**UNICEF OPSCEN Brief - Friday, 26 December 2014**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [GENERAL](#GENERAL) | **Across Regions** | Asia marks 10 years since Indian Ocean tsunami |
|  |  | Iraq, Turkey pledge to join hands to fight ISIL |
|  |  | India seeks help from Bhutan, Myanmar to hunt down militants |
| [CEE/CIS](#CEECIS) | **Ukraine** | Talks on settlement breakdown |
|  |  | Russia says Kiev's move to join NATO dangerous for Europe |
|  | **Uzbekistan** | Presidential vote to be held in March |
| [EAP](#EAP) | **China** | Police fire on Tibetans after self-immolations - rights group |
|  | **Indonesia** | Joint inquiry needed into Papua killings – HRW |
|  | **Malaysia** | Record numbers evacuated in worst floods in decades |
|  | **Myanmar** | After decades of repression, Catholics find voice |
|  | **Philippines** | Peace talks with communist rebels to restart soon |
| [ESA](#ESA) | **Somalia** | AU troops killed in al-Shebaab attack |
|  | **South Sudan** | Action needed now to prevent another year of devastation |
|  |  | President lifts dawn-to-dusk curfew |
| [LAC](#LAC) | **Colombia** | FARC says to free captured soldier |
|  | **Haiti** | President names Evans Paul as new PM |
|  | **Paraguay** | Guerrilla group frees hostage |
| [MENA](#MENA) | **Across MENA** | Jordan vows 'all efforts' to save pilot seized by ISIL |
|  | **Egypt** | Roadside bomb kills 2 soldiers in Sinai |
|  | **Iraq** | Senior Kurdish rebel leader warns county must stay united to defeat 'savage' ISIL |
|  | **Libya** | Gunmen kill 14 soldiers at power plant |
|  |  | 22 Libya soldiers killed in speedboat attack on oil ports |
|  | **State of Palestine** | Palestinian sniper attack at Gaza border sets off clash |
|  |  | Firebomb attack wounded Israeli father and daughter in West Bank |
|  | **Sudan** | Authorities expel two senior UN officials; UN says move 'unacceptable' |
|  | **Syria** | Kurds advance against ISIL fight, watchdog says |
|  |  | Regime strikes kill 37 civilians: monitor |
|  |  | Peace talks set to take place in Moscow next month |
|  | **Yemen** | Shiite militia abduct senior intelligence official |
| [SA](#SA) | **India** | Army scales up offensive after violence in Assam; thousands flee |
|  | **Pakistan** | Authorities announce anti-terrorism action plan after school attack |
|  |  | Two US drone strikes kill seven militants |
| [WCA](#WCA) | **CAR** | Nearly 70 killed since last week |
|  | **DR Congo** | Riots after at least 30 die in boat accident |
|  | **Liberia** | UN mission reports 4th Ebola case |
|  | **Nigeria** | Girl, 14, recounts would-be suicide bombing |
|  |  | Embattled states impose travel bans through Christmas |
|  | **Sierra Leone** | Port Loko district declares three-day Ebola shutdown |

GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**Asia marks 10 years since Indian Ocean tsunami**

Beachside memorials and religious services were held across Asia on Friday to mark the 10th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami that left more than a quarter million people dead in one of modern history's worst natural disasters. The devastating 26 December 2004 tsunami struck a dozen countries around the Indian Ocean rim. It eradicated entire coastal communities, decimated families and crashed over tourist-filled beaches the morning after Christmas.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/asia-marks-10-years-indian-ocean-tsunami-27832996**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/asia-marks-10-years-indian-ocean-tsunami-27832996)

**Iraq, Turkey pledge to join hands to fight ISIL**

Iraq and Turkey on Thursday pledged to join forces to fight ISIL insurgents who are holding swathes of Iraq and Syria. Ankara wants a wider strategy for Syria that would ultimately bring Assad's downfall. It has repeatedly called for a buffer zone, backed by a no-fly zone, to be put in place inside the war-torn country on the Turkish border.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-turkey-pledge-join-hands-fight-jihadists-181939072.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-turkey-pledge-join-hands-fight-jihadists-181939072.html)

**India seeks help from Bhutan, Myanmar to hunt down militants**

India has sought cooperation from Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh in an offensive against a tribal militant group that had shot dead at least 80 people in Assam state this week, officials said on Friday.

