

**News of September 2019**

**Issue no. 118**

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**Commentary.**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Jeremy Bentham, an English philosopher, suggested that people should tattoo their name, address, and date of birth on their wrists: “Who are you, with whom I have to deal? The answer to this important question would no longer be liable to evasion.” While Mr. Bentham’s suggestion was ignored—and today’s tattoo fashion is far from name and address—the identification of a person is an enduring problem. Documents—passports, identity cards, medical records, driver’s licenses, marriage contracts, birth certificates—many people have one or all of these.

Except when they don’t, or when the documents they have are not trusted by the person who asks, “Who are you?”

For example, in Berlin a man was arrested for killing a former Chechen separatist commander on 23 August. According to the *New York Times*, he had a Russian passport and, yes, arm tattoos but “investigators believe the name is fake.” An anonymous email to the Berlin police suggested the man is a former major in the St. Petersburg police department named Vladimir Alekseevich Stepanov; the *Times* found his name in “court and government records in Russia” and “also ran searches through millions of images on numerous photo databases and located two potential photographs of him,” but then *Fontanka.ru*, a Russian news website, said Mr. Stepanov was in prison and published a “current photo of Mr. Stepanov, which does not seem to resemble the suspect in custody in Berlin.” So who is he?

[https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/world/europe/berlin-murder-russia.html?ref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fkatrin-bennhold&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/world/europe/berlin-murder-russia.html?ref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fkatrin-bennhold&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection)

For another example, migrants of all ages often have few and sometimes no documents. Human Rights Watch issued a report on the treatment of unaccompanied migrant children in the French Hautes-Alpes. It conducted interviews between January and July with 61 juvenile migrants as well as others who interacted with the children and reviewed the records of evaluations of 36 children by the government, 13 juvenile court judgments, and 2 guardianship offers. The children told them that they “felt they had not been heard” during their interviews with French authorities, “a conclusion reinforced when they saw the reports prepared by the examiner.” HRW found that “many [of the children] are refused formal recognition as children after flawed age assessments” and “police have also harassed aid workers, volunteers, and activists who take part in search-and-rescue operations in the mountains.” Among other recommendations, HRW urges the government to presume that the “birth certificates and other identity documents obtained abroad” that the child has “be presumed valid in the absence of substantiated reason to believe they are not” and to treat the children as the juveniles they are.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/09/05/subject-whim/treatment-unaccompanied-migrant-children-french-hautes-alpes>

And then there is this: “A new Chinese app that lets users swap their faces with celebrities . . . in a video clip racked up millions of downloads,” *Reuters* reported, but sparked “new concerns surrounding identity verification.” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-tech-zao/chinese-face-swapping-app-goes-viral-sparks-privacy-concerns-idUSKCN1VN0G9>

Governments hold a monopoly on issuing documents of legal identity, and government archives around the world hold literally billions of examples. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 is “By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.” It does not say where and how that registration is to be maintained and made available to the person asking, “Who are you?” Tattooing is looking better all the time.

**HRWG News.** The meeting of the Working Group will be held at the ICA meeting in Adelaide, Australia, on 21 October from 10:00 to 12:00 at a venue to be confirmed. Everyone is welcome.

## **International news.**

**European Union Court of Justice.** The Court issued two significant opinions, one saying “the operator of a search engine is not required to carry out a de-referencing on all versions of its search engine” and the other that the “prohibition on processing certain categories of sensitive personal data applies also to operations of search engines.” The last sentence of the press release concerning the processing of sensitive data reads, “The Court also makes clear that, even if the operator of a search engine were to find that the data subject does not have a right to the de-referencing of such links because the inclusion of the link in question is strictly necessary for reconciling the data subject’s rights to privacy and protection of personal data with the freedom of information of potentially interested internet users, the operator is in any event required, at the latest on the occasion of the request for de-referencing, to adjust the list of results in such a way that the overall picture it gives the internet user reflects the current legal position, which means in particular that links to web pages containing information on that point must appear in first place on the list.” The Italian Data Protection Authority summarized this as requiring the search engine’s algorithm to “list first the most updated piece of news and not the piece of news that has received the most clicks.” Thanks to Giulia Barrera for the information.  
<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2019-09/cp190112en.pdf>;  
<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2019-09/cp190113en.pdf>

**Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia.** In a status report on the disposition of the cases on the Court’s docket, the Open Society Justice Institute reported that in the case against Yim Tith, the Co-Investigating Judges “issued separate and conflicting closing orders,” each of about 500 pages. While the outcome of the case is not clear, the “one clearly, and perhaps overridingly, positive impact of the process” is that the public “will benefit greatly by the fact that closing orders with extensive factual and legal analysis . . . after nearly 10 years under investigating—will be available in Khmer, English and French.” As the court foresees its closure in 2021, determining where the archives of the Court will be held is becoming a critical issue. <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/publications/latest-developments-at-the-extraordinary-chambers-in-the-courts-of-cambodia-august-2019>

**International Criminal Court.** The Prosecutor filed notice of appeal against the Trial Chamber’s acquittal of Laurent Gbagbo and Charles Ble Goude. For background see *HRWG News* 2019-01 and 07. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/record.aspx?docNo=ICC-02/11-01/15-1270-Corr>

**Interpol.** The director of Interpol’s organized and emerging crime units told *Thomson Reuters Foundation* that to stop human trafficking, “We need access to data that is not in law enforcement’s hands, that is held by private industries, by the banking sector.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190911224407-pb67d/>

**Special Tribunal for Lebanon.** The Court made public the indictment of Salim Jamil Ayyash, the arrest warrants for him, and the judge’s decision on the Prosecutor’s submission on the case. Ayyash is a Hezbollah fighter accused of attacking three politicians, as part of the events that led to the killing of the Lebanese prime minister and 21 other people on 14 February 2005. <https://www.stl-tsl.org/en/media/press-releases/indictment-in-the-connected-cases-made-public>

**United Nations.** The UN’s International Law Commission (ILC) adopted draft articles on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity and “decided to recommend the draft articles to the UN General Assembly.” Draft Article 14 concerns mutual legal assistance, and the annex which supports it details rules on the provision of documents between States. [http://legal.un.org/ilc/reports/2019/english/a\\_74\\_10\\_advance.pdf](http://legal.un.org/ilc/reports/2019/english/a_74_10_advance.pdf)

The report of the special investigation into the death of Dag Hammarskjöld in a plane crash in Congo in 1962 was to be given to the General Assembly on 16 September but was not, due to a “delay in document processing” within the UN, a spokesman told *PassBlue*. Although “several UN member states” have not declassified all relevant material, “a key detail is now corroborated: there was a second plane in the air” the night of the crash. <https://www.passblue.com/2019/09/17/stalling-the-un-report-on-dag-hammarskjolds-death-is-regrettable/>

