

ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights

Winner of the Premio Internacional Derechos Humanos 2020 de la Asociación pro Derechos Humanos de España

Issue no. 134, January 2021

Written and compiled by Trudy Huskamp Peterson

Commentary. This commentary was going to be about the importance of business records in understanding the COVID-19 pandemic: the manufacture of vaccine and glass vials and packaging, the transport of all those products, the distribution to governmental and commercial stations for inoculation. But then, on the morning of 4 February, I learned that Lokman Slim, a Lebanese activist, thinker, and committed archives advocate, had been assassinated.

The famous question is “If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” Lokman Slim was a giant redwood, and his fall has made a sound in political, social, and cultural circles from the Middle East to the U.S. Midwest. You can read about him in newspapers from *Al Arabiya* <https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2021/02/04/Who-is-Lokman-Slim-A-profile-on-Lebanese-activist-Hezbollah-critic-shot-to-death> to *France 24* <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20210204-lokman-slim-prominent-hezbollah-critic-shot-dead-in-south-lebanon> to the *New York Times* <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20210204-lokman-slim-prominent-hezbollah-critic-shot-dead-in-south-lebanon> and more.

Lokman Slim knew two important things about archives: he knew that records have to be preserved and he knew that they must be made accessible. With his wife, Monika Borgmann, he created the institution UMAM Documentation and Research to gather as much information as possible about the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and the persons who were still missing from it. In recent years, he helped many Syrian groups collect important materials on the still raging war in Syria. And he knew that documenting Lebanese culture was important, too: he would take posters off trees on the sidewalk for preservation, he acquired the film footage of a major producer of Lebanese motion pictures and advertising, and he even rescued the records of one of the famous Beirut hotels, commandeering them from a truck on the way to a dump.

As UMAM’s documentation on the missing from the civil war grew to thousands of cases, Lokman Slim realized that it was essential to have a copy of those files located far from the UMAM archives. After securing that safe place in the National Archives of Finland, he became one of the founding members of the group that developed the international *Guiding Principles for Safe Havens for Archives at Risk*, coordinated by swisspeace and endorsed by the International Council on Archives as official guidance. He served on the Advisory Committee for Safe Havens for Archives at Risk from its inception.

Lokman Slim’s death reminds us all of the danger that human rights activism entails. And for those of you holding sensitive human rights documentation, whether in an archives or in the offices of an advocacy group or your home, make sure your documentation has a safe haven somewhere. That will be a tribute to the tree that just fell in the human rights forest.

SAHR News. The Section held a general meeting on 26 January. A report of agreements and decisions taken soon will be posted to the Section’s page on the ICA website.

A supplement to this issue of *SAHR News* is available by writing to Trudy@trudypterson.com. It includes items on technology, Honduras/United States, China and Hong Kong, Columbia, Egypt, Mexico and a list of “good reads.”

The index (English only) to the 2020 issues of *SAHR News* is posted on the ICA website: <https://www.ica.org/en/indexes-and-topics-to-human-right-related-news>

International news.

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Court ruled in cases against Croatia, Romania, Russia, and Serbia. After a Croatian man violently attacked a lesbian in a club in January 2010, the police charged him only with “breaching the peace and public order.” The woman “lodged a criminal complaint with the State Attorney’s Office,” but it was rejected and domestic courts agreed with the rejection. ECHR ruled that “the minor-offence proceedings against the applicant’s aggressor had not addressed the hate-crime element of the offence and had resulted in a derisory fine,” *BIRN* reported. She was awarded 10,000 euros plus court costs. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/14/echr-slates-croatias-ineffective-response-to-homophobic-attack/>

The Court found that Romania violated “the right to respect for private and family life” when it required two transgender citizens to “furnish proof that they had undergone gender reassignment surgery” before it would recognize their gender reassignments. One person had presented to the Bucharest court “three medical certificates that confirmed he suffered from a gender identity disorder,” *BIRN* reported, but the court would not order a change of gender on his identity card because he had not undergone surgery. The second person did undergo surgery in 2018 in order to get a new identity card. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/19/european-court-rules-romania-violated-trans-rights/>

In one case against Russia, the Court ruled that it “unlawfully annexed Crimea in 2014 and that the peninsula remains sovereign Ukrainian territory,” the *Guardian* reported. In a second case, ECHR found Russia “guilty of unlawfully rounding up ethnic Georgians and their subsequent ‘inhuman and degrading treatment’” during its war with Georgia in 2008. It also said Russia “failed to investigate war crimes and systematic human rights abuses,” “prevented the return of 20,000 Georgians” who fled the war zone and whose villages were burned, and did not cooperate with the Court proceedings. “The evidence included witness statements, satellite footage, and video and phone intercepts” and the testimony of more than 30 witnesses. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/21/russia-human-rights-violation-georgia-war-echr-ruling>

In the case against Serbia, the Court ruled that Aleksandaer Zlicic was subjected to “inhuman and degrading treatment while in police custody” in order to force him to sign a document admitting that a small bag of cannabis was his. Serbia was ordered to pay Zlicic 6,700 euros. However, the Court noted that despite the fact that the seizure certificate was “obtained through inhuman and degrading treatment,” it was not “relied upon to secure” his conviction and had “no bearing on the outcome of the proceedings.” <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22tabview%22:%5B%22document%22%5D%2C%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-207467%22%5D%7D>

Armenia and Azerbaijan filed cases against each other for human rights violations during the recent conflict and over the past 30 years, *Armenpress* and *Daily Sabah* reported. <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1042106.html>; <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/azerbaijan-suesarmenia-inechr-for-crimes-against-humanity>

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In an unusual petition, “the first of its kind to be submitted” to the Commission, “relatives of at least 34 Yemenis alleged to have been killed in American military actions” asked the Commission to “determine whether the deaths were unlawful,” the *Washington Post* reported. <https://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/article/Yemenis-file-rights-case-over-deadly-U-S-strikes-15900468.php?fbclid=IwAR2SRye6GDBXxcYtYCT0KICehHdQ7a5GCmMS-eoISbMyZaq3jji9iguvfA>

IACHR called “on states in Central and North America to ensure comprehensive protection for the rights of the individuals who make up the migrant caravan from Honduras.” Noting that more than 7,500 people are believed to have crossed into Guatemala on January 15-16, IACHR said it had access to reports that “law-enforcement officers and soldier hit migrants and used tear gas to disperse and stop the caravan.” Almost 3,000 were returned by bus to Honduras, while the rest continued on. “This happened in a context where at least 20 people tested positive for COVID-19, according to Guatemalan State data.” http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2021/016.asp

International Criminal Court (ICC). Mahamat Said Abdel Kani, charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity as a commander of the Seleka rebels in the Central African Republic, surrendered and was flown to the ICC. The ICC warrant for his arrest was issued “under seal” in January 2019. https://www.eurasiareview.com/26012021-central-african-republic-first-seleka-suspect-in-icc-custody/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29
<https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1561>

Two Brazilian indigenous leaders asked the Court to investigate president Jair Bolsonaro for crimes against humanity, *AFP* reported. The complaint said deforestation had increased “by 34.5% in a year, the assassination of indigenous leaders is at an 11-year high and environmental agencies have collapsed or faced threats.” <https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20210123-brazil-indigenous-leaders-sue-bolsonaro-for-killings-and-ecological-destruction?emci=b9860d46-135f-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&emdi=97face7d-165f-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&ceid=4606001>

