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## ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights *Winner of the Premio Internacional Derechos Humanos 2020 de la Asociación pro Derechos Humanos de España*

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#### Commentary.

December's commentary is usually a list of important or simply interesting items, chosen from the year's monthly issues. I had already started compiling the list when staggering events pushed away all thought of the usual: the death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa and the Russian court-ordered liquidation of Memorial International, its Human Rights Center, and the extension of the prison term of Yuri Dmitriev, an historian who had chaired Memorial's regional branch in the province of Karelia. Make no mistake: these are blows.

Archbishop Tutu was the keynote speaker at the 2003 world meeting of archivists in Cape Town, South Africa. In his quiet, charismatic way, he challenged those of us fortunate enough to be in the room. "We are ashamed of that part of our history but it is our history nonetheless," he said. "And it stands there recorded in our National Archives. . . . The records are crucial to hold us accountable . . . They are a potent bulwark against human rights violations. We must remember our past so that we do not repeat it." Out of that encounter, a small group of archivists formed a human rights working group within the International Council on Archives. No one had any thought about an enduring function; we just wanted to do something. Now, almost 20 years later, the Section on Archives and Human Rights is a stable, recognized part of the ICA world, and the issue you are reading is a direct result of the inspiration of the late Archbishop. (For a fuller appreciation of the archival impact of Archbishop Tutu, see the statement written for the Section by former South Africa national archivist and organizer of the 2003 meeting Graham Dominy: <https://www.ica.org/en/obituary-desmond-tutu>)

Memorial was founded in Russia in 1989, growing out of a popular movement to expose the political repression in the Soviet Union, particularly during the dark years of Stalin's rule. It grew into a major human rights organization, Memorial International, with 60 affiliate organizations across the country and in Europe and an associated Human Rights Center that assists migrants, refugees and internally-displaced people, as well as maintaining lists of political prisoners and obtaining critical records from the government that uncover the nature and extent of persecution in the past. According to the *Washington Post*, the Human Rights Center "has helped more than 1,500 Russians take their cases to the European Court of Human Rights . . . to challenge rights abuses by Russian authorities." <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/28/russia-rights-memorial-liquidated/>

From its beginning, Memorial acquired documentation to create a record of the crimes of the state against its citizens. Its archives now contains at least 60,000 case files on victims of Soviet state repression, a database containing 3 million names of victims, and another database with "the names of nearly 42,000 people who worked for the Soviet secret police from 1935 to 1939, when repression peaked," the *Post* also reported. Memorial also collects physical objects—from clothes to paintings to typewriters—which it displays in a museum in Moscow. People donate items to Memorial; the *New York Times* reported on a November 2021 donation of papers of a woman who had been imprisoned in the Russian labor camps. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/28/world/europe/russia-memorial-human-rights.html>

In the same week that the courts ruled on the two parts of Memorial, a Russian court extended the prison term of Yuri Dmitriev, the former Memorial regional chair, to 15 years from 13. "Mr. Dmitriev, who discovered mass graves resulting from Stalin's brutalities, was convicted of sexually abusing his

adopted daughter, a charge he denied,” the *New York Times* explained. For background on the lengthy Dmitriev case, see *SAHR News* 2020-4, *HRWG News* 2018-01, 04.

The world reacted with sorrow to the death of the Archbishop; dozens of governments and non-governmental organizations issued strong protests over the closing of Memorial. Archivists everywhere worry about the fate of Memorial’s irreplaceable holdings. The archives needs to be protected; the physical documents and objects can’t be moved easily to a safe haven outside Russia (although copies of its databases are surely preserved outside the country), and the information the archives contains must continue to be available to the Russian people and all others whose fate is recorded there. As an appeal of the court’s ruling goes forward, it is essential to create a “safe haven in place” for the archives. Governments and all concerned organizations must work with Memorial and with Russian officials to find a way forward. As the director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum and memorial in Poland tweeted about the closing of Memorial, in an echo of the Archbishop, “A power that is afraid of memory will never be able to achieve democratic maturity.”

**SAHR News.** Gilles Manceron, an historian specializing in French colonialism, will present “Access to archives in France: between republican principles and the weight of the state, difficulties persist” as a First Tuesday Talk on February 1 at 16:00 Paris time. The talk will be in French; no translation will be provided. To register in advance for the talk:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAtc-qrqDIsGtCy7CXJ7zJ1Tf3-osJJ4rfA>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the event.

SAHR submitted comments on the impact of climate change on archives in response to a call from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

SAHR issued a statement of appreciation for Archbishop Desmond Tutu: <https://www.ica.org/en/obituary-desmond-tutu>

### **International news.**

**Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).** The Commission and the Rule of Law Program for Latin America at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation launched an open access database of IACHR rulings and decisions. [http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media\\_center/preleases/2021/326.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2021/326.asp)

**United Nations.** The General Assembly adopted the resolution “Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in Promoting Democratization and Enhancing Periodic and Genuine Elections.” The U.S. Ambassador to the UN said the adoption “marks an historic moment”: “This is the first time in the UN’s 76-year history that any UN body has adopted by consensus a text referencing ‘sexual orientation and gender identity’.” <https://usun.usmission.gov/statement-on-the-first-ever-consensus-adoption-of-a-un-resolution-referencing-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/>

The Security Council, in what even the UN press release described as a “contentious meeting,” rejected a draft resolution “that would have integrated climate-related security risk as a central component of United Nations conflict-prevention strategies aiming to help counter the risk of conflict relapse.” India and the Russian Federation voted against it and China abstained. The draft asked the Secretary-General to include in mission and thematic reports “gender- and age-sensitive information relating to the security implications of climate change and recommendations to address it” and to take “steps to improve the collection of data, monitoring and analysis of the effects of climate change in the context of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies.” No data, no need to act. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14732.doc.htm>

**World Meteorological Organization (WMO).** WMO announced that the “temperature of 38 degrees C (100.4 degrees F) in the Russian town of Verkhoyansk on 20 June 2020 has been recognized as a new Arctic temperature record.” WMO’s Secretary-General said, “This new Arctic record is one of a series of observations reported to the WMO Archive of Weather and Climate extremes that sound the alarm bells about our changing climate.” The Archive “includes the world’s highest and lowest temperatures, rainfall, heaviest hailstone, longest dry period, maximum gust of wind, longest lightning flash and

weather-related mortalities; it will now include a category “highest recorded temperature at or north of 66.5, the Arctic Circle.” <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/wmo-recognizes-new-arctic-temperature-record-of-38%E2%81%B0c>

