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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**Fatalistic outlook on "invisible" newborn deaths obstructs fight against infant mortality**

Research published on Tuesday in the Lancet medical journal showed Somalia, Liberia, Ethiopia and Bangladesh registered less than 10 percent of newborns by their first birthday. Chad, Guinea Bissau, Tanzania and Nepal registered less than 20 percent. The research found the rate of reduction in newborn deaths has been about half of that achieved for children under age five. Newborn deaths now account for a larger proportion of under-five child deaths – 44 percent in 2012, compared to 36 percent in 1990.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140521041625-5i9hy/?source=fiOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140521041625-5i9hy/?source=fiOtherNews3)

CEE/CIS

**Serbia**

**UNICEF supports children evacuated from the flooded areas**

UNICEF mobilised over 70 volunteer psycho-social workers (mostly psychology students) and trained them, in collaboration with partners, over the weekend in order to be deployed to collective centres. Psycho-social workers conducted initial situation and needs assessments in 14 collective centres, reaching an estimated 700 children. Recreation kits for 20 collective centres have been delivered to facilitate the full programme of workshops/activities with children that will be conduced in two 2 shifts per day. Activities are closely coordinated with the City Secretariat for Social Welfare, and done in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defence, as well as university faculties, and NGO partners.

**UNICEF -** [**http://www.unicef.org/serbia/media\_26089.html**](http://www.unicef.org/serbia/media_26089.html)

**Tajikistan**

**Two people killed in clashes with police in the east**

Two people in Tajikistan's eastern city of Khorog were killed on 21 May when police opened fire on a crowd that tried to storm a police station to free a local man held there and then went on to set fire to several government buildings, police said. Khorog, the capital of the Gorno-Badakhshan region on the border with Afghanistan, saw days of fighting in 2012 between government troops and rebels after the Tajik President vowed to punish local warlords for the killing of a security service general. The man detained at the Khorog police building is the brother of a former warlord, a Tajik police source in Dushanbe reported, without saying why he had been arrested. Three people were taken to hospital with gunshot wounds, of which two later died, the police source said. A group of around 50 or 60 protesters set fire to the city court, the police station and the local prosecutor's office, the source said.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/21/us-tajikistan-clashes-idUSBREA4K0MB20140521**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/21/us-tajikistan-clashes-idUSBREA4K0MB20140521)

**Ukraine**

**Ukraine boosts security for vote as US warns Russia**

The United States piled the pressure on Russia on 21 May over its actions in Ukraine, where the authorities are mobilising tens of thousands of police for a presidential vote in the face of a bloody insurgency gripping the east. The US Vice President threatened further sanctions on Moscow if it disrupts Sunday’s presidential ballot, being viewed as crucial to prevent all-out civil war on Europe’s doorstep. In a key step demanded by the West to ease tensions, Russia said its troops were packing up and moving back from the Ukrainian border, but also again demanded that Kiev halt its offensive against the pro-Moscow separatists fighting in the east. Washington and Nato have so far said they have seen no sign of any pullback, although Ukraine’s border guard service said there was no visible Russian troop activity within 10 kilometres of its territory.

**AFP -** [**http://gulfnews.com/news/world/other-world/ukraine-boosts-security-for-vote-as-us-warns-russia-1.1336512**](http://gulfnews.com/news/world/other-world/ukraine-boosts-security-for-vote-as-us-warns-russia-1.1336512)

EAPR

**Across EAPR**

**Vietnam PM says considering legal action against China over disputed waters**

Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung said his government was considering various "defense options" against China, including legal action, following the deployment of a Chinese oil rig to disputed waters in the South China Sea. Dung's comments, given in a written response to questions from Reuters, are the first time he has suggested Vietnam would take legal measures, a threat likely to infuriate Beijing. "Vietnam is considering various defense options, including legal actions in accordance with international law," Dung said in an email sent while on a visit to Manila late on Wednesday. He did not elaborate on the other options being considered.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/21/us-vietnam-china-idUSBREA4K1AK20140521**](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/21/us-vietnam-china-idUSBREA4K1AK20140521)

**N.Korea threatens to strike S.Korea warships near sea border**

North Korea threatened Wednesday to launch an attack on South Korean warships without warning if there was even a "trifling" provocation near their disputed Yellow Sea border. A South Korean naval ship fired warning shots Tuesday after three North Korean patrol boats crossed the sea boundary. On Wednesday the North's military accused South Korea of "an intentional grave provocation" at a time when North Korean vessels had been chasing Chinese boats fishing illegally in the area.

