
ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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

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Commentary.

GIGO—garbage in, garbage out—is an acronym used since at least the early days of modern computing (see this 1957 article: <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/50687334/the-times/>). Perhaps now we need the acronym BIBO--bias in, bias out--as computer-generated algorithms dominate many of our daily transactions.

In Europe, the General Data Protection Regulation tried to deal with bias in automated decisions. Its Article 22 on “Automated individual decision-making, including profiling” reads:

1. The data subject shall have the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing, including profiling, which produces legal effects concerning him or her or similarly significantly affects him or her.
2. Paragraph 1 shall not apply if the decision:
 - (a) is necessary for entering into, or performance of, a contract between the data subject and a data controller;
 - (b) is authorised by Union or Member State law to which the controller is subject and which also lays down suitable measures to safeguard the data subject's rights and freedoms and legitimate interests; or
 - (c) is based on the data subject's explicit consent.

Outside Europe there is scant legislation, leaving the construction of algorithms for automated decision-making without regulation in markets such as the United States. But within Europe or outside it, situations like these were reported in March:

*“*Lighthouse Reports* and *WIRED* obtained Rotterdam’s [Netherlands] welfare fraud algorithm and the data used to train it, giving unprecedented insight into how such systems work. This level of access, negotiated under freedom-of-information laws, enabled us to examine the personal data fed into the algorithm, the inner workings of the data processing, and the scores it generates. By reconstructing the system and how it works, we found that it discriminates based on ethnicity and gender. It also revealed evidence of fundamental flaws that made the system both inaccurate and unfair.”
<https://www.wired.com/story/welfare-state-algorithms/>

*A *STAT* investigation found artificial intelligence is now driving denials for medical treatment under U.S. government funded Medicare Advantage, the “the taxpayer-funded alternative to traditional Medicaid that covers more than 31 million people.” Insurers “are using unregulated predictive algorithms, under the guise of scientific rigor, to pinpoint the precise moment when they can plausibly cut off payment for an older patient’s treatment.” *STAT* researchers combed through “hundreds of pages of federal records, court filings, and confidential corporate documents, as well as interviews with physicians, insurance executives, policy experts, lawyers, patient advocates, and family members of Medicare Advantage beneficiaries.” The director of a care facility said, “They are looking at our patients in terms of their statistics. They’re not looking at the patients we see.”
https://www.statnews.com/2023/03/13/medicare-advantage-plans-denial-artificial-intelligence/?utm_campaign=morning_rounds&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=249894563&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--1_WgZ1Xiv5tB5_EstY6AnbjBApuboBrM2H1yKhA35kYVjanhIN0MnyP7GFLDl2nzuo4Qh4ovR4jRCAhrCrQsMAh2Q&utm_content=249894563&utm_source=hs_email

*In a similar study, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) examined “how algorithmic design choices can function as policy decision” when used to “screen calls to a child welfare agency about alleged child neglect in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.” The researchers used data on child-referral records from 2010 to 2014; “the data was very similar to the data used to train” the artificial intelligence algorithm, with “roughly 800 variables, including, for each family, information about prior referrals and child welfare records, jail and juvenile probation records, behavioral health information, birth record information and demographic information.” By using such historic data, the resulting tool and similar ones “give families no opportunity for recourse, perpetuate racial bias, and score people who may have disabilities as inherently ‘riskier’,” calling the use of such algorithms into question. https://www.aclu.org/the-devil-is-in-the-details-interrogating-values-embedded-in-the-allegheeny-family-screening-tool?redirect=afst_audit

Archives hold records that can be used in myriad ways. Archivists insist that they make and certify true copies of documents in their possession but do not certify the truth or accuracy of the contents. Simply basing an algorithm on archival records fed into it for machine learning does not in itself make the result truthful. BIBO.

SAHR News. The Section on Archives and Human Rights is marking with a series of events its founding 20 years ago as the Human Rights Working Group, the founding of the International Council on Archives in 1948 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, also in 1948. The first event will be a special First Tuesday Talk on 6 June at 4:00 p.m. (Central European Time) reflecting on the Working Group, the Section, and the evolution of the field of archives and human rights since 2003. ICA’s Executive Director, Carlos Serrano Vasquez, will moderate a panel composed of ICA President Josée Kirps, Graham Dominy, Antonio Gonzalez Quintana and Trudy Huskamp Peterson.

International news.

