

## News of August 2019

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### Commentary.

After the heart-breaking reports of Hurricane Dorian's devastation in the Bahamas, I emailed Patrice Williams, the director of the National Archives, and asked, "Are you and your colleagues okay after hurricane Dorian? Did you have damage to the archives?" She replied that both the colleagues and the archives are safe, as they were out of the direct path of the storm. "Whew," I thought. But we know that a national archives does not hold all important records: business records, archives of faith-based institutions, school records, archives of all sorts of nongovernmental institutions, local notary and land transaction records, personal papers in homes and bank boxes—these are all vulnerable and the damage to them cannot be determined with a quick email.

It is not clear what effect global warming had on the violence of the Category 5 hurricane that was Dorian, but it is unquestionable that climate change is real, with no cessation in sight. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2018 report showed oceans warmer than estimated (see *HRWG News* 2018-10 and 2019-01); for a recent analysis of the warming world, see <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/national/climate-environment/climate-change-world/>. Along with warmer oceans, climate change brings the melt of ice caps and glaciers, leading to sea level rise. As the *National Geographic* explains, "The most recent special report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says we can expect the oceans to rise between 10 and 30 inches (26 to 77 centimeters) by 2100 with temperatures warming 1.5 °C. . . . Another analysis based on NASA and European data skewed toward the higher end of that range, predicting a rise of 26 inches (65 centimeters) by the end of this century if the current trajectory continues." That will mean permanent flooding in thousands of populated areas, not only on the coasts but also along the rivers that lead to the sea. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/sea-level-rise/>

We know that in the wake of disasters people need documents. The foresighted Syrian project called *The Day After* copied court and land records in Aleppo, Syria, and took copies out of the country to save them from manmade disaster. But people also need records of marriages, education, employment, affiliations, health. And communities need the documents of heritage in order to root themselves in their culture.

Archivists have thought a great deal about coping with disasters, such as floods and hurricanes that result in (usually) temporary displacement. And archivists have given some thought to disaster preparedness, too. But inexorable climate change requires a longer strategy. Archives of all kinds will have to assess the risk, decide how to mitigate that risk, and take action, which may take years to accomplish. Does the archives move? Does it stay in place but send security copies to another location, either in the country or outside? Does it need evacuation plans? Will building changes, like a seawall, be enough?

To begin, archivists must to understand the scope of the changes that are coming. One way to do this is to map. The first step would be to map the locations of the archives in the country or province, including in government offices, major businesses, faith-based organizations, schools, and so forth. No mapping project will find all of them, but it should be able to locate the major ones. Next overlay that map with the best projections of sea level rise, such as in the forthcoming IPCC publication *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* (<https://www.ipcc.ch/>). With that information in hand, a council of stakeholders can assess the nature of the risk and decide on actions that need to be taken to prevent mass loss of archives.

As the world's climate continues its rapid change, we can be certain that not all archives will be as lucky as the National Archives of the Bahamas was this time. We archivists need to get ready to preserve the records of our civilizations.

## **International news.**

**International Organization for Migration (IOM).** Through 14 August “at least 514 people [migrants] have lost their lives in the Americas in 2019, compared with 384 recorded through this point in 2018—an increase of just over one-third” and the “earliest point in any of the past six years that IOM’s Missing Migrants Project has reached the threshold of 500 or more [migrant] deaths in the Americas.” Worldwide 1,675 migrant deaths were recorded, but “due to the challenges of collecting information about these people and the context of their deaths, the true number of lives lost during migration is likely much higher.” <https://www.iom.int/news/americas-migratory-routes-reach-grim-milestone-over-500-deaths-so-far-2019-3>

**United Nations.** The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs told the Security Council that because of “the continued lack of access to places of detention in Syria, the United Nations still has no official statistics on those detained abducted or missing,” but reports from various organizations suggest that “more than 100,000 people have so far been detained, abducted or gone missing” by acts of government or other parties to the conflict. Noting that families need information on the fate of the missing, she said, “Records from hospital or burial sites are not public and some families have been forced to pay large sums of money in hope of obtaining information—often in vain.” <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13913.doc.htm>

“On 27 August 2019, 103 local, regional and international organizations called on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Michelle Bachelet, to release the UN database of businesses engaged in activities related to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory,” *Al-Haq* reported. In March 2016 the UN Human Rights Council resolved that the High Commissioner’s office should produce such a database. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-11. <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/14950.html>

The annual *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report* by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said, “In 2018, almost half of the 281 natural disaster events worldwide occurred in the region, including eight out of the ten deadliest. An average of 142 million people in the region have been affected annually since 1970, well above the global average of 38 million.” The data from governments in the region that are used for the analysis are detailed in a set of helpful annexes. <https://www.unescap.org/publications/asia-pacific-disaster-report-2019>

Humanitarian organizations regularly obtain and use micro-level data on such sensitive topics as biometrics, gender-based violence, and infectious diseases. The Centre for Humanitarian Data of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs released a Guidance Note on “Statistical Disclosure Control,” a technique to measure and lower the risk of re-identification of individuals in microdata that is used in humanitarian action. The Note introduces the technique of disclosure control and includes brief case studies on assessing disclosure risk from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the nongovernmental organization REACH. [https://centre.humdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/guidance\\_note\\_sdc.pdf](https://centre.humdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/guidance_note_sdc.pdf)

The death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in a 1961 plane crash continues to make news. The *New York Times* reported that a researcher requested access to parts of a dossier titled “Correspondence regarding Dag Hammarskjöld and Ndola 1992-1995” in Sweden’s diplomatic records. Sweden’s national archives refused the request “on grounds that they are classified under national security laws.” In a letter to Sweden’s Foreign Ministry and to a leading Swedish newspaper, the descendants of some of the 16 people killed in the crash wrote, “How can Sweden expect other countries to declassify relevant documents if Sweden is not doing the same?” <http://www.hnn.us/article/172733>

## **World/general news.**

**Business.** In 2014 seven Guatemalan men filed a lawsuit in Canada against the Canadian mining company Tahoe Resources for compensation for the injuries they suffered when they were shot during a “peaceful protest” outside the company’s Escobal silver mine in April 2013, *Business and Human Rights* reported. The men alleged that the company’s Guatemala security manager “personally ordered

the shooting and instructed the security personnel to ‘falsify accounts of the shooting and destroy or cover up evidence’.” Tahoe was acquired by Pan American Silver in February 2019, which has now both “reached a settlement with the . . . plaintiffs and publicly apologized to the victims and the community.”

[https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/tahoe-resources-lawsuit-re-guatemala?utm\\_source=Business+%26+Human+Rights+Resource+Centre+Updates&utm\\_campaign=a977cad441-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_08\\_05\\_07\\_39&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c0049647eb-a977cad441-182072537&mc\\_cid=a977cad441&mc\\_eid=f1f6556540](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/tahoe-resources-lawsuit-re-guatemala?utm_source=Business+%26+Human+Rights+Resource+Centre+Updates&utm_campaign=a977cad441-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_08_05_07_39&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c0049647eb-a977cad441-182072537&mc_cid=a977cad441&mc_eid=f1f6556540)

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said the Swiss drug company Novartis manipulated data to get approval to market its gene therapy treatment Zolgensma. The agency said, “Ensuring truthful, complete and accurate data in product applications is a critical component of industry’s responsibility as they work to demonstrate the safety, purity, and potency of biological products. The submission of such truthful, complete and accurate data is also critical for the FDA to be able to protect the public health, and the law requires it.” <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/statement-data-accuracy-issues-recently-approved-gene-therapy>

In 2015 Richard Sackler testified in a lawsuit brought by the U.S. State of Kentucky against his family’s company, Purdue Pharma, which makes the painkiller OxyContin and is accused of promoting the use of the drug and spurring the deadly opioid crisis that has claimed an estimated 200,000 lives in the U.S. alone. (The case was settled for \$24 million later that year.) After a long legal battle by media companies, the Kentucky supreme court allowed the release of, first, the transcript of his testimony and finally the video of it, which *ProPublica* posted. <https://www.propublica.org/article/watch-richard-sackler-deny-his-familys-role-in-the-opioid-crisis>

A judge in the U.S. State of Oklahoma “found Johnson & Johnson and its subsidiaries helped fuel the state’s opioid crisis and ordered the consumer products giant to pay \$572 million,” the *Associated Press* reported. “Roughly 1,500 similar lawsuits filed by state, local and tribal governments” are pending in a consolidated Federal case in the U.S. State of Ohio. [https://www.statnews.com/2019/08/26/oklahoma-judge-finds-johnson-johnson-fueled-opioid-crisis/?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=dc8a0e5d69-MR\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-dc8a0e5d69-149736437](https://www.statnews.com/2019/08/26/oklahoma-judge-finds-johnson-johnson-fueled-opioid-crisis/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=dc8a0e5d69-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-dc8a0e5d69-149736437)

Medical records. “Robot-assisted surgery is big business,” *Undark* declared. The robot also captures data: “massive amount . . . detailing every snip, clamp, and stitch.” In 2018 “more than 1 million procedures were performed worldwide” using one of the most popular surgical robots, leading to questions of who “should hold responsibility for regulating robotic surgery data” and the privacy protocols to be employed. <https://undark.org/2019/08/15/surgical-robots-are-suring-in-popularity/>

Privacy. In July a Google “language reviewer” for the Google Assistant service leaked more than 1000 audio recordings to the Belgian news site *VRT*, which was able to identify some of the people speaking, including “being able to hear people’s addresses, discussion of medical conditions, and records of a woman in distress,” *TechCrunch* reported. In August the Hamburg, Germany, data protection authority ordered Google to “cease manual reviews of audio snippets generated by its voice AI” and said it has “significant doubts” that Google Assistant “complies” with the European Union’s data protection law. <https://techcrunch.com/2019/08/02/google-ordered-to-halt-human-review-of-voice-ai-recordings-over-privacy-risks/>; for the Belgian report see <https://www.theverge.com/2019/7/11/20690020/google-assistant-home-human-contractors-listening-recordings-vrt-nws> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/facebook-audio-privacy-1.5246470>

*Motherboard* reported that it obtained “documents, screenshots, and audio recordings” that show “contractors working for Microsoft are listening to personal conversations of Skype users conducted through the app’s translation service.” [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/xweqbg/microsoft-contractors-listen-to-skype-calls](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xweqbg/microsoft-contractors-listen-to-skype-calls)

World War II. Ancestry, the online genealogy company, announced that in partnership with the Arolsen Archives (formerly the International Tracing Service) it digitized and posted on line Arolsen’s “Africa, Asia and Europe Passenger Lists of Displaced Persons (1946-1971)” and “Europe, Registration of Foreigners and German Individuals Persecuted (1939-1947).” <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/ancestry-digitizes-millions-holocaust-nazi-130000665.html>

Poland is seeking reparations from Germany for destruction during World War II, *AFP* reported. Since 2017 a parliamentary commission “has been working on a new analysis of the extent of Poland’s

wartime human and material losses,” and the commission head said “the figures could be even higher than those drawn up by Poland in 1947, which are equivalent to around \$850 billion (750 billion euros) today.” The German government’s position is that Poland “relinquished its claims for reparations to the former communist east Germany — the German Democratic Republic — in 1953,” while Polish conservatives argue that in the 1953 accord “Warsaw acted under pressure from the Soviet Union.” Records are crucial sources for the claim. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/feeling-its-wwii-wounds-poland-seeks-german-reparations-80-years-on/>

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

**Balkan war.** The Coalition for RECOM is a network of civil society organizations in the post-Yugoslav countries that advocates for the establishment of an official Regional Commission to establish the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the period from 1 January 1991 through to 31 December 2001. RECOM says there are 10,167 persons missing from Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. It released a statement saying that in 2019 “the mortal remains of only 85 persons have been identified” (60 from Bosnia, 25 from Croatia). “There are serious indications that certain state institutions, such as the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia and the wartime commanders possess information on the locations of a large number of mass graves, but that this information is being kept a ‘state secret’ and in private archives.” <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=36874&lang=de>

The Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina published a new database of all the 27,085 missing persons reports that have been verified, *BIRN* reported. “Around 25,500 mortal remains have been excavated,” with 7,206 still missing in Bosnia and a total of 11,765 people still missing from Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. A member of the Institute’s board of directors said “lack of will among top politicians was the crucial problem in the search for the missing” and the searches are impeded by “lack of reliable information about locations of graves.”

[https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/29/bosnia-publishes-database-of-27000-wartime-missing-persons/?utm\\_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=ee380e9e86-BI\\_DAILY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4027db42dc-ee380e9e86-319725265](https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/29/bosnia-publishes-database-of-27000-wartime-missing-persons/?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=ee380e9e86-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-ee380e9e86-319725265)

**Belgium/Democratic Republic of Congo.** A Belgian court is investigating an orphanage that allegedly abducted and trafficked children from the Democratic Republic of Congo, *BBC News* reported. Belgian families were told the children were orphans, but “DNA tests have proved that in some cases they are not” and at least two families have photographs of the disappeared children who, they were told, were going to a “summer camp” but never returned. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48948774>

**Colombia/Venezuela.** For the next two years or until “the circumstances impeding the registrations of boys and girls as Venezuelans cease” Colombia will grant citizenship to children of Venezuelan migrants born in Colombia since 19 August 2015, *AP* reported. However, “Colombia’s laws still prohibit children born to foreign parents in the country illegally from accessing birthright citizenship. Statistics from Colombia’s migration agency show some 47% of Venezuelans living in the country lack legal status.” For background see *HRWG News* 2019-05. <https://apnews.com/441ff0264f46492fb416b19f0d4d6702>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report on the attacks against both Colombians and Venezuelan migrants in Colombia’s border area of Catatumbo. Armed groups operating in the area, “engaged in a brutal fight for territory,” have “committed a range of abuses against civilians, including killings, disappearances, sexual violence, child recruitment, and forced displacement.” HRW concluded that the “government does not exercise effective control.” The report is based on more than 80 interviews, “official reports and statistics, publications by nongovernmental and international organizations, and written testimony given to government officials by almost 500 victims of abuses committed in the context of the armed conflicts.” <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/08/war-catatumbo/abuses-armed-groups-against-civilians-including-venezuelan-exiles>

**Guatemala/United States.** The International Crisis Group reported that Guatemalan Minister of Interior signed a “security cooperation agreement with [the] U.S. on sharing biometric information of foreigners in or passing through Guatemala.” This seems to be the same as the 2018 agreement with Mexico; see *HRWG News* 2018-04. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/central-america/guatemala>



Indonesia/Timor-Leste/United States. Marking the twentieth anniversary of East Timor’s independence referendum, the U.S. nongovernmental National Security Archive published a selection of more than 200 documents from 1999 obtained through “declassification requests to the U.S. government.” NSA wrote that the U.S. knew of the Indonesian military’s plans to “kill, drive out, or intimidate into silence independence activists” but chose to “preserve close ties” to the Indonesian military, worrying that “violence in East Timor would destabilize Indonesia.” <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/indonesia/2019-08-28/us-sought-preserve-close-ties-indonesian-military-it-terrorized-east-timor-runup-1999-independence>

Israel/Palestine. Following the revelation that the Defense Ministry was closing Israeli archival documents relating to the events of the 1948 exodus of Palestinians from the new state of Israel (see *HRWG News* 2019-07), Israeli historian Ilan Pappé wrote an article for the *Electronic Intifada* titled “Israel’s Latest Attempt to Erase Palestine” and followed it with an interview with *The Real News Network*. The interviewer noted, “Yehiel Horev of the Ministry of Defense specifically spoke about undermining historians, mainly Israeli historians . . . to prevent them from reporting what happened in 1948.” <https://electronicintifada.net/content/israels-latest-attempt-erase-palestine/27941>; <https://therealnews.com/stories/how-israels-erasure-of-palestinian-history-perpetuates-occupation>

Middle East war. Germany’s Central Office for Combating War Crimes under International Criminal Law is collecting evidence (for future prosecution) on the August 2014 Islamic State assault against the Yazidi population in which nearly 10,000 were murdered and about 7,000 Yazidi women and children were abducted and sold as slaves, *DW* reported. “More than 100 women have already testified for the War Crimes Unit, with about 100 more yet to do so.” Approximately 85,000 Yazidis from Iraq and Syria have sought refuge in Germany. <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-pursues-justice-for-survivors-of-yazidi-genocide/a-49871986>

Nineteen years ago an Iraqi doctor came to the United Kingdom “after treating prisoners who were being tortured by members of the Al-Istikhbarat, the military wing of the Ba’ath Party’s security agencies” and also working as a doctor in Libya during Gaddafi’s regime, *The Sun* reported. In 2007 he sought and was denied refugee protection; court documents said he “never sought to leave the Al-Istikhbarat throughout his military service.” The case has been through appeals by both the government and the doctor, and a court has now ruled that he can appeal for asylum, saying there was not enough evidence to “support a conclusion of significant contribution to torture.” He is licensed to practice medicine in the U.K. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/9745290/doctor-saddam-hussein-legal-battle-uk-asylum/>

The nongovernmental Syria Justice and Accountability Centre said it has documents that “outline how Syrian intelligence agencies, the perpetrators of some of the worst human rights abuses throughout the conflict, are playing a central role in directing and monitoring humanitarian aid efforts in Syria.” As a result, the government can manipulate “the flow of humanitarian aid to punish perceived enemy populations and benefit government loyalists.” See also the report from Human Rights Watch. [https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/08/01/documents-obtained-by-sjac-show-role-of-syrian-intelligence-in-directing-humanitarian-aid/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=85f812d407-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-85f812d407-90540617](https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/08/01/documents-obtained-by-sjac-show-role-of-syrian-intelligence-in-directing-humanitarian-aid/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=85f812d407-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-85f812d407-90540617); [https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/08/08/inside-the-syrian-arab-red-crescent/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=d93750a2bf-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-d93750a2bf-90540617](https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/08/08/inside-the-syrian-arab-red-crescent/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=d93750a2bf-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-d93750a2bf-90540617); [https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/07/documents-reveal-government-meddling-syria-aid-delivery?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=d93750a2bf-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-d93750a2bf-90540617](https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/07/documents-reveal-government-meddling-syria-aid-delivery?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=d93750a2bf-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-d93750a2bf-90540617)

*Enab Baladi* investigated the detention of foreigners in Syria. Lebanon is particularly concerned, because “since its entry into Lebanon in 1990, the Syrian army has arrested hundreds of Lebanese people on various political charges.” Countries use middlemen to pressure the Syrian regime for information about and release of their nationals. The Lebanese Forces Party “handed over a list of Lebanese detainees in Syrian regime prisons to the UN envoy to Syria,” while Jordan handed over a list of Jordanian detainees in Syrian prisons to the Syrian Embassy in Jordan. Germany and the U.S. appear to have used Russian and Czech Republic authorities to negotiate on detainees. [https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2019/08/foreigners-in-regimes-cells-a-pressure-card-or-document-of-condemnation/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=30fbb0abbf-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-30fbb0abbf-90540617](https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2019/08/foreigners-in-regimes-cells-a-pressure-card-or-document-of-condemnation/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=30fbb0abbf-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-30fbb0abbf-90540617)

Amnesty International issued a press release: “Responding to an official communication obtained by Amnesty International that the Lebanese authorities forcibly deported almost 2,500 Syrian refugees back to Syria in the past three months, Amnesty International’s Middle East Research Director, Lynn Maalouf, said: ‘We urge the Lebanese authorities to stop these deportations as a matter of urgency, and the Higher Defense Council to cancel its related decision.’” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/08/lebanon-authorities-must-immediately-halt-deportation-of-syrian-refugees/>

Several nongovernmental organizations marked the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances (30 August) with commentary on the missing in the Middle East wars:

\*Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC) noted that on 8 August the United Nations Security Council held its first ever briefing on detainees and missing persons in Syria. SJAC warned, “The difficulty in estimating the number that remain missing is a direct result of the Syrian government’s efforts to conceal the issue. The government uses unregistered detention facilities and declines to make records of prisoners available to the public or the international community.” SJAC called on the UN Special Envoy to provide regular updates on his work and that of his Special Advisor on detainees to “allow civil society organizations to more effectively engage in the process and advocate for the missing.” [https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/08/29/breaking-the-cycle-of-enforced-disappearances/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=13dba06e8d-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-13dba06e8d-90540617](https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2019/08/29/breaking-the-cycle-of-enforced-disappearances/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=13dba06e8d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-13dba06e8d-90540617)

\*The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issued its annual report on “violations related to enforced disappearances by all actor parties in Syria.” Based on its “archives of detainees and enforced disappearance, resulting from the daily monitoring and documentation that [it has] carried out continuously since 2011” it said that “at least 98,000 people have been forcibly disappeared in Syria since March 211.” The organization “constantly” updates its records “and all the statistics therein in tracking detainees’ status, with every detainee registered by name, place and conditions of detention, the party responsible for the arrest and enforced disappearance, the latest observations and documents” and has a “special database providing information on detainees’ gender, marital and family status, age group and place of detention.” <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2019/08/31/54185/>

\*SNHR also issued a report saying 638 refugees “were forcibly disappeared after their return” to Syria and “15 returning refugees were killed as a result of torture.” “It took nearly eight months of work to complete this report and collect its data to cover the largest possible sample, in order to reach the widest possible areas and neighborhoods to which these refugees returned and then to monitor the violations they were subjected to.” The report recommends that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees “notify refugees of the dangers of return in the absence of any change to the ruling regime in Syria.” [http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/The\\_Syrian\\_regime\\_continues\\_to\\_pose\\_a\\_severe\\_barbaric\\_threat\\_and\\_Syrian\\_refugees\\_should\\_never\\_return\\_to\\_Syria\\_en.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/The_Syrian_regime_continues_to_pose_a_severe_barbaric_threat_and_Syrian_refugees_should_never_return_to_Syria_en.pdf)

\*In a long essay on the disappeared, the International Center for Transitional Justice wrote, “The magnitude of the challenges ahead is daunting for all stakeholders, including governments, which bear the primary responsibility for monitoring, investigating, and prosecuting human rights violations within their jurisdictions. Governments also have the task of devising programs to help families move on with their lives, and removing systemic corruption and dysfunction from security, prison, police, justice, and other relevant state branches. Meanwhile, archiving and oral history projects — such as the Syrian Oral History Archive, a collection of first-person testimonies from women — are helping victims pursue truth and their right to know.” <https://www.ictj.org/news/name-loved-ones-justice-missing-and-disappeared>

The Syrian Network for Human Rights issued a report: “The most notable types of weapons used by the Russian-Syrian Alliance on populated areas in Northwestern Syria: Cluster munitions, barrel bombs, incendiary weapons, nail missiles, chemical weapons.” It said that the region “has been the scene of the testing and use of various types of weapons,” that Russia was using the region “as a laboratory rather than testing weapons in empty areas within Russia,” and that it will take the region “decades to recover from the use of these weapons alone.” The report “draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news

reports and developments,” survivor accounts, its “network of credible sources,” and videos and photographs posted online. SNHR retains “copies of all the videos and photographs . . . in a confidential electronic database, as well as keeping hard disk backup copies.” <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2019/08/19/54151/>

The U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that actions by both regime forces and anti-government fighters in northwest Syria killed “at least 29 regime forces and 31 rebels and jihadists,” reported *AFP*. “A spike in bombardment since late April has killed more than 920 civilians,” according to the Observatory, with “regime and Russian air strikes” killing 12 civilians on 26 August in the vicinity of Maaret al-Noman. <https://news.yahoo.com/northwest-syria-clashes-kill-51-fighters-monitor-084126110.html>

Russia/Ukraine. After “Russia announced a decree to fast-track the granting of citizenship to all residents of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, where Russian-backed separatists have been fighting a war against Ukrainian troops,” Ukraine announced it will draft a law to simplify the procedure for acquiring citizenship by “foreigners and stateless persons who have participated in the implementation of national security and defense measures and citizens of the Russian Federation who have been persecuted for political reasons,” *RFE/RL* reported. <https://www.rferl.org/a/zelenskiy-decree-ukraine-citizenship/30107683.html>

Saudi Arabia/United Kingdom/Yemen. The Global Legal Action Network and the U.K. law firm Bindmans submitted a 288-page report to the U.K. international trade secretary “alleging that the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen has covered up evidence of its unlawful airstrikes on civilian targets,” the *Guardian* reported. The Yemeni human rights group Mwatana “looked at more than 400 bombing incidents,” using “witness interviews and photographic evidence taken during visits to the site of attacks.” In June the UK Court of Appeal of England and Wales ordered the government to “reconsider all existing British government licenses to export arms to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/15/report-documenting-saudi-cover-up-of-unlawful-airstrikes-in-yemen-submitted-to-uk>

Human Rights Watch “called for a United Nations investigation as it said that at least 47 Yemeni fishermen, including seven children, were killed in five attacks carried out by the [Saudi-led] coalition in 2018,” *Al Jazeera* reported. HRW also said “more than 100 Yemeni fishermen are being held in Saudi Arabia, some of whom have been tortured in custody.” It based its assertions on interviews with “survivors, witnesses, and knowledgeable sources about seven fishing boat attacks: six in 2018 and one in 2016.” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/saudi-uae-led-coalition-killed-47-yemen-fishermen-2018-hrw-190821140949177.html>; for the report see <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/21/yemen-coalition-warships-attack-fishing-boats>

## National news.

Argentina. The National Institute of Statistics said the percentage of children living below the poverty line is now 49.6%, “an increase of over 11% in one year,” reported *teleSUR*. [https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Child-Poverty-in-Arentina-at-Nearly-50-20190807-0003.html?utm\\_source=planisys&utm\\_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_content=9](https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Child-Poverty-in-Arentina-at-Nearly-50-20190807-0003.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=9)

Australia. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission sued the “online healthcare booking platform HealthEngine . . . over allegedly manipulating patient reviews and ratings and selling private information of over 135,000 patients to private health insurance brokers,” the *Guardian* reported. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/aug/08/healthengine-sued-for-allegedly-manipulating-reviews-of-gps-and-selling-patient-details>

Bangladesh. The High Court “ruled that women need no longer declare if they are virgins on marriage certificates, after a five-year legal battle by women’s rights groups trying to protect women’s privacy and potential humiliation,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190827055735-6xv4t/>

The UN Committee against Torture issued concluding observations on the country’s submission, with “regret that the submission of the State party’s initial report was 20 years late.” It said it is “concerned at information it has received alleging the widespread and routine commission of torture and ill-treatment . . . by law enforcement officials for the purpose of obtaining confessions or to solicit the payment of bribes.” The Committee made recommendations, many of which involve documentation, including:

“systematically collect statistical data at the national level on the implementation of the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act;” establish “an investigation mechanism to handle complaints” regarding treatment by law enforcement personnel; “publish a list of all recognized places of detention;” “commission an independent inquiry into allegations” against members of the Rapid Action Battalion; establish an “independent vetting procedure” for all military and police proposed for deployment with the United Nations; “collect and publish statistical information about attacks on and violence against indigenous, ethnic and religious minorities and other vulnerable groups;” “eliminate the 24-hour time limit to obtain a medical report and file rape claims;” and “register complaints of sex or labour trafficking of Rohingya within Bangladesh.”  
[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1293&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1293&Lang=en)

