**UNICEF OPSCEN Brief - Wednesday, 24 December 2014**

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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**Germany plans trauma centre for ISIL rape victims: minister**

A German government minister said Berlin aimed to set up a trauma centre for victims of a mass rape campaign by the ISIL. Overseas development minister Gerd Mueller told the Bild newspaper that the care facility in Germany could serve 100 women and girls from Syria and Iraq. Mueller did not provide a timetable or say where in Germany the centre would be established.

**AFP -** [**http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/germany-plans-trauma-centre-for-is-rape-victims-minister\_1518670.html**](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/germany-plans-trauma-centre-for-is-rape-victims-minister_1518670.html)

**Turkey builds 'upgraded' Syria refugee camp**

Turkey has begun building a new and upgraded refugee camp in the country’s southeast to accommodate tens of thousands of Syrians who escaped the conflict in the Kurdish city of Kobane in northern Syria. The new camp will open in mid-January and house 32,500 people, the provincial head of Turkey’s Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, or AFAD, said. The camp will offer educational institutions, from middle school to high school, along with a fully functioning hospital. Most of the 180,000 refugees from Kobane and surrounding areas are currently living in makeshift shelters provided by local Turkish municipalities and NGOs.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/turkey-builds-upgraded-syria-refugee-camp-201412215551222511.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/turkey-builds-upgraded-syria-refugee-camp-201412215551222511.html)

**Sierra Leone to withdraw Somalia troops over Ebola**

Sierra Leone is withdrawing its troops from Somalia after the AU blocked the West African country from rotating its soldiers over fears for the Ebola virus. Sierra Leone sent 850 troops to Somalia for a 12-month deployment to fight al-Shebaab, in Somalia in 2013. Their rotation was delayed after a group of 800 soldiers, who were waiting to replace their comrades in Somalia, were quarantined after one of the soldiers was tested positive for Ebola.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/s-leone-withdraw-somalia-troops-over-ebola-2014122143849987599.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/s-leone-withdraw-somalia-troops-over-ebola-2014122143849987599.html)

CEE/CIS

**Across CEE/CIS**

**Russia defies fresh Western sanctions**

Russia says it will not "cave in" to pressure, following a fresh set of US, EU and Canadian sanctions over the conflict in Ukraine. A spokesman said Moscow regretted "that the West is yet again displaying a complete lack of interest" in resolving the crisis in south-east Ukraine. Russia was developing "retaliatory measures" the spokesman said. The US sanctions focused on Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in March. President Obama signed an executive order to ban the export of goods, technology and services to Crimea, in addition to new sanctions on Russian and Ukrainian individuals and companies. Similar measures agreed by the EU earlier this week came into effect on Saturday. Canada announced its own sanctions on Crimea on Friday.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30560941**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30560941)

**Ukraine**

**Conflict leaves more than 1.7 million children affected; almost 150 schools closed - UNICEF**

Conflict in Ukraine has left 147 schools closed in parts of Donetsk Oblast where fighting is ongoing, and disrupted the education of some 50,000 children since 1 September. Some of the schools are in ruins and others remain closed because of safety concerns. In government-controlled areas 187 educational institutions have been damaged or destroyed. The situation for more than 1.7 million children affected by the growing crisis in eastern Ukraine remains extremely serious. Since March 2014, over 1 million people have been displaced from the conflict-affected areas, including nearly 530,000 people within Ukraine, of whom at least 130,000 are children.

**CNN -** [**http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/20/world/europe/ukraine-conflict/**](http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/20/world/europe/ukraine-conflict/)

**NYT -** [**http://www.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/100000003339848/ukraines-children-of-war.html**](http://www.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/100000003339848/ukraines-children-of-war.html)

**UNICEF -** [**http://www.unicef.org/media/media\_78177.html**](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_78177.html)

EAP

**Cambodia**

**Cambodia charges unlicensed doctor for spreading HIV to over 100 people**

Cambodian prosecutors said they charged an unlicensed medical practitioner with murder on Monday, alleging he spread HIV among at least 106 villagers in the country's remote northwest. Authorities detected the local epidemic of HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, on Dec. 9 when they started testing in the community in Battambang province and found children as young as two and people in the 80s had contracted the virus.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141222123139-pb24z/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141222123139-pb24z/?source=fiOtherNews2)

