
ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights

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Commentary.

Blood red, poppies bloom along the train tracks between Vienna and Budapest. The once heavily fortified border passes with only an announcement on the train's public address system that you are entering Hungary. But anyone with a memory or knowledge of the second half of the 20th century will feel a prickle of unease as you move from a democracy to one that Hungarian President Viktor Orban calls an "illiberal democracy."

In its annual *Freedom in the World* report for 2022, the NGO Freedom House said there have been "16 consecutive years of decline in global freedom. A total of 60 countries suffered declines over the past year, while only 25 improved. As of today, some 38 percent of the global population live in Not Free countries, the highest proportion since 1997. Only about 20 percent now live in Free countries."

Finland, Norway and Sweden stand at the top of the Freedom House list and Turkmenistan, South Sudan and Syria sit at the bottom, with North Korea and Eritrea just above them.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/global-expansion-authoritarian-rule>; <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

A look at the NGO Reporters without Borders' *World Press Freedom Index* shows a similar pattern. Of the 180 countries ranked, the top five are Norway, Denmark Sweden, Estonia, and Finland, and the bottom five are Myanmar, Turkmenistan, Iran, Eritrea, and North Korea. <https://rsf.org/en/index>; <https://rsf.org/en/rsfs-2022-world-press-freedom-index-new-era-polarisation>

What is the difference in government records in a country like Finland and, say, Turkmenistan? I know of no systematic study of the similarities and differences. From the ancient world, Ernst Posner said there were six "basic types of records that may be called constants in record creation, whatever the nature of governmental, religious, and economic institutions": laws of the land, evidence of administrative actions, financial records, land records, control of persons for purposes such as military service, and notarial records of private business transactions. (Ernst Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World*, p. 3). Interestingly, he did not include police or military records per se, although these surely existed, as did records of courts. But if we look at the list, we find those records in governments today, with "administrative actions" expanded to include records of social services, border control, and elections, to name a few.

If the basic records are pretty similar in all governments, what—if any—are the differences? In a police state, are police more likely to document fully their actions, knowing no outsider will ever see the records, or is it the other way around, with police in democratic states wearing body cameras and dashboard cameras on cars? Do we have better internal documentation of military violence in less democratic countries because the soldiers have no need to hide their acts (see the Syria item below)? Is there a difference in records disposal: who gets to decide what to save and what to throw away and when? Is the difference in how carefully the records are maintained, particularly the records of the head of state? Counter examples can be found for most of these suggestions.

What we do know is that public access to government records differs dramatically, and access is crucial for defending and seeking accountability for the violations of human rights. It is no surprise that of the

five lowest ranked countries in the Freedom House list, only Iran has an access law, passed in 2009. All the top ranked countries have a government access law, as do the majority of countries rated as fully free (see <http://www.freedominfo.org/?p=18223>). To be sure, there is a gulf between having a law and administering it effectively in accordance with its provisions. But laws are a start, both access to information laws and archives laws. They are the foundation for the right to know.

SAHR News. Recordings of previous First Tuesday Talks by Graham Dominy, Adel Maizi, Giulia Barrera, Giles Manceron, and Claudio Ogass Bilbao/Francisco Gonzalez are available at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLru9FNsjTJG55cSmywZGbUmK62Cb7KmbL>

International news.

Kosovo Specialist Chambers. The leader and deputy leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army War Veterans' Organization were found "guilty of obstruction of justice, intimidation and the unauthorized revelation of court information and personal information about protected witnesses in war crimes cases," *BIRN* reported. "The two men were prosecuted after they received batches of legal documents leaked from the Specialist Chambers, which contained confidential information about protected witnesses in cases against KLA ex-guerrillas. Boxes of court documents were left in the hallway of the offices of the KLA War Veterans' Organization in September 2020." For background see *SAHR News* 2020-09, 12, 2021-10. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/18/kosovo-war-veterans-leaders-convicted-of-witness-intimidation/>

International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. "The last major fugitive wanted for his role in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Protais Mpiranya, died in Zimbabwe in 2006, UN prosecutors probing the case said," *AFP* reported. His family and friends went to "great lengths to conceal his death and place of burial" and gave "false statements to investigators" and coached others to lie if questioned. Five indicted men remain as fugitives. https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/92045-mpiranya-last-major-rwandan-fugitive-was-dead.html#utm_source=emailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter-EN-09-05-to-13-05-2022

United Nations. "The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Thursday passed a resolution to initiate an investigation into possible war crimes committed by Russian troops in Ukraine," *Jurist* reported. "The investigation will be conducted by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, an independent commission under the UNHRC responsible for coordinating and reporting upon national and international investigations. The commission is charged with investigating events in areas of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions in late February and March 2022." <https://www.jurist.org/news/2022/05/un-human-rights-council-to-investigate-russia-war-crimes-in-ukraine/>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "The Ukraine war and other conflicts pushed the number of people forced to flee conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution over the staggering milestone of 100 million for the first time on record," UNHCR said. "100 million people forcibly displaced worldwide represents 1% of the global population and is equivalent to the 14th most populous country in the world. The number includes refugees and asylum seekers as well as the 53.2 million people displaced inside their borders by conflict." <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118772>

World Health Organization (WHO). Combining national data on reported deaths from covid with information from "localities and household surveys," a panel of experts estimated that nearly 15 million more people died during the pandemic than would have in normal times. <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/global-excess-deaths-associated-with-the-COVID-19-pandemic>

World/general news.

Business records. "The report 'Spanish Arms Exports and Alleged War Crimes in Yemen' by Amnesty International, Centre Delas for Peace Studies and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) reveals new evidence regarding arms exports by the Spanish company Airbus Defence and Space S.A. to Saudi Arabia . . . and the United Arab Emirates . . . as well as their use in alleged war crimes in Yemen committed between the start of the conflict in 2015 and June 2021." According to information from the Yemen Data Project, an NGO, "there have been over 25,000 airstrikes since the beginning of the air campaign." An Amnesty International spokesperson said, "Spanish military

equipment is essential for both aircraft and a number of other military goods used by the Saudi/Emirati-led Coalition that has committed atrocities in Yemen. This raises serious questions as to the potential complicity of the Spanish government in the commission of international crime in Yemen.”