Bosnia. “The United Nations has ordered Bosnia to compensate a woman raped by a soldier during war and to set up a nationwide war crimes reparation scheme, after the first case of sexual violence brought before the UN Committee Against Torture,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The Bosnian Muslim woman was raped by a Bosnian Serb soldier in 1993; the “rapist was convicted and ordered to pay her 15,000 euros in compensation, but was unable to do so because he did not have the money. The Committee found that the state must pay her instead, and set up a scheme so that other victims owed similar compensation could also receive it.” The records of the compensation scheme will need careful management. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190829171544-qmgt6/>

Brazil. In 1995 Brazil established a seven-member Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances “to find the bodies of and identify those who died or disappeared when in police custody during the dictatorship” (1964-1981) and “issue compensation criteria for the victims' families,” *AFP* reported. It has processed 480 requests for identification and compensation. To the dismay of many, President Jair Bolsonaro has appointed two members of the armed forces to the commission—that is, military men to investigate abuses of the military dictatorship. <https://www.france24.com/en/20190801-bolsonaro-appoints-military-men-investigate-dictatorship-abuses>

Cameroon. The conflict between the central government and the Anglophone region that began in late 2017 continued. “Since then, fighting has killed about 1,800 people and displaced over 500,000, according to UN estimates,” *Reuters* reported. A “local security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the latest fighting had killed at least 34 people and forced thousands from their homes. A local government source said there had been killings every day, though he was not sure about the numbers of dead. He also said that thousands had been displaced. Both sources said it was not possible to give a more exact figure.” UNICEF said it has information that as of “June 2019, at least half of schools in the affected regions were closed due to attacks or the threat of violence, depriving more than 600,000 children of an education.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190827153224-nzww6/>

“Cameroonian authorities held over 100 detainees incommunicado and tortured many of them in a detention facility in Yaoundé, Cameroon’s capital, from July 23 to August 4, 2019,” Human Rights Watch reported. “In a news release dated August 2, Communication Minister René Emmanuel Sadi confirmed that 224 prisoners were transferred from the Central Prison to police and gendarmerie units in Yaoundé for questioning but did not specify which facilities.” HRW interviewed 14 detainees, families and lawyers, as well as reviewed videos and photos of the 22 July fire during a prison riot at the Central Prison. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/20/cameroon-detainees-tortured>

Canada. “The Federal Court of Canada has approved the settlement of a class-action lawsuit against the government to compensate thousands of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children who attended federally operated Indian day schools,” *CBC News* reported. “The schools were operated separately from Indian residential schools, so the students were not included in the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.” The agreement provides compensation to individuals, based on the severity of the abuse suffered, and a \$200 million fund for group healing programs. The Court will appoint an administrator for the program; claimants will submit forms to the administrator who will review them and make payments. According to the lawyer for the successful plaintiffs, “There's not going to be any cross examination. They will not be grilled or asked any questions by lawyers or anyone else. They will be presumed to be truthful.” <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indian-day-school-settlement-court-approves-1.5252211>



*Yukon News* reported that Yukon's Information and Privacy Commissioner said that under the province's Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act a public body can refuse to confirm or deny even the existence of records if the agency receiving the request could prove "that revealing whether the records existed would amount to an unreasonable invasion of an individual's personal privacy." <https://www.yukon-news.com/news/acknowledging-the-existence-of-records-is-an-invasion-of-privacy-privacy-commissioner/>

Central African Republic. In February the government signed a peace agreement with 14 armed groups, and according to MINUSCA (the UN peacekeeping mission) the violence has lessened, reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. MINUSCA recorded 565 incidents of abuse or human rights violations from January through June, compared to 1,674 in the same period of 2018 and 1,097 in 2017.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-centralafrica-violence-rights/central-african-republic-sees-sharp-decline-in-violence-idUSKCN1UY1V6>

Colombia. In a historic first step, former FARC rebels gave the Unit for the Search for Disappeared People a list containing "details on 276 individuals," *AP* reported. "In addition to the rebels, victim organizations are also providing information on the disappeared. In total, details on 624 cases have been provided." While this is welcome information, it is on a small number of the persons who are believed to have disappeared during more than five decades of conflict.

<https://apnews.com/4d7020005a9145faa9aa6fc8629e700d>

The "first 'official' record of a forced disappearance occurred in 1977, when Omaira Montoya, a militant of the National Liberation Army (ELN), was captured by the Colombian intelligence police. For the last 42 years, however, the authorities have not provided answers about her whereabouts," *teleSUR* reported. Although the exact number of missing people is not known, the Commission of Truth and the Search Unit for Presumed Disappeared Persons believe "at least" 120,000 people disappeared during long civil war.

[https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Colombia-State-Does-Not-Account-for-124000-Missing-People--20190827-0006.html?utm\\_source=planisys&utm\\_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_content=10](https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Colombia-State-Does-Not-Account-for-124000-Missing-People--20190827-0006.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=10)

According to the national Victims Register, "While 8.8 million persons—a fifth of the total population—have been officially recognized as victims of conflict, only 28,641 have come forward to denounce sexual violence," but that is five times the number registered five years ago when the Havana peace talks were held with the FARC, *justiceinfo.net* reported. "At least 10 of the 124 reports presented by organizations and persons to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace . . . focus on sexual violence," and one of the ten lists 2,000 episodes.

<https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/tribunals/national-tribunals/42256-sexual-violence-punching-bag-colombian-transition-part-1.html>

After Ivan Marquez, the leader of the FARC, announced in a video he would be taking up arms again in protest of the government's failure to deliver on the promises in the peace accord, President Ivan Duque said, "I have ordered the creation of a special unit for the persecution of these criminals with reinforced intelligence, investigation and mobility capabilities throughout Colombian territory," *Al Jazeera* reported. New unit, new records to be managed very carefully, given the mandate.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/colombia-duque-seeks-arrest-rearmed-farc-leaders-190829200112859.html>

Ecuador. The offices of the nongovernmental organization Center for Digital Autonomy were sacked and computer equipment stolen, *teleSUR* reported. The organization was founded by Swedish "programmer and digital privacy activist" Ola Bini to "build free and open software for everyone, to protect privacy, security and anonymity." Bini was arrested on 11 April and held until 20 June on charges of "assault on the integrity" of computer systems. Both the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights "denounced the Swede's detainment as arbitrary" and Bini's attorney said the burglary was to "intimidate" Bini and the organization.