**China**

**Authorities promise medical care for HIV-positive boy: state media**

Beijing has pledged to provide medical treatment and a living allowance for an HIV-positive 8-year-old boy who was last week threatened with expulsion from his village, state media reported Monday. Beijing has now pledged to ensure the boy, dubbed Kunkun in the media, gets an education after reports he was having trouble finding a school that would take him, the China Daily said. China's health ministry has also pledged to conduct spot checks around China to uncover any other violations of anti-discrimination policies, the state-run paper reported. It was unclear on Monday whether Kunkun still faces expulsion from the village, where he had been living under his grandfather's care.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/china-promises-medical-care-hiv-positive-boy-state-055751719.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/china-promises-medical-care-hiv-positive-boy-state-055751719.html)

**Myanmar**

**Authorities resume ceasefire talks with rebels**

Myanmar and ethnic rebels on Monday resumed ceasefire talks that were postponed in November when the army shelled a Kachin rebel training camp in the north of the country, killing 23. Top-level representatives were not due to attend the talks in Yangon, which were expected to focus on the shelling, an official said. Conflicts with several ethnical rebel groups have intensified since peace talks collapsed between the government's Union Peace Working Committee (UPCW) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) in September. In early December, ethnic Kokang rebels of the self-proclaimed Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army killed seven soldiers in northeastern Myanmar's Shan State, news reports said.

**DPA -** [**http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/Myanmar-resumes-ceasefire-talks-with-rebels-30250382.html**](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/Myanmar-resumes-ceasefire-talks-with-rebels-30250382.html)

ESA

**Somalia**

**UN removes former warlord from sanctions list**

A former Somali warlord who renounced his alliance with the al-Shebaab this summer was removed from a UN sanctions list Friday. Mohamed Said Atom, a powerful arms dealer, had been targeted with UN travel and financial sanctions for "kidnapping, piracy and terrorism." In June, Atom announced he had laid down his arms and would in future only work through "peaceful means and understanding."

He accused Shebaab, which is linked to Al-Qaeda, of being manipulated by a foreign agenda and of killing Muslims. The UNSC committee dealing with Somalia announced Atom's removal from the sanctions list.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/un-removes-former-somali-warlord-sanctions-list-130941882.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/un-removes-former-somali-warlord-sanctions-list-130941882.html)

**South Sudan**

**Rebels committed atrocities - UN**

South Sudan rebels killed, raped and kidnapped civilians during an attack in October, leaving at least 11 people dead, the UN says in a report. Fighters backing Riek Machar, former vice president, attacked the town of Bentiu near the border with Sudan on 29 October and "killed at least 11 civilians and committed other serious human rights abuses", according to the report, received by AFP news agency. UNMISS also said it had "received testimony from multiple sources alleging that opposition forces abducted and raped female residents of Bentiu after government troops withdrew from some parts of the city during the afternoon of 29 October 2014."

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/un-south-sudan-rebels-committed-atrocities-201412209546580791.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/un-south-sudan-rebels-committed-atrocities-201412209546580791.html)

**Zimbabwe**

**President fires more cabinet members**

Zimbabwe's government says the president has fired two cabinet ministers believed to be loyal to the ousted vice president, while thousands of civil servants have not been paid Christmas bonuses. A statement from President Mugabe's office said he fired the minister of state for presidential affairs and the minister of state in the vice president's office. It said he also fired five deputy ministers for performing below the expected standard. Earlier this month, Mugabe fired Vice President Joice Mujuru, accusing her of plotting against him. The 90-year-old leader also fired nine other ministers believed to be loyal to Mujuru in what analysts have described as a political purge.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zimbabwes-president-fires-cabinet-members-27758909**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zimbabwes-president-fires-cabinet-members-27758909)

LAC

**Colombia**

**Eight police, military killed in guerrilla attacks**

FARC guerrillas killed five soldiers in an ambush on Friday just hours before the rebels were to begin an indefinite ceasefire, the army said. Three police officers were also killed in an attack by the country's smaller ELN guerrilla group. FARC ambush, in which seven soldiers were wounded, occurred in the southwestern province of Cauca as the army patrolled a highway damaged in a bomb attack a short while earlier. The policemen died in a separate attack in northeast Norte de Santander province, which police blamed on the National Liberation Army, or ELN. The FARC unexpectedly announced on Wednesday that it would cease hostilities for an unlimited time from Saturday.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141219224601-ywp0l/?source=fiOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141219224601-ywp0l/?source=fiOtherNews3)