International Criminal Court. Pre-Trial Chamber II issued warrants for the arrest of Vladimir V. Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova for “responsibility for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population and that of unlawful transfer of population from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation, in prejudice of Ukrainian children.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2023-02. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and>

Kosovo Specialist Chambers. The Chambers released a “less redacted version of the indictment of former Kosovo President Hashim Thaci . . . giving more details of the war crimes and crimes against humanity charges,” *BIRN* reported. It “discloses the names of some of the ethnic Albanian, Serb and Roma victims in the case, as well as details of alleged threats and pressure they exerted against the KLA’s political rivals.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/02/hague-court-publishes-details-of-hashim-thacis-alleged-war-crimes/>

The trial of Thaci and three others will begin in April, but the presiding judge warned that hearing only the prosecution witnesses would take six-and-a-half years and urged both prosecution and defence to find ways to reduce the length of the hearings, *BIRN* reported. Key evidence includes Kosovo Liberation Army communiqués “whose authenticity is being disputed by the defence.” The prosecutor said that once the communiqués’ authenticity is proved, the number of witnesses could be “adjusted.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/20/prosecution-case-in-kosovo-ex-guerrillas-trial-could-take-six-years/>

United Nations. The High Commissioner for Human Rights presented reports on Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and Cyprus to the Human Rights Council. Among the items, he said his “Office documented 92 massacres” in 2022 in Columbia; “registered a 54% increase last year in harassment, intimidation and use or misuse of criminal procedures against human rights defenders, indigenous peoples, human rights organizations, media and journalists” and “authorities registered over 48,000 cases of violence against women” in Guatemala; and reported that “civil society has documented 43 killings and two disappearances in LGBTBI people and the killing of at least 252 women” in 2022 in Honduras. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/03/colombia-honduras-guatemala-and-cyprus-reports-are-presented-high>

The Special Rapporteur on the field of cultural rights reported to the Human Rights Council, underlining “the rights of migrants to have access to and effectively participate in all aspects of cultural lives, both of the host State and their own cultures.” She noted, “Archives left behind by individuals and ethnic, political or religious groups who are forced to leave their countries or territories, must also be protected and migrants allowed access to them by the State of origin or wherever those archives are kept. All States should respect their obligations to take steps to protect such archives by ensuring safe preservation and ensure access, including by the individuals and groups who were forced to leave. That is in line with General Assembly resolution 68/165.” The submission by the ICA Section on Archives and Human Rights is acknowledged in a footnote. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5235-cultural-rights-and-migration-temporarily-only-english>

The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment issued a statement of “good practices in national criminalization, investigation, prosecution and sentencing for offences of torture.” Several of the recommendations include issues of documentation, including ensuring “periodic public reporting on complaints received,” ensuring delays in opening investigations “are to be explained and documented in writing,” designing complaints procedures to allow safe and convenient filing, and adopting guidelines and standards for “documentation and investigation of cases of torture or other ill-treatment” and for admissibility of open source information. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5230-good-practices-national-criminalization-investigation>

UNICEF said “the COVID-19 pandemic, climate disasters and ongoing conflict have deepened inequalities among children in Europe and Central Asia.” The report is the “first of its kind to bring together existing data and analysis for all countries in the region, while highlighting critical data gaps that need to be filled.” A UNICEF regional director said “lack of data of how these events have affected children’s rights makes it difficult to assess how we can meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and families, so that no child in the region is left behind.” <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134392>

Thirty-four more women “have come forward to accuse workers for the World Health Organization and other aid groups of sexual abuse and exploitation during the 2018-2020 Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *The New Humanitarian* reported. Twenty-six of the women said “the abuse resulted in pregnancies, 18 of them allegedly involving WHO staff.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-09, 10. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2023/03/08/more-women-accuse-WHO-aid-workers-ebola-sex-abuse-scandal?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=62463b298b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_10_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-62463b298b-75545741

United Nations/International Court of Justice. The UN General Assembly resolved to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change, in particular “the obligations of States under international law to ensure the protection of the climate system from anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases.” <https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12497.doc.htm>

World/general news.

Business. A group of Yemeni nationals filed a lawsuit in the U.S. against defense contractors Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics, “accusing them of ‘aiding and abetting war crimes and extrajudicial killings’ by supplying arms to the Saudi-led coalition’s war against Yemen,” *Middle East Eye* reported. The pleading said “Plaintiffs have direct evidence that the Defendants’ weapons were responsible for their injuries. Plaintiffs have provided photographs of weapons with certain serial numbers on them as evidence that the named Defendants produced such weapons.” <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemenis-sue-top-us-defence-contractors-aiding-war-crimes>; for pleadings see <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/608276df0e35bd790e38eff3/t/6400d3288128f8752c97dce2/1677775658494/STAMPED+Complaint+%281%29.pdf>

The NGOs International Partnership for Human Rights and NKO published the results of a study of the Western-made components used in Russia’s war against Ukraine. “Now one year on from the full scale invasion, it is clearer than ever that Western-made components have and continue to be imported into Russia and be used inside weapons involved in the committing of suspected war crimes and human rights atrocities.” The researchers chose cases of suspected war crimes, then examined the weapons used in each, and finally identified “the components found in such weapons and the branding on them.” They

created a “dataset of more than 170 individual components that had been found in Russian equipment and bore the branding or logo of foreign companies” and linked these to “a dataset of suspected war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. In each case, video and image evidence was documented, geolocated, and archived.” They also had access to “leaked Russian ‘shopping lists’ showing the intent to acquire components manufactured by such companies in order to support its military.” The result was “over 400 examples of suspected war crimes committed using weapons understood to be, in varying degree, reliant on foreign-made components.” https://nako.org.ua/storage/pdf/2023-02-27--11:50:05-Enabling_War_Crimes_report.pdf

The Amsterdam, Netherlands, district court ruled that “Facebook Ireland broke privacy law when it processed the personal data of Dutch Facebook users for advertising purposes without a proper legal basis (such as consent) between April 1, 2010, and January 1, 2020,” *TechCrunch* reported. The plaintiffs, two Dutch non-governmental organizations, will seek compensation; Meta/Facebook said it is appealing the ruling. <https://techcrunch.com/2023/03/15/facebook-dutch-ads-ruling/>

Google released an audit by the law firm WilmerHale that “examined how its policies and services impacted civil rights and recommended the tech giant take steps to tackle misinformation and hate speech,” *Reuters* reported. It also recommended that Google’s YouTube “review its hate speech and harassment policies to address issues such as intentional misgendering or deadnaming of individuals and ‘adapt to changing norms regarding protected groups’.” <https://www.reuters.com/technology/google-taps-law-firm-conduct-civil-rights-review-washington-post-2023-03-03/>

Forty-five U.S. state attorneys general filed a petition in a Tennessee state court to compel the Chinese-owned company TikTok to produce “internal TikTok communications to determine whether the company engaged in deceptive conduct that harmed mental health of TikTok users, particularly children and teens,” *Reuters* reported. The petition alleged that “TikTok has failed to preserve some potentially relevant evidence, in the form of internal employee chat messages.” https://www.reuters.com/legal/state-ags-demand-tiktok-comply-with-consumer-protection-investigations-2023-03-06/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-dataveillance

“Public prosecutors in Brazil are seeking compensation for men who they say were forced to work in ‘humiliating and degrading’ conditions, with no clean water or sanitation” on the cattle ranch owned by German carmaker Volkswagen in Brazil’s northern Para state between 1973 and 1987, the *Guardian* reported. “Official documents seen by the *Guardian* reveal that Volkswagen received grants and tax breaks worth more than \$129m (104m euros) to buy and run the cattle ranch from Brazil’s military government, which was in power between 1964 and 1985.” A team of academics from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro worked with the prosecutors to collect “testimonies from 15 men about their experiences working on the ranch. The government believes hundreds more people were exploited.” Volkswagen “rejects all the allegations.” https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/mar/30/brazil-to-sue-volkswagen-over-claims-of-slavery-during-military-dictatorship?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its latest report. The summary for policy makers condensed information from thousands of papers of climate science in the six reports published since 2014 and provided “graphics showing individuals—from babies to pensioners—set to suffer ever more from rising heat” including “surging risks to mental health from a warming climate,” *Reuters* reported. For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-08, 2022-11. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-climate; https://www.context.news/climate-risks/act-now-ipcc-climate-report-appeals-to-all-to-salvage-15c-goal?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-climate

Writing in *Nature*, three researchers explained they used “satellite, station-based and reanalysis datasets” to show the “impacts of 2003-2017 forest loss on precipitation.” After examining more than a dozen databases and government and university sources, the authors estimated that if continued at the current rate, “future deforestation in the Congo will reduce local precipitation by 8-10% in 2100.” Their findings “provide a compelling argument for tropical forest conservation to support regional climate resilience.” <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-022-05690-1>