<https://www.ecchr.eu/en/press-release/new-report-reveals-arms-exports-by-spanish-company-airbus/>

“A French appeals court has confirmed that the cement giant Lafarge must face charges of complicity in crimes against humanity over alleged payoffs to Islamic State group and other jihadist groups during Syria’s civil war,” *AFP* reported. For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-07, 09.

https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220518-paris-court-upholds-charges-of-complicity-in-crimes-against-humanity-linked-to-lafarge-cement-plant-in-syria?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=46dec0f000-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-46dec0f000-96428969

The Aboriginal Corporation of the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura people signed a “preliminary agreement with Rio Tinto to co-manage land that is still being mined for iron ore” within their 10,888 sq. km. native title area in Western Australia, the *Guardian* reported. Rio Tinto destroyed a 46,000-year-old PKKP heritage site Juukan Gorge in May 2020. For background, see *SAHR News* 2020-09, 2021-10.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/20/juukan-gorge-traditional-owners-sign-agreement-with-rio-tinto-to-co-manage-wa-mining-land?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

In 2007 Indonesia made it a legal requirement that a corporation taking control of a community’s ancestral land to use as a palm oil plantation would give “a fifth of any new plantation to communities.” An investigation by the *BBC*, The Gecko Project and *Mongabay* analyzed “government figures” and “found companies have failed to provide more than 100,000 hectares . . . of legally-required” land in Borneo’s Central Kalimantan province and estimated “this has deprived communities of an estimated \$90m each year.” Creating a database of accusations against companies for not providing land revealed that there have been protests “every month for the last six years, on average.” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-61509744>

A Brazilian labour court summoned Volkswagen to appear to face “accusations of ‘slavery’ practices in Brazil” during the 1974-1986 military dictatorship, *AFP* reported. German media outlets “consulted over 2,000 pages of testimonies and police reports,” which described “abuse and violence by intermediaries and armed guards,” as workers deforested some 70,000 hectares where Volkswagen “planned to build a large agricultural site on the edge of the Amazon basin for the meat trade.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2020-09. <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/volkswagen-accused-of-slavery-practices-under-brazil-dictatorship>

Thailand’s Court of Appeals denied the sugar company Mitr Phol’s “motion to dismiss a historic class action lawsuit filed against the company by plaintiffs representing hundreds of Cambodian families who were violently displaced to make way for one of the Thai sugar giant’s industrial sugar plantations,” the NGO Inclusive Development International reported. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-01.

<https://www.inclusivedevelopment.net/cambodia/thai-court-greenlights-trial-against-global-sugar-supplier-mitr-phol/>

The Narwhal and *VICE World News* published their joint investigation of the working conditions for at-sea fisheries observers, “the eyes and ears of the public aboard fishing vessels.” Through an access to information request, they received “more than 700 pages of documents” on the actions taken by the Canadian government after both groups published on the harassment of observers. The records “reveal that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has created a suite of new policies and is spending millions on modernization in wake of whistleblowers speaking up.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2020-07.

https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5qz53/fisheries-harassment-canada-docs?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=220526

Climate change. A report by the Philippines Commission on Human Rights said “the world’s most polluting companies have a moral and legal obligation to address the harms of climate change because of their role in spreading misinformation.” Drawing on “scientific, legal and personal evidence from around the world to examine the role played by 47 of the world’s most polluting companies,” the Commission found “coal, oil, mining and cement firms engaged in ‘wilful obfuscation’ of climate science and obstructed efforts towards a global transition to clean energy.” The *Guardian* said “experts hope . . . the vast body of evidence it has collected will be used by policymakers, lawyers and climate

campaigners around the world.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/06/filipino-inquiry-finds-big-polluters-morally-and-legally-liable-for-climate-damage>; <https://chr.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CHRP-NICC-Report-2022.pdf>

Medical records. “Google is being sued over its use of confidential medical records belonging to 1.6 million individuals in the UK,” *Sky News* reported. “The company’s artificial intelligence arm, DeepMind, received the data in 2015 from the Royal Free NHS Trust in London for the purpose of testing a smartphone app called Streams.” The UK’s Information Commissioner’s Office previously found the deal to be illegal. The suit, brought by an individual, argues that the records were used “without patients’ knowledge or consent.” <https://news.sky.com/story/google-sued-for-using-the-nhs-data-of-1-6-million-brits-without-their-knowledge-or-consent-12614525>

A study published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* said “pollution was responsible for an estimated 9 million deaths around the world in 2019” and pollution is the “largest existential threat to human and planetary health.” The study used data from the 2015 Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (epidemiological data from 195 countries and territories) and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, *Inside Climate News* reported. https://insideclimatenews.org/news/17052022/outdoor-air-pollution-health/?utm_source=InsideClimate+News&utm_campaign=35c58d2192-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_29c928ffb5-35c58d2192-328765186

Migration. Through the Freedom of Information Act, *CBS News* obtained data from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection showing that from October 2020 through September 2021 the Border Patrol “processed 12,212 unaccompanied migrant minors who had been previously expelled.” The data provide “a glimpse into one of the unintended consequences” of expelling migrant families: “migrant parents opting to ‘self-separate’ from their children to allow them to enter the U.S. as unaccompanied minors, who have not been subject to the pandemic-era border expulsions since November 2020.” <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/immigration-migrant-children-us-border-custody-unaccompanied-minors-2021/?tag=CNM-00-10aab8a&linkId=165985001&emci=01abcfbf-e3dd-ec11-b656-281878b85110&emdi=6ed04808-ebdd-ec11-b656-281878b85110&ceid=8788546>

In an April report the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) said the U.S. Border Patrol “has not collected or recorded, or reported to Congress, complete data on migrant deaths,” *The Intercept* reported. The report “focused heavily on the Border Patrol’s Tucson [Arizona] Sector; in recent years, major discrepancies have emerged between the agency’s data and that of the local medical examiner’s office.” GAO found the medical examiner’s data “sufficiently reliable,” noting that from fiscal years 2014 through 2020, the medical examiner counted 855 “suspected migrant remains” while the Border Patrol covering the same area counted 488. By law, when a migrant’s body is found on the U.S.-Mexico divide, the Border Patrol “is required to document the discovery, no matter who made the initial encounter,” but in its reporting the agency appears to include data only on migrant deaths it discovers. https://theintercept.com/2022/05/09/border-patrol-migrant-deaths-gao/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter

Privacy. In May 2020, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and five other NGOs filed a complaint against Clearview AI, the facial recognition software maker, in an Illinois, U.S., state court. The NGO Business & Human Rights Resource Center reported, “Clearview AI settled the lawsuit without admission of liability and accepted not to sell its facial recognition database to most US companies. It will not be able to provide its software ‘to any government contractors or state or local government entities in Illinois for five years.’ In addition, the company has to provide an online ‘opt-out’ form on its website so that Illinois residents can make sure their faceprints can be blocked from search results if they are in the database.” <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/clearview-ai-lawsuit-re-consent-over-scanning-of-online-photos-usa/>

