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Commentary.

Fake news seems to be everywhere. The President of the United States calls the work of the mainstream media “fake news.” Mainstream media such as the *New York Times* have reported extensively on the hundreds of thousands of fake Twitter accounts that flooded the public with anti-Clinton messages during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign and posts that comment on current controversies “by simultaneously sending conflicting messages to different users segmented by political and racial characteristics.” https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/technology/twitter-russia-election.html?_r=0 Even Pope Francis is concerned, announcing this month that the 2018 World Day of Social Communications will focus on fake news, as will his January message. In making the announcement, the Vatican said it “wishes to offer a contribution” to the discussion of fake news, “proposing a reflection on the causes, the logic and the consequences of disinformation in the media, and helping to promote professional journalism, which always seeks the truth, and therefore a journalism of peace that promotes understanding between people.” <http://time.com/4963060/pope-francis-fake-news-communications/>

Of course, fake news and fake messages, ranging from satire to propaganda to outright lies, have been with us for a very long time. The 1905 publication of “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” which purported to show a Jewish plan for world domination, is a hideous example that the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum calls “an important part in the Nazis’ propaganda arsenal.” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007058> But the ease with which fake news can be produced and the speed with which it can be spread today make it enormously troubling. Add to this two trends that appear to be growing and we have a particularly virulent climate.

First, we see efforts by a number of countries to reshape or ignore history. Here are a few:

*The 50th anniversary of the 1965-1966 Indonesian state-sponsored purges of those suspected of being communists or communist sympathizers not only was not commemorated solemnly, but, according to *Reuters*, “a mob opposed to public discussion of Indonesia’s 1965 massacre of communists tried to force its way into a Jakarta building where they believed communists were meeting, injuring five policemen.” Twenty-two people were arrested. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1326663/anti-communist-mob-attacks-indonesia-meeting-22-arrested> “The Indonesian government and its powerful military and security forces have failed to confront the darkest chapter . . . and in fact continue to actively suppress public discourse about the massacres,” the *New York Times* wrote in the wake of the mob attack. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/world/asia/indonesia-communist-purge.html>

*A legal scholar who examined two Chinese digital platforms “found that two of China’s main online database for scholarly articles had removed dozens of articles” from the 1950s that “questioned the Communist party’s commitment to the rule of law at the time,” the *Financial Times* reported. <https://www.ft.com/content/4ffac53e-8ee4-11e7-9084-d0c17942ba93>

*A long-time student of Russia reported that the current Russian government “has selected particular events to which it has given a meaning very different” from that of the archival record. Officials in the North Caucasus recently commemorated the “460th anniversary of the voluntary inclusion of the Kabards within Russia.” A Kabard activist points out that while in the 16th century the Russian and the Kabard entities concluded a treaty, the Kabards “later joined other Circassians in fighting the Russian military conquest of their land.” Writing in *Eurasia Review*, the scholar says that ultimately Russian citizens “will have to unpack and reject” these conflicting interpretations “if they are to have any hope that

“they can coexist [with their neighbors] in a positive way in the future.” http://www.eurasiareview.com/26092017-historical-holocaust-islamic-states-lasting-legacy-analysis/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

*Forty years after the Vietnam War ended, the U.S. public is still arguing about whether the war was a “noble cause,” as former president Ronald Reagan said, or good for absolutely nothing and a tragic conflict for Southeast Asians and the U.S. and other non-Vietnamese who fought in it. A new television series on the war, generally praised by media critics, has drawn much sharper responses from historians of the war. (For a sample, see the “Members Forum” of the American Historical Association at <http://communities.historians.org/home>)

*And in Japan many peace museums “face difficulties, including insufficient storage space and staff, in accepting” donations of materials from World War II. A professor told the *Japan Times*, “Japan has yet to reach a public consensus on how we should view its role in the war, so we do not have a budget set aside for collecting war-related materials for public memorial museums.” <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/21/national/japanese-war-memorabilia-pile-museums-online-auctions-artifacts-remain-unregulated/#.WduWA4wXAdV>

The second trend is even more ominous. Archives contain the records that can help counter these pernicious trends toward dissimulation and falsehoods about history. Access to archives has long been a major issue, but many people have advocated for freedom of information laws to overcome at least government barriers to archives. What is now happening—see the items on India and the United States below—is that people who seek information are attacked or forced into expensive litigation over the legitimacy of the request.

While we resign ourselves to the fact that fake news will forever be with us, we must not resign ourselves to any interruption in access to the archives that provide the evidence to counter it. A 19th century U.S. president said, “Government resting upon the will and universal suffrage of the people has no anchorage except in the people’s intelligence.” Archives provide the material—the heavy iron—for the anchor for the people.

HRWG News.

The Human Rights Working Group will meet on Sunday afternoon, November 26, during the ICA annual conference in Mexico City. The meeting is open to the public; all are welcome. The Working Group is sponsoring a session “Principles and practices: Everyday challenges and the Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists and Records Manager in Support of Human Rights” on Tuesday, November 28, at 16:00. In addition, the session on Environment and Natural Disasters on Tuesday will feature a discussion of current work on safe havens for archives at risk, a project fostered by the Working Group.

HRWG is offering a workshop, “Human Rights and Archives in Latin America,” for Latin American archivists on Wednesday and Thursday, November 29 and 30. Participants must be registered for the ICA annual conference to join the workshop; we ask that you also register for the workshop but there is no additional fee to attend. The registration form is at the end of this issue of *HRWG News*.

The Working Group also calls attention to the keynote addresses on human rights by Frank LaRue, UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General Communication and Information, on Monday morning, November 27, and by Dra. Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, Secretaria Ejecutiva, Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, on Tuesday, and other sessions under the program heading “human rights.”

International news.

European Union (EU). Czech public television gained “access to documents in Italian and Belgian archives” which show that the European Parliament and foreign ministers of EU member states “publicly opposed the persecution of dissidents in Communist Czechoslovakia,” called on the authorities to respect human rights and condemned “the threats, beatings and imprisonment which the communist secret police

applied in trying to squash resistance to the regime in the 1970s and 1980s.”

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/archive-documents-show-eu-tried-to-defend-charter-77-activists>

European Union Court of Justice. The Court decided, in *Bărbulescu v. Romania*, that companies can monitor their employees’ email only if the employees are notified of the monitoring in advance.

[https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{"itemid":\["001-177082"\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{)

International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The Commission issued a report saying that the Syrian government used the banned nerve agent sarin in an attack on the village of Khan Sheikhoun in April that killed dozens and wounded hundreds. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-06.

http://www.ohchr.org/SiteCollectionImages/Bodies/HRCouncil/ICISyria/COISyria_ChemicalWeapons.jpg

International Criminal Court (ICC). In August the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Libyan military officer Mahmoud Warfali for war crimes, based in part on video evidence. Now more videos have emerged showing his commanding general, Khalifa Haftar, ordering troops to take no prisoners (that is, to kill instead) and to intentionally starve civilians. Haftar has dual Libyan and U.S. citizenship, reported *Just Security*. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-08.