## **World/general news.**

**Business records.** “Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are suing Meta Platforms Inc., formerly known as Facebook, for \$150 billion over allegations that the social media company did not take action against anti-Rohingya hate speech that contributed to violence,” *Reuters* reported. The class-action complaint was filed in the U.S. State of California and “British lawyers also submitted a letter of notice to Facebook’s London office.” A *Reuters* investigation in 2018, which was cited in the U.S. complaint, “found more than 1,000 examples of posts, comments and images attacking the Rohingya and other Muslims on Facebook,” That same year, the UN Mission to Myanmar said, “Facebook has been a useful instrument for those seeking to spread hate.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2018-08. <https://news.trust.org/item/20211207035120-7o4sj/>

A Russian court fined Meta approximately \$27 million and Google nearly \$100 million for “systematic failure to remove banned content,” the *Washington Post* reported. “The fines represent an escalation in Russia’s push to pressure foreign tech firms to comply with its increasingly strict rules on what it deems illegal content—particularly apps, websites, posts and videos related to jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny’s network, which has been labelled as extremist in the country.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/24/google-russia-fine-banned-content/>

According to the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, human rights abuses are “endemic” on tea plantations. It requested “65 major companies” to disclose their supply chain details “to be held centrally in the first Tea Transparency Tracker.” Only 17 companies responded, with 10 companies fully disclosing the supply chain and 7 “committed to full transparency in the future.” “With legal cases mounting in courts for serious rights abuses and media exposes continuing, companies evade responsibility by insisting workers don’t need to know where the tea they pick goes, even though this means they have no means of knowing the brands’ standards for the treatment of workers in their supply chains. At the same time, tea brands also present themselves as ethical to their consumers, using certification or membership of ethically-oriented industry associations as a substitute for transparency and due diligence.” However, certification bodies “do not see themselves as substitutes for due diligence.” [https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/tea-transparency-tracker/?utm\\_source=wu&utm\\_medium=wuemail&utm\\_campaign=Tea\\_Transparency\\_Tracker&utm\\_content=email](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/tea-transparency-tracker/?utm_source=wu&utm_medium=wuemail&utm_campaign=Tea_Transparency_Tracker&utm_content=email)

“Conflict Rubies,” a report by the NGO Global Witness, revealed “for the first time in detail” how Myanmar’s “military and other armed actors profit from gemstones, including rubies, sapphires and other coloured stones.” The report “is based on more than 150 interviews with public officials, community members and industry representatives and analysis of data including Myanmar Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative [MEITI] reporting, corporate records, maps, trade data and hundreds of other public sources in English and Burmese.” A good annex describes the use of data. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/natural-resource-governance/conflict-rubies-how-luxury-jewellers-risk-funding-military-abuses-myanmar/>

A court in Odense, Denmark, ruled that the company Dan-Bunkering “is guilty of breaching EU sanctions on the Syrian government for providing fuel to Russian intermediaries,” *The Maritime Executive* reported. The company was fined nearly \$7 million, and the CEO of Dan-Bunkering’s parent company was given a four-month suspended prison sentence. “Russian air support was a critical component of al-Assad’s successful operation to retake Aleppo from rebel forces in 2015-16; the air campaign racked up accusations of war crimes, including an alleged pattern of air strikes on civilian hospitals, markets and schools.” According to *Manifold Times*, internal emails were key pieces of evidence in the case. A criminal law specialist at the University of Copenhagen said, “The verdict may have significance later for other cases, because it is one of the first verdicts to determine the level of punishment” for the white-collar crime of violating EU sanctions. <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/two-danish-bunkering-firms-sentenced-for-fueling-war-in-syria>; <https://www.manifoldtimes.com/news/dan-bunkering-trial-prosecutors-question-bunker-holding-ceo-keld-demant/>

In 2017 France passed a Duty of Vigilance law requiring French companies to establish and implement “reasonable vigilance measures adequate to identify risks and to prevent severe impacts on human rights and fundamental freedoms, on the health and safety of individuals and on the environment.” Total, the French energy company, was sued in 2019 by six NGOs, alleging that “the vigilance plan published by Total is inadequate because it does not reference” Total’s mining project in Uganda. The first case to be tested under the new law, it has been snarled in legal actions until December, when France’s Supreme Court ruled that a civil court has jurisdiction to “examine the case on its merits,” the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre summarized. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/total-lawsuit-re-failure-to-respect-french-duty-of-vigilance-law-in-operations-in-uganda/>

EJAtlas, the Global Atlas of Environmental Justice which “documents and catalogs environmental justice conflicts around the world,” shows 30 environmental conflicts in locations where the giant mining company Vale operates. A research team took EJAtlas’ “quantitative and qualitative data, as well as images, references, and a bibliography” and compared that information on Vale with the company’s public statements in its 2006-2019 Sustainability Reports. The team found Vale attempts to “neutralize conflicts” in its public reports, which do not discuss “important aspects of environmental conflicts . . . much less the violence exercised against actors and groups mobilized.” <https://www.scielo.br/j/asoc/a/P95LHNfndSvCZtHWXZ8LmsC/?format=pdf>

France’s privacy office said Clearview AI, the controversial facial recognition company, violated Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation and told the company to stop “unlawful processing” and to “delete user data within two months.” The company “has already been ruled in breach of privacy rules in Canada, Australia, and the U.K.,” *TechCrunch* reported. For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-11. <https://techcrunch.com/2021/12/16/clearview-gdpr-breaches-france/>

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission announced that the New York-based bank JPMorgan Chase will pay a fine of \$200 million for what the Commission called “‘longstanding failures’ by JP Morgan’s securities arm to keep an archives of employee communications,” the *Washington Post* reported. The U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which was part of the settlement, said “unauthorized communication methods” had been in “widespread use” since at least 2015. Under U.S. law, “financial firms are required to preserve electronic records between brokers and clients so that they can be scrutinized by regulators and to guard against fraud and antitrust violations.” JPMorgan admitted the misconduct, “a rare admission of wrongdoing by a corporate giant.” <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/jpmorgan-fined-200-million-for-allowing-employees-to-do-business-on-whatsapp-private-devices/>

Education. The NGO Scholars at Risk published its annual report, *Free to Think 2021*, documenting “332 attacks on higher education communities in 65 countries and territories” between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021. They included killings, violence and disappearance; imprisonment; prosecution; loss of position; travel restrictions; and other coercive measures. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2021/?emci=3760627c-7154-ec11-94f6-0050f2e65e9b&emdi=5722692d-df58-ec11-94f6-0050f2e65e9b&ceid=2876037>

Indigenous peoples. With support from the NGO Rainforest Foundation Norway, indigenous organization ORPIO issued the report “Territorial Corridor of the Isolated Peoples and Contiguous Forest of Yavari-Tapiche” in Peru and Brazil. The researchers took “photos from overflights, collected testimonies from Indigenous peoples living within the corridor and in the peripheral zone of the area, talked to government officials and analysed satellite data from the area.” They created “unique proof of unknown isolated Indigenous groups,” whose right to live in “self-imposed isolations is enshrined in several key human rights declarations, including the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” However, the “report reveals dozens of timber licenses that overlap the area” and “documents how Indigenous peoples are forced to leave their homes due to logging and drug smuggling.” <https://www.regnskog.no/en/news/ny-rapport-verdens-storste-omrade-med-isolerte-urfolk-kartlagt-i-amazonas>

Migration. A newly revealed indictment in the U.S. State of Georgia against a transnational labor trafficking network charges that Central American victims of the criminal network “had their passports and visas withheld” while working under brutal forced labor conditions. *InSight Crime* reported that “the network allegedly filed thousands of false petitions using fake signatures and fraudulent documents

to the U.S. government requesting over 71,000 workers to enter the United States to work on agricultural farms under the . . . work visa program between 2015 and 2021.”

<https://insightcrime.org/news/laborers-mexico-central-america-exploited-us-work-visa/>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ shelter system “received 122,000 migrant children who were taken into U.S. custody without their parents” between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021, *CBS News* reported, the most ever. The “vast majority” were from Central America; nearly three-quarters were between the ages of 15 and 17; two-thirds were boys. More than 107,00 of the children “were released to sponsors;” as of 22 December there were still “nearly 12,000 unaccompanied minors in its custody,” according to Department statistics. “Over 80% of unaccompanied children who enter U.S. care have family members in the U.S., many of whom are also undocumented.”

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/us-shelters-received-a-record-122000-migrant-children-in-2021/ar-AAS5ErL>

Protecting Rights at Borders is the initiative of an umbrella group of the Danish Refugee Council and civil society organizations from six European countries. Its report, “Human dignity lost at the EU’s borders,” said between 1 January and 30 November it “collected close to 12,000 reports involving pushbacks employed by border police, law enforcement officials or other authorities experienced by migrants and asylum seekers.” They told the researchers about “the destruction of evidence by police and border guards. The practice aims to erase all traces of the person’s presence on its territory and is often part of chain-pushbacks. The evidence of pushbacks happening remains nevertheless conclusive and the existence of the no longer rare cases where people with a legal status (such as interpreters or others) are pushed back too, further reflects the normalization of the practice as a border management tool.” [https://drc.ngo/media/rzplexyz/prab-iii-report-july-to-november-2021\\_final.pdf](https://drc.ngo/media/rzplexyz/prab-iii-report-july-to-november-2021_final.pdf)

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

Afghanistan/United States. The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement statistics show that “roughly 1,450 Afghan children [have] been evacuated to the United States without their parents since August,” and about 250 remain in government custody, most of whom “have no family members to reunite with” in the U.S., *CNN* reported. A woman in the U.S. State of Virginia who has taken custody of her young Afghan niece and nephew said “the children’s names and birth dates are wrong on all the official documents issued during their journey—a problem she imagines is common,” making it difficult for families to find the evacuated children. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/27/us/afghan-children-evacuated-without-parents-ccc/index.html>

Algeria/France. France’s prime minister and ministers of culture, foreign affairs, armed forces, interior and justice signed an order permitting certain records relating to the Algerian war (1 November 1954 to 31 December 1966) to be opened 15 years ahead of schedule in the national archives and its subordinate archives, including those in the ministries, *France24* reported. The records opened are documents relating to cases brought before the courts and the execution of court decisions and records relating to investigations carried out by the judicial police. Excluded are documents which relate to minors and persons involved in intelligence activities, and records that would invade the “sexual intimacy” of the lives of persons. <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20211210-france-to-open-classified-algerian-war-archives-15-years-ahead-of-schedule>; <https://histoirecoloniale.net/Archives-de-la-guerre-d-Algerie-il-faudra-surveiller-de-pres-l-ouverture.html>

Canada/Vatican. Canada’s National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Rome issued a joint statement saying the religious order will grant “full access to critical residential school records” in its archives in Rome, *CBC News* reported. The Oblates operated 48 residential schools for First Nations children, including two where unmarked graves have recently been found. Oblate Father Ken Thorson told *CBC* that the records will not be redacted and “any records from residential schools found in this process would be returned to Canada.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-11. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/oblates-opening-archives-rome-to-national-centre-for-truth-and-reconciliation-1.6278031>

China/United Kingdom. “The World Uyghur Congress (WUC), with the support of the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) has been granted permission by the High Court of England and Wales to proceed with a landmark challenge against U.K. authorities for permitting the importation of cotton

goods produced with forced labour in China.” The WUC-GLAN press release said, “The case is supported by a wide range of evidence submitted to the Court, including witness statements, leaked government documents, satellite imagery, a secret memorandum from within the textile industry and documents which the Chinese government has attempted to remove from the internet.”

[https://www.glanlaw.org/files/ugd/14ee1a\\_3b4b509b98a141c1a727ed49e97a98d9.pdf](https://www.glanlaw.org/files/ugd/14ee1a_3b4b509b98a141c1a727ed49e97a98d9.pdf)

Czech Republic/France/Morocco. Historian Jan Koura used the former Czechoslovak security service (StB) archives in his research on Mehdi ben Barka, a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Moroccan opposition leader who was murdered in France in 1965. The StB’s 1,500-page file on Ben Barka and “thousands of other newly released secret documents,” showed that “Ben Barka not only had a close relationship” with the StB but also “that he received substantial payments from it, both in cash and in kind,” the *Observer* reported. “France and the U.S. have yet to release key secret documents on the case.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/26/moroccan-opposition-leader-mehdi-ben-barka-was-a-spy-cold-war-files-suggest>

Greece/Russia. “Russia will return to Greece the pre-war archives of Jewish communities that were stolen by Nazi forces,” *AFP* reported. No date for the return was given. “The archives had until now been stored among Russian military files and Greece had sought their return for decades,” the Greek prime minister’s office said. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/12/09/russia-to-return-pre-war-jewish-archives-to-greece-a75778>

Israel/Palestine (Gaza)/Syria. Airwars, a U.K.-based NGO, published “Why did they bomb us? Urban civilian harm in Gaza, Syria and Israel from explosive weapons use.” It “comprehensively documents the civilian toll of recent Israeli actions in Gaza and Syria, as well as from Palestinian rocket fire into Israel during May.” Interactive maps accompanied the report. “Thousands of local media, social media and official sources documenting civilian harm as it happened were identified and archived by Airwars’ team of Arabic-, Hebrew- and English-language researchers in relation to the May 2021 conflict in Gaza and Israel,” and they assessed the “hyperlocal monitoring of casualty claims by affected communities.” A key finding: “Across the three conflict areas, both the targeting approach and the population density of those areas bombed were critical drivers of civilian harm, leading to profoundly different outcomes for civilians.” <https://airwars.org/news-and-investigations/gaza-israel-syria-ewipa-report/>

Japan/United States. A U.S. whistleblower leaked a “report produced under contract for the Defense Logistics Agency - Energy . . . the Department of Defense agency that supplies fuel to military facilities,” *The Intercept* reported. The 2015 report detailed “inspections of vapor monitoring systems that detect fuel leaks along the 100-plus miles of pipelines” used by the U.S. military in Okinawa, Japan. An alarming 43 of the 60 monitoring systems “were inoperable due to problems like broken sensors and alarms; in at least one case, the alarm and sensor system were missing entirely. The devices are supposed to notify the local [military installation] of leaks, which can cause environmental contamination, explosions, and fires.” [https://theintercept.com/2021/12/20/us-military-japan-okinawa-pipelines-pfas/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter](https://theintercept.com/2021/12/20/us-military-japan-okinawa-pipelines-pfas/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter)

Mideast war. The Berlin-based Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) partnered with the NGO Syrian Archive, which works to “collect, preserve and verify hundreds of videos related to chemical weapons incidents in Syria,” and created an interactive data portal on 349 instances of chemical attacks in Syria since 2012. “The extensive data on the conventional war and original interviews,” when combined with the data on the 349 confirmed incidents, “reveals the strategic logic of the Syrian chemical weapons campaign.” GPPi’s dataset “attributes 334 [attacks] to the Syrian government, eight to Islamic State, and 7 unidentified responsibility.” <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/29112021>

Two NGOs, the Transitional Justice Coordination Group and The Day After, issued a report entitled “Map of Violations in Syria from 2011 to 2016.” They said it is “the first Syrian report—researched and written by Syrians—that provides a comprehensive account of violations committed on all Syrian territories over 6 years, adopting a methodology of comparing documentation, supplementing data and contextualizing and aligning these within their relevant legal framework.” <https://tda-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Mapping-of-Violations-in-Syria-EN.pdf>

Christian Ritscher, the head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by the Islamic State in Iraq (UNITAD), briefed the UN Security Council. UNITAD and Iraqi authorities exhumed bodies from a mass grave outside Mosul where victims executed by ISIL at Badush Central Prison in June 2014 were buried; “at least a thousand predominantly Shia prisoners were killed.” He said, “Analysis of digital, documentary, testimonial and forensic evidence, including internal ISIL documents, has led to the identification of several individual ISIL members responsible for these crimes,” which “constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.” Ritscher also discussed ISIL’s development and use of chemical and biological weapons, explaining “analysis of detailed records left behind by ISIL has led to the identification of those [ISIL] members allegedly responsible for leading the development of the programme and implementing major attacks.”

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/3/isil-committed-war-crimes-at-mosul-prison-un-investigation-finds>;

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107022>

After using the Freedom of Information Act and filing lawsuits, the *New York Times* obtained from the U.S. Defense Department some 5,400 pages of records from 1,311 reports (out of “at least 2,866 reports”) of “confidential assessments” of civilian casualties in the U.S. air war in the Iraq and Syria since 2014. The *Times* “analyzed the casualty assessments in aggregate to discern patterns of failed intelligence, decision-making and execution” and “visited more than 100 casualty sites and interviewed scores of surviving residents and current and former American officials.” It concluded that “the air war has been marked by deeply flawed intelligence, rushed and often imprecise targeting, and the deaths of thousands of civilians, many of them children.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/12/us/civilian-deaths-war-isis.html>

### **National news.**

Afghanistan. On 14 December Nada Al-Nashif, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the Human Rights Council that between August and November the office “received credible allegations of more than 100 killings of former Afghan national security forces and others associated with the former Government, with at least 72 of these killings attributed to the Taliban.” Further, since August “the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has documented 59 apparently arbitrary detentions, beatings, and threats to civil society activists, journalists, and staff of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission attributed to the *de facto* authorities,” and at least eight civil society activists and two journalists have been killed.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27960&LangID=E>

Albania. “Prosecutors in Tirana said they are trying to verify the facts about a list allegedly detailing the salaries of around 630,000 Albanians that is being circulated online,” *BIRN* reported. The suspicion is that the list, including ID numbers of persons in both public and private sectors, was leaked from databases of the tax service or the Social Insurance Institute. <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/22/albanian-prosecutors-probe-huge-suspected-leak-of-personal-data/>

Argentina. Former president Mauricio Macri was indicted for “ordering the illegal surveillance of the families of the 44 crew-members who died in the 2017 *ARA San Juan* submarine tragedy,” *Buenos Aires Times* reported. “Family members of the sailors told investigators they were followed and wiretapped, filmed and intimidated into abandoning any claims related to the incident.” In September 2020 the *New York Times* reported that the Federal Intelligence Agency (AFI) illegally spied on the families of 44 crew members of a submarine that went missing in 2017. “Intelligence officials said the agency uncovered 3 hard drives that show that family members’ activities and communications had been monitored,” without authorization by a judge. A sister of one of the crew members said AFI “had photos of agents following family members and evidence of them investigating relatives’ activity on social networks” during 2018-2019, after the submarine’s wreckage had been located in November 2018 by a private company. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/23/world/americas/argentina-missing-submarine.html>;  
<https://www.batimes.com.ar/news/argentina/former-president-mauricio-macri-charged-with-illegal-espionage.phtml>