“Twitter has agreed to pay a \$150 million fine after [U.S.] federal law enforcement officials accused the social media company of illegally using peoples’ personal data over six years to help sell targeted advertisements,” *PBS* reported. <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/25/1101275323/twitter-privacy-settlement-doj-ftc>

Technology. A gunman who killed 10 people and wounded three others in a Buffalo, New York, supermarket “livestreamed the attack to the gaming platform Twitch, which is owned by Amazon,” *AP* reported. “It didn’t stay there long; a Twitch spokesperson said it removed the video in less than two minutes;” however, a “clip purporting to display a first-person view of the gunman moving through a

supermarket firing at people was posted to Twitter . . . and was still viewable more than four hours later.” Twitter said “that when people share media to condemn it or provide context, sharing videos and other material from the shooter may not be a rules violation. In these cases, Twitter said it covers images or videos with a ‘sensitive material’ cover that users have to click through in order to view them.”

<https://apnews.com/article/technology-shootings-new-york-social-media-d7b488e820ab0a4056995e87a16fe71e>

“A fast-expanding network of antennae is empowering Indigenous groups to use phones, video cameras and social media to galvanize the public and pressure authorities to respond swiftly to threats from gold miners, landgrabbers and loggers” in Brazil’s Amazon rainforest, *AP* reported. “Brazil’s Federal Prosecutor’s Office has set up a website to register reported crimes and receive uploaded visual material.” The new series of records needs immediate appraisal by archivists. <https://apnews.com/article/climate-spacex-technology-entertainment-business-62848dbceff7df4892233414d359a025>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Armenia/Azerbaijan. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan set up “border delimitation” commissions to resolve the dispute over their mutual state border, *Al Jazeera* reported. Archival maps will be significant in the deliberations. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/24/armenia-azerbaijan-take-small-step-towards-peace-deal>

Balkan wars. “The Kosovo government said it needs more satellite images of a suspected mass grave site in southern Serbia to determine whether a search for buried bodies that was halted by the Belgrade authorities should continue,” *BIRN* reported. A spokesperson for the Kosovo government pointed out that satellite images helped locate mass graves at Rudnica and Kizevak, both in southern Serbia. “The Kosovo prime minister’s office blamed Serbia for not cooperating with the search by not providing additional information from its archives” and has “repeatedly called on Serbia to open its military archives from the 1998-99 war in order to help clarify the fate of the remaining missing persons.” The communication officer for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Kosovo “told *BIRN* that the ICRC also believes that ‘local archives represent a very important source of information’.”

<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/31/kosovo-seeks-satellite-images-of-suspected-war-grave-in-serbia/>

Canada/United Kingdom. The U.K. Archbishop of Canterbury announced “he will ensure” that any Canadian “residential school-related records held by the Anglican Church in England are released,” *CBC News* reported. Between 1820 and 1969 the Anglican Church in Canada operated 36 residential schools and more than 150 day schools where First Nations children were forced to give up cultural practices and were abused. The Mohawk Institute, run jointly by the Anglican Church and the Government of Canada, was the longest-operating residential school, running from 1828 until 1970. Survivors of the Institute want the Church to assist them “in retrieving records from the New England Company, which originally ran the Mohawk Institute” but which is separate from the Church of England. The Archbishop promised to push for the release of Company records.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/archbishop-canterbury-survivors-records-financial-support-1.6435416>

China/Kenya. “The High Court in Mombasa has ordered the government to provide two activists with agreements relating to the construction of the Sh450 billion standard gauge railway (SGR) line project,” in accord with the Access to Information Act, *Business Daily* reported. The government had argued that the contracts for the project “are between the governments of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of Kenya” and said that opening the records “would injure relations between Kenya and China and would stifle the successful implementation of the National Transport Policy.”

<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/kenyan-court-orders-state-to-disclose-secret-sgr-deal-3814666>

France/Haiti. The *New York Times* published a major, six-article story on Haiti’s “independence debt,” the massive payments France forced Haiti to pay in exchange for recognition of its sovereignty after the 1791-1803 revolution. King Charles X of France “demanded 150 million gold francs, and that . . . sum was pared down to 90 million francs in a so-called ‘treaty of friendship’ in 1838,” a scholar of Haitian history wrote in *The Racket*, commenting on the *Times*’ reporting. While the basic story is well-known to Haitians and scholars, the *Times*’ researchers produced the most “precise and well-sourced” accounting, using many archives as sources. They calculated that between 1825 and 1957 Haiti paid France and the bank that is now Citigroup (which loaned Haiti money for the debt) 112 million francs or

about \$560 million in today's dollars. They then extrapolated that paying out those funds cost Haiti at least \$21 billion that could have been used to invest in the country's growth. <https://theracket.news/p/whats-new-and-what-isnt-in-the-nyts?s=r>

France/Rwanda. The Paris Court of Assizes opened the trial of former Rwandan prefect Laurent Bucyibaruta, now living in France, for "alleged crimes of genocide, complicity in genocide and complicity in crimes against humanity during the Tutsi genocide of 1994 when he was head of the Gikongoro prefecture in western Rwanda," *justiceinfo.net* reported. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda indicted Bucyibaruta in June 2005 but withdrew from the case in 2007 and "a complete investigation file was transmitted to France." https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/91867-rwandan-prefect-bucyibaruta-trial-genocide-paris.html#utm_source=emailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter-EN-09-05-to-13-05-2022

Germany/Syria. The Syria Justice and Accountability Center published its 9th monitoring report on the trial of Syrian Alaa M. in Frankfurt, Germany. The court asked "a linguistic expert to assess the German language translations of various Arabic documents that were submitted in evidence in the case. . . . The Judges noted that a key issue of the trial is to authenticate documents like the ones that were translated and other evidence that is physically outside Germany." https://syriaaccountability.org/inside-the-alaa-m-trial-building-bridges/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=46dec0f000-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-46dec0f000-96428969

Israel/Palestine. In a joint statement, three UN special rapporteurs said that Israel's High Court of Justice decision permitting the forced eviction of approximately 1,200 Palestinians from their homes in Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank "has given carte blanche to the Israeli Government to perpetuate the practice of systematic oppression against Palestinians." Data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs showed that "between January 2009 and May 2022, Israel demolished some 8,413 Palestinian buildings, including residential, educational, business and medical infrastructure of which 1,513 were funded by donors." <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/18/forced-evictions-of-palestinians-in-masafer-yatta-un-alarmed>

