

ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS
News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights
Issue no. 119, October 2019

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Commentary.

On the evening of October 31, I walked into a Hong Kong hotel seeking food and was confronted with a shining white skull—artificial, but startlingly realistic. It was, of course, decoration for Halloween, the night when certain traditions say spirits rise from graves and cavort in the world. From apparently pagan roots, Halloween in various countries has become a festival, a commercial celebration, a costume party, a time to watch horror movies: in other words, fun.

It is a testament to the ability of humans to compartmentalize that when we see a skull on a reception desk we smile but we demand that photographs of the dead are handled with the utmost discretion. Consider the issue of the Caesar photographs. In 2014 a Syrian military police photographer, given the cover name “Caesar,” managed to leave Syria, bringing with him on a computer thumb drive 53,275 images of approximately 11,000 dead bodies of people tortured and killed while in Syrian military detention. He told a three-person Inquiry of eminent jurists that the reasons he was ordered to take the photographs were “[f]irst to permit a death certificate to be produced without families requiring to see the body thereby avoiding the authorities having to give a truthful account of their deaths; second to confirm that orders to execute individuals had been carried out.” At that time of the Inquiry’s report, the photographs were entrusted to the “Syrian National Movement.” <https://static.guim.co.uk/ni/1390226674736/syria-report-execution-tort.pdf>

On 21 September 2017, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) and a number of Syrians called the “Caesar Files Group” filed a criminal complaint with the German Federal Prosecutor in Karlsruhe against senior officials from the Syrian intelligence services and the military police for crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Group gave the Prosecutor “a set of high-resolution images and metadata” that “can be used to verify the photographs and provide further information about them. This adds to the evidentiary value of the images and paves the way for further investigatory steps.” In June 2018, the “German Federal Court of Justice (*Bundesgerichtshof*) issued an international warrant against Jamil Hassan on the basis of the so-called Caesar Files, their metadata as well as witness statements by Syrian torture survivors. Hassan was the head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence Service until July 2019 and therefore responsible for torture in thousands of cases.” <https://www.ecchr.eu/en/case/caesar-photos-document-systematic-torture/>

Meanwhile, the nongovernmental Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) obtained “about 6,189 Caesar photographs” and is working to determine the identity of the people photographed (the images have only numbers, not names). So far SNHR has identified 801 persons, including 2 children and 10 adult females. It decided not to publish the photos it has because, it wrote, this “would involve many violations, perhaps the most prominent of which is the violation of victims’ and family members’ privacy . . . the publication of such distressing photos may cause further trauma and pain to the tens of thousands of families whose children are still forcibly disappeared. In addition to this, most of these graphic photos of individuals killed under torture contain shocking and distressing scenes and we believe that disseminating them without very good cause is a violation of human dignity.” <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2019/10/21/54362/>

Atrocity photographs are, unfortunately, increasingly common, from videos of Islamic State murders published on line to images of police brutality captured by cellphone cameras. They are important as potential legal evidence, for resolving the fates of persons, and for the history of the event and the human community. Some of them are public immediately, such as the images broadcast by the gunman who killed two people and injured two more in Halle, Germany (see below). But managing the records of undisclosed atrocity photographs such as those Caesar had requires a sensitive, serious consideration of their impact when made public, the privacy rights of the families of the persons pictured, and the need to show the public the evidence of crimes. Surely if it is possible to bring closure to a family by making the photos available to the family for review while protecting their privacy, that is the just course of action,

while denying access to the general public. SNHR and others who hold such archives have a most serious responsibility when they grant access.

HRWG/SAHR News. At the annual meeting of the International Council on Archives, the Human Rights Working Group became the Section on Archives and Human Rights (SAHR). Anyone interested in the topic may join the Section; contact Deborah Jenkins, SAHR Secretary at deborahjenkins@protonmail.com

International news.

European Court of Human Rights. The Court ruled in *Pastörs v. Germany* that Holocaust denial is not protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. Udo Pastörs, a member of Germany's far right National Democratic Party, had argued a ban on Holocaust denial was a violation of his right to freedom of expression.
http://d31hzlhk6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20191031/58/18/15/12/c83bb50f74f7e69f47140fb3/Pastors_press_release.pdf

International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic were tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and acquitted of war crimes in 2013, but that conviction was overturned by the appeals chamber which ordered the case "retried and all the evidence and witnesses reheard in full by new judges," *BIRN* reported. The case is now in progress, and the prosecution used "excerpts from Ratko Mladic's war diary in an attempt to prove that the Serbian State Security Service, where the defendants were senior officials, sent paramilitary units from Serbia to Bosnia and Herzegovina in autumn 1995 and had control over them." https://balkaninsight.com/2019/10/10/ratko-mladics-diary-links-serbian-security-service-to-arkan/?utm_source=Balkan+Insight+Newsletters&utm_campaign=173143213e-BI_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4027db42dc-173143213e-319725265

