Saturday. Marc Ravalomanana was formally placed under house arrest following a decision by Madagascan authorities to allow him return to the capital, Antananarivo, on Dec. 24 to spend Christmas with his family, according to his representative Brian Currant. Ravalomanana is being held in the home he shares with his wife and sons. He was previously detained in the northern city of Antsiranana, also known as Diego Suarez, 700 km from the capital.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/madagascars-former-president-under-house-arrest-122907731.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/madagascars-former-president-under-house-arrest-122907731.html)

**Somalia**

**US air strike 'targets al-Shabaab leader'**

The United States has launched an air strike targeting a senior leader of Somalia's al-Shabab group, the Pentagon has said. Military spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby said the raid on Monday hit a target in Saacow, in sourthern Somalia, shortly after the armed group's intelligence chief surrendered to government and African Union forces. Kirby did not identify the targeted fighter's name.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/us-air-strike-targets-al-shabab-leader-2014122922222891124.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/us-air-strike-targets-al-shabab-leader-2014122922222891124.html)

**South Sudan**

**WFP reopens Nile route to bring aid to hunger-hit South Sudan**

WFP said on Monday it had begun delivering food aid to war-torn South Sudan via the Nile River from Sudan for the first time since it became independent in 2011, warning the country could face a "hunger catastrophe". The corridor, through an area of high military activity, will reduce reliance on expensive airplane and helicopter deliveries, which cost six to seven times as much as river and road transport, according to the WFP. WFP said it had completed thousands of flights over the last year carrying food and nutrition supplies to some 2.5 million people isolated by conflict and bad roads, which become impassable during rainy seasons.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141229115041-nqoqd/?source=dpagehead**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141229115041-nqoqd/?source=dpagehead)

LAC

**Colombia**

**Colombia rebels begin indefinite, unilateral ceasefire**

Leftist rebels in Colombia began a unilateral ceasefire Saturday hailed as a key step in peace negotiations -- but uncertainty marred the truce, which the guerrillas threatened to break if attacked by the army. "Today, the FARC's unilateral and indefinite ceasefire began. I hope it will turn into a bilateral and final ceasefire, and we can put an end to a war that's lasted more than 50 years," President Juan Manuel Santos said at a ceremony in La Guajira in the country's northeast.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/colombia-rebels-begin-indefinite-unilateral-ceasefire-143914089.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/colombia-rebels-begin-indefinite-unilateral-ceasefire-143914089.html)

**Mexico**

**Mexico calls for larger, more diverse UN Security Council**

Mexico on Sunday called for an overhaul of the UN Security Council, envisaging more member countries across a wider geographical swathe, as the government steps up efforts to raise its profile on the global stage. Tasked with maintaining global peace, the UNSC meets when war looms and cooperates in efforts to solve international disputes, with measures ranging from sanctions to military action.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141229082817-9om6x/?source=fiOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141229082817-9om6x/?source=fiOtherNews3)

MENA

**Iraq**

**Suicide attacks kill 26 in Iraq, Syria as US-led airstrikes pound ISIL targets**

At least 26 people were killed by suicide attacks in Iraq and Syria on Monday as the US-led coalition launched more airstrikes against ISIL targets. In the Taji area north of Baghdad, at least 17 Shiite pilgrims died and 35 were injured when a suicide bomber targeted a tent serving refreshments. Pilgrims from Iraq and abroad are making their way to Samarra, north of Baghdad. We were distributing food, fruit and tea to the pilgrims who were walking to Samarra, and a suicide bomber blew himself up.

**The National -** [**http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/suicide-attacks-kill-26-in-iraq-syria-as-us-led-airstrikes-pound-isil-targets**](http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/suicide-attacks-kill-26-in-iraq-syria-as-us-led-airstrikes-pound-isil-targets)

**Syria**

**ISIL releases interview with captured Jordan pilot**

On 30 Dec, ISIL released an interview with a Jordanian pilot, captured on 24 December after his warplane from the US-led coalition was reportedly shot down while on a mission in the northern Raqqa region. The pilot is quoted saying that his plane was struck by a heat seeking missile.

**Reuters-** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141230142800-a5j1z/?source=jtTheWire**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141230142800-a5j1z/?source=jtTheWire)

**Libya**

**Car bomb explodes outside Libyan parliament**

A car bomb exploded on Tuesday in front of the hotel that houses Libya's elected parliament in the eastern city of Tobruk, officials said. The device went off in the hotel's parking lot while lawmakers were in session in a nearby hall, parliamentary spokesman Farraj Hashem said. A security source there several people had been wounded.