[https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Ecuador-Ola-Binis-NGO-Office-Sacked-Tech-Equipment-Stolen-20190801-0038.html?utm\\_source=planisys&utm\\_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_content=10](https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Ecuador-Ola-Binis-NGO-Office-Sacked-Tech-Equipment-Stolen-20190801-0038.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=10)

El Salvador. The Advocate for the Defense of Human Rights (Procuradora Para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, PDDH) issued a report on the "overwhelming evidence of extrajudicial executions by El Salvador's National Civilian Police" during 2014-2018, *El Salvador Perspectives* reported. The PDDH "examined 48 'emblematic' cases of extrajudicial killings in which security forces executed 116

people” by gathering “investigative materials on all the cases.” PDDH “was able to identify several patterns. Most often this type of killing happened in rural areas of the country. The victims were almost all male, between the ages of 15 and 24, but some were as young as 13 and 14. More than 60% of the cases came from 2015-16, when the country's overall homicide rate was the highest in the world. Although police reports claimed that more than 90% of those killed were gang members, the PDDH investigation determined that in many cases that was simply not true, and the victim was simply a youth in a marginalized community where police abuse and mistreatment was rampant.” <http://www.elsalvadorperspectives.com/2019/09/the-overwhelming-evidence-of-executions.html>

National police reported 131 murders in August, the lowest monthly total since 2000, *El Faro* reported. [https://elfaro.net/es/201909/ef\\_foto/23605/Las-cifras-de-agosto-confirman-el-descenso-de-la-violencia-homicida-en-El-Salvador.htm](https://elfaro.net/es/201909/ef_foto/23605/Las-cifras-de-agosto-confirman-el-descenso-de-la-violencia-homicida-en-El-Salvador.htm)

Guatemala. After 12 years Guatemala’s unique International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG by its Spanish acronym) ended on 3 September. In a report on CICIG’s legacy, the Washington Office on Latin America wrote, “Since 2007, the CICIG has supported corruption probes that resulted in the indictment of Guatemala’s former president and vice president; the prosecution of dozens of prominent government officials . . . ; the ouster of more than a dozen corrupt judges and thousands of police officers; and the detention of powerful drug traffickers.” *TeleSUR* reported, “On August 23, the CICIG delivered more than a hundred reports to the public prosecutor's office, as part of the transfer of information. The documents include police, financial, criminal analysis, and forensic reports.” A security digital copy of CICIG records is now with the United Nations Archives in New York. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/cicigs-legacy-fighting-corruption-guatemala/>; <https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Guatemala-Giammattei-to-Create-New-Anti-Corruption-Body-20190827-0020.html>

India. India published “the final version of a list which effectively strips about 1.9 million people in the north-eastern state of Assam of their citizenship,” *BBC News* reported. “The National Register of Citizens is a list of people who can prove they came to the state by 24 March 1971, the day before neighbouring Bangladesh declared independence from Pakistan. People left off the list will have 120 days to appeal against their exclusion.” So far India has “detained thousands of people suspected of being foreigners in temporary camps which are housed in the state's prisons.” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/nrc-list-19-million-excluded-india-citizens-list-190831044040215.html>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-49520593> NP

Five human rights monitors for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) told OHCHR that the communications blackout the Indian government has imposed on Kashmir following the cancellation of the region’s political autonomy “is a form of collective punishment of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, without even a pretext of a precipitating offense” and “may be obscuring continuing abuses against civilians,” reported *PassBlue*. While “fuller credible reports” from Kashmir are not available, some photographs have been “smuggled from Kashmir” showing protests. The experts said “information received suggests that there has been an increase in the arrest of political figures, journalists, human rights defenders, protesters and others.” [https://www.passblue.com/2019/08/25/top-un-rights-experts-call-kashmir-blackout-collective-punishment/?utm\\_source=PassBlue+List&utm\\_campaign=c30212cc72-dear\\_readers\\_Aug2019\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4795f55662-c30212cc72-55008469](https://www.passblue.com/2019/08/25/top-un-rights-experts-call-kashmir-blackout-collective-punishment/?utm_source=PassBlue+List&utm_campaign=c30212cc72-dear_readers_Aug2019_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4795f55662-c30212cc72-55008469) ; for the report see <https://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24909&LangID=E>

By the end of August, *The Hindu* reported, “as many as 36 persons have received pellet injuries in the Kashmir Valley since August 5.” A “senior government official” said the “numbers were based on records available with hospital authorities in Srinagar.” The Jammu and Kashmir Governor “admitted that pellet guns were used by security personnel during protests in the Kashmir Valley but they took utmost precaution to prevent injuries.” <https://theworldnews.net/in-news/36-suffered-pellet-injuries-since-august-5-official>

An Indian court acquitted six men for killing a Muslim dairy farmer, despite videos shot on cellphones showing the crowd beating him after stopping his truck which had cows in the back, *Reuters* reported. <https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN1V41K1>

“Special taskforces have been established . . . to help stop women from being duped by doctors into having unnecessary hysterectomies that cause debt bondage and enslave families, the country’s health ministry said,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. Six taskforces are to “develop a strategy . . . for

keeping a nationwide record of hysterectomy cases” and also to “develop a list of alternative treatments for many of the health complaints suffered by Indian women.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190802055817-0bvk9/>

Ireland. Ireland's Data Protection Commission “ordered the country to delete 3.2 million people's personal data after ruling that its national ID card scheme was ‘unlawful from a data-processing point of view’,” *The Register* reported. [https://www.theregister.co.uk/2019/08/16/ireland\\_id\\_card\\_scheme\\_halted\\_dpc\\_3\\_2m\\_records/](https://www.theregister.co.uk/2019/08/16/ireland_id_card_scheme_halted_dpc_3_2m_records/)

Parliament is considering a Retention of Records Bill “to provide for the retention of certain records of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, the Residential Institutions Redress Board and the Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee; for that purpose to deem those records to be records of the Department of Education and Skills and to transfer those records to the National Archives.” *The Irish Examiner* reported that in April 2018 the minister of education wrote to the National Archives Advisory Council (NAAC), seeking its views on the bill but opining that “anonymising records and contacting institutional abuse survivors instead of sealing records for 75 years would involve ‘considerable expense’ and ‘significant practical difficulties’.” In August 2019, the NAAC chairman finally responded, writing that “the Council felt consideration ought to be given to opting for a period of 100 years as this is generally regarded as a two-generation gap” and stressed there is “a very strong public interest” in not destroying the records as they have historical value. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/anonymising-abuse-records-expensive-archives-council-told-945683.html>

Japan. *Kyoto News* sought the records of 137 “landmark” constitutional civil cases, only to find that although all judgments were preserved, “documents relevant to judicial procedures had been discarded in 118, or 86%, of the cases” and “all documents were preserved for only 18 of the cases” and “only one had been sent to the National Archives of Japan,” *The Japan Times* reported. The cases reviewed “focused on issues such as nationality, freedom of expression, separation of state and religion, expropriation of land for national defense, and the constitutionality of the Self-Defense Forces.” <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/08/05/national/crime-legal/courtroom-records-landmark-postwar-civil-cases-binned-across-japan/#.XVMx6xgXAdU>

