Commentary.

Why do people post on Facebook what they do? For instance, a man in Thailand live streamed himself killing his baby daughter and then committing suicide. http://electronicnewsnetwork.com/news/baby-murder-suicide-facebook-201032349/ A man in Memphis, Tennessee, set his phone to record as he doused himself with kerosene, lit a match and committed suicide. http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/americas/92648925/man-commits-suicide-on-facebook-live-by-setting-himself-on-fire Videos of rapes, “revenge porn” (attempts to use intimate images to shame, humiliate or gain revenge against a person), and ISIS beheadings mingle online with images of family feasts and frolicking kittens. And any of these can be downloaded and saved to an institutional or personal archives.

The Guardian published a series of articles it called “The Facebook Files,” based on “more than 100 training manuals, spreadsheets and flowcharts” leaked to The Guardian that show how Facebook is dealing with violent content on its service. The company uses algorithms and is working with artificial intelligence to address the problem of content, trying to walk the line between censorship and free speech. And Facebook has a team of 3,000 people—and growing—to monitor the postings and decide what to delete. As one man described a monitor’s job: “You’d go into work at 9am every morning, turn on your computer and watch someone have their head cut off. Every day, every minute, that’s what you see.” Several nongovernmental organizations also have teams monitoring content, particularly watching for images of child abuse. All of these organizations have “safeguard programs” to support the mental well-being of the monitors who work in these psychologically stressful jobs. (When archivists must identify and read documents for human rights lawsuits or process records from truth commissions and criminal courts, these same stresses are apparent and the same care for the health of the staff members is essential.) https://www.theguardian.com/news/series/facebook-files

Facebook told The Guardian it is “going to make it simpler to report problems to us, faster for our reviewers to determine which posts violate our standards and easier for them to contact law enforcement if someone needs help.” What is not clear, however, is how law enforcement will be able to act on the complaints—or even conduct investigations—if Facebook truly deletes the content. Or is Facebook only disabling public links but retains the content for use by legitimate investigators and prosecutors or defense counsel? We don’t know—or, at least, The Guardian doesn’t tell us. If Facebook does keep the information and it is available to law enforcement, archivists will eventually have to handle that evidence as part of their responsibility for police and attorney records. But if that repulsive information is not available for the use of those who protect our human rights, we will all be less secure and the posters—that is, the ones who are still alive—will be free to offend once more.

International news.

International Criminal Court (ICC). In an Article 15 Communication to the ICC titled “The contribution of Chiquita corporate officials to crimes against humanity in Colombia,” the International Federation for Human Rights and other nongovernmental organizations in Colombia and the United States asked the Office of the Prosecutor [OTP] to “immediately expand its current preliminary examination on Colombia to include the Chiquita Suspects and ultimately investigate these individuals for funding, supplying and, in general, providing significant contributions to the blocs of the AUC [the paramilitary Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia] that operated in the banana growing zones” in Colombia, to “closely monitor relevant local mechanisms and proceedings to ensure that they apply ICC standards for investigation and prosecution and do not permit continued impunity of the Chiquita Suspects,” and “if Colombian authorities are unable or
unwilling to move forward with charging and prosecuting the Chiquita Suspects, the OTP should request authorization to investigate the Suspects’ role in funding, supplying, and significantly contributing to international crimes of the AUC to ensure that impunity does not continue.” The National Security Archive “provided more than 48,000 pages of internal Chiquita records to the ICC as part of the communication, including financial records, legal memoranda, handwritten notes, and the secret, sworn testimony of company officials.” In a “sealed section” the Communication provided the names of 14 “Chiquita Suspects.” For background, see HRWG News 2017-04. For the submission, see https://www.fsfdh.org/IMG/pdf/rapport_chiquita.pdf; http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB593-chiquita-papers-evidence-in-icc-filing/

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Office of the High Commissioner announced a five-year “partnership” with Microsoft Corporation. A grant of $5 million, Microsoft’s press release said, will partly be used to develop “Rights View,” an information “dashboard” that will “aggregate large quantities of international and external data on specific countries and types of rights violations in real time” through the use of “cloud computing and big data analysis.” Microsoft also promised to “work closely with the office to help promote broader adoption and implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” and provide support for human rights advocacy and outreach campaigns. https://news.microsoft.com/2017/05/16/technology-for-human-rights/#w1VqXdf6xpFkG0uE.97