<https://www.justsecurity.org/45094/hifter-smoking-gun-videos-emerge-citizen-libyan-warlord-khalifa-haftar-ordering-war-crimes/>

Four Palestinian human rights organizations “submitted their fourth substantive communication to the Prosecutor . . . alleging that high-level Israeli civilian and military officials have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem,” the Coalition for the International Criminal Court reported. The 700-page submission includes evidence on “extensive appropriation and destruction, as well as pillaging of Palestinian property” and the “willful killing and murder of 300 Palestinians by members of the Israeli forces since 13 June 2014.”

<http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/news/20170920/palestinian-human-rights-orgs-submit-west-bank-communication-icc>

International Labor Organization (ILO). The ILO and the Walk Freedom Foundation, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), issued a global estimate of modern slavery. Noting that “accurate and reliable data is a vital tool in tackling complex social challenges,” the researchers used surveys they took between 2014 and 2016 in 48 countries, data from IOM’s victim assistance database and information from the ILO Committee of Experts. They estimated that 40.3 million people were living in modern slavery “at any moment in time in 2016”; 73% of them were female. Of the 40.3 million, 24.9 million were in forced labor and 15.4 million were in a forced marriage.

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_575605.pdf

United Nations. The Security Council “approved the creation of a U.N. investigative team to collect, preserve and store evidence in Iraq of acts by Islamic State that may be war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide,” *Reuters* reported. “Use of the evidence collected by the team in other venues, such as international courts, would ‘be determined in agreement with the Government of Iraq on a case-by-case basis.’ Evidence is for primary use by Iraqi authorities, followed by ‘competent national-level courts,’ according to the resolution.” Another serious archival task in Iraq.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-un/u-n-team-to-collect-evidence-of-islamic-state-crimes-in-iraq-idUSKCN1BW26J>

The UN’s Human Rights Council approved a “resolution calling for a group of ‘eminent international and regional experts’ to monitor and report on rights abuses in Yemen,” the *Associated Press* reported.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/body-intl-experts-examine-rights-abuses-yemen-50182278>

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons opened for signing by nations. The Secretary-General remarked that the UN is “the depository of the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty” (in the United Nations archives); that 1996 Treaty must be ratified by all the 44 states that participated in the drafting of the document and “possessed nuclear power or research reactors at the time.” China, Iran, the United States, Egypt and Israel have signed that Treaty but not ratified it, while the DPRK (North Korea), India and Pakistan have not signed.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57614#.WcgAwb5zVB0>; <http://www.4-traders.com/news/ECOSOC-United-Nations-Economic-and-Social-Council-Prohibition-Treaty-Important-Milestone-towards-Cr--25149460/>

The Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization issued *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017*. They report that hunger is on the rise, with about 11% of the global population underfed. "Deteriorations have been observed most notably in situations of conflict, often compounded by droughts or floods linked in part to the El Nino phenomenon." They used data collected by each organization, plus data collected through the Gallup World Poll. <http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) again called on the UN to "compensate victims of widespread lead poisoning at UN-run camps in Kosovo." HRW interviewed 19 victims of lead poisoning and 10 medical practitioners and others supporting the affected communities and published extracts from the interviews. One of the doctors who performed lead testing while working for an NGO said, "In some cases, the level of lead was so high that the measurement tool could not maintain it." Once again, this shows the importance of NGO records documenting harm. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-04 and 06. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/07/un-compensate-kosovo-lead-poisoning-victims>

And a UN source gave AIDS-Free World's Code Blue Campaign, a nongovernmental organization, "internal case files that reveal the United Nations' egregious mishandling of sexual exploitation and abuse complaints against its own peacekeeping personnel," Code Blue wrote. The case files are from "14 fact-finding inquiries into complaints lodged against military peacekeepers from nine different countries serving in the UN mission in the Central African Republic." Anonymized extracts of the case files are posted on the NGO's website. Military peacekeepers remain under the jurisdiction of the countries that sent them; the UN's role is to investigate and, if necessary, refer the case to the sending state. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-06 and 08. <http://www.codebluecampaign.com/press-releases/2017/9/13>

World/general news.

Business news. *ProPublica* wanted to know whether Facebook would accept ads directed to anti-Jewish groups, so it bought three ads. Facebook approved and distributed the ads, until *ProPublica* contacted the company which then "removed the anti-Semitic categories—which were created by an algorithm rather than by people—and said it would explore ways to fix the problem" and remove "the associated targeting fields." <https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-enabled-advertisers-to-reach-jew-haters>

The Union of Concerned Scientists, in its *Climate Change* journal, published an article on research that traced the rise in global carbon dioxide, surface temperature and sea level to major carbon producers. The scientists wrote, "Emission traced to seven investor-owned and seven majority state-owned carbon producers were consistently among the top 20 largest individual company contributors to each global impact," both from 1880-2010 and from 1980-2010. The researchers used historical data, but noted that there was "uncertainty arising from the lack of data" on some elements. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-017-1978-0>

Also on climate change, a "coalition of institutional investors managing more than \$1tn [trillion] in assets is demanding that 60 of the world's largest banks take action to protect the world from the threat of catastrophic damage due to climate change," *Financial Times* reported. They "demand more information about their exposures to climate-related risks and their plans to ensure compliance" with the 2015 Paris climate accord. That will require the use of corporate records. <https://www.ft.com/content/a2616a52-988b-11e7-a652-cde3f882dd7b>

As if climate change is not enough to worry about, the Human-Induced Earthquake Database "now includes approximately 730 entries," reported *Eurasia Review*. The database was created by a group of researchers from Durham and Newcastle universities who "analyzed peer-reviewed literature, academic presentations, media articles, and industry and government reports for projects where scientific evidence suggests that the human activity was the cause of an earthquake sequence" within the past 150 years. One of the researchers said that "mining projects . . . and water impounded behind dams . . . are the most commonly reported causes of induced earthquakes, but unconventional oil and gas extraction projects using hydraulic fracturing are now a frequent addition."

http://www.eurasiareview.com/30092017-database-of-earthquakes-triggered-by-human-activity-is-growing/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29:
<http://inducedearthquakes.org/>

Medical records. *STAT* analyzed records of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of 29 new drugs between January and July of this year. It found that "86 percent of approvals were supported in part by data from trials conducted outside the U.S. and Canada." Trials abroad have problems, *STAT* said, ranging "from hitches translating medical records (which could affect the reporting of side effects) to different standards of care in overseas clinics (which could affect patient outcomes) to mistakes . . . [and] cases of outright fraud." This means, *STAT* concluded, that "drugs tested primarily on patients in developing countries could seem more effective, or perhaps even safer, than they really are."

