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**Commentary.**

The vote was unanimous: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Eight states of the new United Nations abstained that December day in 1948, but no one said no. After the ghastly years of World War II, support for human rights was universal.

The problem was that the Declaration was just a declaration: it had no enforcement mechanism. So shortly after the Declaration was adopted, the United Nations decided to give it the “hard legal form of an international treaty,” as the eminent German jurist Christian Tomuschat explained.

([http://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/iccpr/iccpr\\_e.pdf](http://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/iccpr/iccpr_e.pdf)) To that end two covenants, one on civil and political rights and one on social and economic rights, were developed and opened for signature in December 1966.

Today the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) has 168 state parties. Almost every state of members of the International Council on Archives is a signatory. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has slightly fewer parties—164—but again these include the great majority of member states of the ICA. ([https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&lang=en); [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-3&chapter=4&lang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-3&chapter=4&lang=en); <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>)

While all the Articles of both Covenants have strong archival implications, just as each Article of the Declaration does (see discussions in *HRWG News*, December 2009 through July 2012), Article 19 of the ICCPR has special importance for archivists. In its entirety, it reads:

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
  - (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
  - (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

Archivists are people who “receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.” As item 3 says, managing this right “carries with it special duties and responsibilities.” There may be “certain restrictions” when receiving and imparting information, and archivists are well aware of the difficulties we sometimes have when confronted with rights-based questions.

To support archivists handling these issues, the Human Rights Working Group proposes the adoption by the International Council on Archives of the “Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists in Support of Human Rights.” For those of us who live in countries that are parties to either or both Covenants, the

“Basic Principles” do not introduce any new responsibility for archivists, but they make us aware of responsibilities we already have. The “Basic Principles” are, in fact, a restatement in archival terms of the duties that archivists bear and the rights we have, deriving from the Covenants and other human rights treaties. For those of us who live in countries that are not parties to these Covenants, the “Basic Principles” can be considered ethical guidelines, which complement our ICA Code of Ethics and are a logical consequence of the Universal Declaration on Archives, adopted by ICA and endorsed by UNESCO. And for all of us, they are a useful tool, reminding us of our role in supporting the world community of rights.

### **International news.**

**Council of Europe.** The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Recommendation on human rights and business, “a text that provides more specific guidance to assist member States in preventing and remedying human rights violations by business enterprises and also insists on measures to induce business to respect human rights.” Good business archives will help fulfill these obligations.

[http://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/-/human-rights-and-busine-1?redirect=http://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/home?p\\_p\\_id=101\\_INSTANCE\\_qBOoAEZ8jaby&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=normal&p\\_p\\_mode=view&p\\_p\\_col\\_id=column-1&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=4](http://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/-/human-rights-and-busine-1?redirect=http://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/home?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_qBOoAEZ8jaby&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=4)

The Committee of Ministers called on “Turkish authorities” to examine “the reports and military archives in their possession containing information on burial sites, including of relocated remains” of persons missing on Cyprus and transmit the information to the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. <http://in-cyprus.com/44801-2/>

**European Union.** The Court of Justice announced that its archives deposited at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence, Italy, are now open for research use.

<http://www.eui.eu/Research/HistoricalArchivesOfEU/News/2016/02-26-The-historical-archives-of-the-Court-of-Justice-of-the-European-Union-at-the-HAEU.aspx>

**International Court of Justice.** The Court (ICJ) heard initial arguments in the case brought by the Republic of the Marshall Islands against the nine “known or suspected” nuclear weapons states, arguing that they have “failed to carry out good-faith negotiations towards nuclear disarmament, as required under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty signed in 1968 and in force since 1970.” These initial proceedings were against the United Kingdom, India, and Pakistan, with the cases against the other states to follow. All three states argued that ICJ does not have jurisdiction, although it delivered an Advisory Opinion in 1996 “on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons” and said that the weapons threaten “the stability of the international order.”

[http://www.eurasiareview.com/17032016-worlds-highest-court-addresses-nuclear-disarmament-analysis/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](http://www.eurasiareview.com/17032016-worlds-highest-court-addresses-nuclear-disarmament-analysis/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29)  
<http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=4&k=e1&case=95&code=unan&p3=4>

**International Criminal Court.** The Court (ICC) found Jean-Pierre Bemba, the former vice president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The judges held that Bemba was responsible for abuses committed by his militia in the Central African Republic in 2002-2003, including the large-scale rape by soldiers under Bemba’s control. This verdict marks the first time the ICC has found “a high official directly responsible for the crimes of his subordinates, as well as the first to focus primarily on crimes of sexual violence committed in war,” reported *Reuters*. According to the *International Justice Monitor*, the evidence admitted in the case “consisted of transcripts from the testimony of 77 witnesses and 704 items of documentary evidence,” including video.

<http://news.trust.org/item/20160321150228-wxuug/>; <http://www.ijmonitor.org/2014/04/presentation-of-evidence-ends-in-bembas-trial/>

The ICC ordered Dominic Ongwen, a former senior commander in Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army that operates in Uganda and neighboring states, to stand trial on 70 charges, including murder, rape, torture and use of child soldiers. The *Associated Press* reported that the decision was based on “written and oral statements of 130 witnesses and intercepted radio communications.”

[http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2016/03/23/icc-orders-ugandan-militia-fighter-stand-trial/vqPj8QvoSliZo5uAIDrhvI/story.html?s\\_campaign=email\\_BG\\_TodaysHeadline&s\\_campaign=](http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2016/03/23/icc-orders-ugandan-militia-fighter-stand-trial/vqPj8QvoSliZo5uAIDrhvI/story.html?s_campaign=email_BG_TodaysHeadline&s_campaign=)