OHCHR issued “updated guidelines for investigating unlawful killings around the world,” known as the Minnesota Protocol. Paragraph 54 reads: “Material should be collected in a systematic manner. An effective information management system is required to ensure that all material gathered is recorded, analysed and stored appropriately, taking into account security concerns. This system does not need to be complex or technologically advanced, but it should be comprehensive, consistent and secure in order to ensure that no material is lost, damaged, degraded or overlooked; that it provides an audit trail that can demonstrate that evidence has not been tampered with; and that it can be easily found, referenced and cross-referenced.” http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21661&LangID=E


World Health Organization (WHO). More than half of all deaths have a recorded cause, WHO said in its global health report based on information from its 194 member states. The assistant director-general for health systems and innovation said that while data collection has improved, “many countries still do not routinely collect high-quality health data” and that makes “effective health monitoring and policymaking far more difficult,” Reuters reported. WHO is “working with countries to strengthen health information systems and improve data quality.” http://news.trust.org/item/20170517100754-1c4ht/ for the report, see http://www.who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2017/en/

World/general news.

Business. After a Syrian rebel soldier posted to Facebook his picture with a heavy machine gun in which the weapon’s serial number was visible, reporters from BIRN and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project were able to trace the weapon to a state-owned factory in Serbia where it was built, then to a Sofia, Bulgaria, arms dealer, on to Saudi Arabia and to the fighter. The reporters used the 2015 accounts of the factory, the Serbian export license that guaranteed “the weapons will be used by the purchasing party” (which was Saudi Arabia’s security forces), “confidential documents from Serbia’s Ministry of Defense and minutes from a series of inter-ministerial meetings” in Serbia. https://www.occrp.org/en/makingakilling/the-covotes-trail-a-machine-guns-path-from-serbia-to-syria/
Tesla Motors Inc. is an electric car company. The Los Angeles Times reported that “a union-connected group released government safety records” obtained from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration that “show a rate of safety incidents reported at the company’s Fremont, California, auto plant significantly higher than the auto industry average—as much as 31% higher in 2015.”

After a German historian argued in 2016 that the Associated Press (AP) was complicit in the Nazi regime, AP commissioned an outside academic to review its work in Germany during the Nazi period. The report of the review is now released. “Research began more than a year ago with a review of previously unexamined AP archives. That review was then extended to other records—including U.S. military documents, and the oral histories and personal papers of deceased employees,” it said. AP said it recognized “that AP should have done some things differently during this period, for example protesting when AP photos were exploited by the Nazis for propaganda within Germany and refusing to employ German photographers with active political affiliations and loyalties.” However, “suggestions that AP at any point sought to help the Nazis or their heinous cause are simply wrong.” The report includes digital copies of 43 documents from AP’s archives. For background, see HRWG News 2016-03. https://www.ap.org/about/history/ap-in-germany-1933-1945/

Medical. Using DNA data collected from 930 women, “154 of predominantly African ancestry and 776 of European ancestry,” researchers found critical underlying biological differences between black and white women with breast cancer, reported medicalxpress.com. The data is held by The Cancer Genome Atlas established by the U.S. National Cancer Institute and the National Human Genome Research Institute. One author of the study said, “People have long associated breast cancer mortality in black women with poverty, or stress, or lack of access to care, but our results show that much of the increased risk for black women can be attributed to tumor biological differences, which are probably genetically determined.” The results of the study should lead to the development of scientifically targeted treatment. https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-05-large-precision-breast-cancer-diagnosis.html

Researchers analyzed U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data on new drugs and and FDA’s later safety warnings on all 222 prescription drugs approved by the FDA from 2001 to 2010. They found, reported the Associated Press, that “almost one-third of new drugs approved . . . ended up years later with warnings about unexpected—sometimes life-threatening—side effects or complications.” The report raised “concerns about whether new drugs are being extensively tested before approval.”

The Williams Institute of the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law, published Legacies and Lessons, “the first in a planned series of reports to be published by the All Survivors Project on sexual violence against men and boys in different situations of armed conflict. Eight years on from the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka, and more than two decades since fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended, conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys remains one of the least documented and most inadequately addressed of all the human rights abuses that took place during these wars.” The researchers noted, “In both Sri Lanka and BiH, lack of documentation has proved to be a first and fundamental stumbling block to responding appropriately or fully to sexual violence against men and boys.”