https://www.statnews.com/2017/09/08/clinical-trials-overseas-data/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=e6fe0ec18c-MR&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-e6fe0ec18c-149736437 ; for the FDA records see <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/DrugInnovation/ucm537040.htm>

Also from *STAT*, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sent a warning letter to Pfizer, the maker of the EpiPen device which is used to combat serious allergic reactions. The FDA wrote, "Your own data show that you received hundreds of complaints that your EpiPen products failed to operate during life-threatening emergencies, including some situations in which patients subsequently died." Thirteen "lots" of the devices were recalled in the spring of 2017; the devices are still on the market.

https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2017/09/07/pfizer-epipen-mylan-fda-letter/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=e6fe0ec18c-MR&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-e6fe0ec18c-149736437

The Lancet reported on research into the safety of abortions worldwide. Using data compiled by other researchers on the number of abortions in "every country and major territory in the world" that "were obtained from official statistics and published or unpublished national studies," the researchers applied the World Health Organization's definition of safe or unsafe practices to the data. They concluded that of the 55.7 million abortions that occurred worldwide each year between 2010 and 2014, nearly 55% were safe, but of the 25.1 million that were considered unsafe, 97% were in developing countries. The researchers wrote, "The paucity of empirical data is a limitation of these findings. Improved in-country data for health services and innovative research to address these gaps are needed to improve future estimates."

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)31794-4/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)31794-4/fulltext)

Through use of the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, researchers at Yale University obtained "clinical trial data from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on two costly Hepatitis C drugs, Sovaldi and Harvoni, in order to enable the research community to independently assess their safety and efficacy." The documents included "clinical study reports and detailed summaries of study results . . . study protocols, case report forms on adverse events, and selected correspondence" between the manufacturer and the FDA. The FDA "withheld and redacted individual patient-level data."

<https://law.yale.edu/yls-today/news/ghjp-closes-two-year-foia-case-against-drug-manufacturer>

Privacy. A study by researchers at Stanford University used a "sample of more than 35,000 facial images that men and women publicly posted on a US dating website," and a "sophisticated mathematical system that learns to analyze visuals based on a large dataset" and found that the computer "could correctly distinguish between gay and straight men 81% of the time and 74% for women." The *Guardian* said the research "raised questions about the biological origins of sexual orientation, the ethics of facial-detection technology and the potential for this kind of software to violate people's privacy or be abused for anti-LGBT purposes."

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/07/new-artificial-intelligence-can-tell-whether-youre-gay-or-straight-from-a-photograph?utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GU+Today+USA+-+Collections+2017&utm_term=242861&subid=22849866&CMP=GT_US_collection

World War II. A blog post from Daniela Bartakova at the Jewish Museum in Prague discussed the Nazis' use of computer equipment when registering Jews. "Original registration cards . . . which were preserved are the so-called Hollerith cards, i.e., cards designated for machine processing. In short, machine processing of cards represented a modern technological system turning statistical data into holes and columns. For this purpose, the Dehomag machines (Deutsche Hollerith Maschinen Gesellschaft) were distributed all around the Third Reich and Nazi occupied territories, leased, maintained, and serviced by the IBM Company."

<https://blog.ehri-project.eu/2017/09/11/card-file-of-the-jewish-population/>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Africa. South Africa and Tanzania selected Dodoma, Tanzania, as the center of the new African Liberation Heritage Programme. The Tanzanian Minister of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports said that a “special appointed committee” will “advance the idea” to other members of the Southern African Development Community and seek approval from that regional body “in accordance with UNESCO and AU [African Union] mandates.” The Minister said, “Currently a lot of liberation struggle stories are still in people’s heads, we need them to tell us of what happened and how then we shall put it in writing and other format such as videos and audio recordings for future generations to understand our past.” Thanks to Jens Boel for the information. <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/Tanzania-to-be-center-of-African-liberation-heritage/1840340-4104316-mdgyxo/index.html>

Argentina/Germany/Israel. Argentina gave Israel digital copies of 139,544 “photos and documents taken during the Holocaust and post-war years” that “shed light on the conduct of Argentine diplomats” and the “ties between Argentina and the Nazi regime during World War II, and especially in the years following, when the regime of Juan Domingo Peron assisted Nazi officials who fled to Buenos Aires,” *Ynetnews* reported. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/argentina-hands-israel-thousands-of-wwii-files-to-probe-aid-to-nazis/>; <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5015306,00.html>

Armenia/Turkey/Vatican. Copies of “Armenian Genocide-related documents” from the Vatican’s archives were acquired by an Italian-Armenian businessman and turned over to the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, *Public Radio of Armenia* reported. <http://www.armradio.am/en/2017/09/20/armenian-genocide-related-docs-from-vatican-archives-handed-to-agmi/>

Bangladesh/Myanmar. Bangladeshi government teams are registering thousands of desperate Rohingya who fled from Myanmar into Bangladesh, “collecting fingerprints and details from all newcomers, including those in makeshift shelters,” *BBC News* reported. Previously “only those in two official camps were being documented”; official registration will help aid officials understand the needs. *BBC* quoted the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as saying the UN had received “multiple reports and satellite imagery of security forces and local militia burning Rohingya villages, and consistent accounts of extrajudicial killings, including shooting fleeing civilians.” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41224108>

Bosnia/Netherlands. Both the Dutch government and the nongovernmental organization Mothers of Srebrenica asked the Netherlands Supreme Court to reverse the ruling of an appeals court. The government wants the Court to overturn the ruling that found it partially liable for the deaths of around 350 Bosnians from Srebrenica who were killed in the July 1995 massacre, while the Mothers want the Court to find the Dutch authorities guilty of “the death of a group much bigger than 350 boys and men,” *BIRN* reported. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-06. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/dutch-govt-challenges-ruling-on-srebrenica-deaths-09-21-2017?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=199ac366ed-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-199ac366ed-319755321

Burkina Faso/Mali. Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report saying that “since late 2016, Malian forces have committed extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrests against men accused of supporting Islamist armed groups, while a June 2017 cross-border operation by Burkinabe forces left two suspects dead.” HRW documented “three common graves believed to contain the remains of at least 14 men executed after being detained by Malian soldiers” and “26 cases of enforced disappearance, in which the Malian government provided families no information on missing relatives who had been detained.” Family members gave HRW “lists of the men believed to be buried in three common graves,” while “lawyers, judges, and community leaders” said they believed “the evidentiary basis for many detentions . . . is weak and sometimes based on false intelligence provided by people to settle personal scores.” Mali’s General Directorate of State Security said that “every person they detained had appeared before a judge and was under arrest warrant,” which should leave records in both the Directorate and the courts. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/08/mali-unchecked-abuses-military-operations>