Femicide by police and security officers is far too frequent. According to the *Washington Post*: “Argentina recorded more than 250 femicides in 2020, one every 35 hours. Forty-one of the victims had previously filed complaints. In the first eight months of 2021, the advocacy group Mumala registered at least 118 femicides. In 13% of the confirmed cases, Mumala estimates, the perpetrator was a member of

the security forces.” In the province of Buenos Aires, “the provincial police’s internal affairs division reported gender violence complaints were filed against 5,965 police officers between 2013 and 2020. Eighty percent of those officers remain in uniform.” And NGO La Casa del Encuentro said “214 women in Argentina were killed by police officers or former police officers between 2008 and 2020.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/photography/2021/12/02/argentina-suffered-more-than-250-femicides-2020-one-every-35-hours/>

Australia. “Australia’s official military history unit has been denied access to the unredacted final report of the Bereton war crimes inquiry, potentially compromising its ability to record a complete and accurate account” of Australia’s participation in the Afghan conflict, *The Age* reported. “The Bereton inquiry, conducted under the auspices of the Australian military Inspector-General and completed in November 2020, alleged in a redacted final report that a dozen or so Australian special forces soldiers executed up to 39 Afghan prisoners and civilians.” The inquiry took four years and “relied on sworn testimony of over 300 former soldiers and military officials” producing “the most detailed document that exists dealing with the alleged war crimes scandal.” The war history unit relies partly on “after action” mission reviews that Judge Bereton found were commonly “manipulated . . . routinely embellished and sometimes outright fabricated.” Access to the report would provide a corrective. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/war-memorial-historians-denied-access-to-afghanistan-war-crimes-report-20211122-p59b4n.html>

Brazil. “Forty years after Brazil returned to democracy, an Army elite troop training exercise involved a simulation against a fictitious armed dissident faction of the Workers' Party,” *The Intercept* reported. “The documents describing the exercise, which took place last year, demonstrate that the largest of the three Armed Forces not only continues to see left-wing social and political movements as enemies – it also is being trained to fight them.” <https://theintercept.com/2021/12/07/exercito-treinamento-anti-esquerda-documento/>

In January the Para state public prosecutor began a “civil inquiry into the causes of mercury contamination among the Munduruku” people who live in north Amazonia territory, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. “According to documents from Para state’s Secretariat of Environment and Sustainability . . . as of July 8, 2021, more than 1,120 hectares (2,767 acres) of Munduruku land had been cleared for mining activities,” which a professor of public health said spreads mercury already present in the soil. An epidemiologist “analyzed hair samples from 197 people in three Munduruku villages and found some level of the toxic heavy metal in all of them . . . nearly 60% had levels above what global health organizations consider safe.” He said, “Approximately 90% of the contaminant mercury present in the environment comes from illegal mining activities.” Mercury poisoning problems can “range from vision problems and muscle weakness to mood and memory disorders. In extreme cases, it can lead to premature death.” [http://news.trust.org/item/20211217005848-weg69/?utm\\_campaign=new-climate&utm\\_medium=newsletter&utm\\_source=topPicks&utm\\_content=link7&utm\\_contentItemId=20211217005848-weg69](http://news.trust.org/item/20211217005848-weg69/?utm_campaign=new-climate&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=topPicks&utm_content=link7&utm_contentItemId=20211217005848-weg69)

Agents of the federal environmental enforcement agency Ibama “shut down schemes involving hundreds of companies the agency said were covering up illegal logging in the Amazon rainforest, according to government documents reviewed by *Reuters*.” The schemes included selling the logging permits to companies harvesting illegally and sometimes involved the use of “shell companies that only existed on paper in order to funnel” the permits. More than 220 companies and 21 logging concessions were involved. <https://news.trust.org/item/20211222095149-1rapf/>

Canada. The Crown-Indigenous Relations minister said the Federal government will release to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation “reports compiled by Ottawa outlining an individual institution’s history, including its administration, statistics on the number of Indigenous children forced to attend, as well as key events such as reports of abuse” in eight residential schools that operated in British Columbia and Alberta, *CBC News* reported. “The government will review other residential school records it has withheld based on what the minister says were legal principles of privilege applied too broadly.” <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/government-residential-school-records-30-days-1.6275067>

Chile. “Investigators looking into coercive adoptions in Chile since the first cases came to light in 2014 have come to a stunning conclusion: The practice was wide-spread during the rule of Gen. Augusto Pinochet,” reported the *New York Times*. “The process was abetted by a vast network of officials—including judges, social workers, health professionals and adoption brokers—who forged documents



and are widely assumed to have taken bribes.” Roughly 650 cases are under investigation by judicial officials, and a judge said the cases “could reach 20,000.” In October, Sweden began investigating adoptions from Chile, “responding to pressure from Chilean adoptees raised in the country who have used DNA testing to establish their connections to birth parents in Chile.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/17/world/americas/chile-adoption-pinochet.html>

China/Hong Kong. *Strand News*, a pro-democracy website in Hong Kong, was raided by more than 200 police officers with “a warrant that allowed them to search and seize any journalistic materials. Officers carted out boxes of materials, including computers and cellphones,” the *Washington Post* reported. Seven current and former editors, board members, and a journalist were arrested, the website and related social media will be taken down, and all employees have been dismissed, *AP* reported.

[https://apnews.com/article/business-media-crime-arrests-hong-kong-231577ace6e85c58ceb876c6c66feba?user\\_email=&utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=MorningWire\\_Dec29&utm\\_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers](https://apnews.com/article/business-media-crime-arrests-hong-kong-231577ace6e85c58ceb876c6c66feba?user_email=&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningWire_Dec29&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/28/hong-kong-arrests-press-freedom/>

Colombia. A magistrate of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) announced at a press conference that “a total of 21 soldiers and a civilian have admitted their guilt in 247 ‘false positives’ cases, a term used to denote extrajudicial executions of innocent civilians who are then ‘identified’ as guerrillas who died in combat,” reported *Orinoco Tribune*. For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-07.