Mali. The Fulani and Dogon militias signed a peace agreement, in which they undertake to “expose and denounce the terrorists to the authorities and, if necessary, to fight them,” *AFP* and *france 24* reported. (A jihadi movement is active in the country.) “The number of displaced persons, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), increased from 18,000 to 70,000 between May 2018 and May 2019” but some people are now moving back to their villages. Because the agreement is between two armed groups, it is not clear who will preserve the official copies of it. [https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2019-08-07---peace-agreement-between-fulani-and-dogons-in-mali--a-chance-to-neutralize-armed-groups-rJNjq0\\_OQH.html](https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2019-08-07---peace-agreement-between-fulani-and-dogons-in-mali--a-chance-to-neutralize-armed-groups-rJNjq0_OQH.html)

Mexico. The head of the National Human Rights Commission's anti-trafficking program said, “Mexican authorities do not know the nationality of hundreds of identified foreign trafficking victims . . . raising fears that vulnerable U.S.-bound migrants are being left stranded.” Between June 2012 and July 2017 state and federal prosecutors' offices identified more than 650 foreign trafficking victims in Mexico but knew the nationalities of only 57%. However, the government “deported almost 20,000 migrants in June, the highest monthly figure since 2006, according to government statistics.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190822160639-1x0zi/>

Mozambique. Mozambique's President and the Renamo opposition leader “signed a landmark agreement to formally end decades of hostilities in the southern African country,” *AFP* reported. “More than 5,200 Renamo fighters are expected to surrender their weapons to the government.” The government archives should hold the government's official copy of the peace accord; the government will need good documentation of the demobilization and disarmament, particularly because there is still a “jihadist insurgency in the north, which has claimed more than 250 lives since October 2017.” <https://thedefensepost.com/2019/08/01/mozambique-renamo-peace-deal/>

Myanmar. The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar released a report on the business interests of the Myanmar military and called for targeted sanctions and an arms embargo. The Mission's report “establishes in detail the degree to which Myanmar's military has used its own businesses, foreign companies and arms deals to support brutal operations against ethnic groups that

constitute serious crimes under international law, bypassing civilian oversight and evading accountability.” The Mission staff members used the usual sources, but notably used “corporate records, including through Myanmar government company registration, open source and private-subscription databases that list the ownership and/or senior management of privately-held companies.” It said, “The information gathered by the Mission in the course of this investigation has been preserved with a view to being shared with competent and credible bodies pursuing accountability in line with recognized international norms and standards, including with regard to due process and fair trial standards.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24868&LangID=E>

The Mission issued a second report titled, “Sexual and gender-based violence in Myanmar and the gendered impact of its ethnic conflicts.” Because the Mission had issued a report on the topic in 2018, it “had already collected a vast quantity of primary and secondary information on sexual and gender-based violence,” so this report “relied on both previously collected information and information collected from new investigations.” After it consolidated “all its materials on the Tatmadaw’s [Myanmar military] use of sexual and gender-based violence, the Mission reaffirms its conclusion that rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence constitute gross violations of international human rights law in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States. . . . Notably, the Mission’s consolidation of its materials has led it to conclude on reasonable grounds that the sexual violence perpetrated against Rohingya women and girls in Rakhine state on and after 25 August 2017 was an indicator of the Tatmadaw’s genocidal intent to destroy the Rohingya people in whole or in part. The Mission also concludes that the Government has failed, and continues to fail, in its obligation to hold perpetrators for sexual violence accountable, and that the Government bears continuing State responsibility under the Genocide Convention for its failure to investigate and punish acts of genocide.” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-un/myanmar-troops-sexual-violence-against-rohingya-shows-genocidal-intent-u-n-report-idUSKCN1VC1TT>; for the report see [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/sexualviolence/A\\_HRC\\_CRP\\_4.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/sexualviolence/A_HRC_CRP_4.docx)

Nigeria. Human Rights Watch documented “human rights abuses committed against largely Nigerian women and girls who are trafficked for sexual and labor exploitation within and outside Nigeria” as well as “the experiences of non-Nigerian women and girls who are trafficked into Nigeria.” HRW interviewed 76 survivors of human trafficking and representatives of 21 nongovernmental organizations working on trafficking issues, as well as federal and state government officials and representatives of assistance agencies. However, said HRW, “It is difficult to say how many women and girls are trafficked from, in, and within Nigeria as there is no reliable data.” The International Organization for Migration reported a 600% increase in the number of trafficking victims arriving in Italy by sea in 2017 “with most arriving from Nigeria. The organization estimated that 80% of women and girls arriving from Nigeria—whose numbers soared from 1,454 in 2014 to 11,009 in 2016—were potential victims of trafficking.” <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/27/you-pray-death/trafficking-women-and-girls-nigeria>

Paraguay. A farm family in Curuguaty province sued the government in 2011, asking it to enforce the ban on certain pesticides used by soybean farms in the area, which caused the death of one person and the poisoning of 22 others and contaminated water, soil and food. Water samples collected from the well at the family home showed the presence of banned agrochemicals. The court found that they were harmed and ordered the government to enforce buffer zones to separate spraying areas from human settlements and waterways. The government did nothing. The family then appealed to the UN Human Rights Committee, which found “that Paraguay did not exercise adequate controls over illegal polluting activities” and concluded “that heavily spraying the area with toxic agrochemicals poses a reasonably foreseeable threat to the victims’ lives. Therefore, the Committee declares the violation of the right to life and the right to private life, family and home.” It urged Paraguay to “undertake an effective and thorough investigation into fumigations with agrochemicals and the subsequent poisoning of peoples, including children, and contamination of water, soil and food . . . to prosecute those responsible, to make full reparation to the victims, and to publish the decision in a daily newspaper with a large circulation.” Paraguay is to report back in 180 days on the steps taken. A member of the Committee said, “This is a landmark decision in favour of the recognition of the link between severe harms to environment and the enjoyment of core civil and political rights.” <https://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24890&LangID=E>



Russia. On 14 August the Moscow office of the nongovernmental Justice Initiative was raided by the Federal Security Service and two days later the Ministry of Internal Affairs searched the Justice Initiative office in Ingushetia, Amnesty International reported. In Moscow, “the officers were armed with machine guns and, without presenting a search warrant, began to examine the cabinets of the Justice Initiative. They took the human rights defenders’ phones for one hour and demanded access to the phones. Employees were forced to unlock the screens and officers read their correspondence in instant messengers. They photographed the employees’ passports and tried to open the office of the director of the organisation.” They left after an hour. “No documents of the Justice Initiative were seized.” In Ingushetia “police confiscated the organization’s documentation covering 2017-2019, including contracts with lawyers working on European Court of Human Rights cases.”

