
ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights
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Commentary.

After more than 13 years and 160 issues, I decided it was time to turn over *SAHR News* to other voices. A group of wonderful colleagues is taking it on: Kate Blalack will edit until September, and five persons will collect news (Amanda Leinberger, Aminata Kay, Joy E Rowe, Normand Charbonneau, Valentina Rojas). Andreas Nef will continue as the IT support, and the translation teams in French (Christine Martinez, Dinza Tang Irmi, Françoise Watel, and Annick Yonga) and Spanish (Paloma Beneito Arias, Blanca Bazaco Palacios, and Nilda Lopez) will continue the laborious work of language conversion.

It has been a privilege to share items, issues and commentary with readers for these many years. I not only have learned a lot about what was happening around the world, but I also gained a renewed appreciation for a free and fair press. Without robust, discerning press reports, the *News* would not be possible. ICA, on behalf of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, issued a press release drafted by SAHR supporting our colleagues in journalism. See:

English: <https://www.ica.org/en/world-press-freedom-day-3-may-2023>

French: <https://www.ica.org/fr/journee-mondiale-de-la-liberte-de-la-presse-3-mai-2023>

Spanish: <https://www.ica.org/es/dia-mundial-de-la-libertad-de-prensa-3-de-mayo-de-2023>

My sincere thanks to the many people who have provided support for the *News*, including translators past and present who never complained about difficult language, persons who sent in suggestions for items to be included, persons who complained about coverage, and most of all the readers. I look forward to seeing the evolution of the *News*. I'll be reading each month!

SAHR News.

The next First Tuesday Talk will be held on 6 June at 4:00 p.m. (Central European Time). It will be a reflection on the Working Group/Section over the past twenty years and the evolution of the field of archives and human rights. ICA's executive Director, Carlos Serrano Vasquez, will moderate a panel composed of ICA President Josée Kirps, Graham Dominy, Antonio Gonzalez Quintana and Trudy Huskamp Peterson.

On behalf of ICA, SAHR submitted a response to the call for comments from the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery on the issue "New Technologies for the Use of Facilitating and Preventing Contemporary Forms of Slavery." The submission can be found here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2023/call-input-use-technology-facilitating-and-preventing-contemporary-forms>

International news.

Kosovo Specialist Chambers. The trial of former Kosovo president Hashim Thaci and three other ex-guerrilla leaders opened. The prosecution "showed the court KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] communiques and orders for arrests" as well as "video footage of statements from the 1990s" and "documents found in some of the defendants' home" to argue that the defendants had "individual and command responsibility for crimes that were mainly committed against prisoners," including "murders

of 102 people and the forced disappearance of 20 others,” *BIRN* reported.
<https://balkaninsight.com/2023/04/03/kosovo-guerrilla-leaders-orders-show-war-crimes-guilt-trial-told/>

United Nations. The 2023 UN Population Fund report was released. It “examined the myths that too many newborns are responsible for the world’s eight billion population and found that the real problem was that women are unable to make their own reproductive choices.” Eight countries will account for half the projected growth in global population by 2050: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, and Tanzania. The report relied on extensive data from UN sources, including the World Health Organization, UN Women, UNICEF, the UN Statistics Division, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Population Division, UNESCO, and the United Nations Population Fund. https://www.unfpa.org/swp2023?utm_source=PassBlue+List&utm_campaign=645a63e74d-RSS_PassBlue&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4795f55662-645a63e74d-55008469

The International Organization for Migration’s Missing Migrants Project “documented 1,433 deaths in 2022, the highest number since the project began in 2014.” IOM announced it is launching the first Network on Missing Migrants in the Americas “to create a knowledge and work community that shares updated and reliable data on missing migrants to contribute to evidence-based policy.” The network plans to link “civil society organizations, government institutions, journalists and other key actors.”
https://www.iom.int/news/new-network-missing-migrants-americas-aims-drive-action-save-migrant-lives?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email; see also account of one boat with 43 dead men found near the Caribbean island of Tobago, all the men seem to have embarked from Mauritania. https://apnews.com/article/adrift-investigation-migrants-mauritania-tobago-663a576e233cb4b363f5eda8d5969b5a?user_email=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&utm_medium=Morning_Wire&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_campaign=MorningWire_April12_2023&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

In April the Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Arbitrary Detention released an “opinion” adopted at its November 2022 meeting concerning Zayn al-Abidin Muhammad Husayn (Abu Zubaydah), a Palestinian arrested in Pakistan in March 2002 and held today by the U.S. at its prison in Guantanamo, Cuba. Citing U.S. documents about the case, the Working Group found the deprivation of liberty of Abu Zubaydah in contravention of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and urged his release with “an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations.” In addition to the United States, the Working Group cited ancillary responsibilities of Thailand, Poland, Morocco, Lithuania, Afghanistan and the United Kingdom. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session95/A-HRC-WGAD-2022-66-Advance-Edited-Version.pdf>

World/general news.

Business. Fracking is the process by which fluids are injected underground under high pressure to crack (fracture) “coal beds and shale rock, allowing the gas and oil trapped with the rock to rise to the surface.” Researchers studying the oil and gas industry in California and Texas used data from the FracFocus Chemical Disclosure Registry to which 23 U.S. states require oil and gas companies to send information including “well locations, operators, and the masses of each chemical used in fracking fluids.” They “found that from 2014 through 2021, 62% to 73% of reported fracks each year used at least one chemical that the [U.S. Federal] Safe Drinking Water Act recognizes as detrimental to human health and the environment,” they reported in *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/companies-that-frack-for-oil-and-gas-can-keep-a-lot-of-information-secret-but-what-they-disclose-shows-widespread-use-of-hazardous-chemicals-193915?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%203%202023%20-%202588726033%20NO%20HIGHLIGHTS&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%203%202023%20-%202588726033%20NO%20HIGHLIGHTS+CID_aeb0ee41d65a67e52274b385810ee98f&utm_source=campaign_monitor_us&utm_term=Companies%20that%20frack%20for%20oil%20and%20gas%20can%20keep%20a%20lot%20of%20information%20secret%20but%20what%20they%20disclose%20shows%20widespread%20use%20of%20hazardous%20chemicals

The European Union bans the use of certain pesticides. *Lighthouse Reports*, *Reporter Brasil* and four other “global media partners” looked at projects funded by public development banks, and by “combining paper trails and on the ground reporting” (including “project-specific environmental impact assessment reports”) found that pesticides banned in the European Union were used in projects funded by the Dutch bank FMO for eucalyptus farms in Paraguay, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development loans for cotton farming in Uzbekistan and Agence Francaise de Development financing of rubber plantations in Ghana. And the *Guardian* reported that “documents from the Brazilian agriculture ministry obtained through a freedom of information request reveal that a fungicide made by

[German firm] BASF and based on . . . a chemical banned in the EU, was sprayed over two sugar plantations that supply Nestle.” The EU’s body responsible for regulating pesticides said “the export of banned pesticides would be phased out” but with no date set.

<https://www.lighthousereports.com/investigation/europes-funding-of-eu-banned-pesticides/>;
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/25/eu-firms-accused-of-aborrent-export-of-banned-pesticides-to-brazil?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

A nine-month investigation by 140 journalists in 27 countries, part of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, “used data to expose flaws in hundreds of green claims by forest products companies.” The research “reviewed nearly 2,000 case studies involving 410 companies alleged to have committed environmental violations in at least 50 countries,” reviewing “reports by environmental organizations, human rights groups and local authorities, court records, green certificates databases, trade data and audit reports.” They styled the report “data journalism.”

https://www.icij.org/investigations/deforestation-inc/how-we-used-data-to-expose-flaws-in-hundreds-of-green-claims-by-forest-products-companies/?utm_source=ICIJ&utm_campaign=073464218d-20230419_WeeklyEmail&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_992ecfdbb2-073464218d-83815091

“Between 2019 and 2022, groups of Tesla employees privately shared via an internal messaging system sometimes highly invasive videos and images recorded by customer’s car cameras, according to interviews by *Reuters* with nine former employees.” https://www.reuters.com/technology/tesla-workers-shared-sensitive-images-recorded-by-customer-cars-2023-04-06/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Daily-Briefing&utm_term=040723

The e-cigarette maker Juul settled the case against it brought by six U.S. states and the city of Washington, DC., for “its alleged role in fueling the recent significant rise in youth vaping.” As part of the settlement Juul is required “to disclose a number of previously secret documents, which will be housed in an academic archive,” *STAT* reported. The name of the archives was not disclosed, and “the settlement lays out a lengthy process for Juul and the state to debate whether certain documents should be redacted or withheld from the archive.” https://www.statnews.com/2023/04/12/juul-settlement-documents/?utm_campaign=morning_rounds&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=254114330&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9CXXrLaKrv1n0JpR_nV_Tp9qH81g4dTkLIHcr71E5FrSimTXN_RAah6SRFDHy3TmDpYLjAGn8uz8vbp83pZbLD-fvg&utm_content=254114330&utm_source=hs_email

The U.K. Information Commissioner’s Office fined TikTok 12.7 million pounds for permitting “up to 1.4 million UK children aged under 13 to use the platform in 2020,” *BBC News* reported, “with TikTok collecting and using their personal data” without parental consent. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-65175902>

“A Brazilian court on Wednesday ordered a temporary suspension in the country of the encrypted messaging app Telegram until it complies with an order to share information on extremist and neo-Nazi groups using the platform,” *Reuters* reported. [https://www.reuters.com/technology/brazil-court-suspends-telegram-not-complying-with-order-neo-nazi-groups-2023-04-26/#:~:text=BRASILIA%2C%20April%2026%20\(Reuters\),Nazi%20groups%20using%20the%20platform](https://www.reuters.com/technology/brazil-court-suspends-telegram-not-complying-with-order-neo-nazi-groups-2023-04-26/#:~:text=BRASILIA%2C%20April%2026%20(Reuters),Nazi%20groups%20using%20the%20platform)