Police believe that a faction of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), fighting for a separate state for ethnic Bodos, was behind coordinated attacks on tea plantation workers and their families this week, the deadliest in years. Some militants may have fled to neighbouring Bhutan while their leader was believed to be in Myanmar, officials and police said, prompting calls for cooperation.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141226075202-np126/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141226075202-np126/?source=fiOtherNews2)

CEE/CIS

**Ukraine**

**Talks on settlement breakdown**

The foreign ministry of Belarus, which has been hosting Ukraine peace talks, says the much-anticipated round of negotiations on Friday has been scrapped. Ministry spokesman Dmitry Mironchik said that the talks broke down but did not give a reason. The talks were to discuss how to improve an often-violated cease-fire that was declared in September, to pull back heavy weapons and to exchange of war prisoners. The negotiators included representatives of Ukraine, Russia, pro-Russian rebels and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/talks-ukraine-settlement-break-27835215**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/talks-ukraine-settlement-break-27835215)

**Russia says Kiev's move to join NATO dangerous for Europe**

Russian FM Sergei Lavrov said Ukraine's pursuit of NATO membership posed a danger to European security and that the West was using Kiev's bid to join the Atlantic alliance as a way to fuel confrontation between Russia and Ukraine. The Kiev parliament's renunciation of Ukraine's neutral status this week as a step towards joining NATO has outraged Moscow and deepened the worst confrontation between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141225130812-yk4nh/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141225130812-yk4nh/?source=search)

**Uzbekistan**

**Presidential vote to be held in March**

Uzbekistan said on Friday that the next presidential elections in the tightly controlled Central Asian state would take place in March next year. President Islam Karimov, 76, who has ruled the country of 30 million since the collapse of the Soviet Union, has not publicly named a successor. He indicated in May that he wants to stay on in his role. The Central Election Commission chief said that the next presidential vote would be held on 29 March 2015 and that campaigning had begun on Friday.

**AFP -** [**http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/south-central-asia/79052-uzbekistan-presidential-elections-march**](http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/south-central-asia/79052-uzbekistan-presidential-elections-march)

EAP

**China**

**Police fire on Tibetans after self-immolations - rights group**

Chinese police have fired on Tibetan protesters demonstrating after a series of deadly self-immolations by people from Tibet campaigning against Chinese rule of their Himalayan region, a rights group said on Friday. A monk was shot in the arm after police used teargas and opened fire during a clash with Tibetans outside a police station in the western province of Sichuan, which borders Tibet, British-based Free Tibet said in a statement. The group did not say when the violence happened and police in the area could not be reached for comment.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/26/us-china-tibet-idUSKBN0K404J20141226**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/26/us-china-tibet-idUSKBN0K404J20141226)

**Indonesia**

**Joint inquiry needed into Papua killings – HRW**

Indonesia President Joko Widodo should create a joint fact-finding team to ensure a credible, impartial investigation into the 8 December deadly shootings in the remote town of Enarotali in Papua, Human Rights Watch said. The team should include the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) and the military, as well as the police, to investigate the incident, in which at least five peaceful protesters died of gunshot wounds. The government should also deploy the official Witness and Victim Protection Agency to Enarotali to protect witnesses, victims, and victims’ families from possible security force reprisals for cooperating with investigators. Papuan journalists and rights defenders told HRW that numerous witnesses are afraid to discuss the incident.

