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Commentary.

The auditoriums in modern convention centers look pretty much the same: blond wood, soft chairs, huge screen on the stage, translation booths. The program of the opening session of an international congress is pretty much the same, too: welcome from the host country, opening remarks by the president and distinguished participants, and a cultural presentation by the host country. All that happened at the 2016 Congress of the International Council on Archives (ICA) just concluded in Seoul, South Korea. But there was a significant difference, too. Each of the three sets of remarks—by ICA president David Fricker, by UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information Frank La Rue, and the message to the Congress by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon--noted the importance of archives in support of human rights. Sitting in the audience, one could feel the ICA worldview begin to shift. It was an extraordinary moment.

The Congress included many fine program sessions that related to archives and human rights, encompassing such topics as records of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, World War II Nazi collaborators in Belgium, the truth commission in Canada and the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda, to name only a few. And at the close, the national archivist of Mexico, Mercedes de Vega, announced that one of the emphases of the 2017 annual meeting to be held in Mexico City will be archives and human rights.

The day before the Congress opened, the ICA Programme Commission, the body responsible for ICA's technical and professional program, unanimously endorsed the "Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists and Records Managers in Support of Human Rights" as a "working document for circulation within ICA for discussion, publicity and use." The ICA's Section on Literary and Artistic Archives quickly posted the "Basic Principles" in English, French and Spanish on its blog: <https://literaryartisticarchives-ica.org/2016/09/07/basic-principles-in-support-of-human-rights/> Now all constituent bodies of ICA as well as professional associations of archivists and human rights advocates have the opportunity to discuss, comment on, and endorse the document. From the initial discussions in 2011 on a possible statement on archives and human rights to September 2016 has been a long journey, but the "Basic Principles" statement is finally released.

As we approach the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2018, the international archival community has in the "Basic Principles" a document it can discuss and debate, in the full light of the Declaration and of the difficult history of those seven decades. In 1962 the U.S. novelist and social critic James Baldwin wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced." The archival profession now has clearly faced its role in support of human rights. How we archivists manage our practices and change them if we need to do so is up to us. The "Basic Principles" is a promissory note from the archival profession.

International news.

International Criminal Court. Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi pleaded guilty to charges of destroying ancient cultural artefacts in Timbuktu, *Al Jazeera* reported. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/man-trial-icc-destroying-timbuktu-artefacts-160822100834765.html>

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The ICTY outreach office announced that it will establish information centers in Bosnia at the genocide memorial centre in Potocari (near Srebrenica) and in Sarajevo. The official told *BIRN*, “ICTY information centres are designed in such a way as to ensure direct and safe access to all public files and archive materials contained in online databases for all interested citizens and organizations.” <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/hague-archives-to-be-kept-in-sarajevo-and-srebrenica-soon-08-05-2016>

United Nations. At the beginning of August, a panel of experts monitoring United Nations sanctions on Yemen sent a report to the Security Council saying, “The panel has documented violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by the Houthi-Saleh forces, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and forces affiliated to the legitimate government of Yemen.” *Agence France-Presse* said the “report showed a photograph of a tank parked at Taz University and said it was investigating several reports of civilian sites used as shields.” At the end of the month the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a report on human rights violations between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. It too said that it documented military attacks where the reporters were “unable to identify the presence of possible military objectives.” OHCHR noted that the national commission of inquiry that Yemen established in September 2015 was “unable to implement its mandate in accordance with international standards” and called on “the international community to establish an international, independent body to carry out comprehensive investigations in Yemen.” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/05/un-report-says-saudi-led-coalition-and-houthis-violate-human-rig/> ; <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20411&LangID=E>; <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/ThirteenCivilianCasualtiesadayYemenConflict.aspx>

On August 24 the Secretary-General sent the Security Council the third report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism on the use of chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The panel confirmed a number of specific chlorine and mustard gas attacks in 2014 and 2015, and the information it gathered about chemical weapons and/or toxic chemicals used as weapons between December 2015 and August 2016 “suggests the involvement of both the Government and other actors in these alleged incidents.” The panel noted that it “could not compel the submission of information or documents to it” and the “dire security situation on the ground” affected the information it could collect. It also said it lacked “a chain of custody for some of the material received” and some of the information was “misleading.” The report includes an exemplary Annex on the panel’s methods of work, focusing on the management of its information and the analysis of it. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1626975-1.pdf>

Following a stern report from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, who said that the United Nations needed to acknowledge its responsibility for the cholera epidemic that began in Haiti in 2010 and to make reparations to the victims, and after a United States federal appeals court upheld the UN position that it has legal immunity from a lawsuit by the victims, the Secretary-General said through his spokesman that he “deeply regrets the terrible suffering” of the cholera victims: “The United Nations has a moral responsibility to the victims of the cholera epidemic and for supporting Haiti in overcoming the epidemic and building sound water, sanitation and health systems.” Repeated scientific studies documented the connection between the United Nations peacekeeping mission and the introduction of cholera in Haiti, as have studies undertaken by the United Nations itself. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2016-08-19/statement-attributable-spokesman-secretary-general-haiti>

Four United Nations Special Rapporteurs, a UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Cote d’Ivoire, and the Chairperson of the UN Working Group on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises took the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the illegal dumping of toxic waste in Cote d’Ivoire to issue a joint statement. “On 19 August 2006, the cargo ship ‘Probo Koala’ discharged 500 tonnes . . . of toxic waste in Abidjan” on at least 18 sites around the city. “According to official estimates, 15 people died, 69 people were hospitalized and over 108,000 others sought medical treatment.” The hazardous waste belonged to the Anglo-Dutch company Trafigura. Previous compensations to victims have been inadequate, the experts wrote, with residents still “in the dark about the ongoing dangers to their health.” Among other steps, the experts urged Trafigura to disclose “all information it has about the contents and nature of the waste and its likely health and environmental impacts.” <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20384&LangID=E>

The Secretary-General issued a “follow-on note to the 2015 report of an Independent Panel of Experts that was established to examine and assess new information regarding the death of former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.” He urged “all Member States to continue their search for relevant documents and information, and to review for potential disclosure information which remains classified or undisclosed for other reasons.” He also announced that he had “declassified those archives of the UN for which I am responsible.” <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54750#.V8DWqt9JetV>

World/general news.

Business. A remarkable and complex story began in 1993 when “indigenous and farmer residents of the Ecuadorian rainforest sued Chevron’s predecessor Texaco in New York, alleging that the company left behind an environmental and public health disaster” from its oil venture in the Amazon between 1972 and 1990, reported *Courthouse News Service*. Chevron, the multinational oil and gas company, acquired Texaco in 2001 and convinced the New York court to “relocate” the lawsuit to Ecuador where the drilling occurred. The Ecuador court ruled against Chevron and awarded the plaintiffs \$18 billion in February 2011, which the supreme court of Ecuador in 2014 reduced to “about” \$9.5 billion. Chevron then took the case back to New York, where it successfully overturned the Ecuador judgment by arguing that it had been “procured by corrupt means,” including a promise to pay the Ecuadorian judge “\$500,000 from a judgment in favor” of the Ecuadorian plaintiffs. Now the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld the lower U.S. court, telling the Ecuadorians they cannot collect the verdict against Chevron. This Chevron victory in the appeals court, reported *Bloomberg Law*, “may benefit other corporations seeking to avoid enforcement of foreign judgments they contend are based on corrupt proceedings.” Meanwhile, as reported in *HRWG News* 2014-11, the Ecuadorian plaintiffs requested the International Criminal Court to open an investigation into the Texaco/Chevron actions and, as reported in *HRWG News* 2015-06, a Chevron whistleblower gave Amazon Watch internal company videos of efforts to hide contamination. Think of the massive numbers of court records this case already has generated, in the U.S., Ecuador, and the ICC, plus the records of the attorneys for Chevron and for the plaintiffs! <http://www.courthousenews.com/2016/08/08/2nd-circ-shields-chevron-from-9-5b-verdict.htm>; <https://bol.bna.com/chevrons-pollution-victory-opens-door-for-companies-to-shirk-foreign-verdicts/>

For over a year, five attorneys general of U.S. states have been investigating Exxon Mobil over claims that the company had known for decades about the relationship between the use of fossil fuels and climate change, while it funded groups promoting doubt about global warming. (For links to the many stories on the cases, see <http://exxonknew.org/>.) The *New York Times* reported that New York’s attorney general, who has been leading an inquiry and received “extensive” company records, said the investigation is focused less on what Exxon knew than on what it predicts. He said, “The older stuff really is just important to establish knowledge and the framework and to look for inconsistencies.” A pretty big “just.” <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/20/science/exxon-mobil-fraud-inquiry-said-to-focus-more-on-future-than-past.html>

Medical. A study conducted by researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital and the University of Pennsylvania, using data “from people who sent their saliva to Silicon Valley personal genomics company 23andMe and consented to allow the company to use that information (anonymously) for research” found “15 locations in our DNA that are associated with depression, one of the most common mental health conditions and one that is estimated to cost the world billions in health-care costs and lost productivity,” reported the *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2016/08/01/large-dna-study-using-23andme-data-finds-15-sites-linked-to-depression/?wpisrc=nl_draw&wpm=1

Missing persons. *Reuters* reported on the struggle to identify drowned migrants by teams of forensic scientists in Italy and Greece. Sadly, “there is no common practice to collect information about these deaths between states or even sometimes within the same country, and a plan by the Dutch-based International Commission on Missing Persons (ICP) to start tracing lost migrants is still awaiting funding.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20160817130511-umpeb/>

Poverty. By using machine learning (a computer algorithm) on “data from household surveys by five African nations – Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Malawi and Rwanda - and nighttime satellite imagery of the

same countries” a team of computer scientists and satellite experts was able to create “a self-updating world map to locate poverty,” reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. The nighttime “images are a basic tool to predict poverty because a higher intensity of nightlight is associated with higher levels of development,” and the computer used the night data “to spot signs of poverty in a separate set of high resolution daytime satellite images that contain information from poor regions that otherwise appear dark in night photos.” The goal, said the researchers, is to help “eradicate global poverty by indicating where help is needed most.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20160818201137-jsvzx/>

Privacy. The *Associated Press (AP)* reported on the privacy breaches that are contained in the massive releases of data by Wikileaks. In the past year alone, *AP* found that Wikileaks has released “medical files belonging to scores of ordinary citizens while many hundreds more have had sensitive family, financial or identity records posted to the web.” Some of the releases have put people at serious risk, said *AP*. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/b70da83fd111496dbdf015acbb7987fb/private-lives-are-exposed-wikileaks-spills-its-secrets>

“Privacy International, a London-based watchdog, has launched a new searchable database on hundreds of surveillance companies across the world, as part of an effort to track a murky industry,” reported *The Verge*. Information in the database on companies “was gathered from more than 1,500 brochures, as well as investigations and media reports. Entries on more than 600 technology exports were based on publicly available records and national export licensing data.” Privacy International said that “only Finland, the UK, and Switzerland have released useful statistics on export licensing.” <http://sii.transparencytoolkit.org/>

WhatsApp announced that it will start disclosing the phone numbers and “analytics data” of its users to Facebook (Facebook bought WhatsApp in 2014), reported *worldbulletin.net*. *HRWG News* of July 2016 carried a link to an article reporting that the Islamic State prefers to use WhatsApp for its commercial transactions, including selling women and girls; WhatsApp is also used by human rights groups that need a confidential work space. <http://www.worldbulletin.net/headlines/176666/whatsapp-to-share-user-data-with-facebook>

Slavery. Verisk Maplecroft released a Modern Slavery Index it “developed over the course of the last 12 months” using “multiple data sources to benchmark the risk at a global scale.” It says that for multinational companies “tracking slavery deep within the supply chain constitutes [the] largest challenge for business.” <https://maplecroft.com/portfolio/new-analysis/2016/08/12/modern-slavery-rife-58-countries-china-india-among-25-economies-posing-extreme-supply-chain-risks-global-index/>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Argentina/United States. On a visit to Argentina last March, U.S. President Barack Obama promised to declassify U.S. government records relating to human rights abuses under Argentina’s 1976-1983 dictatorship. In August the first tranche of 1,078 pages was given to Argentina and posted on the website of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. More records are to be declassified and released “over the next 18 months.” <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB556-Obama-administration-declassifies-documents-on-Argentina-military-human-rights-abuses/> ; <https://icontherecord.tumblr.com/post/148650765298/argentina-declassification-project>

Australia/Nauru. “More than 2,000 leaked incident reports from Australia’s detention camp for asylum seekers on the remote Pacific island of Nauru—totaling more than 8,000 pages” were published by *The Guardian*. They show “the devastating trauma and abuse inflicted on children;” allegations involving children made up more than 50% of the leaked reports. Commenting on the story the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection said, “The documents published today are evidence of the rigorous reporting procedures that are in place in the regional processing centre – procedures under which any alleged incident must be recorded, reported and where necessary investigated.” It said it is examining the incidents in the reports that were published “to ensure all of these matters have been reported appropriately by service providers.” <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/aug/10/the-nauru-files-2000-leaked-reports-reveal-scale-of-abuse-of-children-in-australian-offshore-detention>