Also in Brazil, U.K. company Serabi Gold “has been mining gold in the Amazon rainforest without approval from the Brazilian land agency or the consent of nearby Indigenous communities,” the *Guardian* reported. In the background are two men, partners who, according to the government land agency Incra, “claimed a plot . . . without authorization” which is now being mined by Serabi. One of the men said he had “old ownership documents,” and Serabi said it has “all the required permits” for its operation and will make payment “to the appropriate title holder as and when title is formally confirmed.” https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/apr/18/uk-company-mining-gold-in-amazon-on-disputed-land-brazil?i=U8SdiCaMGe95diji_Jb_Dg&s=09

Freedom of press. The Committee to Protect Journalists issued a report examining the European Union’s response to “threats such as murders of journalists, pandemic-related media controls, spyware, and the war in Ukraine.” The report summarized, “Often, the scope and effectiveness of EU actions in support of press freedom reflect the gap between the values-based narrative that the EU tells about itself and the reality of how it and its member states pursue their interests.” Sources cited are published reports and interviews. <https://cpi.org/reports/2023/04/fragile-progress-the-struggle-for-press-freedom-in-the-european-union/>

Medical records. Writing in *Nature*, a research team reported it had “quantified the potential human health and economic benefits” of protecting Indigenous territories in the Amazon “by using cardiovascular and respiratory diseases cases, pollutant and forest cover data” from 2010 to 2019. “Our estimates indicate that by protecting Amazon Indigenous territories, over 15 million respiratory and cardiovascular cases could be avoided every year, with -\$2 billion USD being saved only in health costs.” The report includes numerous maps and a discussion of sources, primarily from the Brazilian government and the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-023-00704-w#Sec11>

Migration. “The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported on Friday that over 100,000 refugees and migrants have traversed the Darien jungle within the initial three months of this year,” *teleSUR* reported. Based on Panamanian statistics, that is six times the number of people who arrived in Panama during the first three months of 2022. The Darien gap connects Colombia and Panama and is used by migrants making their way to Central America and on to Mexico and the United States.

https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Record-Alert-100-000-Refugees-On--Panama-Colombia-Border-20230414-0015.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=8

Religious records. The prosecutor in the U.S. state of Maryland issued a 463-page report based on four years of investigation into the sexual abuse of children by Catholic Church clergy, *NBC News* reported. The state found that in the past 60 years “600 children are known to have been abused by the 156 people included in this Report, but the number is likely far higher.” The report is “based on hundreds of thousands of documents and untold stories from hundreds of survivors.” <https://www.nbcnews.com/news-us-news/maryland-ag-documents-widespread-sexual-abuse-least-600-victims-baltim-rna78378>

Technology. Whisper is a “speech recognition tool offering audio transcription and translation into English for dozens of languages,” *Context* reported. The Māori, Indigenous New Zealanders, are concerned that the app was trained on 1,381 Māori language sources scraped from the web. Karaitiana Taiuru, a Māori ethicist, said, “Data is like our land and natural resources. If indigenous peoples don’t have sovereignty of their own data, they will simply be re-colonised in this information society.”

https://www.context.news/ai/nz-us-indigenous-fear-colonisation-as-bots-learn-their-languages?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-dataveillance

World War II. German museums are using pawnshop records to trace the silver items confiscated by Nazis and now in museum holdings in order to return them to the heirs of the previous owners, the *New York Times* reported. In 1939 Jews were required “to turn over jewelry, gold, silver and other objects to 66 pawnshops in Germany.” A curator at the Bavarian National Museum said, “Most of the stolen silver went from the pawnshops to companies specializing in melting silver. In Munich alone, about 10 tons of jewelry and precious metal were registered.” Searches for heirs require using multiple archives and databases and can take years.

<https://artdaily.cc/news/156195/Not-Picassos--but-still-precious--Museums-return-silver-lost-to-the-Nazis#.ZE68hjzMJD8>

“The Serbian Museum of Genocide Victims said . . . it has obtained a list with the names and details of 5,800 Serbian children rescued from Ustasa death camps in the Nazi-allied Independent State of Croatia,” *BIRN* reported. The list was compiled in the second half of 1942 by Austrian humanitarian Diana Budisavljevic “who worked on behalf of children in the camps where Serbs, Jews, Roma and anti-fascists were held during World War II.” The list “contained the names and surnames of the children, their parents, the date and name of the camp from which they were rescued, as well as the age and identity of their Croatian adoptive parents.” The Museum did not disclose how it obtained the list; Budisavljevic’s diary said “post-World War II Communist authorities took away her entire archive in May 1945.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/04/21/serbia-finds-list-of-5800-children-saved-from-croatian-wwii-camps/>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Cameroon/France. “The commission of historians charged by [French president] Emmanuel Macron to investigate the action of France during colonisation in Cameroon has begun its work. Several voices question the context of this research and its purpose,” *France Info* reported in mid-March. “In its report, the commission will have to make recommendations, as was done for Algeria or Rwanda. What next?”

For the moment, it is not time for reparations, but [Cameroonian singer] Blick Bassy is thinking about it. ‘Compensation, national funerals, steles...’ he suggests. ‘We need to reappropriate this memory and finally build a national narrative’.” Thanks to Christine Martinez for the link.

https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/cameroun/guerre-du-cameroun-l-ouverture-des-archives-suffira-t-elle-a-faire-la-lumiere-sur-les-responsabilites-de-la-france_5714876.html

Democratic Republic of Congo/Rwanda. Referring to the continuing conflict across the Rwanda-Congo border, Rwandan President Paul Kagame said, “The borders that were drawn during colonial times had our countries divided. A big part of Rwanda was left outside, in eastern Congo, in southwestern Uganda and so forth and so forth . . . And these people have been denied their rights.” A Congolese historian retorted, “If we go back to the first map of the region . . . of 1885, it is Congo that has land to reclaim from Rwanda and not the other way round.” Belgian historian Gillian Mathys commented that the three colonial maps “that caused the ambiguity . . . had been drawn by Europeans who only had knowledge of a lake at an approximate location; no European had set foot in the Kivu area [on today’s border] before 1894,” *African Arguments* reported. <https://africanarguments.org/2023/05/lines-through-the-lake-why-the-congo-rwanda-border-cant-be-redrawn/>

El Salvador/United States. The U.S. arrested former El Salvador Army colonel Roberto Antonio Garay Saravia for “assisting or participating in extrajudicial killings and wilfully misrepresenting this material fact in his immigration application,” *El Faro* reported. The U.S. government’s press release announcing the arrest said he was a commander in a unit accused of several major war crimes, including the El Mozote massacre in December 1981 and the El Calabozo massacre in August 1982. A U.S. source, unnamed, said Garay Saravia’s role at El Mozote is “still unclear ‘because that’s the information contained in El Salvador’s military files,’ which remain sealed since the ‘80s and [El Salvador president] Nayib Bukele’s administration refused to open, backtracking on a promise that he would disclose them from ‘A to Z’.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-04, 05.

https://elfaro.net/en/202304/el_salvador/26798/US-Arrests-One-of-the-Army-Officers-Accused-of-the-El-Mozote-Massacre.htm?utm_source=El+Faro_EN+DB&utm_campaign=6c55306caf-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_22_01_08_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9190c89-6c55306caf-363082696
<https://scrippsnews.com/stories/exclusive-ice-arrests-salvadoran-man-wanted-for-war-crimes/>

France/Syria. On 29 March “the investigating judges of the war crimes unit of the Paris Judicial Court ordered the indictment before the Paris Criminal Court of three senior Syrian regime officials: Ali Mamlouk, Jamil Hassan and Abdel Salam Mahmoud, for complicity in crimes against humanity and war crimes” in the disappearance and death of Mazzen and Patrick Dabbagh (father and son). During the proceedings the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression had “supported the lawsuit by providing several testimonies and witnesses as well as comprehensive chains of command detailing the structure of the Syrian Air Force intelligence services” at the time of the disappearance in November 2013. The family received death certificates in July 2018, saying Patrick died in January 2014 and Mazzen in November 2017. “In the absence of the defendants on French territory” the trial will likely be held in absentia. <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/north-africa-middle-east/syria/syria-dabbagh-case-french-justice-orders-the-trial-of-ali-mamlouk>

Gambia/Switzerland. Gambia’s former Minister of the Interior, Ousman Sonko, was indicted in Switzerland for crimes against humanity, including “killing of a perceived political opponent in 2000, of acts of sexual violence committed between 2000 and 2002 as well as in 2005, of having participated in acts of torture” and others. Sonko is in custody in Switzerland. In addition to the complaints filed by victims and testimony by “dozens of witnesses,” the final report of t Gambia’s truth commission showed Sonko was “one of the main perpetrators of human rights violations.” The commission records are relevant to the case. <https://trialinternational.org/latest-post/former-gambian-minister-of-interior-to-be-tried-in-switzerland-for-crimes-against-humanity/>

Germany/Israel. Germany’s interior minister announced that “Germany has appointed an eight-person commission to re-appraise the attack on Israeli athletes and team members at the 1972 Munich Olympics to answer unresolved questions,” *Haaretz* reported. Germany agreed with the families of the murdered athletes on “reappraisal of the events by a commission of German and Israeli historians, the release of files in accordance with the law, the classification and acceptance of political responsibility . .

. and the provision of further recognition.” <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-04-21/ty-article/germany-appoints-commission-to-re-appraise-1972-munich-olympics-attack/0000187-a28f-d4f0-abb7-f2eff6020000>

Japan/South Korea. The Daejeon, South Korea, district court approved the “seizure of four South Korean-based patents of [Japanese firm] Mitsubishi Heavy . . . at the request of two surviving victims and the families of two other forced labor victims who have died,” *Bloomberg* reported. Koreans were forced to work at Japanese mines and factories during Japan’s 1910-1945 occupation of Korea. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-07. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-04-06/south-korean-court-ups-mitsubishi-patent-seizures-in-labor-case?leadSource=uverify%20wall>

Ukraine war. *Reuters* reported that the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation is working with Ukrainian officials to analyze “cellphone information, forensic analyses of DNA samples, as well as analysis of body parts collected off battlefield” to obtain geolocation information and other war crimes evidence. https://www.reuters.com/world/fbi-working-with-us-companies-collect-war-crime-evidence-ukraine-2023-04-26/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Daily-Briefing&utm_term=042623

“A growing body of evidence suggest Russian forces are systematically stealing art and cultural artifacts from Ukraine,” *NBC News* reported. A team from the U.S. Smithsonian Institution used a database of more than 28,000 cultural sites in Ukraine, thermal imaging from NASA and commercial satellite photos to verify the damage. At the Kherson Regional Art Museum its director, Alina Dotsenko, “made backup copies of the electronic inventory for the museum’s collection and removed any record of it from the building. But a former colleague, she later learned, had also made a copy of the archive and gave it to the Russians.” After that “a team of armed Russians in civilian clothes . . . hauled away more than 11,000 pieces of art.” Thanks to Vitor Fonseca for the link. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russia-stealing-art-ukraine-nazi-level-world-war-2-rcna77879>

National news.

Bahamas. “The Bahamas is undergoing a wave of gender-based violence,” *Nassau Guardian* wrote. The Bahamas Crisis Centre issued a statement saying that “Bahamas statistics reveal a 50% increase in reports of child abuse in addition to police reports of an increase of 34% in reported sexual offenses in 2022 over 2021.” https://thenassauguardian.com/groups-decry-gender-based-violence/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Brazil. Stuart Edgar Angel Jones was a dual citizen (Brazil/U.S.) and a member of the extremist group Movimento Revolucionário 8 de Outubro (MR-8). He disappeared on 14 May 1971, and died in detention at an airforce base two days later. A “virtual auction” announced it was offering a letter describing Angel Jones’ torture, *Globo* reported. The document, signed by someone purporting to be a military official who witnessed the torture, had been found and bought in a traditional “marché aux puces” (flea market) in Rio; the buyer consigned it to the auction. Hildegard Angel, the sister of the disappeared, “managed to suspend the auction with the help of lawyers” and obtained the letter. “Now, the priority is to discover if it is authentic,” said *News Weber*, as the document has several odd elements. According to Brazilian archivist and chair of SAHR Vitor Fonseca, the letter contains “no new information--everything reported was already known.” Thanks to him for the story and link. oglobo.globo.com/cultura/noticia/2023/03/retirado-de-leilao-documento-que-teria-confissao-de-militar-sobre-tortura-a-stuart-angel-mobiliza-historiadores.ghtml; <https://newsweber.com/familia-de-stuart-angel-vai-periciar-suposto-documento-sobre-tortura/>

Burkina Faso. The government expelled the correspondents for the French newspapers *Le Monde* and *Libération*, *AFP* reported. “The March 27 publication of a *Libération* investigation into the circumstances in which a video was filmed showing children and adolescents being executed in a military barracks by at least one soldier evidently strongly displeased the junta in power in Burkina Faso.” The government spokesman called the reporting “manipulations disguised as journalism.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/02/burkina-faso-expels-reporters-from-two-french-newspapers>

Chile. As the government sets out to clarify the circumstances in which people were detained and forcibly disappeared during the 17-year dictatorship, the Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared stressed “the need to demand active participation from Chile’s tight-lipped armed forces and reform the Legal Medical Service, SML, which is tasked with forensic testing,” the *Guardian* reported. “The SML has been accused of a series of serious blunders, including the mishandling [of] 89

boxes of dictatorship-era evidence—including unidentified human remains. In February, an investigation revealed that the boxes were carelessly left in a damp university basement for two decades, where they were damaged by water and mould. The SML moved them in 2019, but have still not conducted pending forensic work.” https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/17/chile-families-search-disappeared-pinochet?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

China. China uses cameras manufactured by Hikvision to monitor the population; the Chinese government owns over 40% of the company. “In 2019,” *The Intercept* reported, “facing increasing U.S. sanction, Hikvision commissioned a human rights review of its five largest police projects in Xinjiang,” the territory of the Uyghur Autonomous Region. It hired Pierre-Richard Prosper, a former U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes, to conduct it. The result of the review remained secret until, at a conference Hikvision convened in Sydney, Australia, Prosper talked about it. A tape of the conference session was leaked to *The Intercept*, which reported, “For the review, Prosper and his team received approximately 15,000 pages of documents and read about 5,000 ‘line by line,’ he said. The contracts were explicit about their use against Uyghur communities, for example, in Moyu County, with a population of over half a million in southwestern Xinjiang.” *The Intercept* also obtained at least one Hikvision contract, confirming the leaked remarks. https://theintercept.com/2023/04/21/hikvision-leaked-tape-uyghur-surveillance/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter; see also article on Hikvision published by *Wired*: <https://www.magzter.com/stories/science/WIRED/WHO-WATCHES-THE-WATCHERS> [behind paywall]

The Zuzhou Intermediate People’s Court in Jiangsu province sentenced six people to jail “for their roles in the human trafficking and abuse of a woman whose appearance in an online video showing her chained by the neck sparked a public outcry,” *CNN* reported. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-02. https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/08/asia/chinese-woman-chained-torture-intl-hnk/index.html?utm_term=1681119047631f01f6df35189&utm_source=cnn_Meanwhile+in+China+-+04.10.2022&utm_medium=email&utm_ee=HIDqgVF%2BeoRB1IeG210UFJEkqoeDgxNcch1oNwCB38Si2yaBIZ90BKKTxCb6dEVY&utm_term=1681119047640

Democratic Republic of Congo. A quarter of the state's civil service payroll is made up of fake employees, *Anadolu Ajansi* reported. Thanks to Christine Martinez for the link. <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/rdc-le-quart-du-fichier-de-paie-des-fonctionnaires-de-l-etat-est-constitu%C3%A9-de-faux-agents-igf/2883423>

Egypt. The government and a private British company, Academic Assessment Ltd., exposed on line 356,797 files on over 72,000 children for at least eight months, Human Rights Watch said. The data was collected when the children took the Egyptian Scholastic Test between September 2020 and December 2022. Not only did the exposure include the names and grade level, but also copies of passports or national IDs. Distressingly, in the case of 110 children the data identified them by name “as having some form of disability.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/19/egypt-data-tens-thousands-students-compromised>

El Salvador. Amnesty International issued a blistering report, saying “Salvadoran authorities have systematically committed grave human rights violations since a state of emergency and numerous legislative amendments were approved in March 2022, supposedly to tackle gangs.” Amnesty said the government instigated “the arbitrary detention and imprisonment of more than 66,000 people in record time. Amnesty International has documented around 50 cases in which it has been able to identify a pattern of large-scale arbitrary detention and imprisonment. Patterns identified include detention based on alleged anonymous accusations or having tattoos or a previous criminal record of any kind. The organization has also documented the holding of expedited hearings--mostly virtual--where a judge, whose identity is withheld, can simultaneously try up to 500 people with virtually no evidence implicating them in the commission of an offence.” *CrisisWatch* reported that Public Security Minister Gustavo Villatoro announced on 17 April that “authorities had arrested 67,467 people for gang affiliation since introducing [the state of emergency].” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/04/el-salvador-state-emergency-systematic-human-rights-violations/>; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

Guatemala. *El Faro* published an interview with former Guatemalan judge Miguel Angel Galvez, now in exile. He was the judge of the historic “Death Squad Dossier” case, among other sensitive judicial proceedings, but he said “the Death Squad Dossier got the attention of certain elements in the military, and it’s the one that made me feel pressured to leave the country.” The case, he said, is being “dismantled.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-07. <https://elfaro.net/en/202304/centroamerica/26801/%E2%80%9CWith-the-Death-Squad-Dossier-I-understood-that-Guatemala-is-designed-for->

[impunity%E2%80%9D.htm; https://www.wola.org/analysis/guatemala-death-squad-dossier-case-dismantled-corrupt-political-legal-system/?emci=7187c2ad-bdd4-ed11-8e8b-00224832eb73&emdi=872faa19-44d5-ed11-8e8b-00224832eb73&ceid=8788546](https://www.wola.org/analysis/guatemala-death-squad-dossier-case-dismantled-corrupt-political-legal-system/?emci=7187c2ad-bdd4-ed11-8e8b-00224832eb73&emdi=872faa19-44d5-ed11-8e8b-00224832eb73&ceid=8788546)

Iraq. The UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances issued its final report on its visit to Iraq in November 2022. Among the findings was that “more than 17 institutions of State authorities have responsibilities related to disappearances,” each of which have registers or databases, but these are not interconnected. The Committee wrote, “The non-existence of reliable data must be urgently addressed,” and it urged Iraq to “establish a consolidated nationwide register of all cases of disappearance in Iraq since 1968. To this end, the information from the different sources must be compiled and systematized.” Further, the register “should be accessible to all persons who have a legitimate interest, ensuring the protection of personal information and sensitive data.”

https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1135342?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=707e63a2cb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_04_05_12_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-707e63a2cb-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Mexico. In 2002 Mexico passed its first federal freedom of information law and created the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data (INAI) to administer it. Now President Lopez Obrador wants to close INAI and transfer its functions to another part of government. *La Jornada* quoted him saying INAI has “served to legitimize theft and hide information.” The newspaper noted, “Since 2016, an online portal for information requests to government agencies has received more than 8 million submissions. During the most recent fiscal year, the INAI resolved more than 18,000 appeals. The institute also protects citizens’ rights to access personal data, such as medical records and sanctions private and public entities for stealing personal information.” <https://mexicodailypost.com/2023/04/21/amlo-proposes-disappearance-of-the-national-institute-for-transparency-inai/>

Nicaragua. Amnesty International conducted interviews, “reviewed court records, analysed national laws and other relevant publications, verified audiovisual information and monitored social media and press sources” to develop a report on the “social, political and human rights crisis” since 2018. It exposed the excessive use of force by police and pro-government armed groups, misuse of the criminal justice system, attacks on civil society, and enforced displacement, exile, and arbitrary deprivation of nationality. *CrisisWatch* reported that the “human rights group Nunca Mas [on] 28 April revealed that since [the] 2018 protests, at least 158 people detained have been subjected to torture, 113 of whom were victims of sexual violence by prison guards and police officers.”

