**UNICEF OPSCEN Brief -** **Tuesday, 31 December 2013**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| CEE/CIS | **Russia** | Death toll from Russian bombings rises to 33 |
|  | **Turkey** | Turkish minister says fending off "mini-coup attempt" |
|  |  | Another AKP MP quits over Turkey corruption scandal |
| EAPR | **China** | Religious extremism blamed for Xinjiang attack |
|  | **Indonesia** | Volcano erupts in Indonesia |
|  | **Myanmar** | Myanmar announces broad prisoner pardon |
| ESAR | **Kenya** | Four police officers injured in Dadaab landmine explosion |
|  | **South Sudan** | South Sudan rebels take part of Bor, sanctions loom |
| LAC | **Argentina** | Buenos Aires residents protest over 'heatwave power cuts' |
|  | **Cuba** | Historic US flight to Cuba lands in Havana |
| MENA | **Across MENA** | Lebanese army opens fire as Syrian warplanes strike over border |
|  | **Egypt** | Egypt hands 139 Morsi backers 2-year jail terms |
|  | **Iraq** | Clashes spread to Iraq's Fallujah after protest camp cleared |
|  |  | 44 Iraqi lawmakers resign to protest against gov't moves on Sunnis |
|  | **State of Palestine** | Fatah urges Hamas to stop interfering in Arab countries |
|  |  | Number of Palestinians killed in West Bank by Israel hits 5 year- high |
|  |  | Israel releases third group of Palestinian prisoners |
|  | **Yemen** | Suicide bomber strikes in south Yemen, second attack averted |
| ROSA | **Afghanistan** | Afghan security forces kill 8 militants in operations: ministry |
|  | **Bangladesh** | Islamist party leader killed in "gunfight" in South West |
|  |  | Bangladesh opposition's top leader arrested for instigating violence |
| WCAR | **CAR** | UNICEF says children 'beheaded' in Bangui |
|  | **Cameroon** | French priest kidnapped in Cameroon set free: French government |
|  | **DR Congo** | Security forces repel attacks, dozens dead |
|  |  | Death toll in Congo attacks rises to 100: government |
|  |  | UN peacekeepers in DR Congo on alert after clashes: spokesman |
|  | **Mauritania** | Mauritania to set up slavery tribunal |
|  | **Nigeria** | Military says 63 Boko Haram militants killed in raids |

CEE/CIS

**Russia**

**Russia buries dead as bombings toll hits 33**

Russia beefed up security and mourned its dead on Tuesday as the toll from jarring successive-day suicide strikes in the run-up to the Sochi Winter Olympic Games rose to 33. The southern city of Volgograd planned to bury the first victims of Sunday's bombing of the heartland hub's main railway station that killed 18 people and which officials have provisionally blamed on a young woman from the restive North Caucasus region of Dagestan. A second suicide attack on a trolleybus packed with students on Monday that investigators pinned on a male assailant has now claimed 15 lives.

**AFP -** [**http://sports.yahoo.com/news/ten-killed-blast-russian-city-volgograd-official-050507114--oly.html**](http://sports.yahoo.com/news/ten-killed-blast-russian-city-volgograd-official-050507114--oly.html)

**Turkey**

**Turkish minister says fending off "mini-coup attempt"**

Turkey's government said on Tuesday it was fending off a "mini coup attempt" by elements in the police and judiciary who served the interests of foreign and domestic forces bent on humbling the country. Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan said the ruling AK Party had in the past survived military coup plots and attempts in the courts to outlaw it. It would not now yield to a corruption investigation he said targeted the government but was already damaging the national [economy](http://www.reuters.com/finance/economy?lc=int_mb_1001). "These latest formations in the judiciary and the police, we can't call it a coup, but a mini coup attempt. This is what interests foreign investors," he told broadcaster CNBC-e, echoing suggestions by Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan of a foreign interest in the crisis.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-turkey-corruption-idUSBRE9BU0BC20131231**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-turkey-corruption-idUSBRE9BU0BC20131231)

**Another AKP MP quits over Turkey corruption scandal**

Another lawmaker from Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) announced his resignation on Tuesday amid a high-level bribery and corruption probe, local media reported. Hasan Hami Yildirim had criticised the government for exerting pressure on the judiciary over the corruption investigation that has shaken Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's grip on power.