Australia/Sri Lanka. Thousands of Sri Lankans, many of whom were victims or witnessed potential war crimes during the Sri Lankan civil war, fled to Australia. At the end of the war, the plan was to set up a war crimes court that would involve international judges and prosecutors, but Sri Lanka's President Sirisena now says it will be a special court with all Sri Lankan judiciary. The testimonies of victims living in Australia were collected by the Sydney-based Public Interest Advocacy Centre, which told *ABC News* that "many of those who have these crucial eyewitness testimonies would be unwilling to testify before Sri Lankan judges." That could deprive the court of crucial evidence for its proceedings.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-25/war-crime-victims-fear-facing-sri-lanka-court/7786462>

Bosnia/United States. A Bosnian man living in the U.S. state of Ohio was arrested "on charges that he lied on documents to obtain refugee status in the United States," reported the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. The indictment says that he was a military officer involved in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of some 8000 men and boys. http://www.cleveland.com/court-justice/index.ssf/2016/08/suspected_bosnian_war_criminal.html

Croatia/Germany/former Yugoslavia. Two intelligence officials of the former Yugoslavia were convicted by a German court of assassinating a Croatian man, Stjepan Djurekovic, in Germany in 1983. The men's lawyer argued that Djurekovic was murdered because he was passing Yugoslav military secrets to West German's intelligence agency (BND), reported *BIRN*, and "according to the BND's records, Djurekovic worked for German intelligence from 1975 to 1983." http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/yugoslav-spy-saga-puts-assassinations-in-spotlight-08-03-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=db1820fd3d-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-db1820fd3d-319755321

Croatia/Serbia. "According to Croatian laws, a minority with more than 30 per cent of the population in a town or city has a right to use its own language and script in official correspondence, and signs and names of institutions must be bilingually written," reported *BIRN*. Croatia "began checking whether its citizens had correctly reported their place of residence in 2013." Croatia's interior minister said that "false Serb residents" made the town of Vukovar over 30% Serb, and after removing them from the residential data Vukovar will no longer use Cyrillic script and the Serbian language. Vukovar was "nearly reduced to rubble by Serb forces" during the Balkan war in the 1990s. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/tensions-continue-to-raise-between-serbia-and-croatia-08-15-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=6cf9473adf-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-6cf9473adf-319755321

Islamic State/IS/ISIL/ISIS. A video released by the Islamic State appears to show five children shooting prisoners to death, reported *Huffington Post*. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/isis-child-soldiers-execution-video_us_57c0b401e4b04193420f4219?ir=WorldPost&utm_hp_ref=world

Russia/Ukraine. "Natalya Sharina, the Director of the state-run Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow, has been under house arrest since 30 October 2015 after investigators allegedly found 'extremist literature' in a pile of books in the library that had not been indexed or made available for borrowers," wrote Amnesty International. On 15 August the Moscow Prosecutor General's office refused to sign an indictment against her and sent the case back "for further investigation," also prolonging her house arrest. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/4710/2016/en/>

National news.

Belgium. Attackers set fire to Belgium's national forensic crime laboratory, reported the *Associated Press*; the damage to the building and its contents were termed "severe." The laboratory examines evidence and houses the country's DNA database. A spokeswoman for the Belgian prosecutor's office said, "It is obvious that several individuals would have an interest in making elements in their justice file disappear." http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/E/EU_BELGIUM_CRIME_LAB_ATTACK?SITE=NCAGW&SECTION=HOME

Bulgaria. "At least 16,000 records of Bulgaria's communist-era Military Intelligence personnel, the equivalent of nearly half, were destroyed after the beginning of the transition towards democracy," reported the *Sofia Globe*. The records should have been "handed over to the Dossier Commission, the body empowered by law to disclose the affiliation of people in various categories of public life to the former

State Security and the Military Intelligence division of what was called the Bulgarian People's Army." <http://sofiaglobe.com/2016/08/18/bulgaria-many-thousands-of-communist-era-military-intelligence-staff-records-destroyed/>

Colombia. The accord between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) includes a number of programs that will both depend on and create records, including disarmament, a truth commission, and special tribunals to try former combatants. The government's land restitution program, which started in 2011, can now include areas of the country where the FARC was in control and where land was either abandoned by people fleeing the fighting or seized by the FARC and paramilitary groups operating in the countryside. According to the *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, about 200,000 hectares of land have been returned to the original owners, but of the approximately "80,000 land claims lodged to date with the authorities less than half are being processed, hampered by red tape and difficulties in sorting out who has legal title." <http://news.trust.org/item/20160809050148-5t6qt/>