**HRW -** [**http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/24/indonesia-joint-inquiry-needed-papua-killings**](http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/24/indonesia-joint-inquiry-needed-papua-killings)

**Malaysia**

**Record numbers evacuated in worst floods in decades**

More than 100,000 people have been evacuated from their homes by authorities in five northern states of Malaysia hit by the Southeast Asian' nation's worst monsoon floods in decades. Extremely high levels of floodwater and bad weather have made relocating victims and the transport of food supplies by helicopters difficult, the PM said in a statement. A total of 103,412 people have been displaced in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Perak and Perlis, state news agency Bernama said, surpassing the previous record of 100,000 people evacuated during floods in 2008.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141226022923-p5oqt/?source=jtTheWire**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141226022923-p5oqt/?source=jtTheWire)

**Myanmar**

**After decades of repression, Catholics find voice**

Six decades after its first saint was murdered for his faith amid a bloody civil war, Myanmar's Catholic Church is stepping up calls for peace and religious tolerance as it celebrates its 500th anniversary.

The grisly 1950 killing of Isidore Ngei Ko Lat, a religious teacher travelling with an Italian priest in the wild and war-ravaged eastern borderlands, had been almost forgotten after decades of military rule that severely restricted religious minorities in the mainly Buddhist country. But his canonisation in May has bolstered the Catholic Church, which marked five centuries in Myanmar with celebrations that had been delayed by four years because of curbs to religious freedoms under the former junta. Overall, Christians are thought to make up about four percent of Myanmar's 51 million population -- around 500,000 of them Catholics.

**AFP -** [**http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/after-decades-of/1550254.html**](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/after-decades-of/1550254.html)

**Philippines**

**Peace talks with communist rebels to restart soon**

The Philippine government and communist rebels said Friday that formal negotiations to end a lengthy insurgency could restart shortly, though the rebels' armed wing announced it was beefing up its guerilla campaign. Peace talks regarding one of the world's longest-running insurgencies, which have been on-and-off since the 1980s, may resume as early as the second half of January, Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison said in a video message on Facebook. Back-channel talks to "prepare the agenda" for formal negotiations have been ongoing since September and agreements on a ceasefire and social and economic reforms may be finished before President Benigno Aquino steps down in 2016, said Sison, who is in exile in the Netherlands.

**AFP -** [**http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/peace-talks-with/1550294.html**](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/peace-talks-with/1550294.html)

ESA

**Somalia**

**AU troops killed in al-Shebaab attack**

The AU force in Somalia says three of its peacekeepers and a civilian contractor have been killed in an attack on its headquarters in the capital, Mogadishu. An AU statement said al-Shebaab gunmen had entered the base disguised as Somali government troops. It said five attackers were killed and several others captured. AMISOM said its troops had regained control of the base after a gunfight lasting several hours. The base also hosts the British and Italian embassies and is used as the headquarters for UN operations in Somalia. A spokesman for the UN in Somalia, said all UN staff were safe and accounted for. Earlier in December, at least six people were killed when al-Shebaab attacked a UN convoy near the airport.

**BBC -** [**http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30601865**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30601865)

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20141225151814-tajz5/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20141225151814-tajz5/?source=fiOtherNews2)

**South Sudan**

**Action needed now to prevent another year of devastation**

Throughout 2014, efforts at peace have been halting. For every agreement made there has been a deadline passed and for every cessation of hostilities there has been a new bout of fighting. To stop this continued slide of war and man-made humanitarian suffering, international efforts at restoring peace must be increased with real consequences for missed negotiating deadlines in the form of diplomatic pressure, targeted sanctions, and an arms embargo.

**Foreign Policy -** [**http://fpif.org/south-sudan-glimpse-2014-ahead-2015/**](http://fpif.org/south-sudan-glimpse-2014-ahead-2015/)

**President lifts dawn-to-dusk curfew**

The South Sudanese presidency on Tuesday announced lifting of the dusk-to-dawn curfew which existed in the capital, Juba. The new directive reportedly came in the wake of an assessment by a security council, which was established in the aftermath of last year’s outbreak of conflict in the country.