World War II. The Max Planck Society in Munich, Germany, holds brain tissues from persons with mental illnesses who were murdered by the Nazi regime. The Society announced that “starting in June, an international research team from Germany, Austria, UK and the US will work together to examine the specimens and to identify the victims” so that they can be “properly buried,” reported Deutsche Welle. The researchers will “sift through books and archives at the Max Planck institutes, as well as at hospitals and psychiatric wards, and the archives of any offices associated with the Nazi euthanasia program.” The results will be collected in a database. For background, see HRWG News 2017-01. http://www.dw.com/en/german-research-organization-to-identify-nazi-victims-that-ended-up-as-brain-slides/a-38664332

The prefecture of police of Paris signed an agreement with the Shoah Memorial in Paris and the Holocaust Museum in the United States, to provide access to the archives of the “special brigades” that were responsible for tracking “internal enemies” during the World War II Vichy regime in France. Both
institutions will receive digital copies, but they will not be permitted to make them available on the internet, Radio France reported. [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sciences/histoire/memoire-la-prefecture-de-police-de-paris-ouvre-ses-archives-sur-les-brigades-speciales-de-la-seconde-guerre-mondiale_2198594.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sciences/histoire/memoire-la-prefecture-de-police-de-paris-ouvre-ses-archives-sur-les-brigades-speciales-de-la-seconde-guerre-mondiale_2198594.html)

The Russian news agency Sputnik reported that the Russian Ministry of Defense published on its website “a unique archive of documents detailing the atrocities and horrifying cruelty perpetrated by the Nazis during their occupation of the city of Kherson, Ukraine, during World War II.” [https://sputniknews.com/society/201705061053337885-nazi-occupied-kherson-report-declassified](https://sputniknews.com/society/201705061053337885-nazi-occupied-kherson-report-declassified)

**Bilateral and multilateral news.**


**Central African Republic/Uganda.** With the startling headline, “In Search for Warlord, Ugandan Troops Are Said to Hunt Girls,” the New York Times reported “according to internal United Nations records, peacekeepers in the Central African Republic have documented allegations of rape, sexual abuse or sexual harassment of more than 30 women and girls by Ugandan soldiers” sent into the CAR to hunt for warlord Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army. The UN also said that it knows of 44 women and girls impregnated by Ugandan soldiers; the head of the UN peacekeeping mission wrote to Ugandan authorities last June saying that it had reports of women and girls abducted “and forced to become prostitutes or sex slaves or to marry Ugandan soldiers.” A spokesman for the Ugandan military said that it investigated the allegation, the investigation is finished, “that no cases of rape or statutory rape were registered . . and that there was no plan to support any children left behind.” Uganda is withdrawing its troops from the CAR now that Uganda and the U.S. have abandoned the search for Kony. [https://sputniknews.com/society/201705061053337885-nazi-occupied-kherson-report-declassified](https://sputniknews.com/society/201705061053337885-nazi-occupied-kherson-report-declassified)

**Central America/Mexico/United States.** Doctors without Borders (MSF) released a report on the violence migrants from Central America encounter as they cross Mexico and attempt to enter the United States. During 2015 MSF talked with a random sample of 467 migrants and refugees in “facilities the organization supports in Mexico” and gathered data from MSF clinics from 2015 through December 2016. Nearly 40% were fleeing after “direct attacks or threats to themselves or their families, extortion, or gang-forced recruitment,” and more than half (56.2%) of the El Salvadorans fleeing had a relative who died of violence within the last two years. More than two-thirds of the migrants and refugees reported being victims of violence during their transit, with nearly a third of the women sexually abused. [http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/report-forcibly-flee-central-americas-northern-triangle-neglected-humanitarian-crisis](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/report-forcibly-flee-central-americas-northern-triangle-neglected-humanitarian-crisis)

