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CEE/CIS

Russia

Navalny says Putin's regime must be destroyed

Russian opposition leader detained heading to protest after he was given suspended sentence and his brother jailed. Navalny has been under house arrest since February under the conditions of the ongoing court case. About 2,000 people rallied near Red Square on the evening after the sentencing, responding to Navalny's call for mass protests to "destroy" President Vladimir Putin's regime.

Al Jazeera -<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/12/navlany-says-putin-regime-must-be-destroyed-2014123013373642270.html>

Ukraine

Canadian frigate to join NATO forces off Ukraine

A Canadian frigate with 250 marines on board set off from Halifax on the Atlantic coast Tuesday to join NATO forces in the Mediterranean Sea monitoring the Ukraine crisis. HMCS Fredericton, which is carrying a Sea King helicopter and an air detachment, will replace HMCS Toronto, which joined the permanent NATO forces in July. Canada has already deployed six F-18 fighters as part of the NATO air mission.

AFP - <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/161123-canadian-frigate-to-join-nato-forces-off-ukraine>

EAP

Across EAP

More rain forecast for flood-hit SE Asia

Weather forecasters on Sunday warned that much of Malaysia will see more storms in the next three days; Thailand and Sri Lankan authorities also warned their people to brace for more floods. "We expect another surge in heavy rain followed by strong winds brought by the seasonal northeast monsoon, which usually continues till March," a Malaysian meteorological department official told AFP news agency. According to officials, more than 200,000 people across the region have been left homeless because of the floods.

Al Jazeera - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/12/more-rain-forecast-flood-hit-se-asia-201412286107902449.html>

ESA

Burundi

Many killed in Burundi-DRC border clashes

At least 22 people have been killed in clashes between Burundi's army and members of an unidentified rebel group near the Democratic Republic of Congo border, sources have said.

Burundian officials and witnesses said the group of around 200 rebels crossed into Cibitoke province north of the capital Bujumbura overnight on Monday. The rebels crossed into the country from Democratic Republic of Congo's eastern Kivu region, an unstable and resource-rich area that is home to dozens of rebel groups

Al Jazeera - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/12/dozens-killed-burundi-drc-border-clashes-20141231123140325747.html>

Uganda

Extremists Kill 2 Muslim Clerics in Uganda

A police official says an extremist group is responsible for killing two Uganda Muslim clerics days apart. Ugandan police chief said the clerics had refused to cooperate with the Allied Democratic Forces, a Uganda extremist group based in Congo. The clerics were separately shot dead by armed men who used motorbikes to run away after killing the victims. In 2012, five clerics were assassinated and police also linked these killings to ADF.

ABC - [http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/extremists-kill-muslim-clerics-uganda-27900592](http://abcnews.go.com/international/wirestory/extremists-kill-muslim-clerics-uganda-27900592)

LAC

Cuba

U.S. condemns Cuba's 'practice of repressing' after activists detained

The United States on Wednesday condemned what it called Cuba's practice of repression following the detention of several activists, in the first major test of President Barack Obama's policy shift toward normalizing relations with the communist-ruled island. The arrests marked the most significant crackdown on the opposition since Cuba and the United States agreed on Dec. 17 to restore diplomatic ties and put behind them more than five decades of hostility. About 12 opponents were taken away by police, including the husband of opposition blogger Yoani Sanchez.

Reuters - [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-cuba-usa-dissidents-idUSKBN0K81DN20141231](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-cuba-usa-dissidents-iduskbn0k81dn20141231)

Haiti

Haiti parliament mandate extended to avoid vacuum

Haiti's president reached a deal with lawmakers to extend parliament's mandate and hold legislative elections by April 2015 to avoid a political vacuum next month, an official told AFP Tuesday. The agreement was signed Monday night between President Michel Martelly and the two presidents of parliament and extends the mandate of the Chamber of Deputies until April 2015 and the Senate until September 2015, according the official who asked not to be named. The parliament's mandate was set to expire on January 12, which would have left Martelly to rule by decree, a prospect that has sparked opposition protests in the impoverished Caribbean nation in recent weeks.