United Nations. The United Nations released the report of the investigation into the 1961 death of Dag Hammarskjöld, but the Secretary-General, in transmitting it to the General Assembly, said he "considers that it is equally clear that the work will need to continue with renewed urgency, with a view to establishing the truth of the tragic event." The report, written by jurist Mohamed Chande Othman, said, "Despite encouraging progress having been made, we are not at a stage where it may be said that searches have been exhaustive in all Member States. As discussed in my report, certain Member States have not responded substantively to queries or appear to have inferred that their intelligence, security and defence archives cannot hold 'relevant' information, as they are not ordinarily archives of which their legal frameworks allow consultation. I believe that these difficulties may and should be overcome, given the very unique circumstances of this matter." He then enumerated the information that is still needed from the U.K., U.S., the Russian Federation and South Africa. <https://undocs.org/A/73/973>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/World Bank. A Joint Data Centre, a cooperative effort of the two agencies, opened in Copenhagen. It will hold data on refugees and data on the communities which host displaced persons to "help policy-makers find solutions to humanitarian crises." At the launch, the Secretary-General said that "many decisions are based on incorrect information, because key data needed to identify problems and solutions does not exist," and the data to be held in this Centre "will enable support programs to be better designed." The Centre promised that data to be used for studies "will be anonymized, and sensitive individual protection-related data will not be included." <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049001>

World Health Organization(WHO). WHO published the first *World Report on Vision*, based on scientific research reports which, in turn, were based on medical data. "Globally, at least 2.2 billion people have a vision impairment or blindness, of whom at least 1 billion have a vision impairment that could have been prevented or has yet to be addressed. More reliable data on the met and unmet eye care needs, however, are required for planning. Also, the burden of eye conditions and vision impairment is not borne equally. The burden tends to be greater in low- and middle-income countries and underserved populations, such as women, migrants, indigenous peoples, persons with certain kinds of disability, and in rural communities." https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/publications/world-vision-report-accessible.pdf?sfvrsn=223f9bf7_2

World/general news.

Business records. Yonas Yeshanew was Ethiopian Airlines' chief engineer when a Boeing 737 Max plane crashed last March, killing all 157 people on board. He is now seeking asylum in the U.S., and in a report he sent to the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and international air safety agencies he said that the day after the crash the airline's chief operating officer "ordered that records on the downed Max plane be checked for 'mistakes'." The *Associated Press* quoted aviation experts saying "that after a crash, maintenance records—specifically, log books and task cards containing notes by pilots and fixes by mechanics—are required by international air safety regulators to be immediately sealed off, and any attempt to manipulate them is a serious violation tantamount to trampling on a crime scene." <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-boeing-737-max-ethiopian-airlines-whistleblower-20191007-ttkixw7xnbhivl77ckylzpepqi-story.html>

After it decides whether to accept or reject the application to approve marketing a new drug, biological treatment, or medical device, Health Canada will make public the application records the company submitted, *Undark* reported. <https://undark.org/article/canada-opens-door-public-scrutiny-drug-trials/>

Asia Paper & Pulp (APP) has been blamed as one of the "main companies responsible for the current haze crisis" in Indonesia. A study by a coalition of Indonesian organizations and the nongovernmental Environmental Paper Network said APP is involved in hundreds of conflicts with communities across Sumatra and Borneo where "community rights to customary land are still largely ignored." APP admitted conflicts between their wood suppliers and local communities, but claims to have "resolved 49% of the land disputes associated with its operations. But no specific information—including names or locations of the villages, size of areas involved, details about the process or outcomes—has been shared with the public." In addition to interviews, public data on areas given to APP in concessions, and media reports, the researchers used satellite imagery and geo-spatial analysis to identify both current and potential conflicts. They call on the company to make public the details of its work with communities to resolve social conflicts and to "consistently obtain the free, prior and informed consent of local communities." <https://environmentalpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/APP-social-conflicts-mapping.pdf>

YouTube has been "under fire for not doing enough to remove videos that contain hate speech and disinformation," *Columbia Journalism Review* noted. But Syrian human-rights activist Hadi Al Khatib, who runs The Syrian Archives which has been "tracking and preserving as many videos of war crimes in that country as it can, says that the "more than 200,000 such videos" that YouTube has removed from its site are "important evidence" of war crimes. He calls the removals by You Tube and other tech companies "erasing history." <https://www.cjr.org/hero/youtube-takedowns-war-crimes.php>

Criminal records. The nongovernmental Open Society Foundations published an essay on the "racialization of antidrug policies" in which minorities and immigrants are disproportionately targeted. The authors argued, "The first step in trying to address this . . . is for countries to collect data on drug crimes; tracking data (on race, ethnicity, gender nationality, etc.) of those arrested and prosecuted for such offenses is particularly needed." https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/the-uncounted-victims-of-the-war-on-drugs?utm_source=news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=news_101219&utm_content=PdJCM2q46Zsg2lkQNjYeM02vI83d3vRdPP9-BJqjrjk

