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GENERAL

**Across Regions**

**Asylum-seeker mothers 'attempt suicide' to give kids chance**

A dozen mothers in an asylum-seeker camp have reportedly attempted suicide so their children can be settled in Australia, but PM Tony Abbott Wednesday said he would not be morally blackmailed. The Sydney Morning Herald said the women tried to kill themselves this week after being told they would be taken from a detention centre on Christmas Island to PNG or Nauru. Any boatpeople who arrived in Australia after 19 July 2013 cannot be resettled in Australia, regardless of whether they are genuine refugees or not. They are instead sent to detention facilities or resettled on islands in the Pacific. The damaging claims come with Australia facing growing pressure over its controversial immigration policies with High Court action under way over the fate of 153 Sri Lankans being held in custody on the high seas.

**AFP -** [**http://www.centnews.com/World/Asylum-seeker-mothers-attempt-suicide-to-give-kids-chance/S-2014-07-09/76877.html**](http://www.centnews.com/World/Asylum-seeker-mothers-attempt-suicide-to-give-kids-chance/S-2014-07-09/76877.html)

**UN rights office ‘deeply disturbed’ over Australia’s handling of Sri Lanka asylum seekers**

The UN human rights office said Tuesday that is “deeply disturbed” that Australian authorities on Sunday returned to Sri Lanka 41 people seeking asylum, apparently without adequate screening of their protection claims and needs. “This is not something that can or should be done hurriedly, remotely and on high seas,” said Ms. Ravina Shamdasana, spokesperson for OHCHR. “It is unclear whether the Australian Government has been given any assurances that the returnees will not face ill treatment upon their return to Sri Lanka, nor is it clear how the Australian Government plans to monitor their treatment,” Ms. Shamdasani said. She welcomed the High Court of Australia’s issuance of an interim injunction against the return of another 153 other Sri Lankan asylum seekers, reportedly including 37 children.

**UN News Centre -** [**http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48216#.U7y2XWjD\_ct**](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48216#.U7y2XWjD_ct)

**Child TB problem far greater than thought: study**

Twenty-five percent more children are falling ill with TB than the UN had thought, with more than 650,000 hit by the disease each year in the 22 worst affected countries, specialists said. Reporting in The Lancet, they said that about 53 million children under 15 are living with latent TB infection, a condition that can develop into active TB at any time. Last year WHO estimated there were 530,000 cases of active TB among children younger than 15 years in 2 Obama seeks billions in funding to address flow of children across border 012. But this estimate was based on reporting by paediatric doctors -- a technique faulted by many experts as its methods and reliability vary hugely from country to country. The new estimate is based on a mathematical model based on each of 22 countries where TB falls into the category of a "high

**AFP -** [**http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-153205-Child-TB-problem-far-greater-than-thought:-study**](http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-153205-Child-TB-problem-far-greater-than-thought:-study)

**Obama seeks billions in funding to address flow of children across border**

A recent surge in young migrants, mostly from Central America, is generating an unprecedented predicament for US authorities and setting off a new round of finger-pointing in Washington. Near the border, a scramble is underway to shelter the new arrivals, who will enter a backlogged immigration system after enduring the trial of their lives. Signaling the urgency of the situation, US President Barack Obama asked lawmakers on Tuesday to approve nearly $4-billion in emergency funding to address the dilemma on the country’s border with Mexico. Mr. Obama has deemed the current state of affairs an “urgent humanitarian situation.” In recent years, growing numbers of children have been fleeing violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to seek a better future in the United States, where many of them have relatives.

**The Global and Mail.-** [**http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/most-children-border-crossers-to-be-sent-home-white-house-says/article19502723/**](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/most-children-border-crossers-to-be-sent-home-white-house-says/article19502723/)

**Turkey urges Israel to halt Gaza assault, US and UN slam rocket fire**

Turkey called on Israel on Tuesday to "immediately" halt its assault against the Gaza Strip, following the deadly air campaign against the Palestinian enclave. "We are calling on Israel to immediately halt its attacks on Gaza," the foreign ministry said in a statement. Later on Tuesday, the United States condemned rocket fire by Hamas militants into Israel, and said it was concerned for civilians on both sides. Meanwhile, UNSG Ban Ki-moon condemned Gaza rocket attacks on Israel and called on both sides of the conflict to halt their aggressions.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137993-turkey-urges-israel-to-halt-gaza-assault-u-s-and-u-n-slam-rocket-fire**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137993-turkey-urges-israel-to-halt-gaza-assault-u-s-and-u-n-slam-rocket-fire)