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In two verdicts that are hard to reconcile with each other, the Tribunal (ICTY) first found Radovan Karadzic guilty of ten of eleven counts against him, including six crimes against humanity in “municipalities” and genocide in Srebrenica, but acquitted him of the first genocide count “for systematic killings in 1991 and 1992 in those municipalities.” Then, a few days later, the ICTY acquitted Serbian nationalist party leader Vojislav Seselj on all nine counts against him, saying there was “insufficient evidence.” For a useful discussion of the Karadzic verdict, see [http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/q-and-a-on-the-karadzic-verdict-03-27-2016?utm\\_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm\\_campaign=70fa06d100-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a1d9e93e97-70fa06d100-319755321](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/q-and-a-on-the-karadzic-verdict-03-27-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=70fa06d100-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-70fa06d100-319755321) For *BIRN*'s report on the Seselj case, see [http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vojislav-seselj-hague-tribunal-war-crimes-verdict-03-31-2016?utm\\_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm\\_campaign=5773f20981-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a1d9e93e97-5773f20981-319755321](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vojislav-seselj-hague-tribunal-war-crimes-verdict-03-31-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=5773f20981-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-5773f20981-319755321)

*Balkan Transitional Justice* published an essay by three professors on the need to safeguard the ICTY archives. [http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/safeguarding-the-yugoslavia-tribunal-s-unique-war-archives-03-29-2016?utm\\_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm\\_campaign=fa23a3264e-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a1d9e93e97-fa23a3264e-319755321](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/safeguarding-the-yugoslavia-tribunal-s-unique-war-archives-03-29-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=fa23a3264e-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-fa23a3264e-319755321)

In an exceedingly complex case, former ICTY spokeswoman Florence Hartman was jailed for five days for failure to pay a fine. She had published a book saying that the decision of the appeals chamber to classify as “confidential” the documents created by the Supreme Defense Council of Serbia which Serbia supplied to the ICTY during the trial of Slobodan Milosevic was improper. The ICTY sued, convicted and fined her. When she didn't pay, she was arrested. The classification on the documents has now been removed. <http://ilawyerblog.com/the-yugoslavia-tribunal-also-engages-in-debt-collection/>

United Nations. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reported that there were 99 “new allegations of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse against United Nations staff members” last year, and 69 involved personnel in 10 peacekeeping missions from “some 21 countries,” reported *Reuters*. The report “calls for the U.N. General Assembly and troop contributing countries to allow prosecutions inside the countries where the alleged crimes took place and creation of a DNA registry of all peacekeepers.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20160304021459-4qk8w/>

The United Nations Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism issued her first report. (“Albinism is a congenital disorder affecting about one in 20,000 people worldwide who lack pigment in their skin, hair and eyes,” reported the *Thomson Reuters*, and it is most common in sub-Saharan Africa where body parts may be used in witchcraft.) At least 40 people in 7 countries have been attacked in the last 8 months. The report said, “Statistics and disaggregated data on albinism remain difficult to find, particularly in areas where the worst human rights violations against persons with albinism occur.” The data required to enhance efforts to fight against “these horrendous human rights violations” includes “information on the number of cases registered, investigations, prosecutions and administrative and judicial decisions.” [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/63](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/63) and <http://news.trust.org/item/20160322212347-3tdka/>

United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria. The Commission told the U.N. Human Rights Council that countries should start to hold accountable those that committed atrocities during the fighting in Syria, reported *Reuters*, and “lower-level perpetrators should be prosecuted pending” the apprehension of more senior personnel. The Commission has “a confidential list of suspects and maintains a database with 5,000 interviews” and has received “about 15 requests for information from various countries.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20160315183935-ne488/>

United Nations Human Rights Council. The Council decided to set up a three-person commission to investigate human rights abuses in South Sudan, including “gang rapes, destruction of villages and attacks on civilians that may constitute war crimes,” *Thomson Reuters* reported. <http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL5N16V6AJ>

Welcoming the decision by the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court to bring charges against the perpetrators of cultural destruction in Timbuktu, Mali (including the attacks on manuscripts), the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights said, “It is impossible to separate a people's cultural heritage from the people itself and their rights. Clearly, we must now understand that when cultural heritage is under attack, it is also

the people and their fundamental human rights that are under attack.”

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53370#.VudfTdA-Kr9>

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a report to the Human Rights Council. Although he noted a “number of positive measures” the government undertook in 2015, he said the government’s use of capital punishment “continues to surge at a staggering rate.” Because the Special Rapporteur has not been permitted to enter Iran, the report is based on “information produced by the government and relayed by alleged victims of rights violations and civil society actors located inside and outside the country.” Government information came from “websites maintained by various branches and agencies of the Iranian government, details presented in national stakeholders reports . . . and information gleaned from statements either published by national media sources or by individual government officials.” Civil society information came from 128 interviews with Iranians, “open letters, confidential communications and reports emerging from Iran, and reports submitted to the special procedures by credible human rights organizations.” The government called the civil society sources “mostly unreliable.” <http://shaheedoniran.org/english/dr-shaheeds-work/march-2016-report-of-the-special-rapporteur-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran/>

**UNICEF.** In response to the urgent need to understand the Zika virus, a volunteer team of Google staff members is “helping UNICEF build a platform to process data from different sources, including weather and travel patterns, in order to visualize potential outbreaks,” *Reuters* reported.

<http://news.trust.org/item/20160303080328-zty13/>

## **World/general news.**

**Business records.** The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, a nongovernmental organization headquartered in the United Kingdom, developed the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark over two years of “consultation with over 400 companies, industry associations, investors, governments, civil society representatives, academics and lawyers.” The Centre is beginning a pilot project to benchmark “the top 100 companies in the agricultural products, apparel, and extractive industries,” with the final scores promised for November 2016. The importance of records to monitoring business compliance with human rights standards is obvious. <http://business-humanrights.org/en/corporate-human-rights-benchmark>

The United Kingdom passed the Modern Slavery Act in 2015. It requires every organization with a total global annual turnover of 36 million British pounds that is carrying out a “business (or part of a business) in the U.K. to produce a slavery and human trafficking statement for each financial year. The statement must contain details of the steps that the organization has taken in the year to identify and eradicate modern slavery from both its own business and its supply chain.” The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is collating all the statements in a public database “to bring transparency and accountability” to the process. <http://business-humanrights.org/en/uk-modern-slavery-act-analysis-of-early-company-statements-new-guidance-available>

The Swiss Federal Archives announced that it has accessioned a section of the records of the Claims Resolution Tribunal, which assessed the claims of victims of National Socialist persecution or their heirs to accounts at Swiss banks. The Tribunal closed in 2012; the records are being processed by the Archives for opening at the end of 2016; the processing costs are paid by the Swiss Bankers Association and the funds remaining from the Tribunal. <https://www.bar.admin.ch/bar/en/home/about-us/press-releases%20.msg-id-60934.html>