**Sudan Tribune -** [**http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article53438**](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article53438)

LAC

**Colombia**

**FARC says to free captured soldier**

Colombia's FARC guerrillas on Thursday announced that they would release a soldier they captured last week "in the coming days," calling the move a humanitarian gesture. The decision came in the wake of a unilateral ceasefire the leftist rebels began Saturday during peace negotiations. The guerrillas called the release a "new peace gesture of the FARC, a humanitarian act, considering that the soldier was slightly wounded during combat." The FARC has declared Christmas ceasefires in each of the past two years, but this is the first without an expiration date.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/farc-says-free-captured-colombian-soldier-005307066.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/farc-says-free-captured-colombian-soldier-005307066.html)

**Haiti**

**President names Evans Paul as new PM**

Haitian President Michel Martelly named veteran politician Evans Paul as PM to lead a new government, as he seeks to defuse a crisis over long-delayed elections. Thursday's announcement followed the resignation of Laurent Lamothe from the post earlier this month in the face of repeated calls for him to quit over the failure to hold legislative elections for the past three years. Opposition parties have organized a series of anti-government protests to demand that Martelly step down due to claims he is seeking to rule by decree after 12 January, when the legislature's current mandate ends.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/haiti-leader-names-evans-paul-prime-minister-021459899.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/haiti-leader-names-evans-paul-prime-minister-021459899.html)

**Paraguay**

**Guerrilla group frees hostage**

Paraguay's military says a guerrilla group operating in the country's north has freed a young hostage. The leftist Paraguayan People's Army released 17-year-old Arlan Fick late Thursday. They had been holding him hostage since 2 April, and had refused to release him even after receiving a $500,000 ransom. Officials accuse the rebels of carrying out killings, kidnappings, bank robberies and attacks on police. Victims include 22 civilians, 13 police officers and three members of the military since 2008.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/paraguay-guerrilla-group-frees-hostage-035218701.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/paraguay-guerrilla-group-frees-hostage-035218701.html)

MENA

**Across MENA  
Jordan vows 'all efforts' to save pilot seized by ISIL**

Jordan vowed Thursday to make every effort to save a pilot captured by the ISIL in Syria as Washington denied claims the jihadists had shot down his warplane. Maaz al-Kassasbeh, a 26-year-old first lieutenant in the Jordanian air force, was captured by ISIL on Wednesday after his F-16 jet crashed while on a mission against the jihadists over northern Syria. It was the first warplane lost and the first capture of a serviceman since the coalition launched strikes against ISIL in Syria in September.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/jordan-vows-efforts-save-pilot-seized-jihadists-002848049.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/jordan-vows-efforts-save-pilot-seized-jihadists-002848049.html)

**Egypt**

**Roadside bomb kills 2 soldiers in Sinai**

Egypt's military spokesman says a roadside bomb explosion struck an army vehicle in the volatile Sinai Peninsula, killing an army captain and a soldier. The spokesman Brig. Gen. Mohammed Samir said on his official Facebook page Friday that another soldier was injured in Thursday's explosion near the city of el-Arish. The militant group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, which pledged allegiance to the ISIL, has claimed responsibility for most of the attacks in Sinai.

**AP -** [**http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-26/282241-roadside-bomb-kills-2-soldiers-in-egypts-sinai.ashx**](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Dec-26/282241-roadside-bomb-kills-2-soldiers-in-egypts-sinai.ashx)

**Iraq**

**Senior Kurdish rebel leader warns county must stay united to defeat 'savage' ISIL**

Iraq must remain a united country in order to defeat the ISIL, a senior leader of the rebel Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has insisted. Cemil Bayik, co-founder of the PKK and field commander of the organisation warned that it would be “very dangerous” if Iraq were partitioned. Unless Iraq’s Shia, Sunni and Kurdish communities worked together to counter the threat of ISIL, the “fascist” group would benefit.

**Guardian -** [**http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/24/pkk-kurdish-leader-cemil-bayik-iraq-syria-isis**](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/24/pkk-kurdish-leader-cemil-bayik-iraq-syria-isis)

**Libya**

**Gunmen kill 14 soldiers at power plant**

A Libyan military official says gunmen have killed 14 soldiers guarding a power plant in the central city of Sirte. The official Libyan news agency says the military chief of the self-proclaimed government in the capital Tripoli has ordered an investigation into the slaying in Sirte, which is controlled by Islamist militias allied with the Tripoli government. It is not clear who carried out the attack early Thursday.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/gunmen-kill-14-libya-soldiers-power-plant-181115457.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/gunmen-kill-14-libya-soldiers-power-plant-181115457.html)