The Syria Justice and Accountability Centre filed a “*communiqué* supported by witness testimony and video evidence” asking the Prosecutor to “open an investigation into crimes against humanity which may have been committed by Greece against refugees at the Greek-Turkish border and at reception and identification centers on the Aegean islands.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2020-03, 04. https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2021/01/28/sjac-calls-on-icc-prosecutor-to-investigate-crimes-against-humanity-committed-by-greece-against-refugees/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=19112153e1-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-19112153e1-9642896

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Four OECD “National Contact Points . . . will begin the process of investigating three international mining giants (BHP, Anglo American and Glencore) and Ireland’s state-owned energy provider, the ESB, over serious human rights abuses and devastating environmental pollution at the Cerrejon coal mine in Colombia,” reported the Global Legal Action Network. For the complaint with its cited evidence, see https://c5e65ece-003b-4d73-aa76-854664da4e33.filesusr.com/ugd/14ee1a_14d758179e494a7bb096875cf1f63c87.pdf; https://c5e65ece-003b-4d73-aa76-854664da4e33.filesusr.com/ugd/14ee1a_9e51053b5ec0401d95b0b68e00cf7103.pdf

United Nations. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons came into force. It “includes a comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear weapon activities,” *Jurist* reported. Fifty countries have ratified the treaty, but none of the nine known nuclear-armed states (U.S., U.K., Russia, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel) have signed on. <https://www.jurist.org/news/2021/01/un-treaty-prohibiting-nuclear-weapons-enters-into-force/>

Writing for *PassBlue*, Toby McIntosh reported surveying “27 core UN organizations to learn whether they conduct open meetings and relevant documents” and finding that “overall, about half (14) hold open meetings.” He wrote there is “no obvious correlation of confidentiality with subject matter,” as (for example) the World Health Organization’s executive board has open meetings while the International Telecommunications Union council has closed ones. Further, “only 14 of the 27 UN organizations have Freedom of Information policies that enable requests for agency documents.” He noted, “The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals include passing and implementing FOI laws.” <https://www.passblue.com/2021/01/25/un-agencies-are-not-exactly-zooming-toward-open-meetings/>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (UNHCR). The refugee agency said, in its annual release of statistics, that “despite an estimated 1.44 million refugees in urgent need of resettlement globally, only 22,770 were resettled through UNHCR” in 2020, the “lowest refugee resettlement numbers the agency has witnessed in almost two decades.” It attributed some of the problem to the pandemic, but also to low acceptances by states. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/1/600e79ea4/refugee-resettlement-record-low-2020-unhcr-calls-states-offer-places-save.html>

World/general news.

Business records. Mynor Padilla pled guilty to the 2009 killing of Adolfo Ich, an Indigenous leader who opposed Hudbay Minerals’ Fenix mine outside the town of El Estor. “The company faces ongoing civil lawsuits in Canada related to violence against Indigenous residents, including Ich’s killing,” the *Guardian* reported. After the verdict, Hudbay issued a statement saying, “We will review the court’s written decision once it is released. Any agreements made in the Guatemalan court do not affect our view of the facts or Hudbay’s liability in relation to civil matters currently before the Ontario court.” For some of the background on this long legal struggle, see *HRWG News* 2015-07 and 2017-04. <https://search.aol.com/click/?ytl=A2KIbNCbiPthAYASAppCWVH; ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1610348827/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fwww.theguardian.com%2fglobal-development%2f2021%2fjan%2f07%2fguatemala-nickel-mine-death-adolfo-ich/RK=0/RS=zncxM2NIM0qm1R42nproVI.WSmc->

A Dutch appeals court “held Royal Dutch Shell’s Nigerian subsidiary responsible for multiple oil pipeline leaks in the Niger Delta and ordered it to pay unspecified damages to farmers,” *Reuters* reported. The court also said Shell must install a leak detection system. Friends of the Earth said the ruling “marked the first time a multinational had been instructed by a Dutch court to uphold a duty of care for foreign operations.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2015-12. <https://news.trust.org/item/20210129100200-qq16o/>

Marks and Spencer “asked Oxfam to identify human rights and worker wellbeing issues in their supply chains as part of a collaborative research project.” Oxfam interviewed 390 workers “across food manufacturing sites in the UK and footwear factories in India supplying M&S.” According to Oxfam, the “important and consistent themes” from the interviews were “a lack of effective worker voice, concerns about speaking out, inadequate sick pay, the need for more transparent or fairer job progression processes, and difficulty in meeting living costs in some instances.” They found that the issues “were generally more serious for women than for men in both countries, and for all workers interviewed in India compared with those interviewed in the UK.” Quite remarkable openness by M&S. <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/handle/10546/621145>

The anti-slavery group Reporter Brasil said its investigation showed six meatpacking firms bought cattle from ranches that used slave labor, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. JBS, “one of the world’s largest meat processing firms, bought cattle from two ranches that later ended up on Brazil’s ‘dirty list’ of companies that employed slave labor,” Reporter Brasil said, but the head of the Pastoral Land Commission’s anti-slavery campaign said that list only includes the names of those “unlucky enough to get caught.” Brazil’s leading anti-slavery labor prosecutor said, “We need to map the entire supply chain and then build a legal argument to make those at the top responsible.” JBS argued that to “block producers based only on inspections . . . would be a disregard for that producer’s right of defense before public authorities.”

https://news.trust.org/item/20210105182738-3cvy6?utm_campaign=trafficking&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=mainListing&utm_content=link5&utm_contentItemId=20210105182738-3cvy6

Toyota agreed to pay the U.S. government \$180 million as a fine for “systematically” failing from 2005 to 2015 “to report defects that interfered with how its cars controlled tailpipe emissions, violating standards design to protect public health and the environment from harmful air pollutants,” the *New York Times* reported. A company spokesman said Toyota recognized “that some of our reporting protocols fell short of our own high standards.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/14/climate/toyota-emissions-fine.html>

Environment. A U.S. research team analyzed 18 years of satellite data measuring the amounts of human-made particles in the air and fossil-fuel carbon dioxide emission estimates and compared those findings to the gross domestic product data of countries. They found the nations with the fastest economic growth suffer the most severe pollution, *Eurasia Review* reported. https://www.eurasiareview.com/27012021-satellite-data-reveals-bonds-between-emissions-pollution-and-economy/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29; for the research, see <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/abc9e1/pdf>

A research team in Argentina “found that, since the 1990s, up to 25% of reported bee species are no longer being reported in global records, despite a large increase in the number of records available,” *Eurasia Review* reported. The team used the “Global Biodiversity Information Facility . . . an international network of databases, which contains over three centuries’ worth of records from museum, universities, and private citizens, accounting for over 20,000 known bee species from around the world.” Bees are the world’s most important pollinator of food crops; the lead researcher said, “It’s not a bee cataclysm yet, but what we can say is that wild bees are not exactly thriving.” https://www.eurasiareview.com/25012021-quarter-of-known-bee-species-havent-appeared-in-public-records-since-1990s/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Justice. The Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians published a December report on the rise in attacks on legislators globally, *PassBlue* reported. “The committee found 552 members of parliaments, men and women, in 42 countries whose rights were allegedly violated in 2020,” up from 533 in 2019. “The region with the most cases was the Americas, with Venezuela leading.” The report said, “The figures reveal that women MPs are significantly more exposed to torture, ill treatment and acts of violence, with 34% of women parliamentarians considered . . . affected, compared

with 18% of male colleagues.” <https://www.passblue.com/2021/01/04/for-women-in-politics-globally-the-job-can-mean-abuse-jail-or-death/>

Labor. *Motherboard* obtained documents showing that IRI Consultants, a “union avoidance” consulting firm, collected “detailed personal information on each rank-and-file employee in order to assess their union sympathies” and help employers “defeat workers’ efforts to organize for higher wages, benefits, and their improved safety and well-being at work.” In a spreadsheet IRI used to “thwart a union drive at two Seattle [U.S.] hospitals” the consulting firm “regularly gathered information about 83 rank-and-file hospital employees’ personality, temperament, motivations, ethnicity, family background, spouses’ employment, finances, health issues, work ethic, job performance, disciplinary history, and involvement in union activity in the lead-up to a union election.” https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkdqaz/lazy-money-oriented-single-mother-how-union-busting-firms-compile-dossiers-on-employees?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=210106

Medical records. A research team followed 712 U.S. women, aged 78 without dementia, to see if air pollution contributes to Alzheimer’s and dementia risk. Using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency “monitoring data and air quality simulations” the researchers were able to estimate the everyday outdoor level of unhealthy pollutants (chemicals car exhaust, smoke, dust) suspended in the air in the locations where the women lived. They compared that estimate with brain scans of the women taken five years apart. Writing in *The Conversation*, one of the team said, “When we compared the brain scans of older women from locations with high levels of [pollutants] to those with low levels, we found dementia risk increased by 24% over the five years.” https://theconversation.com/air-pollution-may-contribute-to-alzheimers-and-dementia-risk-heres-what-were-learning-from-brain-scans-148776?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%205%202021%20-%201826217762&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%205%202021%20-%201826217762+Version+B+CID_23dee4b1984cd9ff1725442504fa41c7&utm_source=campaign_monitor_us&utm_term=Air%20pollution%20may%20contribute%20to%20Alzheimers%20and%20dementia%20risk%20%20heres%20what%20were%20learning%20from%20brain%20scans

Microsoft, health insurer Cigna Corp, the Mayo Clinic and others formed a Vaccination Credential Initiative “to help people store encrypted digital copies of their immunization records in a digital wallet of their choice,” *Reuters* reported. “Individuals without smart phones would receive paper-based QR [Quick Response] codes which link to their vaccine records.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20210114121756-i3lpf/>

Migration. Two nongovernmental organizations, AVID and Innovation Law Lab, released a report “detailing the immigration experiences” of 153 individuals from 16 countries who were detained at the Otero County Processing Center, operated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Chaparral, New Mexico. The most common category of concern was medical issues while in ICE detention: “Both mental and physical ailments go untreated. Moreover, mental ailments can be so acute that individuals turn to self harm and suicide attempts.” The complaints were derived from records made by staff and volunteers of the El Paso Immigration Collaborative while talking with the individuals about their legal rights. <https://avid.chihuahuan.org/2021/01/02/process-by-torment/>

On the last day of 2020, the U.S. “Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act” became law. Among its provisions is a requirement that the Justice Department, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Government Accountability office submit annual reports with the “data on the total number of migrant lives lost on the border and assessments of government efforts to identify and resolve the cases of the missing and the dead,” *The Intercept* reported. https://theintercept.com/2021/01/05/migrant-deaths-law/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter

The Democratic staff of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee released a report on the U.S. “asylum cooperative agreements” that send persons seeking asylum in the U.S. to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador where they are to apply for asylum. The report said that of the 945 asylum seekers sent to Guatemala, not a single one had been granted asylum, as fact confirmed by a spokeswoman for Guatemala’s national migration institute, the *Washington Post* reported. The Senate report printed an annex of key documents related to the U.S.-Guatemala agreement. <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/ranking/release/menendez-publishes-new-report-documenting-cruelty-coercion-and-legal-contortions-in-trump-administrations-asylum-agreements>; <https://search.aol.com/click/?ytl=AwrJ7JyLsAVgUKUA6CJpCWVH; ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzQEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=161>

[1014411/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fwww.stripes.com%2fnews%2fus%2freport-says-us-sent-central-american-asylum-seekers-to-guatemala-but-none-were-granted-it-1.658784/RK=0/RS=woF_cJgfXPi3q79.qe3ZQO9WoAc-](https://www.stripes.com/news/2021/01/14/11/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fwww.stripes.com%2fnews%2fus%2freport-says-us-sent-central-american-asylum-seekers-to-guatemala-but-none-were-granted-it-1.658784/RK=0/RS=woF_cJgfXPi3q79.qe3ZQO9WoAc-)

Privacy. *Motherboard* reported that Salaat First (Prayer Times), an app that reminds Muslims when to pray, is “recording and selling their granular location information to a data broker, which in turn sells location data to other clients.” Another app, Muslim Prom, sells “its users’ location data to a company called X-Mode Social which sells products to the U.S. military via contractors.” *Motherboard* obtained a “large dataset” of Salaat First data and reported that it “contains precise latitude and longitude of app users, their phone model, operating system, IP address . . . timestamp” and “the user’s unique advertising ID—a particularly powerful piece of data that allowed *Motherboard* to filter the cache to specific users and then follow that person’s movements through time.” <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xgz4n3/muslim-app-location-data-salaat-first>

Personal lending apps that give small-ticket loans for short periods with high interest rates “have mushroomed in India and elsewhere in recent years as smartphone use surged,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. A researcher who studied a dozen Indian lending apps said that although most users gave the lender permission to access “the borrower’s phone’s location data, contacts, apps and text messages for the credit risk assessment,” borrowers are not understanding that “if a person doesn’t pay back a loan, their data can be sold—so the material implications of exchanging data for lending are more palpable even when the intent of data collection is made explicit.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20210129082306-xfbjk/>

Slavery. The U.K. Modern Slavery Act was adopted in 2015. It requires “commercial organisations that operate in the U.K. and have an annual turnover above 36 million pounds to produce a statement setting out the steps they are taking to address and prevent the risk of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.” The NGO Business & Human Rights Resource Centre announced that in 2021 the U.K. Government will launch a “public registry of modern slavery statements,” and the registry that the NGO has been maintaining of over 16,000 statements will be closed. https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/modern-slavery-statements/?mc_cid=71db5a00c9&mc_eid=ff6556540

Technology. Facebook’s new Oversight Board ruled on its first five cases of content removed and released four of the five for restoration, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The one ban upheld was a post “the purported to show historical photos of churches in Baku, Azerbaijan, with a caption that Facebook said indicated ‘disdain’ for Azerbaijani people.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20201204135105-4wy8q/>

Parler, a social network used by far-right groups, was “deplatformed” by Amazon Web Services, Google and Apple in the wake the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6. According to *Motherboard*, “When rumors of Parler’s imminent deletion began to circulate, donk_enby, who has been researching Parler for months, understood that a litany of important information about America’s most prominent far-right extremist groups was at risk of being permanently hidden from the public eye. In a monumental effort, donk_enby and a few other fellow hackers and researchers managed to capture and archive nearly every post, photo and video on Parler before it was shut down.” The download is now available on line at <https://ddosecrets.com/wiki/Parler>. https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7vqew/the-hacker-who-archived-parler-explains-how-she-did-it-and-what-comes-next?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=210112

The host for the Parler cache is a “transparency collective of data activists known as Distributed Denial of Secrets” or DDoSecrets. In a controversial move, it published “a massive new set of data . . . all collected from dark web sites where the information was originally leaked online by ransomware hackers,” including more than 750,000 emails, photos and documents from five companies. An analyst and researcher for the security firm Recorded Future told *WIRED* that “amplifying the leaks from ransomware groups only encourages them to threaten those leaks against more victims.” https://www.wired.com/story/ddosecrets-ransomware-leaks/?bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&hasha=8fcd7efd9e9d6389b9f914ad34a5948d&hashb=be86af3880f5d49a71f804266e79b70bb4fa408d&hashc=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_010620&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=list1_p4