To reduce transport emissions and combat climate change, the U.S., the European Union and China “rely heavily” on electric vehicles, *Business & Human Rights* reported. However, the Transition Minerals Tracker “has documented hundreds of allegations of human rights and environmental abuses related to mining of transition minerals” needed for batteries in electric vehicles. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/somo-exposes-the-scale-of-the-rush-for-battery-minerals-it-can-be-avoided-through-a-transport-transition/>

Environment. Deforestation Inc., a cross-border investigation led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), looked at the global system of environmental auditors providing certificates of sustainability in industries such as logging to fight forest destruction and climate change. “ICIJ examined inspection records, environmental violation data and court filings, concerning companies in at least 50 countries. The analysis identified 48 auditing firms that had declared sustainable the practices of companies in the forest product industry that had been charged with such violations as logging in Indigenous forestland and protected reserves, using false permits, and importing illegally harvested timber.” As a part of the investigation, ICIJ exposed the roles of intermediaries and certification organizations such as the Forest Stewardship Council in “the widely condemned trade in Myanmar teak” and the “broader flaws in the global system meant to prevent deforestation and combat climate change.” The inquiry was “based on leaked files from Myanmar’s tax agency, publicly available trade data and interviews with teak traders in 11 countries. The confidential files—most from 2021 and 2022—were shared with ICIJ by Justice for Myanmar, a human rights group, U.K.-based news outlet Finance Uncovered, and Distributed Denial of Secrets, a data transparency group.”

<https://www.icij.org/investigations/deforestation-inc/auditors-green-labels-sustainability-environmental-harm/>;
https://insideclimatenews.org/news/07032023/myanmar-teak-deforestation/?utm_source=InsideClimate+News&utm_campaign=3fba45c0a9-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_11_02_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_29c928ffb5-3fba45c0a9-328765186

In 2020 the U.K.-based organization Earthsight published a report accusing Paraguay’s giant meat-packing company Minerva and its Frigorifico Concepcion subsidiary “of buying cattle raised by two ranchers responsible for illegal land grabbing and forest clearance, all within the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples in the Gran Chaco.” NGO Global Witness followed up to see if the expose affected the financing of Minerva. It found that since the report “many leading financiers continue to bankroll Minerva, with some backing it financially by holding or even increasing their shares in the company” or by “underwriting bond issuances worth millions of dollars.” All but one of the financial companies involved (Netherlands’ APG, BNP Paribas, Spanish bank Santander, U.S. Blackrock, HSBC, JPMorgan, and Vanguard) “are signatories of either the Net Zero Asset Manager Initiative or the Net Zero Banking Alliance” and two are members of both. Yet they are backing a company “engaged in the deforestation crisis in Paraguay, which lost a quarter of its net forest cover between 2000 and 2020, according to Global Forest Watch.” “Our analysis suggests that voluntary initiatives are not providing sufficient incentives for financial institutions to remove deforestation and human rights abuses of the kind found in the Gran Chaco from their portfolios. It appears there are no real consequences for failing to meet voluntary deadlines and the reputational risks alone are clearly not enough to stop major banks and financial institutions lending to companies engaged in deforestation.”

<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/forests/cash-cattle-and-the-gran-chaco/>

Carbon credits permit an entity to increase its carbon emissions if it pays another entity to reduce, by an equal amount, the emissions of the same pollutant. In Brazil, a program called Jari Para in the Jari Valley “aims to reduce plant-heating emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and protect biodiversity by supporting local ways to earn a living, like Brazil nut processing, which keep trees and their stored carbon intact,” *Reuters* reported. The project covers about 497,000 hectares (1.23 million acres). Jari Para sold carbon credits for all the land, although 386,000 hectares are “registered as public property in 2018” and the project did not have government authorization to make the sale. This has again brought to the fore the historic problem of land titles in Brazil, complicated by “irregular ownership deeds issued by local notary offices that were never checked by government authorities.”

https://www.context.news/nature/in-brazils-amazon-carbon-credit-project-halted-over-land-dispute?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-climate

Freedom of speech and press. In its annual report, the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists said that 289 safety alerts (serious threats to the safety of journalists and media freedom) were sent in by partner organizations in 2022 concerning 37 countries, 7 up from 2021, and there was a 60% rise “to 127 in the number of journalists in prison at the

end of 2022 in Europe.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/07/coe-platform-records-continued-degradation-in-press-freedom-in-2022/>

Gender equality. “Researchers estimated gender equality in 1156 countries using a ‘modified global gender gap index,’ which is based on an index developed by the World Economic Forum (WEF) between 2010 and 2021,” and data on life expectancy from the World Bank. “Reporting in *PLOS Global Public Health*, they wrote, “Globally, greater gender equality is associated with longer [life expectancy] for both women and men and a widening of the gender gap in [life expectancy].”