**22 Libya soldiers killed in speedboat attack on oil ports**

Islamists killed at least 22 soldiers on Thursday after a surprise attack in which they used speedboats in a failed bid to seize some of Libya's main oil terminals, officials said. The fighting in the oil-rich region came as pro-government forces lost ground to Islamist militias in the eastern city of Benghazi, where jihadists beheaded six people and killed 14 others, military officials said. The militiamen belonging to the Fajr Libya, or Libya Dawn, launched the attack on Al-Sidra port by firing rockets from speedboats, setting an oil tank on fire, security sources said.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/19-libya-soldiers-killed-islamist-militia-military-source-145711043.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/19-libya-soldiers-killed-islamist-militia-military-source-145711043.html)

**State of Palestine**

**Palestinian sniper attack at Gaza border sets off clash**

A clash on Wednesday, December 25, set off by a Palestinian sniper attack on an Israeli military patrol along the border with Gaza left one Palestinian militant dead and an Israeli soldier wounded, officials said, further straining a tenuous cease-fire that ended a 50-day war over the summer. After a routine patrol on the Israeli side of the border came under fire, the Israeli military said, Israel responded with air and ground forces against Hamas position in the immediate vicinity of the attack. It appeared to be the most serious direct confrontation between Israel and Hamas, the Islamic group that dominate the Palestinian enclave, since fighting ended in late August.

**SFGATE -** [**http://www.sfgate.com/world/article/Palestinian-sniper-attack-at-Gaza-border-sets-off-5978333.php**](http://www.sfgate.com/world/article/Palestinian-sniper-attack-at-Gaza-border-sets-off-5978333.php)

**Firebomb attack wounded Israeli father and daughter in West Bank**

A firebomb attack on a car in the occupied West Bank left an 11-year-old Israeli girl severely burned and her father injured on Thursday, December 25, the Israeli military said. The Israeli military said the suspected Palestinian attack was near the Ma’ale Shomron Jewish settlement, north of the West Bank city of Nablus. Video footage of the incident obtained by Reuters TV showed firefighters trying to douse the flames engulfing a vehicle on the side of a road after darkness fell. The military did not say whether the victims of the attack were settlers, who are bitterly resented by many Palestinian.

**Reuters -** **http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/25/us-mideast-palestinians-israel-idUSKBN0K30NE20141225**

**Sudan**

**Authorities expel two senior UN officials; UN says move 'unacceptable'**

Sudan has ordered two senior UN officials to leave, the world body said on Thursday, in what appeared to be an escalation of President al-Bashir's move against UN activities in the country. The UN said in a statement that the officials are Ali Al-Za'tari, UN resident coordinator at UNDP and Yvonne Helle, the UNDP's country director. The reason for the expulsions was not immediately clear, but they come a month after Bashir called for peacekeepers from UNAMID, to leave, calling them a "security burden." Sudan had already shut UNAMID's human rights office in Khartoum and called on the mission to prepare an exit plan. The move came days after it denied peacekeepers permission to pay a second visit to the site of alleged mass rapes by Sudanese soldiers in Tabit, a village in Darfur, the western region plagued by conflict.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/26/us-sudan-un-expulsions-idUSKBN0K30IC20141226**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/26/us-sudan-un-expulsions-idUSKBN0K30IC20141226)

**Syria**

**Kurds advance against ISIL in Syria fight, watchdog says**

Kurdish fighters Thursday, December 25, advanced against ISIL militants in the embattled town of Kobane in northern Syria, a monitoring group reported. Fighters from the People’s Protection Units (YPG), a main Kurdish militia, retook the district of Sophia in the southern side of Kobane from the jihadist group, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. At least 14 militants and a Kurdish fighter were killed, according to the observatory. ISIL has tried since mid-September to capture the most Kurdish town located close to the Turkish border.