**AFP -** [**http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Dec-31/242758-another-akp-mp-steps-down-over-turkey-corruption-scandal.ashx#axzz2oxafuPBD**](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Dec-31/242758-another-akp-mp-steps-down-over-turkey-corruption-scandal.ashx#axzz2oxafuPBD)

EAPR

**China**

**Religious extremism blamed for Xinjiang attack**

Chinese police said the nine people responsible for a deadly "terrorist attack" in the western region of Xinjiang were promoting religious extremism, state media reported on Tuesday. The Xinjiang government said police shot dead eight people on Monday during the attack in Yarkand county close to the old Silk Road city of Kashgar in Xinjiang's south. The violence raised the death toll from clashes there to at least 35 since November.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-china-xinjiang-idUSBRE9BU01F20131231**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-china-xinjiang-idUSBRE9BU01F20131231)

**Indonesia**

**Volcano erupts in Indonesia**

Mount Sinabung, one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, erupted again midnight Tuesday, the strongest since September, spewing hot ash up to 7,000 meters high along with lava and forcing more evacuation, an official said. Hot lava burst forth with flames from the crater and slid off the southeast slope of the volcano, leading the authorities to warn all residents nearby to evacuate, Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman of disaster management and mitigation agency, told Xinhua by phone.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c\_133008628.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c_133008628.htm)

**Myanmar**

**Myanmar announces broad prisoner pardon**

Myanmar on Monday announced a sweeping amnesty for prisoners who were charged under draconian laws used to imprison activists, after the reformist president vowed to free all political inmates by the end of the year. The move is the latest in a series of prisoner releases since the long-isolated nation embarked on dramatic reforms as it emerged from junta rule nearly three years ago. It was not immediately clear how many people would be freed, but the presidential statement read out on state media indicated all prisoners detained or on trial under the country's most controversial laws would be freed.

**AFP -** [**http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h8c7A7vZx33io88n\_YYjEMcMV7JQ?docId=4dcf49b4-244b-4771-a2c3-1aa8b42b3abb**](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h8c7A7vZx33io88n_YYjEMcMV7JQ?docId=4dcf49b4-244b-4771-a2c3-1aa8b42b3abb)

ESAR

**Kenya**

**Four police officers injured in Dadaab landmine explosion**

Four police officers escaped death narrowly on Monday morning after their vehicle was hit by a landmine in Dadaab refugee camp. The officers were escorting officials of an NGO for an assignment when the incident occurred at Dagahaley area within Dadaab refugee camp, police said. The police vehicle was badly damaged but reports indicate the officers sustained minor injuries. The latest landmine attacks come amid heightened security following claims insurgents threatened reprisal attacks in Kenya after the military went to Somalia to hunt the militants.

**Standard Media -** [**http://shabelle.net/?p=10050**](http://shabelle.net/?p=10050)

**South Sudan**

**South Sudan rebels take part of Bor, sanctions loom**

South Sudanese rebels seized control of parts of the strategically key town of Bor on Tuesday as a deadline set by neighboring countries for an end to hostilities and peace talks neared. "The town is still partly in our hands and partly in the hands of the rebels," Mayor Nhial Majak Nhial told Reuters by phone from the government's military headquarters inside Bor, 190 km to the north of the capital, Juba, by road.

He said the national Sudan People's Liberation Army was outnumbered by militia fighters the government says belong to the feared "White Army", which has in the past sided with rebel leader Riek Machar.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-southsudan-unrest-idUSBRE9BT0A920131231**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-southsudan-unrest-idUSBRE9BT0A920131231)

LAC

**Argentina**

**Buenos Aires residents protest over 'heatwave power cuts'**

Main roads to the Argentine capital Buenos Aires have been blocked by people protesting against power cuts. They are demanding government action on shortages that have been affecting many parts of the city. Residents set fire to rubbish bags and tyres on the roads, causing long traffic jams as many left the capital for the New Year festivities. The authorities are blaming the energy crisis on Buenos Aires' worst heatwave in decades, with temperatures over 38C. Some neighbourhoods have been without power for two weeks, with a marked increase in the use of air conditioning. But the opposition accuses the government of mismanaging the crisis.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-25556136**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-25556136)

**Cuba**

**Historic US flight to Cuba lands in Havana**

The first commercial passenger flight from Key West to Cuba in more than 50 years has landed in Havana, capping several years of efforts to reunite the two islands, though regular air service still appeared a distant prospect. US Customs and Border Protection gave the final approval for the flight on Monday morning, and the nine-passenger aircraft departed 90 minutes later at 10am, Key West International Airport director Peter Horton said. "This is just a test run," Horton said. "Whether this is going to come and be a regular service I don't believe has been determined yet."