**Reuters -** [**http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/12/30/libya-security-idINL6N0UE1HM20141230**](http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/12/30/libya-security-idINL6N0UE1HM20141230)

**Bahrain**

**Clashes erupt outside house of detained Bahraini opposition leader**

Security forces clashed with demonstrators outside the home of the detained head of Bahrain's main Shi'ite Muslim opposition group on Tuesday. The security forces fired tear gas rounds to disperse the gathering in Bilad al-Qadeem village and some protesters hurled rocks and iron rods at police.

Sheikh Ali Salman, head of the al-Wefaq Islamic Society, was arrested on Sunday after leading a protest rally against last month's elections.

**Reuters-** [**http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-2891354/Clashes-erupt-outside-house-detained-Bahraini-opposition-leader.html**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-2891354/Clashes-erupt-outside-house-detained-Bahraini-opposition-leader.html)

**State of Palestine**

**Arabs meet on Palestinian call for swift UN vote to end Israel occupation**Arab UN delegations on Monday discussed a Palestinian plan to make peace with Israel within a year and end Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories by late 2017, despite Israeli and US opposition. Several Western council diplomats told Reuters they had been surprised by the Palestinians' sudden push to submit over the next few days a final draft resolution to the UN SC. Several European countries have urged a less stringent timeline to win broader support. The United States wants to wait until after Israeli elections in March.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141229175918-0lk7d/?source=leadCarousel**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141229175918-0lk7d/?source=leadCarousel)

**West Bank Ministers Visit Gaza to Unite Ministries**

Palestinian officials on Monday traveled from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip for the first working meeting of their struggling unity government, months after it was formed, in hopes of reviving efforts to end years of bitter political division. The Palestinian rivals Fatah and Hamas agreed last spring to form a government of apolitical technocrats. But the government is still not properly functioning due to deep differences.

**ABC -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/west-bank-ministers-visit-gaza-unite-ministries-27878069**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/west-bank-ministers-visit-gaza-unite-ministries-27878069)

**Palestinian teen killed by IDF in West Bank after throwing rocks**

Palestinian teen was killed by Israeli military gunfire when hurling rocks at Israeli cars in the West Bank, the IDF said Monday. Safeer was shot at after throwing rocks at Israeli cars near the Tapuah settlement, in the central West Bank, according to the IDF. The army said the rock throwing endangered drivers on the road. Palestinian security officials said he was throwing stones at a military vehicle when he was shot

**Times of Israel -** [**http://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinian-killed-by-idf-fire-in-west-bank-after-throwing-rocks/**](http://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinian-killed-by-idf-fire-in-west-bank-after-throwing-rocks/)

SA

**Afghanistan**

**Taliban declare "defeat" of US, allies in Afghanistan**

Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan on Monday declared the "defeat" of the US and its allies in the 13-year-old war, a day after the coalition officially marked the end of its combat mission. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force is shifting to a support mission for Afghan army and police more than a decade after an international alliance ousted the Taliban government for sheltering the planners of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on American cities.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141229123142-54q9n/?source=leadCarousel**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141229123142-54q9n/?source=leadCarousel)

**Bangladesh**

**Top Bangladesh Islamist sentenced to hang for war crimes**

Bangladesh's war crimes court Tuesday sentenced a leading Islamist to death for rape, mass murder and genocide during the country's 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. A.T.M. Azharul Islam, 62, became the 16th person and the 11th Islamist to be convicted of atrocities by the International Crimes Tribunal, which found him guilty of being a key member of a notorious pro-Pakistan militia.

**Yahoo News -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/top-bangladesh-islamist-sentenced-hang-war-crimes-071958602.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/top-bangladesh-islamist-sentenced-hang-war-crimes-071958602.html)

**Pakistan**

**Pakistani 'mastermind' bailed over Mumbai terror attacks is rearrested for kidnapping**

Police in Pakistan have re-arrested the terrorist leader believed to be behind the Mumbai terror attacks in 2008 which left 166 people dead. Zaki-ur-Rahman Lakhvi had been due to leave jail today after a judge granted him bail on December 18, but was immediately rearrested by authorities on another case. Lakhvi is one of the leaders of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a terror group whose name translates as Army of the Righteous, which accepted responsibility for the Mumbai attacks.

**Daily mail** [**http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2890922/Lawyer-Mumbai-suspect-rearrested-Pakistan.html**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2890922/Lawyer-Mumbai-suspect-rearrested-Pakistan.html)

**Sri Lanka**

**Sri Lankan Tamil party backs opposition for president**

Sri Lanka’s main ethnic Tamil political party said Tuesday that it will support the chief opposition candidate in January’s presidential election, in the latest blow to Mahinda Rajapaksa’s bid for a third term in office. The country’s largest Muslim political party also announced on Sunday that it was leaving Rajapaksa’s camp to support Sirisena in the election.

