

ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS
News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights
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Commentary

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 (1): *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

“Circumstances” are beyond control around the world, as COVID-19 continues to rage. To regain control we need data, created as data or extracted from textual or cartographic or audiovisual records and evaluated statistically. As Paul Brodeur, a U.S. science reporter, wrote, “Statistics are human beings with the tears wiped off.” The underlying records are full of tears.

The World Health Organization’s Regional Office for the Western Pacific published a very helpful “Medical Records Manual: A Guide for Developing Countries,” and one on electronic health records. It emphasizes that medical records are essential for a patient’s present and future care but also for “the management and planning of health care facilities and services, for medical research and the production of health care statistics.” How each country compiles the statistics varies and to whom the data are made available varies, too. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/208125> ; <https://book.ok.cc/book/1126572/864b5e>

As the nature of the COVID-19 spread became apparent, the head of the World Health Organization said to the WHO Executive Board, “Firstly, all member states need to share detailed information of the outbreak as part of their responsibilities under the International Health Regulations (IHR).” WHO collects health data from countries worldwide to make projections and analyses. It has tried to harmonize reporting by creating an *International Classification of Diseases* (ICD-11) which is “used to code and classify mortality data from death certificates” and a number of supplements, including the *International Classification of Diseases, Clinical Modification*, used “to code and classify morbidity data from the inpatient and outpatient records, physician offices” as well as for surveys and research. Around the world, countries are collecting and sending data on corona cases to WHO, which publishes a daily update. But there are difficulties with the data. Partly it is a coding question; while there may be cases of deliberate under-reporting (see China below) or difficulties of communication, at least some of the problem is misidentification of cases of COVID-19 as pneumonia or another illness. And yet the data is all researchers have for epidemiological research to find cures and vaccines and all administrators have for health-management purposes. (For a comparison of three main sources of data on COVID-19 deaths, see <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-sources-comparison>.) http://www.china.org.cn/world/2020-02/05/content_75675069.htm; https://icd.who.int/browse10/Content/statichtml/ICD10Volume2_en_2016.pdf

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, herself a doctor, warned on 6 March, ““COVID-19 is a test for our societies, and we are all learning and adapting as we respond to the virus. Human dignity and rights need to be front and centre in that effort, not as afterthought.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25668&LangID=E> Many human rights organizations are concerned about the widespread use of the data being generated by the COVID-19 crisis, both as a danger to privacy and an excuse for dictatorial powers to impose restrictions on essential freedoms.

*European Digital Rights, an association of civil and human rights organizations across Europe, on 20 March called “on the Member States and institutions of the European Union to ensure that, while developing public health measures to tackle COVID-19, they: Strictly uphold fundamental rights; Protect data for now and the future; Limit the purpose of data for COVID-19 crisis only; Implement

exceptional measures for the duration of the crisis only; Condemn racism and discrimination; Defend freedom of expression and information.” <https://edri.org/covid19-edri-coronavirus-fundamentalrights/>

*A coalition of 13 U.S. human rights organizations wrote to all members of the U.S. Congress, “Individuals must retain certain fundamental rights over the data collected from them during or as a result of the crisis, and whatever increased access to personal data is allowed to companies and the government during the emergency should be removed once the emergency has passed.” <https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/Covid-Response-Privacy-Protections-Letter-3-20-with-Signatories.pdf>

*Privacy International announced it is tracking the global response to COVID-19 because, “Tech companies, governments, and international agencies have all announced measures to help contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Some of these measures impose severe restrictions on people’s freedoms, including to their privacy and other human rights. Unprecedented levels of surveillance, data exploitation, and misinformation are being tested across the world.” <https://www.privacyinternational.org/examples/tracking-global-response-covid-19>

* Business and Human Rights Resource Centre created a “Depth Area” on its website to report “the latest news on the implications of the outbreak for business and human rights.” https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/covid-19-coronavirus-outbreak?mc_cid=35a0fc334b&mc_eid=151854dc7e

Each of these groups could point to UDHR Article 29 (2) in support: *In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order, and the general welfare in a democratic society.*

Keeping records is an essential service during this pandemic. The data generated will save us, now and in the future. Perhaps as never before, we recognize recordkeeping is a public good.

International news.

International Criminal Court. The Appeals Chamber ruled that the Prosecutor may open an investigation into allegations of war crimes in Afghanistan that may have been committed by Taliban, Afghanistan, or international forces since May 2003, *The New Humanitarian* reported. For background see *SAHR News* 2019-06. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/05/in-the-news-afghanistan-war-crimes-probe?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=5263674692-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_03_5_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-5263674692-75545741

In the closing statement in the trial of Dominic Ongwen, a commander of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, the prosecution discussed “the questions the defense raised on the quantity, reliability, and credibility of intercepts of LRA radio communications” that were intercepted by three Ugandan security agencies which “kept records of those intercepts,” *International Justice Monitor* reported. The prosecutors had disclosed to the defense 600 cassettes of audio recordings as well as “22,000 pages of material related to the intercepts” including “logbooks of the intercepts from the Uganda People’s Defense Forces, the Internal Security Organization, and the Uganda Police.” <https://www.ijmonitor.org/2020/03/in-closing-statements-prosecutors-say-ongwen-willingly-committed-crimes/>

NATO. On the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, NATO declassified and its archives released three volumes of documents relating to the Treaty negotiations. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174160.htm

United Nations. In a must-read statement, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed for a global ceasefire in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-03-23/secretary-general-appeal-for-global-ceasefire>

The UN released a report on “special measures” for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel and staff members of partner organizations that implement a program or project. The UN now has “an electronic tool (iReport SEA Tracker) that tracks the trajectory of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and improves the presentation of relevant data related to United Nations entities, other than peacekeeping or special political missions.” In 2019 80 allegations were reported against personnel of peacekeeping and special political missions, 95 against other United Nations staff

members, and 164 against personnel of implementing partners. The UN refers the cases to the Member State of the alleged perpetrator for resolution. <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/705>

UN Women. To mark the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Women issued a report taking “an integrated approach to reporting on progress, gaps, and challenges related to the advancement of gender equality and women’s rights.” Using data from the United Nations Statistics Division, UNESCO, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and nongovernmental organizations and academic studies, the report shows both important gains (for example, more girls are in school than ever before, global maternal mortality has fallen by 38% between 2000 and 2017) and work still to be done (among the sad statistics: 18% of women aged 15 to 49 experienced sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months and less than 40% of women who experience violence seek help of any sort). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/womens-rights-in-review>

World/general news.