**Cuba**

**Despite thaw with US, Cuba 'will not change' communist system**

Cuban President Raul Castro has hailed a recent US move to normalise bilateral relations but stressed Havana would not change its political system. Castro also warned Cuba faced a "long and difficult struggle" before the US removed its economic embargo. He said he would attend next year's Summit of Americas in Panama, where he could meet US President Obama.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-30561598**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-30561598)

**Haiti**

**Health minister named as new interim PM named**

Haitian Health Minister Florence Duperval Guillaume was named interim PM on Sunday to replace Laurent Lamothe, who resigned a week ago following several weeks of protests. The announcement is part of an effort to resolve a mounting political crisis over long-delayed elections. Under Haiti's constitution, Guillaume can hold the interim position for up to 30 days before a permanent choice is nominated for approval by parliament. Lamothe was forced to resign after President Michel Martelly accepted the recommendations of a special commission appointed to defuse the crisis, including calling for the PM to go. It also came after international warnings from the US and the UN that the country was on the brink of political chaos again.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141221160655-5tqt2/**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141221160655-5tqt2/)

**Venezuela**

**US seeks to overthrow government: official**

Tighter new US sanctions against Venezuela are aimed to foment violent unrest to try to overthrow President Nicolas Maduro, his defense minister said. US President Obama signed a law on Thursday to allow sanctions against senior Venezuelan officials accused of violating the rights of protesters during anti-government demonstrations that rocked the country earlier this year. The text approved just over a week ago by both houses of the US Congress would freeze assets and deny visas to Venezuelan authorities responsible for violence and political detentions triggered by the protests.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/us-seeks-overthrow-venezuela-government-official-234048242.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/us-seeks-overthrow-venezuela-government-official-234048242.html)

MENA

**Across MENA**

**Israel bombs Gaza militant base after rocket hits southern Israel**

Israeli aircraft bombed a Hamas militant base in the Gaza Strip on Friday for the first time since the end of a war in the territory, in response to a rocket that militants launched earlier in the day, the army said. The bombs struck in the Khan Younis area in the southern Gaza Strip. Local hospital officials said there were no casualties. The militant rocket fired earlier landed in a field in southern Israel and did not cause casualties.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141219234202-yw3zy/?source=fiOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141219234202-yw3zy/?source=fiOtherNews3)

**Gaza ripe for new explosion, analysts warn**

Barely four months after a bloody conflict battered Gaza, experts warn that a new war could be in the offing if reconstruction is not accelerated and Palestinian divisions remain. Since the end of the deadly 50-day war between Israel and Hamas, which killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians and 73 in Israel, little has changed on the ground in Gaza. Swathes of the territory lie in ruins and tens of thousands of people remain homeless. With reconstruction still conspicuous by its absence and talks to bolster the August truce repeatedly postponed, frustration is growing in Gaza -- and with it the danger of a new outbreak of violence.

**AFP -** [**http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/gaza-ripe-for-new-explosion-analysts-warn\_1518710.html**](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/gaza-ripe-for-new-explosion-analysts-warn_1518710.html)

**Egypt allows in travellers from Gaza for first time since October**

Egypt opened the Rafah border crossing on Sunday for incoming passengers from the Gaza Strip for the first time in almost two months, Palestinian and Egyptian officials said. Rafah is the only major crossing between Gaza, home to 1.8 million Palestinians, and the outside world that does not border Israel, which blockades the strip and allows passage mainly on humanitarian grounds. Egypt shut the crossing on 25 October after Islamist militants in Egypt's adjacent Sinai region killed 33 members of its security forces in some of the worst anti-state violence since Islamist president Mohamed Mursi was toppled in July 2013.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141221103454-v8vwq/?source=fiOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141221103454-v8vwq/?source=fiOtherNews3)

**Iraq**

**Iraqi Kurds, Yazidis fight ISIL for strategic town of Sinjar**

Kurdish and Yazidi fighters battled to take the strategic northern Iraqi town of Sinjar back from ISIL on Sunday after breaking a months-long siege of the mountain above it. Seizing the town would restore the majority of territory Iraq's Kurds lost in the jihadist group's surprise August offensive. It would also give a huge strategic victory to both the Iraqi Kurds and the central government in Baghdad, as the Kurdish fighters could then cut the highway from Syria to Mosul, a vital supply line for ISIL. A 32-truck convoy of aid sent by Iraqi Kurds to the Yazidis, including food, tents, medical supplies and food, arrived on the mountain on Saturday.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141221230100-myuls/?source=fiHeadlineStory**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141221230100-myuls/?source=fiHeadlineStory)