CEE/CIS

**Across CEE/CIS**

**Kremlin silent as pro-Russian rebels retreat in Ukraine**

As a Ukrainian government offensive sends separatists retreating from their strongholds in the country's restive east, there are signs that Moscow is seeking to distance itself from the pro-Russian rebels. Facing the threat of biting Western sanctions that could further shake Russia's teetering economy, President Vladimir Putin has watched a string of rebel defeats without taking any action - drawing accusations from separatist sympathizers at home that he is betraying their cause. Having initially vilified the government in Kiev as a "fascist" junta pursuing ethnic cleansing in eastern Ukraine, Russian state television has dampened its rhetoric in recent weeks. And analysts say overt Russian involvement in the conflict threatening to tear apart the former Soviet state would simply be too costly for the Kremlin.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138003-kremlin-silent-as-pro-russian-rebels-retreat-in-ukraine**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138003-kremlin-silent-as-pro-russian-rebels-retreat-in-ukraine)

**Turkey**

**Turkey seeks to boost peace talks with Kurds**

Turkish lawmakers debated legislation Tuesday to restart a stalled peace process with the Kurdish rebels - a development that could also help Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan win Kurdish votes as he seeks election as president next month. Erdogan, who has dominated Turkish politics for more than a decade, declared last week that he’s running for president. Votes from Kurds - who make up an estimated 20 percent of Turkey’s 76 million people - would be key to achieving his ambition of becoming Turkey’s first directly elected head of state.

**AP -** [**http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/08/Turkey-seeks-to-boost-peace-talks-with-Kurds.html**](http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/08/Turkey-seeks-to-boost-peace-talks-with-Kurds.html)

**Ukraine**

**Ukraine accuses Russia of abducting woman army officer**

Ukraine accused Russia on Wednesday of abducting a woman army officer captured by separatist fighters in eastern Ukraine and demanded she be released and returned home. Nadezhda Savchenko, 33, was seized by pro-Russian rebels in June while she was fighting with pro-government militia on the outskirts of Luhansk on the border with Russia, local media said. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said in a statement Savchenko had been spirited across the border illegally after she was seized by the separatists. "This is yet more confirmation that the terrorists plan and carry out their crimes in Ukraine in close contact with the intelligence services of the Russian Federation," it said.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709091432-m8ywm/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709091432-m8ywm/?source=search)

**Ukraine has no plans to steal Russian gas bound for Europe-minister**

Ukraine has no intention of stealing Russian natural gas destined for Europe, the country's energy minister said on Wednesday, after a senior Russian official said he expected Kiev to start stealing the fuel when its own supplies ran low. "We are not taking such gas today and have no plans to take it," news agencies reported Energy Minister Yuri Prodan as saying. Russia, which sends some of its gas to Europe via pipelines through Ukraine, halted gas supplies to Ukraine last month after Kiev missed a deadline to start paying off its gas debts, estimated by Gazprom at $5.3 billion.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709102209-9c278**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709102209-9c278)

EAP

**Across EAP**

**UNHCR deplores deportation of Laotian refugee from Thailand**

UNHCR is dismayed by the deportation by Thailand of a refugee recognized by UNHCR to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, where he could face harsh treatment amounting to persecution. According to information confirmed this week by the Thai authorities, the deportation of this former Lao Hmong leader took place on 13 June. UNHCR had urged the Royal Thai Government not to send him back since his detention in March 2013. Given his high profile, UNHCR has serious concerns over the risks to him now that he has been returned to Laos.

**UNHCR -** [**http://www.unhcr.org/53bbc65b9.html**](http://www.unhcr.org/53bbc65b9.html)

**China**

**China official warns party against aping Soviet freedoms**

China must learn the lessons of the collapse of the Soviet Union, where Communist Party members were allowed to express dissenting views and become "megaphones" for Western ideology, leading to disintegration, a senior official said on Wednesday. The lessons of the fall of the Soviet Union are reiterated regularly by Chinese leaders and state media, underscoring Beijing's fears about any challenge to the authority of the ruling Chinese Communist Party. President Xi Jinping, like many officials before him, is steeped in the party's long-held belief that loosening control too quickly or even at all could lead to chaos and the breakup of the country.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709065124-vnony/?source=search**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709065124-vnony/?source=search)

**DPR Korea**

**N. Korea fires two more missiles into the Sea**

North Korea on Wednesday fired what appeared to be two short-range missiles into the sea in the latest in a series of launches interspersed with spurned peace overtures to South Korea. A spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said the two missiles were fired from the western province of Hwanghae into the Sea of Japan (East Sea). "We suspect they were short-range ballistic missiles," spokesman Um Hoy-Sik told Agence France Presse, adding that the range was around 500 km. UN resolutions bar the North from conducting any ballistic missile tests, and Japan was swift to condemn the launches.