**France/Morocco.** In 1965 Moroccan opposition leader Mehdi Ben Barka disappeared from a Paris street; his body was never found. Now, Morocco World News reported, “Eighty-nine documents of the Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage (SDECE), France’s former external and counter-espionage services, [dated] between 1965 and 1966 are to be declassified . . announced . . the official gazette of the French republic, the Journal Officiel. The Commission du Secret de la Défense national (CSDN), an independent administrative body in charge of advising on documents declassification, had in March given approval of declassifying 89 documents [dated] between 1965 and 1966.” It is not likely that this is the entire body of records related to the case, but it is a start to opening the records. Thanks to Jens Boel for the news. [http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20170510-france-va-bientot-declassifier-documents-affaire-ben-barka](http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20170510-france-va-bientot-declassifier-documents-affaire-ben-barka) [https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/05/216180/declassified-french-documents-truth-ben-barka-disappearance](https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/05/216180/declassified-french-documents-truth-ben-barka-disappearance)

**Georgia/Abkhazia/Russia.** Abkhazia is an autonomous region in northwestern Georgia that declared its independence in 2008 (not recognized by Georgia). On May 18 Abkhazia signed an agreement with Russia to establish a “Joint Information and Coordination Center of Internal Affairs Agencies.” Among its stated duties, reported APSNYPRESS, are “to organize the exchange of operationally meaningful information with law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Russian Federation, as well as to maintain the necessary operational and forensic records, to maintain a special data bank on organized criminal
communities, to promote the necessary concerted actions to combat dangerous types of crime that represent Threat to the security of the RA and RF.”  

Libya/United Kingdom.  The 1998 Real IRA bombing in Omagh, Northern Ireland, killed 29 people and injured 220. After evidence emerged that Libya “supplied the IRA with millions of pounds and 120 tonnes of weaponry, including Semtex,” lawyers for victims are seeking compensation from Libya and called on the UK government “to open up its huge archive of information on Libya’s dealings with the IRA,”  

Mexico/United States. Using samples from bones of unidentified bodies found in the Arizona desert since the 1970s, researchers “used the DNA to analyze the ancestry of migrants who had died along the border” and found that “people with more European ancestry were more likely to be identified than those with indigenous roots.” The problem, the researchers said, was the “deep distrust between indigenous peoples in Mexico and their government, founded on a history of oppression by those in power” and thus they are reluctant to provide DNA samples to the government for matching with the DNA of the bodies.  

Middle East war (Al-Qaeda/Iraq/IS/Syria/Yemen). The U.S. military said it “reexamined the way it reports whether its daily bombing runs over Iraq and Syria are inadvertently killing civilians” and acknowledged that it “failed to report 80 civilian casualties from airstrikes during the last two years,” the Los Angeles Times reported. A U.S. military spokesman said the analysts “recognized ‘anomalies’ after poring over data for several months” which “led them to reexamine 396 reports of civilian casualties” based on “reports from its staff, the news media, social media, local and individual monitoring groups.” Human rights groups say the toll is much higher.  

Canada’s Department of National Defense released “figures” showing that “Canadian bombs missed their targets 17 times during the air campaign in Iraq,” CBC News reported. The News also obtained “a series of documents, briefing notes and media strategy lines” from the Department on “an incident outside Kirkuk.” Those documents, obtained through the access to information act, raise “questions about whether there was a systemic problem with the guided munitions throughout the campaign.” Whether any of the misses led to civilian casualties is not revealed.  

Reuters reported that the Islamic State released a 12-minute Russian language video showing the beheading of “what it described as a Russian intelligence officer captured in Syria.” The video was obtained by the US-based SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors extremist publications and media.  

IraqiNews.com reported that the Islamic State (IS) “began to burn tons of its archives at its main offices, including the hisbah (vigilantism) and security,” west of Mosul, Iraq. The information comes from a leader of a paramilitary group, who said IS is destroying archives “to cover ‘crimes’ committed by the group and to conceal the identity of its sympathizers.”  

A new report from the Syrian Network for Human Rights argued that Russian forces “most likely” supported the Syrian regime forces that attacked Khan Sheikhoun using chemical weapons. The nongovernmental organization said it “relied mainly, in this report, on interviews with survivors who were injured in the chemical attack, doctors who treated them, paramedics, eyewitnesses, and Civil Defense members. Accounts by observers who work on pinpointing warplanes radar signals and tracking the communication between the pilot and the airbase from which the warplanes took off were included in the report” in addition to “pictures and videos that were published online, or those we received from local activists via e-mail and Skype, or on social media.” For background, see HRWG News 2017-04.  

The U.S. military raided a compound in Yemen that it believed Al-Qaeda was using; the Pentagon said “at least” seven were killed. U.S. officials told Fox News, “The goal of the raid was to snatch more laptops and mobile phones and other intel to learn more about AQAP [Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula]; it was not a
raido kill or capture a high-value target such as the terrorist group’s emir.”