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2013/12/us-flight-cuba-2013123101731785966.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2013/12/us-flight-cuba-2013123101731785966.html)

MENA

**Across MENA**

**Lebanese army opens fire as Syrian warplanes strike over border**

Lebanon responded with anti-aircraft fire Monday against a group of Syrian jets that launched an airstrike upon a Lebanese border town that is home to many supporters of a rebellion against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Lebanese media reported. The official National News Agency said the army opened fire upon the Syrian jets after a raid upon an area near the eastern town of Arsal. Arsal is a Sunni Muslim town close to the Syrian border. It is home to 30,000 Syrian refugees and its citizens back the opposition rebels fighting to topple al-Assad. The town is on a key route used to supply food and weapons to rebels near the central province of Homs.

**DPA -** [**http://www.adn.com/2013/12/29/3251739/lebanese-army-opens-fire-as-syrian.html**](http://www.adn.com/2013/12/29/3251739/lebanese-army-opens-fire-as-syrian.html)

**Egypt**

**Egypt hands 139 Morsi backers 2-year jail terms**

An Egyptian court Monday sentenced 139 Islamist supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi to two years in jail over violence that erupted in July, state news agency MENA reported. MENA said the sentences could be subject to appeal, while the defendants, who are currently in custody, could each be bailed for $700. The military deposed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president, on July 3 and his supporters have regularly staged demonstrations demanding his reinstatement.

**AFP -** [**http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iNf\_Dn01TE4QMJlhFFJuVrdwtnEQ?docId=fd24df9d-db18-4791-9477-87bb9fd51363&hl=en**](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iNf_Dn01TE4QMJlhFFJuVrdwtnEQ?docId=fd24df9d-db18-4791-9477-87bb9fd51363&hl=en)

**Iraq**

**Clashes spread to Iraq's Fallujah after protest camp cleared**

Iraqi forces battled militants in Fallujah on Monday as clashes spread to a second city after an anti-government protest camp was demolished, a police officer said. Captain Omar Oda said militants burned several military vehicles. Dr Assem al-Hamdani said 10 gunmen were wounded in the unrest in the city, west of Baghdad, which was one of the hubs of the insurgency that followed the US-led invasion of 2003. The clashes followed deadly violence in nearby Ramadi, where security forces killed 10 gunmen in fighting that broke out as they demolished a camp where Sunni Arab protesters had gathered for more than a year.

**AFP -** [**http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/131230/clashes-spread-iraqs-fallujah-after-protest-camp-cleared**](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/131230/clashes-spread-iraqs-fallujah-after-protest-camp-cleared)

**44 Iraqi lawmakers resign to protest against gov't moves on Sunnis**

Forty-four members of Iraq's parliament announced their resignation on Monday to protest against the government's latest moves on Sunnis, including the demolition of a protest site and the arrest of a Sunni MP in the western Anbar province. The MPs from the Sunni Motahidoon Alliance also demanded the withdrawal of the army from cities in the Anbar province and the release of Ahmad al-Alwani, a Sunni lawmaker who was arrested on Saturday, the bloc's spokesman Dhafer al-Ani said at a televised press conference.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c\_125935628.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c_125935628.htm)

**State of Palestine**

**Fatah urges Hamas to stop interfering in Arab countries**

Fatah called on rival Palestinian group Hamas to stop "all forms of intervention" in the internal affairs of Arab countries, especially those of Egypt. "Egypt has always been supportive of our people and our just and national cause," said Fatah in a statement posted after a meeting of the movement's central committee on Sunday night. "For Hamas, the national security of Egypt is as important as Palestine's," he said, adding, "We hope that Egypt exits the current crisis peacefully." Tensions between Fatah and Hamas have intensified after the ouster of former president Mohamed Morsi on 3 July, following which media reports accused Hamas of involvement in Egypt's internal strife.