**AFP-** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138039-n-korea-fires-two-more-missiles-into-the-sea**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138039-n-korea-fires-two-more-missiles-into-the-sea)

**Indonesia**

**Both candidates in Indonesia election claim victory; Jokowi ahead in more counts**

Both candidates claimed victory in Indonesia's presidential election on Wednesday, suggesting there could be a drawn out constitutional battle to decide who will next lead the world's third-largest democracy. Just a few hours after voting closed, Jakarta governor Joko "Jokowi" Widodo said he had won, based on what are widely seen as independent quick counts of more than 90 percent of the votes. A victory for him would be seen as a triumph for a new breed of politician that has emerged in Southeast Asia's biggest economy, and increase the promise of reform in government. But ex-general Prabowo Subianto, the rival candidate seen as a representative of the old guard that flourished under decades of autocratic rule, pointed to a quick count by other pollsters naming him the winner.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709095637-1clxo**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709095637-1clxo)

**Philippines**

**Six wounded in Philippine clash with communist rebels**

Philippine police and troops have clashed with dozens of communist guerrillas in a remote southern mountain village, leaving six troopers wounded, the military said Wednesday. Police Special Action Force commandos and army troops were patrolling on Talomo mountain outside Davao city on Mindanao island when they encountered at least 30 New People's Army (NPA) rebels, triggering the gunbattle Tuesday. The NPA rebels are known to extort money from politicians, businessmen, mining firms and community members to fund their operations. Failing to pay up could result in retaliation, including targeted killings.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138057-six-wounded-in-philippine-clash-with-communist-rebels**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138057-six-wounded-in-philippine-clash-with-communist-rebels)

**Thailand**

**Rape and murder of 13-year-old spark debate in junta-ruled Thailand**

The rape and murder of a 13-year-old girl on an overnight train in Thailand have prompted a nationwide call for stricter enforcement of rape laws and a weekend rally that will defy military restrictions on public gatherings. The crime took place on a busy train route popular with commuters. The setting and violent nature of the crime have stoked public anger in social and mainstream media and calls for the State Railway of Thailand's governor to step down. Growing public outrage over the case is akin to reaction to the high profile gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman on a New Delhi bus in 2012 which sent shockwaves across urban India.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709074826-usra8**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709074826-usra8)

ESA

**Burundi**

**Opposition fears “genocide” as political violence escalates**

Fears of large-scale political violence are growing in Burundi, with the opposition and the UN concerned about the alleged militarization of the ruling party's youth wing as the country is still recovering from decades of inter-ethnic violence. In an attempt to secure its power base in the 2015 elections, President Pierre Nkurunziza's Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) has been distributing weapons and uniforms to its youth wing Imbonerakure, which is exercising violence on opposition supporters, the UN said in a recent report. UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman warned the UNSC of "large-scale violence."   
**DPA -** [**http://asia.dpa-news.com/news/international/burundi-opposition-fears-genocide-as-political-violence-escalates-a-38870627.html**](http://asia.dpa-news.com/news/international/burundi-opposition-fears-genocide-as-political-violence-escalates-a-38870627.html)

**Burundi critic of government denied bail on security charge-lawyer**

A rights activist campaigning against constitutional change critics say will upset Burundi's ethnic balance and entrench President Pierre Nkurunziza in power has failed in his plea for bail, a defence lawyer said on Wednesday. The proposed amendments, which opponents fear may establish the primacy of Nkurunziza's majority Hutus over Tutsis, have stirred the worst political crisis in the east African state since a 12-year civil war ended in 2005, and raised fears of renewed turmoil. Lawyers for Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, 66, arrested in May after accusing the ruling CNDD-FDD party of distributing weapons to youth groups and backing paramilitary training in neighbouring Congo, said they would appeal. Burundi authorities deny Mbonimpa's accusations, which have broght him charges of endangering state security.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709135859-unhb5/**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709135859-unhb5/)

**Kenya**

**Armed men burn police camp, homes and vehicles on coast**

Armed assailants have attacked a camp of police reservists and burned down nearby homes and businesses, a regional official said on Tuesday, as violence escalates on Kenya's northern coast. But there were no reported deaths this time. In the nearby coastal town of Lamu, residents also reported finding leaflets strewn about threatening Christians and the government. The leaflets purported to be from Somalia's al-Shebaab group, but the group denied it sent them. The government has promised to track down those behind attacks on coastal towns and villages, most of which have been deadly, but worried locals say the repeated assaults show the state is not doing enough or is powerless to stop them. Hundreds of families have fled homes in Lamu County, where the worst attacks have occurred, sheltering in camps near police posts or fleeing the region altogether.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140708145918-v0fpn/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140708145918-v0fpn/?source=fiOtherNews2)

**Rwanda**

**11 children reunited with their families**

Eleven Rwandan children have been repatriated from DRC to Rwanda, where they were reunited with their families. Scattered by the violence that has gripped the region for several years, the families were at last reunited thanks to the efforts of ICRC to trace the children’s relatives. This hard work is paying off; 50 Rwandan children have now been reunited with their families since the beginning of the year.