Russia/Ukraine. Euromaidan Press published the first in what it promises will be a series on the information to be found in the KGB archives held in Ukraine. It reported that the files, if “put in a row” would stretch for 150 kilometers. It noted, “In the USSR, archives both accumulated the records of state terror and served as a tool for its implementation. Investigators studied them as a source of carefully collected personal information that could once ruin the life of a potential victim.”

United Kingdom/Northern Ireland/United States. Anthony McIntrye is one of the oral historians who recorded interviews with paramilitaries from the time of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. In one more stage in the case that seemingly will never end, the Belfast Telegraph reported that a Northern Ireland court ruled that the legal team for McIntrye will be given access to the correspondence between the government’s Public Prosecution Services (PPS) and authorities in the U.S. when PPS sought access to McIntrye’s interviews deposited at Boston College in the U.S. For background, see HRWG News 2016-04 and 06. http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/exprovo-in-boston-tapes-row-can-examine-pps-files-35752983.html

National news.

Australia. The Australian Research Council is funding a three-year project at Monash University and the Federation University of Ballarat to “improve the way records for children in state care are compiled,” reported ABC News. One of the researchers, who once was a “state ward,” said that the children should have access to the files on themselves: “Why should one set of people have files on them, recording some of their most personal moments, that they’re not allowed to have access to?”

Brazil. A series of corruption investigations has destabilized Brazil’s government for the past two years. The Federal Supreme Court authorized an investigation based on evidence from a “wiretap recording” that was released by the newspaper O Globo. Telesur reported that on the tape the President is heard agreeing to “sizeable bribes to manage the fallout of corruption scandals . . and keep a powerful witness from speaking out on government corruption.” The man who recorded the meeting apparently did so “as part of an attempt to secure a plea bargain deal with prosecutors.” O Globo did not say how it gained access to the recording, but the Supreme Court approved the plea bargain for the man and his brother one day after the release of the contents of the tape. http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Brazils-Top-Court-Suspends-Temer-Ally-Aecio-Neves-from-Senate-After-Damning-Wiretap--20170518-0004.html


Croatia. Parliament amended the law on archives to open all records in the State Archives dated before 22 December 1990. “The new law provides for the personal data to be available immediately after the death of the person in question, with the exception of specially protected categories of data, such as those pertaining to medical issues,” Total Croatia News reported. A member of the opposition political party said that the roots of the country’s current political crisis, which relates to the former secret police, can be found in the archives. http://www.total-croatia-news.com/politics/18692-pre-1990-state-archives-to-be-opened

Central African Republic. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published the results of its mapping of human rights violations in the Central African Republic between 2003 and 2015, finding “620
serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.” The report sets out recommendations for the Special Criminal Court (see below) and a truth commission. It is based on a “desk review, analyzing information from more than 1,200 confidential and open sources contained in documents such as United Nations reports, reports by international nongovernmental organizations (NGOS), media reports, academic articles and books. To fill priority information gaps identified by the desk review, the project conducted investigations and visits to sites of alleged incidents in most regions of the CAR. Investigators conducted interviews with around 120 persons, including victims and witnesses, State authorities, religious and community leaders, human rights defenders and alleged perpetrators.”

The President “appointed five Central African judges to sit at the Special Criminal Court, created in June 2015 to try crimes committed in the country since 2003,” APA reported. For background see HRWG News 2017-01 and 02. http://en.africatime.com/republique_centrafricaine/articles/car-five-judges-named-special-criminal-court

Democratic Republic of Congo. More than 500 people have been killed in Kasai province in the last five months, police reported to the DPA news agency on May 15. That does not count the two United Nations experts who were killed in March while investigating human rights violations in the region. The laptop of one of the UN experts contained “130 documents proving the involvement of [Clement] Kanku, former Minister for Cooperation and Development, in the massacres perpetrated in Kasai,” reported the International Business Times, citing the New York Times. One of the documents is “a recorded phone conversation in which Kanku appears to discuss setting fire to the town of Tshimbulu, as well as targeted assassinations of an army colonel and other officials.” That recording was later leaked on social media; meanwhile, the government said it “obtained a cellphone video showing [the UN workers] being killed.”