Business records. The EJAtlas group with nongovernmental organizations MiningWatch Canada, Earthworks, and the Institute of Policy Studies and others developed an interactive map illustrating “conflicts and harms associated with eight mining projects owned by Pan American Silver, from Mexico to Argentina.” Using documentation the groups obtained, the map shows the conflicts at each site, provides details of the project, and has an extensive set of links to reference materials. <https://thecologist.org/2020/mar/04/conflict-and-harm-pan-american-silver>

The nongovernmental organization Mighty Earth issued a report on “labor and environmental sustainability issues at the Firestone Rubber Plantation in Liberia, which is the single largest rubber plantation on the planet.” Mighty Earth reported that there has been “unfair dismissal of union officials and underpaid pensions (the report provides a startling chart of these), environmental degradation of the Farmington River, and serious effects on the communities along the river. The research included interviews with workers, union leaders, members of affected communities and government officials, as well as “where possible, supporting documents and high-resolution photographic evidence.” Firestone Liberia “did engage upon seeing an early draft copy” of the report. http://www.mightyearth.org/wp-content/uploads/Firestone-Liberia-full-report_2-7-20_rev-CURRENT.pdf

The *Guardian* reported that two Brazilian meat companies, JBS (“the world’s biggest meat company”) and Marfrig, are linked to “a farm whose owner is implicated in one of the most brutal Amazonian massacres.” The companies have “committed to not buying from farms involved in illegal deforestation” and an agreement with federal prosecutors “bans farms that have been convicted of involvement in rural conflicts, or that are being investigated.” Using land registry records, satellite images, court records, and “government sanitary records of cattle sales,” *Reporter Brasil* traced cattle sold from one farm to another and “minutes later” sold a JBS meatpacker, a quick sale called “cattle laundering,” which is when “cattle from a farm that has environmental issues sells cattle to a ‘clean’ farm” to “get around monitoring systems because meat companies including JBS do not monitor the ‘indirect suppliers’.” The *Reporter Brasil* investigation “highlights the difficulties that Brazil’s big meat companies have in monitoring their supply chains.” Thanks to Giulia Barrera for the reference. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/03/worlds-biggest-meat-company-linked-to-brutal-massacre-in-amazon?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_E-mail

The *Guardian* also published an article on children under 13 working on farms in Guatemala that supply Starbucks and Nespresso with coffee beans. The U.K.’s Channel 4 *Dispatches* program filmed child labor at seven farms linked to Nespresso and five linked to Starbucks. Both companies said they have “zero tolerance” for child labor and each launched an investigation. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/mar/01/children-work-for-pittance-to-pick-coffee-beans-used-by-starbucks-and-nespresso>

The nongovernmental organization Amazon Watch issued a report on how five U.S. and U.K. financial institutions “are actively contributing to climate change by providing debt and equity financing for crude oil extraction projects in the Amazon.” Replete with data, the research used equity financing data and debt financing data from the Bloomberg Terminal and 4th quarter 2019 data from “Profundo, using the Refinitiv database.” <https://amazonwatch.org/assets/files/2020-investing-in-amazon-crude.pdf>

The Court of Appeal of England and Wales ruled that African Minerals Ltd & ors (AML) is not liable for the unlawful acts of Sierra Leone's Police, including "beatings, shootings, robbery, sexual assault and one death," that took place "during two major outbreaks of unrest and violence connected to [AML]'s iron ore mine," reported *jdsupra*. Although the company provided "money, food, transport, accommodation, etc." to the police, the court agreed with the lower court that "it was necessary for AML to provide material and financial support to the local police force in order to enable them to protect mine personnel and property." The Court of Appeal noted that the lower court judge had "a vast amount of material on which to found his judgement" including a 24 day trial, 67 witnesses, and "written closing submissions of over 400 pages." <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/african-minerals-court-of-appeal-of-82829/>

In 2019 Auguste Mutombo, the executive director of a nongovernmental organization in the Democratic Republic of Congo, "helped facilitate the field research that formed the evidence base" for the lawsuit a group of families launched against Apple, Google, Tesla, Microsoft and Dell, accusing them of being "complicit in the deaths of children in cobalt mines." The *Guardian* reported that "shortly after details of the lawsuit went public, Mutombo received dozens of death threats in person and via telephone and text messages from people who claimed to be members of mining cooperatives." He fled the country, but has now returned "and said he wished to go public to try and force the authorities to protect his family from further threats." For background see *SAHR News* 2019-12. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/10/human-rights-activist-forced-to-flee-drc-over-child-cobalt-mining-lawsuit>

Forbes reported that "Nike, Adidas, Apple, Microsoft and Samsung are among 83 multinationals that have been linked to forced labor by Uighurs in factories across China, according to a new study by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)." The ASPI report says that "since 2017, more than a million Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minorities have disappeared into a vast network of 're-education camps'," but this phase of the "re-education" seems to be ending "as government officials now claim that all 'trainees' have 'graduated'." ASPI said it is "extremely difficult for Uyghurs to refuse or escape these work assignments," which since 2017 has placed them in 27 factories in nine provinces. ASPI used "open-source Chinese-language documents, satellite imagery analysis, academic research and on-the-ground reporting," with data on the companies "based on published supplier lists, media reports, and the factories' claimed suppliers." <https://www.forbes.com/sites/siminamistreanu/2020/03/02/study-links-nike-adidas-and-apple-to-forced-uyghur-labor/#2e237dc1003d> ; <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale>

The leader of a coalition of Amazonian peoples submitted a complaint to the Dutch contact point for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development about the Amsterdam-based oil firm Pluspetrol, alleging that the company "has caused devastating health impacts through oil exploration and drilling in remote parts of Peru's rainforest," the *Guardian* reported. "Multiple studies show the company's dumping practices have resulted in widespread contamination of natural watercourses that contain unsafe levels of chloride and heavy metals," and a 2018 study by Peru's centre for occupational health and environmental protection for health found that more than half the indigenous residents in the area "have blood lead levels that surpass international recommended limits, while a third have levels of arsenic and mercury above the levels" Peru's government recommends. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/12/peruvian-leader-appeals-to-watchdog-over-terrible-harm-caused-by-oil-firm-aurelio-chino-oecd?emci=6e989e3e-8d67-ea11-a94c-00155d03b5dd&emdi=5a88b57a-8d67-ea11-a94c-00155d03b5dd&ceid=4606001>

ProPublica reported that in 2018 the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Texas investigated the opioid dispensing practices of Walmart and felt they were ready to charge the company criminally for allowing its pharmacists to fill "suspicious prescriptions" leading to multiple opioid overdose deaths. However, the case was never brought because on 31 August 2018, the government "informed Walmart that the DOJ [Department of Justice] would decline to prosecute the company, according to a letter from Walmart's lawyer that lays out the chronology of the case." A further attempt to persuade DOJ to prosecute also failed. The article "is based on hundreds of pages of Walmart internal emails and investigative documents, correspondence between the company's attorneys and the Justice Department, and interviews with nine people familiar with the investigation." <https://www.propublica.org/article/walmart-was-almost-charged-criminally-over-opeioids-trump-appointees-killed-the-indictment>

The *Washington Post* filed an investigative report on how the Johnson&Johnson company worked with farmers in Tasmania to grow a “super poppy” that was “particularly rich in opiates.” Using interviews and records from Oklahoma opioid litigation, which was decided in August 2019 with J&J given a fine of over half a billion dollars (it is now on appeal), the *Post* reported that from 2013 to 2015 “Tasmania was harvesting thousands of acres of poppies and the U.S. subsidiary [of J&J] was manufacturing enough oxycodone and hydrocodone—the two most abused prescription opioid drugs—to capture half or more of the U.S. market, according to company documents.” <https://migrate.readersupportednews.org/news-section2/318-66/62087-how-johnson-a-johnson-companies-used-a-super-poppo-to-make-narcotics-for-americas-most-abused-opioid-pills>

Medical records. The U.S. Defense Department’s Joint Pathology Center (JPC) holds “approximately 55 million glass slides, 31 million paraffin embedded tissue blocks, and over 500,000 wet tissue samples that have been collected over the last 100+ years,” JPC wrote in a newly released report. “The tissue specimens in the repository were used to sequence the 1918 influenza virus, which killed more than 40 million people worldwide. The resulting research ultimately provided guidance for avoiding future influenza outbreaks.” It hopes to digitize this vast collection because “the physical repository degrades every day, with lives lost that might have been saved with the information in the repository.” JPC is seeking a private sector partner for the work with the “aim to ensure that all physical glass slides have been replicated in digital format with associated relevant medical records, with ethical and secure handling of personal health information . . . and a data lake . . . accessible to approved parties.” <https://sociable.co/technology/pentagon-plans-to-digitize-the-largest-repository-of-disease-related-medical-data-in-the-world/>

On 1 August 1962 U.S. President John F. Kennedy sent out a highly unusual warning: women should not take the drug thalidomide, which was linked to babies born with severe defects whose mothers had taken the drug during pregnancy. As the world of research races to find a vaccine and a cure for COVID-19, the *New York Times* published a long article, based on more than 1300 pages of records of the U.S. Food and Drug Agency, that show how in a rush to test an unauthorized drug, “as many as 20,000 Americans were given thalidomide in the 1950s and 1960s as part of two clinical trials,” which the *Times* characterized as “slapdash.” The drug was not approved and the two companies were not prosecuted in the U.S. Thalidomide was developed in Germany but marketed worldwide, and legal actions on behalf of those affected by the drug have been successful in countries including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, but not in the U.S. <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/174721>

Researchers used data from 2010-2016 death certificates from the Ministry of Health in Kuwait on more than 15,000 cardiovascular-related deaths and compared them to records of the 24-hour average ambient temperatures across the country. They found that days with more extreme temperatures (greater than 109 degrees F/42.8C) had three times the rate of cardiovascular death than days when the temperature was less than 94.5 F/34.7C. Men and persons between the ages of 15-64 were most affected. In their article in the American Heart Association journal, the researchers wrote, “Should emissions of greenhouse gases continue at the present rate, the projected temperatures in the Arabian Peninsula will exceed the threshold of human adaptability by the end of this century.” https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.119.044860?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=02a9281e42-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-02a9281e42-149736437

A U.S. study of the mental health of transgender adults found that “those with gender-affirming IDs had a lower prevalence of serious psychological distress, suicidal ideas and suicide planning,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The study used data from a 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality, with 27,715 participants. These findings confirm the 2018 report of the United Nations Independent Expert on the protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity that “bureaucratic and formalistic approaches exacerbate the risk of violence and discrimination, notably when the name and sex or gender details in official documents do not match trans persons’ appearance.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20200317213534-wmy8c/>; [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(20\)30032-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(20)30032-3/fulltext); <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gashc4243.doc.htm>

Migration. Physicians for Human Rights issued a report on the “persistent psychological effects of family separation” of asylum seekers at the U.S.- Mexico border. They evaluated 17 adults and 9 children who had been separated for an average of 60-69 days; all but one child had been reunited. “PHR clinicians chronicled that nearly everyone interviewed exhibited symptoms and behaviors

consistent with trauma and its effects” and needs “further intervention and ongoing therapeutic support.” PHR said the “policy of family separation constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and, in all cases evaluated by PHR experts, rises to the level of torture.” <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/you-will-never-see-your-child-again-the-persistent-psychological-effects-of-family-separation/>

Privacy. In 2017 Spain’s Data Protection Agency ruled that Google must remove from its search engine the links to articles about a case in which a man was tried and cleared of three counts of sexual abuse. Google appealed, and Spain’s National Court has now ruled that it does not have to block the links but said the “search engine must show stories about his acquittal first,” reported *AFP*. <https://www.businessinsider.com.sg/technology/google-told-to-show-acquittal-first-in-spain-right-to-be-forgotten-appeal>

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) published a survey by its affiliates across Europe that found the implementation of GDPR [General Data Protection Regulation] in EU member states shows “a worrying new trend of employers abusing the law to deny trade unions their right to contact workers at work.” The report includes country case studies, which show that both companies and governments are refusing to provide information on names and contact data of employees. An ETUC official said, “The GDPR laws were put in place to protect people from the power of corporations but now corporations are misusing them to protect themselves from people power.” <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/gdpr-being-misused-employers-hinder-trade-unions>

Privacy International, a nongovernmental organization, issued a report saying “2020 is a crucial year to fight for data protection in Africa.” It noted, “As Africa is a testing ground for technologies produced elsewhere in the world, from North America to Korea, the EU or China, personal data of its people are increasingly stored in hundreds of databases.” It identified “four hot topics that will shape the ‘scramble for Africans data’ in the coming year”: data protection legislation, biometric voting systems, biometric ID schemes and national identification numbers, and the “aggressive entrepreneurs’ push on governments to access people’s personal data.” <https://privacyinternational.org/long-read/3390/2020-crucial-year-fight-data-protection-africa>

The International Council on Archives and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions issued a joint statement on privacy legislation. The statement “aims to set out core principles for advocacy around data protection laws by libraries, archives and their associations.” <https://www.ica.org/en/ifla-ica-statement-on-privacy-legislation-and-archiving>

Slavery. Walk Free, a nongovernmental organization, interviewed “law enforcement officers, victim support workers, policy and advocacy stakeholders, and [persons] working in the education and training industry” in eight countries in the Pacific region (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands Tonga, and Vanuatu). In all the countries “at least one, but often several forms of modern slavery were identified, including forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and forced marriage.” Walk Free warned, “The vulnerabilities are likely to increase as climate change exacerbates poverty and migration.” <https://www.minderoo.org/walk-free/news/perfect-storm-of-conditions-for-modern-slavery-in-the-pacific/>