**AFP -**

**Myanmar**

**U.N. warns of disease risk in western Myanmar displacement camps**

Deteriorating living conditions and a looming rainy season are increasing the risk of waterborne diseases in the sprawling, squalid displacement camps in western Myanmar where tens of thousands of people live, the United Nations warned on Tuesday. An increasing number of water points and latrines in the camps in Rakhine State housing mainly stateless Rohingya Muslims are not working, the U.N. said in its latest report. Medical staff from aid agencies were doing about 18,000 consultations a month in displacement camps and villages until February, but the number dropped to about 6,000 in April, the report said.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140520175831-kqjcs/?source=fiOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140520175831-kqjcs/?source=fiOtherNews3)

**Thailand**

**Thai army chief holds rare meeting of political rivals**

Thailand's military has hosted ground-breaking talks between warring political rivals after imposing martial law to prevent the deeply divided kingdom degenerating into another "Ukraine or Egypt"….

**Firstpost -** [**http://www.firstpost.com/world/thai-army-chief-holds-rare-meeting-of-political-rivals-1536761.html**](http://www.firstpost.com/world/thai-army-chief-holds-rare-meeting-of-political-rivals-1536761.html)

ESA

**Across ESA**

**South Sudan**

LAC

**Venezuela**

**US Senate Committee approves Venezuela sanctions**

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee has passed a bill that seeks to punish Venezuelan officials accused of human rights violations during protests that have left 42 dead in the country since they began in February. Only 2 of the 18 senators on the Committee voted against the bill, which passed by a vote of 13-2. The bill, S-2142 Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014, now goes to the full Senate to be voted on. The bill would allow US President Barack Obama to freeze assets and ban US visits by any current or former Venezuelan government official responsible for "directing significant acts of violence or serious human rights abuses against persons associated with the anti-government protests in Venezuela." It also allows the White House to crack down on those who ordered the arrest or prosecution of demonstrators, or who are deemed as having provided assistance including financial support for such acts. The bill would commit $15 million to help NGOs, including pro-democracy groups as well as independent media in Venezuela. The House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee approved a similar draft law earlier this month. It is awaiting a debate and vote on the House floor.

**LAHT -** [**http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2240164&CategoryId=10717**](http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2240164&CategoryId=10717)

MENA

**Egypt**

**Egyptian doctor to** **stand trial for female genital mutilation in landmark case**

A doctor is to stand trial in Egypt on charges of female genital mutilation on Thursday, the first case of its kind in a country where FGM is illegal but widely accepted. Activists warned this week that the landmark case was just one small step towards eradicating the practice, as villagers openly promised to uphold the tradition and a local police chief said it was near-impossible to stamp out. Raslan Fadl, a doctor in a Nile delta village, is accused of killing 13-year-old schoolgirl Sohair al-Bata'a in a botched FGM operation last June. Sohair's father, Mohamed al-Bata'a, will also be charged with complicity in her death.

**Guardian -** [**http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/may/21/egyptian-doctor-fadl-trial-female-genital-mutilation-landmark-case**](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/may/21/egyptian-doctor-fadl-trial-female-genital-mutilation-landmark-case)

**Libya**

**Top Libyan commander joins rebel forces**

The top commander of Libya's air force has joined the ranks of renegade general Khalifa Qassim Haftar, backing his "Dignity Operation" that targets religious hardliners, and adding to divisions in a country still reeling from political unrest since the 2011 revolt. Colonel Gomaa al-Abbani's announcement late on Tuesday is among a series of loyalty pledges made by military units and commanders to Haftar. The official Libyan news agency said on Wednesday that the Interior Ministry has also announced its support for Haftar's offensive, which the government has described as a coup attempt. In a bid to defuse the crisis, the Libyan cabinet has proposed the suspension of the parliament until fresh elections are held.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/05/top-libyan-commander-joins-rebel-forces-2014521923299411.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/05/top-libyan-commander-joins-rebel-forces-2014521923299411.html)

