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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**Turkey loses popularity in Middle East over past two years: Poll**

Turkey's popularity in the Middle East has dropped sharply over the past two years, an opinion poll showed on Wednesday, reflecting Ankara's sometimes controversial foreign policy strategy. The biggest decline was registered in Egypt and war-ravaged Syria, where Turkey is strongly opposed to those in power, according to the poll by an Istanbul-based think-tank. Overall, the number of people surveyed in 16 countries who had a positive view of Turkey slid to 59 per cent this year from 78 per cent in 2011, the Turkey Economic and Social Studies Foundation said.

**AFP -** [**http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/turkey-loses-popularity-middle-east-over-past-two-years-poll-20131204**](http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/turkey-loses-popularity-middle-east-over-past-two-years-poll-20131204)

**Poor disabled children 10 times less likely to go to school than peers- NGO**

Poor children with disabilities in developing nations are 10 times less likely to go to school than children without disabilities, and often suffer discrimination - leaving them less educated and in poorer health, according to a report released on Tuesday by Plan International. The 272-page report - produced in collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine - examined Plan’s vast pool of 1.4 million sponsored children across 30 countries in South America, Asia and Africa, and compares sponsored children with a disability to sponsored children with a disability to sponsored children without.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131204035935-aivkg/?source=hptop**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131204035935-aivkg/?source=hptop)

**Britain pushes UN resolution against ransom payments to extremists**

Britain submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council on Tuesday that calls on countries to prevent the payment of kidnap ransoms to extremist groups, like al Qaeda, which have earned hundreds of millions of dollars from such crimes. British UN Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant said he hoped the 15-member council would be able to adopt the resolution by the end of the month. No new legal obligations would be created, he said, as states were already required not to pay kidnap ransoms under an anti-terrorism resolution adopted in 2001.

**Reuters -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/britain-pushes-u-n-resolution-against-ransom-payments-212036236.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/britain-pushes-u-n-resolution-against-ransom-payments-212036236.html)

**Temperature limit too high to avoid climate change - study**

An internationally agreed target to limit rises in global average temperatures to within 2 degrees Celsius is around double the threshold that would avoid catastrophic climate change, a study by 18 eminent scientists said. Last month, a UN conference in Warsaw kept alive hopes for the 2015 deal cut the greenhouse gas emissions blamed for climate change, but nations made little progress on committing to ambitious emission cuts to keep the world on track towards the 2 degree target. A study published in US-based scientific journal PLOS One on Tuesday said the 2 degree limit was too high and a more appropriate target was around 1 degree C.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131203214531-tc6sd/?source=hpeditorial**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131203214531-tc6sd/?source=hpeditorial)

CEE/CIS

**Ukraine**

**Ukraine PM calls for end to tension, but police brace for action**

Ukraine's embattled PM Mykola Azarov warned protesters on Wednesday they would be punished if they broke the law after he marshalled his ministers for a cabinet meeting despite an attempted blockade by demonstrators. Tension stayed high in Kiev as black-helmeted riot police sealed off the approach road to the main offices of President Viktor Yanukovich, confronting several hundred protesters from behind steel barriers.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131204093537-11rly/?source=hpbreaking**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131204093537-11rly/?source=hpbreaking)

**Ukraine sends delegation to Moscow for talks on gas**

Ukraine on Wednesday sent a top-level delegation to Moscow for talks on gas and other economic issues - the first such since the Kiev government announced a U-turn in trade policy away from the European Union back towards Russia. Prime Minister Mykola Azarov told his cabinet that the visit would continue a dialogue with Russia on trade and economic relations that are "very critical for maintaining and developing Ukrainian industry and economy."

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131204101040-aneuo**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131204101040-aneuo)

EAPR

**Across EAPR**

**Indonesia jails Myanmar Muslims over Buddhist killings**

An Indonesian court on Wednesday jailed 14 Muslim Rohingya men from Myanmar for nine months each for bludgeoning eight Buddhists from their country to death in an Indonesian detention centre. The Rohingya asylum-seekers in April killed the Buddhist men, who had been detained for illegally fishing in Indonesian waters, as sectarian tensions in their home country flared. The Rohingyas, aged 18 to 37, accused the fishermen of sexually harassing two Rohingya women and said the Buddhists started the violence in the detention centre, in the port town of Belawan near Medan city on Sumatra island.

