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Big News Stories of 2014 That Aren't Going Away

We just have so much to look forward to

By Colin Schultz
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The past year was punctuated by crises, from viral outbreaks to military conflicts, protests, natural disasters and political struggles. At some point throughout the year each had its moment in the spotlight. For those of us who aren't directly living them, these struggles tend to recede from view—but just because the American media's attention dwindled, that doesn't mean the problems went away.

Here, then, are a handful of 2014's news stories that will, unfortunately, be following us in to the new year.

Boko Haram

In April, the terrorist organization Boko Haram [kidnapped more than 200 girls from their school in Nigeria](#). Though a few of the girls managed to escape from [the al Qaeda-linked organization](#) many more dropped off the radar altogether. According to local media, [many have been forced into marriages with their captors](#).

Though its attack on the Chibok, Nigeria, school was Boko Haram's most well known, it was hardly the only one. [Hundreds of thousands of people had been forced to flee from the group's incursions](#). The group's latest attack was just this morning. In a raid on a town near Chibok, the group killed at least 15, [says CNN](#).

Ebola

[The worst Ebola outbreak in history has only gotten worse](#). According to the World Health Organization, [7,842 people have so far died of the disease](#), almost exclusively in West Africa.

Scientists have been working hard to come up with ways to fight the virus, and [a number of experimental treatments are currently undergoing testing](#). Researchers have also come up with a

[faster and easier way to test potential patients for the virus](#). Though these advances could help, the outbreak is far from over.

Syria

All eyes were on Syria while the country, led by Bashar al-Assad, still had its chemical weapons. While [its chemical stockpile was dismantled](#), Syria remains the battleground of a brutal civil war, with government forces and multiple different rebel groups all vying for control. The state's military is facing a big problem with desertion and draft-dodging, [says the Washington Post](#), and in the past few months have been taking steps to bolster their flagging numbers.

ISIS

This terror organization, an offshoot of the [Iraq branch of al Qaeda](#), burst on to the scene a few years ago, but this past year the group managed to capture the world's attention with a series of beheadings. The group has also used the opportunity provided by the Syrian civil war to capture some of that country's oil fields, [giving it a steady source of income](#).

ISIS' goal, ostensibly, is to set up an independent Islamic State. [They've even gone so far as to make their own currency](#).

Ukraine

[Protests that began more than a year ago in Kiev](#) have transformed into [deadly skirmishes between the military and pro-Russian separatists in the eastern provinces of Ukraine](#). The fighting originally was connected to a [political agreement between Ukraine and the European Union](#), but that's been signed and the fighting still hasn't stopped.

Just last month NATO's European commander announced that [tanks, troops and artillery had been spotted traveling from Russia to Ukraine](#). [According to the Los Angeles Times](#), Ukraine's president has now said that it seems unlikely that any military move will end the conflict. He's banking on diplomacy; talks start in January.

Thailand

In May, [Thailand's democratic government was toppled in a military coup](#). In October [a new government](#), headed by former army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha, [was set up](#). The transition was not a clean one, [says Human Rights Watch](#), citing the new government's use of mass arrests, censorship and a ban on public gatherings. [But as the Economist notes](#), the military's new rule is tenuous.

Originally, the new government promised to hold elections in the new year. [According to the CATO Institute](#), elections have now been put off until 2016.

California Drought

[California is in the middle of its worst drought in roughly 1,200 years.](#) No, that's not a typo.

Every last inch of California is [running under drought conditions right now](#). Much of the state fits into either the “extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions—the two worst categories. [The National Weather Service predicts](#) that the drought is going to hang on for at least the rest of the winter.

Climate Change Negotiations

This past year was a big one for international climate politics. Both the U.S. and China, the world's two biggest polluters, [set plans to cut their emissions](#). The two powers' plans are important steps, but they are not alone enough to reverse the trend of global climate change.

All of these political machinations were just a preview, though, for the big show set to take place in 2015. In December of next year world governments will [meet in Paris for the 21st Conference of Parties meeting](#), a U.N.-backed get together where, it is hoped, the world can finally come up with a plan to get us on track to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.