**Daily News Egypt -** [**http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/12/30/fatah-urges-hamas-to-stop-interfering-in-arab-countries-egypt-remains-a-point-of-contention-between-the-rival-groups/**](http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/12/30/fatah-urges-hamas-to-stop-interfering-in-arab-countries-egypt-remains-a-point-of-contention-between-the-rival-groups/)

**Number of Palestinians killed in West Bank by Israel hits 5 year- high**

The number of Palestinians who were killed in the West Bank by Israeli security forces in 2013 was overall the highest figure in the past five years, the Betz' elem organization advocating for human rights in the occupied territories said in a report Monday. According to the group, 36 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in 2013, 27 of them in the West Bank and nine others in the Gaza Strip. The number of Palestinians that were killed in the West Bank was three times more than their number in the previous year and reached the highest level in the past five years.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c\_125935645.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c_125935645.htm)

**Israel releases third group of Palestinian prisoners**

Israel freed 26 Palestinian prisoners early Tuesday, as part of a US-brokered agreement to resume direct peace talks between the two sides. The prisoners -- 18 men from the West Bank, three from the Gaza Strip and five others from east Jerusalem -- were freed from Ofer Prison near Ramallah, said Israeli Prison Service spokesperson Sivan Weizmann. They are the third group of the 104 Palestinian inmates that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu committed to letting go in four batches in July, when the peace talks were renewed after three-year suspension.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c\_133009307.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c_133009307.htm)

**Yemen**

**Suicide bomber strikes in south Yemen, second attack averted**

A suicide bomber drove a car laden with explosives into a police compound in southern Yemen's main city on Tuesday, blowing himself up and wounding four police, security sources said. Police averted another suicide bombing in the same area of Aden, and they arrested two people who admitted links to al Qaeda, a security source said. A second explosion struck a police training camp in another part of the city, causing no casualties, the sources said. Local officials said the suicide bombing had killed two police.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-yemen-blasts-idUSBRE9BU00G20131231**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-yemen-blasts-idUSBRE9BU00G20131231)

ROSA

**Afghanistan**

**Afghan security forces kill 8 militants in operations: ministry**

The Afghan Interior Ministry said Tuesday that the country's national security forces have killed eight militants during operation since early Monday. "Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) conducted anti- terrorism operations in Zabul, Uruzgan and Wardak provinces over the last 24 hours. As a result, eight armed Taliban members were killed and two others were arrested by the ANSF,"the ministry said in a statement providing daily operational updates. They also seized weapons besides defusing several improvised explosive devices and roadside bombs, the statement added, without revealing if there were any casualties on the side of the security forces.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c\_133009877.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c_133009877.htm)

**Bangladesh**

**Islamist party leader killed in "gunfight" in South West**

An Islamist party leader was killed in a "gunfight" in Bangladesh's southwestern Sathkhira district on Monday afternoon amid opposition's march program. "Anwarul Islam, also chairman of a union parishad (also union councils, the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh) was found dead after an hour long gunfight between his party men and joint forces," Enamul Hoque, a senior police official, told Xinhua over phone from Satkhira district, some 240 km southwest of capital Dhaka.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/30/c\_133007722.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/30/c_133007722.htm)

**Bangladesh opposition's top leader arrested for instigating violence**

The Detective Branch of Bangladesh Police Monday night arrested a top leader of the country's main opposition party. Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury, also a former foreign secretary, was arrested shortly after he came out of the residence of ex-Prime Minister Khaleda Zia who virtually remained confined to her house since the opposition alliance launched "March for Democracy" program on Dec. 24. The arrest aimed at weakening opposition's ongoing movement demanding parliament polls under a non-party caretaker government, he added.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c\_133007894.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c_133007894.htm)

WCAR

**CAR**

**UNICEF says children 'beheaded' in Bangui**

About 16 children had been killed in Bangui since 5 December and an increasing number of them are being recruited into armed groups, it added. There were "unprecedented levels" of violence against children, UNICEF said in a statement. One of the children who had been beheaded had also been mutilated, while another 60 had been injured in fighting since 5 December, it said. "More and more children are being recruited into armed groups, and they are also being directly targeted in atrocious revenge attacks," said Souleymane Diabate, UNICEF’s CAR representative.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-25559693**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-25559693)