<https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgph.0001214> ;
https://www.npr.org/2023/03/08/1161902940/international-womens-day-gender-equality-life-expectancy?utm_campaign=morning_rounds&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=249413462&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--2-ma3Z1GyudvcOL7E1gq2CgWiAuaWVE4dwGqa_eZa0ISuhWd8aDeN4NJ40CNEPXTpsOoKJHwaEahXCTmml197hwxVqlw&utm_content=249413462&utm_source=hs_email

Medical records. “The prevalence of liver disorders and metabolic syndrome has increased among youth. Glyphosate, the most widely used herbicide worldwide, could contribute to the development of these conditions,” reported *Environmental Health Perspectives*. A team of researchers set out to study “whether lifetime exposure to glyphosate and its degradation product . . . (AMPA)” is a cause. Focusing on California, U.S., they used data from the Center for the Health Assessment of Mothers and Children of Salinas and from California Pesticide Use Reporting and determined that “childhood exposure to glyphosate and AMPA may increase risk of liver and cardiometabolic disorders in early adulthood, which could lead to more serious diseases later in life.” <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP11721>

Using data from the public Global Abortion Policies Database, a research team analyzed “what criminal penalties exist for those who are seeking, providing and assisting in abortions in 182 countries.” They found that “134 countries penalize abortion-seekers, 181 countries penalize abortion-providers and 159 countries penalize person assisting in abortions” and 34 countries “restrict the dissemination of information about abortion.” Reporting in *BMJ Global Health*, they described “what specific penalties abortion seekers and providers face, what factors may increase or decrease those penalties, and the legal sources for these penalties. The findings provide additional evidence of the arbitrariness and potential for stigma associated with the criminalization of abortion and strengthen the case for decriminalization.” <https://gh.bmj.com/content/8/3/e010405>

Using the U.S. “National Cancer Data Base, a nationwide, facility-based oncology data set that captures approximately 70% of all newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer in the U.S.,” researchers studied the records of 107,207 patients who had undergone surgery between January 2010 and December 2017” and received a type of chemotherapy known as NACT. They found that there were “significant racial and ethnic differences” in successful responses to treatment, but these varied by the type of tumor the patient had, they reported in *JAMA*.

https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2802892?utm_term=033023&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_medium=referral&_hsmi=252505538&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--j2_psRUiIwJEfJ4aT6R103TByEJkXx-GBhW1mDT_y4uvWtBL8JRSmnRVAH_8k7A2Z0uYulFvIOLDBOvSzZZ1y9qeaQ&utm_source=For_The_Media

Migration. A fire in a Mexican detention center killed 39 migrants. “Authorities faced mounting scrutiny of their handling of the disaster after video surveillance footage appeared to show guards leaving as flames engulfed a cell with migrants locked inside.” The deaths are being investigated as suspected homicides, the *Guardian* reported, with two federal agents, an immigration official, and five members of a private security company “identified as allegedly responsible” for failing to open doors. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/30/migrant-deaths-at-mexican-detention-facility-centre-investigated-as-suspected-homicide?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Privacy. “Twitter insiders have told the *BBC* that the company is no longer able to protect users from trolling, state-co-ordinated disinformation and child sexual exploitation, following lay-offs and changes under owner Elon Musk.” A *BBC* reporter allowed a team from the International Center for Journalists and the University of Sheffield to track her hate mail “and their data revealed the abuse targeted at me on Twitter had more than tripled since Mr Musk took over, compared with the same period in the year before.” <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-64804007>

Religious records. The Vatican “formally repudiated the ‘Doctrine of Discovery,’ the theories backed by 15th-century ‘papal bulls’ [decrees] that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of Native lands and form the basis of some property laws today,” AP reported. The decrees “‘did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous people’ and have never been considered expressions of the Catholic faith,” the Vatican said. “Indigenous leaders welcomed the statement as a first good step, even though it didn’t address the rescinding of the bulls themselves and continued to take distance from acknowledging actual Vatican culpability in abuses.” https://apnews.com/article/vatican-indigenous-papal-bulls-pope-francis-062e39ce5f7594a81bb80d0417b3f902?user_email=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&utm_medium=Afternoon_Wire&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_campaign=AfternoonWire_March30_2023&utm_term=Afternoon%20Wire