AFP- <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/161103-haiti-parliament-mandate-extended-to-avoid-vacuum>

Peru

Thousands protest against labour laws

Thousands of people have rallied in the Peruvian capital against a new labour law that discriminates against young people. At least 5,000 people marched against 'The Youth Employment Law' in Lima on Tuesday, new legislation that allows employers to reduce employment benefits for those aged between 18 and 24. Under the new provision, bonuses, social security and life insurance will be affected, and holiday entitlement will be cut from 30 to 15 days. Despite opposition by various student groups and labour unions, the government claims the new law will reduce youth unemployment and help the poorest people with little experience.

Al Jazeera - <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2014/12/thousands-protest-against-peru-labour-laws-2014123102039628468.html>

Venezuela

Venezuela confirms recession, inflation hits 63.6 percent in Nov

Venezuela entered a recession in 2014, with the economy shrinking in the first three quarters, the Central Bank said on Tuesday, blaming political opponents for the dismal figures. In a statement, the bank said GDP contracted 4.8 percent in the first quarter, versus the same period of last year, then it fell a further 4.9 percent in the second quarter and shrank 2.3 percent in the third quarter.

The statement added that 12-month inflation, which is the highest in the Americas, reached 63.6 percent in November

Reuters - [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/30/venezuela-economy-idUSL1N0UE1FY20141230](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/30/venezuela-economy-idusl1n0ue1fy20141230)

MENA

Across MENA

Egypt to Begin Expanding Gaza Buffer Zone Next Week

Egypt said Tuesday work will begin next week to double the width of a buffer zone being built along the border with the Gaza Strip to prevent militants infiltrating from the Palestinian enclave. A 500-meter (546-yard) wide buffer zone is now being built along some 10 kilometers (six miles) of the border, with some 800 homes being demolished in the process. Work will begin next week to expand it by another 500 meters, North Sinai provincial Governor Abdel Fattah Harhur said.

AFP - <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/161128-egypt-to-begin-expanding-gaza-buffer-zone-next-week>

Djibouti

Djibouti government reaches deal to bring opposition into parliament

Djibouti's government and the Union of National Salvation (USN) opposition coalition have signed an agreement that will pave the way for opposition lawmakers to make their first parliamentary appearance, and for reforms of the country's electoral body. Political stability in Djibouti is critical, given it hosts the United States' only military base in Africa and is an ally in the West's fight against militant Islam.

Reuters - [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-djibouti-politics-idUSKBN0K90HW20141231](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-djibouti-politics-iduskbn0k90hw20141231)

Iraq

Iraqi forces 'recapture Dhuluiya from ISIL

Iraqi government forces and allied Shia militia have recaptured the town of Dhuluiya, north of Baghdad, from ISIL, security sources say. One source at the Iraqi army's Samarra Operations Command said almost 300 IS fighters had been killed in the battle. There has been no independent confirmation of the reports.

BBC - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30632134>

Libya

Libya pro-government forces shoot down militia chopper

A Libyan jet shot down a militia helicopter today after Islamist-led fighters launched air strikes on a key oil terminal in the east of the country, a military spokesman said. Fighters from the Islamist-led Fajr Libya (Libya Dawn) coalition of militias, which controls much of Tripoli, as well as second and third cities Benghazi and Misrata, have been trying to seize Al-Sidra oil terminal. Militia aircraft, including the helicopter, attacked pro-government forces.

India Times - <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/libya-pro-government-forces-shoot-down-militia-chopper/articleshow/45693323.cms>

State of Palestine

Palestinian draft resolution fails in UN SC, U.S. votes against

A Palestinian draft resolution calling for Israel to withdraw from Palestinian territories by late 2017 was defeated in the UNSC on Tuesday after failing to get sufficient votes in favor. Even if the draft had received the minimum nine votes in favor, it would have been defeated by the vote against it by the US, one of the five veto-wielding permanent members. There were eight votes in favor, two votes against and five abstentions. Australia joined the US in voting against the measure.

Reuters - <http://news.yahoo.com/palestinian-draft-resolution-fails-u-n-council-u-223834337.html>

Hamas accuses Palestinian govt of failing Gaza

The Palestinian consensus government has failed to meet its commitment to rebuild the war-torn Gaza Strip, former Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniya has said. Speaking late on Monday shortly after a ministerial delegation from the West Bank arrived in Gaza, Haniya accused the government of failing “to keep its commitments, by not carrying out reconstruction, nor unifying institutions under the Palestinian Authority nor organizing elections.”