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr43/6679/2023/en/>; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

Peru. Human Rights Watch issued a 107-page report documenting “excessive use of force by security forces, due process violations and abuses against detainees, and failures in criminal investigations, as well as the entrenched political and social crisis that is eroding the rule of law and human rights in Peru.” HRW “verified over 37 hours of video footage and 663 photographs” from the protests of December 2022 through February 2023, in addition to interviewing more than 140 people and reviewing “autopsy and ballistics reports, health records, criminal files and other documentation.” The Ombudsperson’s Office reported 49 civilian killings of protesters or bystanders, of whom “at least” 39 were killed by gunshot wounds “according to autopsy and ballistics reports and health records,” while “in a 40th case, a health document listed the cause as ‘probably’ a gunshot wound.” All the bullets identified in the killings came from the kinds of weapons used by security forces; “police did not seize any firearm, homemade or not, from protesters, nor did Human Rights Watch find any image of a protester holding a firearm.” https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/26/peru-egregious-abuses-security-forces?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

The Lima municipality of Miraflores abruptly closed the museum Place of Memory, Tolerance and Social Inclusion (LUM), citing the museum’s “failure to meet municipal safety norms,” the *Guardian* reported. In January the mayor of Lima called the museum an “offense to the nation,” saying that it “should be put under the control of the armed forces” and it was time to “take control of the narrative.” Opened in 2015 as a place “where Peruvians could commemorate the victims of a brutal internecine conflict which killed tens of thousands of people in the 1980s and 1990s,” the museum has received about 60,000 visitors a year. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/07/peru-mayor-closes-museum-of-memories-army-shining-path?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Russia. A new law authorized creation of “a unified digital database of citizens subject to military service,” state media *RT* reported. The Ministry of Digital Development will establish the registry, “which will be operated by the Ministry of Defense. The government will draw on its existing databases to populate the registry, including tax, election, medical, police and court records, and those drawn from employers and universities. The register will help track the summons sent out to eligible conscripts not just by mail but now also electronically, using the ‘appropriate’ platforms, such as the state services portal ‘Gosuslugi.’ The summons will be considered served within seven days of being posted to the registry. From the moment the summons is issued, the recipient will not be allowed to leave Russia. The new law also introduces penalties for failing to report. Those who do not respond to the summons within 20 days, without a valid exemption, will not be allowed to register a business, vehicle or real estate, or to obtain bank loans.” <https://www.rt.com/russia/574772-putin-signs-new-conscription-law/>

South Sudan. The UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan issued a report saying “nearly all 14 of the United Nations’ risk factors for atrocity crimes are now present in South Sudan.” Unusually, the Commission, in an attempt to strike a blow against impunity, took “the step of naming more of the individuals who warrant criminal investigation and prosecution for their role in gross human rights violations,” Commission Chair Yasmin Sooka said. The report explained that “the evidence collected and all other information gathered is preserved in the Commission’s secure and confidential database and archives. The Commission is mandated to make information available for the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, the Commission on Truth, Healing and Reconciliation and the Reparations and Compensation Authority.” These entities were to be established in accordance with the 2015 Peace Agreement, but none of them have been. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1135277?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=4a5e9746bd-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_04_04_12_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-4a5e9746bd-%5BEMAIL_ID%5D ; https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/A_HRC_52_CRP.3.pdf

Syria. An investigation by the *Guardian*, NGOs Syrian Investigative Reporting for Accountability Journalism (SIRAJ) and NGO The Day After exposed the forging of documents on property ownership, hampering the ability of refugees to return home and claim property. “A lack of centralized court records means there is no data on the scale of property thefts in Syria, but one lawyer said he discovered 125 cases of stolen homes in Damascus alone in the first half of 2022,” while another source said criminal networks of “up to 50 members, from lawyers and judges to military officials . . . find empty homes, forge sales documents and force them through the courts without the owners’ knowledge.” A legal adviser to The Day After “said forgery networks have thrived during the war, helped by many homeowners losing their documents, while official buildings, court records and title deeds have been destroyed.” <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/apr/24/scandal-of-syrias-stolen-homes-fraudsters-use-courts-to-legitimise-thefts-from-refugees>

United Kingdom. The NGO Women’s Rights Network published statistics on sexual assaults, showing that “in just the last three years, Britain reported 6,500 cases of rape and sexual assault in hospitals” and that “only 4.1% of the perpetrators involved in these cases have faced charges,” *Firstpost* reported. In response, the Department of Health has now ordered nurses working in UK hospitals “to wear body cameras.” Think of the volume of recordings and the privacy implications of the images captured. <https://www.firstpost.com/world/uk-healthcare-horror-after-over-6500-rapes-sexual-assaults-in-hospitals-since-2019-nurses-to-wear-body-cams-12503342.html>

