

UN Resumes Aid Delivery in Syria After Attack

The United Nations [decided](#) to suspend all aid convoys in Syria this week following an alleged airstrike on Monday, which destroyed 18 aid trucks and killed around 20 civilians, including a humanitarian aid worker from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. All parties involved in the conflict, including Russia and the United States, were informed about the presence of the envoy carrying relief supplies for 78,000 civilians to rebel-held territories in the northern Aleppo. The intensification of hostilities led to the suspension of envoys planned for four other surrounding cities.

Shortly after the attack on the aid convoy, United States officials [claimed](#) that Russian aircraft had dropped the bombs which hit the convoy, however, both Russia and Syria have denied these claims and any involvement in the incident. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the attack in his address to the UN General Assembly, calling it “sickening, savage and apparently deliberate.” UN officials have also said that it is potentially a war crime.

The fragile ceasefire that was initiated, in part, to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid, has been widely tested as, first, on Saturday, a US-led coalition airstrike on a Syrian military base killed at least 60 Syrian troops in what the US military is [calling](#) an errant targeting of an Islamic State (ISIL) position. Then, on Monday, a Syrian army spokesperson stated that the week-long ceasefire had officially ended. The Syrian army has laid the blame for continual violations on the rebels and the Russian Foreign Ministry has

[released](#)

a statement stating that there is no reason for the Syrian government to continue to commit to the truce. Aleppo-based rebel groups have also declared the ceasefire a failure, citing a lack of commitment from the Syrian government as aid

[intended](#)

for Aleppo was forced to sit across the Turkish border for days as the Syrian government refused to give it entry, before the attack on the aid convoy. US Secretary of State John Kerry

[responded](#)

to such statements, saying that the authority to declare the ceasefire over rests with the US & Russia, with officials from both countries working to extend it on the ground. Secretary Kerry also

[called](#)

for all war planes in Syria to be grounded in attempts to salvage the ceasefire, but the largest wave of airstrikes in weeks

[ravaged](#)

rebel-held areas of Aleppo late Wednesday and into early Thursday morning, [killing](#) at least seven people, including three children. The attacks are believed to have been perpetrated by either Russia or the Syrian government.

However, on Thursday, the UN [resumed](#) deliveries of humanitarian aid, including food and medical supplies, despite the continuing surge of hostilities and apparent dissolution of the ceasefire agreement.

Source for above photo: BBC News

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Burma/Myanmar:

Late last week, a [judge](#) sentenced five Burmese soldiers to five years of hard labor for the murders of five civilians in June from one of Burma's minority ethnic groups.

On Sunday, the Framework for Political Dialogue (FPD) came under review at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon. The meeting examined which ethnic and regional perspectives are to be discussed at the start of the national-level political dialogue, which is expected to [now](#) begin in January.

On Monday, eight people [died](#) in clashes in southeastern Burma that have left thousands displaced over the past month. The fighting took place between the Burmese army and a rebel-splinter group, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) in Karen state, where the dominant rebel group, the KNU, has signed a ceasefire with the government. Despite the continued fighting, Burmese army officers have [pressured](#) Karen internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes. Over 3,800 people have been displaced due to the fighting between the Burmese army and the DKBA since 9 September.

The latest reports from the Refugee Processing Center, run by the US State Department, [show](#) that from 1 October 2015 to 15 September 2016, 11,902 Burmese nationals, including many Rohingya, have resettled in the United States, outpacing even Syrian refugee arrivals in the US.

On Wednesday, Burma's State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, [addressed](#) the United Nations General Assembly as the first civilian leader to represent the country at the world body's annual debate in over 50 years. She noted that the "dreams and aspirations" of the people of Burma in shaping their future with the overwhelming majority won by her National League for Democracy party in last year's elections, "echo those that had led to the founding of the United Nations." In discussing the interethnic issues in the country, particularly of the Rohingya population in Rakhine state, she said, "We are committed to a sustainable solution that will lead to peace, stability and development for all communities within the state. Our Government is taking a holistic approach that makes development central to both short and long term programmes aimed at promoting understanding and trust."

Burundi:

Independent UN investigators [said](#) on Tuesday that they have a list of suspects believed to

have been involved with atrocities in Burundi. The investigators do not know the full extent of these crimes, but they have evidence of rapes, murders, disappearances, mass arrests, and torture of government opponents. Reportedly, there are likely thousands of victims. The investigators have [called](#) on international organizations to try and stop these atrocities before mass violence brings conflict to the entire region. Officials in Burundi have denied the allegations and described the report as biased.

Central African Republic:

Violence [pitting](#) the mainly Muslim Seleka rebels against rival Christian anti-Balaka militia members ignited on Friday. A spokesman for the presidency originally said on Saturday that the fighters from the former Seleka rebel coalition killed 26 villagers. However, on Monday the spokesman [cut](#) that figure to six, matching the UN's toll. The killings took place in the village of Ndomete, not far from Kaga-Bandoro.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has [released](#) an infographic detailing humanitarian access in CAR as of August 2016. It further details how humanitarian access in parts of CAR is frequently hampered by looting, fighting and, most often, attacks against aid workers and the population.

Democratic Republic of Congo:

At least 17 people have been [killed](#) in the capital city of Kinshasa following violent clashes between political protesters and police, after [months](#) of civil unrest related to the potential extension of President Joseph Kabila's tenure as President beyond the constitutional limit. A government-led "national dialogue", which has failed to include many of the country's main opposition parties, is set to present its final agreement on the issue in the coming days.

The headquarters of three opposition parties in the Democratic Republic of Congo were also [torched](#) in the capital city. At least two casualties have been confirmed at the office of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UPDS). Protests are expected to continue as the government stated Monday that it will be unable to hold elections in November.

On Thursday, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [criticized](#) the government of the DRC for their use of excessive force following the protests. The High Commissioner also

expressed shock that men in uniform had participated in some of the attacks on the headquarters of opposition political parties and that President Kabila's government deployed the Republican Guard, a notoriously heavily armed military unit, against the protesters.

The World Food Programme has [released](#) an Emergency Dashboard infographic detailing the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo as of September 2016. The dashboard states that there are approximately 1.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), over 400,000 refugees, and 5.9 million individuals facing food insecurity throughout the DRC.

Gaza/West Bank:

On Tuesday, Israeli soldiers [killed](#) a 16 year old Palestinian boy who tried to stab a soldier outside of Bani Na'im, a village in the occupied West Bank near the city of Hebron. This is the seventh death in the area since last Friday, resulting from an uptick of hostilities ahead of next month's Jewish new year holiday.

On Wednesday, the Palestinian high court in Ramallah [ordered](#) the suspension of local elections in both Gaza and the West Bank previously scheduled for 8 October. This is the second time the court has frozen the elections. The first suspension, which took place earlier this month, was the result of a formal petition signed by several Palestinian lawyers and the West Bank prosecution in response to the invalidation of a Fatah list of candidates in the Gaza Strip by Hamas courts.

President Mahmoud Abbas [appealed](#) to the UN this week for protection against Israeli occupation of its territories in Gaza and the West Bank, stating that direct peace talks can only take place in an international conference such as the one proposed by France for later this year.

Iraq:

On Sunday, two Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers [died](#) in a suicide-bombing east of Mosul, as Kurdish forces continue to prepare for an assault on the city.

On Tuesday, Iraqi forces [initiated](#) an offensive to liberate the northern town of Sherqat from

Islamic State (ISIL). Two days later, on Thursday, Iraqi Brigadier-General Yahya Rasool [announced](#) that the Iraqi military, backed by airstrikes from the US-led coalition, gained complete control of the northern town of Shirqat. The city had been under siege since 2014 when ISIL seized about a third of Iraqi territory. The retaking of Shirqat is considered a key prerequisite for the push to retake the main city of Mosul later this year.

ISIL militants reportedly [fired](#) a shell containing a mustard agent on Tuesday at an air base in Qayyara, where US and Iraqi troops are operating. No US troops were hurt as a result of the shelling. US troops tested the artillery shell after it landed and received a positive reading for the chemical agent. A second test turned up negative. Further lab testing has commenced.

The Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster has [released](#) an infographic detailing settlement status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout Iraq. The infographic shows that there are an estimated total of 3.35 million IDPs currently residing in Iraq.

Kenya:

On Monday, an International Criminal Court (ICC) trial chamber [found](#) the government of Kenya to be in noncompliance with its requirement to cooperate with the ICC, with regards to the case of Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta. The ICC has referred Kenya's non-cooperation to the Assembly of States Parties, the court's membership, for further action. Following the [referral](#) to the ASP, Kenyan Attorney General, Githy Muigai, indicated that Kenya would not accept the court's verdict.

Libya:

On Sunday, militia [members](#) loyal to military leader Khalifa Haftar and Libya's eastern parliament launched a successful counter-attack on two of Libya's most crucial oil ports, Sidra and Ras Lanuf, after briefly losing them to the Petroleum Facilities Guard, [loyal](#) to the UN-backed Tripoli based government the evening before. On Monday, General Haftar went on to call on the UN to cease injecting itself into Libyan affairs, [claiming](#) that Tripoli has been overrun by armed gangs.

Libyan forces [allied](#) with the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, renewed their offensive on Islamic State (ISIL) in Sirte on Sunday, with the support of US airstrikes and special forces. The forces are attempting to push into the last section of the city still under the extremist group's control.

On Tuesday, an airstrike near the town Houn in central Libya [killed](#) at least nine civilians and wounded 20 others. The identity of the planes that carried out the strike could not be confirmed, but armed groups loyal to factions based in eastern and western Libya are known to operate in the area.

Mali:

Over the weekend, [at least](#) 10 people died in clashes between the pro-government Gambia militia and the Tuareg separatist Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) rebel coalition. The fighting took place north of the pro-Tuareg city of Kidal, which has been jointly controlled by the two groups since February. The UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has [released](#) a statement expressing concern over the country's fragile peace deal following the fighting over the weekend, saying such clashes, "as well as constituting repeated violations of ceasefire accords, threaten the progress achieved up until now in the implementation of the peace agreement." MINUSMA also called on all parties to "take immediate measures to guarantee the protection of civilians and refrain from all action that could unleash a return to hostilities".

Nigeria:

The government of Nigeria has [announced](#) that it has been negotiating with Boko Haram since July 2015 to free the over 200 schoolgirls from Chibok kidnapped by the group, with three separate rounds of negotiations having failed.

Over the weekend, American National Security Adviser Susan Rice [and](#) Nigeria's National Security Adviser, Maj-General Babagana Monguno, met in Washington to discuss how to better engage in dialogue with militants in the Niger River Delta and bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

On Sunday, Nigerian police [liberated](#) 14 oil workers kidnapped earlier this month in the

country's southern Niger Delta region.

The same day, eight people [died](#) in an attack by Boko Haram in Kwamjilari village in northeastern Borno state. The attack took place as villages emptied out of church from Sunday mass, with the militants also lighting maize fields and houses on fire.

On Monday, Boko Haram militants [staged](#) two attacks in the country's northeast that left eight people dead. The separate attacks included the beheading of a village chief and his son and the killing of six civilians in a commercial convoy escorted by the Nigerian military.

The Nigerian army has [claimed](#) victory in a battle fought against Islamic extremist militants in Malam Fatori, a town near the country's border with Niger. Earlier in the day, Islamic State's West Africa Province, a faction of Boko Haram, released a statement claiming to have killed over 40 soldiers and wounding many more from "a convoy of the African Coalition Crusader forces" in Malam Fatori. Neither side's claim has been independently verified. However, the battle, which took place on Tuesday, was the first Islamic State-claimed attack in Nigeria since August.

Amnesty International [published](#) a report this week which details a Nigerian police unit, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) which systematically tortures its detainees as a means of extracting confessions and lucrative bribes. This report is an extension of the larger humanitarian crisis in Nigeria, with a [reported](#) 20,000 deaths and the displacement of 2.6 million people throughout the seven years of Boko Haram insurgency.

South Sudan:

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees [announced](#) late last week that the number of civilians seeking refuge from the war in South Sudan has surpassed one million, with an additional 1.6 million internally displaced.

On Saturday, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, [created](#) in March by the Human Rights Council, expressed deep concern over the slow pace of the implementation of the peace plan in South Sudan and the continuation of gross human rights violations. The report comes after the Commission's visit to South Sudan earlier in the month.

Officials in Northern Liech state have [announced](#) that they have entered into talks with senior military officials of the SPLM-IO forces allied to former First Vice President Riek Machar in hopes of their joining the current First Vice President Taban Deng Gai's faction of the SPLM-IO.

The United Nations has [received](#) reports saying people fleeing South Sudan into Uganda are

forced to pay bribes at checkpoints run by South Sudan's government and armed groups to reach safety. There are also reports of physical and sexual assaults and forced family separations.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [published](#) an infographic on Wednesday on the humanitarian situation and response in South Sudan. The infographic shows how the operating environment is increasingly dangerous and difficult. It also shows that the response is severely underfunded, as just 54% of the US\$1.3 billion required under the South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) has been received. Despite the challenges, the infographic also shows that humanitarian partners were able to deliver lifesaving assistance and protection to over 3.2 million people in South Sudan in the first half of 2016.

Members of the United States Congress are [pushing](#) the Obama administration to support an arms embargo on South Sudan. In August, the UN Security Council said that if South Sudan did not accept a 4,000 strong regional peacekeeping force, it would place an arms embargo on the country. The US has been opposed to such action in the past, but has changed its view with recent developments in the country.

Sudan's State Minister of Interior, Babiker Digna [claimed](#) on Wednesday that his country is hosting more than 400,000 South Sudanese refugees, but it is difficult to determine the exact number as the refugee influx still continues.

Sudan/Darfur:

On Saturday, Sudan's Presidential Assistant Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid announced that a week of negotiations over a ceasefire and humanitarian [access](#) with rebel groups has not led to a comprehensive peace deal. The African Union, which is mediating the dialogue, has temporarily suspended the negotiations between the two parties. The following day, Hamid [reiterated](#) that Sudan will reject humanitarian aid from abroad, specifically referencing a planned package from Ethiopia. The comments come amidst mounting international pressure for peace negotiations as hostilities persist between forces loyal to the Republic of Sudan and the active insurgent groups loyal to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North.

On Tuesday, the US State Department [commended](#) the recent efforts by the Sudanese government to cooperate with the US on counterterrorism operations, while also noting that that economic sanctions against Sudan will remain in place. Grave concerns regarding human rights and the management of internal conflicts, specifically in the Darfur region, which has been labelled by the US as genocide, continue to complicate the normalization of relations between

Sudan and Western countries.

On Thursday, Amnesty International and ICRtoP member Human Rights Watch [called](#) for the UN Human Rights Council, currently holding a session on Sudan, to press the Sudanese government to prosecute and hold accountable those responsible for the deaths of protesters and civilians during the September 2013 civil unrest in Khartoum. The protests, which stemmed from an announcement from President Omar al-Bashir regarding cuts to fuel subsidies, left 185 people dead. According to the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies, the majority of protesters were

[found](#) to have been killed by gunshot wounds to the head and chest. As of today, none of the three state commissions of inquiry have been made public and only one policeman has been prosecuted.

Syria:

US Defense officials [have](#) confirmed that US Special Forces are now present alongside Turkish troops and rebels in northern Syria to take part in the Turkish-led "Operation Euphrates Shield". Turkish forces have announced that they plan to extend the offensive to take the ISIL-held town of al-Bab, which sits on a critical juncture, with a Turkish "safe zone" possibly [extending](#) to up to 5,000 square km (1,930 square miles) of Syrian territory.

On Monday, the Homs governor [postponed](#) the planned evacuation of the last rebel-held district of the city due to "logistical obstacles". Around 250-300 rebels are expected to be allowed to leave the city for rebel-controlled territory. However, rebels in other parts of Syria have stated that if the evacuation goes through, they would consider the ceasefire in the country to be over.

Russia [announced](#) on Wednesday that it will be sending its only aircraft carrier to waters off of Syria's coastal region, which is likely a contingency plan for the dissolution of the present ceasefire.

Yemen:

On Saturday, Houthi rebels and forces loyal to the internationally-recognized Yemeni government clashed on two separate fronts. [Fighting](#) broke out in the regions east of the city of Ta'ez, which government forces are attempting to break a siege of, and east of the capital of Sanaa.

Recently released images and videos have [led](#) to claims that Saudi Arabia is using U.S.-supplied white phosphorous munitions in its military campaign in Yemen, with fears being raised over the threat that these munitions pose to civilians. US regulations dictate that white phosphorus, when sold to other countries, may only be used for signaling other troops and creating smoke screens. As of yet, it is undetermined how Saudi Arabia is using the munition in Yemen.

Recent reports have [confirmed](#) that a US-made bomb was used in an airstrike on a hospital on 15 August that killed 11 people. On Monday, Amnesty International urged that states immediately stop supplying weapons that could be used in the Yemen conflict.

On Tuesday, intensive airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition [hit](#) the headquarters of the National Security Bureau in Yemen's rebel-held capital, Sanaa, causing damage to neighboring homes, which left at least one civilian dead and three others wounded. The coalition also bombed the defense ministry and a checkpoint in the suburbs, killing two rebels and wounding four.

Saudi-led coalition airstrikes [killed](#) at least 20 civilians in the rebel-held Yemeni city of Hodeida late on Wednesday. The raid [reportedly](#) targeted a presidential palace used by the Houthi rebel movement, but missiles also hit neighboring houses.

The United Kingdom is set to [increase](#) the humanitarian aid it gives to Yemen, while the country is also facing criticism for selling arms to Saudi Arabia, which could be used in Yemen.