Congo Basin. In an unusual situation pitting nongovernmental organizations against each other, Survival International published a report saying that in the Congo Basin “forest ‘eco guards,’ equipped and coordinated by wildlife charities, are responsible for more than 200 attacks, including burnings with hot wax, maimings with machetes and killings” to force indigenous people out of national parks, reported the *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. “The report collects 18 years of testimony to charities and university researchers by communities in the Congo Basin, a forested area nearly the size of Mexico that is shared between six equatorial African nations.” <https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/11828> ; <http://news.trust.org/item/20170925164808-rd38a/>

Europe. Eurostat is Europe’s statistical agency for economic, environmental and population data, including for asylum applications: the number of applications submitted, the number withdrawn, decisions, and data on those ordered to leave. The Pew Research Center, a nongovernmental organization, “arranged these data to produce estimates for the status as of the end of 2016 of Europe’s asylum seekers who applied in 2015 and 2016.” The researchers found that 1.1 million people who sought asylum in Europe (the countries of the European Union plus Norway and Switzerland) in 2015 and 2016 “still did not know by December 31, 2016, whether they would be allowed to stay,” which is about half of the 2.2 million people who applied for asylum. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/09/20/a-million-asylum-seekers-await-word-on-whether-they-can-call-europe-home/>

France/Rwanda. A researcher, Francois Graner, sought access to the records of President Francois Mitterrand about French involvement in the Rwandan genocide. France’s Constitutional Court decided that the closure of presidential archives for 25 years after the person’s death (Mitterrand died in 1996) is justified and denied Graner’s appeal. In the aftermath, Rwanda’s *New Times* published a letter to the editor headlined, “Concealing Genocide archives is a ploy by France to feign innocence.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2015-04 (on the French government’s announcement that presidential archives on Rwanda would be declassified) and 2016-04 (on the Mitterrand papers). http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41283362?ocid=socialflow_twitter ; ruling <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/les-decisions/acces-par-date/decisions-depuis-1959/2017/2017-655-qpc/decision-n-2017-655-qpc-du-15-septembre-2017.149745.html>; <http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20170913-rwanda-francois-graner-denonce-presence-soldats-francais-genocide-tutsis> ; <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/220537/>

Iraq/Israel/Libya/United States. The U.S. State Department announced that it will return to Iraq the collection of Jewish materials that were found by U.S. forces in the basement of the headquarters of the Iraqi secret police and taken to the U.S. for preservation in 2003. Considerable opposition to the plan was immediately voiced. *Al Monitor* reported that a source at the Iraqi Ministry of Culture said the Iraqi government had not yet decided on the “the competent governmental entity to handle the reception and management of the archives”; that is, whether Iraq’s National Library and Archives should hold the material “or a security agency be vested with the responsibility given the importance of the material.” The World Jewish Congress linked the Iraq question to a prospective agreement between the U.S. and Libya, in which Libya wants the U.S. to prohibit “the importation of pre-1911 historical and cultural relics into the U.S.,” thereby precluding any attempt by the U.S. Jewish community to rescue Jewish property, such as Torah scrolls, that were seized when Libya expelled its Jewish population in the 1960s. For background, see *HRWG News* 2013-08 through 12. <http://www.jta.org/2017/09/08/news-opinion/politics/despite-protests-state-department-says-it-will-return-trove-of-jewish-artifacts-to-iraq> ; <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/09/jewish-archive-iraq-israel-us.html>; <http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/jewish-groups-critical-of-us-decision-to-transfer-jewish-archive-to-baghdad-9-1-2017>

Iraq/Kuwait. In a meeting at the United Nations, Kuwait’s foreign minister “urged” the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq “to press the Iraqi government to double efforts in the search of the Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons, as well as property and national archive,” *KUNA* reported. For background, see *HRWG News* 2015-10. <http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2638892&Language=en>

Iraq/Russia. In an interview with *Telesur*, the Iraqi Ambassador to Russia said that Russia and Iraq are setting up a joint database listing Russian-speaking children “whose parents are believed to have been killed while fighting in Islamic State group ranks” and who are in “government-run children’s homes in Baghdad” in order to return them to relatives in Russia. He said Russia estimated there are “around 500 children” from “Russian origin or from former Soviet Union countries” in these homes. When the Iraqi government receives official documents from the Russian Embassy in Baghdad “proving that those

children are from a Russian origin” the Iraqi Higher Judicial Council decides whether the child should be sent to Russia and the Immigration Department “stamps the passport.” https://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Iraqi-Ambassador-to-Russia-on-Bringing-Them-Home-Campaign-20170923-0013.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=36

Kosovo/Serbia. The Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo opened a documentation centre in Pristina to help people “become better informed about crimes committed” during the Serbia-Kosovo war 1998-99, *BIRN* reported. The centre holds “nine short films of 10-12 minutes, based on data from five trials” at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the director said that when the new Kosovo Specialist Chambers begins to hold hearings in The Hague “these will also be documented at the centre.” He called on “war survivors who want their stories to be heard to visit the centre and have them documented.” <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-opens-a-war-crime-documentation-center-09-25-2017>

Middle East war. Noting “that international coalition forces commenced their military campaign against the terrorist group ISIS in Syria on September 23, 2014,” the Syrian Network for Human Rights said it has documented “no less than 2,286 Civilians killed, including 674 children and 504 women” since the start of the conflict. <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2017/09/24/46828/>

Eliot Higgins, the British investigator who founded *Bellingcat*, provided a useful history of sarin use in the Syrian conflict, quoting a wide variety of sources from declassified material from French intelligence to interviews by UN personnel and social media posts. <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/mena/2017/09/06/history-sarin-use-syrian-conflict/>

United States/Vietnam. A new study published in *Science of the Total Environment* found that “exposure to Agent Orange sprayed during the Vietnam War has been linked to increased levels of certain hormones in women and their breastfeeding children decades later, potentially putting them at higher risk for health problems,” *Eurasia Review* reported. The study focused on two regions, one in northern Vietnam “not occupied by the United States Air Force” and Bien Hoa “an industrial city where the Americans stored approximately 50% of Agent Orange and where there were at least four leaks in 1969-1970.” Writers of an op-ed in the *New York Times*, arguing for compensation for Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange, noted, “Records from Agent Orange lawsuits indicate that both the military and the chemical companies involved were well aware, early on, of the dangers of dioxin.” http://www.eurasiareview.com/28092017-vietnam-agent-orange-still-linked-to-hormone-imbbalances-in-babies/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29; <http://www.reckonings.net/reckonings/2017/09/the-forgotten-victims-of-agent-orange.html>

National news.