**ICRC -** [**http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2014/07-08-rwanda-kigali-reuniting-family-links.htm**](http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2014/07-08-rwanda-kigali-reuniting-family-links.htm)

**Somalia**

**Al-Shebaab storm presidential palace**

Al-Shebaab carried out a major bomb and armed attack on Somalia's presidential palace late Tuesday, penetrating the heavily fortified complex in the capital Mogadishu before blowing themselves up. Somalia's internationally backed President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and PM Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed were not inside at the time and were "both safe", officials said, just five months after a similar attack by al-Shebaab. "There were at least nine attackers, all have been killed, and the situation is under control, the attack is over," a security official said. A Shebaab spokesman confirmed that the group was behind the attack, and claimed their commandos had managed to seize the president's office inside the presidential compound known as the Villa Somalia.

**AFP -** [**http://www.modernghana.com/news/554711/1/militants-storm-somalia-presidential-palace.html**](http://www.modernghana.com/news/554711/1/militants-storm-somalia-presidential-palace.html)

**Somali leader fires police, intelligence chiefs**

Somalia's government fired the police and intelligence chiefs the day after Islamic militants attacked the heavily guarded presidential palace in the capital, Mogadishu, the information minister said Wednesday.

Government troops and AU peacekeepers repelled the attack and no government official was hurt, Mustafa Dhuhulow said. Three of four militants were shot dead by soldiers, after they forced their way into the presidential palace late Tuesday, sparking an exchange of gunfire, he said. The fourth militant was wounded.

**AP -** [**https://news.yahoo.com/somali-leader-fires-police-intelligence-chiefs-090446317.html**](https://news.yahoo.com/somali-leader-fires-police-intelligence-chiefs-090446317.html)

**South Sudan**

**Interior minister issues shoot-to-kill orders against curfew violators**

South Sudanese authorities have ordered security forces to shoot dead anyone found to be violating a renewed night curfew imposed by the government as tension continues to rise over federalism debate in the country. Interior minister Aleu Ayieny Aleu on Monday ordered his security operatives to go on a “shoot-to-kill” mission against night-time curfew violators, which the government has resolved to impose daily from 8pm to 6am. “Please work with me and I will work with you to implement this resolution of the council [of minister]. The shoot-to-kill order was passed by the council. It is not an individual order,” he told the security forces.

Aleu said the resolution was agreed upon by the council of ministers last month.

**Sudan Tribune -** [**http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article51605**](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article51605)

**UNICEF and WFP stepping up assistance to desperate people in remote areas of South Sudan**

**UNICEF** and WFP are stepping up joint missions to reach desperate people in remote areas of South Sudan where the number of children at risk of death from malnutrition-related causes has increased dramatically and a hunger catastrophe is looming. The situation is most dire in the three conflict-affected states of Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile where data indicates as much as 60 to 75% of the population is severely food-insecure.  An estimated 235,000 children under the age of 5 will require treatment for severe acute malnutrition this year; twice as many as last year. Furthermore, some 675,000 children will require treatment for moderate severe acute malnutrition.  So far, due to the challenging conditions, the humanitarian community has only been able to reach about 10% of these children with the required treatment.

**UNICEF -** [**http://www.unicef.org/media/media\_74240.html**](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_74240.html)

**UN SG urges warring leaders to resume talks**

UN SG Ban Ki-moon urged the leaders of South Sudan's two warring factions to resume peace talks, as he marked three years Tuesday since the founding of the struggling African nation. In a statement, Ban invoked the thwarted "hopes and expectations" of South Sudan's people, whose lives for more than half a year have been thrown into upheaval by war. "On the occasion of the third anniversary of South Sudan's independence, the Secretary-General recalls the hopes and expectations of the people of South Sudan when their country was established on 9 July 2011," the UN statement said.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138007-south-sudan-u-n-s-ban-urges-warring-leaders-to-resume-talks**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138007-south-sudan-u-n-s-ban-urges-warring-leaders-to-resume-talks)

**War and hunger darken South Sudan's third anniversary**

Thousands of South Sudanese waved flags at military parades to mark three years of independence Wednesday, despite having little to celebrate in a war-torn young nation ravaged by ethnic atrocities and threatened with famine. The streets of the capital were lined with banners proclaiming "One People, One Nation", as the government of President Salva Kiir put on a show of force with a military parade and speeches intended to celebrate the breakaway from the repressive government in Khartoum. Security was heavy at the events, underscoring the bitter divisions in the world's youngest nation where a nearly seven-month-old civil war rages on.

**AFP -** [**https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/24420199/war-and-hunger-darken-south-sudans-third-anniversary/**](https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/24420199/war-and-hunger-darken-south-sudans-third-anniversary/)

**Uganda**

**Almost 100 killed in clashes since weekend: army**

At least 96 people have been killed in four days of clashes between tribal gunmen and Ugandan troops in the west of the country, the army said on Tuesday. "Since the operation began we have killed 75 attackers," army spokesman said. Five soldiers, five policemen and 11 civilians were also killed in the mountainous and rural region which borders DRC. Attackers, who police said were armed with machetes, spears and guns, launched a series of surprise attacks Saturday and Sunday, with the army sending in extra troops. Fighting is ongoing, although the army says it is now only between its forces and the insurgents. Ugandan police say the attacks are ethnic battles, with the local majority Bakonzo people trying to kill the minority Basongora people, because of "long-standing differences of culture and over land." The death toll is feared to rise further.