"HaMoked, an Israeli rights group that regularly gathers figures from prison authorities, said . . . that as of May there were 604 detainees held in administrative detention. Nearly all are Palestinians," *Al Jazeera* reported. This is the highest number since 2016. Administrative detainees, held without charge or trial, "are arrested on 'secret evidence,' unaware of the accusations against them, and are not allowed to defend themselves in court." <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/2/more-than-600-palestinians-held-by-israel-without-charge-or-trial>

A new film, "Tantura," explores the "longstanding Palestinian claims that the Israeli Army conducted a massacre in Tantura in the hours after they took control of the town in May 1948," the *New York Times* reported. The killed allegedly were buried in a mass grave now under a beachside parking lot. The film uses aerial photographs from 1948-49 showing a trench; it also shows "Israeli Army documents that, while stopping short of mentioning a massacre, acknowledged that soldiers dug a mass grave in Tantura after it was captured, and vaguely referred to 'acts of destruction' following the victory and the subsequent deportation of surviving residents." <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/11/world/israeli-palestinian-mass-grave-tantura.html>

Mideast war. A U.S. military investigation of an 18 March 2019 air strike near the Syrian town of Baghuz which killed at least 56 people "found that troops did not violate the laws of war or deliberately cause civilian casualties," *BBC News* reported. The report's summary, published online, said the review used "124 documents, 25 reports, and 29 hours of video feed." The *New York Times* reported in November 2021 that the strikes "hit a camp where women, children, IS captives and scores of wounded men were sheltering, killing about 70 people;" the U.S. investigation said "there is no evidence to support these allegations." For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-11. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-61492436?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=46dec0f000-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-46dec0f000-96428969
<https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/mfr-for-secdef-v21afedb925372e3b/full.pdf>

Serbia/Slovakia. In the Serbian town of Padina, the Slovak cultural heritage organization Matica Slovenska "issued fake documents confirming applicants' bond to Slovakia, even though they had nothing to do with the country, the *Sme* daily reported. Thanks to the documents, they could have gained

the status of a Slovak living abroad. People with this status can obtain Slovak citizenship faster and it is easier for them to gain employment in Slovakia.” The organization charged from 100 to 2,000 euros for the certificate, *BIRN* reported. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/24/slovak-institution-in-serbia-issued-fake-documents-to-foreigners/>

Ukraine war. In a project called “Satellite Images Map of Ukraine,” volunteers from around the world “are establishing the locations of photos that depict the ravages of the war and adding the images to an online 3-D map to visualize how the armed conflict has progressed,” *Asahi Shimbun* reported. The map includes photos and video footage sent by local residents and photojournalists and satellite photos released by U.S. satellite operators and “other parties.” <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14605844>

After the Ukrainian fighters inside the Mariupol steel plant surrendered, “the Red Cross worked to register the soldiers as prisoners of war in a step toward ensuring their humane treatment under the Geneva Conventions,” *AP* reported. https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-kyiv-nato-4cf194da8b1870d26cbcd0a7ec69ed6?user_email=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=May%2019%20Russia-Ukraine%20war%20newsletter&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on 18 May that it documented “22 apparent summary executions, 9 other unlawful killings, 6 possible enforced disappearances, and 7 cases of torture” in 17 villages and small towns in Kyiv and Chernihiv regions in April. “Ukrainian authorities should take steps to preserve evidence that could be critical for future war crimes prosecutions, including by cordoning off gravesites until professional exhumations are conducted, taking photos of bodies and the surrounding area before burial, recording causes of death as possible, recording names of victims and identifying witnesses, and looking for identifying material that Russian forces may have left behind.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/18/ukraine-executions-torture-during-russian-occupation>

The U.S. State Department announced that it will fund data-gathering on the conflict in Ukraine through a Conflict Observatory that “will use open source investigation techniques and satellite imagery” and will be available to “outside organizations and international investigators.” Partners in the effort include Yale University’s Humanitarian Research Lab, the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, artificial intelligence company PlanetScapeAi, and Esri, a geographic information systems company, *WIRED* reported. https://www.wired.com/story/conflict-observatory-ukraine-russia-war-crimes/?bclid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&mbid=mbid%3DCRMWIR012019%0A%0A&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_content=WIR_Daily_051822&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_051822&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=P2

“Head of the State Archival Service of Ukraine Anatoliy Khromov says that after the victory in the war, it will be possible to raise the issue of returning to Ukraine archival documents that Russia exported in imperial and Soviet times,” *Interfax-Ukraine* reported. Khromov said “the decision to impose sanctions on 15 individuals and 7 legal entities for actual acts or for attempting to steal or illegally use archival documents on Crimea and certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions is at the final stage.” The Service has terminated its cooperation with Russian archives and plans to terminate cooperation agreements with archives in Belarus and “a number of agreements” within the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States, 9 states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia]. <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/833058.html>

The Moscow Times reported on 26 May that “Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine have sent home at least 58 metric tons of looted goods since the start of the invasion in late February, according to an investigation published by independent news site *Mediazona*.” *Mediazona* analyzed video footage from a delivery firm checkpoint at a Russian border town to calculate the volume. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/05/26/russian-soldiers-send-home-58-tons-of-looted-items-from-ukraine-investigation-a77811>

Euromaidan Press reported that as of June 1 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees had registered 6,938,041 refugees and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 9,151 civilian casualties (4,169 killed and 4,982 injured). <https://euromaidanpress.com/2022/06/03/russo-ukrainian-war-day-100-russia-fails-to-achieve-strategic-goals-but-has-tactical-success-ukraine-waits-for-western-weapons/>

National news.