World War II. The Seoul, South Korea, Central District Court “ordered the Japanese government to pay \$91,800 each to 12 Korean women forced into sexual slavery for Japan’s troops during World War II,” the *New York Times* reported. The Japanese government said it would “never accept” the order, citing a December 2015 agreement with South Korea on Japan’s responsibility for wartime sexual slavery and the

establishment of a fund to provide old age care for the women. For background, see *HRWG News* 2015-12.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/world/asia/south-korea-comfort-women-japan.html>;
<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/01/f2d05673e304-s-korea-seeks-amicable-solution-to-comfort-women-issue-with-japan.html>

The Arolsen Archives launched a project #everynamecounts, “a crowdsourcing campaign . . . which aims to establish a digital memorial to the people persecuted by the Nazis.” The Archives is uploading images of documents from which volunteers will transcribe data. <https://arolsen-archives.org/en/news/successful-kick-off-for-everynamecounts/>

The Netherlands branch of the Red Cross transferred to the Jewish Cultural Quarter of Amsterdam the “ownership of more than 140,000 personal cards of Dutch Jews” that were created by the Jewish Council of Amsterdam during the war. More than 75% were annotated by the Red Cross after the war with “the date of deportation in red ink.” The Red Cross transferred the rest of its wartime archives to the national archives. <https://www.jta.org/2021/01/25/global/in-amsterdam-the-personal-card-of-every-holocaust-victim-returns-to-jewish-hands>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Bangladesh/France. In a ruling believed to be the first of its kind, at least in France, “a Bangladeshi man with asthma has avoided deportation from France after his lawyer argued that he risked a severe deterioration in his condition, and possibly premature death, due to the dangerous levels of pollution in his homeland,” the *Guardian* reported. “Air pollution, both ambient and household, was an extremely high risk factor in the 572,600 deaths in Bangladesh that were caused by noncommunicable disease in 2018, according to WHO [World Health Organization] figures.” https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/12/bangladeshi-man-with-asthma-wins-france-deportation-fight?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Democratic Republic of Congo/France. French prosecutors opened investigations against former Congolese warlord Roger Lumbala, who was arrested in Paris in December for “complicity in crimes against humanity” during the 1998-2003 Congo war. The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its member organizations in the DRC welcomed the arrest, pointing out that they “have documented numerous crimes committed between 2002 and 2003 in the East of the country, published several reports and transmitted testimonies of victims and witnesses . . . to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court which opened in June 2004 an investigation into international crimes committed in the DRC since July 2002.” In addition, in 2010 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published a “Mapping Report” on the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in the DRC between 1998 and 2003. The French prosecutors will have ample documentary evidence already gathered. https://www.fidh.org/spip.php?page=imprimer_article&id_article=26382

Israel/Palestine. Israel’s Lod District Court ordered Mohammad Bakri, the Palestinian director of the 2002 documentary *Jenin, Jenin*, to pay \$55,000 in damages and legal expenses “for defamation” to an Israeli army officer who appears in the film. Further, “all 23 copies of the film will be seized, and it will be banned from screening in all Israeli cinemas.” The film presents, without commentary, interviews with Palestinians who lived in Jenin refugee camp during the Israeli military invasion in April 2002. <https://search.aol.com/click/?ylt=A2KIbZxP2QlgC5MAXwBpCWWH:ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzIEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Nj/RV=2/RE=1611286991/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fwww.middleeasteye.net%2fnews%2fpalestine-israel-bakri-ban-jenin-documentary/RK=0/RS=UxfUlgG1F9PPm9YezotgghZTHBg->

Kosovo/Serbia. Kosovo Serb opposition party leader Oliver Ivanovic was assassinated in January 2018. At the time, Serbia’s president said “Belgrade had ‘operational knowledge’ about the case and even named several ethnic Albanians as potential suspects,” *BIRN* reported, but since then the case stalled. A Kosovo prosecutor said, “Serbia is hiding evidence. Serbia has wiretaps and has refused to hand them over. All they have given us is some phone numbers.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/15/cover-up-claims-shadow-unsolved-murder-of-kosovo-serb-politician/>

Latin America. *InSight Crime* published its annual “homicide round-up,” calculating murder rates “based on available homicide data and the country’s 2020 estimated population total, according to the Population Reference Bureau.” The region’s highest homicide rate was in Jamaica, with 46.5 killings per 100,000 people “according to official data published by the Constabulary Force.” The United Nations considers a

homicide rate of 10 per 100,000 people or above an “epidemic,” and by that measure 14 Latin American countries had a murder epidemic in 2020. <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/2020-homicide-round-up/>

Mideast wars. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission said up to 3,000 civilians were killed and over 5,000 wounded in war in 2020. This was a drop of 21% since 2019. It said the Taliban were responsible for 4,568 of the deaths and injuries, which a Taliban spokesman rejected. The Afghan government, said the *New York Times*, is taking ever “more drastic measures to control the flow of information” on Afghan war deaths. <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-169561>; <https://openasia.org/en/2021/01/afghan-leaders-sideline-spokesmen-in-an-escalating-misinformation-war/>

The U.S. NGO National Security Archive published “thousands of internal communications” from the U.S. Secretary of Defense between 2001 and 2003 that it obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. It said the documents “will be an invaluable research tool for study of Iraq and Afghanistan wars.” <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/foia/2021-02-01/rumsfeld-lacked-intel-who-enemies-two-years-after-afghanistan-invasion-newly-published-snowflakes?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=63d51ed3-9a5d-49f4-975f-871d45c4ced6>

Spain/Uruguay. Spanish police arrested Uruguayan ex-Colonel Eduardo Ferro, accused of crimes against humanity during Uruguay’s dictatorship (1973-1985), *teleSUR* reported. According to *La Provincia Diario de las Palmas*, Ferro was tried in 1985 for the kidnapping and disappearance of the communist militant Oscar Tassino but a 1986 amnesty law allowed him to escape conviction. After the amnesty law was repealed in 2011, the case was reopened but Ferro had left Uruguay. One hopes the 1985 and 2011 case files and evidence can be retrieved. Thanks to Antonio González Quintana for the link. https://www.eldiario.es/comunitat-valenciana/detencion-peniscola-militar-uruguayo-acusado-delitos-lesa-humanidad-pone-anos-fuga-reabre-extradicion_1_7175194.html ; <https://www.laprovincia.es/sociedad/2021/01/29/oculto-cinco-anos-militar-buscado-32283159.html> ; https://www.eldiario.es/comunitat-valenciana/detencion-peniscola-militar-uruguayo-acusado-delitos-lesa-humanidad-pone-anos-fuga-reabre-extradicion_1_7175194.html

National news.

Argentina. Following the adoption of the law allowing abortion for any reason during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, the government announced it will drop criminal charges against women accused of having abortions. However, “most women detained in relation to illicit abortions or obstetric complications in Argentina—including 30 with life sentences--have actually been charged with other crimes, like homicide, which will complicate efforts to exonerate them under the new law legalizing abortion,” *Folha de S. Paulo* reported. A thorough search of court records is necessary. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/10/victory-for-argentinan-women-as-abortion-charges-are-dropped>; <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2021/01/argentinan-presas-por-abortarem-buscam-absolvicao-apos-legalizacao.shtml>

Brazil. “More than 42,000 veteran politicians who ran for office in 2020 had changed their self-declared race since their last campaign, potentially to gain access to new campaign financing earmarked for Black candidates,” professor Andrew Janusz wrote in *The Conversation*. “Of the 28,764 winners who identified as Afro-Brazilian last year, 16%--4,580 people—had identified as a different race when they ran for office in 2016, data from Brazil’s Superior Electoral Court shows. Nearly all were previously registered as white.” <https://theconversation.com/thousands-of-brazilians-who-won-elections-as-black-candidates-in-2020-previously-ran-for-office-as-white-151363>

Burundi. The NGO International Crisis Group’s *Crisis Watch* reported that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission presented an “intermediary report” to parliament that focused on the 1972 mass killings. “Civil society platform FORSC . . . criticized it as biased, saying [the] truth commission relied on selected testimonies, did not investigate archives of local administrations, and solely focused on violence against [the] Hutu population, failing to address violence against Tutsis.” <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

Chile. Valparaiso Guarantee Court rejected a lawsuit brought by the military police (Carabineros) that accused the feminist group Las Tesis of inciting violence by broadcasting a video in which the group appeared outside a police station denouncing violence against women by performing the protest song “A Rapist on Your Way,” *teleSur* reported. https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Chile-Court-Rules-Out-a-Claim-Against-Feminist-Group-Las-Tesis-20210105-0007.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=12

The police officer who shot Camilo Catrillanca, a Mapuche farmer, in November 2018 was sentenced to 11 years in prison “with an extra five years for the attempted killing of a 15-year-old boy who was on a tractor with Catrillanca.” This conviction is significant, as the National Human Rights Institute presented 2,520 legal complaints against the armed forces in the year since the anti-government demonstrations that began in October 2019 but “only 31 of them have been investigated.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2018-11. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/29/chile-police-officer-mapuche-killing-sentenced>

The Children Defense Office (CDO) asked a court to protect a 17-year-old Mapuche girl “who was a victim of death threat from a police officer,” *teleSUR* reported. “The denunciation against the officer came after witnesses’ testimonies were collected by the CDO, one of which is an audiotape recording the violent threats against the victim,” the *Guardian* explained. https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Chile-Children-Office-Asks-Protection-for-a-Mapuche-Girl-20210115-0011.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=8

China. *The Intercept* obtained “a massive police database” which is “the product of a reporting tool developed by private defence company Landasoft and used by the Chinese government to facilitate police surveillance of citizens in Xinjiang.” Concerned primarily with the city of Urumqi, the database “includes policing reports that confirm and provide additional details about many elements of the persecution and large-scale internment of Muslims in the area” and “how Chinese authorities are analyzing and refining the information they collect.” https://theintercept.com/2021/01/29/china-uyghur-muslim-surveillance-police/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter

The Fair Labor Association (FLA) is an NGO, made up of businesses, civil society organizations, and universities, that promotes adherence to international and national labor laws. Founded in 1999, it has “never told companies a specific country or region was banned for sourcing because there have always been ways to address labor issues through effective due diligence”—until now. On 23 December the FLA issued a statement saying, “Given the high risk of forced labor, the overwhelming evidence of human rights abuses, and the multiple layers of government sanction, the FLA is prohibiting sourcing and production (including direct and indirect sourcing of raw materials, inputs, or finished products) from Xinjiang.” <https://www.fairlabor.org/blog/entry/fla-statement-sourcing-china>

Colombia. Eight ex-commanders of the former guerrilla group FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) were accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity by Colombia’s Special Jurisdiction for Peace. The 322-page indictment, based on the testimonies of victims and ex-combatants and evidence in six databases, is the first against former FARC leaders since the 2016 peace agreement was signed. <https://www.jep.gov.co/Sala-de-Prensa/Paginas/La-JEP-imputa-al-antiguo-Secretariado-de-las-FARC-Ep-cr%C3%ADmenes-de-lesa-humanidad-.aspx>

Egypt. A man whose aunt was in El Husseineya Central Hospital filmed the chaos as the hospital ran out of oxygen for patients. At least four people died. Posted on line, the video “went viral.” The hospital denied the deaths were due to an oxygen shortage, and the man was interrogated by security officers and blamed for “violating rules barring visitation and filming inside hospitals.” The *New York Times* had six doctors in the U.S. and Egypt review the video and “spotted details that support the finding of an oxygen failure.” The government now requires all hospital visitors “to leave their phones at the door.” https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/18/world/middleeast/egypt-hospital-oxygen-covid.html?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=e9537b4c29-MR_COPY_13&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-e9537b4c29-149736437

El Salvador. The archbishop of San Salvador refused to allow Judge Jorge Guzman, who is investigating the 1981 El Mozote massacre, access to the church archives about the event, even though a warrant for the use had been issued. After a public outcry, the archbishop changed his mind and said the judge could inspect the documents and “will be issued certified copies of any material he considers helpful so authorities can pursue justice.” <https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/salvadoran-archbishop-refuses-open-records-el-mozote-massacre?emci=d25f89f9-285b-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&emdi=c4446119-f75b-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&ceid=4606001> ; <https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/after-outcry-salvadoran-archbishop-will-grant-access-archives-massacre>; https://elfaro.net/es/202101/el_salvador/25164/Juez-revisar%C3%A1-documentos-ropa-y-proyectiles-de-la-masacre-del-Mozote-en-archivos-de-la-Iglesia.htm

Gambia. Before the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), Ousman Sowe, the current head of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), testified on the destruction of evidence after the fall of the Yahya Jammeh dictatorship (1994-2017). In public hearings TRRC disclosed that “of the 571 detentions registered with the Agency, 295 were illegal and no adequate information was available to determine the legality of the remaining 276,” reported *Justice Information*. Sowe provided the detention records that contained this data, but “the year 2004—the year Sowe was head of NIA investigations—does not appear in the files, suggesting that the Agency was not recording detentions at that time or that the file was missing.” Sowe has been accused of burning documents, a charge he denies. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/46424-gambie-espion-qui-en-savait-trop-ou-pas-assez.html>

Guatemala. “Government data show acute malnutrition among the under-fives rose by 80% in Guatemala in 2020 compared to 2019,” *Reuters* reported. “The government said the jump was partly due to improved methodology. However, data gathered by Oxfam last year also showed large increases in families facing food shortages, including a four-fold jump in severe shortages” in the eastern highlands. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-guatemala-hunger/guatemalan-families-mourn-death-of-children-as-hunger-spreads-idUSKBN29K1PU?emci=9c65ac2a-8f59-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&emdi=655f692e-9059-eb11-a607-00155d43c992&ceid=4606001>

In a new report, the NGO Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala said “1,004 defenders were assaulted from January to December 15, 2020. Among those, 15 were murdered and 22 survived a murder attempt.” https://www.omct.org/files/2021/01/26281/guatemala_unadeudasinsaldar.pdf

Haiti. The Human Rights Service (HRS) of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on the human rights violations and abuses during protests in 2018 and 2019. “In Haiti’s ten departments, the HRS documented 131 human rights violations and abuses during the 2018 protests, including against 19 women and 9 minors. In 2019, 567 cases of human rights violations and abuses were documented, mostly during the September to December protests, including against 43 women and 47 minors. Overall, non-state actors instigated 66% of the incidents while the disproportionate use of force by law-enforcement agencies accounted for 34% of the documented cases.” This report again demonstrates the importance of UN records and the need for their careful preservation. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/LACRegion/Pages/HTReports.aspx>

India. The Intelligence Bureau has a “national database of all terrorists in the country,” *The Week* reported. It includes “interrogation reports running into thousands,” with Jammu and Kashmir alone providing “more than 1,000 names and interrogation reports.” https://search.aol.com/click/?ylt=AwrJ7FV7ngVgHeAA_RfPcWVH:ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1611009788/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2fwww.theweek.in%2fnews%2findia%2f2021%2f01%2f13%2fib-sets-up-national-memory-bank-to-share-info-on-terrorists.html/RK=0/RS=QdwFMZOMFyrVNA48vSNrIbuqyMo-