**DPA -** [**http://www.dpa-international.com/news/international/kurds-advance-against-islamic-state-in-syria-fight-watchdog-says-a-43704170.html**](http://www.dpa-international.com/news/international/kurds-advance-against-islamic-state-in-syria-fight-watchdog-says-a-43704170.html)

**Regime strikes kill 37 civilians: monitor**

Syrian regime air strikes killed at least 37 civilians, including seven children, in strongholds of the ISIL, a monitoring group said. The raids struck Al-Bab and Qbasin Thursday in the northern province of Aleppo, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on a network of activists on the ground. "At least 37 civilians, including seven children, three teenagers and two women, were killed in the Syrian army air raids," said the Observatory, adding that dozens more people were seriously wounded. On Thursday, about 60 jihadists were killed in fighting with Kurdish forces for control of territory in northern Syria, according to the Observatory.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/160655-syrian-observatory-regime-strikes-kill-37-civilians-in-syria**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/160655-syrian-observatory-regime-strikes-kill-37-civilians-in-syria)

**Peace talks set to take place in Moscow next month**

Peace talks between the Syrian government and the opposition could be held in Moscow next month, Russia's FM said. The talks are set to take place sometime after 20 January, ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said at a briefing. The first stage of the talks will bring together representatives of home-based and foreign opposition, and representatives of the Syrian government would join them in the next stage.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-peace-talks-set-place-moscow-next-month-151008454.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-peace-talks-set-place-moscow-next-month-151008454.html)

**Yemen**

**Shiite militia abduct senior intelligence official**

A senior Yemeni intelligence official was abducted in Sanaa on Thursday by Shiite fighters from the Huthi militia in control of the capital since a September offensive, security sources said. "General Yahia al-Marrani... was kidnapped this morning by armed Huthis from his home in Sanaa," a source told AFP. Another source said that about 20 Huthis had stormed Marrani's residence and taken him to an unknown location.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/160568-shiite-militia-abduct-senior-yemen-intelligence-official**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/160568-shiite-militia-abduct-senior-yemen-intelligence-official)

SA

**India**

**Army scales up offensive after violence in Assam; thousands flee**

India's army chief pledged Friday to intensify a military offensive in Assam as it tries to track down separatist rebels who killed 69 villagers in the restive northeastern state this week. India has already deployed 6,000 additional security forces and military helicopters to scour the remote area where armed militants mounted a series of coordinated attacks on tribal villagers on Tuesday. Police have blamed the attacks on the outlawed National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), which has waged a violent decades-long campaign for an independent homeland for the Bodo. Around 7,000 people have fled their homes in the wake of the violence, many seeking refuge in makeshift camps set up by the government.

**AFP -** [**http://www.dawn.com/news/1153285/india-scales-up-offensive-after-northeast-attacks**](http://www.dawn.com/news/1153285/india-scales-up-offensive-after-northeast-attacks)

**Pakistan**

**Authorities announce anti-terrorism action plan after school attack**

Pakistan on Thursday said it will set up military courts for terror-related cases, as part of an ambitious anti-terrorism plan following a deadly Taliban school attack that killed 150 people. PM Nawaz Sharif announced the establishment of military courts as part of the 17-point plan of action -- a week after a six year moratorium on the death penalty was lifted for terror cases in the wake of the deadliest assault by militants in Pakistani history. He said the special courts will operate for two years. The plan also includes cutting financial aid to terrorists and preventing banned organisations from operating with new names. He also announced the formation of special anti-terrorism force and regularisation of religious seminaries known as madrassas.

**AFP -** [**http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2886529/Pakistan-establish-military-courts-terrorism-related-cases.html**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2886529/Pakistan-establish-military-courts-terrorism-related-cases.html)

**Two US drone strikes kill seven militants**

Two suspected US drones fired missiles at militant hideouts in northwest Pakistan on Friday killing at least seven fighters, Pakistani intelligence officials said. The attacks took place in the same area where the Pakistani army has been mounting an air-and-ground operation against Pakistani Taliban insurgents who are fighting against the government in order to set up a sharia state in Pakistan. On Friday, an intelligence official said both of the latest air strikes took place in Pakistan's remote North Waziristan region targeting Uzbek and Punjabi Taliban hideouts.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/26/us-pakistan-drone-idUSKBN0K407220141226**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/26/us-pakistan-drone-idUSKBN0K407220141226)

WCA

**CAR**

**Nearly 70 killed since last week**

Nearly 70 people have been killed and dozens others injured during sectarian violence in CAR since last week. Despite the presence of some 8,000 UN and 2,000 French peacekeepers in CAR, the conflict, which has killed thousands and displaced about a million people, has not been resolved.

