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GENERAL

**Across regions**

**Dutch reject UN call to feed, shelter homeless migrants**

The Dutch government on Tuesday rejected a call from UN rights experts to provide thousands of homeless migrants with food and shelter during the bitter north European winter. An estimated 8,000 asylum seekers are turned down every year in the Netherlands and left up to their own devices pending expulsion. Many end up living on the street.

**AFP** - **http://www.expatica.com/nl/news/country-news/Dutch-reject-UN-call-to-feed-shelter-homeless-migrants\_442961.html**

**ISIL recruits broadly, not just fighters**

As it looks to expand its territorial base across broad swaths of Iraq and [Syria](http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/syria.htm), the Islamic State group is recruiting for more than just fighters. The extremist organization also has been targeting its sophisticated propaganda to entice potential wives and professionals such as doctors, accountants and engineers in its efforts to build a new society. Among those it has lured were three teenage girls from Colorado, who set out for Syria this fall after swapping Twitter messages about marriage and religion with IS recruiters, and a young woman who sought to fight there ? or failing that, to use her nursing skills. It's a diverse pool of recruits whose motives perplex Western governments seeking to combat the flow. The group "is issuing a bit of a siren song through social media, trying to attract people to their so-called caliphate," [FBI](http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/us/federal-bureau-of-investigation.htm) Director James Comey told reporters. "And among the people they're trying to attract are young women to be brides for these jihadis."

**AP** - [**http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/islamic-state-recruits-broadly-fighters-27627176?page=2**](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/islamic-state-recruits-broadly-fighters-27627176?page=2)

**US urges caution as Palestinians bid for UN vote**

The United States is trying to carefully navigate a path forward as Palestinians seek to push hopes for a Palestinian state to the top of the UN agenda, top US diplomat John Kerry said Tuesday. But as the Palestinians threaten to submit a draft text Wednesday to the UN Security Council, Kerry hinted Washington did not believe now was the right time as Israel gears up for snap elections in March.

Speaking to reporters just before meeting with chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat in London, Kerry said he had had a series of "candid and constructive conversations" during his three-day whirlwind trip to Europe. "Many of us share a deep sense of urgency about this, given the constant threat of escalation and the dangers of a downward spiral of violence," the US secretary of state told a press conference.

"But we're also very mindful that we have to carefully calibrate any steps that are taken for this difficult moment in the region. We all understand the challenges that are presented by this conflict."

Amid reports of competing Arab-backed and French-led resolutions, Kerry has been meeting his European and Russian counterparts as well as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to gauge support for the Palestinian UN push.

**AFP** -[**http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-us-urges-caution-as-palestinians-bid-for-un-vote-2014-12#ixzz3M5h4ZKJx**](http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-us-urges-caution-as-palestinians-bid-for-un-vote-2014-12#ixzz3M5h4ZKJx)

CEE/CIS

**Ukraine**

**In conflict, upholding the right to health for all**

According to the WHO Representative for Ukraine, the health situation in the conflict zone is “sad”. As a doctor, she is particularly worried about the health of the sick, marginalized and vulnerable. This includes the very young and old, minorities such as Roma populations, the poor, persons with mental, physical or psychosocial disabilities, and displaced persons. The statistics are daunting. No child has been vaccinated in the areas affected by conflict since September, sending polio vaccine coverage down to less than 30-40%. About 40 patients in a mental health institution have reportedly died from hunger, cold and lack of care.

**WHO -** [**http://www.who.int/features/2014/ukraine-conflict/en/**](http://www.who.int/features/2014/ukraine-conflict/en/)

**WHO -** [**http://www.euro.who.int/en/countries/ukraine/news/news/2014/12/mobile-clinics-in-ukraine-to-bring-health-services-to-people-in-need**](http://www.euro.who.int/en/countries/ukraine/news/news/2014/12/mobile-clinics-in-ukraine-to-bring-health-services-to-people-in-need)

**UN says death toll in the east rises to 4,707 with many killed despite cease-fire**

Fighting in eastern Ukraine has killed at least 4,707 people since the conflict began in mid-April and more than a quarter of the recorded deaths have come since a much-ignored cease –fire, U.N. rights investigators said on 15 December. A new report from the UN team in Ukraine says that at least 1,357 of the fatalities have been recorded since the cease-fire began in early September, but the team noted that some of those deaths may have occurred before then. Some 10,322 people have been wounded in the conflict-affected areas of eastern Ukraine, where more than 5 million people are facing rising hardships, according to the report. The move vulnerable population, such as the elderly, children, and people in state institutional care, are being particularly affected by disruptions in social and medical services.

**OHCHR -** [**http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15419&LangID=E**](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15419&LangID=E)

**US News** - **http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2014/12/15/un-says-death-toll-in-eastern-ukraine-up-to-4-707**

**NATO pledges support to Ukraine**

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Monday pledged "ongoing political and practical support" to Ukraine when meeting with Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk at NATO Headquarters, according a statement posted on NATO official website. The Secretary General praised Ukraine's commitment to its partnership with NATO despite challenging circumstances.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/europe/2014-12/16/c\_133856985.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/europe/2014-12/16/c_133856985.htm)

EAP

**Japan**

**Japan confirms bird flu case, culls 4,000 chickens**

Japan's Agricultural Ministry on Tuesday confirmed a case of a highly pathogenic H5 strain of avian influenza at a poultry farm in Miyazaki prefecture in southwestern Japan. Three chickens tested positive at the farm and all of the roughly 4,000 chickens there have been culled, an official at the Miyazaki prefectural government said. The local government also asked nearby poultry farms to restrict movements of livestock, he said. There is believed to be no risk of the virus spreading to humans through consumption of chicken eggs or meat, he said.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141216074608-1knwj/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141216074608-1knwj/?source=search)

**Timor Leste**

**Judicial lurch could worsen domestic violence trauma**

Timor-Leste's efforts to reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence through criminalization and prosecution, already hampered by a general lack of trust in the formal court system, have suffered a fresh setback with the enforced departure of 11 foreign judicial staff who had played a key role in delivering justice in rural areas. "Decisions by the Timor-Leste parliament and government to arbitrarily terminate the contracts of foreign judicial officers and judicial advisors will have a negative impact on victims and their right to an effective remedy," said Amnesty International, highlighting that the staff shuffle may result in cases being re-tried, which could further delay proceedings and traumatize victims who have to testify repeatedly.

**IRIN -** [**http://www.irinnews.org/report/100942/timor-leste-s-judicial-lurch-could-worsen-domestic-violence-trauma**](http://www.irinnews.org/report/100942/timor-leste-s-judicial-lurch-could-worsen-domestic-violence-trauma)

ESA

**Kenya**

**Kenya shuts 510 NGOs, some for “terrorism financing”**

Kenya on Tuesday closed over 500 non-governmental organizations, including 15 for alleged funding for terrorism, as part of a security crackdown following repeated attacks. The government’s NGO coordination board said in a statement that it had “de-registered 510 organizations for non-compliance with the law,” with some using their charitable status as a front for raising cash for terrorism. “Some NGOs have been and continue to be used for criminal activities, including as conduits of terrorism financing in Kenya and in the Horn of Africa,” the statement read, which did not specify the names of such groups.

**France 24** - **http://www.france24.com/en/20141216-kenya-shuts-510-ngos-terrorism-financing/**

**South Sudan**

**Tens of thousands dead in S Sudan war**

Tens of thousands of people have died in South Sudan during one year of war and the country's leaders are putting their "personal ambitions" ahead of the young nation's future, the UN Secretary-General has said. Ban Ki-moon called on the country's leaders to agree to an inclusive power-sharing arrangement that would address the root causes of the conflict and ensure accountability for any crimes committed on the battlefield. There is no official death toll for the conflict, but Ban said "tens of thousands" of South Sudanese have died.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/un-tens-thousands-dead-s-sudan-war-20141216128423266.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/un-tens-thousands-dead-s-sudan-war-20141216128423266.html)

LAC

**Across LAC**

**Chikungunya tops 1 million cases one year after being introduced**

Exactly one year after chikungunya, made its first appearance in the Western hemisphere as a locally acquired infection in the French section of the island of St. Martin, the epidemic that has spread throughout the Americas has topped the 1 million case mark, according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The most recent tally from the international health organization put the number of suspected and confirmed locally acquired cases at 1,011,548, up nearly 36,000 cases from the last week report.

**PAHO -** [**http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?Itemid=40931**](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?Itemid=40931)

**Brazil**

**West Nile virus reported in Piaui state**

On 9 December, the Ministry of Health of Brazil reported a case of West Nile Virus (WNV) in the state of Piauí (PI). This is the first detection of a human case of WNV infection in Brazil. The case has been under investigation since August, when the patient had the first symptoms. The infection was laboratory-confirmed on 28 November. The case, who was admitted to hospital in Teresina (PI), has been discharged and will undergo rehabilitation and physical therapy to recover.

**WHO -** [**http://www.who.int/csr/don/15-december-2014-wnv/en/**](http://www.who.int/csr/don/15-december-2014-wnv/en/)

**Haiti**

**Country awaits new government**

Haiti was under a caretaker government on 15 December after the weekend resignation of the Prime Minister plunged the country into uncertainty as political forces jockeyed to fill the political void. A replacement is due to be named by 17 December under a timetable established by a special commission last week. If elections are not held before 12 January 2015 the parliament will shut down, leaving the country without a functioning government. One plan under discussion involves extending parliamentary terms until elections next summer, with presidential elections in November 2015.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-haiti-prime-minister-idUSKBN0JT2BP20141215**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-haiti-prime-minister-idUSKBN0JT2BP20141215)

MENA

**Across MENA**

**Libyan-Tunisian border point reopened after violent clashes**

The Libyan-Tunisian border was reopened on Monday after 24-hour closing due to violent clashes between Libyan army and the armed Islamist alliance Libya Dawn, a military source said. "The crossing of Ras Jadir was reopened for travelers after closing considering the security precautions and safety of citizens due to clashes near the crossing on Saturday," said Hafid Muammar, spokesman of the joint security chamber of Zuwarah city. "The area from Zuwarah to the border, approximate 60 km, is secured and things are back to normal now," Muammar added.

**Xinhua -** [**http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2014-12/16/c\_133857016.htm**](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2014-12/16/c_133857016.htm)

**Egypt**

**Islamist group criticizes Egypt over arrest warrant for cleric**

Scores of Islamist scholars criticized Egypt on Monday for seeking an Interpol arrest warrant for their leader, a Qatar-based cleric whose outspoken support for the Muslim Brotherhood contributed to a diplomatic rift between Gulf Arab states. Interpol this month issued a Red Notice alert for Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi in connection with several alleged offences including murder, arson, vandalism and theft. It said it was acting at the behest of Egyptian authorities.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-egypt-security-qatar-idUSKBN0JT14X20141215**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-egypt-security-qatar-idUSKBN0JT14X20141215)

**Iraq**

**Iraq reports 2700 missing since June Jihadist onslaught**

At least 2,700 people, mostly soldiers, are missing as a result of attacks by the ISIL group in Iraq, the human rights ministry said on Monday. More than half of those registered as missing by the government are soldiers who were at the Speicher base which the jihadists captured six months ago near Tikrit. "The number of missing from Speicher base has reached 1,660, from Badush prison 487, in addition to 554 from other areas, including 38 women," the ministry said in a statement. Badush is a prison outside the northern city of Mosul, which ISIL has used as its main hub in Iraq. The ministry said those numbers are based on applications filed by relatives and subsequent checking with the relevant ministries.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-reports-2-700-missing-since-june-jihadist-231729101.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-reports-2-700-missing-since-june-jihadist-231729101.html)

**Iraq jihadists release pictures of mass execution**

The ISIL group on Monday released pictures of the execution of 13 men described as anti-jihadist Sunni tribal fighters near the northern city of Tikrit. Three pictures published on a jihadist forum and pro-IS social media accounts show the execution of the men wearing orange jumpsuits. Local residents confirmed to AFP that a mass execution had taken place on a large roundabout six kilometres east of the city of Tikrit at around 3:30 pm.

**AFP -** [**http://www.france24.com/en/20141216-iraq-jihadists-release-pictures-mass-execution/**](http://www.france24.com/en/20141216-iraq-jihadists-release-pictures-mass-execution/)

**Jordan**

**One injured, two arrested in border infiltration attempt**

Border Guards on December 13 foiled an infiltration attempt by three Arab nationals from Syria into the Kingdom, Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF) Spokesperson Col. Mamdoh Al-Ameri said Sunday.

One of the three was injured during the attempt, while Border Guards arrested the other two, Ameri added in a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.  JAF personnel administered first aid to the injured infiltrator and took him to hospital, Petra reported. The other two were referred to the related institutions.

**Jordan Times - http://m.jordantimes.com/one-injured-two-arrested-in-border-infiltration-attempt**

**Lebanon**

**Hostage families burn tires after receiving new threat**

Relatives of the Lebanon's 25 captive servicemen burned tires outside the Grand Serail in Downtown [Beirut](javascript:void(0)) Monday after some families received phone calls from the captors threatening to kill a hostage.

Families told media that they had received calls from the abductors pledging to kill a captive within 48 hours unless the government responds to their demands. "The obstacles are coming from the government," one protester shouted. "The government wants our sons [hostages] dead to close the case."

**Daily Star** - [**http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-15/281096-lebanon-hostage-families-burn-tires-after-receiving-new-threat.ashx#sthash.JD6ynf9b.dpuf**](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Dec-15/281096-lebanon-hostage-families-burn-tires-after-receiving-new-threat.ashx%23sthash.JD6ynf9b.dpuf)

**Libya**

**More air strikes near eastern port and border to Tunisia**

Libya's recognized government conducted air strikes against rival government forces trying to seize major oil ports in the east and against targets in the west on 15 December, witnesses said. A force loyal to the recognized Prime Minister flew air strikes against those rival government troops, located some 40 km from Es Sider port, its air force commander said. The Tripoli-based government said its troops controlled all roads leading to the country's biggest oil port. Some 800 km to the west, an air strike also targeted the town of Zuwara near the border to Tunisia, witnesses said. But the rival government kept control of the main crossing in Ras Jdir.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-libya-security-idUSKBN0JT1ZP20141215**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-libya-security-idUSKBN0JT1ZP20141215)

**State of Palestine/Israel**

**5 Palestinians arrested in Israel for planned attacks**

Israel’s internal security services said Monday it has arrested five Palestinians for planning attacks including a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. The suspects from the West Bank were arrested in October and November and included a woman who planned to blow herself up in Israel’s commercial capital, the Shin Bet said. The announcement came after a series of deadly incidents in Jerusalem November, where lone Palestinian attackers killed a number of Israelis.

**Global Post -** [**http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/141215/5-palestinians-arrested-israel-planned-attacks**](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/141215/5-palestinians-arrested-israel-planned-attacks)

**Israeli troops kill Palestinian in West Bank**

A Palestinian has been killed overnight during an Israeli military operation in the Qalandiya refugee camp near Ramallah in the West Bank, medical and security sources say. The 21-year-old man was killed when troops entered the camp to make an arrest, prompting clashes with residents, sources said on Tuesday.

The Israeli army confirmed that its special forces had launched a raid on the camp and that there had been clashes.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/israeli-troops-kill-palestinian-west-bank-2014121654947797159.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/israeli-troops-kill-palestinian-west-bank-2014121654947797159.html)

**Kerry, Netanyahu meet as UN efforts heat up**

Secretary of State John Kerry met Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the U.S. and Israel developed their responses to a draft U.N. resolution that would set a two-year timetable for an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord. Before departing for the talks in Rome, Netanyahu took a hard line and said he would not allow others to dictate conditions for negotiations that might compromise Israel's security. For the U.S., however, the issue is trickier.

**AP -** [**http://www.ksl.com/?nid=235&sid=32758446&title=kerry-netanyahu-meet-as-un-efforts-heat-up**](http://www.ksl.com/?nid=235&sid=32758446&title=kerry-netanyahu-meet-as-un-efforts-heat-up)

**Sudan**

**UN says forces in Darfur won't leave amid rising violence**

The UNAMID peacekeeping mission in Darfur is unlikely to bow to Sudan's request to leave the region when the situation there appears to be worsening, the head of the UN peacekeeping forces said. Sudan said in November that it had asked UNAMID to prepare an exit plan, days after denying peacekeepers permission to pay a second visit to the site of alleged mass rapes by Sudanese soldiers in the Darfur village of Tabit. The head of the UN peacekeeping forces said a review of UNAMID had been completed and that he would consult with his African Union counterpart, but added Khartoum knew the mission would not leave any time soon.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-sudan-un-chief-idUSKBN0JT2E820141215**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-sudan-un-chief-idUSKBN0JT2E820141215)

**International court’s prosecutor shelves Darfur case for lack of UN support**

The International Criminal Court's prosecutor said on Friday that she had shelved an investigation into war crimes in Sudan's Darfur region for lack of action by the United Nations Security Council to push for arrests. The Hague-based court indicted Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in 2009 for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It has also charged Defense Minister Abdel Raheem Muhammad Hussein, former Interior Minister Ahmed Haroun and Janjaweed militia leader Ali Kushayb. None have been arrested.

**Reuters** - **http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/12/us-sudan-icc-un-idUSKBN0JQ1Z520141212**

**Syria**

**Around 180 Syrian soldiers, jihadists reported killed in battle for base**

Around 100 Syrian soldiers and 80 Islamist fighters were killed during a two-day battle in which insurgents captured the Wadi al-Deif military base, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said on Tuesday. The Britain-based group said Islamist insurgents including al Qaeda's [Syria](http://bit.ly/1svQDtr) wing, the Nusra Front, on Monday took the base next to the country's main north-south highway linking Aleppo with Damascus. Fighters also captured the smaller Hamidiya base, southwest of the Wadi al-Deif, the Observatory said. The group said that around 120 soldiers were captured in the assault, citing insurgent sources.

**Reuters** - **http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/16/us-mideast-crisis-base-idUSKBN0JU0WV20141216**

**Yemen**

**Yemen car bomb attack kills 25, including 15 children**

A suicide car bomb attack in central Yemen targeting a Shiite militia leader killed 25 people including 15 children on Tuesday, security and medical sources said. The children were killed when their school bus was caught up in the attack targeting the home of a leader of the Shiite militia, known as Huthis, in the town of Rada, a local security source told AFP, blaming the attack on Al-Qaeda militants. A medical source confirmed 25 people had died in the attack.

**AFP** - [**http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-car-bomb-attack-kills-25-including-15-children**](http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-car-bomb-attack-kills-25-including-15-children)

**Deadly car bombings hit Yemeni city**

At least four people including two children have been killed after two car bombs exploded in Radaa city of central Yemen, local and medical sources said. Houthi-linked TV channel Almasirah, however, put the death toll at 30. One car bomb reportedly exploded  near a checkpoint manned by Shia Houthi rebels while a school bus was passing. The second car exploded near the house of an official in the area said to be supporting Houthi rebels. The Houthi rebel group has blamed the Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) group for the attack.

**Al Jazeera** - **http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/twin-yemen-car-bombs-leave-dozens-dead-2014121615352245192.html**

SA

**Afghanistan**

**At least 40 Taliban killed since Sunday**

Since Sunday, at least 40 members of the Tailban militia were killed and around 50 more were injured in clashes with Afghan security forces in different parts of the country, official sources said on Monday. Afghan National Army spokesperson Numan Hatifi said about 1200 Afghan and Pakistani insurgents launched coordinated attacks on government positions in the Damgan district of Kunar province, in eastern Afghanistan.

**La Prensa -** [**http://www.laprensasa.com/309\_america-in-english/2843299\_at-least-40-taliban-killed-in-afghanistan-since-sunday.html**](http://www.laprensasa.com/309_america-in-english/2843299_at-least-40-taliban-killed-in-afghanistan-since-sunday.html)

**Suspected ISIL commander arrested**

A notorious anti-government armed militant commander who is believed to have links with ISIS, has been arrested by Afghan security forces in Paktia province. According to the local government officials, the detained commander has been identified as Qari Amandullah who is also famous as Qari Khalid. The arrest was made following a gun battle which continued for almost 15 minutes.

**Khaama Press** - <https://www.khaama.com/suspected-isis-daesh-commander-arrested-in-afghanistan-9130>

**India**

**India bans ISIL, hunts for sympathisers**

India on Tuesday declared a ban on ISIL, days after having detained an engineer for running a popular Twitter account extolling the militant group's military campaign. India has the world's third-largest population of Muslims, but they have largely shunned Islamist causes. Police say only four Indians are known to have joined ISIL, and one has since returned and is in custody. Home Minister Rajnath Singh told parliament the government aimed to limit the activities of the Middle Eastern group which has carved out swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141216084841-cs5xi/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141216084841-cs5xi/?source=search)

**Pakistan**

**Children massacred in Pakistan school attack**

At least 130 people, including 80 children, have died in a horrific attack by Pakistani Taliban fighters (TTP) on a military-run school in Peshawar in Pakistan's northwest. Several explosions and gunfire rung out as six armed men attacked the Army Public School on Tuesday morning, in one the bloodiest attacks in Pakistan's history. Officials told Al Jazeera that all six attackers were killed in the operation and that the death toll was likely to rise.

**Al Jazeera –**

[**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2014/12/fighters-attack-army-run-school-pakistan-20141216742794184.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2014/12/fighters-attack-army-run-school-pakistan-20141216742794184.html)

**Imran Khan leads Lahore protests**

Supporters of the party of Pakistan’s Imran Khan shut down major roads in the eastern city of Lahore on Monday in the latest round of protests against the government. Thousands of followers of Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) gathered at different junctions on major roads in the city and burned tyres, forcing the suspension of public transport.

**Today’s News Gazette** - [**http://todaysnewsgazette.com/pak-imran-khan-leads-lahore-protests/**](http://todaysnewsgazette.com/pak-imran-khan-leads-lahore-protests/)

WCA

**Across WCA**

**UN commission asks for Ebola debt forgiveness**

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa said Monday that it is crucial that the current Ebola health crisis not be a catalyst for financial distress in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. Carlos Lopez, a UN Under-Secretary-General and the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, appealed in Ethiopia on Monday for loan forgiveness.

**Netscape -** [**http://isp.netscape.com/pf/story.jsp?floc=FF-1001-i&idq=/ff/story/1001%2F20141215%2F8384.htm&sc=i**](http://isp.netscape.com/pf/story.jsp?floc=FF-1001-i&idq=/ff/story/1001%2F20141215%2F8384.htm&sc=i)

**DR Congo**

**UN brigade will need to ‘neutralize’ rebels**

Only a few of Rwanda's FDLR rebels operating in eastern DR Congo have laid down their arms before a January deadline, meaning that UN troops will launch operations against the group next month, the UN's peacekeeping chief said on 15 December. Herve Ladsous said that the UN's DR Congo's mission, MONUSCO, was also involved in an offensive to pick off the last remaining elements of Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) Islamist rebels, which also operate in Congo's lawless east.

**Reuters - http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-un-congodemocratic-idUSKBN0JT29720141215**

**UN, aid groups overstretched by crisis in Katanga**

Faced with a dearth of UN peacekeepers, lack of funding and competition from other global crises, relief agencies are struggling to contain a growing humanitarian disaster in DR Congo's Katanga. The deteriorating situation in the copper and cobalt-rich southeastern province of Katanga, which the UNHCR labelled "catastrophic" last month, throws into sharp relief the gaping humanitarian needs. The number of displaced people in Katanga has leapt to nearly 600,000, from 55,000 three years ago, mostly due to violence by armed groups, including the secessionist movement Bakata Katanga. The crisis has taken DR Congo's humanitarian community by surprise after a decade spent focusing on the eastern border provinces of North and South Kivu.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/14/congodemocratic-katanga-aid-idUSL6N0TT3B220141214**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/14/congodemocratic-katanga-aid-idUSL6N0TT3B220141214)

**Nigeria**

**A million displaced unable to vote unless law changed**

More than a million Nigerians displaced by an insurgency in the northeast may not be able to vote in the 14 February 2015 presidential election unless the law is changed, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said on 15 December. A decision on how to deal with the displaced will not be taken before January 2015 when the National Assembly next meets. The potential loss of more than a million votes from the northern area could stoke tension.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141215180046-z4r7q/?source=jtOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141215180046-z4r7q/?source=jtOtherNews3)

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.

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