**Cameroon**

**French priest kidnapped in Cameroon set free: French government**

Georges Vandenbeusch, the French priest kidnapped in northern Cameroon last month, has been released, the office of President Francois Hollande said on Tuesday. The brief statement said Hollande thanked Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities for their work in securing his release and highlighted the "personal involvement" of Cameroonian President Paul Biya. The 42-year-old priest had chosen to remain in northern Cameroon, a zone where Nigerian extremist sect Boko Haram is known to operate, despite the security threat.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-france-hostage-idUSBRE9BU06A20131231**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-france-hostage-idUSBRE9BU06A20131231)

**DR Congo**

**Security forces repel attacks, dozens dead**

Congolese security forces repelled a wave of coordinated attacks against symbols of power in the capital Kinshasa and other cities on Monday, leaving dozens of assailants dead in a day of fierce gunbattles. Armed youths believed to be loyal to a pastor who challenged President Joseph Kabila in elections seven years ago stormed the state television station RTNC and took several reporters hostage. Gunfire erupted at the RTNC premises near parliament as well as the international airport and the main military base in Kinshasa, causing panic among residents. "We were subjected to well-orchestrated attacks in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kindu," a government source said, but added: "The situation is

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/armed-youths-state-tv-journalists-hostage-dr-congo-083922989.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/armed-youths-state-tv-journalists-hostage-dr-congo-083922989.html)

**Death toll in Congo attacks rises to 100: government**

Around 100 people were killed on Monday in Democratic Republic of Congo when security forces clashed with supporters of a self-proclaimed 'prophet' who tried to seize control of the airport, a military barracks and state television, the government said. Paul Joseph Mukungubila, who calls himself 'the prophet of the Eternal' was on the run from authorities, government spokesman Lambert Mende said on Tuesday. Mukungubila, who ran unsuccessfully for president in 2006, said the attacks were in response to government harassment of his supporters. Armed youths attacked the airport, a military barracks and the state television headquarters in Kinshasa on Monday before being repulsed by troops. The government had earlier said dozens were killed.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-congo-democratic-idUSBRE9BT05I20131231**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/31/us-congo-democratic-idUSBRE9BT05I20131231)

**UN peacekeepers in DR Congo on alert after clashes: spokesman**

UN peacekeepers in the DRC are on alert amid ongoing clashes between government forces and unidentified armed men, a UN spokesman told reporters here on Monday. In the DRC, there have been clashes between government forces and unidentified armed elements in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kindu, said Martin Nesirky, spokesperson for UN secretary-general, at the daily briefing. MONUSCO has taken measures to ensure the safety and security of its staff and placed troops in these locations on alert, Nesirky said. According to him, the mission reported that calm has been restored in Lubumbashi, a major city in the southeast of DRC, and in Kindu in the east, where MONUSCO troops stationed at the airport engaged the armed elements.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c\_125935641.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/31/c_125935641.htm)

**Mauritania**

**Mauritania to set up slavery tribunal**

Mauritania is to set up a special tribunal to prosecute suspects accused of involvement in slavery, state media said on Tuesday, in a bid to eradicate the trade in the west African state. A judicial committee chaired by President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz met on Monday and "decided to create a court to try crimes of slavery", the Mauritanian Information Agency reported. Mauritania was the last country in the world to abolish slavery, in 1981, and since 2012 its practice has been officially designated a crime, with those convicted liable to 10 years in prison.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/mauritania-set-slavery-tribunal-state-media-135716113.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/mauritania-set-slavery-tribunal-state-media-135716113.html)

**Nigeria**

**Military says 63 Boko Haram militants killed in raids**

At least 63 Boko Haram fighters were killed in raids by the Nigerian army following recent pre-dawn attacks on a military barracks in Bama town by the militant sect in the northern state of Borno, a military spokesperson said on Monday. The Nigerian forces have been raiding militant camps and launching air and ground attacks on suspected hideouts of the militants over the past two months.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2013-12/31/c\_125935557.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2013-12/31/c_125935557.htm)

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: