

**ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights**  
**Issue no. 129, August 2020**  
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**Commentary.**

Nearly 100 years ago, an English judge was quoted as saying, “The government are very keen on amassing statistics. They collect them, add them, raise them to the Nth power, take the cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But you must never forget that every one of these figures comes in the first instance from the village watchman, who just puts down what he damn pleases.” (Sir Josiah Stamp, *Some Economic Factors in Modern Life*. London, P.S. King and Son, 1929)

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened public awareness of the importance of statistics. How many positive cases were reported today? How does that compare with yesterday or a month ago? What is the percentage of tests that find a person who has COVID? How does my city compare with another, my country with another? How many people have had to be hospitalized? How many intubated? And, finally, sadly, how many people died? To these will soon be added questions about the statistical results of trials of vaccines: How many people took trial vaccines? How many had adverse reactions (side effects)? Is that enough information to be sure the product is safe to use? How many doses of an approved vaccine can be manufactured quickly and safely?

With these questions comes uncertainty about the answers to the statistical questions. For instance:

\**El Faro* reported that a leak of official information from Nicaragua’s Ministry of Health showed that 9,683 citizens were infected between February and July, “three times more than what was officially reported by the Government.” A doctor who analyzed the data said he was sure the government had the data on the cases but “for whatever reason that we cannot easily understand, they chose to lie to the population, change the data, and include different data.”

[https://elfaro.net/en/202008/internacionales/24765/Data-leak-reveals-that-Nicaraguan-government-lied-about-the-impact-of-COVID-19.htm?utm\\_source=DB+El+Faro+ English&utm\\_campaign=c367ab3feb-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_04\\_22\\_01\\_08\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_3ec9190c89-c367ab3feb-363082696](https://elfaro.net/en/202008/internacionales/24765/Data-leak-reveals-that-Nicaraguan-government-lied-about-the-impact-of-COVID-19.htm?utm_source=DB+El+Faro+ English&utm_campaign=c367ab3feb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_22_01_08_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9190c89-c367ab3feb-363082696)

\**BIRN* reported that the head of the Turkish Medical Association in Ankara accused the Turkish government “of not releasing the real numbers of daily COVID-19 registered cases and deaths related to the virus,” saying the health ministry “announces 1,500 daily cases . . . but this is even less than the numbers in Ankara alone.” Medical associations were quoted as saying “one of the major problems was that doctors and other medical workers have become physically and psychologically exhausted,” implying that recordkeeping is not given priority. A member of the junior opposition party in the country said simply, “The government chose the economy instead of health.” [https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/28/turkish-government-accused-of-hiding-real-covid-19-figures/?utm\\_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=4f99b38ec4-BI\\_DAILY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4027db42dc-4f99b38ec4-319725265](https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/28/turkish-government-accused-of-hiding-real-covid-19-figures/?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=4f99b38ec4-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-4f99b38ec4-319725265)

\*The United States “offers vanishing few details on how the disease is spreading,” *Nature* said, with experts arguing that “political meddling, privacy concerns and years of neglect of public-health surveillance systems are among the reasons for the dearth of information in the United States.” The director of the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Division of Infectious Diseases said “she had concerns that potential COVID-19 vaccines are being rushed through the approval process.” She feared that the push to release a vaccine is creating a “data-free zone or data-arguable zone.” <https://www.al.com/news/2020/09/uab-expert-says-rushed-covid-vaccine-is-pushing-scientists-into-data-free-zone.html>

\*By contrast, South Korea has “a coordinated network of public-health centers in 250 districts that send information rapidly to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Almost every day for the past seven months the Center “updated its website with near-real-time information on local outbreaks.” Its “attention to data correlates with its overall success at controlling the outbreak,” *Nature* wrote. [https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02478-z?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=04a35670e2-MR\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-04a35670e2-149736437](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02478-z?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=04a35670e2-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-04a35670e2-149736437)

Political choice, economics, exhaustion, privacy, failure to fund the health statistics system: all of these factors are in play. What is not in question is the importance and necessity of statistics, used today and preserved for future study. While as recently as 25 years ago some archivists argued that statistical databases were not real records to be preserved by an archives, that position has largely, if not entirely, faded. Archivists realize that saving data is critical, not only to support studies of health, social structures, police behaviour, and an endless list of issues, but also to show what policymakers knew and what they did with that knowledge. Archivists must preserve and protect the statistics of that village watchman. Our very lives may depend upon it.

### **International news.**

Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The Supreme Court Chamber terminated the case against Ao An, who was a Deputy Secretary in the Central Zone of Democratic Kampuchea during the Pol Pot dictatorship (1975-1979) and was allegedly involved in the death of thousands of civilians, including Cham Muslims. The judges said, “Notwithstanding agreement in relation to the great number of victims in the central zone . . . there was no agreement after 13 years of investigation that Ao An was within the jurisdiction” of the ECCC. The records of the lengthy investigation remain for future research use; it is not clear what archives ultimately will hold the ECCC records. <https://eccc.gov.kh/sites/default/files/media/20200810%20PR%20FINAL.pdf>

Independent Investigative Mechanism on Myanmar (IIMM). Gambia, which brought a genocide case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice, asked the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to order Facebook to turn over all Facebook “posts and communications by members of Myanmar’s military and police,” arguing “Statements on social media, including Facebook, made by officials and representatives of Myanmar hostile to the Rohingya, or encouraging violence against them . . . may constitute evidence of genocidal intent necessary to support a finding of responsibility for genocide.” The head of IIMM told *Reuters* that Facebook was holding material “highly relevant and probative of serious international crime” but has not shared any during year-long talks. “Facebook had played a key role in spreading hate speech that fuelled the violence” against Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslim minority, the UN investigators said. Facebook said it would not comply with Gambia’s request but is cooperating with the IIMM and “declined to immediately comment further.” Facebook argued in the District Court that providing the material “would violate a U.S. law that bars electronic communication services from disclosing users’ communications.” The head of Fortify Rights, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), said Facebook was “telling states that even in an instance of genocide, their communications and data are secure and won’t be shared with prosecutors or law enforcement.” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-facebook-idUSKCN2570K9>; <https://www.foreignlobby.com/2020/06/10/the-gambia-demands-facebook-documents-in-rohingya-rights-crusade-against-myanmar/>

Special Tribunal for Lebanon. The Tribunal convicted Hezbollah member Salim Jamil Ayyash for involvement in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, but acquitted the other three men charged, *Arab News* reported. The presiding judge said, “The trial chamber is of the view that Syria and Hezbollah may have had motives to eliminate Mr. Hariri and his political allies; however, there is no evidence that Hezbollah leadership had any involvement in Mr. Hariri’s murder and there is no direct evidence of Syrian involvement.” The judgment was based on testimony from 269 prosecution witnesses and over 3,000 exhibits in evidence, including “the call data records of the calls made” by the defendants. As with the ECCC, it is not clear what archives will hold the Tribunal’s records. [https://www.eurasiareview.com/19082020-lebanon-court-convicts-hezbollah-member-salim-jamil-ayyash-for-hariri-assassination/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](https://www.eurasiareview.com/19082020-lebanon-court-convicts-hezbollah-member-salim-jamil-ayyash-for-hariri-assassination/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29) ; <https://www.stl-tsl.org/en>

United Nations. Convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour was ratified and went into effect when Tonga “deposited its ratification instruments” with the International Labour Organization on 4 August, the 187<sup>th</sup> nation to do so. Each member is to “secure the prohibition and elimination of” the use of children under 18 in armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, drug trafficking, hazardous work, forced labor, and slavery. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1069492>; for the convention see [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312327](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312327)

Six UN Special Rapporteurs issued a statement saying that during the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a “closing of civic spaces and restrictions on offline media,” and warned that “access to universal, open, affordable, secure and stable Internet is vital to save lives, to prevent abuses, to continue to promote and protect human rights and urgently increase access to information.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26139&LangID=E>

On August 30, the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances urged countries to continue to search for victims despite the COVID-19 pandemic. They reminded States “that they must consistently register all detainees and provide up to date information as to their fate and whereabouts.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26189&LangID=E>

### **World/general news.**

**Business records.** Magnum, the famous photographic agency, announced that it has begun an “in-depth internal review to make sure that we fully understand the implications of the work in the archive, both in terms of imagery and context. Recently we have been alerted to historical material in our archives that is problematic in terms of imagery, captioning or keywording and we are taking this extremely seriously,” *The Guardian* reported. Thanks to Giulia Barrera for the link. [https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/aug/14/magnum-reviewing-archive-as-concerns-raised-about-images-of-child-sexual-exploitation?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_E-mail](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/aug/14/magnum-reviewing-archive-as-concerns-raised-about-images-of-child-sexual-exploitation?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_E-mail)

“French prosecutors have indicted pharma giant Sanofi for manslaughter over birth defects linked to an epilepsy drug,” *Al Jazeera* reported. Studies say the “drug valproate, marked as Depakine among other trade names . . . caused disabilities in about 15,000-30,000 children whose mothers took the medicine while pregnant.” Last month another French court “ordered the state to pay thousands of euros in damages over the scandal, saying officials should have ensured the drug was not taken by pregnant women.” France’s national compensation agency for medical accidents received 500 complaints about the drug. <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/france-sanofi-charged-manslaughter-birth-defects-case-200803102021167.html>

According to *WIRED*, Google “plans to launch new AI ethics services before the end of the year. Initially, Google will offer others advice on tasks such as spotting racial bias in computer vision systems or developing ethical guidelines that govern AI projects. Longer term, the company may offer to audit customers’ AI systems for ethical integrity and charge for ethics advice.” [https://www.wired.com/story/google-help-others-tricky-ethics-ai/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT\\_WIR\\_NEWSLETTER\\_0\\_DAILY\\_ZZ&utm\\_brand=wired&utm\\_campaign=aud-dev&utm\\_content=A&utm\\_mailing=WIR\\_Daily\\_082920&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=nl&utm\\_term=list1\\_p1](https://www.wired.com/story/google-help-others-tricky-ethics-ai/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_content=A&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_082920&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=list1_p1)

**Catholic church records.** An article in *The Atlantic* said the newly-opened Vatican archives of Pius XII “offer fresh insights into larger questions of how the Vatican thought about and reacted to the mass murder of Europe’s Jews, and into the Vatican’s mindset immediately after the war about the Holocaust, the Jewish people, and the Roman Catholic Church’s role and prerogatives as an institution.” It reported on the extensive correspondence about two young Jewish boys whose parents had been killed in the Holocaust and who had been baptized as Catholics by their French caretaker; surviving relatives struggled until July 1953 to have the boys returned to the family. [https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/08/the-popes-jews/615736/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm\\_content=20200827&silverid-ref=NTI0NDYyODAzNDgwS0](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/08/the-popes-jews/615736/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20200827&silverid-ref=NTI0NDYyODAzNDgwS0)

**Migration.** *The New Humanitarian* published an essay on the “legal battle to hold the EU to account for Libya migrant abuses.” The Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) with two Italian NGOs filed a complaint in April to the European Court of Auditors, alleging that “funding border management activities in Libya makes the EU and its member states complicit in the human rights abuses taking place there and is also a misuse of money intended for development purposes—both of which fall afoul of EU budgetary guidelines.” Using budgetary records to prove human rights abuses is an unusual tactic. [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/08/10/Libya-migrant-abuses-EU-legal-battle?utm\\_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm\\_campaign=8c5da6bec1-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_08\\_14\\_Weekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d842d98289-8c5da6bec1-75545741](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/08/10/Libya-migrant-abuses-EU-legal-battle?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=8c5da6bec1-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_08_14_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-8c5da6bec1-75545741)

Nuclear testing. On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S. nuclear bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, the *Washington Post* wrote, “In the 75 years since Hiroshima, nuclear testing killed untold thousands.” Atmospheric tests were conducted after World War II by a handful of countries, principally the U.S. but also the U.K., France, USSR, China, North Korea and possibly others. The long term effects of nuclear testing on people exposed to fallout is still occurring. The Marshall Islands, where 67 U.S. tests occurred, continues to have radiation levels in some areas that are higher than the areas affected by the Chernobyl and Fukushima disaster. The former president of the Republic of the Marshall Islands said “a lot of critical information was not disclosed” at the time of the tests and people have had insufficient compensation from the United States, including refusal to pay \$2.3 billion in damages that were awarded by the Nuclear Claims Tribunal. Digital security copies of the paper and electronic records of the Tribunal are in the Swiss Federal Archives and the audiovisual records are at the Arxiu Municipal de Girona, Catalunya, Spain.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/hiroshima-anniversary-nuclear-testing/>

Also on the anniversary of the bombing, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a message saying the countries that possess nuclear weapons have a special responsibility: “They have repeatedly committed to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Now is the time for dialogue, confidence-building measures, reductions in the size of nuclear arsenals, and utmost restraint.” He called on all Member States to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The UN Special Rapporteur on toxics also issued a statement, saying, “From the detonation of hundreds of nuclear bombs over vulnerable communities in the Pacific, to the disposal of hazardous radioactive waste on lands and territories of indigenous peoples, the legacy of nuclear testing is one of the cruelest examples of environmental injustice witnessed. Today it is important that we stop and reflect on the racial and ethnic discrimination of nuclear testing, and the victims of this legacy that continue to suffer.”

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1069612>; <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26103&LangID=E>

Technology. Documents published in the “BlueLeaks” trove, the massive quantity of law enforcement documents hacked from government web sites by someone claiming a connection to Anonymous and published by the transparency collective Distributed Denial of Secrets, show what information TikTok shared with U.S. law enforcement in dozens of cases. “Experts familiar with law enforcement requests say that what TikTok collects and hands over is not significantly more than what companies like Amazon, Facebook, or Google regularly provide,” *The Intercept* noted. [https://theintercept.com/2020/08/10/blueleaks-tiktok-law-enforcement-privacy/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter](https://theintercept.com/2020/08/10/blueleaks-tiktok-law-enforcement-privacy/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter)

Although Instagram says it will take 90 days for deleted data to be removed from its system, a security researcher found that “photos and private messages with other users that he had previously deleted” were still available a year later. He reported the situation, and Instagram awarded him \$6,000 from its “bug bounty program,” *TechCrunch* reported. The researcher reported the problem in October 2019; it finally was fixed in August 2020. <https://techcrunch.com/2020/08/13/instagram-delete-photos-messages-servers/>

*WIRED* reported on “the growing role of smart home devices and wearables in police investigations” in the United States. In one case cited, when police found drugs in a household with multiple residents “officers identified a suspect after seizing data from a smart speaker. Its log not only listed recent queries related to drugs but identified who spoke them.” <https://www.wired.com/story/star-witness-your-smart-speaker/>

World War II. *AP* published two related stories on the persons still missing from the violence of World War II. The first, on missing Koreans, reported that in the late 1930s and during the war Japan “forcibly mobilized around 30,000 Koreans as workers” on the Japanese-occupied part of Sakhalin island. At the end of the war, the USSR, which had maintained control of the other part of Sakhalin, took over the entire island and repatriated the Japanese they found there but “refused to send back the Koreans . . . apparently to meet labor shortages in the island’s coal mines and elsewhere.” After Korea and Russia established diplomatic relations in 1990, about 4,000 Koreans returned from Sakhalin. In 2019 relatives of 25 still missing persons asked the U.N. to help locate them, and in June 2020 the UN asked Russia to search for 10 of them. A Korean scholar who has helped with searches for the missing in Sakhalin “said the findings remain partial because Russia has refused to allow extensive access to past records of foreign residents, which it protests over privacy safeguards.”

[https://apnews.com/c851ba77fe32a26c99557948005456cf?utm\\_source=piano&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=morningwire&pnespid=0.sxqaFHHQeN8UugqX8\\_9ZPBGdeUGpSoQjXWo0XP](https://apnews.com/c851ba77fe32a26c99557948005456cf?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=morningwire&pnespid=0.sxqaFHHQeN8UugqX8_9ZPBGdeUGpSoQjXWo0XP)

The second: “Seventy-five years after the end of World War II, more than 1 million Japanese war dead are scattered throughout Asia, where the legacy of Japanese aggression still hampers recovery efforts.” In July Japan established “a comprehensive remains information center” at the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare to conduct DNA testing on recovered remains. About 340,000 unidentified remains are in Tokyo’s national cemetery of unknown soldiers; an historian said the remains “almost certainly include a ‘significant number’ of . . . non-Japanese nationals, including Koreans and Taiwanese soldiers drafted and sent overseas to fight for the Japanese Imperial Army.” In 1991 Russia gave Japan a “list of tens of thousands of imprisoned Japanese soldiers and maps of the mass graves where they were buried. About 600,000 were sent to former Soviet prisons, where 55,000 died, including a few thousand Koreans.” [https://apnews.com/7d3b321e2efcb43ab6607dde73846038?utm\\_source=piano&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=morningwire&pnespid=jvZjpPhHFB6NccHpteM1dKLNyVP.scpt0fzTKz1](https://apnews.com/7d3b321e2efcb43ab6607dde73846038?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=morningwire&pnespid=jvZjpPhHFB6NccHpteM1dKLNyVP.scpt0fzTKz1)

*National Public Radio* (U.S.) published a story on the continuing search for musical instruments confiscated by the Nazis during World War II. It quoted an academic who has worked on the issue saying that while many families are still looking for the instruments “it’s challenging to trace them because government records, dealer records, claims, confiscation records — everything that has to be compared when looking for an instrument — are scattered across many countries.” <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/29/812891442/where-are-the-thousands-of-nazi-looted-musical-instruments>

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

Balkan wars. At a July meeting of officials from Serbia and Kosovo, the Kosovars “asked Serbia to open up its Yugoslav-era military and police archives to help find the locations of wartime mass graves, while Serbia’s delegation asked for the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA’s archives to be opened up for scrutiny,” *BIRN* reported. However, “none of this seems likely to happen any time soon” because “Serbia has classified some of its military archives as state secrets, while Kosovo insists that the KLA, as a guerrilla organization, never had military archives at all.” Kosovo’s prime minister’s office said, “Regarding the KLA archives, it is an issue for war veterans’ organizations,” but the organization’s former spokesperson said the KLA had no “organized or written archive” and what they had “could have been handed over to the Kosovo Protection Corps,” an NGO active from 1999 to 2009. However, the head of the Office for the Heritage of the Kosovo Protection Corps said it does not have KLA material. <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/11/will-serbia-and-kosovo-open-up-secret-war-archives/>

Associations of Serb and Kosovo Albanian missing person’s families told a press conference “that both countries must open up wartime archives and reveal information about people who are still listed as missing from the 1998-99 Kosovo war,” *BIRN* reported. The President of the Association of Kosmet Victims said, “We demand the opening of all the archives and evidence related to potential graves, we demand comprehensive and professional investigations, and we demand witness protection.” 1,643 people are still listed as missing from the war. [https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/27/serbs-kosovo-albanians-make-joint-appeal-for-missing-persons/?utm\\_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=6f4b64e31c-BI\\_DAILY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4027db42dc-6f4b64e31c-319725265](https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/27/serbs-kosovo-albanians-make-joint-appeal-for-missing-persons/?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=6f4b64e31c-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-6f4b64e31c-319725265)

*BIRN* analyzed “all of the completed Hague [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia] cases related to crimes in Prijedor [Bosnia] including documents included as evidence, witness testimonies and expert’s findings” and found they contain “the names of numerous members of the Bosnian Serb Army and police force suspected of involvement in these attacks in 1992 but never put on trial.” A Bosnian attorney “argued that the Bosnian judiciary has not made enough use of the wealth of evidence from the UN court.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/21/un-court-documents-reveal-overlooked-bosnian-war-crime-suspects/>

Central African Republic/Democratic Republic of Congo/South Sudan. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a guerrilla group founded in Uganda in 1987, has perpetrated “at least 55 attacks and 163 abductions . . . over the past year in the three countries where the group operates, according to data from Invisible Children, an NGO focused on the LRA,” *The New Humanitarian* reported. “During the 1990s and 2000s more than 100,000 people were killed and tens of thousands of children conscripted by the

LRA, who claimed to be protecting northern Uganda's ethnic Acholi community against [Ugandan President] Museveni's regime." [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/08/11/Kony-LRA-Uganda-Congo-CAR?utm\\_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm\\_campaign=8c5da6bec1-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_08\\_14\\_Weekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d842d98289-8c5da6bec1-75545741](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/08/11/Kony-LRA-Uganda-Congo-CAR?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=8c5da6bec1-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_08_14_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-8c5da6bec1-75545741)

Colombia/United States. In 2008 Salvatore Mancuso, "the top commander of a since-disbanded group of right-wing militias," was deported to the U.S. where he was tried and sentenced to 12 years in prison for cocaine trafficking. Colombia now wants him extradited; Colombian courts "have judged him responsible for more than 1,500 acts of murder or forced disappearance," AP reported, and at the end of the month the U.S. reportedly decided to send him to Colombia. Not only did the U.S. prosecutor of the narcotics case interview Mancuso for over 200 hours during which he "recounted a paramilitary massacre of civilians," but Mancuso had "more than 300 video conferences with Colombian investigators and victims." Preservation of the interviews and video of the conference is crucial, whether or not they are used in a trial for crimes against humanity. <https://apnews.com/23e41f017ee062025b75baffad043eaf> ; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/sources-us-stops-ex-colombia-warlords-deportation-to-italy/2020/08/31/4f28f3e0-eb86-11ea-bd08-1b10132b458f\\_story.html?emci=5b06db18-54ec-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&emdi=0852da07-57ec-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&ccid=4606001](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/sources-us-stops-ex-colombia-warlords-deportation-to-italy/2020/08/31/4f28f3e0-eb86-11ea-bd08-1b10132b458f_story.html?emci=5b06db18-54ec-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&emdi=0852da07-57ec-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&ccid=4606001)

Using the Freedom of Information Act and the Mandatory Review Declassification Review process, the NGO National Security Archive obtained records that "reveal new details" about former president Alvaro Uribe Velez's "suspected links" to narco-traffickers and paramilitary groups accused of human rights violations. The records include documents from the Secretary of Defense, Defense Intelligence Agency reports, U.S. Embassy Bogota cables, a presidential decision directive, a CIA report on the Colombian Army's links to paramilitary forces and other materials. <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/colombia/2020-08-31/friends-el-veijo-declassified-records-detail-suspected-paramilitary-narco-ties-former-colombian>

Ethiopia/Saudi Arabia/Yemen. Human Rights Watch reported, "Houthi forces in April 2020 forcibly expelled thousands of Ethiopian migrants from northern Yemen using COVID-19 as a pretext, killing dozens and forcing them to the Saudi border . . . [where] Saudi border guards then fired on the fleeing migrants, killing dozens more." Saudi guards took the surviving migrants to detention centers with deplorable conditions. HRW interviewed 13 of the migrants, used "satellite imagery, geospatial datasets" and reviewed "photo images and videos of detainees" to document the events. It urged the UN Human Rights Council to extend and strengthen the mandate of the UN Group of Experts on Yemen to "empower it to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyze evidence of, and to prepare files and clarify responsibility for the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Yemen since 2014." <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/13/yemen-houthis-kill-expel-ethiopian-migrants>

India/United States. The American Bar Association's Center for Human Rights issued a report on Indian sandstone products imported and sold in the U.S. by a sandstone industry supply chain that is "often complicated, unregulated, and nontransparent." Using "government and private data," including "trade data on sandstone importation" from the Global Export Import Data Intelligence Database and interviews with 120 mine workers and others, the researchers found that "United States imports can likely be traced to a supply chain that is marred by serious human rights violations" including "workers . . . subjected to bonded labor, child bonded labor, child labor, low wages, occupational health and safety hazards." [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/human\\_rights/justice-defenders/tainted-stones-rajasthan-2020.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/human_rights/justice-defenders/tainted-stones-rajasthan-2020.pdf)

ISIS/United Kingdom/United States. Two British men (now stripped of citizenship) who fought with ISIS and were "specifically responsible for the detention and ransoming of foreign detainees" are now in a U.S. military prison in Iraq, *Just Security* reported. The U.S. wants them extradited to the U.S. to be tried for war crimes and terrorism-related offenses, but the mother of one man filed suit in the U.K. "arguing the sharing of evidence between the U.K. and the U.S." to prosecute the case was unlawful. The U.K. Supreme Court ruled that "the U.K. Foreign Office was required by the Data Protection Act of 2018 to seek assurances that the death penalty would not be exercised by the U.S. if the information was shared," thereby preventing "the use of certain (invaluable) evidence." The U.S. Attorney General, in an August letter, confirmed "that the United States would not seek or enforce the death penalty in their case." What critical information the U.K. has was not specified. [https://www.justsecurity.org/72152/the-beatles-on-trial-obtaining-justice-for-victims-of-foreign-isis-fighters/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=9f12ea1737-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-9f12ea1737-90540617](https://www.justsecurity.org/72152/the-beatles-on-trial-obtaining-justice-for-victims-of-foreign-isis-fighters/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=9f12ea1737-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-9f12ea1737-90540617)

Saudi Arabia/United Arab Emirates/United States/Yemen. The U.S. State Department's inspector general issued a report "criticizing the agency as failing to take proper measures to reduce civilian deaths from American-made bombs used by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the catastrophic Yemen war," the *New York Times* reported. The report had a classified annex with "detailed discussions of civilian casualties." In a memo that accompanied the report, the acting inspector general wrote that "the State Department had 'withheld significant information' from the classified portion sent to Congress that was necessary to understand the inspector's general's conclusion that the Department had failed to do enough to ensure American weapons would not be used to harm civilians." <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/11/us/politics/pompeo-state-inspector-general-saudi-weapons-civilian-casualties.html>

United States/Vietnam. The Director General of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam's Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies published an article in *ISEAS* on Agent Orange as an issue in U.S.-Vietnam relations. During the Vietnam-American War (1955-1975) some 80 million litres of chemicals were sprayed in Vietnam, of which 61% was toxic Agent Orange. The damage to both people and environment was tragic. Acknowledging that work has begun to remediate contaminated soils, the U.S. efforts to "provide assistance to individuals with health issues related to exposure to Agent Orange" is, at best, slow. "One of the critical hurdles is the discrepancy between the two sides" on the number of victims, as "the U.S. government has suggested a lower number of victims, in contrast to official Vietnamese statistics," which, the Vietnamese stress, must include the impact on "generations of Vietnamese born after the war, with birth defects still being documented even among third-generation victims. Little is known on when or how such biochemical effects will end." [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2020\\_90.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_90.pdf)