Lucknow announced plans to set up five AI-based cameras that “will become active as soon as the expressions of a woman in distress change” and send “an alert to the nearest police station,” the police commissioner said. A staff member of the NGO Internet Freedom Foundation called the idea “absurd.” Privacy experts worry that the system could breach people’s privacy as there is “little clarity on how the technology works, how the data is stored, and who can access the data.” A women’s rights activist said “police often turn away women who go to register complaints or fail to take action.” Uttar Pradesh, where Lucknow is located, is the state with the highest number of reported crimes against women in 2019. <https://news.trust.org/item/20210122071135-tf64t/>

Ireland. The long-awaited report of the Commission on Mother and Baby Homes was released and the prime minister apologized for the state’s complicity in the treatment of unmarried mothers and their children. In 3,000 pages, the Commission documented the abuses between the 1920s and 1998 at 18 homes, through which passed 56,000 unmarried mothers and 57,000 children. Infant mortality at the institutions in many years was double the national average; the investigators called the average death rate of 15% of those born in the homes “appalling.” Most of the babies were given up for adoption, often without the full consent of the mothers. The acknowledgements section of the report thanks “archivists in the National Archives of Ireland, in the local authority archives and diocesan archives mentioned throughout the report. All the archivists involved were exceptionally helpful and enthusiastic.” For background, *SAHR News* 2020-10, 11, 12. For the report: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4b3d-final-report-of-the-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes/>; <https://www.rte.ie/news/2021/01/12/1189187-mother-and-baby-report/>

Israel. Writing in *The Financial Express*, Adam Raz, the author of a recent book compiling military documents from the first years of Israel's statehood, said, "The origins of the brutality documented in all its ugliness last week--an Israeli soldier shooting an unarmed Palestinian who was trying to protect the electric generator he needs to function, amid the abject poverty of the South Hebron Hills--date back quite a few decades, to the period of military rule in Israel proper. Testimony from recently declassified documents, together with historical records in archives, shed light on the acute violence that prevailed in the 'state within a state' that Israel foisted upon extensive areas of the country where Arab citizens lived, from 1948 until 1966." Thanks to Anna Svenson for the link. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/print/how-israel-tormented-arabs-in-its-first-decades-1610719949>

Italy. The Court of Bologna ruled against the food delivery company Deliveroo because the algorithm it used to assign deliveries to delivery workers ("riders") discriminated against those who went on strike, violating labor laws. The trade union CGIL brought the case against Deliveroo, saying the workers who had participated in a strike were assigned less and less deliveries to do. The company claimed there was no discrimination because the algorithm that assigns deliveries to riders is neutral, but also said the system is no longer in use. Thanks to Giulia Barrera for the link. https://www.collettiva.it/rubriche/consultagiuridica/2021/01/02/news/1_algoritmo_frank_e_cieco_ma_ci_vede_benissimo_quando_punisce_chi_sciopera-736020/; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathankeane/2021/01/05/italian-court-finds-deliveroo-rating-algorithm-was-unfair-to-riders/?sh=c59e59f22a19>

Kosovo. The Pristina Basic Court acquitted former premier Agim Ceku and 11 others who were alleged to have added around 19,000 people to the list of war veterans, allowing them to claim benefits, *BIRN* reported. A former prosecutor challenged the government to release the audio recordings of the meetings of the government's commission to verify the veterans. The current prosecutor said the audio was part of the evidence but blamed the lack of "technical capacity of the court, such as a lack of equipment" as the reason the recordings were not played at the trials. The prosecutor said he will appeal the verdict. For background, see *HRWG News* 2018-04, 08, 09. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/20/kosovo-prosecution-to-contest-ex-pms-acquittal-in-war-veterans-case/>; <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/19/kosovo-acquits-ex-pm-of-falsifying-list-of-war-veterans/>

The Election Complaints and Appeals Panel barred Emin Neziraj from running as a candidate for an ethnic Bosniak party because he allegedly is Albanian, *BIRN* reported. The Central Election Commission had certified him as a candidate, noting that the "civil registry database" does not mention ethnicity, and the media office of the Interior Ministry said, "Ethnicity is not recorded in the civil status documents or the central civil registry." Neziraj has appealed to the Supreme Court. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/29/kosovo-election-complaint-highlights-problem-in-proving-ethnic-identity/>

Malta. A member of the Nationalist Party claimed in an opinion piece in the *Times of Malta*: "In Malta, deficient documentation has enabled disgraced former prime minister Joseph Muscat to get away with murder." He cited a long list of times when minutes, deeds, and other documents have been lost, are missing or non-existent or "where records existed, they were wilfully destroyed before the police could get their hands on them." <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/absent-records-hide-culpability-kevin-cassar.846422>

Mexico. *Reforma* said a witness told investigators that Army soldiers "held and interrogated" some of the 43 Iguala students who disappeared six years ago. *AP* reported that the "Interior Department confirmed that the testimony was part of the case files and said it would file charges against whoever leaked it." For background, see *SAHR News* 2020-05, 07. https://apnews.com/article/mexico-2d6e1169beb7c61e7d915dc38b17f1dd?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AP%20Morning%20Wire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

According to the Executive Commission for Attention to Victims, between 2012 and 2020 "a total of 185 people were directly or indirectly victims of human rights violations or of some crime committed by elements of the Mexican Navy Secretariat (Semar)," reported *Animal Politico*. All 185 are registered in the National Registry of Victims, but only 81 have been compensated for the harm done. <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2021/01/marina-victimas-violaciones-derechos-humanos/>

The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) has a digital platform called Collective Rights Violated which holds the results of its mapping of 14 extractive and infrastructure projects that affect "at least" 105

Mexican communities. RRI found the right to collective control of the territory and the right to a healthy environment was violated in 64.3% of the projects, “free, prior and informed consent” was violated in 57% of the cases, and a whopping 85.7% of the time there was a disturbance of cultural and sacred sites, not to mention water pollution, soil pollution and deforestation. Thirty people from the communities were attacked as the projects developed. https://www.servindi.org/actualidad-noticias/13/01/2021/mexico-alto-impacto-de-derechos-vulnerados-por-industria-energetica?fbclid=IwAR3_XXHhYvKCFU2NPQJQJ3_qjqor2D-PoggJSKTLsnb2uMiMMboHV7mQqdc

Montenegro. The new head of the National Security Agency “accused some of the agency’s officers of destroying confidential documents on illegal wiretapping and surveillance” and started an internal investigation, *BIRN* reported. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/21/montenegro-security-service-probes-destroyed-documents-on-illegal-spying/>

Myanmar. The NGO Justice for Myanmar released a report titled “Nodes of Corruption, Lines of Abuse: How Mytel, Viettel and a global network of businesses support the international crimes of the Myanmar military.” Viettel is a “major military conglomerate whose primary mission is to research, manufacture and sell arms.” The report is based “on open source material and a trove of files from a data breach, in which Viettel Construction Myanmar (VCM) inadvertently published internal files online relating to Viettel operations in Myanmar from 2017-2020. The documents include detailed plans of base transceiver stations, operational instructions, inventories, receipts, photographs, and internal policies.” The NGO said it took “measures to protect the privacy of Viettel staff in documents made public.” https://jfm-files.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/public/JFM_Nodes_of_Corruption_low_res.pdf

Netherlands. On the night of 3 December 2020, a mural called “The Wall of Surinamese and Black Heroes” was vandalized by unknown perpetrators. The mural was created by artists Hedy Tjin and Dewi “Butterfingas” Elsinga in the summer of 2020 as an extension of the exhibition “Surinamers in Nederland: 100 jaar Emancipatie en Strijd” (“Surinamese People in the Netherlands: 100 years of Emancipation and Struggle”) and was part of the building that housed The Black Archives (established in 2016 to document the history of black emancipation in the Netherlands). The Black Archives called the vandalism “an attempt at racist intimidation.” Some of the Archives’ staff members have been victims of real-time and online intimidation, including an extreme-right attack that took place in November 2019 during a work meeting of the NGO Kick Out Zwarte Piet (Kick Out Black Pete) in The Hague. No arrests were made for the attack. Thanks to Antoon De Baets for the information. [Vandalizing the Building of Vereniging Ons Suriname and The Black Archives Is an Attempt to Racist Intimidation](#); [Verklaring KNHG t.a.v. aantasting pand van The Black Archives](#) (press release; 4 December 2020); Thijs Niemantsverdriet, “Interview Mitchell Esajas en Jessica de Abreu – Black Archives,” *NRC Handelsblad* (29 December 2020), 12–13.