United States. “Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania used an open-source tool known as webXray to record third-party tracking tools present on hospital websites during a three-day period in August 2021” and linked the tools to their parent companies, *STAT* reported. This is data from the “hospital home pages and public-facing areas, not portals where patients share specific information about their health needs with their doctors,” putting it outside the federal privacy rules. “The study found that the home pages of more than 3,700 hospitals initiated a median of 16 data transfers to third parties,” including to “online advertising giants Meta and Alphabet . . . [and] AT&T, Verizon, Amazon, the media giant Nielsen” and even a private equity company. https://www.statnews.com/2023/04/03/hospitals-hipaa-health-data-pixel-tracker/?utm_campaign=morning_rounds&utm_medium=email&hsmi=252945075&hsenc=p2ANqtz-8nTEepfKYGOUwvfgKcXUB-clFe2cWPJIEZX6Qi_1SBcuPNli4eiT8oD7jb0_w3gHbmARfD9E1R1YiPHDVghr4rbQ5x5Q&utm_content=252945075&utm_source=hs_email

Art collectors Charles and Valerie Diker have been donating or lending Native American objects to the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1993, but a “*ProPublica* review of records the museum has posted online found that only 15% of the 139 works . . . have solid or complete ownership histories, with some lacking any provenance at all.” Native American groups question the legitimacy of the Met’s ownership of the works, arguing that they should be returned to the creator communities. The museum said it is hiring a Native American art researcher whose responsibilities will include “some provenance research.” https://www.propublica.org/article/the-met-museum-native-american-collections?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=230425

Since 2016, employees of contractors with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) “have been investigated for misusing agency data or computers at least 414 times,” *WIRED* reported, based on information from an agency disciplinary database obtained through a freedom of information request. “While many of the records lack enough detail to discern the full nature of the allegations, two dozen investigations were categorized as criminal. And in at least 14 incidents, the records explicitly say that agents were investigated for allegedly using agency databases or computers to harass someone or make threats.” https://www.wired.com/story/ice-agent-database-abuse-records/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cnidid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=Email_0_EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_content=WIR_Daily_041723&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_041723&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=P2

The Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals approved the Boy Scouts of America’s plan to exit bankruptcy by paying claims against it by persons who said they were abused by persons with the organization. Two retired judges and a “committee made up of lawyers who represent sex abuse claimants” will administer a trust fund believed to total at least \$2.46 billion from the Boy Scouts, organizations affiliated with it including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and insurance companies that had policies covering the Scouts. It is the largest sexual abuse settlement fund in U.S. history. Claimants can take a flat fee “based on the information already submitted,” submit additional information and have the trustees “determine the amount based on agreed-upon factors, including the severity of the abuse,” or sue in state court and have the jury determine the amount, a law professor explained in *The Conversation*. An estimated 75,000 people fall into the latter two categories. https://theconversation.com/boy-scouts-of-america-can-now-create-2-4-billion-fund-to-pay-claims-for-scouts-who-survived-abuse-a-bankruptcy-expert-explains-whats-next-202915?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20Newsletter%20%20April%2021%202023%20-%202605826210&utm_content=Daily%20Newsletter%20%20April%2021%202023%20-%202605826210+Version+B+CID_7988dfa1d57df1af35920fe7f48a0bb4&utm_source=campaign_monitor_us&utm_term=Boy%20Scouts%20of%20America%20can%20now%20create%2024%20billion%20fund%20to%20pay%20claims%20for%20Scouts%20who%20survived%20abuse%20a%20bankruptcy%20expert%20explains%20whats%20next

United States/Hawaii. Through the contribution of two donors, the State Archives was able to buy from a New York auction items related to the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. The materials include the queen’s personal flag, personal records of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, “about a dozen photographs, an interview of the person believed to have stolen jewels from King Kalakaua’s crown, letters about the queen’s flag, and more,” reported *Hawaii Public Radio*. Some of the items had been in state hands but were returned to the family at its request in the 1920s. The family apparently sold the items to a collector. <https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/the-conversation/2023-04-21/state-archives-secures-1893-overthrow-artifacts-previously-hidden-in-private-collection>

United States/Michigan. On 11 April legislation came into effect “wiping clean a range of convictions from people’s [criminal] records following a defined waiting period,” *Good News Network* reported. As of that date, 252,417 Michigan residents “became conviction-free as their criminal records were sealed.” The proponents of the reform said it will help persons get jobs and obtain housing, as criminal records “acted as barriers to housing and employment opportunities.” <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/michigan-clears-criminal-records-for-thousands-of-nonviolent-offenders/>

Good reads.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), “Organized Crime and the Rights of Children, Adolescents, and Youth: Challenges and State Actions in Northern Central America”: https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/2023/NorteCentroamerica_NNAJ_ES.pdf

Sandra F. Joireman, Rosine Tchatchoua-Djomo, “Post-conflict restitution of customary land: Guidelines and trajectories of change,” *World Development*: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2023.106272>

Joe Massey, Sasha Moriniere and Ed Parkes, “Responsible data stewardship,” Open Data Institute: <https://www.theodi.org/article/defining-responsible-data-stewardship/>

Marius Pieterse, “The relevance of the African regional human rights system in the urban age,” *Leiden Journal of International Law*: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/leiden-journal-of-international-law/article/relevance-of-the-african-regional-human-rights-system-in-the-urban-age/83CA276521FA316BEAD417EC29D39877?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email#.ZDLs5sR5G-o.twitter

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