Egypt. Historian Khaled Fahmy published an essay at *madamasr.com* on the difficulty of getting permission to do archival research at the Egyptian National Archives. He wrote, "Each year, security further tightens its grip and the numbers of permits [to do research] granted decreases." He was denied permission to copy 19th century maps because the security "apparatus" understands the "importance of maps for national security." "As the Egyptian proverb has it," he wrote, "shut the door that lets in the breeze and set your mind at ease." Thanks to Antoon de Baets for the reference. <http://www.madamasr.com/opinion/giulio-islands-and-national-security>

Germany. The director of Germany's central office for the investigation of Nazi crimes sent prosecutors documentation on eight persons "suspected of having served at a concentration camp near Gdansk," reported *Reuters*. Last year the investigation office was given "up to 10 more years to continue its investigative work before it is turned into a documentation centre." <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/09/german-nazi-hunter-sends-details-8-new-concentration-camp-suspects-prosecutors>

Guatemala. The home of a human rights lawyer in Guatemala City who is the Central America director of the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists was "ransacked" by "at least a dozen" armed men posing as police officers, reported *The Guardian*. The article did not say what was taken, but the assailants clearly would be after documentation. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/15/guatemala-human-rights-lawyer-attack-ramon-cadena-ramila>

Guinea. The Open Society Institute for West Africa (OSIWA) issued an analysis of the final report of the Provisional National Commission on Reconciliation (PNCR) that was given to the president at the end of June. OSIWA supports the Commission's call for a truth commission to follow up on the research it conducted, presumably using PNCR records. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201608100517.html>

India. "With land records in several Indian states dating back to the colonial era, fraud is rampant and disputes are inevitable," *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. Government data show that 22 million cases are currently pending in India's district courts; 7.5 million are civil cases, of which two-thirds relate to land and property. Six million civil cases "have dragged on for more than five years." <http://news.trust.org/item/20160808133206-eyqg1/>

The overburdened court system also negatively affects female crime victims, reported the *Washington Post*. India recently created "fast-track courts to speed prosecution of rape cases and other crimes against women," but these have not eliminated long delays in cases "because of overall problems in the legal system, including files that have not been digitized." <http://thewashingtonpost.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx>

Thomson Reuters Foundation reported, "A survey of Mumbai's slums to establish which residents are eligible for rehousing is being delayed by missing documents and criticized by activists who say the effort will fail unless the rights of all slum dwellers are recognized." In "more than 2,000 slum clusters in the city" government surveyors "are going door to door, checking government-issued identification papers, property titles and biometrics to identify people eligible for rehabilitation and map the areas for redevelopment." <http://news.trust.org/item/20160816161156-ofla0/>

Although in April 2016 the Minister for Culture and Finance of Jammu and Kashmir told all departments to turn over records to the Department of Archives, in the past four months “not even one department has come forward,” reported *Daily Excelsior*. No records have been sent to the Archives since 1985. <http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/no-taker-govts-directives-archiving-record-last-3-decades/>

Iran. The son of the late Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri posted on the website of his father an audio recording of the Ayatollah’s “objections to the execution of thousands of people, mostly members of the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (MEK) in the late 1980s,” reported *Al-Monitor*. The son said he released it to “set the record straight for those who seek to distort his father’s image.” The Ayatollah’s opposition was already known, but the recording confirms “the identities of the individuals involved in carrying out the executions, some of whom hold important positions in the Islamic Republic today.” <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/mek-executions-1988-iran-montazeri-audio-file.html#ixzz4IvpzzwNN>

Iraq. Iraq’s parliament passed a General Amnesty Law. *Al-Monitor* explained, “People convicted between 2003 and the date the law was approved are eligible to apply for amnesty, except those convicted of 13 types of crimes, among them acts of terror resulting in death or permanent disability, human trafficking, rape, money laundering and embezzlement and theft of state funds. Investigating judges and competent courts are charged with implementing the provisions of the statute. If a convict is ruled ineligible for amnesty, he or she can appeal to the Court of Cassation.” Court records will be vital to these amnesty proceedings. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/general-amnesty-law-terrorism-national-reconciliation-iraq.html>

Kosovo. In a continuing story, tapes of six more wire-tapped conversations were released by *insajderi.com*, *BIRN* reported. In one of the tapes made in 2011, Adem Grabovci, the chief of the parliamentary group of the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), is talking to Naser Krasniqi, alias The Face, who was at the time in custody accused of war crimes. Grabovci said he had threatened the parliamentary speaker that if “he causes any trouble, The Face will deal with him.” Grabovci resigned in mid-August. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-wiretap-reveal-alleged-kosovo-president-s-influence-over-laws-08-05-2016>