Pakistan. The *South Asia Intelligence Review* reported on terrorism and counter-terrorism in Balochistan province. Of Pakistan’s 506 terrorism-related fatalities in 2020, Balochistan alone had 215, an increase in violence against both civilians and Security Force personnel. The president of the Balochistan National Party said “death squads have been reactivated” and that 1,800 people disappeared between 20 July and the end of the year. The Chief Justice of Pakistan, hearing a “petition at its Quetta registry seeking recovery of missing persons in Balochistan, categorically rejected the inquiry report submitted by the Police. The Chief Justice observed: Police officials do not know how to investigate cases.” <https://www.satp.org/south-asia-intelligence-review-Volume-19-No-29#assessment1>

Peru. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published the report of its November visit. It said police “used unnecessary and excessive force when faced with mass protests between 9 and 15 November 2020.” “Referencing available audio and video recordings, interviews with victims and witnesses, as well as medical records, the report says that police fired pellets from 12-gauge shotguns and tear gas canisters directly at people’s heads and upper bodies, indiscriminately and from close range.” Among the recommendations is to “provide an accessible and updated register of detained individuals” and to make sure the register incorporates all elements of information required by the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and is updated and “freely accessible to families and lawyers.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/media.aspx?IsMediaPage=true>

Romania. The High Court “ruled that using someone else’s identity to create a fake social media account is a criminal offence, after a man opened a fake Facebook account to publish naked images of his ex-

girlfriend.” The Court called it digital fraud, *BIRN* reported. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/26/online-impersonation-is-a-crime-romanian-court-rules/>

Russia. After Bellingcat, the nongovernment investigative group, made public the itineraries of ten known members of the Federal Security Service (FSB) team that poisoned Alexei Navalny, it received “more than 500 contributions from volunteers, journalists, and other media, some of which pointed to previously unknown coincidences between squad members’ presence and unexplained deaths.” After further investigation, Bellingcat concluded that the poison squad can be linked to “suspicious deaths of three public figures between 2014 and 2019.” <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2021/01/27/navalny-poison-squad-implicated-in-murders-of-three-russian-activists/>

Police used facial recognition technology in Moscow and other Russian cities to identify people to be arrested for taking part in the protests after the arrest of Alexei Navalny, *Eurasia Review* reported. https://www.eurasiareview.com/01022021-video-facial-recognition-technology-used-to-make-arrests-after-january-23-navalny-protest-oped/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Serbia. A research fellow at the Max Planck Institute in Germany investigated the issue of addresses of ethnic Albanians in Serbia being made “passive” and found that, although hard data is lacking, since 2015 around 4,000 Albanians in Mevedja and around 2,000 Albanians in Bujanovac have had their addresses “made inactive.” *BIRN* explained, “Serbia has long had an interest in reducing the size of the Albanian ethnic minority in Serbia, partly to quash any potential claims by mainly ethnic Albanian Kosovo to the southern part of its territory.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/25/serbias-ethnic-albanians-fear-belgrade-is-silently-deleting-addresses/>

Singapore. “Police will be able to access data collected by Singapore’s covid-19 contact tracing system for use in criminal investigations, a senior official said,” *MIT Technology Review* reported. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/01/05/1015734/singapore-contact-tracing-police-data-covid>

South Africa. The Department of Home Affairs issued a draft policy in which the government would obtain a photograph and fingerprint of “every baby born in South Africa for a digital register,” give the child a digital number “and link this data to parents’ identity numbers, which are printed on all ID documents,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The director of a law firm specializing in data privacy issues warned there needs to be significant oversight “to ensure that any system that is implemented is not subject to abuse.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20210107190442-d8qf6/>

South Korea. An area in northeast South Korea known as the “Punch Bowl” was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting during the Korean War. After the war, an estimated 80% of the original owners of the land were in North Korea, separated from their lands by the border. The South Korea government allotted those lands to South Koreans displaced by the war, and “were told by the government in the South that they would be allowed to keep the land if they cultivated it for 10 years,” the *New York Times* reported. A law in 2020 allowed the government to declare the land “state-owned and sell or lease it to the settlers at special rates,” with the “proceeds from the transactions . . . saved to compensate the original landowners, should they return” from the North. Now the debate is over how much the settlers should pay. “Since the government’s original promise was never recorded, officials could find no legal ground to give the land for free,” said an official from Korea’s civil rights commission. https://flipboard.com/topic/seoul/the-korean-war-emptied-the-town-those-who-rebuilt-it-may-now-be-rewarded/a-pdfzuxvmQTKRo_MRcM8O7w%3Aa%3A3195393-808f3f5c49%2Fnytimes.com

South Sudan. The Cabinet approved the establishment of a hybrid war crimes court. The African Union will be the government’s partner; the court will address crimes committed since the outbreak of civil war in December 2013, *Eye Radio* reported. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/31/glimmer-hope-south-sudans-victims>

Spain. Archiveros Españoles en la Función Pública (AEFP), an association that is a member of ICA-SAHR, and 40 other associations of archivists, human rights defenders and historical memory groups proposed an amendment to the government’s draft Democratic Memory Act. The portions proposed for amendment are those regulating access to fonds or records of interest for transitional justice purposes. https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/40-colectivos-piden-nueva-ley-memoria-permita-acceso-archivos-faciliten-guerra-civil_1_7168558.html#click=https://t.co/R23MagTVYj

AEFP also sent a statement on the role of archivists and records managers as potential whistleblowers to the government's public consultation portal regarding the Spain's adoption of the European Union directive on whistleblower protection. The AEFP comments are based on the *Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists and Records Managers in Support of Human Rights*, Principles 15 and 16, on whistleblowers. Thanks to Antonio González Quintana for both items.