**Washington Post -** [**http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\_pacific/sri-lankas-tamil-party-backs-opposition-for-president/2014/12/30/25d8ce8c-8ff4-11e4-a66f-0ca5037a597d\_story.html**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/sri-lankas-tamil-party-backs-opposition-for-president/2014/12/30/25d8ce8c-8ff4-11e4-a66f-0ca5037a597d_story.html)

WCA

**Across WCA**

**IMF Policies Hindered Ebola Response: researchers**

Professors from three British universities say economic policies favoring debt repayment over social spending contributed to the Ebola crisis by hampering health care in three worst-hit West African countries. In a report the academics allege that loan conditions from the International Monetary Fund prevented an effective response to the Ebola outbreak. The report said IMF lending requires governments to prioritize short-term economic objectives over investment in health. And the IMF's insistence on decentralized health care made a coordinated response difficult. The IMF has responded to the article by asserting factual inaccuracies and highlighting IMF’s support to fight Ebola.

**ABC -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/researchers-imf-policies-hindered-ebola-response-27892848**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/researchers-imf-policies-hindered-ebola-response-27892848)

**Lancet -** [**http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X%2814%2970377-8/abstract**](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X%2814%2970377-8/abstract)

**IMF -** [**http://www.imf.org/external/np/vc/2014/122214.htm**](http://www.imf.org/external/np/vc/2014/122214.htm)

**CAR**

**Militants kidnap six in Central Africa Republic**

Members of the LRA, a Uganda-based militant Christian group led by Joseph Kony, stormed the village of Moussa, some 900 kilometres east of the capital Bangui, late Monday. Members of the LRA, a Uganda-based militant Christian group led by Joseph Kony, stormed the village of Moussa, some 900 kilometres east of the capital Bangui, late Monday.

**eNCA –** [**http://www.enca.com/africa/militants-kidnap-six-central-africa-republic**](http://www.enca.com/africa/militants-kidnap-six-central-africa-republic)

**Gambia**

**Gunfire reported at Gambia presidential palace as coup attempt is foiled**

Heavy gunfire near Gambia's presidential palace has been reported by residents of the small West African nation, according to the Associated Press news agency. The violence rocking Banjul early on Tuesday comes as longtime ruler Yahya Jammeh is out of the country on a visit to France. Witnesses who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals said that soldiers linked to the presidential guard were involved, raising the specter of a mutiny.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/firing-reported-at-gambia-presidential-palace-2014123010480938236.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/firing-reported-at-gambia-presidential-palace-2014123010480938236.html)

**Nigeria**

**Boko Haram kills 15 in northeast Nigerian town**

Suspected Islamist militants opened fire in a remote town in northeast Nigeria, killing at least 15 people, witnesses and a security source said. The attack on Monday night targeted Kautikari, near the Cameroon border, just 10 kilometres (6 miles) from the village of Chibok, where more than 200 schoolgirls were abducted in April. They remain captives.

**Reuters-**[**http://www.trust.org/item/20141230154132-zao3a/?source=jtTheWire**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141230154132-zao3a/?source=jtTheWire)

**Liberia**

**Liberia sees surge in new Ebola cases in border county**

An outbreak of Ebola cases in a western Liberia county threatens the country's goal of recording no new cases of the disease by the end of the year. From Dec. 1 to 25, some 49 cases of Ebola were reported in Grand Cape Mount County. This included 27 confirmed cases, nine probable and 13 suspected, said Tolbert Nyensuwah, assistant minister for preventive services and the head of Liberia's Ebola response. The government had set a Dec 31 target for recording no new Ebola infections. The Grand Cape Mount outbreak makes hitting that target unlikely.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141229165517-hlbuz/?source=leadCarousel**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141229165517-hlbuz/?source=leadCarousel)

**Burundi**

**Eight killed in clash on Burundi-DRCongo border**At least eight fighters were killed on Tuesday in clashes between Burundian security forces and members of an unidentified armed group which crossed into the central African nation from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Burundian officials and witnesses said the armed group crossed into Cibitoke province during the night, and that Burundian soldiers and police had been locked in battles against the group throughout the day. Fighting has been concentrated around Buganda, situated 50 kilometres (30 miles) north of the capital Bujumbura, and officials said many residents had fled the area.

**AFP-** [**http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2891262/Eight-killed-clash-Burundi-DRCongo-border-officials.html**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2891262/Eight-killed-clash-Burundi-DRCongo-border-officials.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: