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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**Mali government, rebels begin tough peace talks in Algiers**

The Bamako government and armed groups from northern Mali were to launch tough negotiations in Algiers Wednesday for an elusive peace deal, with parts of the country still mired in conflict. Speaking before the talks began, Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop said his government was prepared to go "as far as possible" within its "red lines" to strike a peace deal with the mainly Tuareg rebels and "forge an understanding between Malians." But as Algerian officials have noted, the armed movements will be negotiating from a position of strength, as they effectively control more than half of the vast Sahel country. "The government is ready to go as far as possible within the red lines that have been drawn," Diop said on Wednesday morning in Algiers.

Those red lines include "respect for territorial unity, the unity of Mali and the republican form of the Malian state," he told AFP.

**AFP -** [**http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/mali-government-rebels-begin-tough-peace-talks-in-algiers-559752**](http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/mali-government-rebels-begin-tough-peace-talks-in-algiers-559752)

**US escalates sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis**

The Obama administration escalated its sanctions Wednesday against Russia over the fighting in Ukraine, marking a return to confrontation with President Vladimir Putin after determining that his hints at cooperation were leading nowhere. The US moves to impose restrictions on the Russian state-controlled oil giant OAO Rosneft and other top firms are aimed at squeezing Russia's already struggling economy and financial system. They followed weeks of US threats that Russia would face repercussions unless it helped defuse the crisis in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russia separatists have been fighting the Ukrainian government for months. The sanctions stop well short of crimping international business ties or blocking deals with entire sectors of the Russian economy.

**WSJ-** [**http://online.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-russian-troops-massing-along-ukraines-border-1405538538**](http://online.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-russian-troops-massing-along-ukraines-border-1405538538)

**Russia 'to reopen Lourdes spy base in Cuba'**

Russia has made a deal with Cuba to reopen an electronic listening post on the Caribbean island that was used by the Soviets to spy on the US during the Cold War, Russian officials say. The Lourdes base near Havana lies 250km from the US coast. The agreement with Cuba came during a visit to the Communist-run island by Russian President Vladimir Putin last week, the Kommersant newspaper says. Mr Putin closed the base in 2001, citing concerns over its cost. A Russian security source quoted by Reuters news agency confirmed the Kommersant report, saying "a framework agreement has been agreed". Russia-US relations have plummeted over the Ukraine conflict and Russia's annexation of Crimea.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28338996**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28338996)

**Istanbul may place Syrian refugees in camps**

Turkey will take "drastic measures" to deal with the influx of tens of thousands of Syrian refugees into its biggest city Istanbul, including forcibly sending them to camps in the southeast, the city's top official said. Istanbul governor Huseyin Avni Mutlu on Wednesday said there were now 67,000 Syrian refugees in the city and legislation would be adopted that could see them effectively expelled from the city of 15 million to refugee camps closer to Syria. Mutlu said authorities would take "drastic measures" to contain the negative consequences of Syrian refugees in Istanbul, including sending those begging in the streets back to the refugee camps "without their consent". His comments came amid signs of growing tensions over the increasingly visible presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey as well as protests in several southeastern cities.

**AFP-** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/istanbul-may-force-syrian-refugees-into-camps-20147161740029946.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/istanbul-may-force-syrian-refugees-into-camps-20147161740029946.html)

**EU urges 'proportionate' Israeli response, Hamas to agree to truce**

EU leaders on Wednesday condemned the firing of rockets into Israel while urging the Jewish state to "act proportionately" and Hamas to agree to a ceasefire. Voicing "great concern" over continued violence in Israel and Gaza, EU leaders said the bloc "condemns the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel and the indiscriminate targeting of civilians." "Israel has the right to protect its population (but) in doing so it must act proportionately and ensure the protection of civilians at all times," a EU statement added.

**AFP -** [**http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/106434/World/Region/EU-urges-proportionate-Israeli-response,-Hamas-to-.aspx**](http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/106434/World/Region/EU-urges-proportionate-Israeli-response,-Hamas-to-.aspx)

Mali and France sign new defence agreement

France and Mali signed a new defence pact on Wednesday, an agreement that will let Paris maintain its prominent role in a former colony whose desert north was occupied by al Qaeda-linked rebels until they were defeated by French troops last year. France has sought to wind down direct involvement in former colonies in Africa, where troops frequently intervened during the decades after independence. But weak local armies, the Islamist threat and a series of political crises and rebellions have led to major French interventions in recent years.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IH20140717**](http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IH20140717)

**United Nations**

**UN peace envoy for Syria seeks way forward**

New UN peace envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura will meet members of the Security Council on Friday as he sets out to revive efforts to end the devastating war. Diplomatic sources said it will be a first opportunity to discuss the way forward with De Mistura, an Italian-Swedish diplomat with experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. The 67-year-old former Italian deputy foreign minister was appointed last week, replacing Algerian Lakhdar Brahimi, who resigned in May after two rounds of peace talks ended in failure. The UN is hoping to get the peace process back on track but it remains unclear if the roadmap agreed during talks in Geneva six months ago can be salvaged.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139197-u-n-peace-envoy-for-syria-seeks-way-forward**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139197-u-n-peace-envoy-for-syria-seeks-way-forward)

CEE/CIS

**Across CEE/CIS**

**Donors pledge 1.8 bln euros for flood-stricken Balkan states**

A conference of international donors pledged more than 1.8 billion euros ($2.43 billion) on Wednesday to help Bosnia and Serbia recover from devastating floods in May. The European Commission, the EU executive, said the conference had mobilised pledges of 809 million euros for Bosnia and 995 million euros for Serbia, plus 41 million euros for cross-border activities. The financial aid would be used for rebuilding houses and public buildings, the rapid restoration of water and energy supplies and urgent assistance for those still without proper shelter.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL6N0PR62B20140716**](http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL6N0PR62B20140716)

**Macedonia**

**Macedonia moves to ban same-sex marriages**

Macedonian lawmakers on Wednesday voted in favour of changing the constitution to explicitly ban same-sex marriages. Two thirds of politicians in the national assembly agreed to support a proposal by the conservative government, which would define marriage exclusively as "a union between a man and a woman". The government now has ten days to draft the amendment, which would be presented again to the 123-seat parliament for approval.

**Business Recorder -** http://www.brecorder.com/world/europe/184283-macedonia-moves-to-ban-same-sex-marriages.html

**Russia**

**Putin says sanctions will backfire**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has denounced the latest US sanctions against his country, saying they will damage relations and hurt businesses from both countries. The president said that bilateral relations were reaching a "dead end". He was speaking after the US and EU bolstered sanctions against Russia over its support for separatists in Ukraine. Shares in Russian interests hit by the sanctions fell sharply, while the markets also fell by more than 2.5%. In addition the rouble has plunged against the euro and dollar.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28340304**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28340304)

**Turkey**

**Turkish opposition says government stalling on corruption probe**

Turkey's opposition accused the government on Wednesday of stalling tactics to avoid potentially damaging revelations from an inquiry into alleged corruption emerging in the run-up to an August presidential election. Tayyip Erdogan, currently prime minister, is widely expected to win the Aug. 10 vote. But he could do without the corruption scandal re-emerging after it dogged his administration for months earlier this year. A spokesman for his ruling AK Party rejected the idea that the government was holding up the inquiry and said the process should not be rushed.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140716154648-4pke6/?source=jtOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140716154648-4pke6/?source=jtOtherNews2)

**Ukraine**

**More Ukrainian soldiers killed as fighting rages in east, peace move flops**

Pro-Moscow separatists battled to break through lines of government forces near the border with Russia in eastern Ukraine on Wednesday, and a tentative step towards agreeing a ceasefire in the intensifying three-month conflict failed. Fighting has escalated sharply since Ukrainian forces pushed rebels out of their stronghold in the town of Slaviansk 10 days ago. The past several days have seen Russia and Ukraine trade accusations of firing across the border. Ukraine's military said 11 more troops were killed in the space of 24 hours, mostly in clashes near the frontier.

**Reuters -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-leader-urges-eu-tough-action-against-russia-072048766.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-leader-urges-eu-tough-action-against-russia-072048766.html)

**Kiev says Russian Jet shoots down Ukrainian plane**

Kiev on Thursday accused a Russian air force jet of shooting down a Ukrainian warplane over its territory Wednesday, ratcheting up tensions along the volatile border between the two ex-Soviet states. "A military plane from the air force of the Russian Federation carried out a rocket strike on a Ukrainian airforce SU-25 as it fulfilled its task over the territory of Ukraine," Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council said on Twitter. The pilot of the downed fighter jet managed to eject and was later evacuated by Ukrainian forces, the military said.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139304-kiev-says-russian-jet-shoots-down-ukrainian-plane**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139304-kiev-says-russian-jet-shoots-down-ukrainian-plane)

EAP

**Across EAP**

**Typhoon kills at least 38 in the Philippines, heads for China**

The Philippines set to work clearing debris, reconnecting power and rebuilding flattened houses on Thursday after a typhoon swept across the country killing 38 people, with at least eight missing, rescue officials said. Typhoon Rammasun, the strongest storm to hit the Philippines this year, was heading towards China after cutting a path across the main island of Luzon, shutting down the capital and knocking down trees and power lines, causing widespread blackouts. The storm destroyed about 7,000 houses and damaged 19,000, the executive director of the National Disaster Agency, Alexander Pama, said. More than 530,000 people had taken refuge in evacuation centres, according to official figures.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKBN0FM07Y20140717**](http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKBN0FM07Y20140717)

**Cambodia**

**Cambodia arrests more opposition members after violent clashes**

Cambodian police arrested two more opposition members of parliament on Thursday on charges of leading an insurrection, taking to eight the number of government opponents being held on accusations that rights groups say are politically motivated. The arrests are the latest twist in a year-long political crisis over a disputed election which has exposed a rift between long-serving authoritarian Prime Minister Hun Sen and many young, urban voters yearning for change. Six members of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), five of them members of parliament and one an activist, were ordered detained in prison pending trial on Wednesday on charges of leading an insurrection, which carries a penalty of up to 30 years in prison.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140717121356-1fw3k**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140717121356-1fw3k)

**Myanmar**

**New UN rights envoy to Myanmar to visit tense area**

The new UN special envoy to Myanmar for human rights arrived yesterday on her first mission to the Southeast Asian nation, coming at a time of renewed political stress and sectarian tensions. Korea's Yanghee Lee succeeds Argentina's Tomas Ojea Quintana in the job to gather firsthand information on the country's human rights situation during a scheduled 10-day visit. A statement from the UN said she will visit areas in western and northern Myanmar where there has been violent ethnic strife, as well as the central city of Mandalay, where recent clashes between majority Buddhists and minority Muslims left two dead and several injured. She will also visit Yangon's notorious Insein prison and travel to the capital Naypyidaw to meet Cabinet ministers and key lawmakers, including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

**AP -** [**http://www.philstar.com/world/2014/07/17/1347216/new-un-rights-envoy-myanmar-visit-tense-area**](http://www.philstar.com/world/2014/07/17/1347216/new-un-rights-envoy-myanmar-visit-tense-area)

**Philippines**

**Typhoon kills 38 in Philippines, millions without power**

A powerful storm that battered the central Philippines has killed 38 people and left millions without power. Ten more people were injured by Typhoon Rammasun and another eight remain missing, according to authorities. The typhoon swept through the country on Tuesday night before making a shift away from Manila on Wednesday. More than 530,000 people took refuge in evacuation centres. Many of those who died were killed while outdoors by falling trees and flying debris. Millions living in provinces southeast of the capital still have no power, according to news agencies.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28339889**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28339889)

**Thailand**

**Military allow ousted Thai PM Yingluck to travel abroad**

Thailand's military leaders have given ousted PM Yingluck Shinawatra permission to travel abroad for the first time since the coup. A military spokesman said the request had been approved because Ms Yingluck had "kept a low profile" since her government was overthrown on 22 May. Reports suggest she will travel to France for the birthday of her brother, Thaksin Shinawatra. The military seized power after months of anti-government protests in Bangkok. Mr Thaksin, who turns 65 on 26 July, was ousted in a coup in 2006. He was removed by the military, kicking of a cycle of political instability in Thailand. Convicted of corruption by a Thai court, he has been living in self-imposed exile overseas.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28339837**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28339837)

ESA

**Somalia**

**Counterterrorism laws intensify Somali food crisis, experts say**

Counterterrorism laws restricting the flow of cash to Somalia are severely harming efforts to prevent a famine similar to the 2011 catastrophe which killed 260,000 people, experts have said. Somalis living abroad have in the past sent home around $1.3 billion a year in remittances, which play a vital role in providing relatives with food and medicine. Virtually all major US banks have stopped offering remittance services to Somalis in the United States because of counterterrorism legislation aimed at cutting off the flow of funds to groups like the Islamist militant al Shabaab. Other western banks have come under pressure to follow suit.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140716172825-6rv0d/?source=dpagehead**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140716172825-6rv0d/?source=dpagehead)

**South Sudan**

**South Sudan army defends new weapons purchase**

The spokesman for South Sudan’s military says the army, with the constitutional responsibility to protect the country, has the right to arm itself. This comes as reports say South Sudan has taken delivery of Chinese arms valued at $14.5 million. Colonel Philip Aguer denies the acquisition of new weapons leaves an impression that Juba is not interested in a peaceful end to the seven-month long civil war. Aguer says the arms were purchased in 2012 as part of a continuing effort to professionalize the army. Col. Aguer denies the acquisition of new weapons leaves an impression that Juba is not interested in a peaceful end to the seven-month long civil war.

**VOA -** [**http://www.voanews.com/content/south-sudan-army-defends-new-weapons-purchase/1959300.html**](http://www.voanews.com/content/south-sudan-army-defends-new-weapons-purchase/1959300.html)

**UN Security Council threatens action against South Sudan**

The UN SC warned on Wednesday it is ready to consider "appropriate measures" against warring parties in South Sudan if they do not stop the violence in the world's youngest nation and negotiate a transitional government. The US and EU have already imposed sanctions on military leaders on both sides. US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power has urged the Security Council to also consider imposing targeted sanctions.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IJ20140717**](http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IJ20140717)

**Uganda**

**Uganda police abuse street children, says HRW**

Street children in Uganda face constant abuse from police and other government officials, a human rights group says. Police beat children with whips and wires, throw them into jail and extort bribes from them, a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) said. Street boys and girls were also raped by men and older boys, it added. The government should focus on improving the lives of street children, and prosecute those responsible for abusing them, HRW said. "Scores of street children told HRW that they fear the authorities and that police are a source of violence, not protection," the group said in a report entitled "Where Do You Want Us to Go?" Abuses against Street Children in Uganda. More than half of all Ugandans are under 15, and children are the single largest group living in poverty, HRW said.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28319499**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28319499)

LAC

**Across LAC**

**Flooding across three South American countries**

As sports fans watched the World Cup final last week they’d be forgiven for not knowing that away from the perfect conditions of the Estadio do Maracana, large swathes of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay had been suffering from heavy rain storms and resulting flooding for much of June and July. These deluges displaced enough people to fill the Maracana stadium almost three times over, yet they have barely registered on international news. In Paraguay rainstorms began back in May causing rivers to overflow, particularly in the southwest of the country. By 12 June, as the first matches of the World Cup began in neighbouring Brazil, almost 160,000 people were feared to have been affected. Current estimates suggest that as many as 200,000 people have now been affected by the flooding in six different provinces. Similar scenes have also been witnessed in neighbouring Brazil and Argentina, but despite the intense media focus drawn by the World Cup these dramatic events were largely overlooked.

Reuters - <http://www.trust.org/item/20140717124531-xr9l4/?source=jtTheWire>

**Honduras**

**Honduras calls for curbing crime to fight child migration**

Honduras Wednesday, July 16, called for international efforts to fight organized crime to deter minors from leaving Central America to illegally enter the US, where rights officials warned youths can face abuse. President Juan Orlando Hernandez suggested putting in place programs similar to US-funded efforts in Mexico and Colombia set up to help eradicate drug production by supporting alternative crops. "Papering over (problems) will not resolve anything" Hernandez said at the beginning of a two-day International Conference on Migration, Childhood and Family, adding that countries must address "the root of the problem" together. Jose Miguel Insulza, leader of the Organization of American States, meanwhile called for a regional action plan to address the crisis-level migration of young people in a "comprehensive manner."

**AFP -** [**http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/latin-america/63554-honduras-calls-curbing-crime-fight-child-migration**](http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/latin-america/63554-honduras-calls-curbing-crime-fight-child-migration)

MENA

**Across MENA**

**Israel poised for Gaza incursions after truce collapses**

Israel urged the evacuation on Wednesday of several Gaza Strip areas where more than 100,000 people live, threatening ground operations after briefly holding fire under an Egyptian truce proposal that failed to stop Palestinian rocket salvoes. Authorised by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet to escalate an eight-day-old offensive, the military said it had sent out evacuation warnings in northeastern Gaza. Israeli experts predicted overland raids to destroy command bunkers and tunnels that have allowed the outgunned Palestinians to withstand air and naval barrages on Gaza and keep rockets flying.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140716104542-edzaj/?source=jtOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140716104542-edzaj/?source=jtOtherNews3)

**Israel repels Hamas gunmen who tunnelled in from Gaza –source**

Israeli forces repelled at least a dozen Hamas gunmen who tunnelled in from the Gaza Strip for an attack on Thursday, a military source said, adding that there were several Palestinian casualties. No Israelis were killed in the infiltration near a southern Israeli community, the source said.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140717053729-xuz8j/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140717053729-xuz8j/?source=search)

**Israel repels Hamas gunmen who tunnelled in from Gaza –source**

Four children were killed in [Gaza City](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/palestinianauthority/) on Wednesday, medics said, in Israeli shelling witnessed by The Telegraph and other foreign journalists. The four were among a group on the beach when the attack took place, emergency services spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said, with some of the surviving injured children taking refuge at a nearby hotel where journalists were staying.

**Telegraph** - **http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/10971306/Israeli-naval-ship-bombs-Palestinian-children-on-Gaza-beach-killing-four.html**

**Israel, Hamas agree to 5-hour cease-fire to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza**

Israel and Hamas agreed Wednesday to a five hour cease-fire in order to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, following a request from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. The Israeli military said in a statement Wednesday that it would hold its fire for five hours starting at 10:00 a.m. local time on Thursday.

**Reuters** - **http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/07/16/israel-warns-gazans-to-leave-homes-as-hamas-urged-to-accept-cease-fire/**

**Tens of thousands flee Israeli raids on Gaza**

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have fled their homes, as Israel continued to press its offensive on the Gaza Strip. Air strikes that struck the enclave on Wednesday killed at least 17 people, including four children, bringing the total deaths of Palestinians in the nine-day conflict to 213, with more than 1,450 wounded. One Israeli was killed a day earlier by a Hamas-launched rocket, the only Israeli fatality since the fighting erupted on July 8. The renewed bombardment on Wednesday destroyed several homes in Gaza, including the house of a senior Hamas official. The New York-based rights group Human Rights Watch called the destruction of civilian homes in the strip a war crime.

**Al-Jazeera** - **http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/thousands-flee-israeli-raids-gaza-evacuate-201471614310305228.html**

**Hamas demands changes to Egypt Gaza plan**

Hamas demanded changes Wednesday to an Egyptian proposal to end the deadly conflict with Israel in and around Gaza, a Palestinian official said. Hamas's demand came as the Palestinian death toll from Israel's punishing air campaign, now in its ninth day, rose to 220 Palestinians dead after the Islamist movement snubbed the truce plan on Tuesday even though it was briefly respected by Israel. Hamas deputy leader Mussa Abu Marzuq met Egyptian officials in Cairo and set out the changes being sought, said Azzam al-Ahmad, a senior figure in Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement. "Hamas has rejected the proposal in its current form and demanded additions, like applying the 2012 agreement concerning border crossings with Israel, and demanded right for fishing up to 12 miles into the sea," Ahmad told reporters in Cairo.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139166-hamas-demands-changes-to-egypt-gaza-plan**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139166-hamas-demands-changes-to-egypt-gaza-plan)

**Mortars strike southern Israel during temporary Gaza truce**

Three mortars struck southern Israel near the border with the Gaza Strip on Thursday, a couple of hours after a temporary ceasefire was supposed to take effect, the Israeli military said. The mortars landed in open areas, causing no injuries or damage, it said, and there were no reports of Israeli retaliation. There was no claim of responsibility in Gaza for the mortar fire.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFL6N0PS30620140717**](http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFL6N0PS30620140717)

**The five-hour truce took effect at 0700 GMT.**

**UN chief urges countries to enforce sanctions on ISIS**

UN SG Ban Ki-moon urged countries to enforce an international arms embargo and economic sanctions on the Islamic State militant group in a bid to weaken the insurgency that has taken control of large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria. In a report to the UN SC on the world body's political mission in Iraq, obtained by Reuters on Tuesday, Ban described the rapidly deteriorating security situation fueled by the Sunni militants as "deeply worrisome."

**Al-Arabiya** - **http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/16/U-N-chief-urges-countries-to-enforce-sanctions-on-ISIS.html**

**Child marriage on the rise among Syrian refugees in Jordan – UNICEF**

Nearly one in three marriages among Syrian refugees in Jordan involves a child under 18 and the proportion is rising for a second consecutive year, according to a report released on Wednesday. Child marriage has long been an accepted practice among parts of the Syrian population, reaching 13 percent of all marriages in pre-war Syria, but the civil war has exacerbated factors believed to encourage early marriage. In the first quarter of this year 32 percent of all Syrian refugee marriages registered in Jordan involved a child, **UNICEF** said, in a report released ahead of an international summit to spur global action to end child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140716121001-dz2rs/?source=jtOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140716121001-dz2rs/?source=jtOtherNews3)

**Iraq**

**Violence threatens Iraqi diversity, says the UN**

The flare-up of sectarian violence that saw jihadist-led militants conquer large swathes of Iraq over the past month has displaced 600,000 people and threatens the country's diversity, the UN warned Wednesday. UNHCR, Antonio Guterres said that ongoing population movements were alarming. "The most worrying situation for us is when we see movement of population that tends to destroy the diversity that existed," he told reporters in Baghdad. A coalition of Sunni militants led by the Islamic State - a jihadist group whose views and methods are even more extreme than al-Qaida's - overran swathes of five Iraqi provinces in an onslaught launched on June 9.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139208-violence-threatens-iraqi-diversity-says-the-u-n**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139208-violence-threatens-iraqi-diversity-says-the-u-n)

**Libya**

**Libya's Tripoli Airport under Fire for 4th Straight Day**

Tripoli international airport came under rocket fire Wednesday for a fourth straight day, in attacks aimed at ousting anti-Islamist fighters who control the facility, a Libyan security official said. "The airport was again targeted by mortar fire and rockets for several hours," the official said, asking not to be named. An AFP photographer said the bombing sparked fires around the airport, setting ablaze a cargo plane on the tarmac and a customs warehouse, sending firefighters into action.

**AFP-** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139249-libya-s-tripoli-airport-under-fire-for-4th-straight-day**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139249-libya-s-tripoli-airport-under-fire-for-4th-straight-day)

**Libyan air controllers strike to protest airport shelling**

Air controllers in western Libya have gone on strike to protest the shelling of Tripoli's main airport, halting flights in much of the oil-producing country, a government official said on Thursday. The strike puts pressure on rival militias to end four days of heavy fighting over control of the country's biggest airport, during which at least 20 aircraft have been damaged in the worst violence in the Libyan capital for six months.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140717001805-zeiw5/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140717001805-zeiw5/?source=search)

**Syria**

**UN peace envoy for Syria seeks way forward**

New UN peace envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura will meet members of the Security Council on Friday as he sets out to revive efforts to end the devastating war. Diplomatic sources said it will be a first opportunity to discuss the way forward with De Mistura, an Italian-Swedish diplomat with experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. The 67-year-old former Italian deputy foreign minister was appointed last week, replacing Algerian Lakhdar Brahimi, who resigned in May after two rounds of peace talks ended in failure. The United Nations is hoping to get the peace process back on track but it remains unclear if the roadmap agreed during talks in Geneva six months ago can be salvaged.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139197-u-n-peace-envoy-for-syria-seeks-way-forward**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139197-u-n-peace-envoy-for-syria-seeks-way-forward)

**Syria aid deliveries ready, rushing to put monitors in place: UN**

WFP rushed on Wednesday to put monitors at Syrian border posts, and UNICEF had aid ready for the first convoys to cross into rebel-held areas under the authorization of the UN SC. The Security Council on Monday approved humanitarian access without Syrian government consent into opposition areas at four border crossings from Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, even though Syria has warned it deems such deliveries an attack on its territory. UN aid chief Valerie Amos, WFP director Ertharin Cousin and UNICEF director Anthony Lake said WFP teams on the ground were urgently putting monitors in place on the Syrian border and that UNICEF had supplies, including blankets, syringes, water purification materials and hygiene kits, ready for delivery.

**Reuters -** http://www.firstpost.com/world/syria-aid-deliveries-ready-rushing-to-put-monitors-in-place-un-1621989.html

**Confident Assad launches new term in stronger position**

Bashar al-Assad was sworn in for a new term as Syria's president on Wednesday, after an election which his opponents dismiss as a sham but which he said proved he had achieved victory after a "dirty war" to unseat him. Once written off in the West as certain to fall, he launches his seven-year term in his securest position since the early days of the three-year-old war. Those close to Damascus say he now believes his Western and regional foes will be forced to deal with him as a bulwark against Sunni Islamist militants who advanced across northern Iraq last month. At his inauguration he delivered a defiant speech, vowing to recover all Syria from Islamist insurgents and warning that Western and Arab countries would pay dearly for supporting rebels he described as terrorists.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140716154247-2o6c4/?source=dpagehead**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140716154247-2o6c4/?source=dpagehead)

**Tunisia**

**Tunisian soldiers killed in attack near Algerian border**

At least 14 Tunisian soldiers have been killed in a militant attack near the Algerian border with the toll expected to rise, the defence ministry says. Some 20 others were wounded in the attack, which took place in the Mount Chaambi area, officials add. They say gunmen, armed with rocket-propelled grenades and rifles, attacked two checkpoints near the border. The Tunisian army has been waging a crackdown on militants operating in the mountainous region over the past year. Islamist militants, including fighters linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM), are believed to be hiding out in the border region.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28341318**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28341318)

ROSA

**Afghanistan**

**Taliban militants attack Kabul airport, six militants reported killed**

Afghan security forces thwarted an attack Thursday morning by Taliban militants on Kabul's international airport, after gunmen seized a nearby construction site as a base to fire at the facility, Afghan officials said. Sediq Sediqqi, the spokesman for Afghanistan's Interior Ministry, said militants had stormed a five-story building under construction in the Qasaba district on the northern side the airport. Security forces, he said, cleared the area by mid-morning, killing six attackers. He had earlier described "very sporadic firing, not very intense firing" from the attackers, who had been "heavily surrounded."

**WSJ-** [**http://online.wsj.com/articles/gunmen-attack-kabul-airport-1405567503?mod=World\_newsreel\_1**](http://online.wsj.com/articles/gunmen-attack-kabul-airport-1405567503?mod=World_newsreel_1)

**Audit of Afghan presidential run-off vote commences**

Afghanistan on Thursday began an audit of 8.1 million ballot papers cast in the second round of presidential elections, according to an AFP photographer. "The audit will take two to three weeks. We are planning to form hundreds of teams for this audit," the chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Ahmad Yousuf Nuristani, told a press conference before the start of the audit.

**AFP -**

**Pakistan**

**US drone strike kills 18 in NW Pakistan**

A US drone strike on Wednesday killed least 18 people in a suspected militant compound in Pakistan's northwestern tribal belt, as the country's military wages a major offensive against insurgent hideouts. The attack came in North Waziristan, where for the past month the Pakistani military has been fighting to wipe out longstanding bases of Taliban and other militants. "A US drone fired two missiles targeting a militant compound in Zoi Saidgai area, killing at least 18 insurgents," a senior security official in Miranshah, the main town of North Waziristan, told AFP. Another security official said as many as 20 people may have been killed in the strike, 12 of them Uzbeks.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139096-u-s-drone-strike-kills-18-in-nw-pakistan**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/139096-u-s-drone-strike-kills-18-in-nw-pakistan)

**Pakistani officials say police foil attack against prime minister's home**

Officials say police fought for more than 10 hours with militants planning to attack the prime minister's home in eastern Pakistan. Government official Shuja Khanzada said Thursday a police officer and a militant were killed in an overnight operation against insurgents planning the attack. Another militant was hospitalized after the gunbattle at a house near the home of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Lahore. Sharif was not in residence.

**AP-** [**http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2014/07/17/pakistani-police-foil-attack-against-pms-home**](http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2014/07/17/pakistani-police-foil-attack-against-pms-home)

WCA

**Across WCA**

**Ebola crisis in West Africa deepens; 500+ dead**

More than 530 deaths in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have now been attributed to the Ebola virus - the largest outbreak on record. The key to stopping the spread of the disease, which causes its victims to bleed from the ears and nose, is isolating the sick, but fear and panic have sent some patients into hiding. Ebola has reached the capitals of all three countries, and the World Health Organization reported 44 new cases including 21 deaths on Friday. There are reports of panicked residents in remote areas attacking the very health workers who've been sent to help them. In one town in Sierra Leone, residents partially burned down a treatment center over fears that the drugs given to victims were actually causing the disease. Dr. Unni Krishnan, who heads disaster preparedness and response for the WHO, says there've been no recorded cases of Ebola outside Africa, and, he says, the "threat of it spreading though is very much there."

**AP -** [**http://www.wwmt.com/shared/news/features/national/stories/Ebola-crisis-in-West-Africa-deepens-500-dead-11440.shtml#.U8c8EJRdXFk**](http://www.wwmt.com/shared/news/features/national/stories/Ebola-crisis-in-West-Africa-deepens-500-dead-11440.shtml#.U8c8EJRdXFk)

**DR Congo**

**Congo launches agri-business park in move to revamp farming**

DR Congo has launched its first agricultural business park, the initial step in a plan to use its vast tracts of arable land to produce food, create jobs and wean the economy off its dependence on mining. Congo has 80 million hectares of arable land and some 70 percent of the population works in farming but most are involved in subsistence agriculture and the country spent $1.5 billion on food imports last year. The programme hinges on Congo overcoming its reputation for being one of the trickiest business environments and reversing the current trend for agriculture's contribution to the economy declining as the mining sector expands.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IR20140717**](http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IR20140717)

Mali

**Islamist group claims attack that killed French soldier in Mali**

A spokesman for the al-Mourabitoun armed Islamist group, formed by veteran jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar, claimed responsibility on Thursday for a suicide bombing this week that killed a French soldier in northern Mali. In a video posted on the Internet, the spokesman who identified himself as Abu Assem Al-Muhajir said that the attack in the region of Al Moustarat, north of Gao, was "a response to French claims that they had annihilated the Mujahideen". Al-Mourabitoun was formed last year from the fusion of two Islamist groups operating in northern Mali: the Mulathameen brigade, led by the one-eyed Belmokhtar, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA).

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140717105446-e5bbx**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140717105446-e5bbx)

**Nigeria**

**Nigeria leader wants $1 bln loan to help fight Boko Haram**

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan on Wednesday sought approval from parliament to borrow up to $1 billion abroad to help the armed forces tackle the security threat posed by the Islamist insurgent group Boko Haram. Jonathan, facing intense criticism at home and overseas for his government's failure to curb a spreading campaign of violence by the Islamist militants, made the request in a letter read to Nigeria's Senate and House of Representatives. His government is accused by critics of not doing enough to protect civilians in Africa's biggest economy and oil producer from Boko Haram, which has killed thousands and abducted hundreds since launching an uprising in the northeast in 2009.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IZ20140717**](http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FM0IZ20140717)

**Nigeria parents deny playing politics over Chibok girls**

Parents of the schoolgirls abducted by militant Islamists in Nigeria have denied playing politics by refusing to meet President Goodluck Jonathan. Tuesday's meeting failed to take place because proper protocol had not been followed, their spokesman said. Mr Jonathan said the parents had called off the meeting after being manipulated by the #BringBackOurGirls campaign group. Boko Haram captured more than 200 girls in the town of Chibok on 14 April. The row broke out as the alleged mastermind of a twin bomb attack in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, was extradited from Sudan back to Nigeria. Aminu Sadiq Ogwuche was reportedly arrested in Khartoum in May after Interpol issued an arrest warrant. He is accused of planning the Nyanya bus station bombings earlier this year, which killed 75 people. Boko Haram said it carried out the bombings.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28323698**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28323698)

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