<https://orinocotribune.com/colombian-military-admit-guilt-in-247-false-positive-cases/>

A report on police response to violence during 9-10 September 2020 protests was released. The *Washington Post* said the 177-page report, written by a former national ombudsman at the request of the mayor of Bogota and supported by the United Nations, was “scathing.” He said the national police “were responsible for the deaths of eleven people during the two days of protests of police brutality,” called the illegal use of force “widespread,” and said he had “documented cases of torture and cruel, inhumane treatment prohibited by the inter-American human rights system.” More than a year after the violence, “fewer than 44% of criminal cases connected to the protests . . . are being investigated.” In response, a spokesman for the director of the national police “said records show that on September 10, officers were given specific instruction to guarantee respect for human rights and the proper use of force.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/13/colombia-police-massacre-2020/>

Protests that began on 28 April and continued for several weeks led to loss of life and injuries, although “the vast majority of the protests were peaceful,” the UN Human Rights Office in Colombia said. Between 28 April and 31 July, the Office received “63 allegations of deaths in the context of the protests.” Its report, published on 15 December, said “the Office has verified 46 deaths, of which 44 were civilians and two police officers. . . . Based on the information gathered and analysed by the Office, there are reasonable grounds to believe that police officers were responsible for at least 28 of these deaths and that at least 10 . . . involved members of the National Police’s Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD). Non-State actors are believed to have killed 10 people. There is insufficient information to establish the likely perpetrators of eight deaths.” The report said the Office also had reports of 60 cases of sexual violence committed by the police that it has verified “so far.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27967&LangID=E>

*Bellingcat*, the investigative journalists, and three partners investigated the killing of Lucas Villa during the 5 May protests in the city of Pereira. Using “hours of social media footage from the scene,” the official autopsy report, and private CCTV footage, they created a timeline and a 3D model of what happened. They found that the attack “appears to have been premeditated,” police officers passed nearby without stopping, police failed to “secure the scene of the crime for at least 46 minutes,” and “physical evidence was most likely moved or lost in the time before police arrived.”

<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2021/12/06/unravelling-the-killing-of-colombian-protester-lucas-villa/>

The Institute for Development and Peace Studies (Indepaz) said that as of 24 December 168 social leaders had been killed during 2021 and since the signing of the peace agreement in 2016 1,283 human rights defenders have been killed, *teleSUR* reported

[https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Colombia-Reaches-168-Social-Leaders-Killed-in-2021-20211224-0016.html?utm\\_source=planisys&utm\\_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm\\_content=12](https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Colombia-Reaches-168-Social-Leaders-Killed-in-2021-20211224-0016.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=12)

Croatia. The Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment reported its findings from an August 2021 visit to Croatia’s border with Bosnia, *BIRN* reported. It said “its delegation was provided with incomplete information about places where migrants may be deprived of their liberty, and was obstructed by police in accessing documentation needed” to determine whether migrants are being ill-treated by police officers and whether alleged cases of ill-treatment are effectively investigated. The delegation interviewed “many” persons across the border in Bosnia and Herzegovina “where it received numerous credible and concordant allegations of physical ill-treatment of migrants by Croatian police officers.”

<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/03/coe-torture-watchdog-accuses-croatia-of-abusing-migrants-at-borders/>

Ecuador. The constitutional court, in a “landmark ruling,” said permits for mining in the Los Cedros protected forest were illegal, upholding “the rights of nature, which are enshrined in the country’s constitution,” the *Guardian* reported. “The decision means that mining concessions, environmental and water permits in the forest must be cancelled.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/dec/02/plan-to-mine-in-ecuador-forest-violate-rights-of-nature-court-rules-aoe>

Ethiopia. Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report on war crimes and possible crimes against humanity committed by all parties to the conflict in the Tigray region. HRW “remotely interviewed” 36 people who reported on abuses around the areas of Chenna and Kobo, where people “described seeing Tigrayan fighters . . . summarily execute a total of 49 people who they said were civilians, providing 44 names. Human Rights Watch also obtained three lists of civilians who had allegedly been killed in Chenna between August 31 and September 4,” with a total of 74 names. HRW called for the UN Human Rights Council to establish an investigative body, and the Council did so a few days later at a special session. The Council decided to “establish an international commission of human rights experts to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into allegations of violations and abuses committed in Ethiopia since 3 November 2020 by all parties to the conflict.” Among other tasks, the commission is to “collect and preserve evidence, to identify those responsible, where possible, and to make such information accessible and usable in support of ongoing and future accountability efforts.”

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/10/ethiopia-tigray-forces-summarily-execute-civilians>;

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27999&LangID=E>

Gambia. The 172-page report of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission was released to the public. “The commission investigated 18 themes, including the killing of West African migrants stranded in The Gambia in their attempt to transit to Europe, enforced disappearance, attacks on media and political opponents, killing of student demonstrators among others.” It received “1,500 statements,” out of which “the commission classified 1,009 people as victims,” reported *Premium Times*. *Al Jazeera* added, “The long-awaited report . . . recommends that a special international court be set up to try [former president Yahya] Jammeh and others in West Africa, but outside of The Gambia.” Jammeh is in exile in Equatorial Guinea.

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/502889-gambias-truth-commission-recommends-prosecution-of-yahya-jammeh-payment-to-victims.html>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/25/the-gambia-commission-recommends-former-president-yahya-jammeh-trial>

Haiti. “Haiti’s leader had a list his assassins wanted,” headlined the *New York Times*. “Before being assassinated in July,” former president Jovenel Moise “had been working on a list of powerful politicians and businesspeople involved in Haiti’s drug trade, with the intention of handing over the dossier to the American government, according to four senior Haitian advisers and officials tasked with drafting the document.” Investigators who arrived at the crime scene found “Moise’s home office ransacked, papers strewn everywhere.” Some of those arrested said “retrieving the list . . . was a top priority,” and Moise’s wife, who survived the killing, said the gunmen “stayed to search the room, hurriedly digging through his files. ‘That’s it,’ they finally declared to one another before fleeing.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/12/world/americas/jovenel-moise-haiti-president-drug-traffickers.html>

Honduras. *Reuters* examined the conflict over land in the fertile Aguan Valley, where commercial palm plantations have forced out local small farmers. The NGO Aguan Human Rights Observatory tracked 146 murders since 2008, including more than “100 farmers, 16 private security guards, a judge, a police officer and . . . collateral victims.” A government summary of the cases, which *Reuters* reviewed, showed convictions in just 25 of those killings. “Disputes still rage over some of the land now growing with palm. The Honduran government hasn’t verified many of the contested titles or resolved allegations by

local residents, human rights groups and other that farms were acquired by force and at unfair prices.” <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/honduras-migration-land/>

