

# NEWSIN brief

## Death toll in Baghdad brothel raid rises to 31

AFP, Baghdad  
The death toll from a raid on a Baghdad compound used for prostitution rose to 31 yesterday, as pictures obtained by AFP offered clues to the circumstances of the carnage.  
"The total number of dead now stands at 31, two of them men," interior ministry spokesman Saad Maan told AFP. The pair, the only male victims of the raid, appeared to have had their backs tied behind their backs before being executed.

## Israel shoots down Gaza drone

AFP, Gaza City  
Hamas's armed wing said yesterday it had sent "a number of UAVs (drones) deep inside the Zionist enemy entity" in a Hebrew-language posting on Twitter.  
The Israeli army confirmed shooting down one drone with a Patriot missile off the port of Ashdod, 28 kilometres north of Gaza. It had no information about any others. So far, no Israelis have been killed since the operation began on July 8, despite 789 rockets hitting Israel and more than 200 others intercepted.

## 16 dead in Hezbollah-Syria rebels battle on Lebanon border: NGO

AFP, Beirut  
At least 16 fighters were killed in clashes between Syrian rebels and Lebanon's Shiite militant group Hezbollah on the Lebanese border over the weekend, a monitoring group said yesterday.  
"Seven members of Hezbollah were killed and 31 wounded" in the clashes which raged from Saturday until Sunday night, said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. He told AFP that the Syrian rebels lost nine fighters and 23 of them were wounded in the battle waged in an undemarcated area of the border between Qalamun in Syria and Lebanon's Aarsal.

## Palestinian shot dead in West Bank clashes: family

AFP, Hebron  
A Palestinian was killed by the Israeli army in a clash near the southern West Bank city of Hebron early yesterday, his family said.  
Relatives identified him as Munir Ahmed Badarin, in his early twenties. They said he was shot near Al-Samua in the southernmost part of the West Bank, and died later in hospital.

## DELHI GANG-RAPE: Indian SC stays death sentence of 2 convicts

NDIV, Online  
The Supreme Court today put on hold the execution of two of the four men convicted of raping and killing a young student in Delhi in December, 2012.  
The court has stayed the death penalty of Akshay Thakur and Vinay Sharma. The sentence of two others, Mukesh and Vinay Sharma, was put on hold in March, days after the Delhi high court rejected the appeal of all four men.  
The high court had called the crime "premeditated" and "callous" and one that "left an indelible scar on the social order."  
The Supreme Court's stay is part of the procedure to examine the convicts' appeals against their death sentence.  
On December 16, 2012, the 23-year-old student and her male friend were attacked by six men after they got on a private bus while going home from the cinema. Her friend was thrown to the back of the bus after being battered with an iron rod, which was later used to torture her. The couple was then thrown from the bus.  
The young woman died of her injuries 13 days later.  
Four of her attackers were convicted last September after the case was fast-tracked, while a juvenile was sentenced to three years in a detention centre. A sixth man, Ram Singh, was found dead in jail in March last year.

# Truce talks on hold as Israel seeks to crush Hamas rockets

AFP, Jerusalem  
Israel is hoping to cause long-term damage to Hamas's military infrastructure before agreeing to ceasefire talks, officials say, as the deadly confrontation entered its seventh day yesterday.  
But it appeared to be in no hurry launch a threatened ground operation as the air force continued to pound Gaza, bringing the Palestinian death toll to 177, and as militants fired barrages of rockets at central Israel, sending thousands running for cover in the country's major cities.  
"The Israeli government at this stage is not answering ceasefire efforts because we want to know first that we have taken away Hamas's desire to do this again in another year or six months," Finance Minister Yair Lapid told army radio on Sunday.  
"That's not happened yet. When it does, then we'll talk."  
So far, the Israeli military campaign has been almost entirely from the air.  
"The IDF (military) has hit Gaza very hard, but has not hit Hamas's armed wing hard

enough," former military intelligence head Amos Yadlin told army radio, saying that so far, only around 50 of the victims were believed to belong to the Islamist movement.  
"Things are moving to another stage in which it will try to exact a very high price from Hamas's armed wing and strengthen both our position in the ceasefire negotiations and our deterrence, as well as hitting Hamas's ability to become stronger after the operation."  
Despite the pressure, also shown for a tite for a ing Israel gression" Gaza, lift its eight-year blockade and release hundreds of its people jailed in an ongoing crackdown in the West Bank.  
According to a senior military official, the army is operating according to a so-called "pain map" drawn up after the last major confrontation with Hamas militants in November 2012, that sets out targets most valuable to the Islamist movement.