El Salvador. A judge reopened the case of the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was shot in 1980 as he celebrated Mass, telesur reported. The case against the prime suspect had been dismissed in 1993 “as a result of the amnesty law.” Evidence on the case is extensive, as detailed in the recent book Assassination of a Saint: The Plot to Murder Oscar Romero and the Quest to Bring His Killers to Justice by one of the lawyers who worked on the case. http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/El-Salvador-Judge-Reopens-Case-of-Slain-Archbishop-Romero-20170518-0029.html

Finland. The government and the Sami Parliament agreed to launch a truth and reconciliation process. Yle Sapmi reported. The chairwoman of the Sami Parliament said that negotiations are beginning on “what the content, mandate and resources of the commission will be.” The Sami are an indigenous people, often called “Lapps” in English, who live in the far north of Finland and neighboring countries. https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/life-and-public/2017/05/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-may-be-launched-finland-already-after

India. “The missing files of IAS [Indian Administrative Service] and PCS [Provincial Civil Service] officers for which a Punjab government official spent 16 months in jail were found during shifting of records” from old to new cabinets, Indian Express reported. Six of the files found “related to disciplinary action.” The man was sentenced for having “misappropriated” the files “in order to benefit those officers against whom the complaints were made and undue advantage has been given.”

Israel. On the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israel State Archives released 150,000 pages of war-related records, including “minutes of the wartime security cabinet and transcripts of other ministerial meetings,” AFP reported. https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/diplomacy-defense/145603-170518-israel-declassifies-six-day-war-archives

Kenya. A “mobile identity card registration team, led by the Nubian Rights Forum with officials from the national registration office and supported by community-based paralegals” is helping Nubians “negotiate the bureaucracy to get access to the national identity card they need to exercise their rights and access opportunities equally with other citizens of Kenya,” reported the Open Society Foundations. Nubians of
Kenya have been denied automatic citizenship, instead having to “undergo a separate set of administrative steps in order to acquire national identity cards when they turn 18,” a process that also requires “appearing before a special committee designed to ascertain the Nubian applicant’s identity and entitlement to Kenyan nationality.” Nongovernmental groups appearing before the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child used “data from their community paralegal project . . . tracking each case from inception to conclusion” to support their recommendation “that the government must approach confirmation of Kenyan citizenship and issuance of documentation of identity on a nationwide basis, applying transparent processes fairly and uniformly to all.”

Kosovo. In 2014 Kosovo’s parliament passed a law recognizing women who were victims of sexual violence during the 1998-99 war, but it was not until the end of April this year that the government established the Committee for Verification and Recognition of Violence Victim Status. According to BIRN, the women can “apply for reparations in writing, without having to testify in person about what they endured. The survivors are not obliged to, but may, submit medical or police records as proof of their rape.” The law does not compensate families of the women who died as a result of their rapes, nor does it compensate Kosovo-Serbian victims of “revenge attacks” committed after June 20, 1999, when Serbian forces withdrew from Kosovo.

Mexico. A video recorded in Puebla state showed soldiers firing on a car, then dragging a man from it, laying him on the street, and firing a “single bullet into the back of the man’s head.” The video was made public by the news agency Diario Cambio, reported the Los Angeles Times. The attorney general said the incident would be investigated; the Defense Department said “it would fully cooperate but questioned whether the video was ‘authentic or edited’.”

Myanmar. A UNICEF report, based on Myanmar’s 2014 population and housing census, its 2015-16 demographic and health survey, and UNICEF Myanmar’s administrative records, said that despite progress since 2010, “as many as 150 children die daily before reaching their fifth birthday, nearly 30 percent of all children under five suffer from moderate or severe malnutrition, and one in five children is born without registration.” Demonstrating again the importance of records of UN agencies, the report says a task force co-chaired by UNICEF “has been documenting, verifying and reporting grave violations against children by all parties to the conflict since 2007.” And UNICEF notes that critical to the efforts to improve the conditions for children in Myanmar are “data arising from new sources of information – most notably the 2014 census and the 2016 Demographic and Health Survey.” Protecting those records in Myanmar’s archives is critical.

The President of the United Nations Human Rights Council, in accordance with its resolution in March, appointed three experts to a fact-finding mission to “establish facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violations by military and security forces, and abuses, in Myanmar, in particular in Rakhine State” and urged the government “to fully cooperate with the fact-finding mission by making available the findings of their domestic investigations.”

