
ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Commentary.

Any doubts that information security is the current crisis should have been answered by the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August. The frightening messages came quickly: The Taliban have captured U.S. military databases. The Taliban have access to the government's database of employees and would use that to hunt them down. The Taliban have access to the government website and is planning to shut it down. Hundreds of people seeking to leave were on cellphones, not sure if the messages they were sending were being intercepted. The worries multiplied by the minute.

The issues surrounding the Afghan digital crisis are many and complex. They include access to: electronic records created by the former Afghan government that are now in the hands of the new governors (digital identity cards for an estimated 6.2 million of the 40 million Afghans, for example), records created by the U.S. and other coalition partners that were captured by the Taliban (including employee records and drone targeting information), biometric information in the hands of intergovernmental and humanitarian agencies that work or worked in Afghanistan, personal information on social media and on cellphones. It is beyond the scope of this commentary to discuss all of these, but reading some of the links listed at the end will introduce the wide-ranging discussions.

A particular concern was that digital IDs and databases would be used to target people, with special worry about the use of biometrics such as iris scans and fingerprints. As a scholar who studies security commented, "With biometrics, the concern is, you can take a new name but you can't really take a new iris." This led to a two-fold discussion: what information should be collected (interestingly, the Afghan National Police's ID card application form shows the names of father and grandfather of the applicant but not of the mother; an Afghan involved with the police explained to *MIT Technology Review*, "Some people don't like to share their mother's name in our cultures") and when should the collected information be deleted. Karl Steinacker, formerly at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees where he "for several years" was "in charge of registration, biometrics, and the digital identity of refugees," argued that if there is no longer an operational need "it makes no sense" to keep the biometric data, whether anonymized or not. He called for "an inventory of data: what data is there, what is needed and what is not needed, where are the copies . . . and is this data potentially damaging to people in the database?" This argument slights the possible use of personal information, whether biometric or not, for other than operational purposes, such as searches for the missing, family reunion, identity clarification, and historical analysis. Here is where archivists must be a part of the decision-making before the records are destroyed.

As the Taliban advanced, individuals scrambled to delete information from cellphones and personal computers. The NGO Human Rights First published guides in Dari and Pashto to teach people how to delete their social media accounts, but following that good advice was clearly a problem for the estimated "13.5% of Afghans who have access to the internet at home" if there was no or poor access to electricity and the internet. LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter all said they had "taken steps to help" secure data on their platforms. Four important human rights organizations—Access Now, Amnesty International USA, Human Rights Watch, and Mnemonic—while acknowledging the need of the online platforms to "restrict content that unlawfully incites or promotes violence," called on the technology

companies “to preserve and archive removed content that may have evidentiary value of human rights abuses, including content identified by human rights organizations, while ensuring the privacy and security of vulnerable individuals associated with that content.”

As you skim the items in this issue of *SAHR News*, note the entries about the use by governments of information in registration systems, which presumably are digital, to enforce or deny services (Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, UAE, Lebanon/Syria). And see the items on the businesses—diet programs and the T-Mobile telecommunications company—that seem to collect more personal digital information than they need. Then think about the security of those systems and the privacy of the people whose information resides in them. The benefits of electronic records and registration systems are real, but so are the risks. That is the digital records paradox.

[HRF Fact Sheet \(humanrightsfirst.org\); https://restofworld.org/2021/afghans-social-media-taliban/](https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/30/preserve-evidence-potential-rights-abuses-afghanistan);
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/30/preserve-evidence-potential-rights-abuses-afghanistan>;
<https://news.trust.org/item/20210817111442-4d73x/>; <https://news.trust.org/item/20210820080622-5wjww/>;
<https://theintercept.com/2021/08/17/afghanistan-taliban-military-biometrics/>; https://theintercept.com/2021/08/17/afghanistan-taliban-military-biometrics/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter;
https://www.vice.com/en/article/jg89kk/afghanistans-government-websites-are-frozen-in-time?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=210831;
<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/08/30/1033941/afghanistan-biometric-databases-us-military-40-data-points/>;
<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/interview/2021/2/9/the-risks-of-biometric-data-and-the-taliban>;
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/29/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-revenge.html>;
<https://blogs.prio.org/2021/08/contingency-planning-in-the-digital-age-biometric-data-of-afghans-must-be-reconsidered/>

SAHR News. The next First Tuesday Talk will feature Adel Maizi, discussing his experiences as an archivist and member of Tunisia’s Truth and Dignity Commission. The talk will be in Arabic. October 5, at 16:00 hours Central European time. To register:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwvdeIurTgqE9VLE4pmY65krRWNkdkwIIFI>

International news.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC report, approved by 195 nations and based on an analysis of more than 14,000 studies of climate around the globe, said it is “unequivocal” that human activity is causing climate change and there is “high confidence” that greenhouse gas emissions are causing more frequent and intensive heatwaves, floods, and wildfires. It said the last time the earth was this warm was “around 125,000 years” ago. The Panel’s next report, due out in 2022, will focus on climate change effects on human society, such as on coastal cities, farms and health care systems. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the report “a red alert for our planet.”

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>; <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2021/08/12/ipcc-report-call-arms-climate-science-courts-legal-experts-say/>; <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20604.doc.htm>

International Criminal Court. The Venezuelan government delivered a dossier to the chief prosecutor on 23 August, providing “evidence of the damage done by the sanctions the United States has imposed on the oil-rich Latin American nation,” *EFE* reported. Venezuela’s vice president said, “We have obtained information on how (the sanctions) affected the medicine-producing industry in Venezuela. More than half the medicine-producing transnationals in the country left.”

<https://www.laprensalatina.com/venezuela-asks-icc-to-probe-us-sanctions-as-crime-against-humanity/?emci=4bd39d4a-a405-ec11-b563-501ac57bf4cb&emdi=5858eb2e-a505-ec11-b563-501ac57bf4cb&ceid=4606001>

UNICEF. Unicef issued a report on the “extremely high risk” to children of the impacts of climate change and pollution, the *Guardian* reported. “The report is the first to combine high-resolution maps of climate and environmental impacts with maps of child vulnerability, such as poverty and access to clean water, healthcare and education.” Unicef’s executive director said the situation is “unimaginably dire.”