The Group of Experts on the conflict in Yemen released a report accompanied by a supplement that laid out detailed findings and methodology used. The Group “found patterns of continued violations by all parties to the conflict, as civilians continued to be killed and injured by the fighting and to suffer violations of their most basic human rights.” It “considered the following to be sources of direct information: interviews with victims; interviews with direct eyewitnesses to an event; videos, photographs, satellite imagery and documents whose authenticity has been assured; decrees, regulations and directives issued by governments; publicly available statements from parties to the conflict, including statements made via State media outlets; statistics, surveys, reports, and other quantitative and qualitative information generated by United Nations organisations, bodies, agencies, funds and programmes.” [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A\\_HRC\\_42\\_CRP\\_1.PDF](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A_HRC_42_CRP_1.PDF)

United Nations/World Bank. Reports on maternal mortality and child mortality were released by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund and the World Bank Group. Using data from “a vital or sample vital registration system, a survey or census collecting full [or summary] birth histories . . . or information on household deaths . . . and life tables,” the report said that progress has been made in saving lives over the past two decades. However, it cautions, “accurate measurement of maternal mortality remains challenging and many deaths still go uncounted” because “many countries still lack well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems, and where such systems exist, reporting or misclassification of cause of death continue to pose a major challenge to data accuracy.” <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/despite-remarkable-progress-15000-children-and-800-women-still-die-every-day-mostly>; [https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/19-09-2019-more-women-and-children-survive-today-than-ever-before-un-report?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=f45872f2e9-MR\\_COPY\\_10&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-f45872f2e9-149736437](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/19-09-2019-more-women-and-children-survive-today-than-ever-before-un-report?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=f45872f2e9-MR_COPY_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-f45872f2e9-149736437)

### **World/general news.**

Business records. “Brazilian federal police have proposed criminal charges against mining giant Vale and German safety firm Tuv Sud and 13 of their employees” over the deadly dam collapse in January 2019, *BBC News* reported. “Police reportedly say both firms falsified documents that said the Feijao dam was stable.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2019-07. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49772778>

“Bayer AG said outside investigators found nothing illegal in a Monsanto project that tracked journalists, politicians and others in Europe before the companies combined last year,” *Bloomberg* reported. Last May French media disclosed that Monsanto “kept secret scores on more than 200 people in a bid to suppress criticism and lobby for approval of Monsanto products like Roundup weedkiller.” The law firm that conducted the review said “the stakeholder lists created were detailed, methodical, and designed to strongly advocate Monsanto’s positions to stakeholders and to the public,” but “we did not find evidence to support the French media’s allegations regarding the illegality of the stakeholder lists.” <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-05/bayer-says-probe-found-nothing-illegal-in-monsanto-surveillance>

A decade ago courts in Nicaragua said workers at banana plantations had been poisoned by chemicals used by the growers and were owed compensation. The companies that manufactured the chemicals—Dow Chemical, Shell Oil and Occidental Chemical—refused to pay. Now the victims have brought suit in France “where the companies have significant assets and 1,245 former workers and relatives are looking to collect the money,” the *New York Times* reported. A French court “delivered documents to Dow France provisionally freezing shares worth 99 million euros . . . pending a trial.” For a book-length treatment of the cases, using many documents from the companies that were made public in the litigation, see Susanna Rankin Bohme, *Toxic Injustice: A Transnational History of Exposure and Struggle*. <https://www.365news.com/2019/09/sterilized-workers-seek-to-collect-damages-against-dow-chemical-in-france/>

The U.K. government body that monitors the operations of British businesses overseas ruled “admissible a landmark complaint against the sugar industry’s sustainability certification body, Bonsucro.” The complaint was filed by Inclusive Development International on behalf of more than 700 displaced Cambodian families who “alleged that the sugar association violated the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises by failing to hold its member company, Mitr Phol, accountable after the Thai sugar giant grabbed the families’ land and left them homeless and destitute.” For background see

*HRWG News* 2019-03. <https://www.inclusivedevelopment.net/uk-government-body-accepts-oecd-complaint-against-sugar-sustainability-body/>

“China’s tech giants Tencent and Alibaba are refusing to co-operate with a government-backed credit scoring programme by withholding access to their troves of customer loans data,” reported *Financial Times*. For background on the credit program, see *HRWG News* 2017-10. [https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/china-alibaba-and-tencent-refuse-to-share-loans-data-with-government-backed-credit-scoring-company?mc\\_cid=8048bffd3f&mc\\_eid=f1f6556540](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/china-alibaba-and-tencent-refuse-to-share-loans-data-with-government-backed-credit-scoring-company?mc_cid=8048bffd3f&mc_eid=f1f6556540)

SLAPPS are strategic lawsuits against public participation that are filed by a private party with the intention to silence or intimidate the other party. Business and Human Rights Resources Centre reviewed “24 SLAPPs brought by 12 carbon majors . . . and other mining companies and one industry association, between 2015 and 2018.” Of the 24 cases in the report, in just one was the defendant formally charged; in 9 the charges were “dropped or . . . dismissed,” and 14 are ongoing. “The plaintiff’s motive is not necessarily to win the case but rather to pressure defendants to abandon their criticism or opposition, draining defenders’ resources in the process.” <https://www.business-humanrights.org/sites/default/files/Big%20Polluters%20and%20SLAPPs%20Briefing%20FINAL.pdf>

The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights and others filed criminal complaints against several German companies for “exporting the spyware FinSpy to Turkey without an export license.” The public prosecutor in Munich opened an investigation. “The Turkish government allegedly planted the spyware on a fake version of the Turkish oppositional website *Adalet*.” When installed, “FinSpy enables government authorities to access telephone and VoIP conversations, data systems, screenshots and other photos.” <https://www.ecchr.eu/nc/en/press-release/german-prosecutor-opens-criminal-investigation-into-finfisher-for-selling-spyware-to-turkey-without-license/>

Global Witness issued a report whose title tells it all: “Agrobusiness including Del Monte Philippines’ Growers Implicated in Violent Attacks against Indigenous Groups: Major Exporter of Pineapples to the US is Carrying Out Business at All Costs.” The 70 detailed footnotes show use of (among others) police records, human rights organization records, records of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, interviews, and responses from Dole Food Company to inquiries. See also a subsequent report, *Defending the Philippines*. [https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19780/Briefing\\_Agribusiness\\_Final\\_qBKYYSD.pdf](https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19780/Briefing_Agribusiness_Final_qBKYYSD.pdf); [https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19791/Philippines\\_Press\\_Release\\_FINAL\\_24\\_Sept.pdf](https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19791/Philippines_Press_Release_FINAL_24_Sept.pdf)

A group of historians asked the U.S. Federal court in Cleveland, Ohio, that is overseeing some 2,000 bundled lawsuits against opioid manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacies by state, local and tribal governments, to order in any settlement that “all collected documents be preserved and made public,” *STAT* reported. [https://www.statnews.com/2019/09/12/historians-push-for-opioid-documents-archive/?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=933d0621b8-MR\\_COPY\\_02&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-933d0621b8-149736437](https://www.statnews.com/2019/09/12/historians-push-for-opioid-documents-archive/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=933d0621b8-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-933d0621b8-149736437)

Environment. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change adopted a *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*. Among the frightening warnings: “Extreme sea level events that are historically rare (once per century in the recent past) are projected to occur frequently (at least once per year) at many locations by 2050 in all . . . scenarios, especially in tropical regions (*high confidence*). The increasing frequency of high water levels can have severe impacts in many locations depending on exposure (*high confidence*).” Archival institutions beware. A positive development is that along with the extensive scientific data used, the “assessment methodologies” include “indigenous and community knowledge.” <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/home/>

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, uses algorithms to read “thousands of articles and UN and government reports per day” and analyzes “high resolution satellite images of housing damage and destruction.” In a report on the first six months of 2019, it said there were “about 10.8 million new displacements worldwide between January and June 2019, 7 million triggered by disasters and 3.8 million by conflict and violence.” This is “the highest mid-year figure ever reported for displacements associated with disasters. In today’s changing climate, mass displacement triggered by extreme weather events is becoming the norm.” [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019-mid-year-figures\\_for%20website%20upload.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019-mid-year-figures_for%20website%20upload.pdf)

A study using data from satellites and weather stations on the ground in the Amazon found “deforestation and consequent transition to pasture or agriculture to grow soybean tend to increase in 2 to 4 times the soil and air temperatures in the region,” reported *Eurasia Review*.

[https://www.eurasiareview.com/12092019-satellite-study-of-amazon-rainforest-land-cover-gives-insight-into-2019-fires/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](https://www.eurasiareview.com/12092019-satellite-study-of-amazon-rainforest-land-cover-gives-insight-into-2019-fires/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29)

Land records. Thomson Reuters Foundation published two stories on the pluses and minuses of mapping. A coalition of a dozen nongovernmental organizations created LandMark, an online project to map all of the world’s indigenous lands. It now has maps covering 12% of the world’s land, and supporters say mapping indigenous lands “will help secure legal rights and alert communities to the potential threats of illegal logging and mining.” However, the “new technologies used to map areas in developing nations for granting titles and aiding development could be misused to further marginalize vulnerable people;” for example, mapping that shows informal settlements can make the communities vulnerable to “harassment, a shakedown, or an eviction by authorities.”

<http://news.trust.org/item/20190913050746-mmski/>; [http://www.thisisplace.org/i/?id=caa3a9fc-4c87-4345-b574-334d47569e7f&utm\\_source=Newsletter&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=Place](http://www.thisisplace.org/i/?id=caa3a9fc-4c87-4345-b574-334d47569e7f&utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Place)

Medical records. With funding from WHO, the International Medical Corps, and the Guinean Red Cross, between 8 December 2015 and 30 September 2016 Surveillance Active en ceinture, the Guinean national survivors' monitoring programme, attempted to contact and follow-up all survivors of Ebola virus disease who were discharged from Ebola treatment units. According to the report published in *The Lancet*, “the names and contacts of all eligible survivors were identified from the Ebola virus disease database that is managed by the Guinean Ministry of Health and partners.” Of the 1270 survivors, “information was retrieved” for 1130 (89%). If the person was alive, the field team “actively followed” him. For persons who died, the team “completed verbal autopsies (i.e., interviews in which a description of illness and events is recorded and a checklist of symptoms is gone through) with the close family members of the deceased, and reviewed medical files shared by family members (when available).” Compared to “age-specific mortality in the Guinea population from the third General Population and Housing Census,” survivors of Ebola “had a more than five-times increased risk of mortality up to 31 December 2015,” with 59 deaths, of which the cause of death was “attributed” to renal failure in 37 cases. After that date, mortality did not differ between survivors of Ebola virus disease and the general population. All but 4 of the known deaths occurred within 13 months of leaving the treatment unit, but the “data management challenges encountered in Guinea” limited further information on the cause of death. The research did provide “preliminary evidence that survivors hospitalized for longer than 12 days with Ebola virus disease could be at particularly high risk of mortality.”

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(19\)30313-5/fulltext?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=bfae345055-MR\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-bfae345055-149736437](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(19)30313-5/fulltext?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=bfae345055-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-bfae345055-149736437)

*STAT* published an article asking, “Mental health apps are scooping up your most sensitive data. Will you benefit?” Citing a study that “revealed that 81% of the 36 top-rated mental health apps sent data to Google and Facebook for analytics or advertising purposes,” it said “a major concern with companies obtaining this type of information is that they could use it for . . . ‘algorithmic discrimination’—when a group, like people with a certain health condition, are screened out of opportunities such as housing, employment, or insurance by an automated system.”

[https://www.statnews.com/2019/09/20/mental-health-apps-capture-sensitive-data/?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=5a86ad923f-MR\\_COPY\\_10&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-5a86ad923f-149736437](https://www.statnews.com/2019/09/20/mental-health-apps-capture-sensitive-data/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=5a86ad923f-MR_COPY_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-5a86ad923f-149736437)

The medical images and health data, including X-rays, MRIs and CT scans, of more than 5 million patients in the U.S. “and millions more around the world” are held on 187 servers that are “unprotected by passwords or basic security precautions,” *ProPublica* wrote. [https://www.propublica.org/article/millions-of-americans-medical-images-and-data-are-available-on-the-internet?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=0432e701da-MR\\_COPY\\_02&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-0432e701da-149736437](https://www.propublica.org/article/millions-of-americans-medical-images-and-data-are-available-on-the-internet?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=0432e701da-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-0432e701da-149736437)

The U.S. National Library of Medicine moved its DNA Sequence Read Archive (SRA) to the cloud to make the data widely available for large-scale computing. “The public SRA data include genomes of

viruses, bacteria, and nonhuman higher organisms, as well as gene expression data, metagenomes, and a small amount of human genome data that is consented to be public (from the 1000 Genomes Project).”  
<https://nlmdirector.nlm.nih.gov/2019/09/24/biomedical-discovery-through-sra-and-the-cloud/>

Stories of long unsolved crimes being solved using DNA databases and genealogical records have been widely publicized. A U.S. economics professor used criminal history data from seven U.S. states between 1994 and 2005 and found that “violent offenders who gave a DNA sample were 17% less likely to reoffend within the first 5 years of release than those who did not; serious property offenders were 6 % less likely to reoffend.” A second study using criminal records in Denmark again showed that “those sampled were 43% less likely to reoffend in the first year,” *Undark* reported. In other words, simply taking and holding a DNA sample works as a crime deterrent in some cases.  
<https://undark.org/article/dna-database-deter-crime/>