AFP - [http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/12/30/Hamas-accuses-Palestinian-govt-of-failing-Gaza.html](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/news/middle-east/2014/12/30/hamas-accuses-palestinian-govt-of-failing-gaza.html)

Tunisia

Essibsi sworn in as Tunisia's president

Beji Caid Essebsi has been sworn in as Tunisia's new president, becoming the country's first freely elected leader since it gained independence from France in 1956. The 88-year-old president won a runoff election this month, defeating incumbent Moncef Marzouki, who had served as Tunisia's interim president since the 2011 ouster of longtime leader Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali.

Voice of America - <http://www.voanews.com/content/essebsi-sown-in-as-tunisian-president/2580147.html>

Yemen

At least 33 killed in suicide bombing in central Yemen

A suicide bomber killed at least 33 people in central Yemen on Wednesday when he blew himself up at a cultural center where students were celebrating Prophet Mohammad's birthday, medical sources and a resident said. They said at least 20 bodies, including women and children, were transferred to al-Thawra hospital in the city of Ibb, while 13 more bodies were taken to another hospital called al-Manar. The provincial governor was reported to be among a number of people wounded in the attack.

Reuters - [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-yemen-attack-idUSKBN0K90JK20141231](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-yemen-attack-iduskbn0k90jk20141231)

WCA

Burkina Faso

Burkina says no proof Compaore stole millions

Burkina Faso's government said it had no proof that ousted president Blaise Compaore stole the equivalent of around $78 million (64 million euros) from state coffers when he fled to Ivory Coast. "I have no proof to date that the former president took 42 billion CFA francs" with him," Economy Minister Jean Gustave Sanon said on Tuesday as rumours swirled on social media and in the local press that Compaore helped himself to state funds before fleeing.

Daily Mail - [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2892364/Burkina-says-no-proof-Compaore-stole-millions.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2892364/burkina-says-no-proof-compaore-stole-millions.html)

DRC

US envoy urges military action against Congo rebel group

DR Congo and UN peacekeepers should take military action against a Rwandan Hutu militia if it fails to meet a Jan. 2 deadline for disarmament, the US envoy to Africa's Great Lakes region said on Tuesday. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, some of whose leaders are implicated in the 1994 Rwanda genocide, has failed to surrender unconditionally, envoy Russ Feingold said from Washington during a teleconference.

Reuters - [http://www.trust.org/item/20141230172505-y1jhy/?source=jtOtherNews1](http://www.trust.org/item/20141230172505-y1jhy/?source=jtothernews1)

Gambia

Gambia president says flying home after gunfire rocks Banjul

Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh said he was returning home from Chad late on Tuesday, after gunfire erupted around the presidential palace in the Gambian capital of Banjul last night. The government denied reports of an attempted coup, but a diplomat said gunmen had attacked Gambia's State House. Although shooting had died down, a senior West African diplomat told Reuters gunmen controlled parts of the capital on Tuesday. Jammeh was abroad, either in France or Dubai, when the violence broke out. Callers on opposition online radio stations urged residents to rise up and keep him from returning.

Reuters - [http://www.trust.org/item/20141230223344-3uqgq/?source=jtTheWire](http://www.trust.org/item/20141230223344-3uqgq/?source=jtthewire)

Guinea

Two-year-old boy infected after playing with bats

The two-year-old boy whose death started the current Ebola outbreak may have contracted the deadly virus by playing with bats in a hollow tree, a study has found. Scientists who visited the village of Meliandou, in Guinea, found that Emile Ouamouno and other children used to play with and sometimes hunt the bats, which are believed to carry Ebola.

Independent - <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/how-ebola-started-a-twoyearold-boy-playing-in-a-tree-with-bats-9950330.html>

Liberia

Liberia suspends Ebola curfew to allow New Year's Eve worship

Liberia's government has suspended for one night a curfew imposed to curb the spread of Ebola, so that New Year's Eve church services can go ahead, Deputy Information Minister Isaac Jackson said. The government introduced the curfew in September at the height of an epidemic The midnight to 6 a.m. curfew will be reimposed the following night, when anyone caught outside will be arrested, he said. Churches that hold services tonight should observe measures to prevent the spread of Ebola such as hand washing, temperature testing and avoiding over-crowding on church benches.

Reuters - [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-health-ebola-liberia-idUSKBN0K90IE20141231](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/31/us-health-ebola-liberia-iduskbn0k90ie20141231)

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