**Press TV -** [**http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/12/24/391578/about-70-killed-in-car-since-last-week/**](http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/12/24/391578/about-70-killed-in-car-since-last-week/)

**DR Congo**

**Riots after at least 30 die in boat accident**

Angry youths went on the rampage setting fire to government buildings after the death of at least 30 people in a boat acccident in north-east Democratic Republic of Congo, officials said Friday. "There are 105 survivors and we have pulled up 30 bodies," provincial government spokesman Monulphe Bosso said. The accident occurred Monday near a village some 35km north of the eastern provincial capital of Kisangani.

**AFP -** [**http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/riots-in-drcongo-after-at-least-30-die-in-boat-accident\_1520677.html**](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/riots-in-drcongo-after-at-least-30-die-in-boat-accident_1520677.html)

**Liberia**

**UN mission reports 4th Ebola case**

The UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia says one if its staffers has contracted Ebola, bringing to four the number of its members who have come down with the disease. A UN said the ill staffer is from Liberia. The patient was immediately transferred to an Ebola treatment unit, according to a statement from the mission. The statement said the mission was taking "all necessary measures to mitigate any possible further transmission — both within the mission and beyond." Two of the UN staffers who earlier contracted Ebola have died.

**AP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/liberias-un-mission-reports-4th-ebola-case-171841614.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/liberias-un-mission-reports-4th-ebola-case-171841614.html)

**Nigeria**

**Girl, 14, recounts would-be suicide bombing**

A 14-year-old Nigerian girl who was arrested with explosives strapped to her body told journalists Wednesday that her parents volunteered her to take part in a suicide attack. The girl, who was identified as Zahra'u Babangida, was arrested in Kano on 10 December following a double suicide bombing in a market that killed 10 people. She said her mother and father, both Boko Haram sympathisers, took her to an insurgent hideout in a forest near the town of Gidan Zana in Kano state. Experts say the group has used girls as bombers to demonstrate the range of tactics they have available to sow fear across Nigeria.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/nigerian-girl-14-recounts-suicide-bombing-182950027.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/nigerian-girl-14-recounts-suicide-bombing-182950027.html)

**Embattled states impose travel bans through Christmas**

Two northeast Nigeria states have put heavy restrictions on vehicle movement beginning on Christmas Eve and lasting through the weekend following fears of Boko Haram attacks. The two states, Borno and Yobe, have been the hardest hit during the five-year uprising by Islamists, which has included several Christmas attacks on churches. The military said it had information that "Boko Haram (planned) to unleash mayhem on some parts of Borno and in particular the city of Maiduguri during Christmas celebrations." The security agencies and the state government had therefore banned "all forms of vehicle movement" in Borno from 6:00 pm (1700 GMT) Wednesday through to Sunday morning. Emergency workers, fire fighters and journalists are excluded from the measure, the military statement said.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/embattled-nigeria-states-impose-travel-bans-christmas-151232992.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/embattled-nigeria-states-impose-travel-bans-christmas-151232992.html)

**Sierra Leone**

**Port Loko district declares three-day Ebola shutdown**

Sierra Leone's northern district of Port Loko, the area with the highest rate of Ebola transmission, plans a three-day shutdown over Christmas as it seeks to contain the disease's spread. Sierra Leone is the worst-hit country in West Africa with over 9,000 cases. The rate of infection is fastest in the capital Freetown and the neighboring province of Port Loko, where 44 out of a total 58 new cases were reported on Wednesday. An official in the National Ebola Response Centre said the new measures would start at midnight on Wednesday and could be extended into the new year.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/24/us-health-ebola-leone-idUSKBN0K218R20141224**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/24/us-health-ebola-leone-idUSKBN0K218R20141224)

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