

**ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights**  
**Issue no. 122, January 2020**  
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**Commentary.**

Some days a mighty wave of dread washes up. I'm not alone in the feeling, it seems: in his 4 February press conference, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "I have spoken recently about winds of hope. But today a wind of madness is sweeping the globe." He was talking, of course, about the realm of peace and security, but the unpredictable instability affects archives and archivists, too. Here are some of the current situations where archivists are in danger or where archives are in danger or both.

A case where both archives and archivists are in danger is in Lebanon. UMAM Documentation & Research, a nongovernmental organization in Lebanon, holds materials relating to the 1975-1990 civil war, including the missing persons from it, as well as significant cultural records (newspapers, film, business records and personal papers). During the recent civil unrest and due to UMAM D&R's overt political stands in favor of the popular protests, anti-protest rioters broke into the compound where UMAM D&R is located in Beirut's southern suburb. They were restrained by the intervention of local people and persuaded not to damage the building and its contents. Threats have been made against the UMAM founders. (Personal communication)

Archivists are also in personal danger. In Chile Alajandra Araya, the director of the archives at the University of Chile (Archivo Central Andres Bello), a history professor, and a member of the human rights group at the university, is being prosecuted as an "accomplice of disruption and burglary" at the public school Liceo 7 Teresa Prats in Santiago. As part of the ongoing social revolt that started in Chile in October, students were occupying the school (a "toma"). Araya went to the school on 5 November to mediate, but during the event the police, acting with the authorization of the director of the school and the municipal authorities, entered, shooting. See below the declaration of solidarity with Professor Araya. Thanks to Valentina Rojas for the information. [Declaración de solidaridad con la académica Alejandra Araya, profesora de la Cátedra de Derechos Humanos, Universidad de Chile](https://www.latercera.com/la-tercera-pm/noticia/acab-la-sigla-la-polemica-una-escuela-autodefensa-archivo-andres-bello-la-u-chile/974746/); <https://www.latercera.com/la-tercera-pm/noticia/acab-la-sigla-la-polemica-una-escuela-autodefensa-archivo-andres-bello-la-u-chile/974746/>; <https://coledeschartes.tumblr.com/post/190494197307/archives-archivistes-et-crise-au-chili-quelques>

In Guatemala, as reported in *SAHR News* 2019-11, former national archivist Anna Carla Ericastilla and former police archives head Gustavo Meono are both under pressure. Currently, Ericastilla is asking a labor tribunal to order compensation for her unjustified dismissal from the archives; in a separate action, a hearing on her request for dismissal of the criminal complaint against her was held in November, but a decision has not been made. (Personal communication)

Also in Guatemala there is a hovering danger to personnel who worked for the former UN-sponsored International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). A legislative commission issued a 17-page report saying CICIG had violated rights and exceeded its mandate to investigate. The commission president called CICIG staff members "criminals." UN Secretary-General Guterres responded with a statement saying both CICIG and the Guatemalan justice sector officials who worked with it "contributed to the eradication of corruption and impunity." He urged the Guatemalan authorities to protect the safety of former staff members of CICIG, which would include those who worked on managing the documentation of crimes. Fortunately, a digital copy of the CICIG records is in the United Nations Archives in New York. <https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/politica/informe-de-comision-pide-que-el-mp-gestione-ordenes-de-captura/>; <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-01-10/statement-the-spokesman-for-the-secretary-general-efforts-support-the-fight-against-impunity-guatemala-scroll-down-for-spanish>

Then there are archives in danger. In Quito, Ecuador, the building housing the archaeological and art collections, the library and photographic collections of the Ministry of Culture was declared at risk of collapse. Plans were already drafted for a new facility in the outskirts of the city, but a broad coalition of groups demand that the government promptly transfer the materials to another building in the center of

Quito. Thanks to Antoon De Baets for the information. <https://www.elcomercio.com/opinion/patrimonio-peligro-opinion-columna-columnista.html>

There are the unknown, uncertain dangers to archives, too. The Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) ended on 19 January, as the Organization of American States, which had supported the program, was unable to reach agreement with the government for its renewal. The OAS issued a statement saying that together with the Attorney General's Office, the activities of MACCIH resulted in the prosecution of 133 people in 14 cases and "above all, in strengthening national capacities to combat corruption and impunity." However, the fate of the sensitive records of MACCIH was not specified. [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-003/20](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-003/20)

Similarly, in Sri Lanka new president Gotabaya Rajapaska explained that "missing persons are actually dead" and that "after the necessary investigations" the families of missing persons will be given a death certificate. In 2015 a temporary presidential commission on the missing said it had received 23,568 submissions, including approximately 5,000 from families of security forces personnel. An Office of Missing Persons was established in 2018 to investigate the disappeared; with the arbitrary issuance of death certificates, what will happen to the Office and its records is not clear. <https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/index.php/2020/01/17/un-resident-coordinator-delighted-with-presidents-sustainable-development-programs/?lang=en>; [http://nirmin.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=127:office-on-missing-persons-omp&catid=9:projects&lang=en&Itemid=208](http://nirmin.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=127:office-on-missing-persons-omp&catid=9:projects&lang=en&Itemid=208); <https://www.icj.org/sri-lanka-presidents-remarks-on-missing-persons-are-an-affront-to-victims/>

So what are we to make of this wind? Does it reflect a growing understanding by political elites that archives have power? Or does it simply reflect the international zeitgeist, the authoritarianism that seems to be increasing? Whatever it is, we cannot simply shake our heads and move on: our colleagues, their archives and their institutions need support.

**SAHR News.** The Executive Committee met on 31 January and discussed publications, preparations for the Abu Dhabi congress, cooperation with other ICA entities, and future projects. Minutes will be posted on the ICA website.

### **International news.**

**European Court of Human Rights.** The Court recently issued two publications of relevance to archives. A December 2019 fact sheet on personal data protection summarizes recent court decisions; see sections on access to personal data, disclosure of personal data, and erasure or destruction of personal data. The fact sheet supplements the June 2018 book *Case Law on Data Protection*; both are free for download at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/data-protection/echr-case-law>. A January 2020 fact sheet summarizes decisions on new technologies, including electronic data, email, musical copyright and video surveillance, among others. Thanks to Giulia Barrera for this information. [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS\\_New\\_technologies\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_New_technologies_ENG.pdf)

The Mothers of Srebrenica association, representing more than 6,000 family members of victims of the 1995 massacre, filed suit against the Netherlands, alleging that the Dutch battalion stationed at the UN compound near Srebrenica "failed to take the measures within its powers to protect the men and boys in the safe area Srebrenica," the law firm representing the families said and *BIRN* reported. For background, see *HRWG News* 2019-07. [https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/21/mothers-of-srebrenica-file-european-court-complaint-against-netherlands/?utm\\_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=effa4a2010-BI\\_DAILY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4027db42dc-ffa4a2010-319725265](https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/21/mothers-of-srebrenica-file-european-court-complaint-against-netherlands/?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=effa4a2010-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-ffa4a2010-319725265)

**European Union (EU).** The United Kingdom "failed to pass on the details of 75,000 convictions of foreign criminals to their home EU countries and concealed the scandal for fear of damaging Britain's reputation in Europe's capitals," the *Guardian* reported. "The police national computer error, revealed in the minutes of a meeting at the criminal records office, went undetected for five years, during which one in three alerts on offenders--potentially including murderers and rapists--were not sent to EU member states." <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jan/14/revealed-uk-concealed-failure-to-alert-eu-over-75000-criminal-convictions>

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The Commission's Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights published a report "Business and Human Rights: Inter-American Standards." [http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/PReleases/2020/014.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/014.asp)

International Court of Justice. The Court unanimously ordered Myanmar to take measures to prevent genocide against Rohingya Muslims. Among the "provisional measures" is one requiring Myanmar to "take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of any evidence related to the allegations of acts within the scope of Article II of the Genocide Convention." Myanmar "must submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this Order within four months . . . and thereafter every six months, until a final decision on the case is rendered by the Court." Myanmar responded to the ruling by denying that genocide took place and accusing human rights organizations of presenting a distorted picture of events, *Al Jazeera* reported. And Myanmar's government panel charged with investigating abuse in Rakhine state in 2017 reported that while "war crimes" had taken place, it did not find evidence of genocide, *Reuters* reported. <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/178/178-20200123-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>; <https://ifex.org/world-court-rules-against-myanmar-on-rohingya/>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/icj-ruling-myanmar-denies-genocide-rohingya-200123180205332.html>; <http://news.trust.org/item/20200120095639-u4u06/>

International Criminal Court. The Registry of the Court is to "map the potential new beneficiaries of reparations in the case of Bosco Ntaganda," *International Justice Monitor* reported. Mapping will be complex because (a) Ntaganda was not convicted over certain incidents in 18 municipalities "meaning victims from these locations would be ineligible for reparations," (b) victims may include persons who did not participate in the trial or "submitted a previous version of the application form" asking for reparations, and (c) victims may include persons who were eligible for reparations in the Lubanga case and are also eligible in the Ntaganda case because Ntaganda was deputy chief of staff while Lubanga was commander-in-chief. <https://www.ijmonitor.org/2020/01/icc-registry-to-map-beneficiaries-of-ntaganda-reparations/>

United Nations. *The New Humanitarian* reported that the "UN did not publicly disclose a major hacking attack into its IT systems in Europe—a decision that potentially put staff, other organisations, and individuals at risk, according to data protection advocates." The breach included systems "at its human rights offices, as well as its human resources department." [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigation/2020/01/29/united-nations-cyber-attack?utm\\_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm\\_campaign=c8dddbbc45-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_01\\_29&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d842d98289-c8dddbbc45-75545741](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigation/2020/01/29/united-nations-cyber-attack?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=c8dddbbc45-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_01_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-c8dddbbc45-75545741)

United Nations Human Rights Committee. In a landmark ruling the Committee said it is "of the view that without robust national and international efforts, the effects of climate change" in countries "may expose individuals to a violation of their rights under articles 6 or 7 of the Covenant [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights] thereby triggering the non-refoulement obligations" of states where climate refugees seek shelter. "Furthermore, given that the risk of an entire country becoming submerged under water is such an extreme risk, the conditions of life in such a country may become incompatible with the right to life with dignity before the risk is realized." The case turned on whether a man from the Pacific island nation of Kiribati could claim asylum as a climate refugee in New Zealand. The judges said he could not because Kiribati is habitable for at least 10 to 15 years, during which time "intervening acts by the Republic of Kiribati, with the assistance of the international community" could "take affirmative measures to protect and, where necessary, relocate its population." <http://news.trust.org/item/20200121053924-363od/> ; <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25482&LangID=E>

United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The director of UNDP's HIV, Health and Development team published an opinion piece on the tradeoff between technology that can improve health services and the privacy and data security challenges it brings. "Between 2016 and 2017, there were over 1300 recorded incidents of protected health information data breaches across 27 countries. Leaking this type of information can threaten the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable groups, such as people living with HIV, especially in the 75 countries around the world that criminalize HIV non-disclosure." <http://news.trust.org/item/20200131163331-v0s9l/>

United Nations Special Rapporteurs (SR). The SR on summary execution and extrajudicial killings and the SR on freedom of expression said they are "gravely concerned by information they have received

suggesting that, in contravention of fundamental international human rights standards, a WhatsApp account belonging to the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2018 deployed digital spyware enabling surveillance of *The Washington Post* owner and Amazon CEO Jeffrey Bezos.” They noted it was “an effort to influence, if not silence” the newspaper’s reporting on Saudi Arabia and also noted that other reporting points “to a pattern of targeted surveillance of perceived opponents and those of broader strategic importance to the Saudi authorities.” And, they said, “The circumstances and timing of the hacking and surveillance of Bezos also strengthen support for further investigation by U.S. and other relevant authorities of the allegations that the Crown Prince ordered, incited, or, at a minimum, was aware of planning for but failed to stop the mission that fatally targeted” *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25488&LangID=E>

## **World/general news.**

**Business records.** *The Intercept* published an article on Imperial Oil, an Exxon subsidiary, based on research in the company’s archives that were donated to the University of Calgary (Canada) Archives and Special Collections in 2006. Researchers from two nongovernmental organizations dug into the holdings and found that “as far back as the 1960s, Imperial had begun hiring consultants to help them manage a future public backlash over its environmental record, as well as conducting surveillance on its public critics.” The director of the Climate Investigations Center, one of the research groups, summed up the findings, saying, “Over the decades they [Imperial Oil] have been adept at finding ways to delay, deny, and deflect any serious discussion about climate policy.” Such records are vital to the “flood of cases . . . now making their way through the courts.” [https://theintercept.com/2020/01/08/imperial-oil-climate-change-exxon/?utm\\_source=The+Intercept+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=63cca9a438-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_01\\_11&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_e00a5122d3-63cca9a438-134379393;https://searcharchives.ucalgary.ca/index.php/imperial-oil-limited-fonds](https://theintercept.com/2020/01/08/imperial-oil-climate-change-exxon/?utm_source=The+Intercept+Newsletter&utm_campaign=63cca9a438-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_01_11&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e00a5122d3-63cca9a438-134379393;https://searcharchives.ucalgary.ca/index.php/imperial-oil-limited-fonds)

*STAT* successfully sued to get access to documents from a lawsuit against Purdue Pharma. Among the records obtained were 26 sales call notes from 1997 to 2001 that “provide in-their-own-words examples of Purdue’s selling of OxyContin that it admitted in 2007 was done ‘with the intent to defraud or mislead’.” Between 1999 and 2017 “more than 200,000 people in the United States died from overdoses tied to all prescription opioids” including OxyContin. For background see *SAHR News* 2019-11. [https://www.statnews.com/2020/01/09/prescriber-fears-oxycotin-misuse-purdue-pharma-sales-reps-misleadingly-played-up-safety/?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=1c6d97e0ed-Weekend\\_Reads&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-1c6d97e0ed-149736437](https://www.statnews.com/2020/01/09/prescriber-fears-oxycotin-misuse-purdue-pharma-sales-reps-misleadingly-played-up-safety/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=1c6d97e0ed-Weekend_Reads&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-1c6d97e0ed-149736437)

Newly released records obtained by lawyers in a lawsuit against the opioid industry showed that between 2006 and 2014 in excess of “100 billion doses” of opioid pain pills were shipped in the United States from 2006 to 2014, the *Washington Post* reported. The data was collected by the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) database ARCOS, the Automation of Reports and Consolidated Orders System that “reveals what each company reported to the DEA about the pills it distributed day by day, town by town.” <https://www.sott.net/article/427518-Over-nine-years-more-than-100-billion-pain-pills-saturated-the-nation>

According to documents filed in a Federal court in the U.S. State of Vermont, a software company called Practice Fusion “was paid by a major opioid manufacturer to design” an electronic medical records tool “to boost prescriptions for addictive pain pills,” *Bloomberg* reported. When a doctor opened a patient’s electronic medical record, a pop-up ad would appear “asking about a patient’s level of pain. Then, a drop-down menu would list the treatments ranging from a referral to a pain specialist to a prescription for an opioid painkiller.” The “alert went off about 230 million times” between 2016 and the spring of 2019 and was used in “roughly 30,000” medical offices. *Reuters* reported that Practice Fusion had contracts with Purdue Pharma and 13 other pharmaceutical companies; it settled the civil and criminal lawsuits against it with a payment of \$145 million. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-29/health-records-company-pushed-opioids-to-doctors-in-secret-deal>

Boeing aviation corporation released “hundreds of messages” from 2017 and 2018 to U.S. Federal House and Senate committees “tasked with investigating the 737 Max passenger jet, which was grounded last March after two fatal crashes within five months killed 346 people,” *VICE News* reported. Boeing apologized for the “language and sentiment” of the messages. One employee wrote that he wouldn’t put his family in an aircraft with a “Max simulator trained” pilot, and another wrote in April

2017, “This airplane is designed by clowns who in turn are supervised by monkeys.” [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/n7jbqb/designed-by-clowns-damning-messages-show-boeing-employees-had-serious-issues-with-the-737-max](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/n7jbqb/designed-by-clowns-damning-messages-show-boeing-employees-had-serious-issues-with-the-737-max)

The *New York Times* looked back at the 2009 crash of a Boeing 737 near Amsterdam that killed 9 people. The plane was a “predecessor to Boeing’s 737 Max,” and in both accidents “the failure of a single sensor caused systems to misfire with catastrophic results.” The *Times* gained access to an unpublished study written by Sidney Dekker, “an aviation safety expert who was commissioned by the Dutch Safety Board to analyze the crash.” Dekker “accused Boeing of trying to deflect attention from its own ‘design short-comings’.” The Safety Board’s final report “either excluded or played down criticisms of the manufacturer . . . after pushback from a team of Americans that included Boeing and federal safety officials, documents and interviews show.” <https://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/release/3/209047/us-pressured-dutch-safety-board-to-downplay-boeing-737-tech-faults.html>

Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights filed a complaint with the U.K. National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, arguing that the products made by JCB, a “world-leading construction equipment company headquartered in Britain” were “prolifically” used “in a number of specific demolition and displacement incidents and in settlement-related construction” in 10 villages or areas in the occupied Palestinian territory between 2016 and 2019. The complaint included evidence (photographic, written reports, video, and witness statements) from the nongovernmental organizations Al-Haq, B’Tselem, EyeWitness to Atrocities, and Who Profits and data from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191211-jcb-faces-human-rights-complaint-over-israeli-demolitions-of-palestinian-properties/>; <https://lphr.org.uk/latest-news/lphr-files-oecd-guidelines-complaint-against-jcb-for-involvement-in-human-rights-breaches-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/>

“Environmental organization GRID-Arendal . . . launched the world’s first publicly accessible global database of mine tailings storage facilities,” *Eurasia Review* reported. With information on more than 1,700 tailings dams around the world, it includes information companies provided at the request of the Church of England Pensions Board after the January 2019 collapse of the tailings dam in Brumadinho, Brazil, that killed 270 people. GRID-Arendal believes the database information will help the mining industry “work towards reducing dam failures in the future.” *Bloomberg* reported that the former chief executive of the mining company Vale and 15 other people from Vale and the German firm Tuv Sud were charged with homicide, citing them for negligence in the Brumadinho dam failure. The prosecutors also charged the two companies and the sixteen individuals with “environmental crimes.” [https://www.eurasiareview.com/26012020-worlds-first-public-database-of-mine-tailings-dams-aims-to-prevent-deadly-disasters/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](https://www.eurasiareview.com/26012020-worlds-first-public-database-of-mine-tailings-dams-aims-to-prevent-deadly-disasters/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29); <https://www.mining.com/web/ex-vale-ceo-charged-with-homicide-for-brazil-dam-disaster/>

Church records. The Vatican announced that on March 2 it will open “all the materials from the period 1939 to 1958,” *Catholic News Service* reported. <https://catholicsentinel.org/Content/Default/Homepage-Rotator/Article/Open-source-Vatican-wartime-archives-ready-for-new-batch-of-scholars/-3/382/39142>

Uruguay’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that “the Holy See had completed the digitization of its secret archives concerning missing persons in Uruguay between 1968 and 1985, the period during which the military junta ruled the country.” According to *FSSPX.News*, the “digitized data can now be viewed by relatives of missing persons, as well as by members of the church who may be affected by the disappearances.” <https://fsspx.news/fr/le-vatican-declassifie-ses-archives-secretes-en-uruguay-54204>

The Society of Jesus in the United States (Jesuits) hired a research team to review “hundreds of Jesuit records, baptisms, marriages and other records from Catholic parishes” to identify slaves “owned, rented or borrowed” by U.S. Jesuits between 1823 and 1865, *America: The Jesuit Review* reported. So far they have accounted for at least 190 enslaved people and hope to identify their descendants. <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/01/06/meet-researchers-helping-jesuits-address-their-history-slaveholding>

Human rights defenders. From 2015 to 2019, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre documented more than 2,000 attacks on human rights defenders, “raising concerns about business-related human rights abuses—from frivolous lawsuits, arbitrary arrests and detentions to death threats, beatings and even killings.” There were 572 attacks in 2019, up from 492 in 2018. Most of these attacks took place in Latin America; mining is the most dangerous sector, with 143 attacks. Attacks against

women have increased every year; 137 were recorded in 2019. [https://dispatches.business-humanrights.org/hrd-january-2020/index.html?mc\\_cid=a76232067f&mc\\_eid=ff6556540](https://dispatches.business-humanrights.org/hrd-january-2020/index.html?mc_cid=a76232067f&mc_eid=ff6556540)

Human trafficking. *Thomson Reuters Foundation* published a series of articles on trafficking:

\*The UN International Organization for Migration said “at least 953 migrants headed for Europe were picked up in the Mediterranean and sent back to Libya in the first two weeks of 2020” where they “are at high risk of human trafficking.” Aid workers “said they have first-hand testimony of migrants being sold to traffickers” from Libyan detention centers. The testimonies need careful preservation. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200115094853-ud7ok/>

\*In November police in Armenia announced that “a criminal ring tricked mothers out of their newborns” to sell in the “lucrative international adoption market.” Five people have been arrested. After the story came to light, more than three dozen women have contacted the police, worried that their children “might have been adopted without their approval.” The spokeswoman for Armenia’s Investigative Committee said “detectives are now checking all adoptions by foreigners since 1991.” Adoption records are critical sources. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200130104324-2yjpx/>

\*Thailand’s government reported that it rescued a record number—1,807—of trafficking victims in 2019. “The country secured 194 trafficking convictions . . . down 17% from 2018;” however, public prosecutors rejected 64 of 364 trafficking cases sent to them by police in 2019, instead prosecuting them “under smuggling and transnational crime laws.” This is a concern because, “unlike trafficking, which involves deception or control over another person for the purpose of exploitation, smuggling means entering another country illegally and is considered consensual.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20200106154723-1x8c8/>; <http://news.trust.org/item/20200128002702-xu1op/>

\*Police said they rescued 137 children from “forced labour and sex work” in the Ivory Coast town of Aboisso and arrested 12 traffickers. The children ranged in age from 6 to 17 and came from Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Togo; “investigations are underway to find their parents.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20200113151823-3341s/>

Medical records. A “massive genetic study” using data on nearly 200,000 U.S. military veterans who have a common anxiety problem found that a gene named MAD1L1 appears to have an association with anxiety, *CNN* reported. The researchers said they also identified a gene connected to estrogen as associated with anxiety and for African Americans “a gene associated with intestinal functions . . . was potentially linked to anxiety.” One of the authors of the study said he hoped the findings will lead to earlier and more effective treatments. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/09/health/anxiety-genetic-association-wellness-trnd/index.html>

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Google “has achieved the ability to view or analyze tens of millions of patient health records in at least three-quarters of U.S. states.” Contractual deals with some of the largest U.S. healthcare providers “allow Google to access personally identifiable health information without the knowledge of patients or doctors. The company can review complete health records, including names, dates of birth, medications and other ailments.” Google denied the allegations. <https://www.healthdatamanagement.com/news/google-under-fire-for-its-efforts-to-access-health-records>

Privacy. “South Korea has become the global epicenter of spycam—the use of tiny, hidden cameras to film victims” in embarrassing situations, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. “Official figures showed there were about 6,000 cases of the so-called spycam porn in 2018 and about 6,500 the year before.” Spycam footage is sold to porn sites; “footage can fetch up to 100,000 won (\$90), with top earners netting more than 100 million won a month.” The government’s Korean Women’s Development Institute surveyed 2000 spycam victims in October 2019 and found “nearly one in four women who has been harassed or secretly filmed has thought about suicide.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20200113002724-jflg1/>

According to *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, the Norwegian Consumer Council found that “10 widely used Android apps that gather sensitive data about health, drug use, and sexual preferences passed some of it on to advertising and marketing firms without clearly informing users.” The Council filed a

complaint with Norway's data authority against the U.S.-based gay dating app Grindr "and companies receiving data from it," alleging they broke the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation rules. Norway's data protection commissioner said, "Sharing location data for gay people can be risky in certain extreme circumstances." <http://news.trust.org/item/20200114181147-r2580/>

Technology. A startup company from Romania, now located in the U.S., says it will market "typing biometrics—the detailed timing information that describes exactly when each key is pressed and released as a way to identify the unique person at the keyboard." It says it has an accuracy rate of between 99% and 99.9%, *telecrunch* reported. <https://techcrunch.com/2020/01/03/this-startup-is-raising-7-million-for-a-technology-that-can-authenticate-people-based-on-their-typing-style/>

European and U.S. law enforcement agencies "seized the domain of WeLeakInfo.com, an online site that allegedly held 12 billion stolen records from 10,000 data breaches," *Digital Transactions* reported. <http://www.digitaltransactions.net/international-operation-takes-down-domain-that-reportedly-had-12-billion-stolen-records/>

World War II. TASS reported that Acting Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the Russian International Affairs Council that "Russia is open for publication of WWII archive materials" and quoted him saying, "Russia is unprecedentedly open for their publication and for the general public becoming acquainted with the archive documents." Lavrov further said Russia "will employ the entire expert and analytical potential of the Council to avoid politicization of this issue and to leave history to historians, to prevent attempts to rewrite the history of World War II and its outcomes, and to not allow attempts to cast a shadow on the heroes of the war, the liberators of Europe." <https://tass.com/politics/1111373>

Monaco announced that it "will for the first time open access to its official archives covering the years 1942 to 1944 when dozens of Jews were arrested and deported by the principality despite its supposed neutrality during World War II," *AFP* reported. [https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog\\_entry/monaco-to-open-wwii-archives-on-deportations-of-jews/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/monaco-to-open-wwii-archives-on-deportations-of-jews/)

Poland is the only European Union country "that has not legislated on property restitution" since the seizures of World War II, *Reuters* reported. "Lawyers told *Reuters* that it is getting more difficult for Holocaust survivors to get restitution as the government refuses to simplify the rules and courts grow more sceptical;" furthermore, "Jews say documents proving property ownership were often destroyed in the Holocaust," leaving them without important evidence. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200120093606-aumdd/>

The *New York Times* published a feature on museums in Poland that have art seized from Dutch owners during World War II. In 2018 a Dutch organization prepared a report, never published, identifying 81 art works seized in the Netherlands that "most likely ended up in occupied Poland." The researchers created a database of "some 15,000 works still missing from the Netherlands, though experts call that a partial count." The curator of the gallery of European Art at the Polish National Museum in Poznan said that provenance research is hindered because "in 1945, almost all the museum's records were destroyed, either burned during fighting between German and Soviet forces or taken to Russia." <http://artdaily.com/news/120013/Poland-urged-to-look-for-Nazi-looted-art-still-held-in-its-museums#.XjxyTSMXAdU>

"Less than a month after the Louvre hired a Nazi loot expert to investigate its collection, she found 10 ill-gotten works hiding in plain sight," reported *Artnet News*. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/restitution-nazi-loot-louvre-france-1758900>

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum announced that it acquired the collection of Johann Niemann, the deputy commandant of the Sobibor death camp. It consists of paper documents and 361 photographs, mostly of Sobibor but some of Belzec, Grafeneck, Brandenburg, and Bernburg camps. <https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-kits/sobibor-perpetrator-collection>

*The New Yorker* reported on the work to link pages of young Jews' autobiographies that were written for a YIVO contest in 1939. Part of the material is in the national library of Lithuania, where YIVO was based prior to World War II, and part is in the archives at YIVO headquarters in New York. For background see *HRWG News* 2017-10. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/30/found-in-translation>

Tiergartenstrasse 4 Association, a research group, launched a website of more than 3,500 photos, documents and maps on the 45 sub-camps of Auschwitz and the “industrial organisations implicated in exploiting prisoners at the camps,” *AFP* reported. [https://www.thelocal.de/20200117/new-website-shows-how-business-exploited-auschwitz-prisoners?fbclid=IwAR0cUXe8gtfTeOuvhVwP6MnLV9gNviN\\_zcRDVV-MzdwcGp3XDonYKExyqk8](https://www.thelocal.de/20200117/new-website-shows-how-business-exploited-auschwitz-prisoners?fbclid=IwAR0cUXe8gtfTeOuvhVwP6MnLV9gNviN_zcRDVV-MzdwcGp3XDonYKExyqk8)

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

Argentina/Chile/Italy/Peru/Uruguay. The Court of Appeal in Rome published the reasoning for its July 2019 judgment that convicted 12 Uruguayans, 5 Chileans and a Peruvian to life in prison for the murders carried out by Operation Condor in Argentina and other Latin American countries, reported *Justiceinfo.net*. For background, see *HRWG News* 2019-07. [https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/les-debats-justiceinfo/opinions/43583-operation-condor-responsabilite-rangs-intermediaires.html&xid=17259.15700019.15700186.15700190.15700256.15700259.15700262.15700265.15700271&usg=ALkJrhg7QHWxV\\_Sy3PUTGQ9guxVIVUrPbLw](https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/les-debats-justiceinfo/opinions/43583-operation-condor-responsabilite-rangs-intermediaires.html&xid=17259.15700019.15700186.15700190.15700256.15700259.15700262.15700265.15700271&usg=ALkJrhg7QHWxV_Sy3PUTGQ9guxVIVUrPbLw)

Australia/Timor-Leste. Among the Australian Cabinet papers from 1998-1999 released by the National Archives on 1 January are a number relating to the crisis in East Timor and its movement toward independence from Indonesian military rule. One briefing paper shows Australia resisting a request from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to take in 1500 East Timorese from central Indonesia, even though UNHCR identified them “as being at gravest risk because of their pro-independence affiliations.” <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/howard-government-resisted-taking-1500-east-timorese-at-gravest-risk-20191219-p53lh2.html>; <https://7news.com.au/politics/australia-intervenes-in-east-timor-drama-c-627972>

Balkan wars. In an example of taking records out of context, in early January media in Serbia and Republica Srpska “reported the sensational news that the archives of the British Defense Ministry” released by the U.K. archives on 31 December “contained important evidence that genocide had not occurred in Srebrenica,” reported *Sarajevo Times*, which rebutted the interpretation. <http://www.sarajevotimes.com/what-do-british-defense-ministry-archives-reveal-about-srebrenica-genocide/>

Colombia/Venezuela. Colombia announced that it will “allow hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants to legalize their presence in the country through work permits meant to bring them into the legal economy,” *Reuters* reported. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200129202207-cey8f/>

El Salvador/United States. In a better-late-than-never move, the United States declared 13 former Salvadoran military officials and their immediate family members “ineligible for entry into the United States” because, based on “credible information,” the military were involved “in gross violations of human rights in El Salvador related to the planning and execution of the extrajudicial killings of 6 Jesuit priests and 2 others on November 16, 1989, on the campus of Central American University in El Salvador.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2019-12. <https://www.state.gov/public-designation-of-thirteen-former-salvadoran-military-officials-due-to-involvement-in-gross-violations-of-human-rights/>

Islamic State. In May 2019 the nongovernmental Syrian Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC) “obtained from an independent activist, who was unaffiliated with any militant group, scanned copies of 277 internal ISIS documents, collected from abandoned ISIS administrative office in Tabqa, Raqqa Governorate, within the seat of the Caliphate declared by ISIS.” SJAC “verified that the documents are authentic and unaltered” copies of the originals. Twenty-four of the documents have headers showing “Bureau of Justice and Grievances;” they include “arrest documents, sentencing documents, confessions, witness statements, marriage certificates, case summaries, information on detainees, interrogation reports, orders for the release of prisoners, and defendant statements.” SJAC published both a report describing the work of that Bureau and 5 of the documents “with appropriate redactions to protect the safety of potential victims.” [https://syriaaccountability.org/library/judge-jury-and-executioner-the-isis-bureau-of-justice-and-grievances/?utm\\_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm\\_campaign=7e00ccc488-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_01\\_10\\_02\\_56\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_0a7405c641-7e00ccc488-90540617](https://syriaaccountability.org/library/judge-jury-and-executioner-the-isis-bureau-of-justice-and-grievances/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=7e00ccc488-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-7e00ccc488-90540617)

Israel/Palestine. Who Profits, an Israeli nongovernmental organization, issued a report titled “Agricultural technology and the Israeli Occupation.” It “shows that Israeli agritech companies are deeply complicit in the ongoing occupation of Palestinian and Syrian land. The report exposes the contribution of agritech firms to agriculture in illegal settlements and examines their role in the Israeli

blockade of Gaza” and “highlights the economic gains made by Israeli agritech industries through their collaboration with the Israeli military apparatus.” In addition to information collected during field visits, the report is based on “company records and publications,” documents of the Israeli Registrar of Companies, and publications by various state authorities including Israeli government ministries.  
<https://whoprofits.org/report/agribusiness-as-usual/>

Israel/Palestine/Turkey. In 2018 Turkey gave Palestinian authorities “a full electronic archive of 140,000 documents . . . spanning over 400 years of Ottoman rule in Palestinian lands.” The director of Palestine’s Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission told *Al-Monitor* the documents are being used “to solve internal disputes between citizens over land ownership and to reclaim Israeli-controlled lands in Israeli courts.” By contrast, an historian told *Ahval* media that “the Ottoman land registry archives for Turkey remain closed, meaning researchers working on properties transferred from Christian minorities to Muslims before the 1923 collapse of the empire, particularly after the deportation and mass killings of Armenians in 1915, are unable to access the documents.” <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/ottoman-archives-helps-palestinian-reclaim-their-land.html> ; <https://ahvalnews.com/palestine/turkeys-transfer-ottoman-archives-palestinians-undermines-israeli-land-claims>

Japan/South Korea. “A group of 33 Korean victims of wartime forced labor in Japan and their bereaved families . . . launched a joint compensation lawsuit against six Japanese companies,” *Yonhap News Agency* reported. This follows a similar compensation lawsuit filed last April in which “the relevant court hearing has yet to begin due to the Japanese side’s refusal to receive judicial documents.”  
<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20200114006900315>

Mideast wars. *The Intercept* obtained “a leaked archives of secret Iranian spy cables” that were “generated by officers from the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security” from 2013 to 2015. It published six reports based on the records on topics of Iran’s influence in Iraq, Iran’s shadow war on ISIS, a secret summit meeting between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Quds Force, and a discussion of the records themselves. [https://theintercept.com/series/iran-cables/?utm\\_source=The+Intercept+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=e18af10683-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_12\\_04&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_e00a5122d3-e18af10683-134379393](https://theintercept.com/series/iran-cables/?utm_source=The+Intercept+Newsletter&utm_campaign=e18af10683-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_12_04&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e00a5122d3-e18af10683-134379393)

The nongovernmental Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issued its annual report on civilians killed in Syria by any combatant party. It reported 3,364 civilians died in 2019, including 234 in December. It said that it has “complex electronic programs to archive and categorize the victims’ data, which the team collects and verifies” from internet or media outlets, “videos and photographs that our team documented, which were posted online or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms.” <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2020/01/01/54591/>

SNHR also issued a special report of “the most notable human rights violations by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria during the last year.” According to SNHR’s database, there were 4,671 cases of arbitrary arrests, 305 individuals “documented as being killed under torture,” 26 medical personnel and 13 media workers killed, and 98 attacks on “medical points and facilities.”  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2020/01/23/54641/>

After U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to bomb Iranian cultural sites, academics, archivists and organizations such as the Society of American Archivists and Blue Shield International condemned the threat in open letters. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/07/condemn-trumps-threat-to-irans-cultural-heritage>; [https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/bsi\\_statement\\_on\\_targeting\\_cultural\\_sites\\_in\\_iran.pdf](https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/bsi_statement_on_targeting_cultural_sites_in_iran.pdf) ; <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-statement-on-targeting-of-cultural-heritage-sites-for-destruction>

Republic of the Marshall Islands/United States. *The New Yorker* published an article “The Cost of Fleeing Climate Change: How an adoption racket in Arkansas offered a way off the Marshall Islands.” It reported that the intensification of climate change in the Islands has led some women to migrate to the U.S. and put their babies up for adoption through an adoption agency in Arkansas. The women believed that they could keep in touch with the children; however, “in Arkansas, the law dictates that all adoptions are closed—the birth parents’ identities are sealed and unavailable to the adopted child, and the adoptive parents’ identities are sealed and unavailable to the birth parents.” The man running the adoption scheme has been charged with human trafficking, among other charges.  
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-cost-of-fleeing-climate-change-marshall-islands-arkansas>

## **National news.**

**Algeria.** *Crisis Watch* reported that a court in Biskra convicted a university student to 18 months in prison for “insult to a regular body” after he posted on social media videos of police repression of protests. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

**Australia.** The *Guardian* reported that the government “is releasing highly sensitive medical records to police” from the Department of Human Services’ Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Medicare Benefits Schedule data and, unlike the records in “My Health Record” system, “no warrant or court order is needed” to release the information. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/27/australian-government-secretly-releasing-sensitive-medical-records-to-police>

**Brazil.** In late December a civilian court in Rio de Janeiro acquitted 7 young men from a favela (slum) of drug charges and “unexpectedly, recognized the defendants’ claims that they were tortured by the Brazilian army,” *Americas Quarterly* reported. The Human Rights Unit of Rio’s public defender’s office had asked the judge to order medical examinations to address the men’s torture allegations, which she granted. The examination was carried out by the forensic institute of the police in collaboration with the International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute and a delegation of international medical experts. The review found the men’s injuries were “highly consistent” with torture and submitted reports saying so to the court, “marking the first time that a court in Brazil has received medico-legal reports in line with international standards.” The judge then dropped the charges. [https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/reason-hope-brazils-justice-system?utm\\_source=AQ%27s+Week+in+Review&utm\\_campaign=e7d1a0d03c-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_08\\_17\\_06\\_51\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_6a33e16b5d-e7d1a0d03c-26124681](https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/reason-hope-brazils-justice-system?utm_source=AQ%27s+Week+in+Review&utm_campaign=e7d1a0d03c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_08_17_06_51_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6a33e16b5d-e7d1a0d03c-26124681)

After *The Intercept* published a “series of damaging political exposés involving the celebrity justice minister of Brazil’s far-right president Jair Bolsonaro,” Federal prosecutors charged journalist Glenn Greenwald with participation in a “criminal organization” that hacked into the cellphones of public officials, the *Guardian* reported. On 6 February the charges were dropped. Greenwald said, “We are going to continue to do the reporting on the archive that provoked these criminal charges in the first place.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/06/glenn-greenwald-brazil-judge-cybercrimes-dismissed>

Brazil’s Labor Inspection Secretariat said that in 2019 1,054 workers had been discovered in “slave-like conditions,” down from 1,745 found in 2018. However, the Labor Prosecutor’s Office said the number of “complaints of slave-like conditions increased to 1,213 from 1,127 in 2018,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200128204546-2tt8f/>

**Burundi.** The chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission told parliament that it has found more than 4,000 mass graves, dating from conflicts since 1962, and “has identified 142,505 victims,” *BBC News* reported. [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51112701?fbclid=IwAR0L0TnZICZiLJ58NPqXj7cwrWWX0\\_qkUdJljAg9YzNudidPKL9KWkKjp-E](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51112701?fbclid=IwAR0L0TnZICZiLJ58NPqXj7cwrWWX0_qkUdJljAg9YzNudidPKL9KWkKjp-E)

**Canada.** Researchers at the University of Guelph used the university archives to develop an exhibition on the “difficult history of Canadian university involvement in teaching eugenics” between 1914 and 1948, two of the researchers wrote in a blog for *The Conversation*. Eugenics was the “deeply damaging idea that it is possible, and even desirable, to improve the human race through selective breeding,” leading to policies “aimed at eradicating those deemed ‘unfit’ through institutional confinement, restrictive marriage, immigration laws and sterilization.” <https://theconversation.com/universities-must-open-their-archives-and-share-their-oppressive-pasts-125539>

**Colombia.** On 1 February the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience suspended the membership of the National Center for Historical Memory in Bogotá, Colombia, from its global network of over 275 historic sites, museums and memory initiatives. “The suspension came after the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, in concert with its Colombian Network of Places of Memory, which includes 28 sites of memory in Colombia, and its Network of Latin American and Caribbean Memory Sites - RESLAC, expressed its concerns about biased and excluding public statements made on behalf of the Center. It requested clarification of the Center’s positions in a letter to its Director, Rubén Darío

Acevedo, dated September 24, 2019, calling for the Center to reaffirm its adherence to the Coalition’s guiding principles.” The Centro did not respond and it was suspended. <https://www.sitesofconscience.org/en/2020/02/statement-on-the-centro-nacional-de-memoria-historica-of-colombia/>

Cuba. A former judge, now living in Spain, “released Cuban court documents showing that dozens of men received sentences between 2 and 4 years in prison for offenses falling broadly under the category of ‘antisocial’,” the *New York Times* reported, and “in case after case, the description of the crime is identical, suggesting that the police cut and pasted the language in the investigation report.” The *Times*’ review of the documents showed that “approximately 92% of those accused in the more than 32,000 cases that go to trial in Cuba every year are found guilty,” of which 4,000 cases are for “antisocial” behavior. The records also show that the prison system holds “more than 90,000 prisoners.” <https://theworldnews.net/us-news/ex-judge-reveals-secrets-of-how-cuba-suppresses-dissent>

Democratic Republic of Congo. “An investigation conducted by the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) . . . established that at least 701 people have been killed and 168 injured during inter-ethnic tensions between the Hema and Lendu communities, in the territories of Djugu and Mahegi, from December 2017 to September 2019” and “barbarity . . . characterizes these attacks.” Most of the victims are members of the Hema community. The UNJHRO team undertook 12 field missions, conducted confidential individual interviews and collective interviews, and consulted “reports, photos and videos relating to the violence.” Protecting the raw interview documentation is critical for future accountability measures. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/RDC/RDCRapportpublicDjugu.pdf>; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/eastern-congo-killings-rapes-may-amount-to-genocide-and-crimes-against-humanity-un-report-finds/2020/01/10/99bb210c-33b8-11ea-91fd-82d4e04a3fac\\_story.html?fbclid=IwAR239XIZz2BqdEly1CK\\_CYuNUReK7bVuFvVXc8yqU5nyymO9z\\_67E0oAuCo](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/eastern-congo-killings-rapes-may-amount-to-genocide-and-crimes-against-humanity-un-report-finds/2020/01/10/99bb210c-33b8-11ea-91fd-82d4e04a3fac_story.html?fbclid=IwAR239XIZz2BqdEly1CK_CYuNUReK7bVuFvVXc8yqU5nyymO9z_67E0oAuCo)

Ecuador. *TeleSUR* reported that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) team that visited in October 2019 presented its report. The team “interviewed 439 people and recorded a total of 280 testimonies” from persons claiming to be victims of serious human rights violations during the early October unrest. In a blunt statement, the report said Ecuadoran “authorities in question prohibited IACHR staff from taking photos or videos, and hindered their work as much as was possible for them.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2019-11. [https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/iachr-denounces-ecuadorian-govt.-repression-in-october-protests-20200114-0025.html?utm\\_source=planisys&utm\\_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_content=10](https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/iachr-denounces-ecuadorian-govt.-repression-in-october-protests-20200114-0025.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=10)

El Salvador. At a court hearing in the case of the El Mozote massacre, Juan Rafael Bustillo, a former commander of the Air Force, told the court “the elite Atlacatl Battalion carried out the El Mozote massacre in eastern El Salvador in which unarmed villagers, most of them women and children, were slaughtered,” *Reuters* reported. This is the first admission on record that the armed forces were responsible for the 1981 massacre of over 1,000 residents of El Mozote and surrounding hamlets. For background see *SAHR News* 2019-07 and 11. <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2020/01/25/world/24reuters-elsalvador-massacre.html>

El Salvador said its 2019 official data show “approximately 28.7 percent fewer homicides than in 2018”: 2,383 compared to 3,346, *InSight Crime* reported. According to a presidential source cited in *Univision*, the average daily murder rate in December was 3.87, “meaning El Salvador capped off the year with its most peaceful month since its civil war ended in 1992.” <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/gang-truce-behind-el-salvador-historic-murder-drop/>

Georgia. The family of Temirlan Machalikashvili, who was shot in his bed during a police “anti-terror” operation, filed a lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights against the State Security Service. After the filing, the nongovernmental Human Rights and Monitoring Center “gained access” to the Service’s records on the case, which had been classified by the Prosecutor’s Office “by reason that they contained state secrets,” *Civil.Ge* reported. The Center said the materials show the police investigation into the killing was “pro forma, inefficient and illusory.” [https://www.eurasiareview.com/15012020-georgia-watchdog-assesses-machalikashvili-case-materials-containing-state-secrets/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](https://www.eurasiareview.com/15012020-georgia-watchdog-assesses-machalikashvili-case-materials-containing-state-secrets/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29)

A “bitter land dispute between local Muslim villagers and the Christian Orthodox Church” is roiling an Adigeni municipality community, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. “According to the

government the land belonged to no one before 2018, when it was registered as state property and donated to the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate, which wants to build a new monastery there,” but “farmers from nearby villages . . . say they have owned and used the lot for decades to grow hay and graze cattle—their main source of income.” Georgia launched an electronic blockchain land registry in the mid-2000s, but “the onus of registering titles was left to property owners.” Only an estimated 25% of all land has been registered. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200128002601-hzi5t/>

Guatemala. A judge dismissed the war crimes charges against Juan Alecio Samayoa Cabrera, the former chief military commissioner in a municipality in El Quiche. He denied being the commissioner; “however, during his immigration proceedings in the U.S. he admitted to have commanded a paramilitary unit of 500 men” in that area. A second case, that of Francisco Cuxum Alvarado, who admitted in his U.S. deportation hearing to having been a member of a “civil defense patrol” in Rabinal, is pending. He is charged with crimes against humanity and aggravated sexual assault in a case brought by 36 Maya Achi women, *International Justice Monitor* reported.

<https://www.ijmonitor.org/2020/01/a-perfect-storm-guatemalan-judge-dismisses-war-crimes-charges-against-feared-military-commissioner/>  
<https://www.ijmonitor.org/2020/01/guatemalan-man-wanted-in-the-maya-achi-sexual-violence-case-arrested/>

India. India launched a Smashboard app using “blockchain to create an encrypted space where victims of sex crimes can store notes, photos, screenshots, documents, video and audio as a journal or time stamped evidence,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The Foundation’s 2018 survey found India the most dangerous nation for women, with about 90 cases of rape reported to the police each day, certainly an undercount of the real situation, both because of women’s reluctance to report and because rapes that end in murder are counted purely as murders. The app promises to allow women “to anonymously report sexual abuse, seek medical or legal aid” with the hope that this will “make reporting of the crime less traumatic for survivors.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20200108134526-9tz90/>  
<http://news.trust.org/item/20200109160408-ftamp/>

Five lawyers collaborated with the anti-trafficking charity Sanjog, India, to study the compensation paid to victims of trafficking between 2011 and 2019, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* also reported. “Quoting crime data that shows there were 38,503 victims of trafficking between 2010 and 2017, the research . . . shows that 107 survivors applied for compensation since 2011, with courts awarding compensation to another 102. Only 77 received the money.” Part of the explanation for the small number of recipients is because the burden of proof is on the victim. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200122151101-hy54s/>

The southern state of Telangana used facial recognition software “to verify voters in 10 polling stations in the Medchal Malkajgiri district to ‘reduce impersonation cases,’ the Telangana state election commission said.” The commission promised that the photographs would not be stored or used “for any other purpose” but voters “will not have the option to opt out,” reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. <http://news.trust.org/item/20200122075002-y5xym/>

Israel. Writing in *Haaretz*, former state archivist Yaacov Lozowick argued that Israel is hiding records that could be useful to defend Israel before the International Criminal Court “should it ultimately decide to open an investigation into potential Israeli war crimes.” <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-is-hiding-documents-that-could-help-its-war-crimes-case-at-the-icc-1.8348990>

Mexico. “The official number of missing persons is 61,637, the chief of the National Search Commission told a press conference,” *Mexico News Daily* reported. This is 50% higher than the total of 40,180 persons reported missing in January 2019; the head of the Commission said “the sharp increase is due to updated and carefully revised information from state-based Attorney General’s Offices.” Most of the missing (60,053) disappeared between 2006, the year former president Felipe Calderón launched the war against drug cartels, and 2019. Meanwhile, the *Associated Press* reported that Mexico’s National System of Public Security said the homicide count rose in 2019 to the highest level in recent history: 35,588 persons killed. <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/new-information-reveals-that-61000-people-have-disappeared/>  
<https://kvia.com/news/us-world/2020/01/21/mexico-homicide-rate-edges-up-in-2019-rate-of-rise-slows/>

Four human rights groups issued a report of their visit to the Nahuatl community of Santa Maria Zacatepec in Puebla State “to document human rights violations perpetuated against members of the community in retaliation for their activities defending the Metlapanapa River.” The Federal Electricity

Commission is installing a thermoelectric plant, a gas pipeline, and a sanitary sewage system that will dump toxic waste into the river. “Even though the community is protected by a writ, the project is moving forward without the necessary permits” and the community is being harassed by “state agents” who make “audio and video recordings and photographs of the defenders” and subject community members to “constant surveillance by state police patrols, intimidation and vehicle chasing, as well as online harassment.” <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/report-international-observation-mission-rio-metlapanapa-zacatepec-puebla>

**Romania.** In a Facebook post, the mayor of Targu Mures “called for Roma parents to have their income and education checked before they have a child,” *BIRN* reported. The National Council Against Discrimination is investigating whether this constitutes discrimination and hate speech. The last Romanian census (2011) showed 665,000 Roma, but the Council of Europe estimated that Romanians of Roma origin total 1.85 million or more than 8% of the population. [https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/14/romania-probes-mayor-for-demanding-checks-on-roma-parents/?utm\\_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=d5ee14db5c-BI\\_DAILY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4027db42dc-d5ee14db5c-319725265](https://balkaninsight.com/2020/01/14/romania-probes-mayor-for-demanding-checks-on-roma-parents/?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=d5ee14db5c-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-d5ee14db5c-319725265)

**Russia.** In April 2017 the Supreme Court banned all Jehovah’s Witnesses organizations, calling them “extremist.” Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that nationwide persecution of Witnesses “dramatically escalated” in 2019. HRW documented 32 Witnesses in prison and “at least 313 people are facing charges, are on trial, or have been convicted.” People are arrested in raids at their houses, with officers confiscating “personal belongings, many of which have not been returned. These include smartphones, tablets, computers, flash and hard drives, and any religious materials.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/09/russia-escalating-persecution-jehovahs-witnesses>

**Rwanda.** Human Rights Watch reported that it interviewed 30 children aged 11 to 17 who had been picked up when living on the streets and detained at the Gikondo Transit Center. HRW said the children had been kept in “deplorable and degrading conditions,” and 28 of the 30 children said they had been beaten by authorities. In addition to the interviews, HRW “reviewed public statements made by senior Rwandan government officials,” information provided by Rwandan government offices, “official documents, publications in state media outlets, Twitter feeds of government officials, and other official sources to evaluate the Rwandan authorities’ position and assessment of the use of transit centers in the process of rehabilitating children living on the streets.” <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/01/27/long-we-live-streets-they-will-beat-us/rwandas-abusive-detention-children>

**Seychelles.** A former police investigator told the Truth, Reconciliation and National Unity Commission that in 1977 he was investigating the disappearance of Gilbert Morgan, who he believed was preparing a coup, *Justiceinfo.net* reported. Subsequently, France-Albert Rene did lead a coup and the investigator was ordered to deliver his unfinished report on Morgan to the new president. The report has never been found, and Morgan’s disappearance, an emblematic case for the Commission, is unsolved. [https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/commissions-verite/43638-seychelles-c-etait-une-grande-gueule-puis-on-ne-l-a-plus-entendu.html&xid=17259.15700019.15700186.15700190.15700256.15700259.15700262.15700265.15700271&usg=ALkJrhhXVIBj\\_i8ljbQ9\\_MZZ65aV0bD1zkw](https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/commissions-verite/43638-seychelles-c-etait-une-grande-gueule-puis-on-ne-l-a-plus-entendu.html&xid=17259.15700019.15700186.15700190.15700256.15700259.15700262.15700265.15700271&usg=ALkJrhhXVIBj_i8ljbQ9_MZZ65aV0bD1zkw)

**Tunisia.** The Truth and Dignity Authority completed the transfer of nearly 10,000 boxes of archives to the National Archives, but the audiovisual records of testimony, approximately 80,000 gigabytes, have been delivered to the Presidency of the government, *Justiceinfo.net* reported. The reason for the division, said a Commission staff member, is to protect witnesses because there is not “a specific law on access to these human rights archives.” The national archives disputed that concern. Thanks to Perrine Canavaggio for the reference. <https://lapresse.tn/44845/justice-transitionnelle-archives-de-linstance-verite-et-dignite-un-enjeu-majeur>

**United Kingdom.** Police investigating the 1974 Guildford pub bombings in which 5 people were killed and 65 injured have “seized archives” held at the Surrey History Center that “were gathered by retired officers and deposited by ex-Chief Superintendent Bob Bartlett,” *BBC News* reported. The records are said to be needed for an inquest; a public campaign has been underway to resume inquest hearings. Four members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army were convicted of the bombings in 1975 but the convictions were overturned in 1989. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-surrey-51142609>; <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/police-may-destroy-seized-guildford-pub-bombs-files-38875351.html>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-surrey-51195681>

“Judges sentencing convicted offenders in high-profile criminal cases in England and Wales, including murders, rapes and other serious offences, will be televised from later this year, the Ministry of Justice has said,” the *Guardian* reported. “The final stage of crown court trials, when judges deliver sentencing remarks, will be broadcast to enable greater public understanding and scrutiny of courtroom hearings.” Archivists will have to determine what of the video to retain permanently; meanwhile, the “Courts & Tribunals Service, part of the Ministry of Justice, will retain copyright of the footage and have access to all recordings.” <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/jan/16/judges-sentencing-in-high-profile-court-cases-to-be-televised>

“Officials at the Metropolitan Police Service of London announced . . . that the force will soon begin to use ‘Live Facial Recognition’ (LFR) technology deployed around London to identify people of interest as they appear in surveillance video and alert officers to their location,” *arstechnica* reported. The system will “check live footage for faces on a police ‘watch list,’ a Metropolitan Police spokesperson said. The real-time facial-recognition system will target suspects in violent crimes, child exploitation cases, and missing children and vulnerable adults, among others.” <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2020/01/london-to-deploy-live-facial-recognition-to-find-wanted-faces-in-crowd/>

**United States.** In 1972 Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution to guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex and, as required by the Constitution, sent it to the States for ratification. After a series of complications, the deadline for ratification by the required 38 States was set at 30 June 1982. When that date arrived the required number of States had not ratified, but with approval by Virginia in January, the number now is reached. The Archivist of the United States is required to certify the adoption of Constitutional amendments, but the Justice Department issued an opinion that since the deadline has expired, the Amendment cannot be certified. Two lawsuits on the matter are pending. <https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases-4>

Four Native American tribes filed a complaint with 10 UN Special Rapporteurs, asserting that the U.S. government has violated their human rights by failing to take action on climate change. Sea-level rise and coastal erosion threaten agricultural land, burial sites, and ancestral lands; photographs are included in the complaint. [https://www.nola.com/news/article\\_c63ee390-3754-11ea-8c6f-57f94fd14a5a.html](https://www.nola.com/news/article_c63ee390-3754-11ea-8c6f-57f94fd14a5a.html); <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6656724/Louisiana-Tribes-Complaint-to-UN.pdf>

“The Department of Homeland Security has agreed to share certain government records from its databases to help the Census Bureau produce data about the U.S. citizenship status of every person living in the country,” *National Public Radio* reported. Records back to 1973 will be provided. Census said “each individual’s records [will] be used in a statistical model designed to produce anonymized estimates of U.S. citizens and noncitizens living in the country.” Privacy advocates are concerned. <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/04/793325772/to-produce-citizenship-data-homeland-security-to-share-records-with-census>

The daughter of a deceased “prominent Republican redistricting strategist” released his personal papers on the manipulation of election districts in North Carolina, *National Public Radio* reported. [https://www.npr.org/2020/01/05/785672201/deceased-gop-strategists-daughter-makes-files-public-that-republicans-wanted-sea?utm\\_term=nprnews&utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=npr&fbclid=IwAR1F7OxeuvY37hMoJxf6MyFhWrybfKTtDieUnG7iCspguuBCahaxvYk3Zk](https://www.npr.org/2020/01/05/785672201/deceased-gop-strategists-daughter-makes-files-public-that-republicans-wanted-sea?utm_term=nprnews&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&fbclid=IwAR1F7OxeuvY37hMoJxf6MyFhWrybfKTtDieUnG7iCspguuBCahaxvYk3Zk)

**Conferences, publications.** CartONG, a non-governmental organization specializing in information management, launched an Open Call for Suggestions (open until 31 May) for the GeOnG Forum on Humanitarian and Development Data (topics related to mapping, GIS, data collection and information management), 2-4 November 2020 in Chambéry, France. <https://www.cartong.org/geong/2020>

**Good reads.** Sedona Conference Working Group 11 on Data Security and Privacy Liability: *Incident Response Guide* for data breaches. [https://thesedonaconference.org/publication/Incident\\_Response\\_Guide](https://thesedonaconference.org/publication/Incident_Response_Guide)

Human Rights Watch: *World Report 2020*: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020>

Oxfam: “Time to Care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis”: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/time-care>

*The New Yorker*: “A Translation Crisis at the Border” on the impact of language difficulties on U.S. asylum claims: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/01/06/a-translation-crisis-at-the-border>

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