Mexico. The National Human Rights Commission issued a report, saying, “Federal police executed at least 22 people on a ranch last year, then moved bodies and planted guns to corroborate the official account that the deaths happened in a gun battle.” The *Associated Press* said the government initially denied the Commission access to autopsy reports, and when the Commission did receive them it found them “sloppy and incomplete.” <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/f59130034a6e4ca7bd4fa42745b6898e/mexico-human-rights-commission-finds-arbitrary-executions>

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, a nongovernmental organization based in London, reported that “more than 100 NGOs and social movements in Mexico have documented cases of alleged corporate abuse in different sectors: mining, energy, oil & gas, agribusiness, and construction, among others.” The groups compiled a report on 68 cases to present to the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights on its visit to Mexico. “The most frequently occurring corporate human rights abuses within the cases are those related to land rights, access to information, and diverse negative impacts to health and the environment due to business activities.” <https://business-humanrights.org/en/mexico-over-60-cases-of-alleged-corporate-abuse-documented-in-advance-of-un-working-group-visit>

Mozambique. Human Rights Watch reported that between July 24 and August 12 “armed men linked to Mozambique’s main opposition party, the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) have raided at least two hospital and two health clinics.” They stole medicines and equipment, and at in one health clinic they also burned patients’ medical records. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/24/mozambique-opposition-group-raids-hospitals>

Myanmar. During the 1990s and early 2000s the military government seized land from farmers; the National League for Democracy (the party currently in power) estimates “that between three to five million acres of land was forcibly taken by the military,” reported *Reuters*. The new government has formed a task force to deal with the “land grab cases,” which will have to cope with “the sheer complexity of the cases and often the absence of a clear paper trail. In many areas of the country, documents such as land tax receipts, government loan books, land use permits and witness statements from village elders have been destroyed by the damp climate. Cyclone Nargis, which killed as many as 140,000 people in the

Ayeyarwady Delta in 2008, also destroyed many of the documents kept by locals in their homes.”

<http://news.trust.org/item/20160803060256-1s9ll/>

The government appointed a joint national-international Advisory Commission to stop human rights abuses in Rakhine State, reported *Reuters*. The nine member panel, headed by former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, is to publish a report in a year. The commission will need a good records management system as it works through the difficult, long-standing issues. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics-idUSKCN10Z0ED>

Nepal. On August 10 Nepal's two transitional justice bodies closed the period for registering complaints. Over 60,000 cases are on hand, and the two bodies have until February 2017 to resolve them. *The Himalayan Times* reported that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission “has finalized a procedure to select war-era cases that can be put on hold.” Of the 2000 complaints examined so far, “5-10 percent are likely to be shelved”; these include “complaints such as use of coercive tactics to force resignation, involvement in insurgency, confession of leaking information, threats, psychological torture and extortion.” One Commission member is demanding that the screening guidelines be revised.

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-may-shelve-hundreds-war-era-complaints/>
<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2016-08-11/transitional-justice-trc-ciedp-have-a-lot-on-their-plate.html>

Nigeria. In April 2014 the Boko Haram militant group captured 276 school girls from Chibok village, and about 200 of them are still missing. Boko Haram released a video showing about 50 of the girls, allowing some parents the first glimpse of their daughter in more than two years, reported *CNN*. The militants demanded that Nigeria release its members that are in jail in exchange for the release of the girls.

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/14/africa/boko-haram-video-missing-girls/index.html>

Peru. Despite the year-long investigation and the national registry of victims begun in January 2016, the public prosecutor ruled that the 1996-2000 reproductive health and family planning program “had not violated human rights as part of state policy, and individual medical personnel were responsible for ‘isolated cases’ where women were sterilized without consent,” *The Guardian* reported. More than 300,000 women and men are believed to have been sterilized in the late 1990s, many forced into the procedure. A congressman who is a doctor told the media that in the 1990s the health ministry “set goals and deadlines, for example, 150 or 200 people must be sterilised over a weekend in order to reach the targets,” which implies that there are records of the orders. For background, see *HRWG News 2015-11*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/aug/03/women-vow-to-fight-on-in-peru-after-fujimori-absolved-over-forced-sterilisations>

Philippines. “Police statistics show that from July 1 to August 19, 2016, police have killed an estimated 712 suspected ‘drug pushers and users.’ That death toll constitutes a more-than-tenfold jump over the 68 such police killings recorded between January 1 and June 15,” reported Human Rights Watch.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/22/philippine-police-killing-spree-demands-accountability>