An historian at Martin Luther University in Halle, Germany, published an article on the *Associated Press* (AP)’s “formal cooperation with the Hitler regime in the 1930s,” reported *The Guardian*. AP said the article “describes both individuals and their activities before and during the war that were unknown to AP” and that it is “currently reviewing documents in and beyond its archives” on the period.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/30/associated-press-cooperation-nazis-revealed-germany-harriet-schamberg>

**Declassification.** The Open Government Partnership blog published an essay, “Breaking down iron doors: why opening up Soviet archives matters.” The author went to the National Security Archives in Tbilisi, Georgia, to learn the fate of a great-grandfather who was picked up by the Soviet security service in 1938 and disappeared. The researcher learned from “two sheets of paper” that a court of three officials sentenced

him to death for “participation in public meetings and distribution of literature against the party.” The researcher argued, “The government policy towards historic archives is a good indicator of its commitment to transparency.” <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/blog/tinatin-ninua/2016/03/21/breaking-down-iron-doors-why-opening-soviet-archives-matters>

**Land records.** Led by Oxfam, the International Land Coalition, and the Rights and Resources Initiative, some 300 organizations around the world issued “A Global Call to Action on Indigenous and Community Land Rights.” It says there is “growing evidence of the vital role played by full legal ownership of land by indigenous peoples and local communities in preserving cultural diversity and in combating poverty and hunger, political instability and climate change.” A major issue is the registration and titling of land, and one of the “seven major shifts” the group urges is “more meaningful data. Governments have to improve national statistics on indigenous and community land rights, starting with formally recognizing the data and maps produced by communities.” [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp-common-ground-land-rights-020316-en\\_0.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-common-ground-land-rights-020316-en_0.pdf)

**Medical records.** Ambry Genetics, a leading genetics testing company, “is putting genetic information from the people it has tested into the public domain,” reported the New York Times. Ambry said that the information from 10,000 customers will be available in the hope that researchers will use it to “discover a lot of new diagnostic targets and a lot of new drug targets.” The customers “were not told specifically about this project,” but “in ordering tests they consent to having their samples used for research.” <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/08/business/genetic-test-firm-to-put-customers-data-in-public-domain.html>

**Photographs as evidence.** The Italian Center for Photography in Turin has an exhibition titled “At the Crime Scene: Image Testing from the Should of Turin to War Drones.” Fascinating photographs from the exhibit, which has “case studies spanning everything from 19<sup>th</sup>-century crime scene photographs to a 21<sup>st</sup> century digital reconstruction of a drone attack in Pakistan,” were published by the *Huffington Post*. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/an-exhibition-explores-how-photos-have-been-used-to-prove-crime-and-violence\\_us\\_56f03eace4b03a640a6b3d3d?ir=WorldPost&section=us\\_world&utm\\_hp\\_ref=world](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/an-exhibition-explores-how-photos-have-been-used-to-prove-crime-and-violence_us_56f03eace4b03a640a6b3d3d?ir=WorldPost&section=us_world&utm_hp_ref=world)

**Special masters.** A special master is someone appointed by a court to resolve disputes, particularly over records, whether of paper or electronic format. *The Christian Science Monitor* published an article on the increasing use of special masters and debates about privacy. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Technology/2016/0311/In-move-to-electronic-court-records-a-debate-about-privacy-emerges>

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

**Al-Qaeda/United States.** The United States released another 112 documents that were seized from Osama bin-Laden’s compound during the May 2011 raid that killed him. Among them is what seems to be bin-Laden’s will and a document outlining the structure of a “chief of staff committee” similar to that used by “almost all North Atlantic Treaty members, including the United States,” reported the *New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/02/world/middleeast/osama-bin-laden-materials-declassified.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/02/world/middleeast/osama-bin-laden-materials-declassified.html?_r=0)

**Argentina/Vatican.** *The Catholic News Service* announced that “at the request of Pope Francis, material in the Vatican Secret Archives relating to Argentina’s ‘Dirty War’ is expected to be opened in the coming months.” However, “the timing and conditions under which the material may be studied will be agreed upon with the Argentine bishops’ conference.” <http://www.catholicreview.org/article/home/vatican-spokesman-archives-on-argentine-dictatorship-to-be-opened>

**Argentina/United States.** Almost simultaneously with the Vatican announcement, U.S. President Barack Obama announced that the United States will declassify military and intelligence records that could shed light on the era of the “Dirty War.” The president of the famous nongovernmental group in Argentina, the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, welcomed the promise, but said, “Our hope is that the archives they send us are complete.” [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US\\_OBAMA\\_ARGENTINA?SITE=AZPHG&SECTION=HOME](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_OBAMA_ARGENTINA?SITE=AZPHG&SECTION=HOME) ; <http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/211487/carlotto-asks-united-states-government-to-declassify-all-archives>

Bosnia/Croatia/Serbia. The Croatian supreme court upheld the conviction of Milorad Momic, a member of the Serbian “Scorpions” paramilitary unit, for involvement in war crimes. Reported *BIRN*, “One of the biggest pieces of evidence brought before the court was a notorious video of the killings [of six Bosniaks from Srebrenica] made by members of the unit themselves.” [http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatian-convicts-serbian-scorpions-paramilitary-03-31-2016?utm\\_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm\\_campaign=5773f20981-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a1d9e93e97-5773f20981-319755321](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatian-convicts-serbian-scorpions-paramilitary-03-31-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=5773f20981-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-5773f20981-319755321)

Burkina Faso/Ivory Coast. Former Burkina Faso president Blaise Compaore and his younger brother are now citizens of the Ivory Coast, “naturalized by a decree signed by Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara” in 2014, reported *africanews.com*. Burkina Faso wants to put Compaore on trial for crimes committed during his rule, but with Ivorian citizenship he “cannot be extradited to Burkina Faso since Ivory Coast does not extradite its nationals.” <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/worldNews/Compaore-Ivorian-citizenship-shameful-Opposition-420523>

Chile/United States. In 1984 a U.S. man disappeared while hiking in southern Chile. The official Chilean inquiry concluded he had drowned, but “more than 450” U.S. records declassified in 2000 showed that the U.S. believed he had been picked up by a military patrol and killed at the infamous Colonia Dignidad, reported the *New York Times*. In 2012 a judge in Chile indicted eight men, police and military, for the kidnapping, but in March the judge closed the case saying it was a “common crime” not a human rights violation. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/11/world/americas/chile-halts-inquiry-on-american-who-disappeared-31-years-ago.html>

France/Germany. France is opening the secret service archives from the World War II period, including the records of the intelligence agency of the Vichy regime and the French resistance and “German documents seized by the French at the end of the war,” reported *The Guardian*. The records, amounting to “hundreds of boxes” were turned over to the defence ministry archives in 1999 “with no classification system—an intelligence technique so no foreign county would get easy access to secret documents. Only half of the archives have now been inventoried.” Some of the files appear to have been purged, some historians told the press, including the file on former French president Francois Mitterrand. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/16/french-archives-nazi-resistance-war-files-celebrities-coco-chanel-josephine-baker>

Germany/Islamic State. “The German authorities have obtained a trove of documents that are said to list foreigners who have traveled to Syria to fight for the Islamic State, which officials hope will help them prosecute fighters who return home,” reported the *New York Times*. *Sky News*, the British broadcaster, said it had a similar list of 22,000 foreigners who crossed from Turkey into Syria. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/11/world/europe/germany-isis-list.html>

Germany/United Kingdom. The U.K. released the applications that U.K. nationals made to an Anglo-German Nazi Persecution Compensation body between 1964 and 1965, including personal testimonies of the horrors experienced in the concentration camps, reported *VICE News*. <https://news.vice.com/article/newly-released-documents-describe-rampant-cannibalism-at-nazi-concentration-camps>

India/Austria/Germany/Italy/Japan/Russia/United Kingdom/United States. The government of India has asked the governments of seven countries for copies of all records relating to Subhas Chandra Bose, whose actions during World War II and his death have been a subject of great controversy in India. For background, see *HRWG News* 2015-10, 2016-01. <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Indian-Government-Approaches-Japan-Russia-UK-for-Netaji-Documents/2016/03/02/article3306690.ece>

Islamic State. A Yazidi woman who was captured by the Islamic State and later escaped spoke at the U.S. Holocaust Museum about crimes against religious minorities in Syria. She said that after capture she was sent to a religious court “to be registered by a photo and number as property” of the Islamic State fighters. She called for “the documentation of war crimes evidence such as mass graves, the rescue of young Yazidi men and women still held by the Islamic State as fighters and sex slaves, and the granting of refugee status,” reported the *Washington Post*. [http://article.wn.com/view/2016/03/23/A\\_Yazidi\\_Woman\\_Shares\\_Her\\_Story\\_Of\\_Terror\\_At\\_The\\_Hands\\_Of\\_Th/](http://article.wn.com/view/2016/03/23/A_Yazidi_Woman_Shares_Her_Story_Of_Terror_At_The_Hands_Of_Th/)

Israel/Palestine. In an incident that has caused considerable controversy, a video posted on line by the Israeli nongovernmental organization B’Tselem showed an Israeli soldier shooting “an unarmed Palestinian

man in the head as he lay motionless on the ground in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron,” reported *VICE News*. <https://news.vice.com/article/video-shows-israeli-army-executing-palestinian-after-alleged-stabbing>

*Al-Monitor*, in an essay titled “Why Israel needs B’Tselem,” said B’Tselem is “coming under frequent attack” from Israel’s political right wing, but the “B’Tselem video from Hebron, as well as other photos and videos from cameras that the organization has distributed to Palestinians for its Camera Project, underlines the need for the organization and is the decisive answer to the campaign being waged against it.” [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/israel-btselem-idf-palestinian-attacker-video-controversy.html?utm\\_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm\\_campaign=bcda3890c9-March\\_29\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_28264b27a0-bcda3890c9-93088897](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/israel-btselem-idf-palestinian-attacker-video-controversy.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=bcda3890c9-March_29_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-bcda3890c9-93088897)

Russia/Ukraine. The Ukrainian military pilot captured during fighting in eastern Ukraine in June 2014 and tried in a court in the Russian town of Donetsk, was found guilty and given a 22 year sentence for “complicity in the deaths of two Russian journalists,” reported the *New York Times*. The prosecution said she “directed mortar fire at a rebel-held checkpoint” which killed the reporters; she said she was captured before the shelling and at the trial her lawyers “offered cellphone records indicating that she was at least three miles from the shelling site when it took place.” The news website *Meduzza.io* published an interview with a “rebel leader” who said he had captured the pilot before the shelling. Before the trial the pilot went on a hunger strike but was persuaded to end it when she received a letter from President Poroshenko of Ukraine urging her to live; however, the president’s office said he had not sent such a letter and her lawyer now believes it was a forgery. The pilot has resumed the protest.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/23/world/europe/ukraine-russia-donetsk-nadiya-savchenko.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/23/world/europe/ukraine-russia-donetsk-nadiya-savchenko.html?_r=0) ;  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/11/world/europe/nadya-savchenko-hunger-strike.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/11/world/europe/nadya-savchenko-hunger-strike.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=0)

## National news.

Afghanistan. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that a two-minute video filmed on a smart phone and posted on social media showing “police dragging a suspect behind a truck, and then beating and biting him” went “viral.” The “incident” took place in Kandahar; a UN report in February 2015 “noted that 58 percent of detainees interviewed in Kandahar had been tortured.” Kandahar police said two policemen were prosecuted for the incident. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/12/dispatches-afghanistan-torture-video-highlights-impunity>

HRW issued a report on the forced use of “virginity exams” by Afghan officials on Afghan females who are accused of the crime of sex outside marriage, which is punishable by up to 15 years in prison. The doctors who perform the exams “write reports based on these examinations, and they are used as evidence in courts hearing the ‘moral crime’ accusation.” The government’s Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission interviewed 53 women and girls who were accused of the crime; 48 had been given virginity exams, 20 more than once, and “one woman said that there were six people in the room watching the examination.” HRW called it “sexual assault in the name of science.”

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/29/dispatches-sexual-assault-name-science-afghanistan>

Argentina. Like the Vatican (see above), the Catholic bishops of Argentina “are working to declassify their archives from the time of the country’s 1976-83 military dictatorship,” reported the *Associated Press*, noting, “Many senior clerics were close to the rulers at the time while some radical priests were persecuted and killed by them.” <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/argentine-church-working-release-dirty-war-archives-3777960>

Canada. An Indian residential school survivor is asking a court to order the government to reopen his claim for compensation for physical and sexual abuse suffered at St. Anne’s residential school. His claim was originally denied, reported *CBC News*, but “documents recently released by the government in response to a court order show the priest had access to the children at St. Anne’s for nearly 40 years.” <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/st-annes-residential-school-survivor-1.3472922>

Czech Republic. Some parts of the archives of the communist-era secret police (StB) will be made available electronically, including those from two sections of the Secretariat of the Federal Interior Ministry, the State Security Command, and the Stb Cabinet, reported *ceskenoviny.cz*. Applicants must “at least once visit the archives in Prague or Brno” to show their identity card “and to be registered,” after

which the person will be given the access codes. <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/czechs-may-see-communist-secret-service-archives-data-online/1324640>

El Salvador. In 2012 the Inter-American Court for Human Rights ordered the government to reopen the investigation into the mass killings at El Mozote in 1982. A long report on the ongoing work was published by the *Boston Globe*, which also mentioned that the human rights organization of the Catholic Church, Tutela Legal, had “storied archives” which “will be critical to any forensic and legal assessment of—and responsibility for—El Salvador’s many mass graves.” The Church closed Tutela Legal and its archives in 2013; a new Tutela has been organized but “the fate of those archives is still being debated in courts and remains uncertain.” <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2016/03/06/salvador-archives-death/Xtn7kjlhpQfJ3WPooypMIK/story.html>

France. The Ministry of Overseas France is investigating the program by which “at least 1,615 children” were removed from the island of La Reunion between 1963 and 1981 and resettled in mainland France, some of whom were orphans but “some of the children were forcibly removed from their parents, who never consented to their resettlement, and their files were later found to have been forged by the authorities,” reported *VICE News*. “The Committee on Children of the Creuse is now focused on collecting testimonies and information,” will help removed children connect with biological families; it hopes to finish the research within two years. In 2014 the National Assembly adopted a resolution (not a law) to do “everything in its power to help former wards [of the state] reconstruct their personal history.” <https://news.vice.com/article/frances-child-abductees-from-the-island-of-runion-are-grown-and-want-answers>

Georgia. In 2012 the country was rocked by the revelation that thousands of politicians and others had been secretly filmed by the secret police in what became known as a sex tapes scandal. Those tapes were all destroyed. Now another “secretly recorded sex tape, purportedly showing an opposition politician” was released on line, reported *Civil.Ge*. The Prime Minister ordered an investigation. [http://www.eurasiareview.com/12032016-georgia-pm-vows-condemns-sex-tape-leak-as-blackmail-of-society-promises-severe-response/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](http://www.eurasiareview.com/12032016-georgia-pm-vows-condemns-sex-tape-leak-as-blackmail-of-society-promises-severe-response/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29); <http://www.rocketnews.com/2016/03/georgias-very-public-sex-tapes-and-the-secret-police/>

Guatemala. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued a report on the situation of human rights in Guatemala, based on information provided by the government and civil society organizations. Focusing on “three fundamental aspects: citizen security, administration of justice, and the inequality and exclusion suffered by indigenous peoples,” the Commission found that “Poverty, racism, discrimination, exclusion, violence and impunity have been constantly observed in Guatemala by this Commission in the exercise of their various functions.” Two of the 38 recommendations made by the Commission relate specifically to record-keeping. Recommendation 33 is: “Ensure the inclusion of ethnicity in all official statistics, censuses, surveys, and administrative and judicial records as a way to strengthen efforts to give visibility to indigenous peoples and ensure ethnicity is considered as a determinant element in defining public policies, plans, and government programs.” Recommendation 17 focuses on the problem caused by the many private security companies which for years have acted with near impunity: “Ensure supervision and effective control of the private security companies and their agents, the registration and punishment of those who do not comply with the rules and regulations; and keep strict tabs on arms and any future process of disarmament.” <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Guatemala2016-en.pdf>

Haiti. A study by Doctors Without Borders of the cholera epidemic that spread through Haiti in the wake of the 2010 earthquake said the death toll “could be much higher than the 9,200 officially tallied so far because of underreporting during the institutional outbreak,” reported the *New York Times*. “In some areas, the number of deaths may have been as much as 10 times as high as that reported to the Haitian government, which derived its statistics largely from mortality information supplied by clinics and hospitals.” The Doctors Without Borders estimate is based on its survey of nearly 71,000 people in four areas of northern Haiti. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/19/world/americas/cholera-deaths-in-haiti-could-far-exceed-official-count.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FDoctors%20Without%20Borders&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/19/world/americas/cholera-deaths-in-haiti-could-far-exceed-official-count.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FDoctors%20Without%20Borders&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection&r=0)

Honduras. Environmental activist Berta Caceres was killed. Less than two weeks later Nelson Garcia, her colleague in the nongovernmental Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), was killed, too. A Jesuit priest told the *New Yorker* that during the past three years “dozens” of



threats were made against Caceres and COPINH and “all of them were documented. They came from people working for, or with DESA.” DESA—Desarrollos Energeticos S.A.—is a company building hydroelectric dams in territory inhabited by the indigenous Lenca people and opposed by them and COPINH. In February, in a strong report on human rights in Honduras, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had specifically called on the Honduran government to take “precautionary measures” for Caceres’ security; the Commission has now told the government to extend protection to her survivors and to a witness to her murder. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-death-of-berta-caceres>;  
<http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/decisiones/pdf/2016/MC112-16-Es.pdf>

Indonesia. Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a strong report on abuses against people with psychosocial disabilities, based on interviews with 149 people and “direct observation, medical or psychiatric records” as well as “domestic and international media reports, official government documents and reports by government-run mental health facilities or institutions, United Nations documents, World Health Organization publications, NGO reports, and academic articles.” HRW estimates that 57,000 people with real or perceived psychosocial disabilities in Indonesia have been “in *pasung*—shackled or locked up in confined spaces—at least one in their lives. Latest available government data suggests that 18,800 people currently live in *pasung* in Indonesia” although the government banned the practice in 1977. HRW “documented 175 cases of people in *pasung* or who were rescued in recent years from *pasung*, another 200 such cases reported by the Bengkulu Mental Hospital, and 25 other cases based on interviews.” It urged the government to take a number of documentation and data collection actions “to better inform policy decisions” on care for persons with mental disabilities. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/03/21/living-hell/abuses-against-people-psychosocial-disabilities-indonesia>