Afghanistan. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 1996, they banned films. Staff members at the state-run Afghan Film company hid “thousands of reels of film,” which they have now recovered and are digitizing, *AFP* reported, as well as digitizing films that were hidden by members of the public. <http://www.menafn.com/1095832540/Afghanistans-lost-movies-hidden-from-the-Taliban-go-digital>

Australia. A judge approved a \$70 million compensation payout to current and former asylum seekers who were detained on Manus Island in “dangerous conditions,” the *Guardian* reported. It is Australia’s largest human rights class action settlement. The case file has a 166-page “statement of claim” that includes evidence of “detailed systematic physical and sexual assault of detainees, inadequate medical care leading to deaths, high rates of suicide and self-harm, and regular outbreaks of violence, including the three-day riots of February 2014 in which more than 70 asylum seekers were seriously injured and Reza Barati was murdered by guards.” https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/sep/06/judge-approves-70m-compensation-for-manus-island-detainees?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Bahrain. Amnesty International published a report that between June 2016 and June 2017 “the authorities increasingly resorted to a wide range of repressive tactics including arrest, harassment, threats, prosecution and imprisonment to silence peaceful critics” even “torturing and otherwise ill-treating human rights defenders.” Amnesty investigated 210 cases, conducting interviews with victims, witnesses, and others; its researchers reviewed court documents for 24 cases, including “court judgements, public prosecution

arguments, defense arguments and charge sheets,” as well as information provided by the government. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1167902017ENGLISH.PDF>

Bosnia. Amnesty International issued a report on Bosnia’s wartime rape survivors. Although “at least 20,000 women and girls were raped or abused” during the 1992-1995 Balkan war, “courts across the country have completed just 123 cases involving sexual violence charges.” Only about 800 women have been able to get basic survivor benefits, some changing “their addresses on paper in order to qualify for modest financial assistance in the areas where it is available.”

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur63/6679/2017/en/>; <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/09/forget-170911072112283.html>

Brazil. “Brazilian authorities are investigating reports of a massacre of up to 10 people from an isolated tribe in the Amazon by illegal gold miners,” the *Guardian* reported. The police said they were trying to “ascertain the provenance of the information,” while a spokesman for the army said it had recently destroyed four illegal gold dredgers and “the documents of two others were being analyzed.”

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/sep/12/brazil-investigates-reports-of-massacre-among-amazon-tribe-javari-valley?utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GU+Today+USA+-+Collections+2017&utm_term=243360&subid=22849866&CMP=GT_US_collection

Burundi. The United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Burundi announced that it “has reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity have been committed and continue to be committed in Burundi since April 2015.” The Commission conducted 500 interviews and “has drawn up a confidential list of suspects”; it asked the International Criminal Court to open an investigation. The Burundi government did not provide requested information and announced that it was setting up its own commission. A week after the report was released “gunmen forcibly entered the Burundi office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,” but whether they seized any records was not reported by the *Associated Press*.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22016&LangID=E>; <https://federalnewsradio.com/world-news/2017/09/gunmen-forcibly-enter-un-human-rights-office-in-burundi/>; <https://www.irinnews.org/news/2017/09/04/burundi-officials-should-be-tried-crimes-against-humanity-un-commission>

Canada. Library and Archives Canada, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), and the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Web Archives. More than just the website of the Commission, it “provides public access to a spectrum of voices from the web related to the commission itself and, more broadly, to the theme of reconciliation. These include official TRC and NCTR websites and related documents, blogs and personal sites on the residential school system, media articles, and sites with a community focus on survivors, commemoration, healing and reconciliation”--260 sources as of September. <https://thediscoverblog.com/2017/09/22/web-archiving-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission/>

The federal government is releasing a “database holding everything that is known about what happened” to Inuits who were “taken south for tuberculosis treatment” between 1953 and 1961, the *Canadian Press* reported. A team of researchers used “records from federal departments, provincial and territorial archives, church files, records from cemeteries, sanatoria and hospitals as well as from individual informants” and have found records on about 4,500 of the 5,240 Inuits that were sent to treatment. For some people the records will answer where a relative was buried, resolving a decades-long trauma.

<http://nanaimonewsnow.com/article/550927/where-she-buried-government-prepares-database-inuit-tuberculosis-graves>

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported that in “six high-profile cases” a Google search for “the name of a young offender or victim . . . pointed to media coverage of their court cases, even though their names do not appear anywhere in the new articles themselves.” It reported that “computer experts believe the links are an unintended . . . consequence of Google search algorithms.” Google Canada said, “If search results that violate local laws are brought to our attention, we’ll remove them.” <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/google-is-linking-secret-court-protected-names-including-victim-ids-to-online-coverage>

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said it will “need until 2020 to finish uploading nearly half-a-million backlogged files to a nationwide criminal-record database, despite previously saying the job would be done next year,” the *National Post* reported. Nearly 450,000 files are still to be uploaded to the database that contains “more than 4.4 million individual files.” The president of a Canadian lawyers’ association said he “worryes that the lack of a reliable nationwide database could result in criminals being treated like first-time

offenders by the justice system when, in reality, they have committed crimes in other parts of the country.” <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/its-taking-the-rcmp-longer-than-anticipated-to-digitize-canadas-national-database-of-criminal-records>

The provincial government of Nova Scotia launched a project “to sort out title deeds to land that was given originally to black loyalists who fought with the British during the American Revolution or to escaped U.S. slaves,” reported the *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. According to a government spokesperson, “it is not exactly known how many people are affected but hundreds of parcels of land in the affected communities are lacking land titles,” making it hard to sell property or use it as a guarantee for a bank loan, complicating inheritance claims and making “disputes more common.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20170928185026-founj/>

Chile. In cooperation with the U.S. nongovernmental National Security Archive, the Santiago Museum of Memory and Human Rights opened a special exhibit of 45 declassified U.S. records relating to the U.S. role during the Pinochet dictatorship. <https://ww3.museodelamemoria.cl/exposiciones/secretos-de-estado-la-historia-desclasificada-de-la-dictadura-chilena-1970-1989/>

China/Hong Kong. “The office of the chief executive, Hong Kong’s leader, failed to hand over any official records at all for eight of the 20 years since it came under Chinese rule in 1997, according to the government department that manages the archives. The Security Bureau only did it for 10,” *Reuters* reported. Hong Kong has no archives law and activists and archivists are pressing the government to enact one, “anxious that records of sensitive information, such as government decisions during the 2014 pro-democracy street protests, could be destroyed with impunity.” <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-anniversary-archives/hong-kongs-vanishing-archives-and-the-battle-to-preserve-history-idUSKCN1BH00Y>

Colombia. In 1999 a FARC guerrilla unit attacked the small town of Silvia in Cauca province and partially destroyed the local government office where a copy of Colombia’s 1810 declaration of independence from Spain hung on the wall. After the government retook the town, the building was abandoned. Recently the document was found in the building’s rubble; it is only the third known surviving copy of the declaration, *Colombia Reports* said. <https://colombiareports.com/colombia-finds-original-copy-declaration-independence-got-lost-guerrilla-attack/>