World War II. The Simon Wiesenthal Centre announced that an historian gave it a copy of a list of “some 12,000 names of Nazis in Argentina, many of whom had contributed to one or more bank accounts at the Schweizerische Kreditanstalt, which became the Credit Swiss bank, based in Zurich, Switzerland.” In 1938 the Argentine government created a Special Commission to Research Anti-Argentine Activities; it seized the records of a German organization in Buenos Aires and between 1941 and 1943 the Chamber of Deputies (the lower body of the Congress) “studied and printed a report that included Nazi bank transfers from Argentina to Switzerland.” The Centre wrote to Credit Suisse requesting access to its archives to help determine if “these dormant accounts hold monies looted from Jewish victims, under the Nuremberg Aryanization laws of the 1930s.” The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has a copy of the list; it was obtained from Argentina’s Chamber of Deputies and must be viewed onsite. Thanks to Giulia Barrera and Henry Mayer for the information. <http://www.wiesenthal.com/about/news/wiesenthal-center-argentina-nazi.html> ; [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51751272?xtor=ES-213-\[BBC%20News%20Newsletter\]-2020March5-\[top+news+stories\]](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51751272?xtor=ES-213-[BBC%20News%20Newsletter]-2020March5-[top+news+stories]) ; <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn105654>

Marking the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, the Belgian Ministry of Defense transferred more than 120,000 files of armed resistance fighters to the General Archives where they are now available for research. <http://www.arch.be/index.php?l=fr&m=actualites&r=toutes-les-actualites&a=2020-03-04-plus-de-120.000-dossiers-de-resistants-armes-de-la-seconde-guerre-mondiale-desormais-accessibles-aux-archives-generales-du-royaume>

DW published an article on the “tens of thousands” of children from Poland and the occupied parts of the Soviet Union who were kidnapped by Nazis during the war. The younger went to SS families for adoption and the older ones to a children’s home to become “Germanized” with new names and German language. The program was administered by the SS association Lebensborn whose records were destroyed after the war “when the association was classified as a charitable organization in the Nuremberg post-war trials.” A book on the Polish children was published in Polish in 2018 and in German this February; a film on the children has also been released. https://www.dw.com/en/the-children-the-nazis-stole-in-poland-forgotten-victims/a-52739589?maca=en-newsletter_en_bulletin-2097-xml-newsletter&r=6716242634607745&lid=1423445&pm_in=14733

In the Czech Republic the director of the Lidice museum was forced to resign because she “failed to contradict” the work of an historian who wrote that before the Nazis razed Lidice in retaliation for the Czech assassination in 1942 of SS deputy leader Reinhard Heydrich, a Jewish woman who was in hiding was betrayed, handed to the Gestapo and died at Auschwitz. The historian said the “details of her arrest were discovered in a chronicle written shortly after the war by the arresting police officer” and he has “the original official documents that were approved and verified” by the policeman’s superiors, the *Guardian* reported. The former director said, “[T]he problem is that the narrative of Lidice is no longer as crystal clear as they want. It spoils the pure-victim status.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/14/lidice-czech-village-razed-by-hitler-truth-history-row>

The Auschwitz Museum announced that it received a collection of documents about the Lados group from a private owner in Israel. The group, based in Switzerland, manufactured illegal passports of Paraguay, Honduras, Haiti and Peru for Jews to use to escape Europe. The newly obtained material “documents the work of the leader of the ultra-Orthodox Agudath Yisrael group”; it includes photographs of 83 Jews. <http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/the-auschwitz-museum-acquires-the-second-part-of-the-archive-concerning-the-lados-group.1414.html>

A U.S. immigration court ordered Friedrich Karl Berger deported because he had served as a guard both at a Neuengamme concentration camp’s subcamp and during the forced march of prisoners at the end of March 1945 when at least 70 prisoners died. The *New York Times* interviewed one of the prosecuting lawyers, who said the Justice Department “received important investigative help from law enforcement and archival authorities in Germany, England, Denmark, Poland and Russia.” But the most unusual piece of evidence came from a shipwreck: Berger’s name appeared in a set of cards identifying the guards in the Neuengamme system along with their basic service information. “The cards were found amid skeletons and other wreckage in the Thielbek, one of three German ships that were carrying thousands of prisoners when they were bombed by the British Royal Air Force in the bay of Lubeck in 1945. In about 1950 . . . the Thielbek was raised from the sea and the cards were recovered and transcribed.” www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/us/friedrich-karl-berger-nazi-concentration-camp.html

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Central America. *The New Humanitarian* combined UN population data and conflict fatalities with the latest figures from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) to determine the violent deaths of civilians in conflict situations. This year Latin American and Caribbean countries were added to ACLED’s database, adding “over 40,000 records” including “map coordinates, references to source material, and names of organizations—now including 170 gang names—involved in the events it tracks.” Syria was by far the most dangerous place in the world for civilians, but three Central American countries—El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico—were in the top 12, mainly because of gang activity. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/maps-and-graphics/2020/02/28/gang-killings-violence-El-Salvador>

China/Ethiopia. For an example of the importance of preserving the materials journalists obtain and create as they work, see this story by a *VICE* journalist who walked to the Mursi tribal area in Ethiopia’s Omo Valley to document the Mursis’ assertions that the government is taking land from them

on behalf of Chinese sugar companies and imprisoning, disarming and beating them. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bvgaq4/kidnapping-torture-and-stolen-land-the-brutal-reality-of-ethiopias-new-sugar-wars

El Salvador/United States. “The Investigating Judge of San Francisco Gotera, Jorge Guzmán Urquilla, asked the Secretary of State of the United States, Mike Pompeo, for all the documents that that country has not yet revealed about the El Mozote massacre and about the military officers accused in the case,” *El Faro* reported at the end of February. “The request for information includes, ‘as a minimum, any document found in the Department of Defense, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or other defense or intelligence agencies’.” The judge sent the letter on 27 January; the press has not reported an answer. The request is particularly important because the El Salvador Army continues to say that files on the massacre do not exist.

https://elfaro.net/es/202002/el_salvador/24058/Juez-de-El-Mozote-pide-a-Estados-Unidos-los-archivos-confidenciales-de-la-masacre.htm

Finland/Liberia/Sierra Leone. Finland arrested Gibril Massaquoi, a former member of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, charging him with committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Liberia between 1999 and 2003, the *Daily Observer* reported. A press release from the nongovernmental organization Civitas Maxima said, “As part of their regular investigation and documentation efforts, Civitas Maxima and its Liberian sister organization—GJRP—found evidence” and gave that information to authorities in Finland, where Massaquoi was living.

