

NEWS IN BRIEF

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SYRIA

ON FEB. 7, SYRIANS AND JORDANIANS JOINED TOGETHER OUTSIDE THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY TO PROTEST RUSSIA'S POLITICAL DECISION TO BLOCK U.N. CONDEMNATION OF THE CURRENT SYRIAN REGIME. In a move that some stipulate was strategically aimed to undercut the U.S., Russia vetoed the U.N. Security Council resolution to formally condemn Syrian President Assad's crackdown on protesters. The response to the veto was not limited, however, to the U.S. and Syria, as Jordanians all along the border gathered to express solidarity with their neighbors, the Jordan Times reports. "A group of my friends are collecting money and clothing for refugees," said Raeda Atoum, a Jordanian demonstrator, to the Jordan Times. "The massacres are a tragedy for both Jordanians and Syrians."



UNITED STATES

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, U.S. SCIENTISTS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY CREATED HUMAN BRAIN CELLS THAT REPLICATE GENETICALLY CAUSED PARKINSON'S DISEASE. With these new brain cells, scientists will be able to study Parkinson's mutations in live neurons and test treatments on an accurate model, BBC reports. In a technique which had already been proven successful, the scientists used donated skin cells to create these new brain cells. "Before this, we didn't even think about being able to study the disease in human neurons," said Dr. Jian Feng, who led the investigations.



CANADA

IT HAS RECENTLY EMERGED THAT IN 2010, CANADA DIRECTED ITS INTELLIGENCE AGENCY TO USE INFORMATION EXTRACTED BY MEANS OF TORTURE IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE RISKS TO PUBLIC SAFETY. According to the public safety ministry, this directive only applies in rare cases and does not in any way condone or encourage torture, BBC reports. However, the statement does contradict previous orders and human rights promises, and many fear that it will encourage other countries to continue torture practices. "Information obtained by torture is always discounted, but the problem is, can one safely ignore it if Canadian lives and property are at stake?" Public Safety Minister Vic Toews asked in Parliament.



EGYPT

ON DEC. 29, EGYPT ANNOUNCED ITS DECISION TO PROSECUTE 16 AMERICANS AND 27 OTHERS INVOLVED IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR ALLEGEDLY ACCEPTING ILLEGAL FOREIGN FUNDS TO PUSH DEMOCRATIC AGENDAS IN EGYPT. According to USA Today, military-backed Prime Minister Kamal el-Ganzouri has suggested that "foreign hands" are behind a plot to destabilize the country and oppose his rule, and this crackdown on foreign-funded NGO's is a strategic step to undermine such plots. Despite U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's threat to freeze \$1.5 billion in aid to Egypt, on Feb. 8 el-Ganzouri refused to halt the prosecution.

Kansas' Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services' new policy: cutting food aid for children of illegal immigrants

NEW POLICY DISPUTED WITHIN KANSAS STATE GOVERNMENT

By Haejin Song
STAFF WRITER

Born in the USA, the land of the free ...

On Oct. 1, the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services made a controversial policy change, cutting food aid for many children of parents who are illegal immigrants, reported the Kansas City Star.

Although illegal immigrants are not allowed to obtain food stamps, the children of illegal immigrants born in the USA had previously been eligible. Because of the children's status as U.S. citizens, the families had been able to receive food aid and some relief for the tight family budget. However, the implementation of the new policy discontinues this aid to many families living in Kansas.

According to MSNBC News, SRS has changed the way it counts household income for its Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Through this program, SRS considers the entire income of all members of a household, but does not account for illegal family members when considering the eligibility of a family for aid.

"Now, all household incomes are treated equally," said Angela de Rocha, SRS director of communications, to the Kansas City Star. "Prior to the policy change ... U.S. citizens were being discriminated against."

Rocha believes that without the recent change, the policy would have given illegal immigrants in Kansas

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Stacy Dean, vice president of food assistance policy

more benefits than some U.S. citizens.

Some supporting the policy change argue that the children of illegal immigrants would not have become U.S. citizens in the first place if their parents had not unlawfully immigrated.

However, many are taken aback by the new policy, and a heated debate has emerged regarding whether the state's action is ethical.

"This is not a time, with this economy, when we should be withdrawing help from struggling families with children," said Stacy Dean, vice president of food assistance policy. "We have a demonstrated problem of food insecurity in this country, and, in Kansas, this policy takes you further away from being able to solve the problem."

"The bottom line here is we have children who are going to bed hungry at night," said President and CEO of Kansas Action for Children Shannon Cotsoradis to the Kansas City Star.

Even though Kansas Governor Sam Brownback continually tries to defend the new policy, the controversial issue does not rest within the Kansas state government.

"Their bill is a legal impossibility and a political fantasy," said Kris Kobach, Kansas Secretary of State, to the Associated Press.

As the controversial issue gains more attention in Kansas and throughout the nation, many illegal immigrants continue to worry about the future of their families, including their children, who remain legal citizens of the United States of America.