South Africa. Between November and December 2015 Medecins sans Frontieres conducted a household survey in Rustenburg Municipality, an area in the heart of the platinum mining belt, to discover the extent of sexual violence against women. The municipality has a population of about 550,000, of which 45% are women. The survey found that one in four women had been raped in their lifetime and “more than 11,000 women and girls [are] experiencing rape each year in Rustenburg Local Municipality.” Police records on sexual violence are unreliable: “Women who have been raped very seldom tell the police (8%) or the community policing forum (1%).” <https://www.msf.org.za/about-us/publications/reports/untreated-violence>

South Korea. An *Associated Press* investigation found “that South Korean authorities have repeatedly allowed Samsung [Electronics Co.] to use trade-secrets concerns to block the release of information about chip workers’ exposure to chemicals and other hazards.” By law, workers are supposed to have access to information about the chemicals they are exposed to at their workplace, so that if sick they can apply for workers’ compensation from the state; without such information, “government officials commonly reject their cases.” “Court documents and interviews with government officials, workers’ lawyers and their families” show that Samsung asks government officials not to release such data citing trade secrets, and the government usually complies. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ea1b8280b50b4ad3a9bdc9def798914/2-words-keep-sick-samsung-workers-data-trade-secrets>

“For years, South Korea was the world’s leading baby exporter,” reported the *New York Times*. “Since the 1950s, it has sent about 200,000 children abroad for adoption, including about 150,000 to the United States.” A number of adopted children are seeking to locate birth parents but finding it difficult. South Korean law requires the consent of the birth parents in order to release the birth records to the adopted child; furthermore, “government adoption files are often falsified, incomplete or missing, making birth parents impossible to track down.” Adoptees are now using DNA databases to try to match their DNA to that of birth parents, but the process is frustrated by the lack of a single consolidated DNA database, the incompatibility of Korean and U.S. databases, and the few birth parents that have submitted DNA to any of the databases. <http://www.staradvertiser.com/nyt/trying-to-fill-in-blanks-adopted-koreans-find-hope-in-a-cotton-swab/>

South Sudan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a written update to the UN Security Council on August 2, said that UN human rights officers have documented at least 73 civilian deaths during the 5 days of fighting that began on 7 July and “at least 217 cases of sexual violence in Juba between 8 and 25 July.” <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20339&LangID=E>

Sri Lanka. The government launched a national data base to be maintained by the Treasury at the Finance Ministry to hold information on damage and losses from such events as floods, landslides and drought. One person from each district will be responsible for uploading information. Previously there was “no uniform system to report the damages or calculate losses”: local administrative officials collected disaster data, sent it to a district office, which in turn sent it to the central government bodies coordinating relief. The government hopes “a uniform reporting tool would minimize errors in data collection,” reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160830073649-yihou/>

Syria. Using statistics collected by the Human Rights Data Analysis Group, Amnesty International published a report estimating that 17,723 people have died in custody in Syria since March 2011, “an average rate of more than 300 deaths each month.” Prison records could confirm these estimates. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/08/harrowing-accounts-of-torture-inhuman-conditions-and-mass-deaths-in-syrias-prisons/>

Turkey. Using a state of emergency law, the government closed 29 publishing houses “along with a swath of newspapers, television channels, magazines and news agencies,” *The Guardian* reported. The Turkish Publishers Association said “all goods, assets, rights, documents and papers belonging to the publishers will be transferred free of charge to the Turkish treasury, with no appeal to be made.” <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/aug/03/free-speech-groups-condemn-turkeys-closure-of-29-publishers-after-failed-coup>

United Kingdom. Research into files of the Home Office, now in the National Archives, shows that “Home Office doctors gave the go-ahead for experimental drug trials on children at two approved schools in the 1960s,” reported *BBC News*. The pupils’ parents were not consulted. The children at Approved Schools were “usually sent there by juvenile courts, they were not imprisoned; the sites were funded and inspected by the Home Office and run by voluntary organisations.” <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-37149029>

United States. *Secrecy News*, a publication of the Federation of American Scientists, reported that the Department of Defense (DoD) is “devoting increased attention to what it calls ‘identity activities,’ which seek to identify individuals who may pose a threat on or off the battlefield.” A new DoD publication defined “identity activities” as “a collection of functions and actions that appropriately recognize and differentiate one person or persona from another person or persona to support decision making.” DoD is collecting “biographical, biological, behavioral, and reputational” information, some of which is used “immediately at the point of collection” but “most collected data and materials are sent to authoritative data repositories or local, regional, or reachback facilities or laboratories for appropriate processing and exploitation.” This body of records will need archival appraisal. <http://fas.org/blogs/secrecy/2016/08/identity-activities/>