L’Arche is a Christian community in Trosly-Breuil, France, that was founded in 1964 by Jean Vanier, a Catholic former Canadian and Royal Navy officer. After a complaint in the last decade saying Vanier was sexually exploiting women, the community “commissioned independent scholars” to investigate. The researchers have produced two reports, and the finding in the nearly 900-page history is that the L’Arche movement “had at its core a secret, mystical-sexual ‘sect,’ and was founded for the precise purpose of hiding the sect’s deviant activities from church authorities,” AP wrote. “Private correspondence and church archives [were] only recently made available to the L’Arche-commissioned researchers,” who “identified at least 25 women whom Vanier abused.” They said the deviant practices did not extend to the other L’Arche communities, which number more than 150 in 37 countries.

https://apnews.com/article/vatican-larche-catholic-abuse-disabilities-vanier-philippe-cb07166b8eda78a8a446a1c7a22008cb?user_email=f553fa26cd5d27697a335ab74e22a11c9b48c47784712d14145ae3c0ed4aad10&utm_medium=Morning_Wire&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_campaign=MorningWire_March28_2023&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers

Slavery. In 2020 the *Guardian*’s owner, Scott Trust, commissioned academic research “to investigate whether there was any historical connection between chattel slavery and John Edward Taylor, the journalist and cotton merchant who founded the newspaper in 1821, and the other Manchester businessmen who funded its creation,” the *Guardian* reported. “The Scott Trust Legacies of Enslavement report . . . revealed that Taylor, and at least 9 of his 11 backers, had links to slavery, principally through the textile industry.” The research team was “able to identify Taylor’s links to plantations in the Sea Islands, along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, after reviewing an invoice book showing that Shuttleworth, Taylor & Co received cotton from the region, which included the initials and names of plantation owners and enslavers.” The Trust issued an apology and said it plans to invest more than 10 million pounds to “descendant communities linked to the *Guardian*’s 19th-century founders.” https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/mar/28/guardian-owner-apologises-founders-transatlantic-slavery-scott-trust?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email; <https://www.hull.ac.uk/research/institutes/wilberforce/the-scott-trust-legacies-of-enslavement-report>

Technology. The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism issued a report to the Human Rights Council on “Human rights implications of the development, use and transfer of new technologies in the context of counter-terrorism and countering and preventing violent extremism.” After expressing concerns about the uses of biometrics, drones, artificial intelligence in counter-terrorism, and cybersurveillance technologies, her first recommendation to States is to “pass comprehensive domestic legislation protecting individual rights and group rights in the collection of data premised on national security, counter-terrorism, violent extremism or extremism grounds.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/alarms-misuse-high-risk-technologies-global-fight-against-terrorism-says>; https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134552?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=6c6bf55386-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_15_12_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-6c6bf55386-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Documents leaked from NTC Vulkan, a Moscow defense contractor to Russian intelligence agencies, “suggest the firm was supporting operations including both social media disinformation and training to remotely disrupt real-world targets, such as sea, air and rail control systems,” the *Washington Post*, *Spiegel*, and other media reported. Among the more than 5,000 pages of documents are “internal company emails, financial records and contracts that show both the ambition of Russia’s cyber operations and the breadth of the work Moscow has been outsourcing.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/03/30/russian-cyberwarfare-documents-vulkan-files/> (behind paywall); <https://www.spiegel.de/thema/vulkanfiles/>

World War II. Twenty-four members of the Philippine NGO Malaya Lolas (Free Grandmothers) that supports survivors of sexual slavery by the Japanese armed forces during World War II filed a

complaint with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), saying that the Government had not supported their claims against Japan for reparation and that has resulted in “ongoing discrimination.” Responding to the complaint, CEDAW “called for authorities to provide full reparation and an official apology to the survivors, who have suffered decades of physical, psychological and other consequences.” The Philippines is a signatory of the CEDAW treaty, and the Committee “concluded that the Philippines had breached its obligations under the CEDAW Convention.” https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134317?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=b786bf89f9-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_09_01_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-b786bf89f9-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