Medical records. Researchers used the World Health Organization's databank and its Epidemiological Data Reporting Form and Ministry of Health reports to determine how "preventive medication has slashed parasitic worm infection around the world." They found that after 5 years of wide-scale administration of the drugs in 15 countries, the percentage of the population infected dropped significantly. *STAT* reported that "even though some 102 countries implemented preventive strategies, only the 15 included in the study had data to demonstrate progress, which the study authors write highlights the importance of collecting data on how these measures are panning out more regularly." https://idpjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40249-019-0589-6?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=c3546a3a0f-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-c3546a3a0f-149736437

"An estimated 60 million people in the world will die this year, and half will have no death certificates or other records describing what killed them," the *Associated Press* reported. Bloomberg Philanthropies announced it will give \$120 million over the next four years to health projects, including "money for verbal autopsies, as well as cancer registries and other programs intended to help developing countries

gather accurate data about the health of their citizens” and thereby save more lives. Verbal autopsies are interviews by a trained health worker with someone close to the deceased person about the details of the death. https://www.apnews.com/8368ad6b33604514918c4bdee12c6408?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=c3546a3a0f-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-c3546a3a0f-149736437

A team of researchers working on the control of mosquitoes that transmit malaria found that DFDT, a compound developed during World War II by German scientists, was more effective than the DDT patented by the Swiss firm Geigy and used by the Allies. The team reviewed postwar U.S. intelligence reports, in which Allied officials dismissed the effectiveness of DFDT, perhaps because of the “deplorable behavior of Hoechst, the German chemical manufacturer that developed the insecticide during the war. The company had forced residents of countries occupied by Germany to work in its factories, and it tested drugs on concentration camp prisoners.” The *New York Times* reported that the Germans developed the compound “at least in part to avoid paying the licensing fees for DDT to the Swiss.” https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/17/science/nazi-ddt-malaria.html?ref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fkenneth-chang&action=click&contentCollection=undefined®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection

The Lancet reported, “Antimicrobial resistance is a growing challenge around the world but is particularly acute in areas of the Middle East where conflict has destroyed or severely impacted health services, although a lack of data makes it difficult to even assess the scale of the problem.” [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32306-2/fulltext?dgcid=raven_jbs_etoc_email](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32306-2/fulltext?dgcid=raven_jbs_etoc_email)

Stellenbosch University in South Africa called for the Wellcome Sanger Institute in the U.K. to return the DNA samples it got from donors, including “members of indigenous communities—such as the Nama people of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa,” who were told the samples would only be used to study “population history and human evolution,” the *Daily Mail* reported. Whistleblowers who formerly worked at the Institute claimed it planned “to build a medical research tool, based on the DNA, which it could then have sold commercially.” <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-7570501/UK-lab-told-return-DNA-African-tribes-accused-trying-commercialise-them.html>

Research by the Human Heredity and Health in Africa consortium (H3Africa) presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics showed how underrepresented Africa is in genetics research. “The H3Africa study confirmed that failing to study African genomes can hinder the use of genetic medicine in people of African descent,” *STAT* reported. https://www.statnews.com/2019/10/16/unprecedented-analysis-african-genomes-genetic-diversity/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=ab4d09ba69-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-ab4d09ba69-149736437

Privacy. A South Korean man has been charged with running a massive child pornography operation called “Welcome to Video” on the dark web, *Quartz* reported. He was discovered because the computer’s IP address was registered in his name and “resolved to a server located in his bedroom. On it, authorities discovered about 250,000 videos showing children, toddlers, and infants being sexually abused.” At least 23 minors pictured have been identified and rescued. “To find Welcome To Video’s customers, investigators analyzed Bitcoin transactions to identify both uploaders and downloaders, which has thus far led to the arrests of 337 users in nearly 40 countries.” <https://qz.com/1730209/a-bitcoin-powered-child-porn-site-was-undone-by-a-right-click/>

Refugees. Counting how many people are refugees is admittedly difficult, but an opinion piece in *The New Humanitarian* suggested it is also dangerous. The writer argued that we lack adequate records for determining the refugee populations in the past, that the absolute number is less relevant than the relative number of refugees to world population and world economy, and that when using absolute numbers “there’s a great risk that talking about the ‘unprecedented scale’ of current displacement will fuel a more general anti-immigrant political discourse” and thereby “decreasing, not increasing public sympathy and support.” https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2019/10/03/unprecedented-number-refugees-wrong-dangerous?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=5b952388ca-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_10_04_WEEKLY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-5b952388ca-75545741

“Hundreds of migrants travelling in a US-bound caravan in the southern state of Chiapas [Mexico], as well as others in the region, were detained . . . despite many carrying official Mexican government documents that grant them the right to be in the state,” *Al Jazeera* reported. A lawyer working with the

Chiapas-based Center for Human Dignity said he “is preparing to file a formal complaint with the prosecutor’s office on behalf of documented asylum applicants who were detained. Dozens of people have already signed onto the complaint, and the list is growing.”