Argentina. A federal judge ruled that the state was guilty of the massacre of more than 400 people from the Qom and Moqoit communities in 1924 and “ordered historical reparations to be awarded to the communities,” *BBC News* reported. Archival documents were used in the case. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-04. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-61519794?emci=3aa3fbb4-47d8-ec11-b656-281878b8c32f&emdi=b2caaf87-48d8-ec11-b656-281878b8c32f&ceid=4606001>

Brazil. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights sent to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights the case of ten victims who were kidnapped in Mage, Brazil, in 1990 “by civil and military police.” Some of the victims were “subjected to sexual violence, murdered and thrown into the Estrela River.” The Commission said Brazil’s investigation lasted almost 20 years but “had serious delays in the proceedings, in the techniques used and in the evaluation of the evidence and was archived without identifying the whereabouts of any of the victims or those responsible and without investigating the complaint of sexual violence.” https://mailchi-mp.translate.google.com/cidh-presenta-ante-la-corte-idh-caso-de-brasil-por-desaparin-forzada-y-violencia-sexual?e=bee49d752c&x_tr_sl=auto&x_tr_tl=en&x_tr_hl=auto&x_tr_pto=op

As President Jair Bolsonaro trails Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in the polls leading to the Presidential election in October, Bolsonaro “is giving squatters title to their farms and allowing more people to carry firearms outside the home,” *Bloomberg* reported. “In Bolsonaro’s first three years in office, more deeds were distributed than in 13 years of leftist governments” that preceded him. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-05-11/bolsonaro-looks-to-brazil-s-south-to-shore-up-election-support>

The video of a 38-year-old mentally ill Black man asphyxiated in the back of a police car went viral, leading to public demands that the officers in the video be investigated, the *Guardian* reported. A member of the Coalition for Black Rights NGO said, “Those two pieces of vermin know they are being filmed and yet they still applied a death sentence. There is no more decency or embarrassment.” Police said they would investigate. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/26/brazil-mentally-ill-black-man-dies-gas-police-car>

Analysis by *DW* found that about 1 million people live “no more than a kilometer away from one of the 1220 dams that combine ‘high risk’ and ‘high potential damage’ classifications in Brazil’s National Dam Safety Information System.” However, “the data is far from complete,” and for 57% of the 22,000 dams currently recorded in the database “no information exists to determine whether they are subject to legislation that outlines safety standards . . . and most of the 6000 dams that are recorded as subject of national safety protocols are uncompliant.” To make the situation worse, a recent survey by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics found that “20% of northeastern cities with at least one dangerous dam nearby don’t have functioning local civil defense services” which are supposed to establish contingency plans and risk mitigation programs. <https://www.dw.com/en/brazil-dams-1-million-live-close-to-danger/a-61523548>

Burkina Faso. In April Human Rights Watch interviewed 83 survivors and witnesses to violent incidents between September 2021 and April 2022, as well as interviewing “medical professionals, security analysts, government officials, foreign diplomats, United Nations representatives, and aid workers.” HRW reported, “Armed Islamist groups and government security forces and militia . . . are committing increased abuses against civilians as the conflict there intensifies and widens.” An estimated 1.8 million people have been displaced, and the long list of abuses—from killings to pillage and use of child soldiers—is hard to read. This report and the next two items are a reminder of the importance of preserving the records of NGOs like Human Rights Watch that work in conflict areas. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/16/burkina-faso-armed-islamists-kill-rape-civilians>

Burundi. “Burundi’s national intelligence services, police, and ruling party youth members have killed, arbitrarily detained, tortured and harassed people suspected of belonging to opposition parties or of working with armed opposition groups,” Human Rights Watch said. But, they warned: “Given the large scale of the abuses and the lack of access for human rights organizations in the region, this research may cover only a fraction of the rights violations taking place.” The assertions are based on interviews, analysis and authentication of “footage showing several army and police officers admitting to killings,” reports of “local and international human rights organizations, media reports, public speeches of government officials, and social media posts.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/18/burundi-suspected-opponents-killed-detained-tortured>

Central African Republic. The crisis and conflict director at Human Rights Watch said, “There is compelling evidence that Russian-identified forces supporting the Central African Republic’s government have committed grave abuses against civilians with complete impunity.” Drawing on interviews between February 2019 and November 2021, HRW documented summary executions, tortures, and beatings, including a massacre of 13 unarmed men at a roadblock near the town of Bossangoa on 21 July 2021. The government said it set up a special commission of inquiry on that incident, and HRW urged the government to publish the commission’s findings. The commission’s records need secure protection. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/03/central-african-republic-abuses-russia-linked-forces>

Chile. Chile formally apologized to a woman who was forcibly sterilized by doctors at a public hospital because she was HIV positive “on the grounds that it would be irresponsible for an HIV-positive woman to have more children,” the *Guardian* reported. The woman had “received no guidance as to the risks, advantages, and alternatives of sterilization, despite a legal requirement for informed written consent from the patient.” The apology is part of the settlement of a case taken to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights by two NGOs on the woman’s behalf. For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-08. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/26/chile-apologizes-woman-forced-sterilization-hiv>

China. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists reported on Xinjiang Police files that were obtained by researcher Adrian Zenz, “an unprecedented leak of thousands of images and documents from the public security bureaus in China’s Konasheher and Tekes counties” in Xinjiang, where “the national government has held hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in mass-internment camps.” The leak contains “the first photographs taken inside the camps and obtained by news organizations without official authorization,” including “mug shots of more than 2,800 detainees.” “In addition to photos, the leak provides confidential government documents, including speeches by high-ranking Chinese officials outlining their plans to repress, ‘educate,’ and punish members of ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang. Among the files, too, are internal police presentations, some for training purposes, on how to search and arrest suspects, and how to use handcuffs and other equipment.” [https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/xinjiang-police-files-uyghur-mugshots-detention/?utm_source=ICIJ&utm_campaign=b72b817de5-20220522_WeeklyEmail&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_992ecfddb2-b72b817de5-83815091&ct=t\(\)](https://www.icij.org/investigations/china-cables/xinjiang-police-files-uyghur-mugshots-detention/?utm_source=ICIJ&utm_campaign=b72b817de5-20220522_WeeklyEmail&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_992ecfddb2-b72b817de5-83815091&ct=t())

Colombia. The Corporate Accountability Lab (NGO) submitted a report to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, Colombia’s transitional justice court, on the role of multinational companies in Colombia’s armed conflict. Focused on crimes in the Gran Magdalena region between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, the report provides evidence “that Drummond Company Inc., Drummond Ltd., and the Prodeco Group financially supported and coordinated with illegal armed groups.” The Lab provided information on the companies’ “strategic financing of the AUC [Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia] through intermediaries, and the related assassination of union leaders and members, assassination of people deemed guerilla collaborators (purported AUC enemies), forced displacement, and land dispossession for financial gain.” The report “relied on sworn testimony presented to federal courts in the United States in five cases that have been filed against Drummond Company, Inc., Drummond Ltd., certain executives of these companies, and associated companies, in addition to information gathered from documentation shared by affected communities, accompanying organizations, and human rights litigators around the world.” Prodeco and Drummond are exporters of Colombian coal. <https://corpaccountabilitylab.org/calblog/2022/5/13/cal-provides-evidence-of-corporate-complicity-in-armed-conflict-to-colombian-peace-tribunal>

Czech Republic. “President Milos Zeman’s office could face a fine of up to CZK 200,000 over the controversial shredding of classified documents” which allegedly included “shredding an intelligence report relating to a Russian operation on Czech territory in 2013 that left two people dead. *Czech Radio* said that the National Archive would now decide about any potential wrongdoing.” <https://english.radio.cz/zeman-office-could-face-fine-over-shredding-classified-documents-8751293?fbclid=IwAR1SaBqwp1afN596qHyQjinBft7HOdICPTs1OEIz--Xv48MLo9Nhd3-2yGE>

Ecuador. Two indigenous activists, Alex Lucitante and Alexandra Narvaez, were awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize, which “recognizes grassroots activism,” for their successful fight against mining on their ancestral lands, *BBC News* reported. “Mr. Lucitante says that the aerial images the community took with the help of drones and the detailed record they kept through phototraps of incursions into their territory were key to their fight.” The evidence helped them protect 79,000 acres of rainforest from gold mining. For background, see *SAHR News* 2018-11. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-61510336?emci=86654941-3cdc-ec11-b656-281878b8c32f&emdi=09b79f2b-3fdc-ec11-b656-281878b8c32f&ceid=4606001&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email; <https://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/alexandra-narvaez-alex-lucitante/>

El Salvador. A member of the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang provided seven audio files to *El Faro*, showing the government negotiating with gang leaders. The MS-13 sources “confessed to *El Faro* their responsibility for the killing of 87 people between March 25 and 27 . . . Spokespersons for MS-13 revealed that the murders were carried out in response to what they call a ‘betrayal’ by the administration of President Nayib Bukele of the covert pact that reduced homicides since 2019.” In one audio, a government negotiator confessed that he got a gang member out of prison and into Guatemala “in order to show the gang his ‘loyalty and trustworthiness’.” “The conversations suggest that the president was aware at all times of the communications with the Mara Salvatrucha.” *El Faro* used “forensic-grade software” to verify the recordings’ authenticity. After the *El Faro* story was published, a Bukele advisor tweeted that “*El Faro* is the gang’s official informational wing.”

https://elfaro.net/en/202205/el_salvador/26177/Collapsed-Government-Talks-with-MS-13-Sparked-Record-Homicides-in-El-Salvador-Audios-Reveal.htm?utm_source=DB+El+Faro_English&utm_campaign=c3177914e5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_22_01_08_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9190c89-c3177914e5-363082696;
<https://mailchi.mp/elfaro.net/elsalvador-crook-escape-6214508?e=b68035e8b1>

Ethiopia. Writing in *Ethiopia Insight*, Jan Nyssen, a professor of physical geography at Ghent University (Glegium) discussed two recently discovered 19th century maps of the Tigray region of Ethiopia. In the current conflict the Amhara region of Ethiopia claims the western portion of Tigray as historical Amhara land. Nyssen pointed out that the 1841 and 1849 maps “fit in a wide array of historical maps and records which jointly reveal that territorial organization has varied tremendously over time.” Turning to language maps, he wrote, “Remarkably, all language maps of the Ethiopian state sustain the current boundaries of the Tigray region.” After careful review, he concluded that “historical cartography demonstrates that claims of long-standing Amhara dominance over Welkeit [western Tigray] are spurious.” <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2022/05/13/uncearthed-evidence-maps-out-western-tigray-dispute/>

Gambia. The government announced that it accepted all but two of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission’s 265 recommendations and “announced the creation of a special court to prosecute alleged perpetrators, including senior officials and former president Yahya Jammeh,” *justiceinfo.net* reported. A special prosecutor within the Ministry of Justice will handle the prosecutions, with a special investigation unit and “local and international experts to guide and conduct its investigations and prosecution.” It is important to strengthen the Ministry’s records system to handle the new cases. https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/92890-gambia-validates-truth-commission-work-and-promises-justice.html#utm_source=emailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter-EN-23-05-to-26-05-2022

Memory House, a museum run by the Gambia branch of the African Network Against Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances (ANEKED), is dedicated to telling the history of the Jammeh regime for the public. Because the Truth Commission “could not possibly cover every victim of the Jammeh regime,” Memory House “trained three Gambian women to document more crimes. Their work is displayed in an exhibition that opened earlier this month, titled *We. Are. Not. Done.*” <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/5/21/at-gambias-memory-house-victims-rewrite-jammeh-era-history>

Guatemala. In 2019 Roberto Molina Barreto and Zury Mayte Rios Sosa ran for election to the presidency but were not allowed to participate “because internal organizations refused to accept the registration of their candidacy, despite meeting the qualifying requirements to apply for a popularly elected position.” They took their case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has now approved and published a negotiated “friendly settlement” of the case. “The State undertook to implement reparation measures consisting of: 1) recognition of the human right to political participation of the applicants . . . 2) carrying out two awareness campaigns . . . to promote equality in the political

participation of women 3) hold two forums with the different educational institutions, private and public, in order to promote equality in the political participation of women.” https://www-oas-org.translate.google.com/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2022/090.asp&x_tr_sch=http&x_tr_sl=auto&x_tr_tl=en&x_tr_hl=auto

“On Friday, May 6, 2022, Guatemalan judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez ordered nine retired military and police officials to trial on charges including the illegal detention, torture, killing and forced disappearance of more than 195 people between 1983 and 1985, during the military regime of Óscar Humberto Mejía Víctores,” two scholar/court observers wrote in *El Faro*. “These crimes are recorded in a military intelligence document that was leaked and made public in 1999, known as the Diaro Militar,” a military logbook that “records the abduction, secret detention, and deaths of scores of people. In several cases, it contains a coded reference to their executions.” Since the ruling, Judge Galvez “has received threatening phone calls and text messages. Unmarked vehicles have followed him. Pro-impunity operators have launched an intense smear campaign against him on social media.” <https://www.wola.org/analysis/guatemalan-judge-under-threat-after-ordering-trial-in-1980s-death-squad-dossier-case/>; see also https://elfaro.net/en/202204/centroamerica/26139/Trial-for-%E2%80%9CDeath-Squad-Dossier%E2%80%9D-Ties-Guatemalan-Wartime-Atrocities-to-Current-Criminal-Networks.htm?utm_source=Verdad+y+Justicia+Guatemala&utm_campaign=e4e29e9460-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_05_18_07_35&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_dd4594766d-e4e29e9460-593709509

Haiti. “Unidentified suspects broke into one of Haiti’s main courthouses, ransacked judges’ offices and stole items including cell phones,” *AP* reported. Evidence and documents linked to cases of the murder of President Jovenel Moïse and of the head of the bar association were not taken, as they are “in a secure location elsewhere.” <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/official-suspects-break-haiti-court-ransack-offices-84675143?emci=c4186102-d9d2-ec11-b656-281878b8c32f&emdi=7895f4cc-dad2-ec11-b656-281878b8c32f&ceid=4606001>

India. In 2019 the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation “introduced GPS-enabled smartwatches for its sanitation workers,” saying it would “bring transparency into the attendance system and prevent workers from allowing someone else to sub in for them,” *Undark* reported. “From the time the sanitation workers turn on their watches until they turn them off, their GPS locations are monitored in real time by officials at the Command and Control Center” of the Corporation. “The workers say the tracking device invades their personal lives,” and they worry about “privacy leaks and the inability to turn off the trackers and cameras—even when they are in the bathroom.” If the watch is turned off, “the workers are marked absent, risking their wages.” https://undark.org/2022/05/02/in-india-digital-snooping-on-sanitation-workers/?utm_source=Undark%3A+News+%26+Updates&utm_campaign=d48327590a-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_04_15_07_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5cee408d66-d48327590a-176036617

Israel. “Classified protocols from the trial of perpetrators of the 1956 Kafr Qasem massacre may now be published,” the Military Court of Appeals ruled. The trial of the border policemen who killed almost 50 Israeli Arabs took place in the late 1950s. *Haaretz* reported, “Some of the documents to be released touch on a secret plan to deport Arabs from Israel’s Triangle region to Jordan. The plan was never put into operation, and its full details have yet to be revealed. However, the court is still barring publication of the plan itself, as well as photographs from the scene of the Kafr Qasem massacre.” Thanks to Lior Yavne for the link. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-05-30/ty-article/.premium/sealed-protocols-from-1956-kafr-qasem-massacre-to-be-published/00000181-1637-d57f-afc1-b6772db80000>

Lebanon. Reporting on a 12-day visit in November, the UN special envoy on poverty, Olivier de Schutter, delivered a scathing report, saying “Lebanon’s government and its central bank have committed human rights violations by impoverishing people through the ‘callous destruction’ of the country’s economy,” *Reuters* reported. While the report “lamented a dearth of official data on poverty,” forcing it to rely heavily on local and international NGOs for information, de Schutter wrote, “The callous destruction of the Lebanese economy cannot be captured by statistics alone”—an “entire generation” has been “condemned to destitution.” <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/lebanese-state-violated-human-rights-by-mismanaging-crisis-un-poverty-envoy-says/ar-AAX8Fcs>

Mali. The UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) “found that in the first quarter of 2022, the number of violations and abuses by Malian defense and security forces rose from 31 in the fourth quarter of 2021 to 320 in the first quarter of this year,” *PassBlue* reported. “The force reportedly killed 248 civilians, including 18 women and 6 children.” However, the NGO Armed Conflicts and Event Data Project (ACLED) and other nongovernmental organizations in the country recorded 456 deaths,

double the UN number, in the “five months of Mali’s new partnership with the Kremlin-linked Wagner Group.” https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/220530_notetrimestrielle_jan-mars2022_final.pdf; https://www.passblue.com/2022/05/31/as-russias-wagner-group-operates-in-mali-the-countrys-civilian-deaths-multiply/?utm_source=PassBlue+List&utm_campaign=81c7cf4d40-RSS_PassBlue&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4795f55662-81c7cf4d40-55008469

Mexico. More than 100,000 persons are now officially registered as “disappeared.” Commenting on the unprecedented number, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said there is a “staggering rate of impunity” as only 35 of the disappearances since 1964 have led to the conviction of the perpetrators. “According to Mexico’s database on disappeared individuals, about a quarter are women, and around a fifth were under 18 when they went missing. The vast majority of cases where the date of disappearance is unknown—some 97%—happened after December 2006, when Mexico transitioned to a militarized model of public security.” <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118382>

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed “concern at the resurgence of violence against women, girls and adolescents in Mexico,” pointing to the 229 cases of femicide that the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System recorded from January to March 2022. https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2022/097.asp

Pakistan. The Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB) released its yearly report, calling the human rights situation “dire.” HRCB received reports of enforced disappearance of 442 people, 170 of whom were tortured and released while the whereabouts of 272 people remained unknown at the time of writing the report, *The Balochistan Post* said. <https://thebalochistanpost.net/2022/05/dire-human-rights-situation-of-balochistan-in-2021-hrcb-report/>

Romania. Sixteen Romanian historians, researchers and “academic figures active in history” signed an open letter “protesting against the decision of the Romanian National Archives, ANR, to limit access to documents in the National Archival Fund,” *BIRN* reported. The ANR had announced “it was restricting access to classified information in the archive until a complete verification was done of the content of the documents.” The petitioners argued that “many of these documents contain important data and information about the crimes and illegalities committed by the former communist regime” and “do not present any security risks for Romania as they were created before 1989, some during World War II or even before.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/30/romanian-historians-protest-curbs-on-access-to-archives/>

South Africa. The judicial commission inquiring into “state capture” and corruption during the presidency of Jacob Zuma handed over the fourth part of its findings to President Cyril Ramaphosa. Known as the Zondo Commission, after its leader Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, the commission “followed procedures of formal investigations, leading evidence, interrogating the almost 300 witnesses and allowing for responses by those implicated,” said an essay in *The Conversation*. A fifth part is yet to be released. Then it will be critical to preserve in the national archives all the evidence the Commission obtained. https://theconversation.com/south-africas-state-capture-commission-nears-its-end-after-four-years-was-it-worth-it-182898?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1652708602-1

Syria. On 27 April two Netherlands-based researchers published an essay in *New Lines* magazine which began, “Leaked videos show in chilling and unprecedented detail Syrian military personnel committing a massacre in 2013 of 288 civilians, including seven women and 12 children. In the videos, which were leaked to the authors in 2019 and amount to 27 takes of the massacre in different stages, military personnel show their faces to the camera and appear at ease and in full control before they execute their civilian captives in cold blood.” The researchers, who provided their findings to police in the Netherlands, France and Germany, first located the site of the massacre in Tadamon, a suburb of Damascus, and then identified the two “main executioners,” who “in three separate videos that each last about seven minutes . . . show themselves in broad daylight while executing 41 civilians.” One of them was Amjad Yousef, an officer of Military Intelligence Division Branch 227; the researchers contacted him on Facebook and eventually “managed to persuade” him to confess to killings. The story was picked up the same day by the *Guardian* and subsequently by media across the globe. It set off intense reactions.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) received information in early May that the Syrian regime had detained Yousef in custody, although without “a judicial warrant based on a specific charge.” It noted that “the Syrian regime had not announced the identity of those who were killed by Amjad Yousef and his partner or informed the victims’ families of their deaths.” SNHR obtained high-resolution videos of the massacre and is trying to identify the victims, “endeavoring to cross-check the information we’ve obtained since the investigation was published along with the data gathered on the forcibly disappeared since their initial disappearance.” SNHR’s database showed 131,469 people arrested since March 2011 “with 86,792 of this number classified as forcibly disappeared persons, including 1,738 children and 4,986 women.” SNHR and 16 other Syrian NGOs urged the U.S. ambassador to the UN to convene a meeting of the UN Security Council “to address the Tadamon massacre and to launch an independent probe into the killings that brings perpetrators and those who gave them orders to justice.” <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/how-a-massacre-of-nearly-300-in-syria-was-revealed/>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/5/family-discovers-missing-member-in-syrias-tadamon-massacre>; <https://snhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/R220517E-1.pdf>; <https://snhr.org/blog/2022/05/09/joint-statement-we-demand-accountability-for-the-syrian-regimes-massacre-of-at-least-41-people-in-tadamon/>

SNHR issued its annual report on the most notable violations against media workers in Syria. It documented the deaths of 711 journalists and media workers in Syria since March 2011, including 52 “due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces.” The report has grim charts, including one that shows the “distribution of the death toll of journalists and media workers by parties to the conflict and controlling forces, by years and across Syria’s governorates since 2011.” <https://snhr.org/blog/2022/05/04/the-annual-report-on-the-most-notable-violations-against-media-workers-in-syria-on-world-press-freedom-day/>

Uganda. The government introduced a digital ID system in 2015. Three NGOs sued the government “saying the mandatory use of the national ID was exclusionary and violated citizens’ rights to key services,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The groups “estimated up to one-third of adults do not have the biometric ID card, seven years after the system was introduced,” and lacking it has “prevented many Ugandans from opening a bank account, buying a mobile SIM card, enrolling in college, gaining formal employment and getting a passport.” They want the government to “accept alternative forms of identification for social and healthcare services.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20220513155511-153t0/>

United States. “SafeGraph, a location data broker, has stopped offering data related to Planned Parenthood and other similar family planning centers after *Motherboard* found it was possible to buy information on how many people were visiting the facilities, where they came from, and where they went afterwards,” *VICE News* reported. https://www.vice.com/en/article/88gyn5/data-broker-safegraph-stops-selling-location-data-of-people-who-visit-planned-parenthood?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=220504

“Internal meatpacking industry documents” reviewed by the U.S. House of Representatives Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis “illustrate that despite awareness of the high risks of coronavirus spread in their plants, meatpacking companies engaged in a concerted effort with Trump Administration political officials to insulate themselves from coronavirus-related oversight, to force workers to continue working in dangerous conditions, and to shield themselves from legal liability for any resulting worker illness or death.” <https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2022.5.12%20-%20SSCC%20report%20Meatpacking%20FINAL.pdf>; for a supporting study see <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/meatpacking-plants-increased-covid-19-cases-us-counties>

A two-year investigation by the Georgetown University Center on Privacy & Technology reported that using the results of “hundreds of Freedom of Information requests and a comprehensive review of ICE’s [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] contracting and procurement records” it found “that ICE now operates as a domestic surveillance agency. . . . By reaching into the digital records of state and local governments and buying databases with billions of data points from private companies, ICE has created a surveillance infrastructure that enables it to pull detailed dossiers on nearly anyone, seemingly at any time.” <https://www.americandragnet.org/>

The Department of the Interior released the first report on its investigation of Federal Indian Boarding Schools. It established “that between 1819 and 1969, the United States operated or supported 408

boarding schools across 37 states (or then-territories), including 21 schools in Alaska and 7 schools in Hawaii” and confirmed “that the United States directly targeted American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children in the pursuit of a policy of cultural assimilation that coincided with Indian territorial dispossession.” It identified “the Federal Indian boarding schools that were used as a means for these ends, along with at least 53 burial sites for children across this system--with more site discoveries and data expected” as the investigation continues. https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bsi_investigative_report_may_2022_508.pdf

Five economists writing in *The New Republic* explained that Black agricultural land ownership was at a peak just after the turn of the twentieth century; however, there was a nearly 90 percent decline in ownership from 1910 to 1997. Using U.S. Federal Census of Agriculture data from 1920 to 1997, they estimated that the lost wealth and income from the “state-sanctioned dispossession” of Black rural families “totals about \$326 billion” and “destroyed a rural Black middle class.” <https://newrepublic.com/article/166276/black-farm-land-lost-20th-century-billions>

The U.S. set records, but not good ones. In 2020 deaths by guns reached the highest level ever recorded, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said, to 45,222, a 14% rise over 2019. And the number of deaths from Covid-19 topped one million people, also according to data from the CDC. <https://usafacts.org/data/topics/security-safety/crime-and-justice/firearms/firearm-deaths/>; <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/17/health/us-reports-1-million-covid-deaths/index.html>

The Southern Baptist Convention released a list of pastors and other church-affiliated personnel accused of sexual abuse, “more than 700 entries from cases that largely span from 2000 to 2019,” *NPR* reported. The church had previously denied that such a list existed. <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/27/1101734793/southern-baptist-sexual-abuse-list-released>

The Chicago Police Department established a task force called Social Media Exploitation (SOMEX) to “help the FBI find information and intelligence using information gleaned from social sites.” *The Intercept* and Chicago-based NGOs “obtained more than 800 pages of emails and other documents about the team through public records requests. These show that the team’s officers were given broad leeway to investigate people across platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, using fake social media accounts furnished by the FBI, in violation of some platforms’ policies,” *The Intercept* reported. https://theintercept.com/2022/05/20/chicago-police-fbi-social-media-surveillance-fake/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter

Good reads.

Julia Crawford and Franck Petit, “Insights on the digital revolution for war crimes probes in Ukraine,” *justiceinfo.net*: https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/93111-insights-digital-revolution-war-crimes-probes-ukraine.html#utm_source=emailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter-EN-30-05-to-03-06-2022

Interview with Belkis Wille, HRW, on “use of biometrics in the humanitarian sector has the potential to put people at risk,” *Responsible Data*: <https://responsibledata.io/2022/05/24/how-the-use-of-biometrics-in-the-humanitarian-sector-has-the-potential-to-put-people-at-risk-an-interview-with-belkis-wille/>

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