Iraq. A team of Czech scholars is documenting architectural sites in Mosul that have been destroyed by ISIS since the group overran the city in June 2014. They are using satellite imagery and “are gathering the widely dispersed historical records, archives and scholarly writing” about “lost buildings,” working with “photos, documentary films, descriptions, satellite images and aerial photos from the 1940s and 1950s” and gathering information from residents and former residents of Mosul, with the aim of providing all “data and experience to responsible authorities and to help in preparing a ‘rescue plan’ for Mosul,” reported *Al-Fanar Media*. <http://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2016/03/czech-scholars-chart-the-destruction-of-mosul-heritage/>

Ireland. Symphysiotomy is a procedure in which pelvic cartilage is removed from a woman to enlarge the birth canal. The procedure was carried out between 1940 and 1990 on “nearly 750 women, with more than one third of those having undergone the barbaric procedure without their knowledge or consent,” wrote the *Irish Examiner*. In 2014 the Irish government created a “Scheme to provide ex-gratia payments to women” who underwent either symphysiotomy or pubiotomy in any State-run hospital (the total number of living women who had either procedure is believed to be about 350). All claims were submitted by 31 August 2015. The judge who administered the Scheme announced her “intention to have applicants’ unclaimed medical records destroyed” when the claims procedure is completely finished (that is, unless the woman asks for them to be returned). Applicants and academic are protesting the proposed destruction, both because complaints to United Nations bodies are still pending and because the records are valuable for future research. <http://www.payment-scheme.gov.ie/>; <http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/letters/shredding-symphysiotomy-records-1.2562019>

Israel. Breaking the Silence (BtS) is a nongovernmental organization that collects testimonies from Israeli soldiers (for background, see *HRWG News* 2016-01 and Israel/Palestine above). Israel’s *Channel 2 News* aired a report claiming that BtS had “collected classified information from soldiers, information that the station got from another nongovernmental organization Ad Kan (No More) that made secret recordings of BtS activities. The Prime Minister instructed Israel’s security forces to investigate BtS. The BtS director told *Al-Monitor* that the “testimonies published by her organization are submitted to the military censor and are not released unless the group reviews explicit permission to do so.” [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/breaking-the-silence-ngo-right-left-alon-liel-traitor.html?utm\\_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm\\_campaign=f3258a8128-March\\_25\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_28264b27a0-f3258a8128-93088897](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/breaking-the-silence-ngo-right-left-alon-liel-traitor.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=f3258a8128-March_25_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-f3258a8128-93088897); see also [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/israel-btselem-idf-palestinian-attacker-video-controversy.html?utm\\_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm\\_campaign=bcda3890c9-March\\_29\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_28264b27a0-bcda3890c9-93088897](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/israel-btselem-idf-palestinian-attacker-video-controversy.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=bcda3890c9-March_29_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-bcda3890c9-93088897)

Japan. A teenager committed suicide after an allegation that he had been caught shoplifting was attached to his records in the school computer system and the information sent to his parents, reported the *Japan Times*. The shoplifting was actually committed by a different student, but the teacher “attached the details to the wrong pupil’s records” and “the school did not have anyone tasked with monitoring its online records at the time of the incident.” <http://time.com/4253672/japan-hiroshima-school-student-suicide-clerical-error/>

Using survey responses from 9,600 women employees “submitted by mail or online,” a government study found “that nearly a third of working women . . . reported being sexually harassed on the job,” reported the *Japan Times*. [http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/02/national/social-issues/third-japanese-working-women-sexually-harassed-study/?utm\\_source=Daily+News+Updates&utm\\_campaign=2cc9d11f45-Thursday\\_email\\_updates03\\_03\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c5a6080d40-2cc9d11f45-332786877#.VucqgN9JdQz](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/02/national/social-issues/third-japanese-working-women-sexually-harassed-study/?utm_source=Daily+News+Updates&utm_campaign=2cc9d11f45-Thursday_email_updates03_03_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c5a6080d40-2cc9d11f45-332786877#.VucqgN9JdQz)

Kenya. HAART, a nongovernmental organization in Kenya that gives human trafficking victims psychological and economic support, surveyed 309 internally displaced persons living in 13 places across Kenya. It found that half of those displaced by the 2007-2008 post-election violence “had experienced or witnessed trafficking, in striking contrast with people displaced for environmental reasons . . . none of whom had been approached by traffickers.” The United Nations estimates that 250,000 people are displaced in Kenya. Kenya has a counter-trafficking law “but it has proved difficult to secure convictions because of the need to prove all three elements—the act of recruitment, the deceptive means and the exploitative purpose,” reported the *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160322143511-titqv/>

Latvia. In 2015 the parliament established a Commission for the Study of KGB Materials, with a three-year mandate to research the KGB archives before they are opened to public research (no earlier than 31 May 2018). The deputy head of the Commission told Latvian television that the Commission is not getting access to the part of the KGB records that are stored at the Center of Documenting the Consequences of Totalitarianism and controlled by the Constitution Protection Bureau. *Latvian Public Broadcasting* noted, “It has been clear for a long time that the records are not fully complete and therefore cannot serve as evidence for establishing the fact of collaboration by informants with a repressive agency of the Soviet Union.” <http://www.lsm.lv/en/article/societ/society/kgb-study-commission-still-kept-away-from-archives.a174565/>

Mexico. Following an appeal under Mexico’s access law, the National Institute for Access to Information and Data Protection ordered the release of the “Auto Formal de Prision” (essentially an indictment by the attorney general) on the “action of Mexican Army soldiers accused of executing at least 11 people who surrendered after a June 2014 firefight in the State of Mexico,” reported the National Security Archive, a nongovernmental organization that worked on the case. The Institute found that the access law “clearly recognizes the necessity that both the victims as well as society in general know the actions of the authorities in the present case, since, given its transcendent importance, these acts directly affect not only the victims and their families, but also society at large, which has been affected by the climate of insecurity generated by acts such as these and the lack of trust it fosters in institutions of transcendent national importance like the Mexican Army.” <https://nsarchive.wordpress.com/2016/03/04/tlatlaxcala-revealed-archive-petition-cracks-open-investigative-file-on-mexican-army-massacre/>

