

News of January 2019
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Commentary.

“We went to the hardware store. My father and I waited in the pickup while my husband went in. He never came out.” That was all the Guatemalan woman said to me, simply, without explaining what happened next, but we can guess: the increasing concern, the decision to go into the store and find him, the questioning of the clerk, the panic, the decision to go home not to the police, the calls to family and friends, the wait to see if there is a ransom demand, the deadening realization that he is not coming back, the juggling of finances to cover needs, the heart-rending decision to ask that he be declared dead so that life can go on.

Resolving disappearances is crucial to the health of any society and the stability of its government. And yet, as the attorney general of El Salvador admitted (see below), although disappearances in the country had increased by 10% in 2018 to 3,514 cases, El Salvador still has “no institutionally agreed methodology to count disappearances.” To begin to fill this methodology need, the United Nations Committee on Forced Disappearances drafted “Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons,” now under revision. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CED/Pages/SearchDisappearedPersons.aspx>

Records are a critical resource in the search for the disappeared. The revised Guiding Principles should insist that the records of each investigation must be managed competently from the start of the investigation to the disposition of the records when a case is closed. This is particularly important if the investigating authority is a temporary body rather than a regular part of the government or if it is faced with thousands of cases. The investigating authority should have a robust records management system both to handle the evidence it obtains on a case and to provide evidence of the work done by the authority with regard to the search. The authority should have a records schedule that states clearly what will happen to the records when a case is closed (whether by return of the disappeared person, retrieval of remains, or administrative procedure) and states which archives will receive the records of the authority, including both administrative and case-related records. The public, both persons who are searching for disappeared relatives and those who want to know how the authority carried out its mandate, has a right to know what will happen to the records.

The Guiding Principles must apply to the records of both government and non-government entities. The Principles should acknowledge that business records often contain information needed for resolving human rights cases. Three recent examples:

*In December 2018 a court in Argentina convicted two former executives of a local Ford Motor Company plant of involvement in the 1976 kidnapping and torture of 24 workers employed by Ford at their factory on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Among their acts, the men were accused of providing photographs, home addresses and other personal data of the victims to agents of the dictatorship so they could be abducted.

*Also in December 2018, a Brazilian appeals court upheld the 2015 ruling against the Swiss agribusiness company Syngenta for the 2007 murder by Syngenta’s contract security firm of a member of a rural workers group that was protesting at Syngenta’s genetically modified food experiment site.

*After Colombia in August 2018 charged 13 former executives of United Fruit (Chiquita) company with using death squads to kill persons interfering with the work of its plantations, a nongovernmental organization in Washington, DC, published profiles of the 13 men “drawing on available public sources and a 48,000 page trove of the company’s internal records gained through [a] successful Freedom of Information Act lawsuit.”

We all wish there would be no need for the Guiding Principles, that no one would go into a hardware store and never come out. But until that wished-for day arrives, we need a good protocol for handling

cases of the disappeared. No attorney general ever again should say, “We have no methodology to count disappearances.”

HRWG News. The index to items in the 2018 issues of *HRWG News* is available.

International news.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The Court published the *Audio Library of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights: 297 “albums”* that include “more than 2,000 audio files of the public hearings that have been held in the 40 years of the Court’s existence.” The audio files are available at <https://soundcloud.com/corteidh:https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.soundcloud.android&hl=es> and <https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/soundcloud/id336353151?mt=8>

International Criminal Court. Former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo and his former cabinet minister Charles Blé Goudé were acquitted and released, although they must abide by several constraints while the prosecution appeals against their acquittal, *International Justice Monitor* reported. The acquittal came before the defense put on its case because the judges ruled that “the prosecution had failed to satisfy the burden of proof in relation to several core elements of the case.” This makes an unusual court record, showing only the prosecution’s side of the argument. <https://www.ijmonitor.org/2019/02/former-ivorian-president-gbagbo-to-be-released-from-icc-detention/>

International Tracing Service (ITS). ITS announced that as of April 2019 its name will change to Arolsen Archives – International Center on Nazi Persecution.

United Nations. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime published “Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018.” It said “countries have reported increased numbers of detected trafficking victims over the last few years,” with most victims trafficked in their home country. Convictions remain very low in many nations; in Europe, convictions fell to 742 in 2016 from 988 in 2011 “despite a concomitant 4.3 % increase in the number of identified victims to 4,429.” It noted that “the capacity of national authorities to track and assess patterns and flow of trafficking in persons has improved in many parts of the world. This is also due to a specific focus of the international community in developing standards for data collections . . . In 2009, only 26 countries had an institution which systematically collected and disseminated data on trafficking cases, while by 2018 the number had risen to 65.” Austria’s foreign minister said, “Sound information and a solid base of evidence for our policies are two of the most important things to fight this disgusting crime in the most efficient way possible.” https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf; <http://news.trust.org/item/20190121172335-2xbr8/>; <http://news.trust.org/item/20190107140434-cb226/>

The *Guardian* reported that film-makers investigating the 1961 airplane crash that killed UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld found a man who says he was a friend of Jan van Risseghem and that van Risseghem “confessed to shooting down the UN plane.” Another man said that Van Risseghem’s flight logs, showing when and where he flew, “are dotted with apparent forgeries.” https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/12/raf-veteran-admitted-killing-un-secretary-general-dag-hammarskjold-in-1961?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIVS19XZlVrZW5kLTE5MDExMw%3D%3D&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayUK&CMP=GTUK_email

World Health Organization (WHO). WHO issued a report on the health of refugees and migrants in the WHO European Region. It noted that “right to health is a basic human right, regardless of migration status.” Comparing the health of migrants and refugees with the health of the host country population, WHO reported “mortality estimates tend to be lower in refugees and migrants than in the European host population for all-cause mortality, neoplasms, mental and behavioural conditions, injuries, endocrine disorders and digestive conditions but higher for infections, external causes, diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs and cardiovascular diseases.” The report is based on a survey to which 40 of the 53 Member States in the region responded, as well as “documents and data sources” contributed by member states. WHO said the region plans to conduct the same survey each two years until 2022 and wants to strengthen “national data collection systems by collecting standardized and disaggregated data

for all refugees and migrants to support regional and national health policy and planning.”
http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/392774/ermh-summary-eng.pdf?ua=1

World/general news.

Business records. The Investor Alliance for Human Rights issued an “Investor Statement on Corporate Accountability for Digital Rights.” Signed by nearly 50 investors, ranging from religious bodies to corporate investment advisors, it urges companies to ensure that “human rights reporting includes privacy, data security, and freedom of expression policies, practices and performance, including relevant data about the volume and nature of company actions, and external demands affecting freedom of expression and privacy, as well as disclosure on how digital rights issues are addressed in corporate oversight, governance, risk and impact assessment procedures, and remedies for adverse impacts.”

https://investorsforhumanrights.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2019-01/IAHR%20Statement%20on%20Digital%20Rights_Final%20%283%29.pdf

“A federal US judge . . . ruled pharmaceutical company Bristol-Myers Squibb, Johns Hopkins University and the Rockefeller Foundation must face a \$1 billion lawsuit over their roles in a 1940s medical experiment that saw hundreds of Guatemalans infected with syphilis,” *AFP* reported. For background, see *HRWG News* 2015-03. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/415165-bristol-myers-squibb-to-face-suit>

Lawsuits against Purdue Pharma, the company that manufactured and aggressively marketed addictive drugs alleged to be responsible for the current opioid crisis, continued to reveal internal corporate documents. For background, see *HRWG News* 2018-12. https://www.statnews.com/2019/01/15/massachusetts-purdue-lawsuit-new-details/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=1e4771a4ef-MR_COPY_12&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-1e4771a4ef-149736437 ; <https://www.statnews.com/2019/01/14/purdue-pharma-appeal-kentucky-supreme-court/>; <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/31/health/purdue-pharma-unredacted-lawsuit/index.html>

“The panel of the complaints mechanism for the German, Dutch and French development banks has ruled that a complaint . . . by nine communities in the DR Congo is admissible.” The complaint centers on “human rights and land legacy issues” with a subsidiary of the Canadian company Feronia, Inc. The case will now go to mediation. For background, see *HRWG News* 2018-11. <https://www.farmlandgrab.org/post/view/28667-civil-society-groups-welcome-decision-of-development-bank-complaints-panel-to-proceed-with-complaint-from-dr-congo-communities-against-palm-oil-company>

France fined Google 50 million euros (\$57 million) for breaching Europe’s new General Data Protection Regulation. The French data privacy agency said Google’s “search engine lacked transparency and clarity in the way it informs users about its handling of personal data and failed to properly obtain their consent for personalized ads,” *Reuters* reported. <https://in.reuters.com/article/us-google-privacy-france-idINKCN1PF208>

Climate change. *Science* published an analysis showing that heat trapped by greenhouse gases is raising ocean temperatures faster than previously thought. “Ocean heating is a critical marker of climate change because an estimated 93% of the excess solar energy trapped by greenhouse gasses accumulates in the world’s oceans.” Basing its report on data from 1970 to the present obtained by floating monitors, the authors said “scientists are continually working to improve how to interpret and analyze what was a fairly imperfect and limited set of data prior to the early 2000s,” and the new research is based on fixing “a lot of problems that were plaguing the old records,” *Eurasia Review* reported. http://www.eurasiareview.com/11012019-oceans-warming-even-faster-than-previously-thought/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Thomson Reuters Foundation reported two climate-related land relocation stories. In the U.S. State of Louisiana, members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe and other inhabitants of Isle de Jean Charles are moving because “their village was nearly wiped [out] by erosion and rising seas.” In Bangladesh, where two-thirds of the country is less than 5 meters above sea level, the government is giving people “fallow land formed from river silt” to use for 10 years “although they cannot live on the land, as much of it is outside protective embankments.” As villages on the coast are flooded, people lose not only homes and possessions and farmland but, as a man told the reporter, family lives are “miserable” because they also lost “their family ties, leaving them facing an uncertain future.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190110211137-oqwt/>; <http://news.trust.org/item/20190114055300-4k5an/>

Human rights defenders. Front Line Defenders, an Irish nongovernmental organization, issued *Global Analysis 2018*. “In 2018, 321 defenders in 27 countries were targeted and killed for their work—the highest number ever on record—according to data collected by Front Line Defenders. More than three-quarters of these, 77% of the total number of activists killed, were defending land, environmental or indigenous peoples’ rights, often in the context of extractive industries and state-aligned mega-projects.” <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2018>

Inequality/poverty. Oxfam, the U.K. nongovernmental organization, released its “annual wealth check,” and said the world’s “26 richest billionaires own as many assets as the 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of the planet’s population,” the *Guardian* reported. It said “the widening gap” between rich and poor is “hindering the fight against poverty.” Oxfam’s methodology for assessing the gap between rich and poor used “global wealth distribution data provided by the Credit Suisse global wealth data book, covering the period from June 2017 to June 2018” and the “wealth of billionaires was calculated using the annual *Forbes* billionaires list published in March 2018.” <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jan/21/world-26-richest-people-own-as-much-as-poorest-50-per-cent-oxfam-report>

Researchers from Aarhus University in Denmark “found that high resolution satellite data can be used to map economic living conditions down to the household level” in rural areas in developing countries, *Eurasia Review* reported. They hope that the method will “ensure better and targeted effort against poverty.” http://www.eurasiareview.com/08012019-satellite-images-reveal-global-poverty/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Medical records. The Pew Charitable Trusts, a U.S. nongovernmental organization, announced that Novartis, the Swiss pharmaceutical company, “has shared data from its antibiotic research programs on Pew’s open-access Shared Platform for Antibiotic Research and Knowledge.” Achaogen, another company, committed in October to provide the data from its “discontinued antibiotic research program.” Pew said it aims to bring together “chemical and biological data from published studies and previously unpublished work, such as the Novartis data, on a user-friendly, cloud-based platform” open to researchers. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/about/news-room/press-releases-and-statements/2019/01/03/novartis-provides-data-to-spark-pews-platform-for-antibiotic-discovery-research>

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study of 20 U.S. states that had cases of a serious birth defect called gastroschisis and found it is “60% more common in counties that had the highest overall opioid prescription rates.” https://www.statnews.com/2019/01/17/opioids-birth-defect-possible-link/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=82af3b550e-MR_COPY_12&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-82af3b550e-149736437

Researchers reporting in the *Lancet* said they used “data from Finnish administrative registers covering a 20% random sample of households with at least one child aged 0-14 years at the end of 2000” and “analysed birthweight gestational age, risk of low birthweight, and risk of preterm birth among children conceived both by medically assisted reproduction and naturally.” They found that “children conceived by medically assisted reproduction had worse outcomes than did those conceived naturally;” however, “this increased risk is largely attributable to factors other than the medically assisted reproduction treatment itself.” [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31863-4/fulltext?dgcid=raven_jbs_etoc_email](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31863-4/fulltext?dgcid=raven_jbs_etoc_email)

Privacy. On January 28, Data Privacy Day, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported that “less than 60% of countries have laws to secure the protection of data and privacy” and since Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation went into effect in May, Europe’s data protection regulators “have received more than 95,000 complaints about possible data breaches.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190128190506-7a2mk/>

Telephone companies “T-Mobile, Sprint, and AT&T are selling access to their customers’ location data, and that data is ending up in the hands of bounty hunters and others not authorized to possess it, letting them track most phones in the country,” *Motherboard* reported. https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/nepxbz/i-gave-a-bounty-hunter-300-dollars-located-phone-microbilt-zumigo-tmobile

Hackers are “passing around a mega leak of 2.2 billion records” called Collections #1-5, *Wired* reported. The “stolen data appears to come from previous thefts,” which the hacker “has cobbled together . . . into a gargantuan, unprecedented collection of 2.2 billion unique usernames and associated passwords and is freely distributing them on hacker forums and torrents.” [https://www.wired.com/story/collection-leak-usernames-passwords-billions/?CNDID=53684912&CNDID=53684912&bxid=MjcwMDU3MDMwNzYzS0&hasha=8fed7efd9e9d6389b9f914ad34a5948d&hashb=be86af3880f5d49a71f804266e79b70bb4fa408d&mbid=nl_013119_daily_list1_p2&source=DAILY_NEWSLETTER&utm_brand=wired&utm_mailing=WIRED%20NL%2013119%20\(1\)&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl](https://www.wired.com/story/collection-leak-usernames-passwords-billions/?CNDID=53684912&CNDID=53684912&bxid=MjcwMDU3MDMwNzYzS0&hasha=8fed7efd9e9d6389b9f914ad34a5948d&hashb=be86af3880f5d49a71f804266e79b70bb4fa408d&mbid=nl_013119_daily_list1_p2&source=DAILY_NEWSLETTER&utm_brand=wired&utm_mailing=WIRED%20NL%2013119%20(1)&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl)

Slavery. Not all combinations of data are as alarming as the mega leak. Michigan State University (U.S.) announced that it will link data collections on slavery from “multiple universities” to “allow people to search millions of pieces of slave data to identify enslaved individuals and their descendants from a central source. Users can also run analyses of enslaved populations and create maps, charts and graphics.” <http://www.openculture.com/2018/01/massive-new-slave-trade-database-will-finally-allow-us-to-identify-african-american-slaves-and-their-descendants.html>

Technology. Open MIC, a U.S. “non-profit that fosters shareholder engagement at leading tech and media companies,” organized a shareholder resolution asking Amazon “to prohibit sales of ‘Rekognition,’ Amazon’s facial recognition technology, to government agencies—unless the company’s Board concludes the technology does not pose actual or potential civil and human rights risk.” <https://www.openmic.org/news/2019/1/16/halt-rekognition>

Physicians for Human Rights worked with “clinicians, police officers, lawyers, and judges in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo . . . to digitize the medical intake forms used for sexual violence cases and help reduce the barriers for survivors to access justice,” *OpenGlobalRights* reported. The resulting app, called MediCapt, is being piloted in Kenya. <https://www.openglobalrights.org/a-tech-solution-to-documenting-sexual-violence/>

A U.S.-based group calling itself Distributed Denial of Secrets “posted a mammoth collection of hacked and leaked documents from inside Russia,” the *New York Times* reported. The documents include “a voluminous archive of material hacked from Russia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs,” emails from a Russian hacking group, and others. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/25/world/europe/russian-documents-leaked-ddosecrets.html>

World War II. Using “carefully compiled train records,” a professor of biomathematics at Tel Aviv University investigated the murders per day by the Nazis during the period in 1942 known as Operation Reinhard, he reported in *The Conversation*. He created “a spatio-temporal map and film of the data,” plotting the 400 communities in Poland that were targeted and “the time sequence of all deportations to the death camps over the whole year 1942,” showing the massacre took place “in just three short months.” <http://theconversation.com/quantifying-the-holocaust-measuring-murder-rates-during-the-nazi-genocide-108984>

The International Tracing Service digitized and indexed a photo card file from the former Dachau concentration camp dating from the first year after the war. The card index, containing approximately 2000 photos of survivors, “was created for victims of Nazi persecution who needed certificates of their imprisonment to receive support from relief organizations” and who had to submit “two photos of themselves—one for the files, and one to glue to the certificate.” <https://www.its-arolsen.org/nc/en/latest-news/news/details/news/detail/News/faces-of-survivors/>

The National Library of Israel announced that it digitized a small collection of rare photographs taken in the Vilna, Lithuania, ghetto. <https://blog.nli.org.il/en/jerusalem-of-lithuania/>

The *New York Times* published an article on the work of identifying and returning to owners the library books confiscated by Nazis during World War II. The work is “aided by newly opened archives,” and the internet. <https://www.todayonline.com/world/theres-nazi-loot-bookshelves-too>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Algeria/France. At a press conference, Algeria's Minister of the Mojahedin said that the negotiations with France on restitution of archives are "sensitive and complex," reported *DK News*. Asked about compensation for victims of French nuclear tests in southern Algeria, he said "negotiations are in progress." He added that the Ministry has collected more than 26,000 hours of oral testimonies from former guerrilla fighters, activists and former officers of the National Liberation Army and is conducting a census of all former fighters. <http://www.dknews-dz.com/article/100262-restitution-des-archives-de-guerre-les-negociations-sont-tres-sensibles-et-complexes.html>

Arab states/Iran/Israel. Israel announced that it hired an "international accountancy firm" for 18 months to research the value of the property and assets that Jews abandoned when they fled Arab states and Iran in the wake of Israel's 1948 declaration of independence. The *Times of Israel* reported that \$250 billion in compensation will be demanded of seven Arab countries and Iran; the article did not explain what records were used to determine the assets left behind. Palestinian reaction was quick, sharp, and negative; see an article in *Eurasia Review*. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-set-to-seek-250b-compensation-for-jews-forced-out-of-arab-countries/> ; <http://www.eurasiareview.com/15012019-the-moral-travesty-of-israel-seeking-arab-iranian-compensation-oped/>

Australia/United Kingdom. The controversy over the withdrawal of Australian nuclear test files at the U.K. National Archives continues. *CNN* reported that a spokeswoman for the National Archives "said the withdrawal of the Australian nuclear test files was done at the request of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority" for its review. For background, see *HRWG News* 2018-12. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6582187/Mystery-removal-archive-papers-detailing-Britains-nuclear-testing-Australia.html>; <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/11/australia/uk-australia-nuclear-archives-intl/index.html>

Central America/United States. The Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a report on the children separated from their parent or guardian by immigration authorities at the U.S.-Mexico border. It said the recordkeeping system failed: "The total number of children separated from a parent or guardian by immigration authorities is unknown. Pursuant to a June 2018 Federal District Court order, HHS has thus far identified 2,737 children in its care at that time who were separated from their parents. However, thousands of children may have been separated during an influx that began in 2017, before the accounting required by the Court, and HHS has faced challenges in identifying separated children." <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-BL-18-00511.pdf>; <https://apnews.com/c648954057594364b01a38b8d16701ac>

Croatia/Serbia. The Humanitarian Law Center in Belgrade, Serbia, published a dossier documenting Serbian troops and police "complicity of crimes against Croats in Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina during the [1991-1995] war," *BIRN* reported. The dossier reports on 11 cases in which 17 people were disappeared or killed; records from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia were used. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/state-involvement-in-crimes-against-croats-in-serbia-dossier-01-31-2019?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=07970dc245-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-07970dc245-319725265

European Union/United Kingdom. The U.K. is registering all European Union citizens residing in the U.K. who "hold a valid passport and any non-EU citizen family members who hold a valid biometric residence card" to give them legal status after the U.K. leaves the European Union, the *Guardian* reported. An estimated 3.5 million EU citizens will need to be registered. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jan/21/eu-citizen-registration-in-uk-could-become-new-windrush-say-migration-experts?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWVuVG9kYX1VS19XZlVrZGF5cy0xOTAxMjE%3D&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayUK&CMP=GTUK_email

Germany/Rwanda. In 2015 judges at the Stuttgart Regional High Court convicted a Rwandan armed group leader for complicity in war crimes and for leading a terrorist organization. In December 2018 the Federal Court of Justice ordered a new trial for the war crimes conviction. This is, said *Justiceinfo.net*, a "setback" for the unit (known as ZBKV) that investigates war crimes and other offenses against international law: "Between 2013 and 2015, the number of investigative leads increased by 8500%, according to the official archives of the parliament." Most cases relate to crimes committed in Syria. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/tribunaux/tribunaux-nationaux/39933-crimes-internationaux-la-force-de-frappe-allemande.html>

Greece/United States. The Eastern Orthodox Church (Greece) petitioned Duke University (U.S.) for the repatriation of three Byzantine-era manuscripts, now in the university library, that the Church says were stolen “when Bulgarian soldiers ransacked an Eastern Orthodox monastery in Greece on March 27, 1917.” The Church submitted a similar claim to New York’s Morgan Library and Museum and to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago; the latter returned a requested item. In December 2018 the Church filed suit against Princeton University for the return of three manuscripts it holds. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/14/arts/design/princeton-eastern-orthodox-church.html>;
<https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2019/01/duke-allegedly-houses-stolen-byzantine-era-manuscripts-church-wants-them-returned>

Islamic State (ISIS). The *Washington Post* reported on an Iraqi scientist who, when Irbil fell to IS, was directed by IS leaders to help make chemical weapons. He is now in prison, but the *Post* pointed out that the “knowledge and skills” acquired from him and others “undoubtedly still exist, tucked away in computer files, flash drives and in the memories of the surviving participants.” A British chemical weapons expert said, “There are jihadists all over the world who will have access on the dark Web to all this stuff.” <https://www.stripes.com/news/iraqi-scientist-says-he-helped-islamic-state-make-chemical-weapons-1.565481>

Israel/Palestine. In a report on Israel’s destruction or seizure of Palestinian structures in the West Bank, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that during 2018 Israel demolished or seized 460 structures, a 10% increase from 2017. Two of the December 2018 demolitions “were on punitive grounds and the rest were due to the lack of the difficult-to-obtain Israeli building permits,” reported *Aletho News*. <https://alethonews.com/2019/01/20/ocha-10-increase-in-israeli-demolition-of-palestinian-structures-in-2018/>

Latvia/Russia. The release of the index listing the real and code names of more than 4,000 purported K.G.B. agents in Latvia has created a “fierce debate over the veracity” of the index, reported the *New York Times*. “Deciding who really did what, however, depends on access to documents stored in Moscow, which has a full archive of the Latvian K.G.B.’s reports and lists of informants,” but those records are closed. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/18/world/europe/latvia-kgb-informants.html>

Middle East and North Africa. Researchers “used data from asylum applications in 157 countries from 2006-2015, together with an index that measures droughts, as well as figures tracking battle-related deaths, to assess the links between climate change, conflict and migration,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. They found “a particular correlation between climate stresses and conflict in parts of the Middle East and North Africa from 2010-2012, when many countries were undergoing political transformation during the Arab Spring uprisings.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190123161538-v0xhs/>

Sri Lanka/United Kingdom. The U.K. Foreign Office admitted it destroyed nearly 400 diplomatic files from the start of the LTTE uprising in Sri Lanka, reported the *Sunday Times*. “Only lists of file names survive, many of them relating to arms sales.” *Morning Star* used a freedom of information request to obtain the details of the destruction and found “that the Sri Lanka records were destroyed in 2014, just weeks after the Foreign Office apologized to top historians for burning files about Britain’s abuse of Mau Mau anti-colonial activists in Kenya.” <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/article/1064682/britains-foreign-office-admits-to-destroying-hundreds-of-files-regarding-start-of-ltte-uprising-in-sri-lanka>

National news.

Argentina. The Ministry of Defense issued a resolution on the management of military records, including the mass declassification of archival records in the Historical Service of the Argentine Army. Thanks to Roman Lescano for the information. https://gallery.mailchimp.com/90f09a9772eb45e4689d1ebad/files/015762ab-592e-4a44-81cc-06cde90ed2ad/Resoluci%C3%B3n_SAD_RS_2019_04170958_APN_MD_1_.pdf

Canada. Bert Crowfoot, who worked for an Indigenous broadcasting network in Edmonton, saved all the recordings of its programs when it closed in 1982. The 2,000 reel-to-reel audio tapes, VCR cassettes, 1,000 reels of 16-mm film, and floppy discs now are being preserved and digitized by the University of Alberta’s Institute for Sound Studies. Crowfoot told the *Canadian Press* that the holdings include “tales of residential schools,” but most important “it’s priceless evidence of how the Cree language has

changed over nearly 60 years.” <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-bought-for-a-buck-now-priceless-alberta-indigenous-media-archive/>

Shift, a “leading center of expertise on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,” issued a report, “Human rights reporting in the Canadian mining sector: Maturity trends and insights.” It analyzed the published “human rights disclosures” (“any and all relevant information that is available on a company’s corporate website, including annual reports and other documents and webpages”) through May 2018 of 18 of the top Canadian mining companies. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 the goal of human rights reporting, 75% of the companies had a score of 3 or less. <https://www.shiftproject.org/media/resources/docs/Human-Rights-Reporting-Canadian-Mining.pdf>

Chile. The Mapuche leader, Facundo Jones Huala, was sentenced in December 2018 to six years in prison for arson on a farm and three years for illegal possession of weapons; however, the Supreme Court has granted an appeal. According to *telesur*, the appeal is based on “the use of intelligence law in criminal proceedings, where it’s rumored that the Chilean government--specifically the Ministry of Security--were illegally monitoring Jones Huala and leaking secret documents to the Prosecution, thus violating espionage laws.” https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Supreme-Court-Finds-in-Favor-of-Mapuche-Leader-Facundo-Jones-20190123-0008.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=12