**Chinese engineer killed in Benghazi**

A Chinese construction engineer has been killed by unidentified gunmen in Libya's restive second city Benghazi, medical and security sources said on 21 May. The 49-year-old was shot dead on 20 May just four days after an offensive led by a former rebel commander to purge the eastern city of Islamist militia left 79 people dead. "Unidentified gunmen forced two other Chinese construction workers to show them the office of the site foreman and then went in and shot him several times," a security source said. "The other two Chinese staff were later released," the source said, adding that he had no word on the identity or motive of the killers. A hospital source said that the engineer was shot in the head, chest and leg.

**AFP -** [**http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Chinese-engineer-killed-in-Libyas-Benghazi-20140521**](http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Chinese-engineer-killed-in-Libyas-Benghazi-20140521)

**Saudi Arabia**

**State of Palestine**

**Yemen**

ROSA

**Afghanistan**

**Afghanistan's government split as Karzai suspends special forces chiefs**

Afghanistan's government has suspended the three police special forces commanders responsible for securing the capital during crucial presidential elections, and plans to try them in a court martial for making illegal detentions and desecrating a mosque. The three men have also been accused of collaborating with US and British commandos to serve foreign rather than Afghan aims, although they will not be tried as spies, according to an official source with first-hand knowledge of events. Since they were removed from their positions in late April, all special operations raids by police commandos have been suspended, raising questions about security in Kabul as insurgents arrive from safe havens in Pakistan and the country prepares for the annual "fighting season".

**Guardian -** [**http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/21/afghanistan-government-split-karzai-taliban-kabul**](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/21/afghanistan-government-split-karzai-taliban-kabul)

**Eight policemen beheaded in Afghanistan**

Armed men have killed at least 16 policemen in Afghanistan, beheading eight of them, according to officials, as security forces prepare to guard a second-round election. Villagers in the southern province of Zabul found the decapitated bodies of eight local policemen who were seized two weeks ago, deputy provincial governor Mohammad Jan Rassoulyar told the AFP news agency on Wednesday. In the country's northeast, officials said that an attack on several police checkpoints in Badakhshan province had left eight officers dead.

**Al Jazeera -** [**http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2014/05/eight-policemen-beheaded-afghanistan-201452152222355526.html**](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2014/05/eight-policemen-beheaded-afghanistan-201452152222355526.html)

**India**

**Pakistan**

**Islamist group forces schools to close in Pakistan's southwest**

Thousands of women, children and activists marched in Pakistan's volatile province of Baluchistan on Wednesday in a protest against a campaign by an Islamist group to force schools to shut down across the region. Tanzeemul Islam-ul-Furqan (Organisation of Islam for the Koran), a little-known group that has been setting schools on fire and distributing threatening leaflets against girls' and Western-style education in Baluchistan, a vast province bordering Iran and Afghanistan. "At least 35 private schools and 30 language centres have been shut down in the districts of Panjgur and Turbat for well over a week, but government schools are open," Mohammad Ayub, a local education official, told Reuters.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140521124413-c5oxc/?source=fiOtherNews3**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140521124413-c5oxc/?source=fiOtherNews3)

**Airstrikes kill 60 Taliban**

Pakistani warplanes and helicopters pounded militant hideouts near the Afghan border on 21 May, killing 60 fighters, the army said. The airstrikes mainly targeted Mir Ali, a town in the lawless tribal region of North Waziristan, the army said in a statement. It said "60 hard-core terrorists" including "important commanders and foreigners" were killed in the strikes, without providing further details, and that another 30 were wounded. One resident said the army had also been firing artillery rounds since early morning. "We heard big bangs," he said. "I saw some houses flattened." Another resident said the airstrikes destroyed several homes and nearby shops in Mir Ali's bazaar, causing civilian casualties. **AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/officials-pakistani-airstrikes-kill-60-militants-23807741**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/officials-pakistani-airstrikes-kill-60-militants-23807741)

WCAR

**Across WCA**

**Guinea-Bissau**

**Mali**

**Mali leader urges ceasefire, orders three days of mourning**

Mali's president called for a ceasefire in the restive north of the country and ordered three days of mourning from Friday as Tuareg separatists claimed they captured more than a key desert bastion after slaying several soldiers. Tuareg militants killed the soldiers during clashes in the rebel-held town of Kidal on Wednesday, a United Nations source told AFP, as a rebel leader said three armed groups had also taken other northern towns. After clashes during the day "the situation is calm tonight in Kidal", which is under the control of rebel groups, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) spokesman Moussa Ag Assarid told AFP from Kidal.