<http://newsontheflipside.com/americas/rights-groups-slam-mexico-detention-of-documented-asylum-seekers/>

Technology. “Researchers at the Mayo Clinic used commercially available facial-recognition software to match photographs of about 80 volunteers to unidentified MRI images that show outlines of the head in addition to the brain itself,” the *Wall Street Journal* reported. “Facial-recognition software correctly matched photos of research volunteers to unidentified medical scans of their heads,” a finding that “draws attention to a privacy threat that will increase with technology improvements and the growth of health-care data, experts in medical imaging and facial recognition said.”

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/facial-recognition-software-was-able-to-identify-patients-from-mri-scans-11571864543>

World War II. The audio recordings of the Nuremberg trials of the Nazi leaders have been digitized and will be available to researchers at the International Court of Justice library in The Hague (which holds the original audio recordings), the Memorial of the Shoah in Paris, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the *Associated Press* reported. <http://www.wboc.com/story/41163920/public-to-get-access-to-nuremberg-trials-digital-recordings>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Egypt/Israel/Syria. Israel’s Defense Ministry released archives, including transcripts of conversations and an intelligence report, “describing the drama of the critical hours prior to the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War,” *Jerusalem Post* reported. <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Defense-Ministry-opens-Yom-Kippur-War-archive-603964>

Guatemala/United States. Francisco Cuxum Alvarado was a member of the Civil Defense Patrol in Guatemala in the 1980s. In 2018 a court in Guatemala charged him with crimes against humanity for participating the mass sexual assault of Maya Achi women in and around the municipality of Rabinal and issued an Interpol notice for his arrest. Alvarado had previously been named as a suspect in the 13 March 1982 massacre in the same vicinity. In April 2019 he was found in the U.S. State of Massachusetts and arrested; he has now pled guilty to entering the U.S. illegally. He will be sentenced to serve time in a U.S. jail for the illegal entry and then deported to Guatemala to face its charges. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/guatemalan-national-wanted-crimes-against-humanity-pleads-guilty-illegal-reentry> ; <https://www.ijmonitor.org/2019/10/suspect-in-maya-achi-sexual-violence-case-makes-key-admission-in-us-court/>

Hungary/Russia. The Russian-Hungarian Joint Archives Committee reached an agreement that by 1 December Russia will give Hungary “in five phases” copies of the “identification documents of some 600,000 Hungarian prisoners of war, who had been held in Soviet camps during and after the Second World War,” *Hungary Today* reported. The Hungarian National Archives will hold the estimated 1,364,262 digital records. <http://hungarytoday.hu/hungary-to-receive-files-of-ww2-prisoners-held-in-soviet-camps/>

Middle East war. Human Rights Watch said Afghan forces backed by the U.S. “have unlawfully killed civilians during night raids, forcibly disappeared detainees, and attacked healthcare facilities for allegedly treating insurgent fighters.” The report, “‘They’ve Shot Many Like This’: Abusive Night Raids by CIA-Backed Afghan Strike Forces,” documents 14 cases from late 2017 to mid-2019, based on interviews with 39 local residents, other witnesses, and Afghan human rights groups which documented these raids. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/31/afghanistan-cia-backed-forces-commit-atrocities>

The *New York Times* reported that after the raid that killed Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the U.S. military found “roughly five to six telephones, two to four laptops and a handful of thumb drives” in his compound. In addition, a “book of receipts” was found by “contacts”; a Syrian researcher examined the receipts “and concluded that they did not appear to have been forged, based on the terminology they use and the receipt’s markings, which match other ISIS records.” The receipts, “typical of the Islamic State’s meticulous bookkeeping,” appear to show that IS was paying a rival group for protection of al-Baghdadi. <https://weeklyreviewer.com/isis-leader-paid-rival-for-protection-but-was-betrayed-by-his-own/>

The *New York Times* “assembled a large body of evidence” to analyze the bombing of hospitals in Syria on May 5 and 6, including “social media posts from Syria . . . interviews with witnesses, and records from charities that supported the four hospitals [which] provided the approximate time of each strike,” “logs kept by flight spotters on the ground who warn civilians about incoming airstrikes and cross-checked the time of each strike to confirm that Russian warplanes were overhead,” and “listened to and deciphered thousands of Russian Air Force radio transmissions, which recorded months’ worth of pilot activities in the skies above northwestern Syria . . . [that] were provided to *The Times* by a network of observers.” It concluded that “the Russian Air Force has repeatedly bombed hospitals in Syria in order to crush the last pockets of resistance” to the Syrian government. www.nytimes.com/2019/10/13/world/middleeast/russia-bombing-syrian-hospitals.html

Amnesty International gathered testimony from 17 witnesses in northeast Syria “as well as analyzing and verifying video footage and reviewing medical reports and other documentation,” all of which “provides damning evidence of indiscriminate attacks in residential areas . . . carried out by Turkey and allied Syrian armed groups.” Amnesty “also corroborated witness testimony, verified video footage and reviewed a medical report to shed light on” how Hevrin Khalaf, a Kurdish female politician, was killed. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/syria-damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-and-other-violations-by-turkish-forces-and-their-allies/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=67a5951ca3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-67a5951ca3-90540617

The nongovernmental Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issued a major report, “Documentation of 72 Torture Methods the Syrian Regime Continues to Practice in Its Detention Centers and Military Hospitals, Identifying 801 Individuals Who Appeared in Caesar Photographs, the US Congress Must Pass the Caesar Act to Provide Accountability.” It said its database shows “at least 130,000 individuals are still detained or forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011. The total number arrested is far higher, with our estimates suggesting that almost 1.2 million Syrian citizens have been arrested and detained at some point.” <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2019/10/21/54362/>

SNHR also said it documented 118 civilians, including one medical staff member, killed in Syria in September. The number included 2 massacres and 22 persons who died due to torture. The report includes a good discussion of the methodology SNHR uses to document the deaths. <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2019/10/01/54275/>

“Turkish-backed Syrian Arab fighters killed at least two Kurdish prisoners . . . one of them lying on the ground with his hands bound behind his back,” the *New York Times* reported. The fighters, identified as Ahrar al-Sharqiyeh, posted a video of the killing on its “social media” account, apparently Twitter. www.nytimes.com/2019/10/12/world/middleeast/syria-kurds-shot-video.html

United Kingdom/Northern Ireland/United States. A court in Northern Ireland cleared Ivor Bell of the charge of soliciting the murder of Jean McConville in December 1972 during Northern Ireland’s “Troubles.” The judge found that the oral history interview with Bell in which he appeared to admit a role in the murder was “unreliable” because both interviewee and interviewer had a “clear bias” and therefore the information in the interview could not be used to convict, reported *BBC News NI*. For background to this long-running case, in which the oral history tapes held by Boston College in the United States were contested, see *HRWG News* 2018-10. <https://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/2019/10/18/the-troubles-former-ira-man-ivor-bell-cleared-of-jean-mcconville-charges/>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-27238797>

National news.

Argentina. The government’s statistics agency reported that 36.4% of the population is living below the poverty line, an increase of 8% “in the last year alone,” reported *teleSUR*. “Child poverty is particularly high; of those under 14, 52% are officially poor.” https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Argentinas-Poverty-Hits-36-Amid-Macris-Neoliberalism-20191001-0009.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=8

Burkina Faso. The National Assembly adopted a law on the “legal regime of archives.” In response to a question from a Member, the Minister of Communication and Relations with the Parliament said that under the new law “when a private person has a certain number of items considered as archives and does

not want to yield them, the State can seize these documents and classify them like archives.”
<https://www.sidwaya.info/blog/2019/10/24/loi-portant-regime-juridique-des-archives-le-parlement-donne-son-quitus/>

Chile. Last March, in response to a growing number of complaints, the government established a “special police unit” to investigate the approximately 20,000 children that were adopted by foreign couples during the Pinochet era. Chile’s Court of Appeals says “at least” 8,000 adoptions are “suspicious cases” of forced disappearance, *BBC News* reported. “The search is often arduous. The adoption documents rarely list the full names of both parents. Sometime names and identity numbers were deliberately changed,” but in registry offices “original handwritten birth certificates sometimes hold clues.” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48929112>

Colombia. Cerac.org, a Bogota-based nongovernmental organization, published a report on violence in each month of 2018 and 2019, showing the deaths, injuries and persons threatened in political violence events. According to its documentation, the 20 assassinations in September is the highest number since August 2018, and September also had the highest number of threats (96) since October 2015, when the violence was associated with local and regional elections. <https://www.blog.cerac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Monitor-de-violencia-politica-en-Colombia-8-de-October-de-2019.pdf>

The Washington Office on Latin America, a nongovernmental organization, published a commentary on the significance of former president Alvaro Uribe’s testimony before the Supreme Court which is investigating him for “bribing and threatening ex-paramilitaries into making false accusations” against a member of Congress. “Evidence presented before the Supreme Court does not only consist of witness testimony: there are also thousands of recorded phone calls between Uribe and his inner circle” that were recorded in connection with a separate case. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/colombia-former-president-uribe-testifies/>

Czech Republic. *Radio Free Europe* published a sample of photographs taken by the Communist-era security service that are in the Security Services Archive, showing the surveillance of civilians. <http://www.rferl.org/a/the-communist-spy-photographers-of-czechoslovakia/30236411.html>

Gambia. The Minister of Justice announced that about \$1 million was paid into the new Reparations Fund of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, reported *justiceinfo.net*. This is the first contribution; it came from proceeds of the sales of former President Yahya Jammeh’s assets. A special commission “went through hundreds of documents and interviewed 253 witnesses” and established that Jammeh owns “281 properties in the country, as well as assets abroad,” and that he stole an estimated \$362 million “from the state coffers.” The rules to determine how much a victim will receive are not yet completed. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/reparations/42679-gambia-jammeh-wealth-victims.html>

Germany. Two people were killed and two injured in an attack on a synagogue in Halle on 9 October. The gunman broadcast 35 minutes of the attack on Twitch, an Amazon-owned platform. The *Guardian* reported, “Twitch removed the video but copies had already been downloaded and shared elsewhere on the internet, highlighting the challenges faced by platforms attempting to stymie the dissemination of such material.” The shooter also posted three documents on the Kohlchan site describing his motives. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/09/germany-shooting-synagogue-halle-livestreamed>

India. The *Washington Post* investigated reports of beatings and torture of Kashmir residents by members of the Indian army. The reporters interviewed 19 people; they “reviewed photos and hospital records detailing the injuries” of 3 people, and for 6 more they “saw either photographs of injuries or hospital records.” The Indian army released a statement saying the *Post*’s report is “baseless.”
<http://thewashingtonpost.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx>

The *New York Times* reported that India released its annual crime report “more than a year behind schedule” and it lacked data on “religious-based crimes or violence against journalists.” The government said “data for new categories on crimes against journalists, human-rights violations by security forces and attacks by cow vigilantes, among others, had been withheld because it was ‘unreliable’ and ‘prone to misinterpretation’.”

https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/24/world/asia/india-modi-hindu-violence.html?ref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fkai-schultz&action=click&contentCollection=undefined®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection

Iran. Iran passed a law granting women “the right to pass their citizenship to their children that are born with foreign fathers,” *teleSUR* reported. However, this right is limited to “children who have been found to not possess any security issues,” which may mean background checks on the foreign fathers before issuing the citizenship document. https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Iranian-Women-Achieve-Major-Victory-With-New-Citizenship-Law-20191003-0007.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=14

Israel. Akevot, a nongovernmental organization, launched a website of documents it has obtained on the 1956 Kafr Qasim Massacre, in which 49 Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed. “The website contains thousands of pages of documents, capitalizing on the primary sources about the massacre revealed to date, its background and the famous trial that followed. It also illuminates deliberate efforts to conceal the event and erase it from public memory.” <https://kafr-qasim-massacre.akevot.org.il/index-en.php>

Libya. In August Amnesty International visited 33 air and ground strike sites in Tripoli and surrounding areas and reported it found “evidence of potential war crimes by both the UN-backed Government of National Accord and the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army, who have been fighting in and around the city.” The report is based on interviews with 156 residents, including survivors, witnesses and relatives of victims, local officials, medical workers and members of armed groups, “verified written and audio-visual material from a variety of sources, including content provided by the warring parties,” and satellite images of “several of the concerned locations taken on different dates since the beginning of the conflict.” <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1912012019ENGLISH.PDF>

Russia. “Since the early 2000s, Russia has seen significant declines in overall alcohol consumption, and a new review shows that there has been a parallel, steep decline in the country’s mortality rates as well,” *Eurasia Review* reported. Researchers used “the Russia Fertility and Mortality Database to obtain data on death rates and cause of death, including deaths specifically due to alcohol consumption . . . as well as deaths frequently related to drinking” and data on life expectancy from the Russian Statistical Service. They said that although they “can’t prove that the decrease in alcohol consumption directly led to improved life expectancy, the link is strong, waxing and waning in tandem over time.” https://www.eurasiareview.com/05102019-in-russia-declines-in-alcohol-consumption-and-mortality-have-gone-hand-in-hand/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Switzerland. The Independent Expert Commission on Administrative Detention presented its report in September. It found that “more than 60,000 people were interned over the last century in some 650 institutions without any judicial order,” reported *JusticeInfo.net*. The Commission “had access to official archives and victims’ testimonies;” it looked particularly at detentions from 1930 to 1981. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/truth-commissions/42559-raw-truth-swiss-administrative-detention-finally-made-public.html>

Turkey. The International Crisis Group (ICG) assembled a database of fatalities since 2011 in the conflict between the government and the Kurdish militant group PKK. The “data is based on information available in open sources, including reports from Turkish language media, the Turkish military, local Kurdish rights groups, and the PKK itself.” ICG’s data show that 4,686 individuals have been killed since July 2015; more than half are PKK members (2,758), 22.4 per cent of whom are female. Around a quarter (1,215) consist of State Security Force members (including soldiers, police and village guards). There have been 490 civilians confirmed dead; the remaining 223 are “individuals of unknown affiliation.” From July 2018 to July 2019, 3.36 PKK members were killed for each state security force member. https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/assessing-fatalities-turkeys-pkk-conflict?utm_source=Sign+Up+to+Crisis+Group%27s+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=a6a58e210f-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_10_22_09_35&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1dab8c11ea-a6a58e210f-359425329