Colombia. The Office of the Ombudsman reported that 37% of the 431 assassinations between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2018 were members or leaders of Communal Action Boards (JACS), which are “local-level councils where citizens decide upon, plan and develop community projects based on their own needs,” *telesur* reported. The majority of the JACs are in rural areas and the members are “mainly low-income Campesino, Indigenous, and Afro-Colombian.” The killings appear to be related to land conflicts between local people growing crops and “fertile soil that criminal rings seek” for growing coca to make cocaine. https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Study-Killing-of-Colombian-Social-Leaders-Is-Systematic-20190113-0008.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=10

El Salvador. *Crisis Watch* reported that the national police chief announced on 20 January that 210 people had been murdered since 1 January, including a “spike of 61 murders 12-14 January.” The homicide rate in 2018 was down to 50.3 per 100,000 people, from 60.8 in 2017. The attorney general reported “disappearances had increased by 10% in 2018 to 3,514 cases” and there is “still no institutionally agreed methodology to count disappearances.” https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch?utm_source=Sign+Up+to+Crisis+Group%27s+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=40df1578fa-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_02_01_03_42&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1dab8c11ea-40df1578fa-359425329#overview

Gambia. The Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission began public hearings. https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&langpair=auto%7Cen&rurl=translate.google.com&sp=nmt4&u=https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/commissions-verite/39977-verites-douloureuses-devant-la-commission-verite-en-gambie.html&xid=17259,15700023,15700124,15700186,15700190,15700201,15700248&usg=ALkJrhjy81wjNdhFv34Y0LxgmeHphKCLw

Haiti. In the aftermath of the catastrophic earthquake that destroyed much of the capitol in 2010, the government expropriated land north of the city that was “slated for development as an industrial park” and homeless people settled there. This new city now has about 300,000 people. However, the “state has not identified the previous owners [of the land] nor compensated them,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported, and the residents are unable to obtain titles to the land where they live, leaving them without security for anything they build on it and without the ability to use it as collateral. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190112115302-9n4jv/>

Indonesia. The city of Jakarta adopted a regulation requiring couples to take an HIV test in order to obtain a marriage license, reported *Eurasia Review*. “The hospital will issue a certificate to couples to give officials at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in order to obtain their marriage license.” An additional and sensitive record in the marriage file. http://www.eurasiareview.com/18012019-indonesia-no-hiv-test-no-marriage-license-in-jakarta/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

According to *World Politics Review* and the *Guardian*, “the Indonesian military raided and destroyed the offices of the West Papuan National Committee, a separatist group in the country’s easternmost

region.” The articles do not say whether its records were seized or destroyed in the raid. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/27242/indonesia-takes-a-page-out-of-china-s-playbook-to-cement-control-over-west-papua>
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/08/new-chapter-of-persecution-indonesia-cracks-down-on-west-papua-separatists>

Mali. Since January 2017 the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission has obtained 10,223 witness statements but no public hearing has yet been held and its three year mandate has expired. *Justiceinfo.net* said “many observers” say an extension is essential. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/truth-commissions/39996-mali-and-the-difficulty-of-seeking-truth-under-fire.html>

Mexico. The Interior Minister announced that her office is reviewing 368 criminal cases and has freed 16 detainees, many of whom “did not have a sentence after many years in detention due to lack of sufficient proof against them,” reported *telesur*. https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Mexico-Releases-16-Political-Prisoners-368-Cases-Under-Review-20190110-0007.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=12

The National Public Security System said its records show there were 33,341 homicides in 2018, a 15% increase on 2017 and the highest figure since records began in 1997, *Mexico News Daily* reported. <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/homicides-are-the-highest-number-on-record/>

Myanmar. A court rejected the appeal of two *Reuters* journalists who were sentenced to seven years in jail for breaking the Official Secrets Act. The judge cited meetings between one reporter and members of the security forces “as well as a notebook found at the journalist’s house that contained the phone number of a member of the Arakan Army, an armed ethnic rebel group he had reported on while covering peace negotiations several years ago,” *Reuters* reported. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-journalists/myanmar-court-rejects-appeal-by-jailed-reuters-reporters-idUSKCN1P50HL>

Nepal. The government extended the terms of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons for one year, but extended the terms of the commission members only until mid-April. According to the *Kathmandu Post*, “The TRC has received 63,000 cases but hasn’t yet completed detailed investigation into a single case. Similarly, the disappearance commission which is sitting on around 3,000 complaints has yet to resolve any of them.” <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2019-01-30/transitional-justice-bodies-to-get-term-extension-officials-wont.html>

Netherlands. After World War II, hundreds of thousands of Dutch citizens were tried under the provisions of special criminal jurisdiction, accused of collaborating with the occupying German forces, treason or membership of the National Socialist Movement. The records of these trials are in the National Archives but are largely closed to research. A judge in the District Court in Amsterdam ruled that the National Archives must fulfil the request by the War Crimes Research Foundation to search the Central Archives for Special Criminal Jurisdiction for information about SS soldiers and Nazi concentration camp guards who are still alive. Thanks to Antoon De Baets for the information. <https://linkeddata.overheid.nl/front/portal/document-viewer?ext-id=ECLI:NL:RBAMS:2018:9101>

Nigeria. Amnesty International analyzed satellite imagery “to confirm the mass burning of structures as Boko Haram unleashed a massive assault on [the town of] Rann, most of which is now destroyed.” At least 60 people were killed in the attack. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/nigeria-deadliest-boko-haram-attack-rann-leaves-least-60-people-murdered>