"This will impair its abilities and force it into a difficult process, as long as possible, of post-war rehabilitation," he told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity.  
"The harder we hit them, the longer and more difficult the (rehabilitation) process, and more effective the deterrence."  
Although Israel has massed tanks and troops along the border, confirming its readiness for a ground assault, ministers at a late-night cabinet meeting decided against putting boots on the ground - at least for now, media reports said.  
"A good outcome would be damaging the Hamas infrastructure and its ability to produce rockets," the military source said.  
Following days of intensive air strikes, Israel had managed to hit Hamas sufficiently hard that any ceasefire agreement reached now would likely halt rocket fire for a "very long time," Yadlin said, suggesting Israel had a longer-term goal in mind.  
"If the aim is to achieve 'quiet for quiet' and to strengthen deterrence, I think those aims have been reached," he said.

# Israel holds off Gaza ground assault

World urges calm, Arab League urges international protection for Gaza  
AFP, Gaza City, Cairo  
UN chief Ban Ki-moon has urged Israel to scrap plans for a ground offensive, saying "too many" Palestinian civilians have lost their lives.  
The Arab League has called on the international community to end Israeli air strikes on Gaza and to protect Palestinians, ahead of a foreign ministers' meeting yesterday.  
The Arab League "affirmed the necessity of urgent steps for an immediate end to the Israeli aggression on Gaza and providing protection for the Palestinians", the report said.  
Israeli "air strikes on Gaza have become a matter that cannot be met with silence any more", it said.  
The pan-Arab organisation "demands that the international community intervene through its legal and humanitarian institutions to protect the Palestinian people".



Smoke billows from a building hit by an Israeli air strike in the town of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. The Arab League has called on the international community to end Israeli air strikes on Gaza and to protect Palestinians, ahead of a foreign ministers' meeting yesterday.

## Gaza conflict enters seventh day



PHOTO: AFP

## S African Noble Laureate Nadine Gordimer dies

REUTERS, Johannesburg  
South African Nobel Prize-winning author Nadine Gordimer, an uncompromising moralist who became one of the most powerful voices against the injustice of apartheid, has died at the age of 90, her family said yesterday.  
Gordimer, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991, died peacefully at her Johannesburg home on Sunday evening in the presence of her children, Hugo and Oriane, a statement from the family said.  
Regarded by many as South Africa's leading writer, Gordimer was renowned as a rigid moralist whose novels and short stories reflected the drama of human life and emotion in a society warped by decades of white-minority rule.  
Many of her stories dealt with the themes of love, hate and friendship under the pressures of the racially segregated system that ended in 1994, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first black president.  
A member of Mandela's African National Congress - banned under apartheid - Gordimer used her pen to battle against the inequality of white rule for decades, earning her the enmity of sections of the establishment.



## Kremlin denies considering strikes on Ukraine

AFP, Moscow  
The Kremlin denied yesterday a report that Moscow was considering targeted strikes against Ukraine after shells landed across the border and killed a Russian civilian.  
Respected daily Kommersant had quoted a source close to the Kremlin as saying Moscow was considering "targeted retaliatory strikes" against Ukraine, where clashes between pro-Moscow rebels and government troops escalated over the weekend.  
But President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed the report.  
"I don't comment on this in any way. It's complete nonsense," he told AFP.  
The source told Kommersant that Russia was considering the possibility of one-off strikes on positions that were the source of fire directed at Russian territory.

## IRAN NUKE TALKS Kerry hunkers down for 'lengthy' talks

AFP, Vienna  
US Secretary of State John Kerry pressed his Iranian counterpart yesterday to make "critical choices", six days before a deadline to cut a historic deal that would finally dispel fears about Tehran's nuclear drive.  
Going into a second day of negotiations in Vienna with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Kerry aimed to "gauge Iran's willingness to make the critical choices it needs to make," a senior US official said.  
"That's a pretty serious and potentially lengthy conversation. The secretary will take the time necessary to have that discussion," the official said.  
"I am glad that we can have some time to be able to catch up and pick up where we left off," said Kerry.  
Zarif appeared to be in for the long haul too, telling Iranian media on Sunday there were still "seven difficult and tough days for discussion".  
The mooted accord would kill off for good fears that Iran



## ROW OVER MODI'S AIDE: Indian Govt divides opposition

NDIV, Online  
The ruling BJP yesterday scored a political victory by winning over most of its opponents on legislation that will enable Prime Minister Narendra Modi to keep his choice of principal secretary - former telecom regulator Nripendra Misra.  
A bill to amend the Telecom Regulatory Authority Act was cleared in the Lok Sabha by a voice vote in which the house was silent during a call for "Noes". Most opposition parties decided not to oppose the government, leaving the Congress isolated in Parliament.  
If cleared in both houses, the bill will replace the ordinance that the government passed just two days after taking over in May, to enable Misra, a former TRAI chairman, to join Modi's team. Before this, an ex-telecom regulator could never take a government job.  
The Congress has condemned what it calls "an ordinance just to help one individual."  
But after daylong negotiations, the ruling party is confident that its bill will sail through Rajya Sabha too, even though it is in a minority and the Congress is the single largest party.  
Sources say Parliamentary Affairs Minister Venkaiah Naidu spoke to leaders of the Trinamool Congress, BSP, AIADMK, Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal United, who fell in line. Naidu reportedly told these parties that this was "not an ideological issue but a procedural matter."

## Gaza airstrikes toll hits 177

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37-year-old who was standing with a group of men, Qudra said.  
A 60-year-old man was killed in a raid on a house in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, and two other people died in separate strikes elsewhere in the coastal enclave, he said in a statement.  
Earlier, a man and a woman wounded in air strikes on Sunday died of their injuries, Qudra said, raising to seven the number of lives lost yesterday as a result of the air campaign.  
So far, more than 1,280 have been wounded.  
Also yesterday, the United States warned against any Israeli ground invasion of Gaza, saying it would put even more civilians at risk than are currently in the crossfire of attacks on Hamas.  
But the White House stopped short of criticizing Israel over the civilian toll so far in Gaza of the offensive, saying the government had a "right" and "responsibility" to defend their citizens against rocket attacks.  
"Nobody wants to see a ground invasion because that would put more civilians at risk," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said during his daily press briefing.  
It was the first time that the White House has specifically warned in a public forum against a full Israeli invasion of Gaza, though other US officials, including Secretary of State John Kerry, have previously said Washington would not like to see such a step.  
Meanwhile, the Palestinian Hamas movement said it would not end hostilities with Israel without concessions by the Jewish state and that no serious efforts towards a truce had been made.  
"Talk of a ceasefire requires real and serious efforts, which we haven't seen so far," Hamas MP Mushir al-Masri told AFP in Gaza City yesterday.  
Masri said Hamas would only negotiate on the basis of a set of concessions it wants to see Israel agree to.  
Those include the lifting of Israel's eight-year blockade on the Gaza Strip, the opening of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt and the release of Palestinian prisoners Israel has re-arrested after freeing them in exchange for kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in 2011.  
"Any ceasefire must be based on the conditions we have outlined, nothing less than that will be accepted," Masri said.  
Speaking to AFP in Cairo, another Hamas official said a general framework had been presented, and that the group was committed to achieving more than it did in the truce deal that ended the last major round of violence with Israel in 2012.  
"We have a general framework, but have not declared point by point demands," he said.  
"We need to build on the 2012 truce

## Jihadists execute 4 Syrian 'spies' in Iraq

AFP, Ramadi  
Jihadist militants publicly executed four Syrian men in a western Iraqi town for allegedly spying for President Bashar al-Assad's regime, witnesses and a doctor said yesterday.  
Militants flying the flag of the jihadist Islamic State group brought the men to a main street in Al-Qaim, near Iraq's border with Syria, in a convoy of trucks on Sunday, witnesses said.  
One militant then announced that they were spies for Assad's regime, which the IS is fighting in Syria, and the men, their hands bound, were shot dead one by one.  
Their bodies were taken away by ambulance, and Dr Mustafa Shawqi from the Al-Qaim hospital confirmed the deaths.  
IS jihadists have repeatedly carried out executions in both Iraq and Syria, and have documented their deeds online with grisly photos of their victims, including some who have been beheaded.