Nepal. A new report produced jointly by the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Martin Chautari Institute, both nongovernmental institutions, on the “continued need for truth” says that Nepalis have mixed views of the two official truth commissions, some even not knowing they exist: “Of those who had heard of the truth commissions, some see them as deeply flawed, while others hope they will be able to help victims overcome obstacles they face locally to finding the truth [of what happened] and ensuring their stories form part of the official record on the conflict.”
The Himalayan Times reported that “it is undecided who—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the Commission of Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP)—will deal with 150 insurgency-era ‘disappearance’ cases.” The problem, said a CIEDP spokesman, is that families “registered at the local registrar’s office that these people died during the Maoist insurgency with the hope of getting financial relief” that was offered by the government and got death certificates although “their relatives, in fact, were made to disappear and their whereabouts were still unknown.” He said it would take action by a court to change the “dead” into “disappeared” persons.

Nigeria. Interviews by the News Agency of Nigeria provide insight into archives issues in the country. A lawyer said “improper record-keeping by some security agencies had affected their abilities to combat crime” and that “there was no documentation of criminals and crimes in some police stations.” However, the military director of the Nigerian Army Archives said, “The Nigerian Army is very serious about record-keeping; both for promotion, posting and other things; we do not joke with record-keeping.” The president of the Society of Nigerian Archivists said the Society is ready to assist the Nigeria Police: “One of the ways we can stabilize society is to help the Nigeria Police Force create data base and documents to keep records of criminals.”

Peru. Telesur reported that Peru’s National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women “brought the case of mass sterilizations” to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The program of “Voluntary Surgical Contraception” that Peru ran between 1995 and 2000 was forced not voluntary; it “particularly affected poor Indigenous Quecha women living in rural areas who could not understand documents written in Spanish that they were forced to sign before the operation.” So far courts in Peru have not required the state to compensate the victims. For background, see HRWG News 2016-12.

Philippines. The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) made a “surprise inspection” at Manila Police District Station 1 and found a secret detention cell holding nine men and three women. CHR filed a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman against the officers; they “noted that the names of the 12 detainees were not in the station logbook,” reported Philstar Global.

Romania. Le Croix published an article on the archives of the Securitate, the communist-era secret police. The director of the Institute for Investigation of the Crimes of Communism complained that while the Securitate archives are available for research (although partially destroyed after the fall of the Ceausescu regime in 1989), the archives of the army and the ministry of justice cannot be” researched freely” and even if legislation would permit access “there is no historical or civic will to open the archives.”

South Sudan. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report on “human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law committed in and around Yei town.” UNMISS documented 114 cases of arbitrary killing of civilians by armed militias and said South Sudan has a “startling level of impunity.” The report was based on interviews, “corroborated by the overall body of credible information collected, including satellite imagery.”

Spain. Following a mission from the European Parliament to Spain, the Spanish Catholic Church and the Ministries of Health and Justice “have agreed to open up their archives to parents who believe their children may have been stolen at birth,” BBC News reported. Beginning in the late 1930s, the regime of Francisco Franco removed babies from families deemed “undesirable,” with “thousands of children thought to have been taken.” Thanks to Antoon de Baets for the news.

Sri Lanka. The President announced “new investigations into alleged secret detention centres as part of a drive to find tens of thousands of people still missing after the country’s decades-long war,” AFP reported. The International Committee of the Red Cross “said that it registered 16,000 people as missing since
setting up a presence in Sri Lanka in 1989,” including 5,100 security personnel listed as missing.  

Switzerland. In 2013 the Swiss newspaper Dagens Nyheter revealed that police in Skane in southern Sweden kept a database of 4,700 persons “showing family connections and other ties between thousands of individuals, mainly Roma,” Radio Sweden reported. Sweden’s Commission on Security and Integrity Protection determined that this “Roma Register” was illegal, and in May the chancellor of justice announced that, in the wake of a lawsuit brought by eleven people who had been included in the database, all persons who were registered will receive state compensation from monies of the National Police Authority.  