Saudi Arabia. “Women in Saudi Arabia will be notified by text message if they are divorced under a new law designed to protect them from having their marriage ended without their knowledge,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The Ministry of Justice said the courts will send the notifications and women can “check their marital status on the ministry’s website or visit the relevant court to get a copy of divorce papers.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20190106191053-38d0m/>

Singapore. The Ministry of Health announced that “confidential information regarding 14,200 individuals diagnosed with HIV up to January 2013 and 2,400 of their contacts is in the possession of an unauthorized person.” <https://www.moh.gov.sg/news-highlights/details/unauthorised-possession-and-disclosure-of-information-from-hiv-registry>

South Africa. To enable prisoners to vote in the next election, the government told family members to bring to the prison “either a smart card ID, barcoded ID book or a temporary ID certificate” of the prisoner to register him or her as a voter. “After registration, these documents will be returned to family members during their next visit.” http://www.eurasiareview.com/18012019-south-africa-prisoners-to-register-to-vote/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Syria. The nongovernmental organization The Day After “finished scanning court records in Akhtar in city, North Aleppo, and Qalat Al-Madiq in Hama countryside.” The aim of the project is to save “official records for real estate interest and courts in opposition controlled areas from being lost or destroyed, since these records are a key pillar in the course of future justice in Syria.” <http://www.tdayafter.org/en/content/214/609/media/tdas-team-scans-courts-records-in-akhtar-in-&-qalat-al-madiq>

Taiwan. “The Transitional Justice Commission might be unable to review 60,567 classified political files from the Martial Law period in the National Police Agency archives due to difficulty in the declassification process,” *Taipei Times* reported. The files include ones on “political figures, surveillance operations, Chinese espionage and other national security cases.” <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2018/12/31/2003707103>

Tanzania. Researchers from IPIS in Belgium “surveyed 450 small-scale mining and processing sites on the nature and scope of operations; working conditions; distribution of wealth; and their health, safety and environmental impact, and made the data available through an interactive webmap, open database and analytical report.” They found “safety awareness in general is worryingly low” and the mining operations pose “serious health risks for workers and neighboring communities.” <https://africanarguments.org/2019/01/25/tanzania-mining-map-vast-potential-pitfalls/>

Tunisia. The Tunisian truth commission, which had an Arbitration and Conciliation Board, completed its work in December 2018. *Justiceinfo.net* reported that “of the 25,998 applications for arbitration and conciliation filed, 21,177 concerned human rights (rape, sexual violence, torture, arbitrary detention, deprivation of income sources) and 4,821 referred to financial crimes. However, the Ministry of the Interior has opposed any possible reconciliation session between, on the one hand, its agents and alleged perpetrators and, on the other, victims who claimed their right to know why they had been subjected to such abuses.” <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/truth-commissions/40051-tunisia-government-accused-of-missing-truth-commission-opportunities.html>

United Kingdom. “More than 2,200 people have been waiting for at least a year to find out whether they will be recognized as victims of slavery—which can help many stay in Britain” according to government documents obtained by the *BBC*, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-46945352>; <http://news.trust.org/item/20190122153054-br3v0/>

The *Guardian* reported that official figures from the London Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime show that while “black people make up 15.6% of London’s population [and] white people make up 59.8%, in 2018 43% of [police] searches were of black people while 35.5% were of white people.” An analysis it commissioned “shows that searches of black people were less likely to detect crime than those conducted on white people, and most stops found no wrongdoing.” https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/jan/26/met-police-disproportionately-use-stop-and-search-powers-on-black-people?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXlVS19XZWVrZW5kLkTE5MDEyNg%3D%3D&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayUK&CMP=GTUK_email

United Kingdom/Northern Ireland. In settling a case brought by a man whose fingerprints and DNA were kept by police, the Police Service of Northern Ireland agreed to publish a DNA retention policy to “provide guidance to the public on how they can find out if their biometric data has been retained by police and why,” reported *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-46803999>

United States. A new law requires the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other federal agencies to send to the National Archives within two years “copies of civil rights cold-case records, without any redaction or changes,” *Courthouse News* reported. “If an agency maintains the files should stay closed, a five-person review board, whose members will be appointed by the president, will decide whether to

postpone disclosure. The review board is also authorized to request files from the FBI and other federal agencies.” <https://www.courthousenews.com/civil-rights-cold-case-bill-drafted-by-high-schoolers-becomes-law/>

“In a huge potential break in the long-running and controversial case of Philadelphia journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, currently serving a life-without-parole term in a Pennsylvania state prison . . . for a murder conviction, the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office says it has discovered six . . . boxes of materials about the case in a locked storeroom of the DA’s offices,” *Eurasia Review* reported. “If those boxes contain any evidentiary material that was improperly withheld from the defense, and if what was withheld proved significant enough that it might potentially have led the original jury to a different conclusion — for example, a non-unanimous decision to convict — it could be grounds for seeking a retrial of the case.” http://www.eurasiareview.com/12012019-a-potentially-tectonic-event-shakes-up-mumia-abu-jamal-case-oped/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

The *Washington Post* reported that police departments, especially in smaller jurisdictions, are “dropping or delaying” their body-camera programs, “finding it too expensive to store and manage the thousands of hours of footage.” Prosecutors also complained that preparing videos to present as evidence at trial was a cost burden. <https://www.bluebulletin.com/NationalNews/2019/January/25/Some.U.S.police.departments.dump.bodycamera.programs.amid.high.costs.aspx>