Egypt. Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report documenting arbitrary arrests and torture by government parties, based on interviews with 19 people who were subjected to torture. Demonstrating the long-term value of reporting by human rights groups, HRW said, “This report, along with others published over the past 25 years by various nongovernmental organizations, shows that police and National Security officers have for decades committed essentially identical types of torture in police stations, security directorates, and National Security offices across the country, indicating that the practice was then and remains now systematic and widespread.” *Al Jazeera* reported that one day after HRW released its report, the Egyptian government blocked the HRW website, bringing to 424 the number of websites blocked in Egypt. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/05/we-do-unreasonable-things-here/torture-and-national-security-al-sisis-egypt>; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/egypt-blocks-human-rights-watch-website-170908033740219.html>

El Salvador. On September 27 the government “formally launched” the National Commission on the Search for Disappeared Persons, responsible for searching for those who disappeared during the country’s armed conflict 1980-1992. http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2017/150.asp

In late August, using documentation as varied as an autopsy report and chats recorded on social media, *Revista Factum* reported that officers in the elite Fuerza Especializada de Raccion (Special Reaction Forces) of the National Civil Police participated in extrajudicial killings and other criminal activities. <http://revistafactum.com/en-la-intimidacion-del-escuadron-de-la-muerte-de-la-policia/>; <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/el-salvador-hesitant-respond-police-death-squad-allegations>

Estonia. Estonia has proclaimed that it has the “world’s most advanced IT card system,” *Financial Times* reported, with cards used for purposes “from signing documents to submitting tax returns and checking medical records.” However, scientists found “a security risk that affects almost 750,000 ID cards” (Estonia’s population is 1.3 million people) and “would enable a hacker to steal a person’s identity.” <https://thevotingnews.com/red-faces-in-estonia-over-id-card-security-flaw-financial-times/>

Finland. “Finland’s current legislation makes it possible for health records to be stored in state-administered databases for eternity, but the new EU [European Union] directive says that data subjects have a right to object to their information being stored,” *YLE News* reported. The National Archives appraised the social benefits electronic data base as a permanent record; the government is now re-examining the question to see if retention complies with the new EU standards.

https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finland_assesses_medical_record_storage_in_light_of_new_eu_data_protection_rules/9813402

France. Archivists in France launched a project to create a repository for LGBT archives in Paris.

http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/09/09/centre-d-archives-lgbt-l-eterneel-projet_1594484

India. According to data collected by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, some 60 persons have been killed after using the Right to Information Act to gain access to government documents, and at least 300 “have been harassed or physically hurt” after they used the documents to search “for hints of falsification or malpractice,” the *Washington Post* reported.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/indians-file-as-many-as-6-million-open-record-requests-a-year-but-some-have-died-for-their-efforts/2017/09/12/7f765fd4-9160-11e7-b9bc-b2f7903bab0d_story.html?utm_term=.6c41b99bf114

Anti-Slavery International, a nongovernmental organization, published a report on slavery in the brick kiln industry, which is estimated to employ more than 23 million workers. They found regular, wide-spread “debt-bondage and the worst forms of child labor.” The report is based on interviews with 383 persons in three states, “of which 339 were directly engaged in brick moulding work in kilns” in Punjab, and a study in 2015-2016 by Volunteers for Social Justice in Punjab that interviewed over 3000 workers and surveyed 208 brick kilns. Among the truly horrific findings is that “for the majority of male workers (and all of the female and child workers), there are no official records of when they started work, the advance [money] provided, how many bricks they are making and what they are being paid. In many cases . . . the brick kiln owners refuse to pay workers at the end of the season, pointing to the lack of records as evidence that the worker was never employed at the kiln.” Anti-Slavery International concluded, “A lack of records raises a presumption of bonded labour.” <http://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Slavery-In-Indias-Brick-Kilns-The-Payment-System.pdf>

Ireland. Ireland announced it will hold a referendum next year on relaxing the law prohibiting abortion, many media outlets reported. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-06.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2017/09/26/irish-vote-abortion-ban-and-expect-contentious-debate/CkmE2WUNsrSZQWGPv2QUrN/story.html>

Israel. Israeli Knesset (parliament) member Aida Touma-Suleiman told *Al Jazeera* that Bedouins living in Israel, a population estimated at 200,000 persons, are gradually being stripped of their citizenship. When Bedouins seek to renew passports or obtain new ones the Ministry of Interior informs them “on the spot that they are not citizens of the state—despite being born in Israel and having lived there their whole lives.” The Ministry said they are correcting a “state error”: between 1948 and 1951 the new state of Israel required Palestinians to “register themselves under a population registry.” However, “many residents at the time were unaware of the registration requirement,” including people living in Palestinian Bedouin villages and towns that were declared closed military zones in 1948.

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/israeli-citizens-stateless-170831105301896.html?utm_source=Al+Jazeera+English+Newsletter+%7C+Weekly&utm_campaign=93ae9a970b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_08_13&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e427298a68-93ae9a970b-225638537

Mexico. Todos los Derechos para Todas y Todos, a network of 84 nongovernmental organizations from 23 provinces, reported that it has documented 106 human rights activists killed during the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto (since 1 December 2012), 81 who were victims of forced disappearance, and over 1000 attacks. The report is titled, optimistically, “La esperanza no se agota” (Hope is not exhausted).

<http://redtdt.org.mx/acciondefensores/index.php/2017/09/05/red-tdt-sexenio-de-eqn-letal-para-personas-defensoras-de-dh/>

Montenegro. The government told the European Union that the country “will pay a total of around 1.35 million euros in compensation to victims of war crimes” during the Balkan wars of the 1990s, *BIRN* reported. The government says compensation has already been approved in 145 cases and 8 cases are currently before the courts. Providing documentation to justify compensation is a critical problem in these cases. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/montenegro-offers-compensation-to-war-crime-victims-09-07->

Myanmar. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that “satellite photos taken on September 2, 2017, show 450 buildings destroyed by fire” in a Rohingya area in the town of Maungdaw. The HRW website has a useful scroll feature showing before and after images. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/19/burma-satellite-imagery-shows-mass-destruction>

Nigeria. One of the girls who was captured in Chibok by Boko Haram militants in 2014 was released in May and brought with her diaries that she and another girl kept during their captivity. The other girl was not released, but the diaries, which *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reviewed, are giving hope to the family of the girl still held. <http://news.trust.org/item/20170928170739-dc4cu/>

Pakistan. “After a hiatus of 19 years, Pakistan has been able to undertake its sixth census . . . only with the help of the army,” reported *Eurasia Review*. The population surged to 207.8 million, up 75.4 million since 1998. The change “will have important repercussions in the distribution of resources and allocation of assembly seats.” Protecting the sensitive census data in the national archives should be a priority for the nation. http://www.eurasiareview.com/10092017-pakistan-census-complexities-analysis/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Pakistan is the home of one of the highest number of Rohingya in the world. The *New York Times* reported that, although “many Rohingya have carried Pakistani national ID cards for years,” they now find it difficult to renew their cards or are denied cards. A member of a Rohingya organization said, “Without cards, we are blocked out of jobs, our children can’t apply for admission in high schools and we can’t access government hospitals.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/world/asia/rohingya-pakistan-myanmar-violence.html>