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/21/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sinjar-idUSKBN0JY0ML20141221?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/21/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sinjar-idUSKBN0JY0ML20141221?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews)

**Lebanon**

**Syrian newborns risk statelessness – UNICEF mention**

Nearly 30,000 Syrian children born as refugees in Lebanon are in a legal limbo, not registered with any government, exposing them to the risk of a life of statelessness deprived of basic rights. It is a problem that is replicated, to varying degrees, in nations across the Middle East where more than 3.3 million Syrians have found safe haven from the intractable civil war in their homeland. The UN launched a major campaign last month to try to end statelessness for an estimated 10 million people around the world within 10 years.

**NYT -** [**http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2014/12/19/world/middleeast/ap-ml-lebanon-syria-refugee-children.html**](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2014/12/19/world/middleeast/ap-ml-lebanon-syria-refugee-children.html)

**Libya**

**Official government targets rival forces trying to seize ports**

Military planes loyal to Libya's recognised government attacked on Sunday an opposing force that is seeking to seize the country's two biggest oil ports, officials said. The advancing force, which is allied to a rival government based in Tripoli, moved east a week ago to try take the Es Sider and Ras Lanuf ports. The adjacent terminals have since closed, halting exports of an estimated 300,000 barrels a day of oil. There was no immediate word of any casualties.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141221165929-w2vft/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141221165929-w2vft/?source=fiOtherNews2)

**Syria**

**20 jihadists killed in failed east airport attack**

At least 20 ISIL members were killed in the second failed jihadist bid in a month to take over an air base in eastern Syria, a monitoring group said. “The ISIL tried, starting late Saturday, to storm the air base. A total of 20 jihadists were killed in the attack, as well as two regime soldiers,” said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The attack was the second recent attempt by ISIL to take over the Deir Ezzor military air base, one of the last remaining regime positions in the eastern province.

**AFP -** [**http://www.france24.com/en/20141221-20-jihadists-killed-failed-east-syria-airport-attack/**](http://www.france24.com/en/20141221-20-jihadists-killed-failed-east-syria-airport-attack/)

**Tunisia**

**Marzouki refuses to admit defeat**

Moncef Marzouki has refused to admit defeat in Tunisia's first free presidential election after exit polls suggested Beji Caid Essebsi had won. The caretaker president, a former exile, said his rival's declaration of victory was "undemocratic." Mr Essebsi, 88, has been celebrating with supporters, telling them all Tunisians now need to "work together" and promising to bring stability. Critics say his success marks the return of a discredited establishment. Official results are not expected until Monday evening. One exit poll gave Mr Essebsi 55.5%, with several others showing similar figures.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30572499**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30572499)

**Reuters** - [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/21/us-tunisia-election-idUSKBN0JZ04F20141221**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/21/us-tunisia-election-idUSKBN0JZ04F20141221)

**Yemen**

**Malnutrition hits millions of children**

One million children younger than 5, roughly a third of the age group in Yemen, are suffering from life-threatening malnourishment, according to Daniela D’urso, the head of the European Commission’s humanitarian aid office in Yemen. About two million children are chronically malnourished. Nearly 60% of Yemeni children suffer from stunted growth, according to public health workers, who in the past few months have noticed other worrying trends, including cases of malnutrition giving rise to other maladies like tuberculosis.

**NYT -** [**http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/19/world/middleeast/yemen-children-starve-as-government-weakens.html?action=click&contentCollection=Health&region=Footer&module=MoreInSection&pgtype=Blogs&\_r=0**](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/19/world/middleeast/yemen-children-starve-as-government-weakens.html?action=click&contentCollection=Health&region=Footer&module=MoreInSection&pgtype=Blogs&_r=0)

**Deadly attack on tribal chief sparks ambush**

Four bodyguards of a Sunni tribal chief were killed on Sunday near Yemen's capital by Shiite militiamen of the Ansarullah group, a tribal source said, sparking an ambush in reprisal. The four were killed when the militiamen, also known as Huthis, blew up the house of Sheikh Yahia Taqi of the Islamist Al-Islah party at al-Makarib in the Arhab area. Local tribes then ambushed an Ansarullah convoy of four vehicles carrying reinforcements, killing or wounding around 30. Arhab, some 30km north of Sanaa, fell to the Shiite militiamen in mid-December as they sought to extend their influence after taking the capital in September.