“About 150,000 Koreans were forced to work in factories and mines in Japan” during WWII, “due to Japan’s colonization of the Korean peninsula from 1910-1945,” *BBC News* explained. “In 2018, South Korea’s Supreme Court ordered Japanese companies to compensate 15 victims of forced labour. But the companies—among them Mitsubishi and Nippon Steel—refused.” The South Korean government now “has controversially agreed to pay compensation to its own citizens who were forced to work in Japanese factories during World War II” by using “donations” from “South Korean companies who benefited from a 1965 post-war treaty.” Both “victims and opponents of the plan in South Korea have criticized the agreement, saying it does not hold Japan accountable.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2018-10. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64858944>

“Anju Niwata, a young Japanese peace activist born and raised in Hiroshima, launched a project called ‘Rebooting Memories,’ which involves colourizing photos taken in the city before the war, featuring survivors, and the families and places lost in the bombing,” *UN News* reported. The UN hailed the project “as a way to breathe new life into conversations about peace, and a world without nuclear weapons.” https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134662?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=7dfdde995d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_21_12_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-7dfdde995d-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Algeria/Morocco. In late February the “director of Moroccan Royal Archives, Bahija Simou, . . . said Morocco’s sovereignty extends of Western Sahara but also Eastern Sahara (which is part of Algeria).” Responding to this claim, Algeria’s Army Chief of Staff said the army “is ready to cut the hand of those who want to undermine Algeria’s sovereignty,” *CrisisWatch* reported. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

Balkan wars. The Serbian NGO Humanitarian Law Centre (HLC) published a dossier “about the crimes committed by the Serbian Volunteer Guard paramilitary unit, also known as Arkan’s Tigers, and urged the authorities in Belgrade to prosecute any suspects who are still alive.” Documents in the dossier show members of the unit “participated in murders, captures, imprisonments, mistreatment and forced displacement of civilians” in various areas of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from 1991-95. The dossier is “based on publicly available police and military documents and testimonies from the Hague Tribunal, media coverage of the unit’s crimes and testimonies gathered by the HLC . . . In the dossier, the HLC identifies by name 189 alleged members of the Serbian Volunteer Guard.” <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/23/serbia-urged-to-prosecute-arkans-paramilitaries-for-war-crimes/>

The trial of Dusan Loncar, a former commander in the Yugoslav army accused of the murder of seven civilians in Lovas, Croatia, in October 1991, began in Belgrade. The indictment said he issued an order to attack the village of Lovas and “cleanse” it; Loncar “stated that he did not issue an order to attack Lovas and he did not recognize the signature on that document as his own,” HLC reported. <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=38749&lang=de>

Caribbean countries. The NGO Migration Policy Institute issued a “policy review” of “Migration, Integration, and Diaspora Engagement in the Caribbean.” A particularly useful table provides a comparison of the varied pathways to permanent residency and citizenship in Caribbean countries. Among the recommendations is: “To facilitate research and effective policymaking, it is vital to expand and improve data collection and to ensure effective dissemination and transparency. For example, making sure data are disaggregated by nationality could support research and understanding of remittances and integration-related indicators, such as access to education and health care and economic inclusion (including unemployment rates, types of employment, and income). There is also notably a

lack of data on irregular migrants, leaving questions such as what share of migrants are irregular and how many irregular migrants participate in the labor force unanswered. Finally, it is crucial to ensure data are accessible and transparent through public, online means. Data on skills and labor needs and the recognition of skills and qualifications earned abroad, for example, will be critical to efforts to leverage diasporas for development.” https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/migration-caribbean-policy?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

France/Russia/Ukraine. The French parliament recognized “the genocidal nature of the forced and planned famine by the Soviet authorities against the Ukrainian population in 1932 and 1933,” *Al Jazeera* reported. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/29/french-mps-recognise-ukraine-soviet-era-famine-as-genocide>

Iraq/United States. During the Iraq war, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) collected biometric data on an estimated 3 million Iraqis, data that the U.S. continues to hold, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. The U.S. also created “a parallel database for the Iraqi government,” and DoD “procurement records” in 2022 showed it sought “contractors to help the Iraqi interior ministry maintain its biometric databases.” An Iraqi man whose data was taken told the reporter, “Before they [the U.S.] had a justification for this. They controlled the area, and they were enforcing their control. Now they left Iraq officially and formally. They have no justification to keep our data.” https://www.context.news/digital-rights/why-does-the-us-still-retain-the-biometrics-of-millions-of-iraqis?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-dataveillance

