**UNICEF OPSCEN Brief – Thursday, 27 November 2014**

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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

CEE/CIS

**Across CEE/CIS**

**Russian troops giving 'backbone' to Ukraine rebels**

Russian forces are still operating in eastern Ukraine, providing the backbone of separatist rebels fighting the Kiev government, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe said on 26 November after talks with Ukrainian leaders. Asked for an assessment of the situation, Breedlove said Russian troops in the east were "training, equipping, giving backbone ...helping (separatist) forces in the field." Russia denies sending troops or equipment to the rebels but accuses Kiev of using indiscriminate force against civilians in the two eastern territories of Donetsk and Luhansk. He said that Russian forces were also helping the rebels "understand the advanced weaponry that is being brought across", referring to military equipment which Kiev and the West says is being funneled into Ukraine from Russia.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/26/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-idUSKCN0JA17O20141126**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/26/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-idUSKCN0JA17O20141126)

**Ukraine**

**Opportunists take advantage of leadership confusion**

Since April, when pro-Russian separatists took over government buildings across the industrialized eastern Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, a cast of characters has come and gone in the rebel leadership. In Perevalsk, a small mining city southwest of the rebel-held city of Luhansk under control since July of Cossack fighters from Russia’s Don River basin who came to the aid of the pro-Russian separatists when the Ukrainian forces fighting the rebels controlling the area began to gain ground. In a matter of months, the Cossacks had turned Perevalsk into their fief. Their chief said he has brought stability back to a city that had been ransacked by a corrupt government “calling itself Ukraine” and took credit for getting the city’s main services back up and running, including water, heat and electricity. Constantly surrounded by armed guards as he travels between his offices on the city’s main square, the Cossack chief said he has brought order and justice to the city of about 26,000. But more important than law and order is that his men are “reviving the city’s Cossack heritage and protecting traditional Cossack lands,” he said. It remains to be seen how the situation with Luhansk’s various leaders will play out. Some speak of being part of a greater independent territory called Novorossiya, or New Russia, which includes all of eastern and southern Ukraine.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/2014/11/donetsk-ukraine-leadership.html**](http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/2014/11/donetsk-ukraine-leadership.html)

EAP

ESA

**Kenya**

**Mandera residents flee to army base**

Hundreds of people have fled to a military airstrip in Kenya's Mandera region amid fears that militants could launch a new assault. Many of them are non-Muslim civil servants who are demanding that the government evacuate them from the region. There are no reports of a specific threat, but many people in Mandera are worried that al-Shabab could strike again, especially as the festive season approaches. Six unions - including those representing doctors, teachers and civil servants - have advised members to leave until security forces can ensure their safety. The call could affect more than 10,000 teachers and 16,500 civil servants in major towns such as Mandera.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30192588**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30192588)

LAC

**Haiti**

**Cholera outbreak kills 132 people in 2014**

Haiti's cholera epidemic has killed 132 people and may have infected nearly 15,000 others so far this year, a OCHA report said on 26 November. The country's cholera outbreak started in 2010 and "an unacceptable number of people have been affected, with nearly 712,330 suspected cases and an estimated 8,655 deaths," the OCHA report said, citing Haiti's public health ministry. In 2014, there have been a suspected 14,869 cases and 132 deaths recorded, the report said.

**AFP -** [**http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/Haiti-cholera-outbreak-kills-132-in-2014**](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/Haiti-cholera-outbreak-kills-132-in-2014)

MENA

**Algeria**

**Army kills suspect in beheading of Frenchman**

Algeria’s military has killed a suspect in the abduction and beheading of Frenchman Hervé Gourdel in September, the Algerian Justice Minister said on 26 November. “It emerges from the investigation on the assassination of French national Hervé Gourdel that one of those who committed this murder, ... was killed by the army during an anti-terrorist operation in October,” the Algerian Justice Minister told state news agency APS. The Jund al-Khalifa fi Ard al-Jazayer claimed responsibility for the killing, saying it was in retaliation for France’s intervention in Iraq.

**AFP -** [**http://www.france24.com/en/20141126-algeria-military-kills-suspect-beheading-frenchman-herve-gourdel/**](http://www.france24.com/en/20141126-algeria-military-kills-suspect-beheading-frenchman-herve-gourdel/)

**Egypt**

**Gunmen kill three soldiers in Sinai**

Three Egyptian soldiers, including a colonel, were shot dead by gunmen in northern Sinai on 26 November, the interior ministry said. Gunmen in a car ambushed the soldiers while they travelling in a pick-up truck in North Sinai’s provincial capital of el-Arish, the ministry added in a statement. The attack came several days after two policemen were killed in a roadside bombing at the entrance to the town.

**Al Arabiya -** [**http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/11/26/Egypt-Two-soldiers-one-officer-killed-in-an-attack-in-Sinai.html**](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/11/26/Egypt-Two-soldiers-one-officer-killed-in-an-attack-in-Sinai.html)

**Court jails 78 minors aged 13 to 17 for pro-Morsi protests**

An Egyptian court sentenced 78 minors to between two and five years in prison on 26 November for joining demonstrations calling for the return of ousted president Mohamed Morsi, judicial sources said. The authorities have engaged in a crackdown on Morsi's supporters since the army ousted him in 2013, with hundreds jailed in mass trials the UN has described as "unprecedented in recent history". A court in the city of Alexandria sentenced 78 boys aged between 13 and 17 for joining the Muslim Brotherhood's rallies during the past three months, a judicial official said. "The 78 minors, members of the Muslim Brotherhood, were arrested for participating in protests organised by the group calling for the downfall of the regime in which they blocked roads and transportation, and terrified citizens," state agency Mena reported.

**AFP -** [**http://www.straitstimes.com/news/world/middle-east/story/egypt-jails-78-minors-aged-13-17-pro-morsi-protests-20141127**](http://www.straitstimes.com/news/world/middle-east/story/egypt-jails-78-minors-aged-13-17-pro-morsi-protests-20141127)

**Lebanon**

**Two Syrian refugee infants die of cold**

Two Syrian infants died from the cold over the weekend on the outskirts of the Lebanese border town of Arsal, where thousands of Syrians are living in unheated tents in freezing temperatures, Lebanon's Daily Star reported. A 3-day-old girl, identified as the daughter of Syrian refugee, died from pneumonia in a field hospital in Arsal, after spending two days in an incubator. "The baby was born in a tent in the vicinity of Arsal without proper medical attention and in cold weather, contracting pneumonia and inflammation around the navel," said a Syrian doctor at Arsal's field hospital. In a similar incident, another baby girl, born to a Syrian couple, arrived at Arsal's al-Rahma hospital after having died from the freezing weather, the hospital director reported. The second victim was born less than 48 hours earlier, he said. The two deaths occurred as Lebanon witnessed rain and snow storm that cut off roads in the mountains. The Lebanese Prime Minister launched a campaign to support efforts to help ease the burden on both Syrian refugees and their Lebanese hosts. The Lebanese Support Growth Fund Campaign to help the Supportive Environment for Syrian Refugees opened in downtown Beirut.

**Daily Star-** [**http://al-shorfa.com/en\_GB/articles/meii/newsbriefs/2014/11/25/newsbrief-07**](http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/newsbriefs/2014/11/25/newsbrief-07)

**Syria**

**UN seeks more cross-border aid deliveries to Syria**The UN Security Council will move to allow cross-border deliveries of relief supplies to Syria for another year, the president of the council said Tuesday, as new figures showed more Syrians were in need of aid. The Council in July agreed in a resolution to allow truckloads of much-needed aid to cross into rebel-held Syrian territory without the consent of the Damascus regime. The UN's top humanitarian aid official Valerie Amos asked the council to renew authorization for the aid deliveries that are due to end in January. While the convoys have not reached as many people in need as hoped, "they have made a difference," said Amos, the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Aid. Over the past six months, 30 UN convoys carrying food aid, medical supplies, water and sanitation equipment have been sent from Turkey and Jordan.   
**AFP -** [**http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2849461/UN-allow-cross-border-aid-Syria.html**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2849461/UN-allow-cross-border-aid-Syria.html)

**Yemen**

**Six people dead as militia attack tribal bastion**

Militiamen seized on 26 November the Sanaa headquarters of an influential tribe after overnight clashes that killed six people, sources from both sides said. The fighting erupted in a northern district of Sanaa, near the seat of power of the Al-Ahmar clan, which heads the powerful Hashid tribe, the sources said. A source said six people were killed in the fighting that raged all night and culminated with Houthi militiamen seizing the house where Al-Ahmar clan had its main headquarters. The house was initially the home of Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar, the late leader of Hashid, and holds significant symbolism for the tribe. It was unclear how many people were present inside the house, which is adjacent to the homes of other key members of the Al-Ahmar clan, when the clashes erupted.

**MEE -** [**http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/six-yemenis-dead-shiite-militia-attack-tribal-bastion-60425112**](http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/six-yemenis-dead-shiite-militia-attack-tribal-bastion-60425112)

SA

WCA

**Across Region**

**Cameroon army says frees 16 hostages**

The Cameroonian army has freed 16 hostages who were abducted by rebels from CAR in October, Cameroon's government said on 26 November. However, the rebel force, the Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDPC), said in a statement it had voluntarily handed over the group following the intervention of former CAR minister. The FDPC abducted a Polish priest on 12 October in western CAR, hoping to use him and 15 Cameroonian hostages as bargaining chips to secure the release of their own leader who was arrested in Cameroon in 2013. It said in a statement that it had released its captives at the former CAR minister's request as a gesture of good faith in a step towards possible political talks. It was not immediately clear if Cameroon had made any commitment about the FDPC leader's fate. The brother of one of the hostages said the hostages were released in two groups on 25 and 26 November in the towns of Baboua and Beloko where they were abducted in mid-October.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/26/us-cameroon-kidnapping-poland-idUSKCN0JA1B820141126**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/26/us-cameroon-kidnapping-poland-idUSKCN0JA1B820141126)

**Mali**

**Nigeria**

**Boko Haram kills 20 villagers near Chibok**

Suspected Boko Haram gunmen killed at least 20 people in an attack on two villages on the outskirts of Chibok, the town where more than 200 schoolgirls were abducted in April, said a Nigerian civilian defense officer. Attackers struck Kamtahi and Galtimari villages, burning houses and forcing residents to flee, a spokesperson of a Nigerian civilian militia, reported. "Virtually every house in the two villages were burnt to ash," he said. "The villages were totally razed down as residents fled for their lives, some with injuries." The Borno State police command spokesperson reported that he was not aware of the incident.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/boko-haram-kills-20-villagers-chibok-27200468**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/boko-haram-kills-20-villagers-chibok-27200468)

**Sierra Leone**

**Ebola burial workers dump bodies in pay protest**Burial workers in Sierra Leone have dumped bodies in the street outside a hospital in protest at authorities' failure to pay bonuses for handling Ebola victims. Residents said up to 15 corpses had been abandoned in the eastern town of Kenema, three of them at a hospital entrance to stop people entering. A spokesman for the striking workers said they had not been paid their weekly hazard allowance for seven weeks. Authorities acknowledged the money had not been paid but said that all the striking members of the Ebola Burial Team would be dismissed.   
**CNN -** [**http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/26/world/africa/sierra-leone-ebola/**](http://www.cnn.com/2014/11/26/world/africa/sierra-leone-ebola/)

**Togo**

**Opposition slams president over refusal to reform**

Togo`s opposition on 26 November slammed the President`s rejection of political reform before next year`s general election, but vowed to keep up the pressure on him to act. The President said on that he will not bow to demands to restrict the number of presidential mandates to two five-year terms. Currently, there is no limit on how many terms a president can serve. Police in Lome, last week fired teargas at protesters marching for political reform after they defied government orders not to approach the national assembly. Another demonstration has been called for this Friday, when members of 16 human rights organisations will take to the streets calling for institutional and constitutional reform.

**AFP -** [**http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/togo-opposition-slams-president-over-refusal-to-reform\_1505325.html**](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/togo-opposition-slams-president-over-refusal-to-reform_1505325.html)

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