**AFP -** [**http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-21/281824-deadly-attack-on-yemen-tribal-chief-sparks-ambush.ashx**](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-21/281824-deadly-attack-on-yemen-tribal-chief-sparks-ambush.ashx)

SA

**Afghanistan**

**Roadside bomb and Taliban attack kill 14, including children**

A roadside bomb and a Taliban attack on a police post have killed 14 people including children in Afghanistan, officials said. Seven civilians died when a bomb hit a pickup truck travelling from Asadabad, the capital of the eastern province of Kunar, to Nari district near the border with Pakistan on Saturday. In northern Afghanistan Saturday seven police were killed and about a dozen wounded when some 200 Taliban fighters attacked their post in the Qushtapa area of Jawzjan province, provincial police spokesman Ahmad Farid Azizi told AFP.

**AFP -** [**http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/roadside-bomb-and-taliban/1542272.html**](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/roadside-bomb-and-taliban/1542272.html)

**Afghan Taliban decry "biased" UN-report on civilian casualties**

Afghanistan's Taliban accused the UN of "enmity and political motives" in reporting that three-quarters of a record-high number of civilians killed and wounded this year were victims of the insurgents. Denouncing a UN report as "biased and unfounded", the insurgents accused UN investigators of intentionally skewing statistics to blame the Taliban. The UN said that for a second year, insurgents were responsible for about 75% of civilians killed, with the toll reaching a new high of 3,188 through November, more than for any other full year since it began tracking numbers.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/21/us-afghanistan-casualties-idUSKBN0JZ07O20141221**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/21/us-afghanistan-casualties-idUSKBN0JZ07O20141221)

**India**

**States on alert for bird and swine flu**

Confirmed cases of bird and swine flu have prompted widespread alerts in India, officials said. Officials in the northern city of Chandigarh culled over 100 birds around the popular scenic Sukhna Lake after some of 22 migratory geese found dead there tested positive to avian influenza or H5N1. Lakes and farms in neighbouring Punjab and Haryana states were being monitored, IBN news channel reported. Northern Uttar Pradesh state banned all import of poultry products from other states and ordered an inspection of its own 4,000 poultry farms, IANS news agency reported.

**DPA -** [**http://www.ibtimes.com/swine-flu-india-claims-8-lives-telangana-andhra-pradesh-bird-flu-alert-other-states-1764406**](http://www.ibtimes.com/swine-flu-india-claims-8-lives-telangana-andhra-pradesh-bird-flu-alert-other-states-1764406)

**Bomb kills three in restive northeast**

Three people were killed and four others wounded in a bomb attack early Sunday in India's restive northeast, police said, the second strike in the area in less than a week. The blast shook west Imphal, state capital of Manipur, which borders Myanmar -- an area that has been plagued by separatist violence for decades. An IED was planted close to a bus depot and went off early Sunday morning, a police official said. No rebel group has claimed responsibility for the attack and it was not immediately clear what the motive was.

**AFP -** [**http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2882364/Bomb-kills-three-Indias-restive-northeast.html**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2882364/Bomb-kills-three-Indias-restive-northeast.html)

**Babies at risk amid vaccine shortage – UNICEF mention**

The government’s failure to address frequent shortages of vaccines has worried the public and health experts who say fatal diseases could attack vulnerable segments of population during an immunisation gap. A government report obtained by the Post shows it ran out of BCG vaccine, which immunises children against tuberculosis, for two months in March early this year. The 96,000 vials of the vaccine that it then procured did not last beyond mid-November. A stock count in mid-October read 15,001 BCG vaccines--448 vials short of the required number. The government has sought **UNICEF**’s help to deliver the vaccine possibly by 29 December.

**Kathmandu Post -** [**http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2014/12/21/top-story/babies-at-risk-amid-vaccine-shortage/271087.html**](http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2014/12/21/top-story/babies-at-risk-amid-vaccine-shortage/271087.html)

**Pakistan**

**Authorities plan to execute 500 terror convicts in coming weeks**

Pakistan plans to execute around 500 militants in coming weeks, officials said Monday, after the government lifted a moratorium on the death penalty in terror cases following a Taliban school massacre. Six militants have been hanged since Friday amid rising public anger over Tuesday's slaughter in the northwestern city of Peshawar, which left 149 people dead including 133 children. The Taliban have issued statements promising to stage more attacks around Pakistan in retaliation for the executions of any of their fighters.