Peru. Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a summary of new evidence that has become public “corroborating longstanding allegations” that Peru’s former president Ollanta Humala Tasso (2011-2016) is “responsible for egregious human rights violations committed by security forces in the early 1990s, during Peru’s internal armed conflict.” The evidence includes statements made on television, photographs, and transcripts of taped conversations. However, “due at least in part to the apparent destruction of relevant military records,” the only “official documentation” that HRW was able to review was a copy “of what appears to be Humala’s military record indicating he was ‘patrol chief’ of Battalion 313 during 1992.” In response to HRW’s request for records related to Humala, the Defense Ministry replied that the records did not exist; “a former high-level office of the Defense Ministry” said he believed the records may have been “deliberately destroyed by fire.” In July 2017 Humala was put in jail in pretrial detention on corruption—not human rights—charges. HRW urged the prosecutors to examine all new evidence and “investigate not only alleged human rights violations, but also alleged attempts to cover-up the crimes, such as bribing witnesses or burning or otherwise destroying documents and other evidence.” <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/07/implicating-humala/evidence-atrocities-and-cover-abuses-committed-during-peru>

Six farmers were killed in the Amazon region of Peru, apparently by men who want their land. The president of the local indigenous federation told the *Guardian* that the local agricultural authority had been handing out falsified land titles and bore “direct responsibility” for the killings. A local investigation in the region “also alleged former officials colluded in the falsification of land titles which were then sold to the highest bidder.” Both illegal logging and palm oil cultivation are surging in the area. https://www.telesur.tv/english/news/Peru-6-Farmers-Killed-Amid-Land-Conflict-20170907-0011.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=10

Russia. At the request of the UN General Assembly, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine presented a report, “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine).” Covering the period from 22 February 2014 to 12 September 2017, the Mission members found that Russian authorities committed “multiple and grave” human rights abuses including arbitrary arrests, torture, and at least one extrajudicial killing. Because Russia would not permit the UN officials to enter Crimea, the Mission members monitored the situation from Ukraine. They conducted interviews, but the sources were not explicitly mentioned; the Mission simply stated it is

“committed to the protection of its sources and systematically assesses the potential risks of harm and retaliation against them.” http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/Crimea2014_2017_EN.pdf

Saudi Arabia. Concerned about hate speech, Saudi activists shared with Human Rights Watch (HRW) “court rulings, social media posts, and video clips” they have collected, to which HRW added information from “telephone interviews and social media communications.” HRW said its “examination of statements and writings of Saudi clerics, courts, and textbooks . . . demonstrate that Saudi government officials and institutions have incited hatred or discrimination against its own Shia citizens” and ignored hostile statements targeted at “Jews, Christians, Sufis, Zoroastrians, and others.” <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/26/they-are-not-our-brothers/hate-speech-saudi-officials>

Serbia. The Humanitarian Law Center issued a statement noting the number of cases where a military man is on trial for war crimes but has frequent absences that are justified by documentation from a military medical institution. “The inevitable impression is that the doctors employed in military medical institutions are behind these obstructions,” the Center said, adding the court “instead of unquestioningly accepting the medical records issued by military institutions and delaying hearings on the basis of these records” should “take appropriate measures to ensure such a farce is put to a stop.” www.hlc-rdc.org

South Africa. The Benchmarks Foundation issued a report on the prevalence of persistent respiratory ailments in 56.1% of the people who live near mine dumps in parts of Johannesburg. Even more alarming, the residents “are living on the largest concentration of radioactive uranium on the planet.” In addition to reviews of published material, including annual reports of mining companies, government reports, and health reports, the researchers used interviews and discussions with focus groups and followed those meetings with a Household Health Survey Questionnaire based on World Health Organization guidelines. <https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/1632217/respiratory-disease-affects-56-of-those-near-mine-dumps/>; for the study see https://business-humanrights.org/sites/default/files/documents/Benchmarks%20policy_gap_12.pdf

South Korea. The National Archives said it will prepare a revised law, to be submitted to the National Assembly in 2018, that would permit the Archives to prohibit the destruction of records on critical incidents. The Archives “recently banned all state agencies from destroying records and documents on the 1980 [pro-democracy] movement,” *KBS News* reported. http://world.kbs.co.kr/english/news/news_Dm_detail.htm?No=130050&id=Dm

Syria. “Syrian activists fear . . . that history could be erased as YouTube moves to rein in violent content,” the *Associated Press* reported. The Syrian Archive said “some 180 channels connected to Syria were shut since June.” After protests, YouTube restored “about 20 channels, salvaging about 400,000 videos” but YouTube is “still reviewing” approximately 150,000 more. And this after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant in August based on video evidence on a Libyan military commander (see above). The Syrian Justice and Accountability Centre echoed the concern. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/youtube-videos-syria-war-activists-human-rights-violations-war-crimes/>; https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2017/09/07/the-responsibility-of-technology-companies-in-the-age-of-digital-human-rights-documentation/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=a7f3efd044-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_09_07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-a7f3efd044-90540617

Turkey. The trial began of 481 military men and civilians accused of planning the failed 2016 coup. The *New York Times* reported that the indictment is 4,000 pages long, and in court the prosecutor has used video footage, transcripts of telephone messages, and recordings of military conversations from the airport control tower at the Akinci air base. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/10/world/europe/turkey-coup-mass-trial.html>

United Kingdom. The Rotherham borough council said no charges will be brought against “any senior figures” at the council “despite ‘various and substantial organisational failings’ that left 1,400 children at risk of sexual abuse,” the *Guardian* reported. Reports released by the Council on the scandal said “on the balance of probability” files of a researcher investigating the abuse “were removed by someone with access to key-coded and locked security doors” and some files were “deliberately corrupted.” Also, reported the *Yorkshire Post*, the South Yorkshire police “by chance” found some minutes of meetings in the late 1990s and early 2000s related to child protection issues in the town. The report said “the council’s records management arrangements were insufficient to record the contents of files sent for archiving and future retrieval.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2014-08 and 2015-02. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk->

[news/2017/sep/06/rotherham-abuse-scandal-no-charges-against-senior-council-figures: http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/missing-rotherham-records-found-by-chance-by-police-1-8740902](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/missing-rotherham-records-found-by-chance-by-police-1-8740902)