The government commission responsible for providing assistance to victims of violence (CEAV) released a report showing “that around 600,000 sexual violence cases were reported between 2010 and 2015,” based on “official information from 16 of Mexico’s states.” Women were 90 percent of the victims. As if to prove these findings, a reporter tweeted a video of herself being sexually assaulted in Mexico City after she “obtained footage of the incident from one of the many private security cameras in the area,” reported *VICE News*. <http://latincorrespondent.com/2016/03/mexico-sexual-violence-on-the-up/>; <https://news.vice.com/article/reporters-video-of-sexual-assault-highlights-impunity-in-mexico>

Nepal. After 14 months of delay, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons announced that each will begin “receiving victims’ complaints” in mid-April. Civil society groups launched a Transitional Justice Research Center and held a conference on “unofficial truth-telling” in cases of human rights violations. Participants discussed “community-based documentation of cases of human rights violations, as well as choosing artistic means such as drama, film, painting, music and documentation, for expressing the truth,” reported *Republica*. <http://www.myrepublica.com/feature-article/story/39403/victims-initiate-unofficial-transitional-justice-activities.html>

Palestine. Since the Palestinian split in June 2007 between the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and Hamas in Gaza, the Palestinian Bar Association in Gaza has filled the role of the Foreign Ministry, including authentication of “marriage contracts, ratification of university degrees and stamps for passports” and other documents. The headquarters of the Bar Association was raided by Palestinian police in Gaza with agents of the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau in Ramallah, attempting to “confiscate documents and computers” for audit, reported *Al-Monitor*. For a day all work by members of the bar in “all courts and institutions” was suspended; it has now resumed and the auditors and the Bar Association reached “consensus” on what documents to audit. However, Gaza citizens are concerned about the implications of the raid, because “after the Hamas takeover of Gaza, the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah denied Gazans passports.” Another Gaza bar association “warned of harm to citizens’ basic interests, such as their being denied passport stamps and the necessary certificates and identity documents needed to travel through Palestinian crossings.” [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/gaza-lawyer-union-police-raid-passports.html?utm\\_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm\\_campaign=bcda3890c9-March\\_29\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_28264b27a0-bcda3890c9-93088897](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/gaza-lawyer-union-police-raid-passports.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=bcda3890c9-March_29_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-bcda3890c9-93088897)

Philippines. Criminal charges were filed against the Valenzuela City mayor and six city officials and the owner of the Kentex factory that burned in May 2015, killing 74 people. The investigation into the fire “showed that the city officials issued business permits and fire safety certificates to Kentex despite blatant violations of the Fire Code,” reported *InterAksyon.com*. <http://interaksyon.com/article/125228/valenzuela-mayor-gatchalian-7-others-ordered-charged-over-kentex-fire>

Russia. In the aftermath of the release of records showing that the story of the sacrifice of the 28 “Panfilov’s guardsmen” during World War II was not true, the head of the archives who released the records was demoted, reported the *Moscow Times*. For background, see *HRWG News* 2015-07, 08, and 10. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/battle-in-the-archives---uncovering-russias-secret-past/563566.html>

South Africa. Tenants threatened with eviction from government housing filed a request under the access law for “documents relating to the relocation proposal.” The government refused the request, saying the documents required “mandatory protection of certain confidential information and protection of certain other confidential information of third party,” but said the requesters could see the “rental policy and maintenance plan” but “no copies could be made,” reported *groundup.org*. <http://www.groundup.org.za/article/plumstead-tenants-kept-dark/>

On March 15 the Supreme Court of Appeal ruled that the government had acted unlawfully when it failed to “take steps to arrest and detain, for surrender to the International Criminal Court . . . the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, after his arrival in South Africa in June 2015,” reported the Helen Suzman Foundation, which was an amicus curiae in the case. Two days later, the Foundation “launched an application in the Pretoria High Court” seeking to overturn the appointment of the head of the police “Crimes Against the State Unit.” Three days later, on March 20, a Sunday, the “Foundation’s offices were raided in an armed apartheid military-style operation,” reported the *Daily Maverick*. “The intruders, a woman and two men, made off with computers and documents after handcuffing a security guard to a railing.” The Foundation said it “had backed up all of its documents.” Thanks to Graham Dominy for the news. <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-03-20-documents-and-computers-seized-in-armed-apartheid-military-style-robbery-at-helen-suzman-foundation-offices/>; <http://hsf.org.za/media/press-releases-1/helen-suzman-foundation-pleased-with-the-outcome-of-al-bashir-court-case>

Syria. The Syria Justice and Accountability Center published a commentary on the ceasefire agreement now in place in Syria. The Center called for monitoring the ceasefire: “Methods of human rights documentation can also be employed to monitor ceasefires, including the use of photographs, videos, and interviews to document and verify violations. Including metadata can help verify times and locations in pictures and videos that will lend credibility to claims.” [http://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2016/03/11/the-role-of-civil-society-in-ceasefire-monitoring/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=f11dd77d0f-Ceasefire\\_post3\\_11\\_2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-f11dd77d0f-90540617](http://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2016/03/11/the-role-of-civil-society-in-ceasefire-monitoring/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=f11dd77d0f-Ceasefire_post3_11_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-f11dd77d0f-90540617)

Taiwan. The secretary-general of the Taiwan Association for the Care of the Victims of Political Persecution During the Martial Law Period “called on the government to declassify important articles and reveal the methods that the military police used to extract confessions,” the *Taipei Times* reported. He said the “military is still sitting on many important files, including judgements passed on political victims of the

era.” He suggested that the government pass a supplemental archives act “to allow victims or their families to read through documents, such as the records of interrogations and alleged confessions, so the public could understand the absurdity of the military’s trials.”