<https://www.unicef.org/reports/climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis>; <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/20/a-billion-children-at-extreme-risk-from-climate-impacts-unicef>

United Nations. In the wake of the earthquake in Haiti, which closely followed the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, there were calls for the UN to dispatch peacekeepers. As *BuzzFeed* reported, “For some of the women in Haiti still seeking support from the peacekeepers who swept in a decade ago, the possibility of a new influx of them triggered resentment. All but one of their claims for child support from UN peacekeepers have stalled in Haiti’s courts.” And even in the one completed case, in

which a Uruguayan peacekeeper was ordered to pay child support, the woman has not been paid. The UN maintains a database of allegations of peacekeepers sexually abusing or exploiting local women. “There have been 1,143 allegations since 2007, across at least a dozen countries,” with 120 reports from Haiti. Of the 120, the UN “opened 88 investigations and sent home 41 uniformed personnel.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2019-12. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/karlazabludovsky/haiti-earthquake-un-peacekeepers-sexual-abuse?emci=e5393f56-280b-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&emdi=c8828467-290b-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&ceid=4606001>

The UN Environment Program announced that “when service stations in Algeria stopped providing leaded petrol in July, the use of leaded petrol ended globally” (for cars and trucks; it is still in use in aviation, motor sports, and off-road vehicles). According to UNEP, “Banning the use of leaded petrol has been estimated to prevent more than 1.2 million premature deaths per year, increase IQ points among children, save USD 2.45 trillion for the global economy and decrease crime rates.” Leaded petrol “affects the development of the human brain, especially harming children, with studies suggesting it reduced 5-10 IQ points.” <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/era-leaded-petrol-over-eliminating-major-threat-human-and-planetary>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR announced its first climate strategy, a “Strategic Framework for Climate Action.” UNHCR’s climate adviser said in an interview that climate change is a “vulnerability multiplier,” and UNHCR “has begun considering whether international refugee law might apply to climate migrants to help the UN and others cope with the mounting crisis. Such a shift would open the door to unprecedented legal protections for people uprooted from their home countries due to climate change,” *Passblue* reported. <https://www.passblue.com/2021/08/01/the-un-refugee-agencys-bold-plan-to-manage-the-crisis-of-climate-migrants/>

World/general news.

Business. TikTok is one of the world’s leading social media platforms. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue, an NGO based in London, “set out to examine the state of hate” on TikTok: “Based on a sample of 1,030 videos, this research examined how TikTok is used to promote white supremacist conspiracy theories, produce weapons manufacturing advice, glorify extremists, terrorists, fascists and dictators, direct targeted harassment against minorities and produce content that denies that violent events like genocides ever happened.” A frightening “33% of the TikTok accounts analysed in this study feature one or more references to hate or extremism in their profile features,” and the “most-viewed video in our sample had 2 million views” and “featured anti-Asian hatred linked to COVID-19.” At the end of the data collection period (4-30 June 2021) only “191 videos, 18.5% of the full sample, were removed or were no longer available on TikTok.” <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/hatescape-an-in-depth-analysis-of-extremism-and-hate-speech-on-tiktok/>

The U.K.-based NGO Business & Human Rights Resource Centre said between 2013 and 2020 it “recorded 679 human rights abuse allegations linked to Chinese business conduct abroad.” The “human rights risks are particularly high in metals and mining (35% or 236 allegations), construction (22% or 152 allegations) and fossil fuel energy (17% or 118 allegations).” The main rights implications were “inadequate disclosure or environmental impact assessment (EIA) (31% of allegations recorded), followed by violations of land rights (29%), loss of livelihoods (28%), labour rights (19%), and pollution and health threat (18%).” https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/2021_BHRRRC_China_Briefing.pdf

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre also reported on allegations of human rights abuses by renewable energy companies operating in Latin America, focusing on hydroelectric, wind and solar. It said hydroelectric companies were responsible for 80% of human rights abuses. Twice as many cases were reported in Mexico and Central American as in South America, with Honduras having the highest number of cases for a single country: 138 or 28% of the total. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/media-centre/rapid-rise-in-rights-abuses-by-renewable-energy-companies-in-latin-america/>

Australia’s Gumala Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) obtained a “forensic audit” of its 1997 agreement with mining company Rio Tinto on the work of the Yandicoogina mine, the *Guardian* reported. The audit said Rio Tinto “may have underpaid GAC by as much as \$400m over the life of the agreement”—Rio Tinto had sent the Corporation a check for \$40 million, 10% of that amount. A senator told the

Guardian, “A lack of resources to help native title groups, traditional owners, establish native title and then, as claimants, use their native title for their best interest is something that’s handicapped the full promise of native title rights for decades.” <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/aug/03/rio-tintos-alleged-underpayment-of-traditional-owners-of-wa-mine-area-sparks-calls-for-widespread-review>

“Google fired dozens of employees between 2018 and 2020 for abusing their access to the company’s pool of data,” according to an internal Google document obtained by *Motherboard*. The document said Google terminated 36 employees in 2020 for security-related issues, and “86% of all security-related allegations against employees included mishandling of confidential information, such as the transfer of internal-only information to outside parties.” https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5gk73/google-fired-dozens-for-data-misuse?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=210804

Royal Dutch Shell agreed to pay around 95 million euros to communities in southern Nigeria affected by crude oil spills in 1970, *Agence-France Presse* reported. For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-01. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/aug/12/shell-to-pay-111m-over-decades-old-oil-spills-in-nigeria>

Climate. Scientists from Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, the U.S. and the U.K. collaborated “to assess to what extent human-induced climate change altered the likelihood and intensity of the heavy rainfall causing the severe flooding” in northern Europe in mid-July. They noted that “in many places the extreme floods not only far exceed any previous event but also led to a failure or even destruction of the gauging stations,” making precision impossible. They used extensive historical data to measure change over time, in one case extending back to “quality checked data” from 1911. <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/wp-content/uploads/Scientific-report-Western-Europe-floods-2021-attribution.pdf>

In an article on climate change affecting Alaska, the *New York Times Magazine* quoted a research scientist with the U.S. National Weather Service saying “the only way to anchor ourselves in reality . . . is via long-term record.” “It’s important,” he said, “to be able to put things in context. You have to be able to look back.” A century of climate records at the Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center near Anchorage show “the average yearly temperature increased by 6.9 degrees” Fahrenheit and “70 years of records collected at the Anchorage airport show that the average yearly stretch of frost-free days . . . increased by 17 days.” <https://zachstgeorge.com/writing/He-Wrote-a-Gardening-Column.-He-Ended-Up-Documenting-Climate-Change>.

Medical records. A study published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* used the electronic health records of 13,000 people in south London, 15 years or older, who had first contact with the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust for psychotic and mood disorders in 2008–2012, and tracked them annually for seven years. The researchers matched the health information with “high-resolution estimates of air pollution at their homes,” the *Guardian* reported, and found that people exposed to an increase of 15 micrograms per cubic metre or higher levels of pollution “had an 18% higher risk of being admitted to hospital and a 32% higher risk of needing outpatient treatment after a year. The link was strongest for NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide), which is largely emitted by diesel vehicles, but was also significant for small particle pollution, which is produced by burning all fossil fuels.” https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/27/air-pollution-linked-to-more-severe-mental-illness-study?mbid=&utm_source=nl&utm_brand=ny&utm_mailing=TNY_Climate_090121&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&hasha=8fed7efd9e9d6389b9f914ad34a5948d&hashb=be86af3880f5d49a71f804266e79b70bb4fa408d&hashc=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&esrc=&utm_term=TNY_ClimateCrisis; <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/association-between-air-pollution-exposure-and-mental-health-service-use-among-individuals-with-first-presentations-of-psychotic-and-mood-disorders-retrospective-cohort-study/010F283B9107A5F04C51F90B5D5F96D6>

Migration. “The U.S. Border Patrol reported nearly 180,000 encounters with migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border in June, the highest monthly total in more than two decades,” the Pew Research Center reported. The statistics show that 34% of the June migrants had attempted to cross the border at least once previously within the past year. And the *New York Times* featured a story about a sheriff in west Texas who finds the bodies of migrants who died while crossing the border into the United States—19 so far this year. “Through July, Border Patrol officials found 383 dead migrants, the highest toll in nearly a decade,” but the Border Patrol figure “does not include the dozens of bodies found by other law enforcement agencies, such as local sheriff’s offices.”