### **National news.**

Australia. The government announced its new website, the Online Register for Modern Slavery Statements, "that will act as a central website for statements from thousands of large businesses required to comply with the Government's landmark Modern Slavery Act 2018." <https://minister.homeaffairs.gov.au/jasonwood/Pages/government-marks-world-day-against-trafficking-in-persons-with-landmark-website.aspx>

Brazil. "Brazil's Superior Court of Justice Wednesday determined Google must provide Rio de Janeiro's authorities with information that can help in the investigations of the murder of Marielle Franco, a . . . human rights defender who was killed in March 2018," *teleSur* reported. The prosecutor wants "data of the people who had searched for information about Franco's activities through Google." The judge said "Google information does not pose an unreasonable risk to the users' privacy and intimacy and that it is necessary to take into account the particularities of this crime." [https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Google-Must-Share-Data-Related-To-Marielle-Franco-Murder-Case-20200827-0004.html?utm\\_source=planisys&utm\\_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_content=11](https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Google-Must-Share-Data-Related-To-Marielle-Franco-Murder-Case-20200827-0004.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=11)

Researchers studying the Amazon found that "indigenous territories with full property rights saw a 66% reduction in annual deforestation compared with land outside their borders," *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. They studied deforestation rates 1982-2016 using U.S. NASA satellite data, maps obtained from Brazil's agency for indigenous persons and road maps from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, plus data on elevation, precipitation, river flow and others from a variety of sources. One of the co-authors wrote, "Our results suggest that not only do indigenous territories serve a human-rights role, but they are a cost-effective way for governments to preserve their forested areas." [https://news.trust.org/item/20200810181208-nk9j1/?utm\\_campaign=new-climate&utm\\_medium=newsletter&utm\\_source=topPicks&utm\\_content=link4&utm\\_contentItemId=20200810181208-nk9j1](https://news.trust.org/item/20200810181208-nk9j1/?utm_campaign=new-climate&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=topPicks&utm_content=link4&utm_contentItemId=20200810181208-nk9j1); <https://phys.org/news/2020-08-indigenous-property-rights-amazon-rainforest.html>; <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/suppl/2020/08/05/1917874117.DCSupplemental/pnas.1917874117.sapp.pdf>

The Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM) reported "the rate of deaths among indigenous residents of the Amazon, based on data collected through August 7, was 247% higher than in the general population," *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The data was provided by the Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COAIB). A COAIB official said that in addition to inadequate healthcare in indigenous regions, the population is "placed in a situation of vulnerability" by the "ongoing entry into indigenous land by illegal miners, loggers and others carrying the [COVID-19] virus." An IPAM researcher pointed out that "people in the Amazon have also become more vulnerable .

. because many, as a result of destruction in their territories, now need to travel to towns to buy food.” She called it “the perfect storm” of vulnerability. <https://news.trust.org/item/20200814155610-434i2/>

**Cambodia.** A court in Banteay Meanchey province is conducting an investigation into a complaint by a group of families that thirteen local businessmen took their land “by forging documents and bribing cadastral officials into registering land.” <https://cambojanews.com/families-file-complaint-in-long-running-land-dispute-with-businessman/>

**China.** Researchers at the University of Toronto (Canada) Citizen Lab found that “between January and May this year, more than 2,000 keywords related to the pandemic were suppressed on the Chinese messaging platform WeChat, which has more than 1 billion users in the country. Many of the censored terms referenced events and organizations in the United States,” *WIRED* reported. [https://www.wired.com/story/wechat-chinese-internet-censorship-coronavirus/?utm\\_source=nl&utm\\_brand=wired&utm\\_mailing=WIR\\_Daily\\_082820\\_Science&utm\\_campaign=aud-dev&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=WIR\\_Science&bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cnid=53684912&esrc=&source=EDT\\_WIR\\_NEWS\\_LETTER\\_0\\_SCIENCE\\_ZZ](https://www.wired.com/story/wechat-chinese-internet-censorship-coronavirus/?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=wired&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_082820_Science&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&utm_term=WIR_Science&bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cnid=53684912&esrc=&source=EDT_WIR_NEWS_LETTER_0_SCIENCE_ZZ)

**Colombia.** In a joint statement on 17 August, two UN organizations in Colombia wrote, “So far this year, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented 33 massacres and has been following up on 97 murders of human rights defenders, of which, to date, it has verified 45 homicides. In turn, the United Nations Verification Mission has verified 41 murders of people in the process of reincorporation in the first half of 2020, registering an increase of 10% in murders against these people compared to the first half of 2019. A total of 215 former combatants have been killed since the signing of the Peace Agreement in November 2016.” <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2020/Aug-18/510456-un-condemns-spike-in-colombia-massacres.ashx?emci=dd6dc7b8-53e1-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&emdi=f73e82f3-53e1-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&ceid=4606001>; <https://colombia.unmissions.org/comunicado-conjunto-del-equipo-de-pa%C3%ADs-de-naciones-unidas-en-colombia-y-la-misi%C3%B3n-de-verificaci%C3%B3n-de>

**Egypt.** The government adopted a new law that gives women and girls who report sexual harassment or assault an “automatic right to anonymity,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. It will be important to monitor the number of new reports filed to see if the law will increase the reporting of sexual violence. <https://news.trust.org/item/20200816164340-ppsxh/>

In July, Assault Police, an Instagram account “with more than 180,000 followers that aims to expose sex attackers,” wrote that in 2014 “six men from powerful families” gang-raped “a girl in the Fairmont Hotel,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The public prosecutor ordered their arrest. Assault Police previously “named a university student from a wealthy family accused of raping and blackmailing multiple women;” he was subsequently arrested. Despite these positive moves to arrest the men accused, the prosecutors also “recently charged several women for ‘inciting debauchery’ with songs and dances in TikTok videos.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20200825104244-84mqa/>

**El Salvador.** *El Faro* published an essay arguing that the government’s advertisement of a reformed “New Armed Forces” is propaganda: “I see an Armed Forces anxious to regain prominence and power, one that genuflects before the strongman and remains closed to history, refusing to open the archives and allowing the victims of crimes perpetrated by its members to know the truth. All of this despite the president’s ‘forceful’ commitment to open the archives, from A to Z, on November 1<sup>st</sup> of last year.” [https://elfaro.net/en/202008/columnas/24753/Violating-the-Constitution-the-Real-News-within-the-Armed-Forces.htm?utm\\_source=DB+El+Faro+ English&utm\\_campaign=91e90030f4-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_04\\_22\\_01\\_08\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_3ec9190c89-91e90030f4-363082696](https://elfaro.net/en/202008/columnas/24753/Violating-the-Constitution-the-Real-News-within-the-Armed-Forces.htm?utm_source=DB+El+Faro+ English&utm_campaign=91e90030f4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_22_01_08_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9190c89-91e90030f4-363082696)