United States. Following a federal court ruling that descendants of slaves once owned by members of the Cherokee Nation have the right to tribal citizenship, the Nation began processing applications. The Freedmen, as the descendants are known, argued successfully that the Treaty of 1866 signed between the U.S. government and the Cherokees gave them all the rights of Cherokees. The case was brought in 2003 by more than 2800 descendants; the ruling gives the litigants and potentially as many as 25,000 people the ability to participate in tribal elections and receive benefits, such as access to tribal health care and housing, the *Associated Press* reported. <http://mynorthwest.com/745525/ Cherokee-nation-processing-freedmen-citizenship-applications/>

“Government bodies are increasingly turning the tables on citizens who seek public records that might be embarrassing or legally sensitive,” the *Associated Press* reported. “Instead of granting or denying their requests, a growing number of school districts, municipalities and state agencies have filed lawsuits against people making the requests—taxpayers, government watchdogs and journalists who must then pursue the records in court at their own expense.” <https://apnews.com/7f6ed0b1bda047339f22789a10f64ac4>

Young, undocumented immigrants who applied to the Federal government in 2012 for permission to stay in the U.S. under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program provided home address, phone numbers, financial information, and education and employment history, all of which went into a Federal database. The DACA youth now worry that the information in the database will be used against them and that they or their families will be deported, the *Washington Post* wrote.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/technology/obama-asked-dreamers-for-their-personal-data-now-they-worry-trump-will-use-it-against-them/2017/09/06/279ca81a-9271-11e7-89fa-bb822a46da5b_story.html?utm_term=.f4e1b0ec1620

The National Center for Health Statistics released data on 2016 drug deaths, showing that drug overdoses killed roughly 64,000 people in the United States in 2016, a 22% rise over 2015. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>

United States/Florida. During Hurricane Irma 11 people died of heat in a nursing home. *STAT* reviewed inspection records of the facility by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. In February 2016 a federal inspector found that the facility lacked an appropriate generator to produce electricity to cool the facility in an emergency and essential records of the facility could not be produced for inspection. *CBS Miami* reported that Florida’s governor deleted voicemails from the vice president of the nursing home to the governor during the emergency saying the facility needed immediate help; the governor said his office “was abiding by Florida’s public records law” in deleting the voicemails.

https://www.statnews.com/2017/09/13/nursing-home-deaths-generator/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=6df06bea96-MR&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-6df06bea96-149736437

<https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/09/24/florida-governor-deleted-voicemails-from-nursing-home-after-hurricane/23221223/>

United States/Texas. Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas Gulf Coast in late August. The nongovernmental Center for Biological Diversity aggregated the public regulatory filings sent by industries to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality through August 31. The Center reported that “oil refineries and chemical plants . . . released more than 1 million pounds of dangerous air pollutants in the week after Harvey’s track,” according to the *Washington Post*. “All are toxic air pollutants documented to harm human health; several cause cancer.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/09/04/chemical-companies-have-already-released-1-million-pounds-of-extra-air-pollutants-thanks-to-harvey/?utm_term=.b2528c079ed7 ; http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2017/air-pollution-09-01-2017.php

Publications.

Swisspeace published “Mapping Archives for Dealing with the Past Processes.”

http://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Publications/Essentials/SP_Essential_1702-web.pdf

The Sedona Conference Working Group on Electronic Document Retention and Production issued *The Sedona Principles, Third Edition: Best Practices, Recommendations & Principles for Addressing Electronic Document Production*. <https://thesedonaconference.org/publication/The%20Sedona%20Principles?>

Future Tense produced a podcast, “Human rights and the archiving opportunities and challenges of the digital world.” <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/futuretense/human-rights-and-the-opportunities-and-challenges-of-the-digital/8827514>

Good reads. *Eurasia Review* published an article by a researcher at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, “The Humanitarian Access Paradox: Data Security in Contested Settings,” that includes a discussion of the vulnerability of data to natural disasters.

http://www.eurasiareview.com/13092017-the-humanitarian-access-paradox-data-security-in-contested-settings-analysis/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

After Hurricane Irma caused destruction across the Caribbean and Florida, *telerama.fr* published an interview with Stephanie Dargaud, the archivist of Saint-Martin, on the importance of archives as an aid in reconstruction. <http://www.telerama.fr/monde/ouragan-irma-comment-les-archives-de-saint-martin-vont-aider-a-la-reconstruction,n5220927.php>

And in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, the State of Texas gave useful guidance to state agencies on what to do with damaged or destroyed records. <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/slrn/blog/2017/09/documenting-destruction-of-records-damaged-or-destroyed/>

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**HRWG Workshop (Mexico City, November 29 and 30)
Workshop del Grupo de Trabajo de Archivos y Derechos Humanos
(Ciudad de México, 29-30 Nov. 2017)**

*Human Rights and Archives in Latin America
Derechos Humanos y Archivos en Latinoamerica*

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In which sessions do you want to participate? / ¿En qué sesiones desea participar?

- Session 1: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the archives. A broad closing look at the many types of archives that can be used to protect and advance human rights.*

Sesión 1: La Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos y los archivos. Ampliando la mirada sobre los diferentes tipos de archivos que pueden ser utilizados para la protección y el cumplimiento de los derechos humanos.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson, discussion leader / coordinadora de la discusión

(November 29 2017, from 9:00 to 10.00 at the ICA Conference venue / 29 de noviembre, de 9:00 a 10.00 hs, espacio Conferencia ICA)

- Session 2: *The records of business as evidence of human rights violations.*

Sesión 2: *Los archivos empresariales como evidencia de violaciones de derechos humanos.*

Lilian Lizbeth Barrientos Hernández and Antonio González Quintana, discussion leaders / coordinadores de la discusión

(November 29 2017, from 10:15 to 12.30 at the ICA Conference venue / 29 de noviembre, de 10:15 a 12.30 hs, espacio Conferencia ICA)

- Session 3: *The records of Latin American dictatorships and civil wars: the status today*

Sesión 3: *Archivos vinculados a las dictaduras latinoamericanas y las guerras civiles: su situación hoy*

Vitor Fonseca, Mariana Nazar, discussion leaders / coordinadores de la discusión

- Session 4: *The “Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists and Records Managers in Support of Human Rights.”*

Sesión 4: *Los “Principios básicos sobre el papel de los archiveros en la defensa de los Derechos Humanos”*

Giulia Barrera and Hans von Ruetten, discussion leaders / coordinadores de la discusión

The sessions 3 and 4 will be held at the at the Spanish Cultural Centre from 9:00 to 15:30 / Las sesiones 3 y 4 serán realizadas en el Centro Cultural de España en México, de 9:00 a 15:30 hs (Guatemala 18- Donceles 97 Colonia Centro Delegación Cuauhtémoc)

The Spanish Cultural Center is in the historic center of Mexico City, next to the cathedral. Metro stations: Zócalo y Allende. Línea 2.

El Centro Cultural de España en el Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México, justo a espaldas de la Catedral Metropolitana, Metro: estaciones Zócalo y Allende. Línea 2

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