A judge in Oakland, California, ordered court documents released that provide “rare insights into how local police and the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] use a sophisticated surveillance device known as Stingray,” reported *The Guardian*. The device tricks electronic devices to connect to it and then can “strip metadata and in some cases phone content” from the devices. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/26/stingray-oakland-police-fbi-surveillance>

The U.S. Justice Department proposed a method to better track killings by police officers, according to a notice published in the government's *Federal Register*. The nearly 20,000 state and local law enforcement agencies and about 685 medical examiner's or coroner's offices would report the total number of such cases every three months to the Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics, which would compile the information. The public can comment on the proposal through October 3.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/08/04/2016-18484/agency-information-collection-activities-proposed-collection-comments-requested-new-collection#furinf>

In an essay published by the *New York Times*, Charlie Savage, a reporter, wrote, "The government has an archive of secret reports by a six-agency task force that reviewed the cases of the 242 detainees who remained at the prison [at Guantanamo] when President Obama took office in 2009." The *Times* and Savage filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit for the reports, and the reporter argued that "it is in the national interest that ex-detainees reintegrate into society. One step to ease that path would be to make public more information about what the government thinks they actually did – and did not do."

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/14/opinion/sunday/how-to-end-the-stigma-of-guantanamo.html?_r=0

United States/Maryland. The U.S. Justice Department issued a report on the Baltimore, Maryland, police department (BPD), finding that the police were systematically discriminating against black residents. In addition to conducting hundreds of interviews, the Department wrote, "we reviewed hundreds of thousands of pages of documents, including all relevant policies and training materials used by the Department since 2010; BPD's database of internal affairs files from January 2010 through March 2016; BPD's data on pedestrian stops, vehicle stops, and arrests from January 2010 to May 2015; incident reports describing stops, searches, arrests, and officers' use of non-deadly force from 2010 to 2015; all files on deadly force incidents since 2010 that BPD was able to produce to us through May 1, 2016; and investigative files on sexual assault cases from 2013 to 2015. We were assisted by a dozen current and former law enforcement leaders and experts with experience on the issues we investigated, and we retained statistical experts to analyze BPD's data on its enforcement activities."

https://www.scribd.com/document/320708307/Investigation-of-the-Baltimore-City-Police-Department-by-U-S-Justice-Department#from_embed?keyword=4417&content=10079&ad_group=Online+Tracking+Link&campaign=Skimbit%2C+Ltd.&source=impactradi-us&medium=affiliate&irgwc=1

United States/New York. An investigation by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the New York Police Department found that the Department repeatedly broke rules governing intelligence-gathering after the attacks on 11 September 2001, particularly in targeting Muslims for surveillance. To develop its report the OIG focused first on the case files for a sample of all investigations, but also used training materials, organizational charts, and documents that outlined the policies, procedures, practices and standards the police were to follow.

<http://www.nyclu.org/news/new-report-underscores-need-rein-nypd-surveillance-of-american-muslim> ;
http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/oignypd/downloads/pdf/oig_intel_report_823_final_for_release.pdf

Zimbabwe. The principal director at Hove Peace Building International, a nongovernmental organization based in Australia, published an essay in *The Zimbabwean*, calling on Zimbabwe's National Peace and Reconciliation Commission to address the forced disappearances in the country. It will not be a simple task: "Because the alleged perpetrator is the current government, it did not bother to keep records of the forced disappearances."

<http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2016/08/forced-disappearances-a-crucial-issue-for-the-national-peace-and-reconciliation-commission-nprc/>

Publications.

Amnesty International, Benetech, and The Engine Room published a fine guide to integrating data collection and management into the day to day work of human rights research and documentation.

<https://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2016/08/24/human-rights-documentation-in-the-age-of-digital-data/>

Swisspeace announced that Arabic and Spanish language versions are now available of *The Conceptual Framework for Dealing with the Past*, developed by swisspeace and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The *Framework* is based on the principles recommended by UN Special Rapporteur Louis

Joinet in his report to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1997 on the question of the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations and subsequent recommendations. Available in [Arabic](#) (2016), [English](#) (2013), [French](#) (2013) and in [Spanish](#) (2016). A Spanish language version of *Securing Police Archives. A Guide for Practitioners* is now available: [English](#) (2013) and [Spanish](#) (2016).

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