**AFP -** [**http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-pakistan-plans-to-execute-500-terror-convicts-officials-say-2014-12**](http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-pakistan-plans-to-execute-500-terror-convicts-officials-say-2014-12)

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141221150440-nobzk/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141221150440-nobzk/?source=fiOtherNews2)

**Several Taliban killed following school massacre**

Pakistani security forces said they killed several Taliban insurgents in and around Peshawar on Saturday. At least five militants, including a key commander, were killed Saturday in a battle between security forces and militants in the Mattani area of Peshawar. On Friday, the Pakistani military said it killed 32 militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, of which Peshawar is the capital. A military statement did not specify whether any of those killed were Taliban members or whether the ambush was linked to Tuesday's deadly school attack.

**CNN -** [**http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/20/world/asia/pakistan-taliban-deaths/**](http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/20/world/asia/pakistan-taliban-deaths/)

WCA

**Across WCA**

**Recorded Ebola deaths top 7,000 - WHO**

The worst Ebola outbreak on record has now killed more than 7,000 people, with many of the latest deaths reported in Sierra Leone, WHO said. The three countries hit hardest by Ebola have now recorded 7,373 deaths, up from 6,900 on Wednesday, according to WHO figures posted online late Friday. A total of 392 of the new deaths were in Sierra Leone, where Ebola is spreading the fastest.

The new totals include confirmed, probable and suspected Ebola deaths. The total number of cases in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia now stands at 19,031, up from 18,569.

**AP -** [**http://time.com/3643092/ebola-deaths-7000-who/**](http://time.com/3643092/ebola-deaths-7000-who/)

**Boko Haram pose regional threat**

Thousands of members of Nigeria's Boko Haram group strike across the border in Cameroon, with coordinated attacks on border towns, a troop convoy and a major barracks. Farther north, Boko Haram employs recruits from Chad to enforce its control in northeastern Nigerian towns and cities. In Niger, the government has declared a "humanitarian crisis" and appealed for international aid to help tens of thousands of Nigerian refugees driven from their homes by the insurgency. These recent events show how neighboring countries are increasingly being drawn into Nigeria's Islamic uprising. Thousands of people have been killed and about 1.6 million driven from their homes in the 5-year insurgency that is spilling across borders into Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/nigerias-home-grown-islamic-uprising-poses-regional-threat-104021339.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/nigerias-home-grown-islamic-uprising-poses-regional-threat-104021339.html)

**CAR**

**At least 20 killed in clashes – police**

At least 20 people have been killed and dozens injured in the latest inter-ethnic clashes in CAR, police said. An official said the violence broke out on Friday when mainly Christian anti-balaka militias launched an attack against rebels of the largely Muslim former Seleka alliance and Peul in the central region of Bambari. "At least 12 people were killed in that attack," the official said. He said ex-Seleka rebels and armed Peul herders - also known as the Fulani - launched a reprisal attack on Saturday on the village of Kouango, 90km south, killing at least eight people, injuring dozens and setting several homes on fire. "Many residents fled to the bush and others sought refuge in the capital Bangui where hundreds of people from both regions have arrived in recent months," the official said. Last week 28 people were killed in sectarian clashes in Mbres, just days after a reconciliation ceremony organised by the UN peacekeeping mission there.

**AFP -** [**http://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/least-20-killed-central-africa-clashes-police**](http://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/least-20-killed-central-africa-clashes-police)

**UN keeping trapped Muslims from leaving: HRW**

Hundreds of Muslims are trapped in the west of CAR in miserable conditions after fleeing Christian militiamen, Human Rights Watch said, accusing UN peacekeepers of collaborating with the authorities in preventing them from leaving. HWR said about 1,750 Muslims - many of them ethnic Peuhl herders - are trapped in Yaloke, Carnot and Boda, where they arrived when fleeing attacks by the largely Christian anti-Balaka militia in late 2013 and early 2014. The conditions are the worst in Yaloke, where 42 people have died from malnutrition and diseases since February. DPKO officials told HRW that the UN is urging authorities to support transfers of those who wish to leave.