**Guatemala.** In a positive development, the Constitutional Court granted three Indigenous communities the legal ownership of their traditional communal lands, *Nomada* reported, translated into English by *El Faro*. The residents of Morola, Jocotan and Nebaj “have long fought for legal recognition of their ownership over large swaths of land expropriated through fraudulent record-keeping practices.” The decision for Jocotan is especially significant because “not only did the court recognize the right of the Ch’orti’ communities to about 600 caballerias of land (2,700 hectares), it also affirmed the official existence of the Ch’orti’ people, a fact long denied by municipal authorities” which had led to social and economic exploitation. [https://elfaro.net/en/202008/internacionales/24759/Indigenous-Communities-in-Guatemala-Push-Back-Against-Government-Land-Grabs.htm?utm\\_source=DB+El+Faro+ English&utm\\_campaign=c367ab3feb-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_04\\_22\\_01\\_08\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_3ec9190c89-c367ab3feb-363082696](https://elfaro.net/en/202008/internacionales/24759/Indigenous-Communities-in-Guatemala-Push-Back-Against-Government-Land-Grabs.htm?utm_source=DB+El+Faro+ English&utm_campaign=c367ab3feb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_22_01_08_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9190c89-c367ab3feb-363082696)



Israel. The State Comptroller reported that “about 1,300,000 historical files in the Israel State Archives are hidden from the public eye, despite the fact that the confidentiality assigned to them by Israeli law has expired,” two researchers wrote in the *Jerusalem Post*. They pointed out that courts have upheld withholding of official records “regarding Israeli defense exports to dictatorships.” They believe that in addition to continuing to press for disclosure, Israeli researchers must “adopt oral history methodology more rigorously in the field of Israeli diplomatic history, in order to help document important hidden histories.” <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/israeli-archives-censorship-regulations-and-oral-history-639569>

Japan. In May 2019 “Japan enforced a law saying for the first time that the Ainu are an indigenous people in Hokkaido,” *Kyodo News* reported. Members of an Ainu cultural preservation body are suing the government saying that as an indigenous people they are exempt from a ban on commercial fishing in rivers. “The focal points of the suit are expected to center on issues such as the legality of the land dispossession [of the Ainu] by the Meiji government [1868-1912] and whether the recovery of fishing rights is applicable to the group.” Government records and those of cultural organizations and individuals will be important evidence. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/08/b117fbdeae50-ainu-minority-files-lawsuit-against-govt-on-salmon-fishing-rights.html>

Lebanon. The enormous explosion of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored at Beirut’s port killed at least 200 people and injured about 6,000 others. *BBC News* reported that the ammonium had been there since 2014; “documents circulated online appeared to show that customs officials sent letters to a Judge of Urgent Matters in Beirut seeking guidance on how to sell or dispose of it at least six times from 2014 to 2017.” [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53683082](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53683082)

As protests spread in the wake of the explosion, police turned to using lead bullets to contain the crowds, demonstrators told *L’Orient Le Jour*. The president of a bar association said, “I have seen victims who received lead shot in the face, in the heart, in the hands . . . We are in the process of putting together cases, six are currently in progress, with the help of volunteer lawyers and doctors, in order to file a complaint.” They have “a set of clues made up of testimonials, videos and photos [which] illustrate and clarify the reality of these figures. A chest x-ray shows the dozens of micro-impacts that a single shot of these multiple lead shot cartridges can create.” <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1228873/des-armes-illegales-ont-elles-ete-utilisees-contre-les-manifestants-samedi-.html?fbclid=IwAR0EXf9RXrc3Yf09qExDI0g9mtDWp9SloyJw8nqquqsiYIgfE5JSM2fnKhDk>

Mexico. In late July the government announced it “will build as many as 20 public works projects in an area of southern Chiapas state that was the scene of the 1997 massacre of 45 Indigenous villagers,” which the Interior Department called “part of a plan to provide reparations for relatives and survivors of the [1997] massacre in the hamlet of Acteal.” This was followed by an August government announcement that it will set up a Justice Commission for the Yaqui People, who were massacred, forcibly removed from their homeland in northern Mexico in the early 1900s, and relocated to either “less valuable territory or to virtual enslavement on haciendas,” *AP* reported. The Commission is to “work out longstanding water and land claims and provide housing, schools and medical facilities for the impoverished Yaqui community.” Both reparations and claims require access to relevant records. <https://www.borderreport.com/regions/arizona/mexico-sets-up-justice-commission-for-yaqui-indigenous-people/?emci=4ed8a82d-6cdd-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&emdi=0510043c-6ddd-ea11-8b03-00155d0394bb&ceid=4606001>; <https://www.borderreport.com/regions/mexico/mexico-to-build-public-works-in-reparation-for-1997-chiapas-massacre/>

*El Universal* published video footage that it said came from a shootout in Nuevo Laredo when 12 people were killed. According to *Reuters*, “The video, apparently filmed from a helmet camera, shows a soldier firing a mounted gun from an army truck speeding along a dark highway.” The army truck stopped by a pickup truck, more shooting, then a shout of “He’s alive,” followed by the order, “Kill him!” *Reuters* said it has not been able to verify the contents of the video. President Lopez Obrador called for an investigation. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/24/mexicos-president-calls-for-investigation-into-order-to-kill-survivor-of-shootout>

The Norwegian Refugee Council’s Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre said 345,000 Mexicans are internally displaced, forced from their homes by violence, *The New Humanitarian* reported. The country’s independent Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights said in its 2019 annual report that “8,864 people were forced from their homes in 28 incidents in 8 of Mexico’s 32 states,” with Guerrero state having the highest number of displaced. Reconciling those numbers suggests that over 336,000 were

displaced before 2019, indicating a long-standing displacement problem. [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/08/25/Mexico-internal-displacement-crisis-conflict?utm\\_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm\\_campaign=1af39c9cac-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_08\\_28\\_Weekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d842d98289-1af39c9cac-75545741](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/08/25/Mexico-internal-displacement-crisis-conflict?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=1af39c9cac-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_08_28_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-1af39c9cac-75545741)

Myanmar. “Ethnicity has become central to citizenship, basic rights, politics and armed conflict in Myanmar,” the International Crisis Group (ICG) wrote. The state recognizes 135 ethnic groups, apparently based on the last British colonial census in 1931 (with some variations). “The 1948 citizenship law specified that, to count as indigenous, a group must have made its permanent home in Myanmar prior to 1823,” and when the list of such groups was published in the 1990s it excluded the Rohingya. “This amateurish list drawing on dubious 100-year-old colonial sources continues to be the basis for determining citizenship, the franchise and other rights in contemporary Myanmar, with potentially deadly consequences.” ICG recommended, “Citizenship should be delinked from ethnicity by amending the 1982 Citizenship Law as well as removing ethnic and religious identifiers on national identity cards and other government documents.” <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