The nongovernmental Anti-Defamation League tracks murders perpetrated by all types of extremists. Its annual report said that in 2018 domestic extremists killed at least 50 people in the U.S.; guns were responsible for 42 of the 50 deaths. “Every one of the perpetrators had ties to at least one right-wing extremist movement, although one had recently switched to supporting Islamist extremism. White supremacists were responsible for the great majority of the killings.” <https://www.adl.org/murder-and-extremism-2018>

“Since May 2015, volunteers for the nonprofit Freedom for Immigrants have documented 1,396 people on hunger strike in 18 immigration detention facilities,” reported the *Associated Press*. Now a federal judge has “authorized force feeding” of some of the 11 detainees in El Paso, Texas, who are on a hunger strike. ICE “doesn’t keep statistics on this” [hunger strikes and force-feeding] and “Federal courts have not conclusively decided whether a judge must issue an order before ICE force-feeds an immigration detainee, so rules vary by district and type of court, and sometimes orders are filed secretly.” A dismaying example of inadequate government records. <https://apnews.com/c4b201dac8bf48eba17485a5c357b810>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) filed suit against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for their failure to release under the Freedom of Information Act the data on immigration enforcement practices since 2012. HRW said the data it seeks “provides the detail necessary to fully understand how ICE carries out its mandate to deport people who have violated U.S. immigration laws and to identify potential human rights abuses in the process.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/10/us-suit-filed-over-immigration-foia-request>

Nitrate is associated with several health problems, and it can come into water from “multiple sources including fertilizers, sewage treatment systems, and animal manure.” Researchers used information from state agencies and on line databases to compile nitrate data for 39,466 public water systems serving more than 70% of the U.S. population; they linked this data to demographic information from the U.S. Census Bureau and to agricultural data. Their report in *Environmental Health* said that public water systems providing drinking water for more than 5.6 million people had a nitrate concentration high enough to be harmful and “water systems with higher nitrate levels also tend to serve communities with higher proportions of Hispanic residents.” http://www.eurasiareview.com/18012019-millions-of-americans-exposed-to-elevated-nitrate-levels-in-drinking-water/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reduced the reporting required from employers on workplace injuries and illnesses; it now will get only an annual summary. It said “privacy concerns” were a reason for the change, reported *Safety+Health*. The director of the largest U.S. union, AFL-CIO, said the reversal “allows employers to hide their injury records and keep workers, the public

and OSHA in the dark about dangerous conditions in American workplaces.”
<https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/18005-citing-privacy-concerns-osa-to-roll-back-electronic-recordkeeping-requirements>

Venezuela. Nongovernmental organizations Human Rights Watch and Foro Penal reviewed cases of 32 people “detained and abused” by government forces. “Lawyers representing the accused, who had access to judicial files and hearings in these cases including some prosecutions of civilians in military courts, said the charges were fabricated and not supported by any real evidence.” Since 2014, HRW “has documented more than 380 cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment against government opponents or perceived opponents, including at least 31 cases of torture.” More than 12,800 people have been arrested since 2014 in connection with anti-government protests, according to ForoPenal, of which more than 7,500 “have been conditionally released but remain subject to criminal prosecution.” Since 2017 “military courts have prosecuted more than 800 civilians, in violation of international human rights laws.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/09/venezuela-suspected-plotters-tortured>

Call for projects, conferences, publications.

ALIPH, a “global fund that is solely dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage in conflict areas,” issued its annual call for projects; submissions due March 15. <https://www.aliph-foundation.org/>

The Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, announced its 2019 Aaron Swartz Fellowship to be awarded either to an unconventional technology expert early in his/her career or a scholar or activist working at the intersection of humanities, social sciences and technology studies or technological solutions. Applications deadline March 15; for details: <http://www.osaarchivum.org/work-with-us/fellowship/aaron-swartz-fellowship>

Swisspeace will offer a “Preventing Violent Conflicts” course 8-10 May 2019 at the University of Basel, Switzerland. Application deadline is 15 March 2019. <https://www.swisspeace.ch/continuing-education/postgraduate-courses/application-individual-course/>

The German Federal Archives will hold a conference on archives and archival material as consequences of World War II and on the role of such material regarding compensation, equalization of burdens and indemnification, at the Federal Archives’ building in Bayreuth 14-15 October 2019. Paper proposals due April 30 to k.kuehnel@bundesarchiv.de; for further information: <http://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Content/Meldungen/2019-01-18-cfp-kriegsfolgenarchivgut.html>

Migration/Immigration Network of the Social Science History Association issued a call for papers for its meeting, “Data and its Discontents,” in Chicago, Illinois, U.S., 21-24 November 2019. Proposals due by February 16, 2019 to <https://ssha.org/>

Good reads. Human Rights Watch *World Report 2019*, summarizing “key human rights issues in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide, drawing on events from late 2017 through November 2018”: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/hrw_world_report_2019.pdf

Fifteen principles of good data: <http://networkcultures.org/blog/2019/01/11/principles-of-good-data/>

“Forensic architecture” investigations into human rights abuses: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/jan/06/research-architecture-redefining-art-goldsmiths-london>

Reporters reconstruct the killing of a Palestinian medic: https://www.reddit.com/r/Palestine/comments/aayhwb/how_times_reporters_froze_a_fatal_moment_on_a/

Reclaiming history for Indigenous groups through “digital repatriation”: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-passamaquoddy-reclaim-their-culture-through-digital-repatriation>

Atonement for (U.S.) Georgetown University’s 1838 slave sale: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/A-New-Path-to-Atonement/245511>

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