**AFP -** [**http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/se-asia/story/indonesia-jails-myanmar-muslims-over-buddhist-killings-20131204**](http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/se-asia/story/indonesia-jails-myanmar-muslims-over-buddhist-killings-20131204)

**Cambodia**

**Cambodia to resume inter-country adoption next year**

Cambodia will resume international adoption next year after a four-year suspension due to concerns over child trafficking, a senior official said Wednesday. "Cambodia is set to resume adoption sometime in 2014 so that foreigners who are interested in adopting Cambodian children will be able to submit their requests next year," Nim Thoth, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Social Affairs, told reporters after a national consultation on adoption. Cambodia banned foreign adoption of Cambodian children in 2009 in order to better regulate the adoption process.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c\_132941511.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c_132941511.htm)

**DPR Korea**

**North Korean leader's ousted uncle alive and safe: South Korean minister**

The uncle of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is alive and appears to be safe, South Korea's unification minister said on Wednesday, a day after the South's National Intelligence Service said he had been removed from two powerful positions. Jang Song Thaek, considered the second-most powerful man in DPRK, was last seen in public in early November at a basketball match between North Korean and Japanese teams in Pyongyang.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/us-korea-north-jang-idUSBRE9B309120131204**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/us-korea-north-jang-idUSBRE9B309120131204)

**Malaysia**

**Malaysia hit by rainy season flood**

At least one was feared dead and thousands evacuated after several Malaysian states were hit by severe floods caused by heavy downpour, local media reported Wednesday. Districts in the northern Pahang and Terengganu state as well as the Johor state in the south were badly hit by the heavy rains and floods in the annual rainy season. A 17-year-old teen is feared to have drowned while a child was missing due to the floods that have hit Kemaman district in Terengganu state, the local Star newspaper reported. Some areas in the Pahang capital of Kuantan suffered blackouts since Tuesday and some residents have rushed to the supermarkets for necessities. Pahang Chiief Minister Adnan Yaakob said 51 relief centers had been opened up statewide.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c\_132941355.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c_132941355.htm)

**Thailand**

**Thai government says protest leader must surrender, no talks**

The Thai government said on Wednesday the leader of violent protests aimed at ousting the prime minister should surrender and face charges against him, including insurrection, ruling out further talks until he did so. Protest leader Suthep Thaugsuban, a former deputy prime minister, has dismissed the charges and vowed to press on with the protests after a pause out of respect for the 86th birthday of King Bhumibol Adulyadej on Thursday. The protests are the latest eruption of a conflict that pits the Bangkok-based royalist establishment against mostly poorer Thais loyal to Yingluck and her brother, former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who was toppled by the military in 2006 and lives in self-imposed exile.

**Reuters -** [**http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/uk-thailand-protest-idUKBRE9B305H20131204**](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/uk-thailand-protest-idUKBRE9B305H20131204)

**Four villagers shot dead in restive Thai south**

Four villagers have been shot dead by suspected militants in the insurgency-plagued south, police said Wednesday, as political turmoil in Bangkok cast doubt over the future of stuttering peace talks. The victims, who were all men, were travelling in a pick-up truck late Tuesday when they were ambushed by gunmen in the Nongchik district of Pattani province, police said. "The initial motive of the killings is linked to the insurgency," Colonel Yukol Prasatnanont, superintendent of Nongchik police said, without giving details. He added a fifth man was missing, while two others sustained minor wounds in the attack. In a separate incident, a 49-year-old Muslim villager was shot dead at his home late Tuesday evening in Pattani's Kapho district.

**AFP -** [**http://reliefweb.int/report/thailand/four-villagers-shot-dead-restive-thai-south**](http://reliefweb.int/report/thailand/four-villagers-shot-dead-restive-thai-south)

ESAR

**Kenya**

**Kenya denies bail for four charged with aiding mall attackers**

A Kenyan court denied a plea for bail on Wednesday by four Somali men charged with terrorist offences for allegedly helping militants attack a Nairobi shopping mall that killed at least 67 people. Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, which struck at the heart of east Africa's biggest economy, over Kenya's refusal to withdraw troops from an African peacekeeping force battling the militants in Somalia. Nairobi's Chief Magistrate Kiarie Waweru Kiarie said he had denied bail because the suspects might interfere with the investigation into the attack.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131204102143-vw62c/?source=hpbreaking**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131204102143-vw62c/?source=hpbreaking)

LAC

**Colombia**

**Colombia's FARC rebels renew call for ceasefire**

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels renewed their call for a ceasefire Tuesday amid peace talks with the government. "We would really like to achieve a bilateral ceasefire," Ivan Marquez, chief negotiator and No. 2 leader in the FARC, told reporters before the new round of talks began at the Havana Convention Center. "We could begin these talks in a much more positive atmosphere."

The two sides should "at least try to reach an accord to 'regulate' the war, and to ease the impacts and effects of the confrontation on the civilian population in particular, as well as on the combatants on both sides," he added.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c\_132940303.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c_132940303.htm)

**Mexico**

**Truck with radioactive load stolen – IAEA**

Thieves have stolen a truck in Mexico carrying a dangerous radioactive material used in medical treatments, the UN atomic watchdog said on Wednesday. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it had been informed by Mexican authorities that the truck, which was transporting cobalt-60 from a hospital in the northern city of Tijuana to a radioactive waste storage centre, was stolen in Tepojaco near Mexico City on Monday. "At the time the truck was stolen, the (radioactive) source was properly shielded. However, the source could be extremely dangerous to a person if removed from the shielding, or if it was damaged," the IAEA said. The IAEA has offered to assist Mexican authorities, who it said were searching for the material and had alerted the public.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131204101842-6nuau/?source=hpbreaking**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131204101842-6nuau/?source=hpbreaking)

MENA

**Egypt**

**Egypt president ‘to approve’ constitution**

Egyptian interim President Adly Mansour is expected to promptly approve the country’s draft constitution, government sources told Egyptian newspaper [al-Ahram](http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/88121/Egypt/Politics-/President-Mansour-expected-to-promptly-approve-Egy.aspx) on Tuesday. Mansour is also expected to soon call for a referendum on the final draft of the charter, which was finalized on Sunday evening and presented on Tuesday to the prime minister by chairman of the constitution drafting committee Amr Moussa. “The government needs a few weeks to prepare for the referendum, so we are talking about the first or second week of January, but not much earlier,” a government source told the state newspaper. Meanwhile, a source at the Ministry of Information told al-Ahram that Egypt would witness a nationwide media campaign over the next few weeks to encourage a “yes” vote.

**Al Arabiya -** [**http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/12/04/Egypt-PM-to-swiftly-approve-constitution-.html**](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/12/04/Egypt-PM-to-swiftly-approve-constitution-.html)

**Jordan**

**Jordan to use Gulf aid to spur economy hit by Syria crisis**

Jordan aims to spend at least $1 billion next year in mainly Gulf-financed development projects to spur its economy, badly hit by an influx of 1.2 million Syrian refugees, the planning minister said on Tuesday. Jordan, along with Lebanon and Turkey, is one of the main host countries for Syrians fleeing fighting between President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebels trying to topple him. Planning and International Cooperation Minister Ibrahim Saif told Reuters the strain on services and resources created by the refugees, mostly hosted by local families, was now felt more deeply as the Syrian conflict drags into its 33rd month. He estimated that this had cost Jordan at least $1.7 billion this year. Other officials put the bill much higher.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131203124346-c2lwu/?source=hptop**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131203124346-c2lwu/?source=hptop)

**Lebanon**

**Hezbollah says commander killed in Beirut, blames Israel**

Lebanon's militant Shi'ite group Hezbollah said on Wednesday one of its commanders was killed outside his Beirut home overnight in an attack it blamed on Israel. The group said in a statement that Hassan al-Laqqis was killed at around midnight in the southern Hadath district of the Lebanese capital. It gave no detail of the operation but said "the accusation is directed at the enemy, Israel". Hezbollah described Laqqis as "one of the leaders of the Islamic resistance" against Israel and said the Jewish state had tried to kill him several times in the past. Meanwhile,

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131204063625-1r5lh/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131204063625-1r5lh/?source=search)

**Libya**

**Libya enforces militia ban in Benghazi**

The Libyan interim government announced the formation of a ministerial committee to enforce the ban on militias in the eastern city of Benghazi on Wednesday. The government announced on its website, that the committee will be headed by Higher Education Minister Mohamed Abu-Bakr, Housing Minister Ali Al-Sharif, Transport Minister Abdel-Qader Ahmed and former Interior Minister Ashour Shuwail, who is now an adviser to the prime minister. The ministerial panel is commissioned to enforce the General National Congress' law that orders the expulsion of all illegal armed militias from the area.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c\_132941388.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-12/04/c_132941388.htm)

**Syria**

**Assad to lead during transition: Minister**

Syria's Bashar al-Assad will remain president and lead any transition agreed upon in Geneva peace talks planned for next month, a government minister insisted on Wednesday. "If anyone thinks we are going to Geneva to hand the keys to Damascus over to the opposition, then he might as well not go," Information Minister Omran al-Zohbi said in remarks carried by the official Sana news agency. "The decision rests with President Assad. He will lead the period of transition, if there is one. He is the leader of Syria... And he will remain the president of Syria."

**AFP -** [**http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/syrias-assad-lead-during-transition-minister-20131204**](http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/syrias-assad-lead-during-transition-minister-20131204)

**Opposition splintered ahead of peace talks**

Within minutes of opening a Twitter account this past week, the leader of the Syrian National Coalition received an onslaught of criticism. "Welcome to Twitter Mr. Western Puppet," one comment to Ahmad al-Jarba read. Others called him a Saudi stooge and scorned the opposition's perceived ineffectiveness. The comments reflect the deep disillusionment and distrust that many Syrians have come to feel toward the Syrian National Coalition, Syria's main opposition group in exile. They also underline the predicament of who will represent the Syrian opposition at an upcoming peace conference in Geneva marking the first face-to-face meeting between Syria's warring sides.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-opposition-splintered-ahead-peace-talks-21065731**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-opposition-splintered-ahead-peace-talks-21065731)

**Rockets kill 18 in govt-held areas of Syria's Aleppo: NGO**

Rocket fire against government-held areas of Syria's main northern city of Aleppo killed at least 18 people on Wednesday, a monitoring group said. Among the dead were "five regime troops, including an officer," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The attack on the Furqan and Meridian neighbourhoods also wounded at least 30 people, the Britain-based watchdog added.

**AFP -** [**http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/rockets-kill-18-govt-held-areas-syrias-aleppo-ngo-20131204**](http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/rockets-kill-18-govt-held-areas-syrias-aleppo-ngo-20131204)

ROSA

**Afghanistan**

**Support for Afghanistan at risk if security pact delayed further –US**

Global support for Afghanistan will fade the longer President Hamid Karzai delays signing a security pact with the US, a senior US official warned, as special envoy James Dobbins arrived in Kabul on Wednesday for talks with the government. Frustration is mounting in Washington, and among NATO allies, over Karzai's refusal to sign a bilateral security agreement (BSA), intended to shape the US military presence in the country beyond 2014. After an assembly of Afghan elders, called a Loya Jirga, endorsed the pact last month, Karzai surprised the international community when he said he might not sign the deal until after elections in April.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131204080400-aa1mk/?source=hpbreaking**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131204080400-aa1mk/?source=hpbreaking)

**US army halts shipments from Afghanistan via Pakistan**

The US military has halted its ground cargo shipments from Afghanistan via Pakistan because of the risk to drivers after protests over US drone strikes. Pentagon spokesman Mark Wright this would affect outgoing shipments of equipment and other goods from US units on Afghan soil. He said deliveries could be resumed "in the near future". Pakistanis have blocked the US main supply route to Afghanistan, blaming the drones for causing civilian deaths. Protesters have been harassing truck drivers, turning back vehicles carrying NATO provisions.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25210710**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25210710)

**More women must vote in Afghan poll – rights activist**

Afghan authorities should ensure a large number of women take part in next year’s make-or-break elections to prevent female voters being murdered and to safeguard transparency, Afghan human rights activist Sima Samar said on Tuesday. “If one or two women go to a polling station, then it’s easy for the opposition to the government to identify the women and kill them, but if it’s thousands of women they cannot go behind every door and kill the people,” she said. The independent election commission [website](http://www.iec.org.af/) shows that nationwide, twice as many men as women have registered so far to vote in the April 5 elections.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20131203184504-ynsio/?source=hpagehead**](http://www.trust.org/item/20131203184504-ynsio/?source=hpagehead)

**India**

**India's anti-corruption party tested in Delhi polls**

A new Indian political party rooted in an anti-corruption movement that swept the country in 2011 faced its first electoral test Wednesday as voters in New Delhi headed to the ballot box. The Aam Aadmi Party, led by former tax inspector Arvind Kejriwal, is contesting the New Delhi state election and hoping for a victory that would be a political earthquake ahead of national polls next year. New Delhi, whose 16.8 million inhabitants elect their own assembly, has been run by the Congress party since 1998 but it is seen as struggling with voter fatigue, inflation, and anger over crime against women and corruption.

**AFP -** [**http://tribune.com.pk/story/640963/indias-anti-corruption-party-tested-in-delhi-polls/**](http://tribune.com.pk/story/640963/indias-anti-corruption-party-tested-in-delhi-polls/)

**Nepal**

**Nepali Congress emerges largest party in polls, stakes claim to form government**

The Nepali Congress, which emerged as the largest party in Constituent Assembly polls, today staked claim to form Nepal's new government but said it was open to working with the CPN-UML to draft a Constitution. After the Nepali Congress (NC) topped both the direct and proportionate voting systems, its President Sushil Koirala said it is natural that his party should lead the government. He, however, told a private television channel that NC will seek collaboration with CPN-UML, the second largest party, and other political parties to draft the constitution.

**PTI -** [**http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/nepali-congress-emerges-largest-party-in-polls-stakes-claim-to-form-government-452244**](http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/nepali-congress-emerges-largest-party-in-polls-stakes-claim-to-form-government-452244)

**Pakistan**

**Gunmen kill Shiite leader and guard in Pakistan**

Gunmen shot dead a Shiite Muslim leader and his security guard on Tuesday in the latest sectarian attack in Pakistan’s port city of Karachi, police said. The drive-by shooting took place in the eastern neighborhood of Gulshan-e-Iqbal two days after two Shiite youths were killed by sniper fire in central Karachi. “Gunmen riding a motorbike opened fire on the vehicle of deputy secretary general of Majlis-e-Wahdatul Muslimeen (MWM), Allama Deedar Ali Jalbani, killing him and his guard,” senior local police official Pir Muhammad Shah told AFP. He said the latest attacks were part of targeted killings aimed at fuelling sectarian violence.

**AFP -** [**http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/asia/2013/12/03/Gunmen-kill-Shiite-leader-and-guard-in-Pakistan-.html**](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/asia/2013/12/03/Gunmen-kill-Shiite-leader-and-guard-in-Pakistan-.html)

**Pakistan records 72 polio cases in 2013: WHO**

Pakistan recorded 72 cases of polio this year compared to 58 for all of 2012, a WHO official said on Wednesday. Pakistan is one of only three countries in the world where the highly infectious crippling disease remains endemic. Officials said the violence and suspicions about the vaccine were the reason for the increase in cases. According to a global update for polio cases, Pakistan had 58 cases last year while Nigeria had 110 and Afghanistan 31.

**AFP -** [**http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/108-pakistan-top-news/147240-pakistan-records-72-polio-cases-in-2013-who.html**](http://www.brecorder.com/top-news/108-pakistan-top-news/147240-pakistan-records-72-polio-cases-in-2013-who.html)

**Sri Lanka**

**Patience with Sri Lanka could 'wear thin': US**

International patience could wear thin with Sri Lanka unless it takes action to address allegations of atrocities during the island nation's civil war, the top US diplomat for South Asia said Tuesday. Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Biswal stopped short of endorsing a deadline set last month by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who said he would call for a UN-backed inquiry into allegations of war crimes unless there was progress on postwar reconciliation by March. A UN report has suggested Sri Lanka's military may have killed up to 40,000 civilians in the final months of the war in 2009 as it crushed ethnic Tamil rebels, who are also accused of atrocities.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/us-patience-sri-lanka-could-39-wear-thin-175742629--politics.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/us-patience-sri-lanka-could-39-wear-thin-175742629--politics.html)

WCAR

**Cameroon**

**Behind malaria prevalence in north Cameroon**

Warmer weather, low bed nets use and heavy rains have been blamed for a recent upsurge in malaria in northern Cameroon, but public health in this region has also been undermined by weak medical services and widespread poverty. Between January and September of this year, 182,402 cases of malaria were recorded in the Far North Region. Nearly a third of those patients died. Over the same period last year, a reported 166,261 people contracted malaria, with 30 percent of them succumbing to the illness.

"The increase in the number of cases and deaths is observed every year between July and October, a period conducive for malaria transmission resulting from heavy rains and standing waters. Women and children are the most affected and child mortality in the region has increased," said Etienne Fondjo, the permanent secretary of the country's National Malaria Control Programme.