Pakistan. The Ahmadi community, “accepted as a minority sect of Islam at the time of the country’s independence in 1947,” was declared “non-Muslim” by a 1974 amendment to the country’s Constitution, *South Asia Intelligence Review* explained. If an Ahmadi practices religious behavior, he “shall be punished with imprisonment . . . for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.” However, that is mild compared to what is happening, according to Britain’s All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, whose July report said that between 1984 and July 2020 “at least 269 Ahmadi Muslims have been killed on grounds of faith” and Ahmadis are denied access to education or stigmatized “through physical and emotional abuse at the hands of teachers and fellow pupils.” The *Review* said that since March 2000, when it began compiling data on the Ahmadi situation, “at least 128 Ahmadis have been killed and 113 injured in 28 incidents.” For background see *SAHR News* 2019-11. <https://satp.org/south-asia-intelligence-review-Volume-19-No-9>

South Africa. A coalition of human rights organizations launched a website that allows people to report police brutality. Since it began in April “more than 100 people have reported beatings, verbal abuse, torture and humiliation . . . 80% of them from low-income areas,” reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. <https://news.trust.org/item/20200803153908-65o21/>

Syria. *The New Humanitarian* published the second and third articles in its series on Syria’s broken documentation system. A researcher with Human Rights Watch told the publication, “Faulty or missing documents affect every aspect of a Syrian’s life.” Groups in areas not controlled by the state have set up registration systems, but as the central government reclaims control over these areas “carrying an opposition-stamped document could potentially invite persecution by the state security agencies.” A humanitarian official said, “We have not found any other conflict where the risk of retribution linked to an identity document is so pervasive.” [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/08/03/syria-broken-documentation-system?utm\\_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm\\_campaign=75d3a8d648-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_08\\_07\\_Weekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d842d98289-75d3a8d648-75545741](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/08/03/syria-broken-documentation-system?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=75d3a8d648-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_08_07_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-75d3a8d648-75545741)

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Committee on the most notable violations of human rights committed by the Syrian regime during the past four years. It noted that the Syrian government has not submitted any report to the Committee since 2004, so SNHR submitted a “shadow report” based on information in its database. Among the items it highlighted are “registering the forcibly disappeared persons as deceased in the civil registry departments” without previously notifying the families; the “implementation of secret rulings issued by Military Field Courts against detainees who have been disappeared from central prisons;” and charges filed “based on testimonies taken from detainees by the regime under coercion, intimidation and torture, which are documented within regime security authorities’ reports, with the detainees being forced to place their fingerprint as a ‘signature’ on the coerced report.” [http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/Sn4hr\\_submits\\_a\\_report\\_to\\_the\\_United\\_Nations\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Committee\\_on\\_the\\_most\\_prominent\\_violations\\_committed\\_by\\_the\\_Syrian\\_regime\\_during\\_the\\_past\\_four\\_years\\_en.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/Sn4hr_submits_a_report_to_the_United_Nations_Human_Rights_Committee_on_the_most_prominent_violations_committed_by_the_Syrian_regime_during_the_past_four_years_en.pdf)

SNHR also issued its annual report on enforced disappearances in Syria; it described the database methodology used to compile the statistics. SNHR said “at least 84,371 individuals, including 1,738 children and 4,982 women, have been classified as forcibly disappeared persons. The Syrian regime is

responsible for 84.82% of the total number of enforced disappearance cases.”  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2020/08/30/55402/>

United Kingdom. The Court of Appeal found that the uses of facial recognition technology by the South Wales Police (SWP) “breach privacy, data protection and equality regulations,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The court said that “police were given too broad discretion, with no clear guidance on where the technology could be used and who could be put on a watchlist. It also found that SWP failed to take reasonable steps to ascertain whether its software held racial or gender bias and that an impact assessment, required for processing sensitive data, was deficient.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20200811143409-qxket/>

United States. The United States continues to have a shockingly high number of fatal police shootings. According to the website *Killed by Police*, 88 persons were killed by police in August, while *Statista* says that from January to 30 August, 661 civilians have been shot, of whom 123 were Black and 80 were Hispanic. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1123070/police-shootings-rate-ethnicity-us/>; <https://killedbypolice.net/kbp2020/>;

<https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/nationaltrends> Many—even most—current police shootings are captured on video, by a witness or by a police bodycam. It is this documentation that has galvanized the movement to change fundamentally the culture and practices of police departments across the country. For examples, see: [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/n7w9kq/video-shows-dying-black-man-told-cops-i-cant-breathe-29-times?utm\\_source=Iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=curated\\_vice\\_daily\\_1420164](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/n7w9kq/video-shows-dying-black-man-told-cops-i-cant-breathe-29-times?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=curated_vice_daily_1420164); <https://search.aol.com/click/?ylt=AwrJ7FvIAFVfc0sAHQZpCWVH: ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1599435110/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fabnews.go.com%2fUS%2fwireStory%2fcrump-represent-black-man-shot-killed-la-deputies-72775660/RK=0/RS=OzZOZcgtgzsWvTmHMjsbMDDWR4-: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/california-police-officer-captured-video-killing-black-man-walmart-charged-n1239154>

The U.S. Border Patrol raided a humanitarian camp on the U.S.-Mexico border operated by the NGO No More Deaths and arrested more than 30 undocumented immigrants who were receiving medical treatment, *The Intercept* reported. “Agents zip-tied volunteers’ hands behind their backs . . . and confiscated their cellphones as well as the organization’s medical records.” Agents filmed the operation. A volunteer said, “They went into our office and took all the paperwork. . . . They took all of our SOAP notes [paperwork used to document medical conditions and care], all of our medical records, and every single volunteer’s phone.” *The Intercept* requested the camera footage but did not receive it, and at the time of the writing “the phones and humanitarian aid documents remain in Border Patrol custody.”  
[https://theintercept.com/2020/08/02/border-patrol-raid-arizona-no-more-deaths/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter](https://theintercept.com/2020/08/02/border-patrol-raid-arizona-no-more-deaths/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter)

The U.S. Court of Appeals said the Federal judiciary is over-charging the public for access to online court records, the *Washington Post* reported. “If large swaths of the public cannot afford the fees required to access court records, it will diminish the public’s ability to ‘participate in and serve as a check upon the judicial process—an essential component in our structure of self-government,’” the court said. The court “limited fees to the amount needed to cover the cost of providing access to docket information online.”  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/federal-judiciary-is-overcharging-for-access-to-public-records-online-court-says/2020/08/06/3a8d7930-d7ed-11ea-aff6-220dd3a14741\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/federal-judiciary-is-overcharging-for-access-to-public-records-online-court-says/2020/08/06/3a8d7930-d7ed-11ea-aff6-220dd3a14741_story.html)