Privacy. The Digital Recognition Network is a “private surveillance system crowdsourced by hundreds” of people who “have installed cameras that passively scan, capture, and upload the license plates of cars.” Used heavily by companies that repossess vehicles when the owners are behind on car payments, it now holds 9 million license plate photos. *Motherboard* tested the database and found that photos of a car could be tracked with “dozens of sightings, spanning years” and each entry “was tagged with the time and GPS coordinates of the car.” A training video for the system pointed out that if the vehicle was scanned while parked in the evening, users can assume that it is at the person’s home, providing quick identification. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/ne879z/i-tracked-someone-with-license-plate-readers-drn](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ne879z/i-tracked-someone-with-license-plate-readers-drn)

Slavery. The UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery said over 40 million people are enslaved around the world, a quarter of them children. “Global estimates from the International Labour Organization indicate that 24.9 million people are in forced labour situations worldwide, and 15.4 million live in forced marriages.”  
[https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1045972?utm\\_source=PassBlue+List&utm\\_campaign=e674029f33-PassBlue\\_Fordham\\_Nov18&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4795f55662-e674029f33-55008469](https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1045972?utm_source=PassBlue+List&utm_campaign=e674029f33-PassBlue_Fordham_Nov18&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4795f55662-e674029f33-55008469)

*Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported on slavery and human trafficking in South Asia:

\*The government of Bangladesh appointed a former judge to “advise on how to clear a huge backlog of trafficking cases.” According to police records, more than 4,000 cases from 2012 to the present are awaiting trial. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190916152521-y1bmp/>

\* In India, when the anti-slavery advocacy group Taftesh analyzed police diaries, cases filed in court, and complaints registered with police by survivors in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh after they had been rescued and returned home, they found that out of 429 people charged with involvement in 198 trafficking cases in the states of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh from 2008 until 2018, only 3 were convicted. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190903111133-4vy8h/>

\*Malaysia, which is home to an estimated 212,000 of about 40 million people trapped in slavery worldwide (according to the Global Slavery Index by human rights group Walk Free Foundation), had only 140 convictions for enslavement between 2014 and 2018 “despite launching more than 1,600 investigations and identifying almost 3,000 victims, according to the U.S. Trafficking in Persons reports.” To speed up the process, Malaysia created a special trafficking court in March 2018, but “official figures . . . from the court’s registrar office showed that only 26 cases were cleared in the court’s first 15 months—with 8 resulting in a conviction.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190903233726-1aku9/>

Technology. The *New York Times* investigated child pornography found on the internet, revealing “a problem global in scope” that has multiplied “at an alarming rate” through the use of “smartphone cameras, social media and cloud storage.” One disturbing fact: “Technology companies reported a record 45 million online photos and videos of the abuse last year.” For its report, the *Times* “reviewed over 10,000 pages of police and court documents; conducted software tests to assess the availability of the imagery through search engines; accompanied detectives on raids; and spoke with investigators, lawmakers, tech executives and government officials.” [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/28/us/child-sex-abuse.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fmichael-h.-keller&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/28/us/child-sex-abuse.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fmichael-h.-keller&action=click&contentCollection=undefined&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection)

Facebook announced that it will “expand its definition of terrorist organizations” and that it will “deploy artificial intelligence to better spot and block live videos of shootings,” the *New York Times* reported.

[www.nytimes.com/2019/09/17/technology/facebook-hate-speech-extremism.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/17/technology/facebook-hate-speech-extremism.html) It then “suspended tens of thousands of apps for a variety of violations, including improperly sharing private data,” *ars technica* added. <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2019/09/facebook-suspends-tens-of-thousands-of-apps-in-ongoing-privacy-investigation/>

A U.S. Federal judge allowed a lawsuit to continue so users may “try to hold Facebook liable . . . for letting app developers and business partners harvest their personal data without their consent,” *Reuters* reported. It quoted the judge as writing, “Facebook’s motion to dismiss is littered with assumptions about the degree to which social media users can reasonably expect their personal information and communications to remain private. Facebook’s view is so wrong.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-lawsuit-privacy-idUSKCN1VU2G2>

After a contractor for Google leaked audio snippets to Belgian media, Google “paused its human audio review worldwide” but has now resumed it “with increased options for user data control,” *WIRED* reported. For background, see *HRWG News* 2019-08. [https://www.wired.com/story/google-assistant-human-transcription-privacy/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT\\_WIR\\_NEWSLETTER\\_0\\_DAILY\\_ZZ&utm\\_brand=wired&utm\\_campaign=aud-dev&utm\\_mailing=WIR\\_Daily\\_092319&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=nl&utm\\_term=list1\\_p2](https://www.wired.com/story/google-assistant-human-transcription-privacy/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_092319&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=list1_p2)

World War II. *TASS* reported, “Russia will hand over 22 fonds of archival documents taken to the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War back to Austria, the Russian government said in an order published on its official website.” *TASS* estimated that almost 2,400 documents will be included; “the attachment to the order clarifies that these documents belonged to different Jewish organizations in pre-war Austria.” <https://tass.com/society/1080468>

Miki Dezaki is a U.S. documentary filmmaker who produced “Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue,” which has been shown commercially in Japan and South Korea. He and the film’s distributor are being sued by five conservative Japanese men whom Dezaki interviewed for the film. The lawsuit accuses him of defamation and “breach of contract, saying the plaintiffs agreed to be interviewed only for his graduate thesis not for a commercial film” and are “demanding compensation and a suspension of all public screening,” reported the *New York Times*. Supporters of the film say the lawsuit “shows how nationalists seek to silence those who challenge them, while at the same time using any outlet they can to spread views that run counter even to an official 1993 Japanese government apology to the comfort women.” [www.nytimes.com/2019/09/18/world/asia/comfort-women-documentary-japan.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/18/world/asia/comfort-women-documentary-japan.html)

A new book, *The Dutch Railroad in Wartime, 1939-1945*, attempts “to offer a comprehensive accounting of the trains and their impact,” reported the *New York Times*. The authors found that “112 Dutch trains went from the Netherlands to nine German Nazi camps in countries such as Germany, Austria and Poland from June 1942 to August 1944,” that each train from the main transit camp carried about 1,000 people, and the Dutch railroad “invoiced the Germans about the equivalent of 3 million euros, adjusted for inflation, for running the trains.” However, “the Germans may not have paid this full amount, about \$3.28 million, but no one knows for sure because the records have been lost.”

<https://www.arenanews.com/block/5127867>

### **Bilateral and multilateral news.**

Algeria/France. French President Emmanuel Macron published a decree opening the archives relating to the disappearance of Maurice Audin, an Algerian militant who was arrested and killed in 1957 in Algeria, *Le Figaro* reported. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/ouverture-des-archives-francaises-concernant-la-disparition-de-maurice-audin-20190910> And at a conference in Paris on the disappeared of the Algerian war, the representative of the Service interministerial of the archives of France announced that France’s prime minister will instruct “the administrations, including Defense” to declassify and open the archives on the war with Algeria. Thanks to Perrine Canavaggio for the information. <https://www.ldh-france.org/les-disparus-de-la-guerre-dalgerie-du-fait-des-forces-de-lordre-francaises-verite-et-justice/>  
<https://www.observalgerie.com/international/france/france-declassifier-archives-secretes-guerre-dalgerie/>

Burundi/Tanzania. The UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi issued a report, based on “over 300 interviews with victims, witnesses and other sources living in Burundi or in third countries, in person or remotely, to add to the more than 1,000 testimonies already collected,” saying “serious human rights violations have continued to be committed in Burundi since May 2018, in a general climate of impunity. Some of these violations constitute international crimes.” The UN extended the Commission’s mandate for another year. Despite the violence, Tanzania intends to force Burundian refugees to return to the country, according to a confidential bilateral agreement obtained by Amnesty International. Signed by Tanzania’s Minister for Home Affairs and Burundi’s Minister of Interior on 24 August, it says that the returns process would begin in the “second week of September and be completed by 31 December 2019” and that “returns would continue with or without refugees’ consent.” The expulsion of persons who have the right to be recognized as refugees is called *refoulement*, and the principle of non-*refoulement*, laid out in the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, is the cornerstone of asylum and international refugee law, which the bilateral agreement would violate.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/tanzania-confidential-document-shows-forced-repatriation-of-burundi-refugees-imminent/>;  
<https://ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIBurundi/Pages/CoIBurundi.aspx>

Cameroon/Germany. Germany gave Cameroon a hard drive containing nearly 10,000 digital records from the German colonial period in Cameroon (1884-1916), *CRTV* reported.  
<http://www.crtv.cm/2019/09/archives-nationales-le-cameroun-sous-protectorat-allemand-numerise/>

Chile/United States. The U.S. nongovernmental National Security Archive used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain and publish a partially declassified memorandum on the U.S. effort to hold Chilean General Pinochet responsible for the assassination in Washington, D.C., of the former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier and his colleague, Ronni Moffett, on 21 September 1976.  
<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/chile/2019-09-20/letelier-moffitt-assassination-state-department-officials-pushed-pinochets-ouster>

Finland/Russia. Sandarmokh, north of St. Petersburg, Russia, has been recognized since 1997 as a gravesite for prisoners who died at the hands of Stalin’s police. “The names of 6,241 prisoners who died here were recovered from the [Russian] archives in the 1990s,” reported the *Washington Post*, but now a group of Russian authorities is suggesting that the graves include “hundreds of Soviet POWs” held by Finnish troops that occupied the area between 1941 and 1944. A Finnish historian said “there is nothing in the Finnish archives . . . to suggest that the Finnish occupiers were aware of the gravesite.”  
<https://www.stripes.com/this-russian-forest-symbolized-stalin-s-brutality-now-some-contend-the-finns-should-share-the-blame-1.599043>

Gambia/United States. The Gambia truth commission went to four U.S. cities and took testimonies, reported *Al Jazeera*.  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/gambian-americans-search-answers-reparations-jammeh-190906215135924.html>

Japan/North Korea. The *Washington Post* ran an article on Japanese citizens kidnaped by North Korea between 1977 and 1983. Five of the abducted returned to Japan in 2002. “Tokyo rejects North Korea’s claim that 8 other abductees died and 4 never entered the country. The main evidence proffered by Pyongyang—8 death certificates, drawn up at the same time, from the same hospital, with identical stamps—was clearly fabricated, as North Korea later admitted.” In 2004 a set of remains said to be of one of the kidnapped women was given to Japan, but “a DNA test proved the remains were not [hers], while hospital records supplied by North Korea were riddled with obvious falsifications and errors, Japan says.”  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/kidnapped-by-north-korea-in-1978-this-japanese-man-is-now-telling-his-tale/2019/09/10/dbcd3dbe-d2c9-11e9-8924-1db7dac797fb\\_story.html?wpisrc=nl\\_rainbow&wpm=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/kidnapped-by-north-korea-in-1978-this-japanese-man-is-now-telling-his-tale/2019/09/10/dbcd3dbe-d2c9-11e9-8924-1db7dac797fb_story.html?wpisrc=nl_rainbow&wpm=1)

Middle East war. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic reported to the Human Rights Council. Based on 291 interviews, satellite imagery, photographs, videos and medical records, the commissioners said “civilians countrywide continue to withstand the brunt of ongoing hostilities.” The commissioners said, “Access to civil documentation and birth registration . . . remain difficult,” lack of civil documentation will challenge “the sustainable return of internally displaced persons and refugees;” satellite imagery shows “tens of thousands of hectares of vital crops and farmland in the demilitarized zone were set on fire;” lack of official death certificates mean women are “unable to move forward with the legal aspects of deaths” including inheritance, custody rights, and freedom of movement.  
[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A\\_HRC\\_42\\_51.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A_HRC_42_51.docx)



The UN said 51 medical facilities (hospitals, ambulance points, and clinics) have been damaged by attacks since the Idlib, Syria, offensive began in late April, *The New Humanitarian* reported. The Syrian American Medical Society said its records show that “at least 14 sites hit by the end of July had shared their coordinates” with the UN to put on a “no-strike list, which was shared with Russia, Turkey, and the United States.” The Armed Conflict and Location & Event Data Project, a nongovernmental organization that monitors and maps conflict, recorded “69 incidents affecting health workers and patients in northwestern Syria, mainly aerial bombing and shelling by Syrian government and allied Russian forces” from 27 April to 15 September. The UN said it will “launch an investigation into attacks on hospitals and other civilian sites.” [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/09/30/UN-healthcare-sites-hit-Syria-Idlib-offensive?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=social](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/09/30/UN-healthcare-sites-hit-Syria-Idlib-offensive?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=social)

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) published a report, “Satellite images obtained by SNHR [that] prove the extent of massive destruction inflicted on Khan Sheikhoun City.” SNHR “analyzed the satellite images and compared these with photographs and videos we obtained showing the city’s buildings in recent months,” and accounts of eyewitnesses, activists and survivors who witnessed the bombings and reported on the effects in their locations. SNHR retains “copies of all the videos, photos and accounts included in this report in a confidential electronic database, and backups on hard disks.” [http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/Satellite\\_Images\\_Obtained\\_by\\_SNHR\\_Prove\\_the\\_Extent\\_of\\_Massive\\_Destruction\\_Inflicted\\_on\\_Khan\\_Sheikhoun\\_City\\_en.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/Satellite_Images_Obtained_by_SNHR_Prove_the_Extent_of_Massive_Destruction_Inflicted_on_Khan_Sheikhoun_City_en.pdf)

The *New York Times* explained how it documents and verifies both Afghan civilian and Afghan forces casualties. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/10/reader-center/afghanistan-casualty-report.html>

The U.S. nongovernmental National Security Archive published an article on documents, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, concerning the actions of the two men who were contractors of the Central Intelligence Agency to “develop and run its torture program.” The items “catalog the alternating horror and banality” of the 25 days of interrogation that “Khalid Sheikh Mohammed endured.” Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a Pakistani militant, is in U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, accused of masterminding the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people. <https://unredacted.com/2019/09/12/declassified-cia-cables-recount-a-poignant-moment-with-ksm-legal-groups-commitment-to-lawfully-employ-methods-even-the-israelis-may-not-frinformsum-9-12-2019/>

The SITE Intelligence group, a U.S.-based nongovernmental counterterrorism organization specializing in tracking and analyzing online activity of the global extremist community, reported that in a video released by al-Qaeda its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri “called upon Muslims to attack U.S., European, Israeli and Russian targets,” *Al Jazeera* reported. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/al-qaeda-leader-urges-attacks-west-911-anniversary-190911170040478.html>

U.S. *National Public Radio* reported on how the U.S. hacked ISIS computer systems in 2016. <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/26/763545811/how-the-u-s-hacked-isis>

New Zealand/Rwanda. New Zealand gave Rwanda “a copy of New Zealand’s diplomatic archive on Rwanda” from its tenure as president of the UN Security Council, 1993-1994, as the Rwandan genocide unfolded, reported *The New Times*. <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/genocide-nz-diplomatic-archives>

### **National news.**

Australia. A team representing 16 organizations and funded by the Australian Research Council launched a website to “help return Indigenous ancestral remains held in other countries back to local communities in Australia.” The website provides links to records and personal papers from repositories worldwide that contain evidence of removals. <https://returnreconcilerenew.info/about-the-project.html>

Brazil. In a report based on 170 interviews and figures compiled by the nongovernmental Pastoral Land Commission and cited by the Attorney General’s Office, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said more than 300 people have been killed over the past decade in conflicts over use of land and resources in the Amazon. HRW itself “documented 28 killings--plus 4 attempted killings and over 40 cases of death threats--in which there was credible evidence that those responsible were engaged in illegal

deforestation and saw their victims as obstacles to their criminal enterprise. Most of the cases are from the past five years.” During the last 10 years only 14 of these murder cases were tried. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/17/brazil-criminal-networks-target-rainforest-defenders>

Canada. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation “revealed the names of 2,800 children who died in residential schools,” *The Canadian Press* reported. The Centre’s director said that these are the deaths and names researchers have been able to confirm, but “another 1,600 also died but remain unnamed” and “many hundreds” are undocumented, adding, “Some schools have an extensive list of students who died; some list none.” <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/names-of-children-who-died-in-residential-schools-released-in-sombre-ceremony-1.4616414>

The Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre digitized ten letter books, dating from 1876-1904, from the Shingwauk and Wawanosh Residential Schools and published them on the Algoma University archives website, reported *CTV News*. A former pupil at the Shingwauk school said, “If there’s going to be any reconciliation, this truth has to be known. It has to be spoken and it has to be acknowledged, and so, that’s why every record that we can get needs to be preserved and available to the people in this country.” <https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/new-digital-access-to-archived-residential-school-records-1.4607779>

Colombia. “Eleven former rebels gave the Special Peace Jurisdiction three file folders offering the first joint, written testimony outlining the guerrilla army’s responsibility in kidnappings of politicians, soldiers and civilians” during the country’s civil war, reported *AP*. The documents do not provide details on individual cases. The inspector general’s office said 522 people remain missing. <https://www.batimes.com.ar/news/latin-america/colombia-ex-rebels-testify-on-kidnappings-at-special-peace-tribunal.phtml>

El Salvador. The government announced an agreement with the Organization of American States to create an International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES). An opinion piece published by *Americas Quarterly* noted that “it is still unclear how CICIES will be funded, who will run it, or how it will be organized.” Setting up a robust information management system should be one of the first steps. [https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/el-salvadors-new-international-anti-corruption-commission?utm\\_source=AQ%27s+Week+in+Review&utm\\_campaign=96cc525377-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_08\\_17\\_06\\_51\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_6a33e16b5d-96cc525377-26124681](https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/el-salvadors-new-international-anti-corruption-commission?utm_source=AQ%27s+Week+in+Review&utm_campaign=96cc525377-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_08_17_06_51_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6a33e16b5d-96cc525377-26124681)

Germany. Parliament decided to transfer the Stasi archives to the Bundesarchiv (the Federal Archives), reported *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49847900>

Honduras. Business and Human Rights Resource Center did an in-depth report on Roberto David Castillo Mejia, who is charged with the murder of human rights activist Berta Caceres in March 2016. Using an impressive variety of records, from mortgage instruments to court documents from a number of countries, the Centre concluded that alongside his business activities, Castillo “has engaged in a pattern of criminal activities, including significant acts of corruption while he served as a government employee, and grave human rights violations.” <https://www.business-humanrights.org/sites/default/files/documents/Violence-Corruption-Impunity-A-Profile-of-Roberto-David-Castillo.pdf>

Mexico. The government reported that “since 2006 and until the middle of August 2019, more than 3,000 clandestine graves with at least 5,000 bodies have been found in the country,” reported *tele SUR*. [https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/44-Bodies-Found-in-Mexican-Mass-Grave-Victims-Identified-20190915-0020.html?utm\\_source=planisys&utm\\_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_content=10](https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/44-Bodies-Found-in-Mexican-Mass-Grave-Victims-Identified-20190915-0020.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=10) ;

The 2014 case of the missing 43 students from Ayotzinapa flared again, as a judge released one of the chief suspects in the disappearance, saying “much of the evidence presented against him by prosecutors of the former government was obtained illegally,” *Mexico News Daily* reported. The government then announced that the Attorney General’s Office and the Federal Judiciary Council will “investigate officials and judges responsible for the release of the suspect and many others in the case.” For Background see *HRWG News* 2019-03. <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/release-of-ayotzinapa-suspect-triggers-probe/>

Myanmar. The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar released a 440-page report on its 15 months of work on conditions in three states. “Drawing on 875 detailed interviews conducted in locations in five countries, the report illustrates, in graphic detail, the violent modus operandi that is

the hallmark of Tatmadaw [military] operations against its own people.” The report used satellite images that show “at least” 392 Rohingya villages “razed to the ground, providing irrefutable documentation of the scale of destruction perpetrated.” The experts named six senior commanders as most responsible, and “an unpublished list containing additional names will be given to the High Commissioner for Human Rights.”  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=23575&LangID=E>

Three UN special rapporteurs “expressed grave concerns about the use of incommunicado detention by the military,” citing reports “received regarding at least 15 deaths in custody of men alleged to be associates of the [anti-government] Arakan Army. The military has said that it is investigating these deaths, and the experts call on it to make the results of the investigation public and to hold any perpetrators accountable.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24939&LangID=E>

A filmmaker was sentenced to 1 year in prison for his criticism of the Army and the 2009 Constitution on his Facebook page; the Army said he was “insulting and defaming” it,” *Burma Campaign* reported.  
[https://www.eurasiareview.com/08092019-myanmar-filmmaker-jailed-for-facebook-post-oped/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](https://www.eurasiareview.com/08092019-myanmar-filmmaker-jailed-for-facebook-post-oped/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29)

The Centre for Law and Democracy published an analysis of the draft National Records and Archives Law. The analysis and the draft law are available at: <https://www.lawdemocracy.org/live/myanmar-archives-law-fails-to-respect-the-right-to-information/>. Thanks to Antoon De Baets for the link.

Nigeria. In June Human Rights Watch interviewed 32 children “who had been detained” by the Nigerian Army “for alleged association with Boko Haram.” The UN “reported that between January 2013 and March 2019, the Nigerian armed forces detained over 3,600 children, including 1,617 girls, for suspected involvement with non-state armed groups,” but the number detained in 2018 “dropped significantly, although Nigerian authorities have consistently denied the UN access to military detention facilities to verify the actual number held.” HRW noted that these cases of detention may constitute illegal enforced disappearances. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/09/10/they-didnt-know-if-i-was-alive-or-dead/military-detention-children-suspected-boko>

Romania. The Court of Appeal ruled that former Romanian president Traian Basescu worked as an informer for the communist-era secret police, the Securitate, confirming the conclusion reached by the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives. *BIRN* reported that Basescu’s “file was destroyed in 1979 without being put on microfilm,” but the Council found other relevant records.  
[https://balkaninsight.com/2019/09/20/romanian-court-rules-basescu-was-securitate-informer/?utm\\_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=428eebb909-BI\\_DAILY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4027db42dc-428eebb909-319725265](https://balkaninsight.com/2019/09/20/romanian-court-rules-basescu-was-securitate-informer/?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=428eebb909-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-428eebb909-319725265)

Seychelles. The Truth, Reconciliation and National Unity Commission began public hearings on events dating from the 1977 coup to the return of the multiparty system in 1993, *Seychelles News Agency* reported. The Commission will accept complaints for six months, from August 2019; in the first month it received over 100.  
<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/11613/Truth+and+reconciliation+commission+begins+first+public+hearings+in+Seychelles>

South Sudan. In a statement to the Human Rights Council the chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan noted that part of the Commission’s mandate is “the collection and preservation of evidence” to assist the prosecutor of a future Hybrid Court. “The Commission has so far identified 66 individuals who it believes bear command or superior responsibility under international criminal law for serious crimes related to the conflict in South Sudan.”  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=24992&LangID=E>

An investigative report by The Sentry, a U.K. nongovernmental organization, said international actors have provided direct support to South Sudanese perpetrators of violence, have formed private businesses with top South Sudanese officials responsible for human rights abuses, and have benefited from major public procurement scandals in South Sudan. Sources listed in the extensive footnotes include court and audit records, corporate publications and email, coming from countries as distant as Macedonia, Uganda, Kenya and the United States.  
<https://cdn.thesentry.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TakingOfSouthSudan-Sept2019-TheSentry.pdf>

Sri Lanka. President Maithripala Sirisena appointed a five-member Commission to “inquire into Easter Sunday Bomb attacks on April 21 and report or take necessary action,” *Daily News* reported. <http://www.msn.com/en-xl/asia/srilanka/presidential-commission-to-probe-easter-bomb-attacks/ar-AAHGzkb>  
[http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_19B/Sep22\\_1569123600CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_19B/Sep22_1569123600CH.php)

Syria. The Syria Justice and Accountability Centre published “Return is a Dream: Options for Post-Conflict Property Restitution in Syria,” with a review of the complex history of Syrian property law, including the registration system for land. [https://syriaaccountability.org/library/return-is-a-dream-options-for-post-conflict-property-restitution-in-syria/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=149c6c8383-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-149c6c8383-90540617](https://syriaaccountability.org/library/return-is-a-dream-options-for-post-conflict-property-restitution-in-syria/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=149c6c8383-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-149c6c8383-90540617)

The Centre also commented on President Bashar al-Assad’s decree “providing amnesty for certain crimes committed before September 14<sup>th</sup> of this year.” The decree reduces death penalties to life at hard labor and life sentences to 20 years in prison, but it “does not provide amnesty for any Syrians who participated in the opposition or engaged in any ‘terrorist activities’.” [https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/09/26/syrias-newest-decree-amnesty-or-a-political-stunt/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=22ee1ff348-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-22ee1ff348-90540617](https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/09/26/syrias-newest-decree-amnesty-or-a-political-stunt/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=22ee1ff348-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-22ee1ff348-90540617)

Taiwan. The Transitional Justice Commission said the Taiwan Transitional Justice Database will be launched before the end of the year, *Taipei Times* reported. The records, including administrative and legal documents from the White Terror era and the trials of 967,000 people, come from the National Archives Administration, the National Human Rights Museum and the Ministry of National Defense. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2019/09/22/2003722723>

United Kingdom. The Law Commission ruled that electronic signatures “are a legally viable alternative to handwritten ones including on deeds from trust documents to power of attorney, commercial deals, personal financial transactions and across Government,” *The Telegraph* reported. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/09/03/written-signatures-threat-law-commission-backs-electronic-versions/>

According to the Crown Prosecution Service, nearly 58,000 rapes were reported to police last year, but there were only 1,925 convictions in 2018-19, about 3% of the reported rapes and a 27% drop from the previous year, reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190912142523-4ebu9/>

In response to a Freedom of Information request to the police by the *BBC*, official figures show “the number of hate crimes in Britain against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community grew more than 130% between 2014-15 and 2018-19,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190912152131-gyipa/>

The medical records of “hundreds of thousands of NHS [National Health Service] patients were dumped in a town centre to weigh down scaffolding,” *The Sun* reported. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/9982719/unshredded-nhs-records-dumped-town-centre/>

United States. A dozen activists and academics formed the Planning Committee for Reparations. William Darity, an economics professor, leads the group and advocates for reparations “to people who prove they descended from a person enslaved in the United States—increasingly possible, he notes, because of online ancestry databases—and show that they have identified as black in public documents for at least 40 years,” reported the *Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/which-americans-should-get-reparations/2019/09/18/271cf744-cab1-11e9-a4f3-c081a126de70\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/which-americans-should-get-reparations/2019/09/18/271cf744-cab1-11e9-a4f3-c081a126de70_story.html)