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/10/migrant-encounters-at-u-s-mexico-border-are-at-a-21-year-high/>;
https://news.yahoo.com/texas-sheriffs-grim-task-finding-121652474.html?fr=sycsrp_catchall

Last January 22 Mexican police officers shot at two trucks carrying migrants towards the U.S. border and then set them on fire, killing 16 Guatemalans, 2 Mexicans and 1 Salvadoran. *VICE News* “obtained exclusive footage of pre-trial hearings against the 12 officers charged in the killings, which a judge ordered kept secret because of the sensitive nature of the case.” Among the evidence offered by the prosecutor: “geolocating tools placed one of the police vehicles at the scene of the massacre as it was happening . . . and cellphone data proved the officers were physically there.” One of the officers charged, a woman who was the regional police commander, testified that when her account of the massacre didn’t match that of the other officers, “the investigator would change my testimony so it would match with the rest of my colleagues.” https://www.vice.com/en/article/93y847/us-trained-cops-in-mexico-killed-migrants-set-them-on-fire-say-prosecutors?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=210807

Human Rights First, a U.S. NGO, said it “has tracked at least 6,356 kidnappings, sexual assaults, and other violent attacks against people blocked at ports of entry or expelled to Mexico by DHS [U.S. Department of Homeland Security] since President Biden took office” on 20 January. The report relied on interviews with migrants and asylum seekers in Mexico and government officials in both the U.S. and Mexico and “draws on data from an electronic survey of asylum seekers in Mexico conducted by *Al Otro Lado* between June and August 2021, as well as information from U.S. and Mexican government data, media sources, and other human rights reports.” https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/HumanRightsTravesty_FINAL.pdf

Privacy. Privacy International, a U.K.-based NGO, looked into BetterMe Meal Plan, Noom, and VShred diet programs that use tests to “lure” users. “Those tests encourage users to share sensitive personal data, including about their mental health.” PI researchers entered the data required to enrol in the programs and then “conducted traffic analysis to find out what happens to the data.” They found that Noom explicitly says it will share collected data, “while the poor security practices of the others meant the data was de facto accessible to third parties.” Further, for “at least” two of the programs “the data we entered did not affect the programme we were being sold, raising questions as to why the data is collected in the first place.” <https://privacyinternational.org/long-read/4603/unhealthy-diet-targeted-ads-investigation-how-diet-industry-exploits-our-data>

The U.S. telecommunications company T-Mobile said a data breach had compromised the information of more than 50 million people. Unusually, “more than 40 million are former or prospective customers who had applied for credit with the carrier”—in other words, not customers. As *WIRED* wrote, “The bigger question . . . is whether T-Mobile really needed to hold on to such sensitive information from 40 million people with whom it doesn’t currently do business.” https://www.wired.com/story/t-mobile-breach-much-worse-than-it-had-to-be/?bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&endid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_081821&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=list1_p4

Technology. More than 90 policy groups from six continents signed an open letter urging Apple “to drop its plan to have Apple devices scan photos for child sexual abuse material,” *Ars Technica* reported. The group letter said, “Though these capabilities are intended to protect children and to reduce the spread of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), we are concerned that they will be used to censor protected speech, threaten privacy and security of people around the world, and have disastrous consequences for many children.” https://www.wired.com/story/apple-csam-plan-sparks-outcry-from-policy-groups/?bxid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&endid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_082021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=list2_p1

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Afghanistan/Pakistan. According to *MENAFN*, Pakistan gave the Afghan Taliban “a list of ‘most wanted terrorists’ affiliated with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) operating from the war-torn neighbouring country.” “Afghan Taliban chief Haibatullah Akhundzada has reportedly set up a 3-member commission to investigate Islamabad’s complaints that the TTP was using Afghanistan to plot cross-border terrorist attacks.” <https://menafn.com/1102700383/Afghan-Taliban-given-list-of-wanted-TTP-men>

Balkan wars. Belgrade's Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) released a digital archives collection, "Crimes in Foca in 1992," containing "judgments, videos, exhibits and other materials collected from court databases and the HLC archives." HLC said, "Some of the most drastic examples of systematic sexual violence during the war in BiH occurred in Foca, which was one of the reasons for the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia."

<https://zoneofnonresponsibility.net/digital-collections/zlocini-u-foci-1992-godine/>

Burkina Faso/European Union/Mali/Niger/Serbia. "Amnesty International collected and analysed more than 400 pieces of digital content from Burkina Faso and Mali, including verified photos and videos posted on social media by members of armed groups between January 2018 and May 2021. The imagery shows weapons stockpiles and fighters from various armed groups and state auxiliaries." While most of the visible weapons were old Kalashnikovs of Soviet origin, "Amnesty identified 12 cases where fighters carried newer weapons made by Serbian company Zastava." Serbia, like other European countries, ratified the arms trade treaty "which prohibits the transfer of arms if there is a risk they will be used to commit or facilitate human rights violations. Such violations are rampant in the Sahel, where the Armed Conflict Location Event Database reported more than 6,000 civilian deaths 2017-2021 in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger." According to official European Union annual report data, since 2013 EU states (including Slovakia, the Czech Republic and France) have "issued 506 licenses, worth 205 million euros, of military equipment to Mali and Burkina Faso."

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/sahel-amnesty-identifies-serbian-weapons-in-stockpiles-of-brutal-armed-groups/>

Iran/Sweden. The trial of Hamid Noury began in Stockholm. He is "alleged to have played a significant role in the 1988 summary executions in several prisons across Iran," *Justice Info* reported. Noury was arrested in Sweden in 2019, based on documents given to Swedish prosecutors by a London law firm.

For background on 1988, see *SAHR News* 2021-06. [Iran: first trial for 1988 massacres opens in Stockholm - JusticeInfo.net](https://www.justiceinfo.net/iran-first-trial-for-1988-massacres-opens-in-stockholm/)

Kenya/United Kingdom. Six UN special rapporteurs (SRs) wrote to the U.K. government "expressing concern over its failure to provide 'effective remedies and reparations' to the Kipsigis and Talai peoples" of Kenya who were "brutally evicted by the British army between 1895 and 1963 to make way for lucrative tea plantations owned by white settlers," wrote the *Guardian*. (The two peoples had filed a complaint with the UN in 2019 asking for an investigation.) The letter was sent on 31 May, noting that if the U.K. government had not responded within 60 days, the letter would be made public; with no response, the letter was released at the beginning of August. After expressing "serious concern" about the lack of accountability and remedy, the SRs wrote, "We are further concerned at the failure to adopt measures to establish the facts and know the truth about the circumstances surrounding those violations, including the identity of victims and perpetrators, the events that led to the violations, and their impact on the affected populations and their descendants."

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26395>; <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/03/un-criticises-uk-for-failure-to-redress-colonial-era-land-grab-in-kenya>

Lebanon/Syria. The NGO Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC) reported that an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees are living in Lebanon, and because of Lebanon's "strict residency rules" an estimated 86% of these Syrians are without legal residency. Lebanon's government stopped UNHCR from registering Syrian refugees in 2015, and now "Syrian refugees without registration have been hesitant to get tested, treated, and vaccinated for COVID-19 due to fears of deportation." SJAC said, "Lebanon must . . . lower barriers for refugees to legally register and permit UNHCR to restart direct refugee registration and counting. This will streamline humanitarian assistance and possible resettlement."

https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2021/08/05/lebanons-economic-turmoil-syrians-face-unique-vulnerabilities/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=52a8fb6a61-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-52a8fb6a61-96428969

Russia/Ukraine. "The remains of between 5,000 and 8,000 people were found in 29 graves in the southern city of Odessa," *AFP* reported. The head of the regional branch of Ukraine's National Memory Institute said "the victims were likely to have been killed by the Soviet secret police unit during the late 1930s. However, he said, it would not be possible to identify the victims as any records were held in Russia."

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58340805>

South Korean/United States/Vietnam. Victims of a massacre by South Korean troops in the Vietnamese villages of Phong Nhi and Phong Nhut on 12 February 1968 are seeking compensation from the South Korean government, in the first lawsuit of its kind to be tried in a South Korean court, the *New York Times* reported. South Korea sent 320,000 troops to fight in the Vietnam war, and declassified U.S. documents provide evidence of civilian atrocities carried out by South Korean troops. However, “South Korea maintains that it has found no evidence of civilian killings in its wartime records.”

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2169323/south-koreans-face-up-to-atrocities-in-vietnam-war>

National news.

Afghanistan. The UN Secretary-General issued the fifth report on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan. It said “an additional 5,770 boys and girls have been killed and maimed in Afghanistan between January 2019 and December 2020. Furthermore, child casualties for the first half of 2021 constituted the highest numbers of children killed and maimed for this period ever recorded by the UN in Afghanistan,” and during that period “one civilian casualty out of three was a child.” Armed groups “particularly the Taliban” were responsible for 46% of the “grave violations, followed by “Government and pro-government forces” (35%), and landmines and “explosive remnants of war.”

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2021/08/138737/>

Bangladesh. Human Rights Watch said it has credible evidence of enforced disappearances by security forces over the past decade, and has “verified enforced disappearances cases in Bangladesh over the last decade in which the victim’s whereabouts remain unknown.” HRW interviewed more than 115 victims, family members, and witnesses to enforced disappearances and said Bangladesh authorities demonstrate a “persistent refusal to investigate . . . and hold perpetrators accountable.” It urged the UN to undertake an “international investigation into enforced disappearances” and to ban officers of the military’s Rapid Action Battalion, a counterterrorism paramilitary unit linked to the disappearances, from participating in UN peacekeeping forces (in 2020 Bangladesh was the largest contributor to those missions).

Bangladeshi human rights defenders assisted HRW in documenting cases, but “the government crackdown on civil society organizations is so severe that none of the human rights defenders who assisted us in this project are willing to be named.” <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/16/where-no-sun-can-enter/decade-enforced-disappearances-bangladesh>

Belarus. “On August 13, the Central District Court in Minsk . . . granted an application from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to declare all content published by *Tut.by* and *Zerkalo.io* as ‘extremist,’ thereby banning both outlets,” the Committee to Protect Journalists reported. “The Ministry of Information will list *Tut.by* and *Zerkalo.io*’s websites, social media profiles, and logos on the government’s Republican List of Extremist Materials, the court statement said. Once the outlets are added to that list, anyone convicted of producing, storing, or spreading any materials from the websites can be subject to a fine of up to 870 rubles (US\$349) or detention for up to 15 days, according to the administrative code of Belarus.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-05. <https://cpi.org/2021/08/belarusian-court-bans-tut-by-and-affiliated-news-website-zerkalo-io-as-extremist/>

Bolivia. A five-member panel of human rights experts established by the Organization of American States issued a “scathing 471-page report” on “the events surrounding the disputed 2019 presidential vote,” *AP* reported. It found “Bolivia’s recent interim government came to power by sidestepping constitutional rules for presidential succession and persecuted opponents with ‘systematic torture’ and ‘summary executions’ by security forces in the tumultuous aftermath of Evo Morales’s resignation in 2019.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2020-06, 2021-05. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/17/bolivia-government-tortured-executed-opponents-report>

Brazil. The Association of Indigenous Peoples from Brazil (APIB) requested the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court “to examine the crimes perpetrated against indigenous people by President Jair Bolsonaro since the beginning of his term, in January 2019, with special attention over the period of Covid-19 pandemic.” The Association said its complaint included “several complaints from indigenous leaders and organizations, official documents, academic research and technical notes.”

<https://apiboficial.org/2021/08/09/unprecedented-apib-denounces-bolsonaro-before-the-icc-in-the-hague-for-indigenous-genocide/?lang=en>

Central African Republic. MINUSCA (the UN Mission in the CAR) and the UN Human Rights Office issued a report on the “human rights situation” from July 2020 to June 2021. It said they documented 526 “incidents of abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law,” affecting “at least 1,221 victims, including 144 civilians,” with “extrajudicial and summary killings, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, unnecessary and disproportionate use of force, conflict-related sexual violence and serious violations against children, including their recruitment by parties to the conflict.” Just over half (54%) of the documented incidents were perpetrated by “a coalition of armed groups, known as the CPC” (Coalition of Patriots for Change) with the rest caused by government or contractor personnel. <https://minusca.unmissions.org/en/central-african-republic-un-report-calls-urgent-end-mounting-human-rights-abuses-and-violations>

Chile. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights welcomed the friendly settlement of the case between the state and NGOs Centro de Derechos Reproductive and Vivo Politivo regarding the responsibility of the state for the 5 November 2002 sterilization in a public hospital of a woman without her informed consent, despite the fact that Chilean law requires “that sterilization must be authorized in writing and with the informed consent of the patient.” A wide variety of personal and public reparation measures were agreed upon. <https://oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2021/221.asp>

China. A new law imposes “some of the world’s strictest controls on private sector handling of information about individuals, but appears not to affect the ruling party’s pervasive surveillance or access to . . . corporate data,” *AP* reported. https://apnews.com/article/technology-business-china-data-privacy-1d3fbcac4549c6968c07897900c96cc3?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=August20_MorningWire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

Colombia. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) court announced its findings on the recruitment of children by the former FARC rebels during a 20-year period, *Al Jazeera* reported. The president of the JEP told a news conference “a provisional estimate, which could be even greater” is 18,667 boys and girls were used in the conflict, and at least 5,691 of the children were under age 14. “The tally came from analysing 31 databases compiled by victims groups and the state, as well as testimonies from 274 people who were forcibly recruited”—a good example of using information from the state, the private sector and individuals to examine a human rights violation. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/10/colombia-farc-rebels-recruited-more-than-18000-children-court>

Colombia’s human rights ombudsman issued a report saying 78 human rights and community activists were murdered in the first half of the year, down from 90 in the first half of 2020, reported *Reuters*. The ombudsman also said 182 activists were killed in 2020, up from 134 in 2019, but “human rights groups, who maintain their own counts, say the figure is higher.” <https://www.euronews.com/2021/08/26/us-colombia-violence?emci=f5824458-7606-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&emdi=bf91f47a-7706-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&ceid=4606001>

VICE World News reported on the case of a protester who was beaten by the police during a strike on 1 May in Madrid, a satellite city of Bogota, and died. His family “put out a call on social media asking people to help them figure out what happened;” they obtained surveillance camera videos and images from four cellphones; *VICE* saw the videos, medical records and witness testimony about the beating. The attorney general opened an investigation into the case, but the family’s lawyer said “there has been virtually no progress since step one—event though he personally handed over the videos, medical records and other evidence months ago.” https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7eq99/cops-in-colombia-were-caught-on-video-brutalizing-this-protester-his-family-wants-answers?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=210807

Ecuador. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) condemned “the acts of violence that occurred in various penitentiaries . . . which resulted in at least 121” dead and “dozens” injured, including prison officers. IACHR based the statement on official sources, including data from SNAI, the National Service for Comprehensive Care for Adults Deprived of Liberty and Juvenile Offenders, and public information. [IACHR Condemns Acts of Violence in Ecuadorian Penitentiaries in the Course of 2021 \(mailchi.mp\)](mailto:mailchi.mp)

Egypt. “A video released by the spokesperson of the Egyptian armed forces on 1 August as an update on operations against militants, shows a soldier shooting a person at close range while asleep in a

makeshift tent. Another clip shows an unarmed man pounded by bullets from above, as he is running in the desert, before falling to the ground. In the video's voiceover the narrator celebrates the success of operations by Egyptian armed forces in North Sinai announcing the killing of 89 militants over an unspecified timeframe." Amnesty International called on the public prosecutor to "launch effective, impartial and independent investigations into what appears to be an extrajudicial killing." The weapons used to kill the man in the tent were made in the U.S., and Amnesty said, "The international community including the USA and EU member states must urgently halt the transfer of arms or military equipment where there is a clear risk that these may be used to commit human rights violations."

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/egypt-investigate-evidence-of-extrajudicial-executions-by-egyptian-army-in-north-sinai/>

An online platform called Qawem ("resist" in Arabic) was launched a year ago by activists to help women fight sextortion, the practice of threatening to share private pictures to humiliate or coerce the women pictured, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. In the past year Qawem has received more than 250,000 appeals for help, a number the creator of Qawem calls "alarming." The organization will contact the blackmailer and tell him "he will not be reported to the police on the condition that he sends a video of himself apologizing, promises to erase the images and accepts legal responsibility if they are made public." If he does not agree, "Qawem helps victims go to the police to report sextortion," although convictions are rare and girls under 18 "cannot file a complaint without a legal guardian." There was no explanation of how Qawem is preserving the "I promise" videos in order to hold blackmailers accountable if they break the promise. <https://news.trust.org/item/20210803000139-ijac0/>

El Salvador. On 3 September 2020 *El Faro* revealed that the government had been "covertly negotiating a reduction in homicides" with the gang MS-13, and four days later "prosecutors raided" the headquarters of the Bureau of Prisons searching for evidence. They were too late. Now, in August 2021, *El Faro* reported that on 5 September 2020 the director of prisons with "information technology personnel" went to the prison facility in Zacatecoluca and removed "computer hard drives" and "change drives" containing "video footage of visitors entering the facility and other information including . . . communication from gang leaders in prison to their membership in the streets" and also removed "221 logbooks." "Prosecutors claim that the logbooks were taken to the DGCP [Bureau of Prisons] archives in Planes de Renderos, and it's unclear whether prosecutors ultimately obtained them." For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-04. https://elfaro.net/en/202108/el_salvador/25670/Criminal-Investigation-Found-the-Bukele-Administration-Hid-Evidence-of-Negotiations-with-Gangs.htm?utm_source=DB+El+Faro_English&utm_campaign=fa2bddf484-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_22_01_08_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9190c89-fa2bddf484-59351739

On 31 August the Legislative Assembly "pushed through justice system reforms, forcing senior judges and prosecutors into retirement," *El Faro* reported. Under the new law, the judge hearing the El Mozote massacre case will be forced to retire, threatening "the future of the trial of high-level military officers for the El Mozote massacre, when U.S.-trained Salvadoran soldiers murdered nearly 1,000 civilians." The defense lawyers for the officers had "repeatedly petitioned to remove him," and the Ministry of Defense "repeatedly denied Judge Guzman access to pertinent files held in military barracks." One of the lawyers for the victims wrote on Twitter, "Protecting war criminals is the objective of these reforms." *El Faro's* reporter covering the trial said, "To remove Judge Guzman is to close the case. The trial can't be repeated because many of the witnesses who testified in the past five years died." For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-05. <https://mailchi.mp/elfaro.net/elfaro-english-bukele-purges-judiciary-6213384?e=b68035e8b1>

Ethiopia. Amnesty International released a report on rape and other sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray. It said women and girls are subjected to violence by members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force, the Eritrean Defense Force, the Amhara Regional Police Special Force and Fano, an Amhara militia group. "Health facilities in Tigray registered 1,288 cases of gender-based violence from February to April 2021. Adigrat Hospital recorded 376 cases of rape from the beginning of the conflict to 9 June 2021. However, many survivors told Amnesty International they had not visited health facilities, suggesting these figures represent only a small fraction of rapes in the context of the conflict." <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/ethiopia-troops-and-militia-rape-abduct-women-and-girls-in-tigray-conflict-new-report/>

Human Rights Watch said that since late June Ethiopian authorities "have arbitrarily detained, forcibly disappeared, and committed other abuses against ethnic Tigrayans in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa."

In July and August, HRW Human Rights Watch reviewed court and police documents and “relevant photos” and “interviewed relatives, friends, and lawyers of 23 Tigrayan people whom the authorities arrested between June 28 and July 19 and whose whereabouts have not been revealed. A lawyer also shared a list of an additional 110 people whose relatives said they did not know their whereabouts as of August 2.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/18/ethiopia-ethnic-tigrayans-forcibly-disappeared>

Guatemala. Judge Miguel Angel Galvez ordered two high-ranking ex-generals to stand trial on charges of committing “genocide, crimes against humanity and forced kidnapping from 1978 to 1982 in a case where more than 1,700 people were killed over 31 separate massacres” in the province of Quiche, home to many indigenous Maya communities, *Reuters* reported. Guatemala’s massive police archives should contain relevant evidence. <https://kfgo.com/2021/08/30/in-guatemala-two-ex-generals-ordered-to-stand-trial-for-genocide/?emci=ddfa4249-580a-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&emdi=5eb48737-590a-ec11-981f-501ac57ba3ed&ceid=4606001>

Haiti. The government asked the United Nations for help in setting up an international commission of investigation into the killing of President Jovenel Moise and creating a special tribunal for the prosecution of the culprits, *Haiti Libre* reported. <https://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-34412-haiti-justice-the-chancellery-asks-the-un-for-help-in-the-investigation-into-the-assassination-of-president-moise.html>

A judge and two court clerks who had collected evidence for the investigation into the killing of President Moise were in hiding on 2 August, the *New York Times* reported, “with a backpack full of legal documents that could determine the fate of Haiti’s most important trial in decades.” The clerks, who wrote down witness statements, said they were pressured to add names of two prominent Haitians to those implicated, and the investigative judge “said that he had . . . been pressured to modify sworn statements and that he had been threatened with death if he did not comply.” Further, “court documents show that two Colombian former soldiers killed after the assassination” had about \$42,000 in cash, but in “subsequent police reports the money is not listed among the evidence found at the scene.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/02/world/americas/haiti-jovenel-moise-killing.html>

India. Human rights activists told *Thomson Reuters Foundation* that “at least three Indian states are denying passports and government jobs to people because of their social media posts or participation in protests.” [No jobs, passports for 'anti-national' social media posts in India \(trust.org\)](https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en/news/2021/08/02/india-social-media-posts-social-media-posts-in-india-trust-org)

The military chief of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent sent a letter to the chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh state pointing out that “the native Assamese speakers of Arunachal Pradesh have been denied the right to obtain their PRCs [permanent resident certificates]” despite living in the state for generations, *The Hindu* reported. He said “Assamese speakers, who are natives of the land . . . are now in danger of expatriation.” <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/grant-prc-to-assamese-people-ulfa-i-to-arunachal-cm/article36150773.ece>

Iran. *HRANA*, the Human Rights Activists News Agency, said residents of Sistan and Baluchestan province who do not have government identity documents are being “denied COVID-19 vaccination, even when vaccines are not in short supply.” According to the director general of the province register, “since 2013 the cases of more than 9,000 households who did not have ID have been processed, resulting in the issuance of about 30,000 identification documents. More than 1,500 cases of citizenship have been denied.” Estimates of the number of people in the province who do not have IDs range as high as 100,000 people. <https://www.en-hrana.org/residents-of-sistan-and-baluchestan-province-who-do-not-have-id-being-denied-coronavirus-vaccine-and-other-medical-services/>

“A group of hackers known as Edalat Ali, or ‘Ali’s Justice,’ published hacked footage from Tehran’s Evin Prison security cameras” showing “the control room and maltreatment of prison authorities with prisoners,” *Iran News Wire* reported. According to the *Washington Post*, the footage was distributed to news outlets including the *AP* “which first reported on the leaked video and said time stamps on the footage showed it was recorded in 2020 and this year.” *AP* said the “group that shared the videos . . . claimed to have ‘hundreds’ of gigabytes of data.” <https://www.eurasiareview.com/24082021-iranian-hackers-leak-footage-of-conditions-inside-evin-prison/> ; https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/iran-evin-footage-prison-apology/2021/08/24/a36182b4-04db-11ec-b3c4-c462b1edcfc8_story.html

“The Statistical Center of Iran said on August 20 that the marriage of girls between 10 and 14 years of age had increased by 10.5% in 2020 compared to 2019,” reported *Iran News Wire*. The secretary of the National Authority of the Convention of the Rights of the Child said “some families marry their children before the age of 13 without official registration” although the law requires families to “get permission from the court to marry girls under 13 years of age.” He attributed the prevalence of child marriages to “cultural and economic poverty.” <https://www.eurasiareview.com/31082021-iran-child-rights-official-says-child-marriages-3-times-more-than-official-stats/>

Lebanon. Human Rights Watch issued a report on the evidence implicating government officials in the 4 August 2020 blast at Beirut’s port that killed 218 and caused an estimated \$3.8-4.6 billion in damage. The blast was caused by the ignition of ammonium nitrate that had been off-loaded from a ship in 2014 and stored at the port. HRW reviewed “dozens of official documents sent from and to officials,” including senior leaders, supplemented by interviews. Television station *Al-Jadeed* “presented evidence” that an advisor to the Minister of Public Works and Transport “removed documents” from the ministry on 9 August, and “since the blast . . . a range of procedural and systemic flaws in the domestic investigation have rendered it incapable of credibly delivering justice.” HRW urged the UN Human Rights Council to establish “an international, independent investigative mission” to investigate the explosion, including “preserving evidence and identifying alleged perpetrators” of human rights violations and abuses. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast>

With Lebanon’s economy in a downward spiral and the social fabric fraying, the Shia militant group Hezbollah issued two ration cards to each poor family living in “Hezbollah bastions,” allowing family members to “buy highly subsidized products from dozens of shops” as well as “get medical treatment and advice at 48 Hezbollah-run clinics around Lebanon,” *AP* reported. Meanwhile “the government has been working for months to issue ration cards to poor families.” https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-religion-lebanon-beirut-hezbollah-93e21ba43a0f64198ca3726d3284ad39?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Sep01_MorningWire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

Malta. Nine international media organizations, including Article 19, PEN International, and Reporters without Borders, applauded the release of the 437-page report by the Board of Public Inquiry on the 2017 assassination of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. The Board concluded that “the State has to shoulder responsibility for the assassination because it created an atmosphere of impunity.” Caruana Galizia’s critical reporting “inevitably resulted in a direct confrontation with those in power” and “reached a climax following the publication of the Panama Papers and revelations about offshore company 17 Black.” The Panama Papers scandal was a leak in 2016 of 11.5 million documents--2.6 terabytes of data--from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca that contained financial and attorney-client information for more than 214,488 offshore entities. For background on the scandal, see *HRWG News* 2016-04. <https://rsf.org/en/news/daphne-caruana-galizia-landmark-public-inquiry-recommendations-must-be-implemented>

Mauritania. On 23 August, the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, *Justice Info* published an article on the persistence of slavery in Mauritania. In 2018 the Global Slavery Index published by the Walk Free Foundation estimated 90,000 people living in “modern slavery,” but “local associations accuse the government of not allowing a census of slaves and say these figures are far from reflecting the full extent of the phenomenon.” SOS Esclaves, an NGO, said, “The conditions for access to civil status are practically impossible for slaves. . . . Hundreds of thousands of people are unable to register. If someone is not registered, he or she does not exist as a citizen and cannot access any rights, including education.” [Justice still in chains for Mauritania’s slaves - JusticeInfo.net](https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/2021/08/23/justice-still-in-chains-for-mauritania-s-slaves)

Mexico. The Washington Office on Latin America, an NGO, said “Mexico’s National Registry of the disappeared lists over 23,000 people disappeared from 2018-2020, all of whom are presumed to be victims of a crime. Yet less than a third are listed in the Registry as victims of any specific crime currently under investigation. This reflects both a failure by authorities to upload information to the Registry—preventing it from fulfilling its potential as a search and investigation tool—and a real gap between disappearance victims and criminal investigations.” Government statistics report over 90,000 people are currently disappeared.

https://mexicodisappearances.wola.org/?utm_source=WOLA+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=93e1e073c5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_07_28_04_04_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_54f161a431-93e1e073c5-133911529

There are more than 52,000 unidentified cadavers in Mexico, and states on average identify just 20 percent of the bodies they receive, reported the Movement for Our Disappeared (El Movimiento por Nuestros Desaparecidos), according to *El Pais*. The Movement said there are “rudimentary, incomplete and little updated” databases for use in identifying the bodies, and those that exist are “underutilized and sparsely interconnected.” <https://elpais.com/mexico/2021-08-27/aumento-de-la-violencia-y-falta-de-peritos-la-crisis-forense-en-mexico-deja-mas-de-52000-cuerpos-sin-identificar.html>