**AFP -** [**http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/almost-100-killed-in-uganda-clashes-since-weekend-army\_946032.html**](http://zeenews.india.com/news/world/almost-100-killed-in-uganda-clashes-since-weekend-army_946032.html)

LAC

**Across LAC**

**US temporarily suspends deportation of Central American children**

Guatemalan FM Fernando Carrera said Tuesday the US had agreed to temporarily suspend deportation of Central American children caught while attempting to cross the border illegally. Carrera said the agreement was to hold while the US and the Central American nations negotiated conditions for returning the children. The immigration issue has gained new urgency in the US after 52,000 unaccompanied minors have been detained after crossing America's southern border illegally since October, twice the number from the same period a year ago. Earlier Tuesday, US President Barack Obama requested $3.7 billion in emergency funding from Congress to help cope with the surge.

**AFP -** [**http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2014/07/09/342020/guatemala-says-us-agreed-to-suspend-child-deportations.html**](http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2014/07/09/342020/guatemala-says-us-agreed-to-suspend-child-deportations.html)

**Quake toll in Mexico, Guatemala rises to 5**

The death toll in from a magnitude-6.9 earthquake near Mexico's border with Guatemala has risen to five, with authorities confirming two more deaths in Mexico. The director of civil defense for the Mexican border state of Chiapas says a total of four people there were killed by falling pieces of roofs or walls. Luis Manuel Garcia Moreno said Tuesday that about 9,000 homes in Chiapas were damaged. In neighboring Guatemala, President Otto Perez Molina said a baby died when parts of the ceiling collapsed on the newborn in the San Marco medical center. Perez Molina said 33 people were injured in Guatemala.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/death-toll-mexico-guatemala-quake-rises-24469398**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/death-toll-mexico-guatemala-quake-rises-24469398)

**Colombia**

**FARC, Colombian government to resume talks in Cuba**

FARC rebels and Colombia's government will resume peace talks on 15 July in Havana after a break, the two sides said Tuesday. After a pause of more than a month, negotiators have already held some preparatory discussions on the highly thorny issue of victims of the country's conflict. That one is next up on the agenda of talks aiming to reach a deal that would end Latin America's longest-running civil war. Agreement has been reached previously on three agenda points: rural development; the rebels' reintegration into the political process; and illegal drugs. The sides have yet to take up three other agenda items: the laying down of weapons by the FARC, compensation for victims of the conflict and determining whether an eventual comprehensive peace agreement should be put to a national referendum, as the government insists.

**AFP -** [**http://www.brecorder.com/world/south-america/183022-farc-colombian-government-to-resume-talks-in-cuba.html**](http://www.brecorder.com/world/south-america/183022-farc-colombian-government-to-resume-talks-in-cuba.html)

MENA

**Across MENA**  
**Death toll hits 38 as Israel pounds Gaza**

Eleven women and children were among 17 Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza Wednesday, hiking the overall death toll to 38 in two days, the emergency services said. More than 300 people have been wounded. Among the dead was at least one militant, as well as six children and five women, emergency services spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra told AFP. It was not immediately clear whether the other five fatalities were civilians or militants. The deadliest single strike took place shortly after midnight when a missile slammed into a house in the northern town of Beit Hanun, killing Hafez Hammad, a senior Islamic Jihad commander, and five of his family members, including two women and two children. In another series of raids to the north and east of Gaza City, Israeli warplanes killed two more women and four children, Qudra said. **AFP -** [**http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/105832/World/Region/Updated-Death-toll-hits--as-Israel-pounds-Gaza.aspx**](http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/105832/World/Region/Updated-Death-toll-hits--as-Israel-pounds-Gaza.aspx)

**Israel steps up Gaza offensive as missiles head towards Tel Aviv airport**

Israeli jets and naval gunfire pounded 160 targets in the Gaza Strip overnight as the government of Binyamin Netanyahu launched a large-scale military operation against the Islamist militant group Hamas in the coastal enclave. The Israeli military, threatening a long-term offensive, said that Operation Protective Edge aimed to strike Hamas and end the rocket attacks that have intensified and reached deeper into Israel in recent weeks.

**The Guardian -** [**http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/09/israel-palestine-gaza-strip-offensive-air-strikes-tel-aviv-airport**](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/09/israel-palestine-gaza-strip-offensive-air-strikes-tel-aviv-airport)

**Iraq**

**Iraq forces find 53 corpses south of Baghdad**

Iraqi security forces found the bodies Wednesday of 53 men who had been bound and executed in a confessionally mixed province south of the capital, police and medical officials said. The men were found in orchards south of Babil provincial capital Hilla, all with gunshots to the head or chest, in killings reminiscent of the brutal sectarian bloodshed that gripped Iraq in 2006-7. A mortuary official said the victims were killed at least a week ago. It was not immediately clear why the men were killed, the officials said.