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/search-moscow-and-nazran-offices-justice-initiative-project>;  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/08/russia-authorities-raid-human-rights-offices-confiscate-vital-documents/>

Alla Yaroshinskaya, a former Peoples’ Deputy of the USSR, wrote about documents she obtained from the Politburo archives on the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in 1986. She concluded: “The deception around the catastrophe turned out to be just as vast as the catastrophe itself.”

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nunn-lugar-russia-programs/2019-08-15/top-secret-chernobyl-nuclear-disaster-through-eyes-soviet-politburo-kgb-cia-part-one>

Saudi Arabia. “A series of royal decrees published by the official gazette . . . stipulated that a Saudi passport should be issued to any citizen who applies for it and that any person above the age of 21 does not need permission to travel,” *Reuters* reported. The decrees also “grant women for the first time the right to register child birth, marriage or divorce and to be issued official family documents and be eligible as a guardian to children who are minors” and state that all citizens “have the right to work without facing any discrimination based on gender, disability or age.”

<http://news.trust.org/item/20190801211905-09zrh/>

Sudan. The Transitional Military Council and the opposition coalition reached agreement and held a formal signing ceremony. *Radio Tamazuj*, which covered the preliminary ceremony, showed the signatories waving the signed agreement. The official copy should go to the national archives.

<https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/military-and-opposition-initial-constitutional-declaration>

Thailand. The environment minister said a group will be set up to review conflicting land claims in the country's national parks, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. But he cautioned, “In Thailand conflicts may arise from a multiplicity of maps . . . There are military maps, land department maps, and forest department maps. There are slight differences between them, so there are overlapping claims. We are looking to reconcile these maps, and verify the claims. But it will take time.”

<http://news.trust.org/item/20190821104643-8ghv6/>

United States. Federal Customs and Border Protection, which administers migrant detention centers, said it will not provide flu vaccinations to migrant families and has no plans to do so ahead of the next flu season, *CNBC* reported. “In general, due to the short-term nature of CBP holding and the complexities of operating vaccination programs, neither CBP nor its medical contractors administer vaccinations to those in our custody,” a Customs and Border Protection spokeswoman said. In a letter to members of Congress urging vaccinations, four doctors “said the U.S. death rate in children from the flu is about 1 in 600,000. So far, three children have died out of 200,000 people held at detention facilities along the [U.S.-Mexico] border.”

[https://www.cnbc.com/2019/08/20/the-us-wont-vaccinate-migrant-children-against-the-flu-at-border-camps.html?\\_source=sharebar|twitter&par=sharebar](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/08/20/the-us-wont-vaccinate-migrant-children-against-the-flu-at-border-camps.html?_source=sharebar|twitter&par=sharebar)

Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School is one of the oldest Roman Catholic girls’ schools in the U.S. In researching the archives, the school’s archivist and historian found records from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century showing the Catholic nuns “owned at least 107 enslaved men, women and children” and they “sold dozens of those people to pay debts and to help finance the expansion of their school and the construction of a new chapel,” reported the *New York Times*. The school digitized its records related to slavery and is making them public.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/02/opinion/sunday/nuns-slavery.html>

Venezuela. The nongovernmental Coalition for Human Rights and Democracy “has documented 250 cases of torture committed by Venezuelan security forces against military officers, their relatives and

opposition activists since 2017,” reported the *New York Times*. One officer, Rafael Acosta, died in custody after suffering “blunt force trauma and electrocution, according to leaked portions of his autopsy report, and the government admits excessive force was used against him.” The Coalition believes there are 217 officers in jail, including 12 generals. [www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/world/americas/venezuela-military-maduro.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/world/americas/venezuela-military-maduro.html)

Zambia. Human Rights Watch wrote, “Being outside is a health risk for some of Zambia’s children” if they live in lead-contaminated townships near former lead mines. “Studies estimate that half of the children in these areas have elevated blood lead levels that warrant medical treatment.” The government has “no health database to track cases of lead-related hospitalization or death;” HRW urges the government to track lead poisoning, including lead-related hospitalization and mortality. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/23/we-have-be-worried/impact-lead-contamination-childrens-rights-kabwe-zambia>

### **Conferences, publications.**

The journal *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies* (University of Victoria, Canada) plans to publish a special issue on indigenous knowledges and calls for paper proposals by 30 November. [kulajournal@uvic.ca](mailto:kulajournal@uvic.ca)

“My Data Conference: Rebuilding trust - for human-centered data economy” will be held 25-27 September in Helsinki, Finland. For information see <https://mydata2019.org/>

Good reads. Dakar Guidelines on the establishment of hybrid courts: <https://justiceinconflict.org/2019/07/30/launched-the-dakar-guidelines-on-the-establishment-of-hybrid-courts/>

Debating whether an international tribunal is needed for crimes of the Islamic State: <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/tribunals/mixed-tribunals/42224-do-we-need-an-international-tribunal-for-islamic-state.html>

Discussing the book “Speech Police: The Global Struggle to Govern the Internet”: [https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20190606-speech-police-global-struggle-govern-internet-david-kaye?utm\\_source=PassBlue+List&utm\\_campaign=d3ac6c172a-PassBlue Fordham Nov18&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4795f55662-d3ac6c172a-55008469](https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20190606-speech-police-global-struggle-govern-internet-david-kaye?utm_source=PassBlue+List&utm_campaign=d3ac6c172a-PassBlue Fordham Nov18&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4795f55662-d3ac6c172a-55008469)

Using blockchain technology in cross-border legal cooperation: [https://www.abdn.ac.uk/law/blog/use-of-blockchain-technology-in-crossborder-legal-cooperation-under-the-conventions-of-the-hague-conference-on-private-international-law-hcch/?requested\\_path=use-of-blockchain-technology-in-crossborder-legal-cooperation-under-the-conventions-of-the-hague-conference-on-private-international-law-hcch/](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/law/blog/use-of-blockchain-technology-in-crossborder-legal-cooperation-under-the-conventions-of-the-hague-conference-on-private-international-law-hcch/?requested_path=use-of-blockchain-technology-in-crossborder-legal-cooperation-under-the-conventions-of-the-hague-conference-on-private-international-law-hcch/)

Restoring movies in Afghanistan: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/08/27/taliban-tried-wipe-out-afghanistans-film-industry-this-is-what-survived/?noredirect=on>

Salvador Allende’s project to create an electronic “nervous system for Chile economy”: [https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/longview-cyber-socialism-chile?utm\\_source=AQ%27s+Week+in+Review&utm\\_campaign=72a25b80de-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_02\\_15\\_01\\_52\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_6a33e16b5d-72a25b80de-26124681](https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/longview-cyber-socialism-chile?utm_source=AQ%27s+Week+in+Review&utm_campaign=72a25b80de-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_02_15_01_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6a33e16b5d-72a25b80de-26124681)

Society of American Archivists published *Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit*. <https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy/documenting-in-times-of-crisis-a-resource-kit>

**Please share news with us!** [trudy@trudypeterson.com](mailto:trudy@trudypeterson.com)

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