<https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/sierra-leone-rebel-official-arrested-in-finland-over-war-crimes-in-liberia/>

France/Burkina Faso. France authorized the extradition of Francois Compaore, the brother of former President Blaise Compaore, who was arrested in Paris in 2017 on an international arrest warrant charging him with involvement in the 1998 murder of journalist Norbert Zongo. When French President Macron visited Burkina Faso in November 2017 he promised to hand over all the archives that France has on the murder. For background, see *HRWG News* 2017-12. <https://www.thomassankara.net/communique-de-presse-francois-compaore-doit-maintenant-etre-incarcere/?lang=en>

Germany/IS/Syria. Germany charged Omaima Abdi, the former wife of two German Islamic State leaders, with crimes against humanity, reported *Kurdistan 24*. She had returned to Germany from Syria with her children in 2016. In April 2019 two investigative reporters, who had found Abdi’s phone in Syria, published a story about her on *Al Aan TV* and on Twitter. “The mobile had thousands of pictures with incriminating evidence, showing Abdi with guns, her child with a weapon, and her marriage” as well as “addresses in Hamburg, Germany.” German police took up the case and made the arrest.

<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/ffe73a6c-e372-492c-9c18-59f8a5809a00>

Guatemala/United States. The U.S. deported former Guatemalan special forces soldier Gilberto Jordan after he served a 10-year sentence for lying on citizenship forms about his participation in the Dos Erres massacre in December 1982, *International Justice Monitor* reported. When he arrived in Guatemala he was arrested on charges related to the massacre. <https://www.ijmonitor.org/2020/03/ex-kaibil-who-admitted-to-killing-in-dos-erres-massacre-deported-to-guatemala/>

Indonesia/Netherlands. A court in The Hague ordered the Netherlands to pay compensation to victims of colonial massacres in Indonesia in the 1940s, the *Guardian* reported. The twelve plaintiffs were the widows and children of men “killed by [Dutch] soldiers in the Indonesian province of South Sulawesi between December 1946 and April 1947.” One man was awarded 10,000 euros, but the rest were awarded between 123 and 3,634 euros; the “court recognized in its ruling that the sums granted the relatives of victims were ‘disproportionate’ to the suffering caused.” And it does not compensate the many other families who lost members during the conflict. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/27/hague-court-orders-dutch-state-to-pay-out-over-colonial-massacres>

Mideast war. Human Rights Watch wrote to the Minister of Defence of Australia, urging her to “ensure that the government conduct full and impartial investigations into all allegations that SAS [Special Air Service Regiment] forces carried out summary executions and other possible crimes against Afghan civilians and combatants, and that you re-examine cases previously dismissed for which there is now new evidence of possible criminal acts.” HRW said new video footage and witness testimonies exist. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/200320_hrw_australia_defence_letter.pdf

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic presented the findings of its investigations from 11 July 2019 to 10 January 2020. The report is based “on 233 interviews conducted in the region and from Geneva,” as well as satellite imagery, photographs, videos, medical records, and communications from Governments and non-governmental organizations. “The Commission verified unlawful attacks in Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘man, Marat al-Harma, Janudiyah village (Jisr al-Shughur), a medical point located near Al-Khasra, and Al-Bara.” It used as examples air strikes on a marketplace at Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘man and a “compound for displaced civilians located approximately 2 km from Haas” and concluded: “Based on the evidence available, including witness testimonies, video footage, data imagery as well as reports by flight spotters, flight communication intercepts and early warning observation reports, the Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that a Russian aircraft participated in each incident described above. In both incidents, the Russian Air Force did not direct the attacks at a specific military objective, amounting to the war crime of launching indiscriminate attacks in civilian areas.” The Commission also reported on several airstrikes that killed civilians that it believes were carried out by Turkish forces. “The Turkish authorities have either denied involvement in or indicated that they have no record of these incidents . . . The Commission continues to investigate these incidents, and calls on the Turkish authorities to launch its own investigations and make the findings public.” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=25638&LangID=E>”

The nongovernmental Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issued a report on “widespread looting by Syrian and Iranian regime forces in and around Idlib” in “nearly 30 areas since April 2019 to date, which constitutes a war crime.” The report includes some remarkable photographs of public sales of looted goods, including by men in military uniforms. It urges the Independent International Commission of Inquiry to “document the widespread looting by Syrian Regime forces in cooperation with Iranian militias” and “issue a special report or statement condemning these operations and clarifying their risk to the return of IDPs [internally displaced persons] and refugees.” <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2020/03/31/54831/>

The nongovernmental Syria Justice and Accountability Center issued a report, “State of Justice in Syria 2020.” Among the highlighted developments is: “Syrian groups are facing growing challenges in their efforts to document violations. As the government continues to reclaim territory, conducting interviews and obtaining documentation within Syria is becoming increasingly dangerous. For Syrian groups seeking to preserve digital evidence from social media, automated removals by Facebook and YouTube continue to erase important evidence of violations in the Syrian conflict.” https://syriaaccountability.org/library/the-state-of-justice-in-syria-2020/?utm_source=SJAC+Weekly+Update&utm_campaign=6ebe737e05-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_01_10_02_56_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0a7405c641-6ebe737e05-90540617

Human Rights Watch said Saudi forces and their pro-Saudi Yemeni allies torture detainees, “disappear” some, and transferred at least 5 to Saudi Arabia. The statement is based on interviews, photos, and “a document signed by the Yemeni government’s ‘secretary-general for political security’ for al-Mahrah [governorate] about the detention of a person in al-Ghaydah airport and a short video in which a badly bruised man describes being arbitrarily detained and tortured at the airport prison.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/25/yemen-saudi-forces-torture-disappear-yemenis>

Physicians for Human Rights, in cooperation with Mwatana for Human Rights, issued a research report on “attacks on medical facilities and personnel by parties to the Yemen conflict that took place between March 2015 and December 2018.” The report is based “primarily” on testimonies of witnesses and survivors, who reported 120 attacks. Robustly preserving these interviews is essential for a future accounting of the violations. <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/i-ripped-the-iv-out-of-my-arm-and-started-running-attacks-on-health-care-in-yemen/>

National news.

Argentina. The appeals court in Resistencia, the capital of the province of Formosa, confirmed the lower court ruling that the National Police and the Air Force committed a massacre of members of indigenous communities on 10 October 1947 in the La Bomba area, known as the Pilaga massacre in Las Lomitas. At the request of the Federation of Indigenous Communities of the Pilaga People, the appeals court went further and ordered that “the claim of the Pilaga community that the genocide

suffered by its people be recognized.” The court did not grant a claim for individual compensation for the families of the victims. The Asociacion de Archivistas en las Funcion Publica Argentina hailed the decision, issuing a message saying, “Until a few years ago, both the national and provincial institutions denied that the events the Pilaga people remembered had ever happened. There were no documents, there were no records of the actions of the police. It was in the recovery and public access to the archives of the Ministry of the Interior, its secret, confidential and reserved files” that a documentary filmmaker found the reports of the genocide and used them in a film. “It was the archives—identified, classified, described and made available by archivists convinced of the social function and political role that is our responsibility—which was able to provide those official records that revealed the concealment of the [government] actions.” Thanks to Mariana Nazar for the information. http://www.elcomercial.com.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=283539:la-camara-federal-considero-como-un-genocidio-la-matanza-de-rincon-bomba&catid=9:edicion-digital&Itemid=65

Bolivia. In November 2019 the military confronted a group of protesters in Senkata, who were protesting the coup d’etat that removed Evo Morales from the presidency; 36 people died, and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission said this qualified as a massacre. The Bolivian Legislative Commission announced that it will investigate the Senkata and related Sendaba events; the president of the Commission said “the inquiring process would not be a simple data collection” and that “the first action in the process is to hold audiences with the affected citizens and register oral and written testimonies,” *teleSUR* reported. Data collection is never simple. https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/bolivia-senkata-and-sencaba-events-under-investigation-20200319-0006.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=8

Brazil. The government issued an ordinance creating “a special procedure to expedite the issue of visas to migrants subject to trafficking and violent crimes like domestic abuse,” *Reuters* reported. The visa will authorize the migrant to work legally in Brazil. However, to get a visa the applicant first must “provide an official document with a photograph” and be “recognized as a victim by government authorities” who will take “into account if the victims cooperate with efforts to catch their abusers.” A representative of Caritas, a nongovernmental organization that helps migrants, said she questioned the requirement for cooperation with criminal investigations and the requirement for an official document “given that traffickers often take identification documents away from their captives.” She went on to say, “We will have to assemble a whole support system to help these migrants obtain their documentation.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20200324195919-3j8pr/>

Cameroon. A 14 February attack on Ngarbah village “left at least 21 civilians dead, including 13 children and one pregnant woman, according to more than a dozen eyewitness survivors who spoke to *The New Humanitarian* on the ground shortly after the incident. Government forces and an ethnic Fulani militia were to blame, the survivors said.” The army spokesperson said, “The military were there for security operations, and they had information about the headquarters of terrorist secessionists [being in the village].” Reflecting on the importance of data, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ representative stationed in northwest Cameroon said, “It is highly suspicious that in almost all incidents, the vast majority [of cases] are deaths rather than injuries, leading one to assume [it’s] more of an execution-style being perpetrated.” https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/03/Cameroon-Ambazonia-Ngarbuh-massacre?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=5263674692-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_03_5_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-5263674692-75545741

Canada. Using the Access to Information Act, *The Canadian Press* obtained memos from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to the public safety minister in July 2019 requesting him to approve access to “proposed classes of datasets” (the details about the classes of data were redacted). The memo said, “Data analytics is a key investigative tool for the Service, providing CSIS with the capacity to make connections and identify trends that is not otherwise possible through traditional methods of investigation.” The Ottawa-based International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group called for more information about the datasets of interest, warning the “eligible datasets should be limited to information that is demonstrably linked to a threat to Canadian security, not data that is simply likely to help CSIS identify eventual threats.” <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/canada-s-spy-service-moves-quietly-ahead-with-data-crunching-plans-documents-1.4874548>

China. Human Rights Watch issued a 91-page report, “China’s ‘Bilingual Education’ Policy in Tibet: Tibetan-Medium Schooling Under Threat.” It “highlights compulsory ‘bilingual’ kindergartens that immerse Tibetan children in Chinese language and state propaganda from age 3, in the name of ‘strengthening the unit of nationalities.’” The report is based on “in-depth interviews with Tibetan schoolteachers, academics, and former officials, and includes translations of recent petitions by Tibetans and debates on language rights and education.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/05/china-tibetan-children-denied-mother-tongue-classes>

After the SARS epidemic in 2002, China created an infectious disease reporting system: “Hospitals could input patients’ details into a computer and instantly notify government health authorities in Beijing,” the *New York Times* reported. But in the COVID-19 outbreak it didn’t work because “hospitals deferred to local health officials who, over a political aversion to sharing bad news, withheld information about cases from the national reporting system—keeping Beijing in the dark and delaying the response. The central health authorities first learned about the outbreak not from the reporting system but after unknown whistle-blowers leaked two internal documents online.” <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/2020/03/31/fail-safe-system-to-track-contagions-failed/>

Colombia. “The Colombian National Police, in a number of instances, abused the mostly peaceful demonstrators protesting throughout the country in late 2019,” including beatings, “improper” use of weapons, and arbitrary detention, Human Rights Watch said. HRW based its report on interviews, videos published on social media, medical reports, criminal complaints, and information from government offices. On 22 January the Attorney General said the office was investigating 72 cases of possible abuse by police officers; the Defense Ministry on 3 March said it was conducting 32 investigations, the National Police had opened 44 disciplinary investigations, and the Inspector-General’s Office was conducting 4 disciplinary investigations. As of 10 March no charges had been brought, and HRW noted that the Inter-American Court on Human Rights has ruled that “military criminal jurisdiction is not the competent jurisdiction to investigate and if applicable, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of human rights violations.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/10/colombia-abuses-amid-massive-demonstrations#>

Justiceinfo.net published an overview of three transitional justice situations. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission by the end of 2019 “had listened to 5,243 victims . . . in the form of individual interviews, collective testimony and hearings.” The Center for Historical Memory has been “caught in political turmoil,” having made a “questionable” decision “to close the door on research on crimes perpetrated by paramilitaries or state actors such as the army or the police, while it promotes a whole sub-theme on crimes committed by . . . guerrillas.” The Center announced it will work with the largest association of cattle breeders to recognize “the memory of the victims in the Colombian countryside,” controversial because rural entrepreneurs were both victims and perpetrators of violence. And although the president did not attend the inauguration of sculptures in Bogota and at the United Nations in New York made of weapons and bullets handed in by the FARC guerrillas, he did lay the foundation stone for the future National Museum of Historical Memory in Bogota. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/fr/commissions-verite/44028-lutte-politique-pour-la-verite-et-la-memoire-en-colombie.html>

Germany. The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance issued a report saying “there is strong evidence for extensive racial profiling by German police.” It made 15 recommendations, including “ensure that evidence of online hate speech is preserved and transmitted to the law enforcement authorities” and “establish specialized police and prosecution units that investigate hate crime” in all provinces (which will mean new records-generating units). <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-germany-sixth-monitoring-cycle-16809ce4be> ; <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-must-do-more-to-fight-racism-council-of-europe/a-52803181>

Greece. Using “on-the-ground reporting and forensic analysis of satellite imagery,” the *New York Times* “has confirmed the existence of a secret center in north-eastern Greece” that is detaining migrants “incommunicado” before expelling them to Turkey “without due process.” The *Times* said it also, through the use of “footage supplied to several media outlets,” established that the Greek Coast Guard “fired shots in the direction of migrants aboard a dinghy that was trying to reach Greek shores . . . beat them with sticks and sought to repel them by driving past them at high speed.” Other videos “provided

by witnesses also confirmed the death of at least one person—a Syrian factory worker—after he was shot on the border.” <https://www.365news.com/2020/03/we-are-like-animals-inside-greeces-secret-site-for-migrants/>

India. At a land conference in New Delhi, experts warned that India’s push to “re-survey lands, verify and upgrade records, and put the information online by 2021” raises data privacy issues and could make the poor even “more vulnerable to evictions,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. <https://news.trust.org/item/20200309072201-b31hz/>

The *New York Times* wrote that “more evidence is emerging that the Delhi police, who are under the direct command of Mr. Modi’s government and have very few Muslim officers, concertedly moved against Muslims and at times actively helped the Hindu mobs that rampaged in New Delhi in late February, burning down Muslim homes and targeting Muslim families. Several videos posted online have showed police officers beating and throwing rocks at Muslim protesters and waving on Hindu mobs to join them.”

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/police-in-delhi-accused-of-abetting-hindu-violence-against-muslims-1.4201451>

Iraq. Amnesty International and SITU Research collaborated on a website featuring a three-dimensional reconstruction of deadly incidents captured on video around Baghdad’s Tahrir Square and Jimhouriya Bridge when mass protests erupted in October 2019. Amnesty had collected “citizen documentation that revealed the gruesome deaths of protesters killed by military-grade grenades.” SITU used “commercially-sourced 30cm-resolution satellite imagery and reference photos of the area” to produce the model. “By doing so, Amnesty International and SITU Research, along with other partners, were able to show how the Iraqi security forces deliberately targeted protesters by firing the canisters around head height, with devastating results.” <https://situ.nyc/research/projects/smokescreen-iraqs-use-of-militarygrade-tear-gas-grenades-to-kill-protesters>

Mexico. The Mexican Centre for Environmental Rights (CEMED) issued a report on the violence against land and environment defenders, the *Guardian* reported. Using data from approximately 200 local and national media, combined with information from the cases that the organization follows, CEMED said at least 83 Mexican land and environment defenders were murdered between 2012 and 2019 and hundreds more threatened, harassed or subjected to smear campaigns. “Almost one in three attacks since 2012 targeted defenders opposing energy projects, especially wind and hydroelectric power.” <https://www.cemda.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/informe-personas-defensoras-2019.pdf>

A judge “issued arrest warrants against 5 government officials and a former marine for torture, forced disappearance, and obstruction of justice in the case of the 43 students who were forcefully disappeared in September 2014 in Iguala, Guerrero,” the nongovernmental Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) wrote. Three have been arrested and an Interpol alert is out for one who may have left the country. WOLA also released a commentary on the steps the Mexican government has taken to address the 60,053 cases of disappeared persons. For background, see *SAHR News* 2020-01. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/mexico-arrest-warrants-ayotzinapa/>; <https://www.wola.org/analysis/mexico-disappearances-lopez-obrador/>

Nepal. The Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons released a list of 2,506 persons “who were allegedly made disappeared either by the state security personnel or the rebelling armed party during the decade-long armed conflict, 1996-2006,” *Onlinekhabar* reported. The Commission said the list was based on complaints it received since its establishment in 2015. <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/ciedp-releases-list-of-2506-persons-disappeared-during-conflict.html>

Nicaragua. “The organizations of parents and relatives of convicted prisoners insist that the political and opposition leaders should not put aside the demand for the release of those who are imprisoned for protesting against the regime, especially because most have been ‘criminalized’ by common crimes, making their defense difficult and reducing their visibility,” reported *Confidencial*. Alianza Civica and organizations of family members provided a list of 61 prisoners of conscience which *Confidencial* published after interviewing family members and reviewing documents and print media reports. *Confidencial* found that at least 12 have been in prison for several months, some were convicted and other are still being prosecuted for common crimes that “according to their lawyer, were imposed to prevent them from being released under the Amnesty Law passed in mid-2019.” <https://confidencial.com.ni/los-ultimos-61-presos-politicos-de-la-dictadura-de-daniel-ortega/>

Pakistan. A teenage Pakistani Christian girl was abducted last October and forced to marry a Muslim man, *UCAN* reported. “Her parents filed a petition with Sindh High Court seeking annulment of the marriage under the Child Marriage Restraint Act. The matter was heard on February 3 when two judges caused controversy by observing that the marriage . . . would be considered valid under Islamic Sharia law if she had already had her first menstrual cycle.” The Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act forbids marriage under the age of 18, and the parents had provided a birth certificate, baptismal certificate and testimony from her school showing that she was 14 years old. But the court adjourned, giving the “police more time to determine [her] age.” When it resumed on 19 March, the court was informed that “medical tests of [her] bones” show she is 17 years old. The court did not rule; the parents announced they are taking the case to the Supreme Court. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/06032020-pakistan-parents-angry-after-delay-to-child-bride-case/>; <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/39218>

The government of Islamabad said the city’s land records “will be fully computerized within the next few months,” reported *The Nation* (Pakistan). It promised that the project will “not only make the service delivery efficient but will also empower women by protecting their rights in inheritance and facilitating their access to land records.” <https://nation.com.pk/21-Mar-2020/islamabad-swiftly-moving-towards-land-record-computerisation>

Russia. Konstantin Aranovsky, a judge on Russia’s Constitutional Court, says that the Soviet Union was “an illegally established state” whose authorities bear responsibility for numerous crimes and that the Russian Federation must not be considered the legal successor of the ‘repressive-terrorist acts’ of the USSR,” reported Paul Goble on the *Window on Eurasia* blog. “Russia may compensate victims of the Soviet system, the judge says, but it does so not as a continuation of the USSR but as a new state that is acting mercifully rather than because of legal liability.” In rebuttal, Moscow State University legal scholar Valdimir Tomsinov said people do not know the details of Stalin’s repressive regime “because many of the records from that time are still classified and unavailable even to researchers. Among the most important of these are the 276 volumes concerning the investigation of [Nikolai] Bukharin and the 100 volumes about [Georgi] Malenkov.” <https://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2020/02/constitutional-court-judge-says-russia.html>; https://www.eurasiareview.com/04032020-russia-cant-reject-being-legal-successor-to-the-ussr-without-triggering-disasters-oped/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29

Somaliland. The *Christian Science Monitor* published a story on Jama Musse Jama’s “library and informal national archive” in Hargeisa, the capital of the self-declared republic. He began collecting material in 1991 when a woman selling food gave him “a piece of paper off the ground so that he could wipe the dirt off his hands.” The paper was “the trial records from a famous court case a decade earlier that had sent hundreds of student activists to prison.” He took the rest of the woman’s papers and “wandered the rest of the gutted-out city center, picking up whatever other documents he could find.” <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2020/0311/The-national-archives-built-from-a-crumpled-napkin>

South Africa. “Following an almost six-year long legal fight, The Centre for Applied Legal Studies has received the result of the investigation by the Department of Correctional Services into incidents at the [Bloemfontein] prison while it was controlled by private companies G4S and Bloemfontein Correctional Contracts in 2013,” reported *GroundUp*. It said “inmates were assaulted by staff, forcibly injected with medication, and locked in a cell without a toilet, lighting, windows or ventilation.” It also charges the companies with “failure to keep records” and “falsification of records.” <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/official-report-bloemfontein-prison-reveals-mistreatment-inmates/>

Sweden. The government announced it will set up a second Truth and Reconciliation Commission to “deal with the historical injustices committed against the Swedish national minorities the Tornedalians, the Kvens, and the Lantalaïset,” *The Local* reported. Sweden earlier announced plans for a truth commission “on the historical abuses and ill-treatment of the Sami.” <https://www.thelocal.se/20200213/truth-commission-to-illuminate-swedish-abuse-of-menkieli-minority>

Syria. After the government announced that it had discovered another mass grave, this one in the Duma region, questions were raised “about the issue of mass graves in Syria, the people responsible, the way to reach a mechanism to try these people in the future, as well as the fate of the missing people,” *Enab Baladi* reported. The director of Syrians for Truth and Justice said “testimonies are needed from

dissidents from the regime or opposition factions or any acting party in Syria, as well as testimonies of people who resided in the areas where mass graves were found and whose assertions could constitute crucial evidence about the perpetrators.” He pointed out “it is possible to rely on satellite photos to identify the perpetrators by monitoring the changes in the soil as a result of the excavation and determining its history, which would, in turn, help to collect human rights and legal files for future accounting.” <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2020/03/mass-graves-in-syria-victims-awaiting-trial-of-criminals/>

Taiwan. Ten Taiwanese historians and scholars published a 2-volume “Draft Report on the Truth of the 228 Incident and Transitional Justice.” Sponsored by the Memorial Foundation of 228, the publication “incorporates the latest historical materials we gathered, including government documents that have been declassified over the past two years” and will be submitted to the truth commission for its use, *Focus Taiwan* reported. The “228 Incident” means the clashes between security forces and civilians from February to May 1947 during which between 18,000 and 28,000 people were killed. <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202003080012>

Turkey. The International Crisis Group (ICG) released new data on deaths during Turkey’s “almost four-decade-long conflict with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party.” ICG found the ratio of militants killed per one state security force member “saw an almost four-fold increase since July 2015” and “could confirm the death of 129 seasoned militants since July 2015.” <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkeys-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer>

United Kingdom. The Lord Chancellor announced that “documents signed electronically—even when a statutory requirement for a signature predates the digital age—have legal force in England and Wales.” He also said a working group will be asked “to consider the question of video witnessing of electronic signatures” and to ensure that “allowing electronic signatures does not have any adverse impact, particularly on vulnerable people.” The government also will ask the Law Commission to review the law of deed. <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/law/electronically-signed-deeds-are-legal-lord-chancellor-confirms/5103306.article>

“At least 20,000 applications requesting documents were withheld by the government using a controversial exemption clause in data protection laws, a freedom of information request by *The Independent* found. The exemption . . . allows information to be blocked if it ‘undermines immigration controls’.” More than 45,000 applications for personal information were made to the Home Office (HO) between May 2018 and January 2020, and HO used the exemption on 42.8% of the applications. The denials could prevent people from getting essential proof of their right to live in the U.K. <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/b/thousands-denied-access-information-proving-right-stay-britain>

The *Belfast Telegraph* reported that six files created between 1981 and 1983 “relating to the Kincora Boys’ Home were destroyed between 2010 and 2015, the Northern Ireland Office has said.” In 1980 the public learned that at least 29 boys were sexually abused there. The Home was investigated by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in 2016; a former Kincora resident is suing the government alleging he was abused at Kincora and other institutions. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/kincora-files-destroyed-as-institutional-abuse-inquiry-was-set-in-motion-39059374.html>

United States. A study published in the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology* reported “severe maternal morbidity [disease] and mortality associated with childbirth was twice as high among indigenous women compared with white women,” higher among rural residents compared with urban residents, and highest among rural indigenous residents. The researchers used “2012-2015 maternal hospital discharge data from the National Inpatient Sample,” which is “a 20% stratified sample of all hospital discharges in the United States” maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2020/02000/Severe_Maternal_Morbidity_and_Mortality_Among.8.aspx

A Federal court ordered the Trump administration to conduct a “full environmental review of a controversial segment of the Dakota Access Pipeline,” as requested by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, who argued that the “Army Corps of Engineers violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when it issued permits [to build the pipeline] without conducting adequate environmental reviews.” The court agreed, ruling, “This court ultimately concludes that too many questions remain unanswered. Unrebutted expert critiques regarding leak-detection systems, operator safety records, adverse

conditions, and worst-case discharge mean that the easement approval remains ‘highly controversial’ under NEPA.” <https://news.trust.org/item/20200325202240-ffqhl/>

In 1970 a car bomb killed two black activists, members of the Student Non-Violet Coordinating Committee. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and national media argued that they were carrying a bomb, “intended for use in Black extremist activities,” which detonated, said FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover. An historian who made use of “heretofore classified government material” is urging that the case be reopened, writing, “The declassified files make clear that Hoover and other top officials cared more about protecting the secret operations of the government particularly the existence of the FBI’s COINTELPRO program, whose mission called for ‘neutralizing’ black extremists . . . than getting to the truth of [the] case.” <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/174474>

Publications – Good reads.

United Nations: Global report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/51>

WJP Rule of Law Index 2020: Comparing rule of law trends and practices in 128 countries and jurisdictions worldwide. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/>

Humanitarian Law Center (Belgrade): Report on war crimes trials in Serbia in 2019: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=37339&lang=de>

Video interview with Shari Eppel on exhumation efforts in Zimbabwe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2IL-vPbCdY>

Chemistry World: Fossils suggest possible use of DNA for data storage: [10.1039/d0cc00222d](https://doi.org/10.1039/d0cc00222d)

New York Times: Researcher quit when museum ignored evidence that paintings it held were Nazi-era confiscated property: <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/174659>

Gulah Wandita, *Jakarta Post*: “Truth in the time of corona: International day of right to truth, dignity of victims”: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/03/24/truth-in-the-time-of-corona-international-day-on-right-to-truth-dignity-of-victims.html>

Zara Rahman, *Bot Populi*: “Avoiding the trap of the singular data story: Why we need a justice-oriented approach to data that centres an analysis of power relations”: <https://botpopuli.net/avoiding-the-trap-of-the-singular-data-story>

Katherine Ellison, *Knowable Magazine*: Tracking a pandemic and threats to privacy: <https://www.knowablemagazine.org/article/health-disease/2020/digital-pandemic-tracking>

Aidan Peppin, Ada Lovelace Institute: Concern about government partnerships with the technology sector on health data: <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/data-driven-responses-to-coronavirus-are-only-as-good-as-the-trust-we-place-in-them/>

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