**AFP –**

**Mali wants international inquiry into northern attack**

**Tuareg separatists beat back Mali offensive in flashpoint town**

Tuareg separatists repulsed an attempt by Mali's army to take control of their stronghold of Kidal and seized another northern town on Wednesday, setbacks that could potentially embarrass President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's government. Malian troops launched the offensive to retake control of Kidal after a clash over the weekend while Prime Minister Moussa Mara was visiting. At least eight soldiers and eight civilians were killed. Government forces then reinforced their positions.

**Reuters - <http://www.trust.org/item/20140521183056-iap01/?source=fiOtherNews2>**

**Machine gun, heavy weapons fire heard in Kidal**

Machine gun and heavy weapons fire was reported on 21 May in the northern Malian town of Kidal, where the army has reinforced its positions ahead of an expected drive to retake the village from the control of separatist rebels. The fighting comes four days after at least eight soldiers and eight civilians were killed during clashes between the army and rebel forces as the country’s Prime Minister visited the town on 17 May. "As you can hear... gunfire has started up again between the soldiers and rebels in Kidal. I can’t say more about it,” an army officer reported from the town.

**AFP - <http://www.france24.com/en/20140521-mali-kidal-gunfire-clashes-tuareg-separatist-rebels/>**

**Reuters - <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/21/us-mali-fighting-idUSBREA4K0IJ20140521>**

**France to put off Mali redeployment after Kidal clashes**

France is to delay plans to redeploy troops in northern Mali to other countries in the Sahel region following the weekend’s clashes between separatists and Malian troops. Earlier this month France announced it was ending the “frontal war phase” of its military operation in Mali, where it sent troops in 2013. Paris was initially hoping to move around 3,000 soldiers serving in Mali to other countries in the Sahel region to fight militant groups there. A source at the French Defence Ministry said on 20 May the redeployment had been delayed for “a few weeks”. The French Defence Minister has called off a 25 May trip to Mali, where he was to discuss plans for the redeployment, and Chad, where the new broader operation will be based.

**RFI -** [**http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20140521-france-put-mali-redeployment-after-kidal-clashes**](http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20140521-france-put-mali-redeployment-after-kidal-clashes)

**Nigeria**

**U.S. deploys about 80 military personnel to help find Nigerian girls**

The United States has deployed about 80 military personnel to Chad in its effort to help find and return more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by Islamist militant group Boko Haram, President Barack Obama said in a letter to Congress on Wednesday. The U.S. government has also sent officials from the State Department and the FBI to Nigeria to help in the search.

**Reuters - <http://www.trust.org/item/20140521192533-qpm4b/?source=fiOtherNews2>**

**Nigerian blasts, likely intended to foster discord, instead promote unity**

The terrorists who blew up a busy market in this central Nigerian city Tuesday, killing at least 118 people, may have been hoping that the attack would reignite a historic tinderbox of religious and tribal enmity that has been easily goaded to violence in the past. While both Muslim and Christian residents here Wednesday acknowledged their history of mutual grudges and resentments, they expressed similar revulsion and anger at the bombing. Many instantly attributed it to the extreme Islamist group Boko Haram, which has staged other attacks in this region but has not claimed responsibility for Tuesday’s blasts. On Tuesday, as word of the deadly Jos bombings spread, many Nigerian commentators expressed concern that they would revive the sectarian hostility that had only recently receded in this region that lies along the fault line between the country’s Muslim-dominated north and Christian-majority south.

**Washington Post -** [**http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/nigerian-blasts-likely-intended-to-foster-discord-instead-promote-unity/2014/05/21/963bd13c-e118-11e3-9743-bb9b59cde7b9\_story.html**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/nigerian-blasts-likely-intended-to-foster-discord-instead-promote-unity/2014/05/21/963bd13c-e118-11e3-9743-bb9b59cde7b9_story.html)

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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