Sri Lanka. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report warning that “the failure of Sri Lanka to address past violations has significantly heightened the risk of human rights violations being repeated.” It noted that the Presidential Commission of Inquiry has interfered in criminal trials, “including by withholding documentary evidence, threatening prosecutors with legal action, and running parallel and contradictory examinations of individuals already appearing before trial courts.” As of December 2020, “over 40 civil society organizations had approached OHCHR with reports of harassment, surveillance and repeated scrutiny by a range of security services—including Criminal Investigation Department, Terrorist Investigation Division and State Intelligence officials—who questioned them about administrative details and activities of the organization, lists of staff, including their personal contact details, donors and funding sources . . . The Secretary-General and Special Procedures have received similar allegations of surveillance and reprisals.” Among the recommendations are that the Human Rights Council and Member States should “support a dedicated capacity to collect and preserve evidence and other related information for future accountability processes, to advocate for victims and survivors, and to support relevant judicial proceedings in Member States with competent jurisdiction,” a stark criticism of the current government.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26695&LangID=E>

Syria. Since February 2019 the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison has been documenting cases of forced disappearances “caused by the acting parties on Syrian territory.” They obtained data about the forcibly disappeared person, the disappearance, the place where the disappeared is suspected to be, information on financial extortion and problems in obtaining a death certificate and a civil record proving the deaths, the person providing the statement and willingness to provide DNA samples. A report issued in January, based on the collected data from more than 1,200 former prisoners and family members, said “guards, judges, members of the military and in some cases middlemen receive cuts” from bribes paid by families of detainees to allow visits to prisoners or to obtain their release. The report “calls for the international community to pressure supporters of the regime, particularly Russia, into revealing the fate of the disappeared and to allow families to visit those still alive. It also demands that officials reveal where the dead were buried and allow DNA testing of remains so that victims can be returned to their families,” the *Guardian* wrote. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/how-syria-uses-prison-to-extort-money-report-arrest-funding-assad-regime?fbclid=IwAR1ssrjrEgeemYQs0yjeIyad1JRDL9wgbmZH91WZJu1nux8TKYuptUE9qnE&utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=e86b213a7c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-e86b213a7c-96428969 ; for the study see <https://admisp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Forcibly-Disappeared-in-Syrian-EN.pdf>

The NGO Syrian Justice and Accountability Project published “a sample of Syrian government documents which captures the extent to which Syria’s educational system has been ravaged by conflict. In the documents, the government clearly acknowledges its use of schools for military purposes and recognizes the widespread destruction of schools, specifically in the Idlib region.” https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2021/01/21/new-documents-show-syrian-government-used-schools-for-military-purposes/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=b9b4191f56-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-b9b4191f56-96428969

Thailand. “A Bangkok court sentenced a Thai woman to a record 43 and a half years in prison . . . after she pleaded guilty to sharing audio clips on social media that were deemed as insulting the monarchy and violating Thailand’s harsh royal defamation law,” *Benar News* reported. <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/thai/defamation-sentence-01192021164116.html>

Turkey. An investigation by Turkish *Gazete Duvar* used data from Turkey’s Justice Ministry that showed “between 2014 and 2019 nearly 128,872 probes were launched into insults against President Recept Tayyip Erdogan, resulting in prosecutors launching 27,717 criminal cases. Turkish courts sentenced 9,556 of those charged,” *BIRN* reported. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/15/investigation-highlights-spike-in-cases-of-insulting-turkish-president/>

United Kingdom. “The UK’s crime and policing minister has blamed ‘human error’ for the erasure of hundreds of thousands of DNA records and other data on criminal suspects from the national police computer,” AP reported. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/15/priti-patel-under-fire-as-150000-police-records-accidentally-lost?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_E-mail ; <https://newseu.cgtn.com/news/2021-01-20/-UK-blame-human-error-after-400-000-police-records-are-deleted-Xbu0Mk1MKA/index.html>

United States. The insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on 6 January has been followed by strenuous efforts to identify and arrest key figures and to preserve the digital materials generated by rioters before and during the event. Bellingcat “quickly began to collect all videos, photos, and livestreams of the attack,” and the NGO National Security Archive launched a “systematic” Freedom of Information Act “campaign” to obtain government records relating to warnings of the threat and the aftermath. <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book-sourcebook/foia/2021-01-13/capitol-riot-documents-you-should-read-part-1> ; <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-donald-trump-capitol-siege-campaigns-elections-d14c78d53b3a212658223252fec87e99>; https://www.wired.com/story/archive-social-media-footage-pro-trump/?utm_source=twitter&utm_brand=wired&mbid=social_twitter&utm_social-type=owned&utm_medium=social

The importance of a piece of paper: President Biden signed an Executive Order overturning the ban on transgender persons serving in the U.S. military. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/25/executive-order-on-enabling-all-qualified-americans-to-serve-their-country-in-uniform/>

The Office of the Inspector General (IG) of the Justice Department (DOJ) released a 93-page review of the “zero tolerance” policy, the program begun in 2018 to separate migrant children from their parents who illegally crossed into the United States from Mexico. The IG declared, “Then Attorney General Sessions was aware that full implementation of the zero tolerance policy would result in criminal referrals by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) of adults who entered the country illegally with children and that the prosecution of these family unit adults would result in children being separated from families.” The “review included site visits, interviews, and policies and documents from multiple components within DOJ” as well as information from “DHS, HHS [Health and Human Services], and Federal court and Federal Defender personnel.” In a long paragraph on document review, the IG said it used policy documents, memoranda, electronic correspondence, internal decision documents, “conference and meeting agendas, summaries and notes; and financial records, budget documents, intergovernmental agreements, procurement documents, and memoranda of understanding,” emails, handwritten notes, “calendar data files,” and “a limited number of classified emails, meeting summaries and policy documents.” https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/21-028_0.pdf

STAT reported that data collection poses challenges to the COVID-10 vaccination effort. “Tracking vaccination data accurately and in real time will be crucial to catching and correcting inequities in the distribution system,” as well as ensuring that people who have received a first injection get a second one. A spokesperson for a county health department in Utah said, “Our throughput and our vaccination capabilities are not the challenge, truly. It’s really the documentation.” https://www.statnews.com/2021/01/29/covid19-vaccination-data-tracking-disparities/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=2eee7406fa-Weekend_Reads_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-2eee7406fa-149736437

United States/California. The University of California Los Angeles launched “a new archival project aimed at independently preserving and dissecting the history of mass incarceration in L.A.,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported. The university has “177 boxes of LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] records from the 1970s through the early 2000s, which the university fought for and won access to in court.” The project will also “include oral histories and other ephemera from community members whose lives are captured in the documents or who were otherwise affected by the region’s aggressive criminal justice pipelines.” <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-01-28/ucla-wins-3-65m-grant-to-archive-lapd-trove-document-age-of-incarceration>

United States/Michigan. Former governor Rick Snyder was charged with “wilful neglect of duty after an investigation of ruinous decisions that left Flint with lead-contaminated water and regional outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease,” AP reported. *The Intercept* obtained documents related to the investigation, including “phone records from search warrants that showed an all-out blitz of calls” between the governor and the directors of the state’s Department of Human Services, as well as meeting notes and email messages. For background on the Flint water crisis, see *HRWG News* 2016-01, 02.

<https://apnews.com/article/health-michigan-flint-rick-snyder-54755694e7655cc122567010e6ce26a6> ; https://theintercept.com/2021/01/13/flint-michigan-rick-snyder-legionnaires/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter

Uzbekistan. Uzbek authorities recorded 185 cases of baby trafficking during the past four years, according to the Interior Ministry, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The head of Uzbekistan's human trafficking commission said, "Gaps in the registration of pregnancies and births as well as poor coordination between government agencies are also an issue." <https://news.trust.org/item/20210115162803-suetj/>

Meetings. The ICA Section on University Archives is having a virtual conference, "Memoria, derechos humanos y buenas prácticas en archivos universitarios y de investigación," 22-26 February. Antonio González Quintana, chair of SAHR, will be the opening keynote speaker. For more information, see <https://live.eventtia.com/es/memoria-y-archivos>

Please share news with us! trudy@trudypeterson.com

The Section on Archives and Human Rights is grateful to the online Italian archival magazine *Il Mondo degli Archivi* for handling the distribution of *HRWG News*. To subscribe to the *News*, enter the required information on the form that you will find here: <https://anai.us13.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=5942a8a83f3023c6a5a63139e&id=324882c3f7>

This Newsletter is published under a Creative Commons license. Feel free to further circulate it and reuse it for non-commercial purposes.