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-forces-53-corpses-south-baghdad-080328420.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-forces-53-corpses-south-baghdad-080328420.html)

**Jordan**

**Jordan army launches recruitment drive**

Jordan's army launched a recruitment drive on Tuesday to address "a general shortage", following last month's advances by jihadist militants in neighboring Iraq. "The Jordan Armed Forces announces the need to recruit a number of males due to a general shortage. All those born after January 1, 1987 can apply," it said in an advertisement in newspapers and on the army's website. A Jordanian government official said it was a "routine" procedure. "It is a routine measure, nothing more and nothing less. Retirements take place and the army needs recruits. A similar campaign was announced by police a few weeks ago," he told Agence France Presse. The Jordanian armed forces are estimated to number between 150,000 and 200,000, according to military experts.

**AFP-** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137935-jordan-army-launches-recruitment-drive**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137935-jordan-army-launches-recruitment-drive)

**State of Palestine**

**Five killed in Israel raid on house in Gaza: medics**

Five Palestinians were killed on Wednesday when an Israeli missile struck a house in central Gaza, the emergency services told AFP. Spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said there were women and children among the dead, without giving exact numbers. He said the strike targeted a house in Al-Maghazi, a beachside refugee camp near Deir al-Balah.

**AFP -** [**http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-153277-Five-killed-in-Israel-raid-on-house-in-Gaza:-medics**](http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-153277-Five-killed-in-Israel-raid-on-house-in-Gaza:-medics)

**Syria**

**Syrian Kurds demobilise 149 child soldiers, says rights group**

Syrian Kurdish forces have demobilised scores of child soldiers from their ranks over the past month, a Swiss group that works to save under-age fighters said. The main Kurdish militia in Syria made a public promise in June to stop using child soldiers and halt their recruitment. A total of 149 militia members under the age of 18 have since been demobilised, according to Elisabeth Decrey Warner, head of Geneva Call. But there are still believed to be up to 100 under-age fighters in the ranks of the YPG (People's Protection Units) and its women's arm, the YPJ (Women's Protection Unit).

**AFP -** [**http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-kurds-demobilise-149-child-soldiers-says-rights-211007601.html**](http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-kurds-demobilise-149-child-soldiers-says-rights-211007601.html)

**Opposition coalition elects new president**

Syria's Western-backed opposition National Coalition elected Hadi al-Bahra, chief negotiator at the Geneva peace talks, as its new president following a three-day meeting in Istanbul, the coalition said on Wednesday. Bahra, a US-trained industrial engineer, will replace Ahmad Jarba, who has served the maximum two six-month terms. Like Jarba, Bahra has close ties to Saudi Arabia and has lived there. "Hadi al-Bahra wins coalition presidency by 62 votes," a post on the Coalition's Facebook page said on Wednesday.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL6N0PK0RT20140709**](http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL6N0PK0RT20140709)

**Syria rebels kill 14 in Hama village**

At least 14 people, among them women, were killed by Syrian rebels in the village of Khatab in central Hama province overnight, state media and an NGO said Wednesday. Syrian state television said rebels carried out a "massacre" that included women and children, while the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said seven men and seven women had been "executed" by rebel fighters. "An armed terrorist group infiltrated the village of Khatab at dawn and committed a massacre among the civilian residents, killing 14 of them," state television said. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said "14 residents of Khatab in the northwestern Hama countryside were killed, including seven (female) civilians, by rebel brigades."

**AFP-** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138089-syria-rebels-kill-14-in-hama-village**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138089-syria-rebels-kill-14-in-hama-village)

**Tunisia**

**Aging Tunisia ex-PM to run for president 'if Still Alive'**

Beji Caid Essebsi, the 87-year-old ex-premier and leading opponent of the Islamists, said Tuesday he will stand in Tunisia's presidential poll later this year, if he's "still alive". "At the moment, my intention is to run" in the November 23 election, Essebsi told a news conference. The octogenarian has already been nominated as the candidate of Nidaa Tounes, Tunisia's main secular party, which he heads. His critics accuse him of seeking to restore the regime of the deposed dictator, while his supporters say he is the only credible counterweight to the Islamist Ennahda party, which resigned this year after months of political crisis.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137967-aging-tunisia-ex-pm-to-run-for-president-if-still-alive**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137967-aging-tunisia-ex-pm-to-run-for-president-if-still-alive)