**India.** The Supreme Court ordered federal and local governments to start issuing ration and voter cards to sex workers on an official list and registering them with the Aadhar biometric identification system, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. “Official estimates suggest there are about a million sex workers in India, many of whom currently cannot vote, open bank accounts or access the food subsidies they are eligible for because they do not have identity documents.” NGOs working with sex workers estimate that almost half “are not registered with the government and not included in that figure.” A week after the Supreme Court decision, “two sex workers’ collectives in southern India’s Andhra Pradesh state asked the state government authority for a recount” of the number of sex workers in the state. <http://news.trust.org/item/20211222134652-6eqvp/>

**Israel.** Following a request from the NGO Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research, redacted transcripts of cabinet meetings from November-December 1948 were released. Writing in *Haaretz*, one of the Akevot researchers stated bluntly, “A perusal of the minutes of these meetings leaves no room for doubt: The country’s top leaders knew in real time about the blood-drenched events that accompanied the conquest of the Arab villages.” <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium.HIGHLIGHT.MAGAZINE-classified-docs-reveal-deir-yassin-massacre-wasn-t-the-only-one-perpetrated-by-isra-1.10453626>

**Japan.** Japan’s industry ministry conducted a survey of large firms on the “extent to which companies are focused on human rights issues.” It found that 21% have not done anything to safeguard human rights, and the ministry said “corporate efforts on human rights remain insufficient overall,” *NHK World* reported. [https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20211130\\_31/](https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20211130_31/)

**Myanmar.** The Myanmar Accountability Project (MAP) filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court, asking for a criminal investigation of Myanmar’s military leader Senior General Min Aung Hliang for “the use of torture as part of the violent crackdown against the protest movement in Myanmar,” *Jurist* reported. MAP’s submission relied on the evidence assembled by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, which said it “has collected over 219,000 information items related to post-coup events” and the findings of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners “which has found that since the coup in February, over 1,300 people have been killed, and over 7,000 have been arrested, charged, or sentenced.” <https://www.jurist.org/news/2021/12/myanmar-military-leader-min-aung-hliang-accused-of-crimes-against-humanity/>

**Nepal.** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was formed in February 2015, has received 63,718 complaints, *The Kathmandu Post* reported, but has conducted only “preliminary investigations of nearly 4,000 complaints and completed detailed investigations of just 29.” In December the Cabinet decided to pay compensation in the 29 cases. Bewilderingly, “the commission currently has prioritized the complaints that do not need prosecution,” thereby excluding cases of gross violations of human rights. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/12/25/truth-commission-wraps-up-29-war-era-cases-of-atrocities-victims-unhappy>

**North Korea.** The Transitional Justice Working Group, based in Seoul, issued a report on 23 public executions since Kim Jong Un took power in December 2011. It found that seven persons were executed “for watching or distributing South Korean videos,” and that “executions were carried out at closely monitored sites,” suggesting that the “regime is paying more attention to human rights issues as a response to increased international scrutiny.” The investigation used satellite imagery and collected testimonies, although “escapee accounts are near-impossible to independently verify because of North Korea’s strict control of access to its people and records,” *AFP* noted. The report’s lead author said it “carefully assessed accounts for consistency, only choosing those it found to be most reliable.” <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211216-north-korea-trying-to-hide-executions-from-world-rights-group>

**Qatar.** Qatar’s population stands at 2.67 million, according to data from the Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics, with 2.1 of them migrant laborers from India, Bangladesh and Nepal, according to the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. The NGO Migrant-Rights.org issued a report, “Dropping Dead: Qatar’s death certificates for migrant workers are a template for denial.” “Based on the deceased workers’ medical records, employment contracts,

photographs, travel documents and testimonies from victims' families, Migrant-Rights.org's investigation reveals a grim picture of untimely and unexplained deaths." Qatar's Public Health Department "issued death certificates without carrying out any investigations to identify the real cause of death, even though these workers were in the 20s and 30s and certified healthy, in mandatory pre-departure tests, at the time of migration." Working conditions are a likely cause. <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2021/12/dropping-dead/>

South Sudan. "Dozens of civilians in South Sudan were killed and tens of thousands displaced amid fighting between armed groups in Western Equatoria state from June to October this year," Amnesty International said in the first human rights analysis of the violence. Amnesty interviewed 76 people, including internally displaced persons, to document cases and used satellite imagery to analyze damage or destruction of structures. A humanitarian worker said in November that 13 of 20 medical facilities in the area were unusable "after being vandalized" and another said only 8 of 53 schools were open. "According to government figures verified by the UN, the fighting has displaced more than 80,000 people." <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/12/south-sudan-survivors-describe-killings-mass-displacement-and-terror-amid-fighting-in-western-equatoria/>

Syria. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) announced that 1,271 civilians, including 229 children, 134 women, and 104 victims of torture, were killed in Syria in 2021. SNHR wrote that since 2011 it "has created complex electronic programs to archive and categorize the victims' data, enabling the SNHR to catalogue victims according to their gender and the location where each was killed, the governorate from which each victim originally came, and the party responsible for the killing, and to make comparisons between these parties, and identify the governorates which lost the largest proportion of residents." <https://sn4hr.org/blog/2022/01/01/57199/>

United Arab Emirates. A new law coming into force 2 January 2022 decriminalizes premarital sex; however, the law "still does not offer unmarried women a clear path to acquiring birth certificates for their babies," *AP* reported. To get a birth certificate an unwed mother must "provide a ream of personal documents, take a DNA test and testify before a judge. If the judge approves, the mother may request her child's birth certificate." At the same time, "the law criminalizes women lacking such documents." [https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-crime-dubai- united-arab-emirates-ae0c5912fb8198a03d970ca3e848d569?user\\_email=&utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Dec13\\_Morning\\_Wire&utm\\_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers](https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-crime-dubai- united-arab-emirates-ae0c5912fb8198a03d970ca3e848d569?user_email=&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Dec13_Morning_Wire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers)