Nicaragua. Amnesty International issued a report on enforced disappearance as a strategy for repression. It documented the cases of “10 people detained for their activism or for exercising their right to freedom of expression who have been subject to enforced disappearance” and whose current whereabouts are not disclosed, although Nicaraguan authorities have publicly confirmed that they have the detainees in their custody. “Families and legal representatives of the 10 detainees submitted more than 40 applications, petitions and appeals to different authorities, requesting access to their files, medical examinations for the detainees, interviews with their lawyers, family visits, and immediate release, among other requests,” but without success. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr43/4631/2021/en/>

Nigeria. The government launched a national electronic identity card program in 2014, but according to the National Identity Management Commission as of the beginning of August 2021 only about 60 million citizens and legal residents (out of a population of about 200 million) have enrolled, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. National Identification Number (NIN) “enrolment involves the recording of an individual’s demographic data and capturing their fingerprints, photo and digital signature. The number is required for all transactions requiring identity verification, such as opening a bank account, applying for a driver’s license, voting, getting health insurance, and filing tax returns.” The minister of communications “issued a directive mandating citizens to link their mobile numbers to their identity numbers by October 31, 2021, or risk being blocked from accessing telecommunications services.” Human rights activists are concerned that the data will not be protected if linked to NIN, as Nigeria has no data protection law. <https://news.trust.org/item/20210805104557-zunak/>

Amnesty International said, “Nigerian security forces have committed a catalogue of human rights violations and crimes under international law in their response to spiralling violence in Southeast Nigeria, carrying out a repressive campaign since January which has included sweeping mass arrests, excessive and unlawful force, and torture and other ill-treatment.” Amnesty carried out an “extensive investigation” on conditions in Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi and Abia states from January 2021, documenting “52 incidents of unlawful killings and 62 cases of arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment and torture. Media reports, video and audio recordings reviewed show that the Nigerian security forces also employed excessive force and other unlawful means to address the rising violence.” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/nigeria-at-least-115-people-killed-by-security-forces-in-four-months-in-countrys-southeast/>

Pakistan. A nationwide polio vaccination campaign started on 2 August, in the face of public warnings not to take the vaccine by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the largest militant group in the country. According to the *South Asia Terrorism Portal’s* database, since 2012 at least 119 persons (56 health workers and 63 policemen) have been killed in violent attacks on polio immunization programs, and another 76 persons (53 health workers and 23 policemen) have been injured. Pakistan is one of only two countries on the World Health Organization’s 2020 list of “polio-endemic nations;” Afghanistan is the other. <https://www.satp.org/south-asia-intelligence-review-Volume-20-No-7#assessment1>

Palestinian Authority. 7amleh, the Arab Center for Social Media Advancement, issued “An Exploratory Study: The Reality of Privacy and Digital Data Protection in Palestine,” a follow-up to its May 2021 report “The Attacks on Palestinian Digital Rights.” Read together, the studies show the impact of both international telecommunications companies and Israeli surveillance techniques on privacy and digital personal data protection in Palestine. 7amleh called for a “Palestinian commission to protect and regulate privacy and personal data and . . . a comprehensive Palestinian privacy and data protection law.” <https://7amleh.org/storage/The%20Attacks%20on%20Palestinian%20Digital%20Rights.pdf>; [https://7amleh.org/storage/The%20Reality%20of%20Privacy%20Digital%20Data%20Protection%20in%20Palestine%20\(1\)_1.pdf](https://7amleh.org/storage/The%20Reality%20of%20Privacy%20Digital%20Data%20Protection%20in%20Palestine%20(1)_1.pdf)

Philippines. A dozen civil society organizations in the HRD Memorial network released a statement expressing “ongoing concern about the persistent killings of human rights defenders (HRDs) and impunity for perpetrators in the Philippines. The HRD Memorial gathered and verified information on the killings of 25 human rights defenders in 2020 in the Philippines. In the first 6 months of 2021 alone, 15 HRDs have been killed in the country.” <https://hrdmemorial.org/solidarity-statement-stop-the-killings-of-human-rights-defenders-in-the-philippines/>

Poland. “A Polish appeals court . . . overturned a ruling against two leading Holocaust historians accused of defamation” in a book they “co-edited about the complicity of Catholic Poles in the genocide of Jews” during the Nazi occupation, the *Guardian* wrote. The judge said litigation over the accuracy of an historical account was “an unacceptable violation of the freedom of scientific research and the freedom of expression.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/16/polish-appeals-court-overturns-ruling-against-holocaust-historians>

Qatar. “Over the last decade,” Amnesty International wrote, “thousands of migrant workers have died suddenly and unexpectedly in Qatar, despite passing their mandatory medical tests before travelling to the country.” It is difficult to know “exactly how many people have died as a result of their working conditions” because “in most cases Qatari authorities do not investigate the underlying cause of their death” and “death certificates usually report their deaths as simply due to ‘natural causes’ or ‘cardiac arrest’.” Amnesty “analysed the data publicly reported by Qatar’s Planning and Statistics Authority, national regulations and international laws and standards pertaining to migrant workers’ rights, and the processes for certifying and investigating worker deaths in Qatar,” consulted medical experts, reviewed government data on “thousands of deaths,” and analyzed 18 death certificates. Amnesty recommends Qatar “establish a specialist team” to ensure that all deaths “are investigated and certified in accordance with international best practice.” <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/qatar-thousands-migrant-worker-deaths-remain-uninvestigated-new-report>

Spain. The UN Human Rights Committee concluded that the trials of former Spanish judge Baltasar Garzon in two major political cases “were arbitrary and did not comply with the principles of judicial independence and impartiality.” One of the cases was an investigation of enforced disappearances during the Civil War and the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco; the Committee said that Garzon’s decisions in the case “were at least a plausible legal interpretation.” <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098502>

Syria. The NGO Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC) reported on “honor killings” in northeast Syria. Noting that since the start of the conflict it has been difficult to collect accurate statistics on such killings, which are illegal in Syria but still occur, SJAC documenters investigated two recent honor killings as examples. They found video evidence in both cases; one video showing the murder of the woman was posted to Facebook. Recently such killings “have ignited public outrage and started a debate about how these murders should be prosecuted in the community,” a good step toward getting both the Syrian government and the Kurdish authorities to end impunity for these crimes. https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2021/08/12/spike-in-honor-killings-fuels-protests-for-accountability-in-northeast-syria/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=f047380a58-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-f047380a58-96428969

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issued its tenth annual report on enforced disappearance in Syria. It said “the number of people detained since March 2011 who still remain forcibly disappeared as of August 2021 has now reach at least 102,287 individuals, the vast majority of whom were detained by the Syrian regime.” The report describes the Syrian government’s practice of “registering some of the disappeared persons as dead through its Civil Registry Departments,” but registry entries “failed to disclose the cause of death, with the families not being given their loved ones’ bodies or being informed of the place of their burial.” The report relied on information from the SNHR database and interviews with the families of victims. <https://sn4hr.org/blog/2021/08/30/56733/>

Turkey. The Freedom of Expression Association issued a report saying that more than 467,000 websites have been banned in Turkey since 2006, with nearly 60,000 banned in 2020. The Association obtained data from the Interior Ministry showing that 75,292 social media accounts were investigated in 2020 “and legal action was taken against 32,000 of them.” Also in 2020, 115,832 news articles were ordered removed from media webpages “the majority of them critical of Erdogan’s government,” *BIRN*

noted. An astonishing 764 different state institutions have banned access to webpages.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/08/17/turkish-govt-increasing-internet-social-media-censorship-report/>