**Yemen**

**Yemen accuses Shiite rebels of 'Atrocities' near Sanaa**

Yemeni authorities on Wednesday accused Shiite rebels of having carried out "atrocities" in the northern city of Amran, near the capital, that they seized after three days of fierce fighting. Huthi Shiite rebels, known as Ansarullah, "stormed the headquarters of the 310th Armored Brigade, looted weapons and equipment there, and killed a number of soldiers and officers," said Yemen's Supreme Security Committee, quoted by state news agency Saba. It said they had also taken over government headquarters in the town. A presidential committee which has negotiated several ceasefires with the rebels said Ansarullah had violated an agreement for the army to withdraw from the city.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138105-yemen-accuses-shiite-rebels-of-atrocities-near-sanaa**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/138105-yemen-accuses-shiite-rebels-of-atrocities-near-sanaa)

**Thousands of civilians flee north Yemen battle**

Some 10,000 families have fled the northern city of Amran in three days to escape an intensified battle between the army and Shiite rebels, the Yemeni Red Crescent said Tuesday. Launching a "call for help", the organization said 5,000 more families were trapped by fighting inside the city. Amran, 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of the capital Sanaa, is home to an estimated 120,000 inhabitants.

**AFP -** [**http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137947-thousands-of-civilians-flee-north-yemen-battle**](http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/137947-thousands-of-civilians-flee-north-yemen-battle)

ROSA

**Afghanistan**

**Suicide attack amidst group of children draws condemnation from UN**

The top UN official in Afghanistan condemned a suicide bombing in the central province of Parwan which killed at least 10 children and injured six others, warning that such indiscriminate attacks could amount to international humanitarian law violations. An explosive-rigged bicycle reportedly detonated in the Qalandarkhail area of Bagram district, as Afghan National Police and international military forces were on foot patrol nearby. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed at least 12 civilians and six service personnel, and injured at least eight people.

**UN News Centre -** [**http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48223#.U7y4S2jD\_cs**](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48223#.U7y4S2jD_cs)

**Afghanistan's war takes heavy civilian toll, says UN report**

Afghanistan's war is getting deadlier for its civilians with the toll from crossfire and ground battles rising sharply, the UN has said in a report. The number killed or injured in the first six months of the year rose by a quarter from 2013 levels to nearly 5,000 people, the bloodiest total since the UN began keeping records in 2009. Women and children are particularly badly affected. It was also the first time that ground fighting has proved more dangerous for civilians than the often indiscriminate homemade bombs that have become a key Taliban weapon, a worrying sign that the conflict may only get more bloody as Nato forces head home.

**The Guardian -** <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/09/afghanistan-war-civilian-toll-united-nations-report>

**Election crisis and rising war casualties add to Afghan woes**

Fighting in Afghanistan is spreading into populated areas and taking a record toll on civilians, the UN warned Wednesday, as presidential candidates urged supporters not to raise tensions after the disputed election result. Political deadlock and soaring civilian casualties have caused deep disquiet among Afghanistan's international backers, who sent tens of thousands of NATO-led soldiers and billions of dollars in aid to the country after 2001. Claims that a functioning state has replaced the harsh Taliban regime look to be in jeopardy after presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah rejected the result of the June 14 run-off election, saying he was the victim of systematic fraud.

**AFP -** [**http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/election-crisis-and-rising-war-casualties-add-to-afghan-woes/articleshow/38084653.cms**](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/election-crisis-and-rising-war-casualties-add-to-afghan-woes/articleshow/38084653.cms)

**India**

**India promises 4,000 female police to protect women train passengers from sexual predators**

India's new government announced plans to boost security for women on the country's massive train network in its first railway budget. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government said it had already strengthened security in trains and at stations by deploying 17,000 Railway Police Force (RPF) constables and promised to recruit and deploy a further 4,000 women constables. "In order to ensure security of ladies travelling alone, special instructions are being issued for their safety in each class of travel," Railway Minister Sadananda Gowda told parliament while presenting his first budget on Tuesday.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709030635-pmt5h/?source=dpagehead**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709030635-pmt5h/?source=dpagehead)

**Nepal**

**Fix flawed truth, reconciliation act**

The Nepal government should act immediately to fix crucial flaws in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Act, particularly those highlighted in a new UN evaluation, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Commission of Jurists said. The assessment, in a technical note from the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human rights to the Nepal government, pointed out that the TRC Act does not conform to Nepal’s international legal obligations, including in that it allows for amnesty for crimes committed under international law. Five experts for the UN Human Rights Council have also voiced similar serious concerns over the TRC Act, passed by Nepal’s Constituent Assembly in April 2014.