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/03/14/2003641547>

The Association’s argument was echoed by a legislator who proposed legislation “on overseeing the archives of political persecution cases,” arguing that a new act “will ensure greater transparency, as well as better collection and organization of files relating to the 228 Incident and the White Terror era,” reported the *Taipei Times*. The Incident was a 1947 crackdown on protesters against the Kuomintang rule over Taiwan, and the White Terror followed, lasting for more than 40 years. *BBC News*, reporting on the release of letters to families of political prisoners who were executed during that era, commented, “Taiwan’s president-elect clearly believes that how the country deals with its past will affect its future social and political cohesion.”

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/03/15/2003641626>;

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/03/15/2003641626/2>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35723603>

Tunisia. *Realities* published photographs taken by a lawyer of the piles of archives in utter disorganization in the corridors and staircases of the tribunal of the first instance in Tunis. It said the “secrets of families” and confidential and important documents often end up in the trash. <http://www.realites.com.tn/2016/03/tribunal-de-premiere-instance-de-tunis-les-archives-a-la-poubelle-photos/>

United States. *ProPublica* reported that Navy veterans who served in Vietnam and seek benefits for exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange must show when and where they were in Vietnam and the name of the vessel they were on. The Veterans’ Administration is so slow in handling the claims that many veterans are themselves doing the research to prove their claims, which “often means locating and sifting through stacks of deck logs, finding former shipmates who can attest to their movements, or tracking down a ship’s command history from the Navy’s historical archive.” [https://www.propublica.org/article/vietnam-vets-hunt-through-ships-logs-to-prove-they-should-get-benefits?utm\\_source=pardot&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=dailynewsletter](https://www.propublica.org/article/vietnam-vets-hunt-through-ships-logs-to-prove-they-should-get-benefits?utm_source=pardot&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter)

The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science released its 10<sup>th</sup> update “of peer-reviewed scientific reports” on “whether exposure to these herbicides [Agent Orange and others] contributed to long term health effects in Vietnam veterans.” The Institute has an “evidence database” on the question, made recommendations “for the continued monitoring of the health of Vietnam veterans,” and “set up procedures that will ensure military personnel are followed from the time they are deployed in order to anticipate the possibility of increased risk of health problems that arise later in life and could be associated with the exposures experienced during their services.” <http://www.nap.edu/read/21845/chapter/1>

According to the *Associated Press* analysis of all Freedom of Information Act requests to 100 federal agencies during Fiscal Year 2015, in “more than one in six cases, or 129,825 times” the government failed to find the record requested. The Federal Bureau of Investigation could not find any records in 39% of the cases and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection could not find the requested records in 34% of the cases. [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US\\_SUNSHINE\\_WEEK\\_FOIA?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2016-03-18-03-35-17](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_SUNSHINE_WEEK_FOIA?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2016-03-18-03-35-17)

United States/Pennsylvania. A grand jury announced that leaders of a small Catholic diocese covered up the sexual abuse of hundreds of children by more than 50 priests and other religious leaders over a 40-year period, reported the *Associated Press*. After a search warrant was issued, the confidential archives of the diocese were opened for the investigation and the state’s attorney general examined more than 115,000 diocesan documents. In a helpful article, the *Tribune-Democrat* explained the process outlined by the church’s canon law for dealing with sexual abuse and how that related to the release of the archives.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/2-catholic-bishops-in-pa-helped-to-hide-abuse-grand-jury-says/2016/03/01/28e4a282-dff7-11e5-846c-10191d1fc4ec\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/2-catholic-bishops-in-pa-helped-to-hide-abuse-grand-jury-says/2016/03/01/28e4a282-dff7-11e5-846c-10191d1fc4ec_story.html) ; [http://www.tribdem.com/news/local\\_news/confidential-archives-experts-divided-on-impact-of-canon-law-in/article\\_c9e8aa53-ff6e-52dc-951a-337844c84ef8.html](http://www.tribdem.com/news/local_news/confidential-archives-experts-divided-on-impact-of-canon-law-in/article_c9e8aa53-ff6e-52dc-951a-337844c84ef8.html)

## **Publications and courses.**

Witness, a nongovernmental organization, published “Video as Evidence: Field Guide to Better Document Human Rights Abuses.” <https://vae.witness.org/>

“*The Devil’s Diary: Alfred Rosenberg and the Stolen Secrets of the Third Reich*” (Harper), by the former F.B.I. agent Robert K. Wittman and the journalist David Kinney tells the story of finding the diary nearly 70 years after the war. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/books/tracking-an-elusive-diary-from-hitlers-inner-circle.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/books/tracking-an-elusive-diary-from-hitlers-inner-circle.html?_r=0) For a fascinating discussion of the archival involvement in the search, see <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/curators-corner/an-over-15-year-journey-the-robert-m.-w.-kempner-collection>

In Freetown, Sierra Leone, the Right to Access Information Commission in collaboration with the Open Data Council and the Ministry of Information and Communications with support from the Open Aid Partnership of the World Bank and other partners are organizing a datafest at the Miatta Conference Centre, Youyi Building, Brookfields, to raise the awareness of Open Data and its importance to economic development on April 21-22 at 10 a.m. For more information, contact Commissioner Yeama Thompson: [yeama.thompson@gmail.com](mailto:yeama.thompson@gmail.com) or tel: 00232 79 107752 and the Sierra Leone Open Data Portal online @ [opendata.gov.sl](http://opendata.gov.sl). Thanks to Andreas Nef for this information.

The International Center for Transitional Justice and the [Barcelona International Peace Resource Center](#) are offering an Intensive Course on Transitional Justice and Peace Processes, June 6-10 in Barcelona. For information contact Natalie Mazur at [nmazur@ictj.org](mailto:nmazur@ictj.org). Please note, the deadline for applications is April 18, 2016.

A conference, “Personal Archives and Culture,” will be held September 21-23 in Rio de Janeiro. For further information, see <http://www.casaruibarbosa.gov.br/arquivospessoais/>

A conference, “Archives des dictatures sud-américaines: les espaces et lieux de révélation des conflits entre droit à l’oubli et droit à la vérité,” will be held October 12-14 in Paris. See <http://dpc.hypotheses.org/994>

“European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Seminar: Reference Services: Best Practices and Innovative Use of Materials” will be held November 13-17 in Jerusalem. See <http://www.ehri-project.eu/cfa-ehri-seminar-reference-services-best-practices-and-innovative-use-materials>

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