**DPA -** [**http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/12/22/391341/un-keeping-car-muslims-trapped/**](http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/12/22/391341/un-keeping-car-muslims-trapped/)

**HRW -** [**http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/22/central-african-republic-muslims-trapped-enclaves**](http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/22/central-african-republic-muslims-trapped-enclaves)

**Gabon**

**Police break up opposition rally, 1 killed**

Gabon's prosecutor says one person was killed after opposition protesters went ahead with a banned rally, prompting security forces to respond with tear gas in a bid to disperse the crowd. Opposition leaders said three people were killed. Saturday's rally had been organized to protest Ali Bongo Ondimba, who became president after his father, former President Omar Bongo, died in 2009.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/gabon-police-break-opposition-rally-killed-27744636**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/gabon-police-break-opposition-rally-killed-27744636)

**Nigeria**

**Bomb blast at NE bus station 'kills at least 20'**

A bombing at a bus station in Gombe city in northeast Nigeria killed at least 20 people on Monday, the latest violence in the region repeatedly targeted by Boko Haram, the Red Cross said. "There was an explosion at the Dukku motor park. The Red Cross mobilised with 20 body bags and they have all been exhausted," said Abubakar Yakubu Gombe, area secretary for the Red Cross. The bomb was planted near a bus that was parked and filling up with passengers, said Mato Yakubu of the National Orientation Agency, a government body responsible for the media. He said the blast occurred at 10:50 am (0950 GMT) at the station on the outskirts of Gombe city, capital of the eponymous state.

**AFP -** [**http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/africa/78713-northeast-nigeria-bomb-blast**](http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/africa/78713-northeast-nigeria-bomb-blast)

**Video shows Boko Haram killing captives**

A new video from Boko Haram shows gunmen mowing down civilians lying face down in a dorm, and a leader saying they are being killed because they are "infidels" or non-believers. Most appear to be adult men. The video released to journalists late Saturday comes two days after fleeing villagers reported that the extremists are rounding up elderly people and killing them in two schools in Gwoza, in northeast Nigeria. The setting of the latest video appears to be a school which the leader says is in Bama, a town 60km north of Gwoza.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/video-shows-boko-haram-killing-captives-113127789.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/video-shows-boko-haram-killing-captives-113127789.html)

**Military, Boko Haram clash near site of latest kidnap**

Nigerian troops have repelled a Boko Haram attack near the village where 185 people were kidnapped last week, killing several insurgents, soldiers and witnesses said. Roughly 150 militants stormed the town of Bulabulin on Wednesday, but the military had reportedly received advanced warning of the raid. Bulabulin lies in the Damboa local government district of northeastern Borno state and is near the village of Gumsuri where 185 people, mostly women and children, were kidnapped last Sunday.

**Al Arabiya -** [**http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2014/12/20/Nigeria-military-Islamists-clash-near-site-of-latest-kidnap.html**](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2014/12/20/Nigeria-military-Islamists-clash-near-site-of-latest-kidnap.html)

**British troops to help fight against Boko Haram**

Up to 100 British soldiers are being lined up for a mission to train the Nigerian army in its fight against the Boko Haram. Britain has already sent specialists to train troops in Nigeria and deployed three RAF Tornados in the summer as part of the search for 200 schoolgirls who were kidnapped by the rebels. Military chiefs are now drawing up plans to increase the scale of Britain’s support for President Goodluck Jonathan, who is said to be under "enormous pressure" from Boko Haram.

**Telegraph -** [**http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11306242/British-troops-to-help-fight-against-Boko-Haram-as-SAS-target-Isil.html**](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11306242/British-troops-to-help-fight-against-Boko-Haram-as-SAS-target-Isil.html)

**Sierra Leone**

**Ebola response in rural areas not yet rapid enough**

The rapid response team has arrived and the chaos is easing, but medics in a remote Sierra Leonean district are struggling to control a local Ebola outbreak when it's too late to nip it in the bud. A deployment of medical workers and equipment to Kono has been the fastest so far in Sierra Leone under a strategy of tackling epidemic hotspots before they get too big. In Koidu, the capital of Kono district, people continue to die of what is thought to be Ebola while others seem unaware of the risks. Authorities are trying to manage over 400 people who came into contact with Ebola sufferers under quarantine.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141221150810-jc6sn/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141221150810-jc6sn/?source=fiOtherNews2)

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