United States. A research team reported in *JAMA* on their study of whether living in a neighborhood with a high police presence is "associated" with increased risk of preterm birth. They used the medical records of "1059 Minneapolis residents who gave birth to a live singleton in 2016," grouping them into White, U.S.-born Black, and Black born outside the U.S. They compared these to police incident data from the City of Minneapolis Police Incident Report, which contained "information on the date and time the incidents were reported by police officers, the type of offense . . . and the geographic coordinates of the incidents." After excluding various medical factors, they found "the odds of preterm birth for pregnant people living in a neighborhood with high police presence was significantly higher compared with the odds of their racial counterparts in a low presence neighborhood." [https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2786940?utm\\_source=For\\_The\\_Media&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=fm\\_links&utm\\_term=120821&utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=3b6adc2bd5-MR\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_8cab1d7961-3b6adc2bd5-149736437](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2786940?utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=fm_links&utm_term=120821&utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=3b6adc2bd5-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-3b6adc2bd5-149736437)

Another medical study team examined "the impact of historical redlining, a government-sanctioned and racially discriminatory policy, and present-day cardiovascular health (CVH)," they reported in *PNAS*. The team used the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis of 6,814 individuals aged 45 to 84 years and a related study of persons in particular neighborhoods. They linked these data to maps from the University of Richmond's Mapping Inequality Project to look at the geographic areas of redlining. They "found that Black adults who lived in historically redlined areas had a . . . lower CVH score compared to those residing in grade A (best) neighborhoods" and if the neighborhood's social environment improved, the CVH for Black adults was better but still not completely equal to that of non-Blacks. In other words, "results suggest that historical redlining has an enduring impact on cardiovascular risk among Black adults in the United States." <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/118/51/e2110986118.full.pdf>

The NGO Center for Democracy and Technology examined “the concerning and rising practice” of federal agencies avoiding a formal legal process to obtain data on U.S. citizens by making commercial purchases from data brokers. The researchers conducted interviews and reviewed “approximately 150 publicly available documents covering awards, solicitations, requests for proposals, and related information on contracts.” They found that “multiple forms of sensitive data, including location, communications, biometric, and license plate reader data, are sold by data brokers to law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and the practice is increasing, with multiple agencies spending upwards of tens of millions of dollars on multi-year contracts.” <https://cdt.org/insights/report-legal-loopholes-and-data-for-dollars-how-law-enforcement-and-intelligence-agencies-are-buying-your-data-from-brokers/>

Whistleblowers shared documents and emails with *The Intercept* that they had given to the Environmental Protection Agency’s inspector general showing the agency approved new products that contain a solvent known as PCBTF, which “ample evidence” shows causes cancer. The EPA spokesperson said the agency is “cooperating fully with the ongoing IG investigation” and is making serious efforts “to catalogue, prioritize and improve the procedures, recordkeeping and decision-making practices related to review and management of new chemicals.” [https://theintercept.com/2021/12/22/epa-whistleblowers-carcinogen-paint-solvent/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter](https://theintercept.com/2021/12/22/epa-whistleblowers-carcinogen-paint-solvent/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Intercept%20Newsletter)

In 2019 the Federal Bureau of Investigation launched the voluntary National Use-of-Force Data Collection Program, asking police departments “to submit details on every incident, not just fatal shootings.” However, a report from the General Accounting Office said there has been “insufficient participation from law enforcement agencies” to meet the target of having 60% of the departments reporting, the *Washington Post* reported. “The FBI estimates there are 18,514 state, local, tribal and federal police agencies in the United States, with a total of 860,000 sworn police employees.” Police officials say “inputting the data can be time-consuming or difficult,” and that likely contributes to the lack of cooperation with the program. <https://archive.ph/MyEU7>

The *New York Times* reviewed “hundreds of research papers and more than 25,000 pages of court documents” and interviewed “nearly three dozen people” in researching “the small but influential cadre of scientists, lawyers, physicians and other police experts whose research and testimony is almost always used to absolve [police] officers of blame for deaths” while in custody. The conclusion: the experts and the “law-enforcement-friendly companies that train police officers, write police policies and lend authority to studies rebutting concerns about police use of force” form “what often amounts to a cottage industry of exoneration.” <https://static01.nyt.com/images/2021/12/27/nytfhomepage/scan.pdf>

### **Publications, calls for papers and comments, good reads.**

Swisspeace announced the Spanish version of *Safe Havens for Archives at Risk* is online: <https://www.safehavensforarchives.org/es/>

The Belgian State Archives published a guide to all the archives relating to Belgian colonization in Congo, Rwanda and Burundi that are held in nearly 80 repositories on Belgian territory: <http://www.arch.be/index.php?l=en&m=news&r=all-news&a=2021-09-29-new-book-helps-to-locate-all-colonial-archives-in-belgium>

iPres called for papers for its 18th International Conference on Digital Preservation to be held in Glasgow, Scotland, and virtually, 12-16 September 2022: <https://ipres2022.scot/important-dates/>

The Sedona Conference released for public comment “Commentary on the Need for Guidance and Uniformity in Filing ESI [electronically stored information] and Records Under Seal”: [https://thesedonaconference.org/publication/Commentary\\_on\\_Need\\_for\\_Uniformity\\_in\\_Filing\\_ESI\\_Under\\_Seal](https://thesedonaconference.org/publication/Commentary_on_Need_for_Uniformity_in_Filing_ESI_Under_Seal)

International Committee of the Red Cross, Missing Persons Project, published “Guidelines for Coordination and Information Exchange Mechanisms for the Search for Missing Migrants,” “Guiding Principles on Interaction with Families of Missing Migrants,” and “Core Data Set for the Search for Missing Migrants”: <https://communities.ext.icrc.org/docs/DOC-7367>

Lynzy Billing, “‘Everything Living Is Dying’: Environmental Ruin in Modern Iraq,” *undark*: <https://undark.org/2021/12/22/ecocide-iraq/>

Konstanze Frischen, “Human Rights Documentation in the Digital Age: Why Machine Learning Isn’t a Silver Bullet,” an interview with Syrian Archive founder Hadi al-Khatib, *Forbes*: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashoka/2021/12/06/open-sourcing-human-rights-documentation-in-the-digital-age---why-machine-learning-isnt-a-silver-bullet/?sh=4fc77bef268b>

Roger Lu Phillips, Aweiss Al Dobouch, “France is Not a Safe Haven for Human Rights Abusers—Despite High Court Opinion,” *Justsecurity.org*: <https://www.justsecurity.org/79473/france-is-not-a-safe-haven-for-human-rights-abusers-despite-high-court-opinion/>

Sebastian Stranglo, “Craig Etcheson on the Legacies of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal,” *The Diplomat*: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/craig-etcheson-on-the-legacies-of-the-khmer-rouge-tribunal/>

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