United Kingdom. The Memory, Identity and Rights in Records for Care Leavers (MIRRA) project at University College London “collected interview and focus group data from more than 80 care leavers, social workers and information managers working for local authorities and charities who look after children.” They found that “many care leavers who try to access records held by local authorities and charities often find their files missing. And when people do receive their records, they have often been heavily redacted, or censored to remove any ‘third party information’—such as names of parents, siblings, family members and carers.” <http://theconversation.com/care-leavers-trying-to-access-childhood-records-is-distressing-and-dehumanising-124381>

In March 1972 four young black men were arrested by undercover officers in London and convicted of theft and assaulting the police. Last year, after another case revealed that an officer who made the arrest was corrupt, one of the four applied to the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) to overturn his conviction. The CCRC has referred it to the court of appeal and “submission is typically viewed as highly likely to result in success,” the *Guardian* reported. The chair of the CCRC said, “The age of the case meant that almost all of the information that we usually have to go on—such as police material and prosecution and court files—had long ago been destroyed so we had to go to great lengths to piece things together.” Perhaps the retention periods of such records should be reviewed.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/13/oval-four-could-have-decades-long-convictions-overturned>

Speaking to the *BBC Northern Ireland*, John Stevens, a former head of London’s Metropolitan Police, said he became aware of some undisclosed documents after conducting three inquiries into allegations of security force collusion with loyalist paramilitaries during the Northern Ireland “Troubles.” Stevens said his investigating team held “something like a million documents — tons and tons of paper;” however, “there was a large cache of intelligence and documentation elsewhere in Derbyshire which we had never seen. No one has ever told us about it.” <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/large-cache-of-troubles-files-kept-hidden-from-legacy-inquiries-1.4059062>

United States. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data, the number of migrants taken into custody along the southern U.S. border reached nearly a million persons during the year ending 30 September, *US News* reported. This was up 88% from 2018. <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2019-10-08/nearly-1-million-migrants-taken-into-custody-in-last-12-months>

Under a Federal court order, the Justice Department acknowledged that the government separated 1,556 immigrant parents and children from each other between June 2018 and June 2019, in addition to more than 2,700 children already known to have been separated. The Justice Department told the court that “most” of the separated children have been released to parents or guardians. The former Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security told *PBS Newshour* that she regretted “that information flow and coordination to quickly reunite the families was clearly not in place;” in other words, a fundamental breakdown in recordkeeping. <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-calls-new-trump-administration-family-separation-numbers-shocking>; <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/kirstjen-nielsen-on-what-she-regrets-about-her-tenure-at-dhs>

A Federal court said two nationwide groups of immigrants could bring class-action lawsuits. The immigrants claim that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement “have a systemic pattern and practice of failing to provide access to immigration case records within deadlines set by the Freedom of Information Act,” *newsamericas* reported. “The case records, known as A-files, contain information about individuals’ immigration history in the United States. This is the first time a court has certified a class in a lawsuit alleging a pattern and practice of violating FOIA.” The files “are critical to assessing immigration options in the United States and defending against deportation.” At the end of September 2018 USCIS said it had a backlog of 41,320 pending requests. <http://www.newsamericasnow.com/judge-grants-class-action-status-to-immigrants-waiting-access-to-immigration-records/>

“The Trump administration is moving to collect DNA samples from hundreds of people booked into federal immigration custody each year and to enter the results into a national criminal database” maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the *New York Times* reported. The database, “known as CODIS, the Combined DNA Index System, is used by state and law enforcement authorities to help identify criminal suspects.” www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/us/dna-testing-immigrants.html

In 2014 a Chicago police officer killed Laquan McDonald, a black teenager. The report of an 2016 internal city investigation into the murder was released in October; it shows that “at least 16 Chicago police officers worked together to conceal or downplay their colleague’s murder” and the cover-up included “falsified police statements, the improper disposal of eyewitness statements, and a culture of silence,” *VICE News* reported. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xwe784/heres-how-chicago-cops-really-covered-up-the-murder-of-laquan-mcdonald

The electronic patient portal FollowMyHealth.com, marketed by the corporation Allscripts and used by George Washington University Hospital and other institutions, reserves the right to use “personal health record” data for “marketing and advertising purposes, including sending you marketing and advertising communications whether on our behalf or on behalf of marketing partners.” A columnist for the *Washington Post* concluded, “Yes, you should be suspicious of health portals, even if your doctor uses them.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/10/22/help-desk-can-your-medical-records-become-marketing-we-investigate-readers-suspicious-patient-portal/?utm_campaign=e3979557de-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_source=STAT%20Newsletters#click=https://t.co/fZ4H0wGYUz