Uganda. The government's NGO Bureau announced it "halted" the operations of 23 civil society organizations for "operating with expired non-governmental organization permits." One of the "halted," the Africa Institute for Energy Governance, and twelve other NGOs issued a response, saying government is targeting organizations that play key roles in environmental rights protection in the oil and gas sector and in the human rights and civic education spheres. The Institute said it had filed the required annual returns and met "all other legal requirements." <https://www.afiego.org/download/press-release-afiegos-response-to-ngo-bureaus-allegations-20-august-2021/?wpdmml=2530&refresh=611f915506a601629458773>

Ukraine. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights received reports in 2019 of more than 140 incidents "ranging from threats to physical attacks" on members of the LGBT+ community, but Ukraine's police data show only "14 hate crimes were recorded on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in 2019," *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. <https://news.trust.org/item/20210803104615-bavec/>

United Arab Emirates. Do Bold, an NGO promoting migrant workers' rights, said children born of migrant workers are not getting stamped birth notifications and certificates, *Reuters* reported. Of 166 migrant women surveyed who did not get a birth certificate at the end of last year, "63 cited unpaid hospital bills as the cause. Other reasons included being unable to provide valid marriages certificates or visas." Of the seven emirates, only Abu Dhabi "responded to a request for comment" and said "a 2018 regulation prohibits licensed obstetrics facilities from refusing to provide a stamped birth notification and certificate 'for any reason'." Without the documentation, the child is unable to get a passport, visa, or Emirates identification or access health care and education. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/migrants-unpaid-hospital-bills-barrier-birth-certificates-uae-2021-08-12/>

United States. The *Washington Post* explained how the Centers for Disease Control's "slow and siloed approach to sharing data" has "prevented officials across the government from getting real-time information about how the [COVID-19] delta variant was bearing down on the United States and behaving with greater ferocity than earlier variants—an information gap they say stymied the response." <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/how-cdc-data-problems-put-the-u-s-behind-on-the-delta-variant/ar-AANstZF>

The U.S. House of Representatives committee investigating the 6 January attack on the U.S. Capitol issued major records requests on 25 August, asking for production of documents in two weeks, *The Hill* reported. "The first wave of document requests was delivered to the National Archives" for Trump Presidential records, as well as to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security and other agencies.

<https://thehill.com/homenews/house/569363-house-panel-probing-jan-6-attack-seeks-trump-documents>

In a Federal court filing in the lawsuit brought by families of 9/11 victims against Saudi Arabia, the Department of Justice said it would review documents that until now have been withheld to determine what additional information can be shared with the families while still "upholding the government's privilege assertions," *AP* reported. <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-72cd0fce43fb43c3e96ce9bdada4ce24>

The FBI reported that the number of hate crimes in the United States rose in 2020 to the highest level in 12 years, with increasing assaults targeting Black and Asian people, *CNN* reported. The numbers are almost surely "a vast undercount because law enforcement agencies are not required to submit their data to the FBI for their annual crime report. There are more than 18,000 agencies in the United States and more than 3,000 did not submit their crime statistics in 2020." <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/30/us/fbi-report-hate-crimes-rose-2020/index.html>

According to *AP*, police departments in the U.S. are uploading short clips of "lifesaving efforts" on their official law enforcement social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, but they may be uploading them "without the permission of the person in crisis—though their identities are obscured—without a warning about contents and without consulting mental health professionals." The American Association of Suicidology "specifically suggests that any reporting on suicide or suicide attempts not include the method or location . . . [and] recommends that photos and videos from the scene also be

excluded, even if the person’s identity is concealed.” Both New York City and Los Angeles Police Departments post videos of suicide attempts, and New York “often tweets detailed captions that include the exact pier someone jumped from or the number of pills they swallowed before the officers ‘saved’ them.” The executive director of the NGO Suicide Awareness Voices of Education “said such social media posts may actually deter viewers from calling” an emergency hotline “for fear they might also get handcuffed or arrested.” https://apnews.com/article/health-police-mental-health-41883ccc67210e505e13bdd7aaf4713a?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Aug23_Morning_Wire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

HuffPost published a long investigative article on the 2020 leak in the pipeline carrying liquid carbon dioxide through Satartia, Mississippi, which sent a cloud of white fog across the area. The leak sickened “dozens of people,” and “months later the town’s residents reported mental fogginess, lung dysfunction, chronic fatigue and stomach disorders.” The story is based on interviews with more than 60 people “and a review of medical records, police and fire reports, 911 recordings, emergency dispatch logs, internal documents from state government agencies” and “federal pipeline incident reports.” It concluded that carbon dioxide pipelines “pose threats that few are aware of and even fewer know how to handle.” https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gassing-satartia-mississippi-co2-pipeline_n_60ddea9fe4b0ddef8b0ddc8f

The *Washington Post* published a story about the closing of the Minnesota Tobacco Document Depository, a warehouse holding the documents from 27 years of legal cases against big tobacco companies for the costs of treating tobacco-related illnesses. Stored in 28,455 boxes, “less than 2% of the documents . . . were introduced in the trial,” a massive case between 46 states and 4 tobacco companies. “Most of the documents have been put online by the University of California at San Francisco, which used software to lift them from company websites, and the physical copies will be destroyed.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/minnesota-tobacco-document-depository/2021/08/25/cdc1ecfc-050c-11ec-a654-900a78538242_story.html

United States/New York. *WIRED* said documents show New York City police “bought a range of surveillance tools—including facial-recognition software, predictive policing software, vans equipped with x-ray machines to detect weapons, and ‘stingray’ cell site simulators—with no public oversight.” The documents, which were “heavily redacted,” were obtained by the NGOs Legal Aid Society and Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (STOP), through the provision of the 2020 law requiring the New York Police Department to reveal information about the surveillance tools it uses. STOP said the police are still blocking the release of other relevant documents. https://www.wired.com/story/nypd-secret-fund-surveillance-tools/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_081021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=list1_p4

United States/Virginia. In February 1951 Virginia executed 7 Black men for the alleged rape of a white woman in 1949. “Not all of the defendants were able to read the confessions they signed,” *NPR* reported, “and none of them had a lawyer with them when they were questioned.” The governor of Virginia has now granted posthumous pardons to them, saying the pardons do not address whether the men were guilty but rather serve “as a recognition for the Commonwealth” that they were tried without adequate due process. <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/31/1032859243/virginia-history-pardons-execution-civil-rights-martinsville-seven>

Venezuela. Centro para los Defensores y la Justicia (CDJ), a human rights NGO, published a report that “140 individuals and organizations working in the defense of human rights . . . were subject to threats, attacks, and social control” by the government in July, *Venezuela Weekly* reported. “The primary perpetrators of the attacks documented were the state-run media, public officials of the Maduro government, and the state security forces, including the National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) and the National Police (PNB).” Additionally, the NGO Accion Solidaria documented “1,436 violations of the right to health” during 2020. <https://www.venezuelablog.org/venezuela-weekly-cdj-report-documents-rise-in-attacks-on-human-rights-defenders/>

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