Turkmenistan. Crisis Watch reported that on 4 May the President fired the general prosecutor “for not addressing corruption” and on 12 May “50 high-level officials from the prosecutor’s office” were “detailed and subjected to show trials broadcast on state media.” Let us hope that the state media organization carefully preserves in its archives the broadcasts of the trials.  
https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/?utm_source=Sign+Up+to+Crisis+Group%27s+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=f4182f471c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_06_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1db8c11ea-f4182f471c-359425329

United Kingdom. Paradise Village is “one of the largest child abuse websites” on the dark web. The Times analyzed the network’s server Freedom Hosting II, “after usernames, email addresses and passwords were hacked by anonymous vigilantes and placed on the open web.” The Times estimated that as many as 10,000 Britons were signed up, and it passed to the National Crime Agency “information on 50 British users, whose login details appear to match those used to create profiles on Facebook and other social media.”  
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/child-abuse-network-had-10-000-uk-members-d665p2nwk

After a series of allegations from former football players, the Football Association (FA) launched an inquiry last December into “historical child sex abuse in football,” BBC Sport reported. “Investigators have started searching 5,000 boxes of FA archives - each containing up to 1,000 pages.”  
http://www.bbc.com/sport/football/39928510

United States. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released a report, “Vital Signs: Racial Disparities in Age-Specific Mortality Among Blacks or African Americans – United States, 1999-2015.” Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau and its own information, including its annual “state-based random-digit-dialed telephone (cell phone and landline) survey of the noninstitutionalized U.S. population” over 18 years old, it found that there were fewer deaths during 2015 compared with 1999, and the difference between mortality for black and white Americans had narrowed, but during 2015 “blacks still had higher death rates than whites” for all causes of death in persons over 65 years of age. The CDC concluded, “Universal and targeted interventions are needed to reduce black-white health disparities across the life span.”  
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6617e1.htm?s_cid=mm6617e1_e

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) examined “data from the more than 91,000 service members who were dismissed” from military service between 2011 and 2015 and concluded that “more than 60 percent of troops dismissed from the military for misconduct between 2011 and 2015 had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and other mental health concerns while serving” in the military. “Misconduct separations” (that is, involuntary dismissals) make the veterans ineligible for health care through the Veterans Administration. GAO pointed out that Army and Marine Corps officials have records available that could be reviewed to determine whether persons proposed for dismissal need mental health care, but they are not doing so.  

According to the New York Times, an annual surveillance review published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence reported that the National Security Agency “vacuumed up more than 151 million records about Americans’ phone calls last year” and that “although the number is large on its face, it nonetheless represents a massive reduction from the amount of information the Agency gathered previously.” The archival implications are equally enormous.  
United States/Pennsylvania. In 1994 Shaun Thomas was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. He has now been released after “an investigative file that had long been sought by defense lawyers was found in a box in a hallway at police headquarters,” the New York Times reported. “The file included witness statements that contradicted accounts that Mr. Thomas was involved.”

United States/Puerto Rico. A Centers for Disease Control (CDC) document obtained by STAT showed CDC’s concern that officials in Puerto Rico are downplaying the extent of the Zika virus health problem. The CDC gave Puerto Rico’s Department of Health the funds to establish a registry called the Zika Active Pregnancy Surveillance System and the criteria to use for entering the cases. However, Puerto Rico has used less stringent criteria for data entry, leaving “women in Puerto Rico and their doctors . . . an incomplete picture of the risk posed by Zika to pregnancies on the island.”

Conferences and publications.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights invites anyone involved in the protection of cultural heritage to participate in a one-day seminar, 7 July from 10:00 to 18:00, on “ways to prevent, contain, and/or mitigate the detrimental impact of the damage to or destruction of the enjoyment of human rights, including cultural rights.” The seminar will take place in Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room XIX; interpretation in all UN languages will be provided.

The Nordic Journal of Human Rights invites submissions for a special issue on research methods related to business and human rights (BHR) to be published in 2018. “The special issue will focus on the interdisciplinary potential of BHR research by inviting contributions that develop new methods for research and analysis or pragmatically apply methods across academic disciplines.” For further information contact hr-journal@nchr.uio.no.

A coalition of African and United Kingdom nongovernmental organizations published, “Honest Accounts 2017: Profiting from Africa’s Wealth.” Using extensive statistical data, they calculated “the movement of financial resources into and out of Africa and some key costs imposed on Africa by the rest of the world” and concluded that “much more wealth is leaving the world’s most impoverished continent than is entering it.”

Al Jazeera published a photo essay on child sex abuse in South Africa, documenting both victims and perpetrators, and “A History of American Lynchings.”

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