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued the annual overview of trends in “key health indicators.” Among them: the infant mortality rate was 14% lower in 2017 than in 2007; the use of e-cigarettes by high school students increased by nearly 20% and the use of tobacco cigarettes decreased; and the proportion of Americans taking five or more prescription drugs nearly doubled between 1999-2016. <chrome-extension://mhjfbmdgcfjbbpaeojofohoeqgiehjai/index.html>

CDC released data from the National Vital Statistics System Mortality Files linked with death certificates showing that nearly 40% of the U.S. overdose deaths in 2017 were due to the opioid drug Fentanyl, followed by heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_12-508.pdf?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=e8bc16bb3e-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-e8bc16bb3e-149736437

Using the Freedom of Information Act, *McClatchy* obtained administrative cancer-treatment billings data from the Veterans Health Administration for all ICD cancer diagnosis codes from fiscal years 2000 through 2018. (ICD is the International Classification of Disease code, a diagnosis code set by the World Health Organization.) “Veterans saw a spike in urinary, prostate, liver and blood cancers during nearly two decades of war, and some military families now question whether their exposure to toxic environments is to blame.” https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/national/national-security/article236413328.html?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=0952e1e5ec-MR_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-0952e1e5ec-149736437

A study of 50,000 patient records from a major U.S. hospital (not further identified) which used an algorithm to identify patients with the most complex health needs found that using the algorithm “to help select patients for extra care favored white patients over black patients with the same health burden,” *Wired* reported. The software was designed to predict future costs; although it had “reasonable accuracy for both black patients and white patients,” because “black people tend to have lower incomes than white people, an algorithm concerned only with costs sees them as lower risk than white patients with similar medical conditions.” This shows “how even putatively race-neutral formulas can still have discriminatory effects when they lean on data that reflects inequalities in society.” <https://www.wired.com/story/how-algorithm-favored-whites-over-blacks-health-care/>

The director of the Missouri state health department admitted at a state hearing that he kept “a spreadsheet that monitored the menstrual periods of Planned Parenthood patients,” *NBC News* reported. He said “he directed the state’s main investigator to compile a list of patients using accessible medical records” in order to “identify patients who had had ‘failed medical abortions’.” https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/ncna1073701?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=d5a8303d0d-MR_COPY_12&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-d5a8303d0d-149736437

The *Washington Post* reported on two new books, both of which “draw on years of painstaking scrutiny of archival records” that the University of Virginia “made available as part of its ongoing attempt to grapple with its slaveholding past.” Both books show that “throughout the first half of the 19th century, male students studying at Southern universities regularly mistreated, beat and raped the enslaved men, women and children who catered to their everyday needs.” <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/slavery-america-university-virginia-south-jefferson-alan-taylor-mcinnis-history-a9145956.html>

Venezuela. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued its judgment in the case of *Alvarez Ramos v. Venezuela*. It held Venezuela “responsible for the violation of the rights of freedom of expression, to participate in government, freedom of movement, judicial guarantees and judicial protection.” In 2003 Alvarez Ramos published an article in a newspaper revealing alleged irregularities in financial operations of a government credit union, for which he was put in prison, his political rights were taken, and prohibited

from leaving the country. The Court ordered, among other remedies, that the state must invalidate the sentence and the criminal records of it. http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/comunicados/cp_48_19_eng.pdf

Publications. The International Committee of the Red Cross issued a Biometrics Policy to facilitate the responsible use of biometrics and address the associated data protection challenges: <https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2019/10/18/innovation-protection-icrc-biometrics-policy/>

Linking climate change to human rights and legal action: <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/other/42589-Christel-Cournil-time-link-climate-issue-human-rights.html>

Technology companies need to assess how their products can be used for abuse: <https://www.wired.com/story/abusability-testing-ashkan-soltani/>

The serious impact of “deepfake” videos: <https://storage.googleapis.com/deeprace-public/Deeprace-the-State-of-Deepfakes-2019.pdf>

Political uses of World War II history in Russia and China: <http://www.theasanforum.org/who-controls-the-past-controls-the-future-the-political-use-of-wwii-history-in-russia-china/?emci=aa46fed9-06d3-e911-bcd0-2818784d4349&emdi=e3c647a0-6eeb-e911-b5e9-2818784d6d68&ceid=29308&dat=>

Documenting the Syrian war: documents, yes, but will anyone be held accountable? <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/614496/technology-exposed-syrian-war-crimes-over-and-over-was-it-for-nothing/>

The ethical issues of collecting genetic data from vulnerable populations: <https://undark.org/article/vulnerable-populations-ethics-genetic-data-collection/>

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