In 1890 an anthropologist recorded three Passamaquoddy spokesmen singing songs, telling stories, and recounting numbers and days. The recordings ended up at the Library of Congress, *National Public Radio* reported. The Library, partnering with the tribe, copied the wax cylinder recordings to digital and the Passamaquoddy are transcribing the words, which are “key to passing this language on,” said a transcriber. <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/03/748604202/historic-recordings-revitalize-language-for-passamaquoddy-tribal-members>

Departments of Motor Vehicles around the country are selling drivers' personal information "to thousands of businesses, including private investigators who spy on people for profit," *Motherboard* reported. And it is legal. Virginia, for example, "has sold data to 109 private investigator firms, according to a spreadsheet" obtained by the reporter. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/43kxzq/dmvs-selling-data-private-investigators-making-millions-of-dollars](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/43kxzq/dmvs-selling-data-private-investigators-making-millions-of-dollars)

A study by the University of New Mexico found that since the 2009 passage of the Health Information Technology and Economic and Clinical Health Act, "physicians find the length [of] time devoted to medical record-keeping has essentially doubled." In a survey of 282 clinicians about 13% of them "reported levels of stress and burnout were directly related" to electronic records and approximately 40% indirectly related. In addition to documenting the patient's medical history, the electronic health record "has become a place for documenting against potential medical malpractice, collecting additional information for quality assurance initiatives, and to support billing processes. Increasingly, it is also becoming part of governmental policy oversight processes." <http://hscnews.unm.edu/news/university-of-new-mexico-studies-physician-burnout-related-to-electronic-records>

In 2012 Washington County, Oregon, developed a new tool to collect additional data on suicides. Upon analyzing the data, officials found that a surprising number of suicides occur at hotels and motels, the dead had recently been evicted, had seen a medical officer, and had turned their pets over to an animal shelter. The county then began training people who work in those places to recognize symptoms and call a special crisis line. From 2012 to 2018 the county's suicide rate decreased by 40%, even while U.S. suicide rates rose. [https://khn.org/news/want-to-reduce-suicides-follow-the-data-to-medical-offices-motels-and-even-animal-shelters/?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=2c69544bbd-MR\\_COPY\\_10&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-2c69544bbd-149736437](https://khn.org/news/want-to-reduce-suicides-follow-the-data-to-medical-offices-motels-and-even-animal-shelters/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=2c69544bbd-MR_COPY_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-2c69544bbd-149736437)

The Missouri attorney general issued a report on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, based on the review of more than 2,000 files on priests and 300 files on deacons, seminarians and nuns who worked in Missouri since 1945. "Approximately 8% had an accusation made against them, extending back to World War II," *Eurasia Review* reported. Most of the allegations involve persons who are dead, but the attorney general is pursuing 12 cases. And in Buffalo, New York, the *New York Times* reported that the Catholic bishop "kept a secret binder in a closet with a list of Catholic priests accused of sexual abuse." [https://www.eurasiareview.com/17092019-missouri-ag-report-on-catholic-church-issued-oped/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29; www.nytimes.com/2019/09/18/nyregion/bishop-malone-buffalo.html](https://www.eurasiareview.com/17092019-missouri-ag-report-on-catholic-church-issued-oped/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29; www.nytimes.com/2019/09/18/nyregion/bishop-malone-buffalo.html)

United States/Maryland. Maryland's Lynching Truth & Reconciliation Commission held its first public event. The Commission is "empowered to investigate at least 40 lynchings that occurred between 1854 and 1933." Maryland is the first state to have a commission to address lynchings. <https://www.mdlynchingmemorial.org/>

Venezuela. The Human Rights Council voted to send an international fact-finding mission to investigate human rights abuses committed since 2014. The mission's record-keeping system should be set up immediately. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=25077&LangID=E>

### **Conferences, publications.**

The Digital Initiatives Symposium at the University of San Diego, California, will be held 28 April 2020 and is "especially interested in proposals from international applicants and/or proposals with international perspectives." Among suggested topics is "social justice and open access." Send proposals to [digital.sandiego.edu/symposium](http://digital.sandiego.edu/symposium); by 22 November 2019.

Proposals are now being accepted for the Third Workshop on Scientific Archives, at European XFEL near Hamburg, Germany, 30 June-1 July 2020. Among suggested topics are "Using and re-using archival resources in current science" and "Enabling access to scientific records." Submit proposals of 400-words using the form at [tiny.cc/e888cz](http://tiny.cc/e888cz) by 31 January 2020. For further information [www.embl.de/aboutus/archive/](http://www.embl.de/aboutus/archive/)

The 6th World Conference of the International Federation for Public History will be hosted by Freie Universität Berlin, 18-22 August 2020. Paper proposals to be submitted by 27 October 2019 to <https://www.ifph2020.org/submission-proposals/?emci=cd36180c-48da-e911-b5e9-2818784d6d68&emdi=389be5c9-e5da-e911-b5e9-2818784d6d68&ceid=29308>

From the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross: *Guidelines on Investigating Violations of International Humanitarian Law*: <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/news/detail/261-guidelines-on-investigating-violations-of-ihl-law-policy-and-good-practice>

On identification management systems in the humanitarian sector that use distributed ledger technology (DLT): <https://sovrin.org/wp-content/uploads/14A-Report.pdf>

From the International Committee of the Red Cross: *Humanitarian Consequences of Family Separation and People Going Missing*: <https://redcross.eu/positions-publications/reuniting-families-across-borders>

On the difficulty of counting casualties after natural disasters: [http://www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?RecordID=9122019&utm\\_source=HMD+Email+List&utm\\_campaign=a5eb380619-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_09\\_12\\_06\\_39&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_211686812e-a5eb380619-180156329&mc\\_cid=a5eb380619&mc\\_eid=9ed352a082](http://www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?RecordID=9122019&utm_source=HMD+Email+List&utm_campaign=a5eb380619-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_09_12_06_39&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_211686812e-a5eb380619-180156329&mc_cid=a5eb380619&mc_eid=9ed352a082)

From the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute: *Where are they? International standards for the search for forcibly disappeared persons*: <https://www.ibanet.org/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUId=27399c4e-3a74-4966-ac79-5f0f074d4054>

From the European Union-funded program T4 DATA: *The DPO Handbook. Guidance for data protection officers in the public and quasi-public sectors on how to ensure compliance with the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679)*: <https://www.garantepriacy.it/web/guest/home/docweb/-/docweb-display/docweb/9127859>

On the “triple nexus” of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts: [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/special-report/2019/09/24/triple-nexus-humanitarian-development-peacebuilding-views?utm\\_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm\\_campaign=1550c579c2-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_09\\_27\\_WEEKLY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d842d98289-1550c579c2-75545741](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/special-report/2019/09/24/triple-nexus-humanitarian-development-peacebuilding-views?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=1550c579c2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_09_27_WEEKLY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-1550c579c2-75545741)

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