**IRIN -** [**http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportID=99260**](http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportID=99260)

**CAR**

**UN to vote on Central Africa force on Thursday**

The 15 members of the UN SC have reached agreement on a French resolution aimed at restoring order to the Central African Republic and it is expected to be adopted unanimously later this week, diplomats said Tuesday. The resolution provides for the AU force in the country (MISCA) to be deployed for 12 months, with a review after six months, to help "the protection of civilians and the restoration of security and public order through the use of appropriate measures." The resolution also authorises French troops in the country to "take all necessary measures to support MISCA in the discharge of its mandate." The text is placed under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter regarding the use of force.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/france-seeks-un-vote-central-africa-force-thursday-211856061.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/france-seeks-un-vote-central-africa-force-thursday-211856061.html)

**DR Congo**

**UN says widespread food aid cuts loom in Congo**

Food aid is being cut back in Congo due to lack of funding that could affect hundreds of thousands of hungry people, the WFP said Tuesday. WFP says its $478 million plan to feed 4.2 million people in Congo through Dec. 2015 is only 25 percent funded, and without more money it won't be able to help 300,000 internally displaced people in North Kivu province. The agency did not identify any countries or other donors that had failed to provide help for the program. For the past six months, WFP has already been forced to cut by half its rations given to those people in North Kivu, one of the areas in eastern Congo with a myriad of armed groups blamed for killing and raping civilians.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/widespread-food-aid-cuts-loom-congo-21079051**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/widespread-food-aid-cuts-loom-congo-21079051)

**Mali**

**21 bodies found in mass grave near Mali capital: Officials**

Twenty-one bodies, believed to be those of soldiers close to ousted president Amadou Toumani Toure, were found overnight on Tuesday in a mass grave near the Mali capital Bamako, judicial and security officials said. "We have found 21 bodies, probably of 'red beret' soldiers, in a mass grave in Diago. The bodies were exhumed," a Malian justice ministry official said. The information was confirmed by a security official.

**AFP -** [**http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/21-bodies-found-mass-grave-near-mali-capital-officials-20131204**](http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/world/story/21-bodies-found-mass-grave-near-mali-capital-officials-20131204)

**Mali, Tuaregs fault France on failing peace talks**

Mali's government and Tuareg separatists both accused France on Wednesday of not doing enough to resolve the political crisis, underscoring the difficulties Paris has in disengaging itself from its former colony. After winning adulation across Mali for a 5-month military offensive earlier this year that scattered al Qaeda fighters, France is caught in a tug of war between the government in Bamako and rebels demanding some form of autonomy based at Kidal in the north. Mali's interim government signed a peace agreement with Tuareg representatives in mid-June, allowing national elections to take place. As part of the deal, Bamako agreed to open talks over the Tuaregs' demands for more autonomy, but those negotiations have stalled.

**Reuters -** [**http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/uk-france-mali-idUKBRE9B30KF20131204**](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/uk-france-mali-idUKBRE9B30KF20131204)

**Mauritania**

**Incumbents win Mauritania poll, Islamists second**

Mauritania's ruling party has won a large majority in legislative and local elections, while an Islamist party came second, the elections commission said Tuesday. The ruling Union for the Republic (UPR) took 56 of 121 seats won in the first round, a victory of 46 percent. Another 26 seats will go to a second round of voting on December 7.The main Islamist party Tewassoul, which had been closely-watched as it took part in elections for the first time, has won 12 seats, according to the results.

**AFP -** [**http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/131203/incumbents-win-mauritania-poll-islamists-second**](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/131203/incumbents-win-mauritania-poll-islamists-second)

**Nigeria**

**Nigeria eases curfew, boosts security in Maiduguri**

Nigerian authorities relaxed a curfew and intensified military patrols in Maiduguri on Tuesday, a day after suspected militants launched strikes on military bases in the northeast city. Gunmen stormed the air force base and several other military locations in an apparently coordinated attack in the early hours of Monday, the military and local residents said. It was not clear how many casualties there were. The attack ended weeks of relative calm in the capital of Borno state, the birthplace of the Boko Haram insurgency that is the gravest threat to security in Africa's top oil producer and the

**Reuters -** [**http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/03/uk-nigeria-violence-idUKBRE9B20PV20131203**](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/03/uk-nigeria-violence-idUKBRE9B20PV20131203)

**Nigeria to try 500 extremist suspects, promises economic boost to address US concerns**

Nigeria's military is recommending immediate trial for 500 suspected extremist militants and the president is promising an economic boost for the northeast region confronting an Islamic uprising — both issues that address concerns expressed by the United States. The suspects include military and paramilitary personnel accused of aiding the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram that the United States last month declared a terrorist organization. Wednesday's developments come the week the US assistant secretary of state for African affairs is in Nigeria for security meetings including officials from the US Department of Defence, the US Africa Command and USAID.

**AP -** [**http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Nigeria+puts+forward+extremist+suspects+trial+promises/9245454/story.html**](http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Nigeria+puts+forward+extremist+suspects+trial+promises/9245454/story.html)