A federal court in the state of Idaho ruled that “Idaho officials must allow transgender people born in the state to change the sex on their birth certificate,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported.  
<https://news.trust.org/item/20200808162750-k8k7m/>

Researchers at Boston University used data from the Black Women’s Health Study, “a landmark investigation that has followed 59,000 African American women since 1995,” to “see how racism might impact cognition [thinking],” they reported in *The Conversation*. In 1997 and 2009 they asked 17,000 of the women “about their experience with interpersonal and institutional racism” and in 2015 they asked “six questions to measure subjective cognitive function.” They found that the women scoring lowest on “cognitive function” also “reported the highest level of everyday and institutional racism.”  
[https://theconversation.com/racism-linked-to-cognitive-decline-in-african-american-women-143792?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20August%202017%202020&utm\\_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20August%2017%202020+Version+A+CID\\_456e3674731e783a2f4d3f089feec9f0&utm\\_source=campaign\\_monitor\\_us&utm\\_term=Racism%20linked%20to%20cognitive%20decline%20in%20African%20American%20women](https://theconversation.com/racism-linked-to-cognitive-decline-in-african-american-women-143792?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20August%202017%202020&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20August%2017%202020+Version+A+CID_456e3674731e783a2f4d3f089feec9f0&utm_source=campaign_monitor_us&utm_term=Racism%20linked%20to%20cognitive%20decline%20in%20African%20American%20women)

CNN reported that researchers at George Mason University “analyzed data capturing 1.8 million hospital births in Florida between 1992 and 2015.” The study “provides the first evidence that the Black-White

newborn mortality gap is smaller when Black MDs [medical doctors] provide care for Black newborns than when White MDs do, lending support to research examining the importance of racial concordance in addressing health care inequities.” <https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/18/health/black-babies-mortality-rate-doctors-study-wellness-scli-intl/index.html>

Using data from “BlueLeaks” (see Technology above), *The Intercept* reported that at the request of the wind energy industry the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security “gamed out attacks on facilities that they acknowledged faced no threat.” The documents provide “a detailed picture of how state, federal and local law enforcement agencies have used the label ‘environmental extremist’ to guide their policing.” <https://theintercept.com/2020/08/24/fbi-fusion-center-environmental-wind/>

A Federal court ordered the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to give *Reveal* the “injury logs” reported by companies with 250 or more employees and workplaces in high risk industries with 20 or more employees. It found that only “about 60% of the establishments expected to submit 2016 data” did so; some Fortune 500 companies did not report; and some companies had “high injury rates for their sectors.” An OSHA official told a court that in 2017 and 2018 it received data from less than half the covered workplaces. The head of OSHA under the Obama Administration said, “This court decision is a game changer. Public disclosure on injury rates will reshape how employers, workers and the public think about the social cost of the goods and services we consume.” <https://www.revealnews.org/article/many-us-workplaces-required-to-report-injuries-flouted-new-labor-department-rule/>

Meatpacking plants are one of the centers of U.S. COVID-19 infections. *ProPublica* used public records laws from states with major meatpacking facilities to obtain records that showed that “for more than a dozen years, critical businesses like meatpackers have been warned that a pandemic was coming.” An infectious disease expert explained that the U.S. health system “rarely records industry or occupation when sending lab results to public health agencies and the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention]. This has been a particular problem with COVID-19, delaying epidemiologists’ ability to recognize workplace-related outbreaks.” [https://www.propublica.org/article/meatpacking-companies-dismissed-years-of-warnings-but-now-say-nobody-could-have-prepared-for-covid-19?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=09078b524f-MR\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-09078b524f-149736437#989716](https://www.propublica.org/article/meatpacking-companies-dismissed-years-of-warnings-but-now-say-nobody-could-have-prepared-for-covid-19?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=09078b524f-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-09078b524f-149736437#989716)

Venezuela. Human Rights Watch reported that since the state of emergency was invoked in mid-March, “Venezuelan authorities have arbitrarily detained and prosecuted dozens of journalists, healthcare workers, human rights lawyers and political opponents.” Using cases reported by NGOs and media outlets, HRW “identified cases involving 162 people who were allegedly victims of harassment, detention, or prosecution between March and June” while the NGO Foro Penal “reported 257 arbitrary arrests between March and July.” HRW said “the lawyers for the accused routinely have limited access to judicial files and prosecutors, due to Covid-19 related court closures” and “security forces have also confiscated cellphones and laptops from journalists and forced them to erase photos or videos.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/28/venezuela-police-state-lashes-out-amid-covid-19>

**Good reads.** The 26<sup>th</sup> annual report--*Annual Report 2020*--of the Network of Concerned Historians, covering the intersection of history and human rights in 91 countries, is available in a pdf-version: <http://www.concernedhistorians.org/content/ar.html>

Meatspace Press published *Data Justice and COVID-19: Global Perspectives*, an open access collection of 38 essays by 60 authors covering events in over 30 countries: <https://meatspacepress.com/>

*Reuters* applied AI technology to 100 years of video: <https://www.reuters.com/article/rpb-lavita-video-archive/reuters-applies-ai-technology-to-100-years-of-archive-video-to-enable-faster-discovery-supported-by-google-dni-idUSKCN2591VO>

Baekkwon Park, Kevin Greene, Michael Colaresi, “Human Rights are (Increasingly) Plural: Learning the Changing Taxonomy of Human Rights from Large-Scale Text Reveals Information Effects,” *American Political Science Review*: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/human-rights-are-increasingly-plural-learning-the-changing-taxonomy-of-human-rights-from-largescale-text-reveals-information-effects/F202F327EA8F4CF52D2E65EB48D409D3/share/8c43e93c9bf2cf97ebb19fa929f46723c7669a40#>

Jane Arraf, “In Iraq, Authorities Continue to Fight Uphill Battle Against Antiquities Plunder,” *NPR*:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/20/886540260/in-iraq-authorities-continue-to-fight-uphill-battle-against-antiquities-plunder>

Ana Karina Zatarain, “Searching with the Mothers of Mexico’s Disappeared,” *The New Yorker*:  
[https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/searching-with-the-mothers-of-mexicos-disappeared?utm\\_source=nl&utm\\_brand=tny&utm\\_mailing=TNY\\_Daily\\_080520&utm\\_campaign=aud-dev&utm\\_medium=email&bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&hasha=8fcd7efd9e9d6389b9f914ad34a5948d&hashb=be86af3880f5d49a71f804266e79b70bb4fa408d&hashc=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&esrc=bounceX&utm\\_term=TNY\\_Daily](https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/searching-with-the-mothers-of-mexicos-disappeared?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=tny&utm_mailing=TNY_Daily_080520&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&hasha=8fcd7efd9e9d6389b9f914ad34a5948d&hashb=be86af3880f5d49a71f804266e79b70bb4fa408d&hashc=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&esrc=bounceX&utm_term=TNY_Daily)

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