**HRW -** [**http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/08/nepal-fix-flawed-truth-reconciliation-act**](http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/08/nepal-fix-flawed-truth-reconciliation-act)

**Sri Lanka**

**Sri Lanka bans activist groups from contact with media**

Sri Lanka has banned activist groups and NGOs from holding press conferences and issuing press releases, a Defence Ministry circular says, raising new concerns over freedom of expression in the island nation. The circular, dated July 1, also outlaws NGOs and civil society organisations holding workshops for journalists. "This is a continuation of threats on civil society," J.C. Weliamuna, head of Transparency International in Sri Lanka and a human rights lawyer, told reporters. President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government is under international pressure to account for suspected war crimes and human rights abuses during the war against separatist Tamil Tiger rebels which ended in 2009.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140709122751-bfqgz**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140709122751-bfqgz)

WCA

**Across WCA**

**Boko Haram attacks put a stop to aid work in north Cameroon – UNICEF mention**

Aid and infrastructure projects in Cameroon’s Far North region have been suspended due to high levels of insecurity caused by Boko Haram, based in neighbouring Nigeria. “This is really dangerous because we all know how vulnerable this region is, plagued with high malnutrition and poverty due to its extreme climate,” Cameroon’s minister of communication, Issa Tchiroma Bakari said. Nearly 6 million people live in Cameroon’s North and Far North regions, 1.2 million of which are children below the age of five. UNICEF Cameroon said it will resume operations as soon as the security situation gets better. The humanitarian situation in the Far North has been worsened by an expanding flow of more than 8,000 refugees fleeing Boko Haram activities in Nigeria.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140708143835-uwqs9/?source=fiDontmiss**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140708143835-uwqs9/?source=fiDontmiss)

**Fifty new Ebola cases, 25 deaths in West Africa - WHO**

Fifty new cases of Ebola and 25 deaths have been reported in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea since 3 July, as the deadly virus spreads in families, WHO said on Tuesday. In a statement, WHO said that the latest figures from health ministries in the three countries showed a total of 844 cases including 518 deaths in the epidemic that began in February. Guinea's ministry reported two deaths since 3 July, but no new cases in the past week, WHO said, calling the situation in the affected region of West Africa a "mixed picture". Sierra Leone accounted for 34 of the new cases and 14 deaths, while Liberia reported 16 new cases and 9 deaths.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140708141012-1xifv/?source=fiHeadlineStory**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140708141012-1xifv/?source=fiHeadlineStory)

**CAR**

**Escalating violence threatens aid delivery: WFP – UNICEF mention**

Warning about the deteriorating situation in CAR, WFP said that the violence there was threatening humanitarian assistance and creating major difficulties for relief workers in the field. WFP spokesperson Elisabeth Byrs said the difficulties spawned by deteriorating security are only compounded by drought and lack of precipitation in parts of the country, notably in the northwest, causing yet another decline in agricultural production. In addition, a lack of fuel for airplanes is hampering operations in CAR. More than 2.3 million children are suffering the consequences of the crisis rocking the country, says **UNICEF**. Children have been directly targeted. On average, at least one child has been maimed or killed in clashes every day in the past six months. Malnutrition rates are high and the number of children associated with armed groups could be as high as 10,000, according to the Ministry of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. One in three children who were enrolled in the last school year did not go back to school this year.

**UN News Centre -** [**http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48226#.U7y48GjD\_ct**](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48226#.U7y48GjD_ct)

**Church attacks leaves 17 dead**

Heavily armed Muslim fighters attacked a Catholic church compound sheltering thousands of civilians in a volatile town in CAR, killing at least 17 people and leaving 10 others seriously wounded, officials said Tuesday. The attack on St. Joseph's Cathedral in Bambari came late Monday afternoon when the fighters accused church officials of helping Christian militiamen operating in the area. The Rev. Thibault Ndemaguia said he had counted at least 17 bodies, while police officials said the death toll was as high as 20.

**AP -** [**http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/african-republic-church-attacks-leaves-17-dead-24464776**](http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/african-republic-church-attacks-leaves-17-dead-24464776)

**Mali**

**Mali to meet northern Tuareg rebels in Algiers on July 16 – French FM**

Mali government officials will meet northern Tuareg separatist rebels in Algiers on 16 July, French FM Laurent Fabius said on Tuesday, indicating progress in their stalled peace talks. The meeting will be the first since clashes in the northern Tuareg stronghold town of Kidal in May during which some 50 Malian soldiers were killed. Fabius told the French parliament's foreign affairs committee that discussions led by Algeria have been positive and Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita has indicated his willingness to see talks lead to a positive outcome.

**Reuters -** [**http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FE0H120140709**](http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FE0H120140709)

**Nigeria**

**Boko Haram blamed for 18 attacks in past two weeks – UN**

Boko Haram is blamed for at least 18 attacks on civilians in northern Nigeria in the past two weeks and the escalating violence of the insurgency threatens the security of West Africa, a senior UN official said. The UN special envoy for West Africa, Said Djinnit, told the UNSC that insecurity in northeastern Nigeria, coupled with growing political tensions ahead of planned general elections in 2015, had left the country at a crossroads. "The Boko Haram crisis is now affecting security in the sub region.” “All efforts should be made to address the insurgency and insecurity," Djinnit said.

**Reuters -** [**http://www.trust.org/item/20140708155225-guwps/?source=fiOtherNews2**](http://www.trust.org/item/20140708155225-guwps/?source=fiOtherNews2)

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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