Israel/Palestine. The Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA) issued a report on demolitions and seizures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in 2022. Throughout the area, “a total of 953 structures were demolished or seized . . . the highest number recorded since 2016;” the construction of 101 of them had been funded by the EU or EU Member States. This 6-year high “was accompanied by a spike in the scale and severity of settler violence; 849 settler incidents recorded in 2022, representing a 58% increase compared with 2021 and a 123% increase compared with 2020.” The report used both EU and UN data. https://www.ecas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/one-year-report-0_en?s=206

Mideast war. “The *Guardian*, in an investigation with the non-profit watchdog Airwars, has now identified six strikes in the Iraqi city of Mosul that killed civilians and appear to have been carried out by British forces in 2016 and 2017.” The investigators “combed through public statements and information from both sides of the Atlantic, including 1,300 coalition documents detailing individual cases of civilian casualties released by the U.S. military in December 2021 after a freedom of information request from the *New York Times*. These were cross-referenced against regular Ministry of Defence updates on strikes, and the dates and locations of all attacks in which the U.K. military claimed it killed or injured IS [Islamic State] fighters, which were released to Airwars after freedom of information requests.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/21/multiple-civilian-deaths-linked-to-2016-17-british-airstrikes-against-is-in-mosul>

Ukraine war. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council. “The body of evidence collected shows that Russian authorities have committed a wide range of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in many regions of Ukraine and in the Russian Federation.” It also documented “a small number of violations committed by Ukrainian armed forces, including likely indiscriminate attacks and two incidents that qualify as war crimes.” During its year of operation, the Commission conducted 610 interviews, “inspected sites of destruction, graves, places of detention and torture, as well as weapon remnants; and consulted documents, photographs, satellite imagery and videos.” The Commission said it received “access and written responses to its queries received from Ukrainian officials,” but did not receive responses from the Russian Federation to official inquiries, although, curiously, an unnamed “Russian governmental institution has referred material to the Commission, which it has examined.” https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiukraine/A_HRC_52_62_AUV_EN.pdf

National news.

Argentina. The *New York Times* reviewed the continuing investigations and trials relating to crimes during the 1976-1983 dictatorship. <https://artdaily.cc/news/155318/Oscar-nominated-film-depicts-road-to-justice-that-is-permanently-alive-#.ZDRICrDMK5c>

Australia. The Yoorrook Truth Commission in Victoria state began a third round of hearings, *justiceinfo.net* reported. Focusing on First Nations children that were forcibly taken from their homes, the Commission heard that the children taken “were processed under criminal forms.” One family who obtained the official records of the children found “blatantly racist comments” about both parents and children and also found that in one case of serious injury, no medical records exist. The NGO Aboriginal Justice Caucus told the Commission “that 93% of Aboriginal children were leaving the [current] child protection system with a criminal charge to their name,” and “2021 data from the Victoria Commission for Children and Young People . . . found that Aboriginal children were nine times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be in youth judicial custody.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2023-02. https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/113364-yoorrook-truth-commission-cold-light-child-protection-system.html?mc_cid=27b40f094f&mc

Belarus. The High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on the 2020 presidential election and its violent aftermath. It drew on “detailed analysis of 207 interviews” and the “over 2500 items of information and evidence” (“photographs, videos, public statements by officials, reports, copies of original medical records, court documents and other digital data”) that the Office “collected, preserved and analysed.” It found “systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations” by government authorities, including the “unlawful deaths” of at least five persons, torture and ill-treatment, over 100 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, and the “arbitrary arrests of tens of thousands of people.” <https://www.jurist.org/news/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/03/G2300897.pdf>

Bermuda. The Minister of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Reform told Parliament that “incidents of revenge porn targeting Bermudian youth have spiked during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic,” *Loop News* reported, but since the laws against revenge porn came into effect in June 2021 “there have been few incidents of revenge porn brought to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions.” https://caribbean.loopnews.com/content/bermuda-reports-spike-revenge-porn-cases-among-youth?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Canada. Canada repealed “historic indecency and anti-abortion laws targeting women and the LGBTQ community,” *Reuters* reported. “By repealing these laws, people with previous convictions can apply for an expungement order for free under the 2018 Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act, which allows for permanent destruction of ‘historically unjust records of conviction.’ Applicants will need information regarding the conviction to meet certain criteria. If the person convicted has passed away, a family member or trustee may apply on their behalf.” https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canada-repeals-historic-laws-targeting-women-lgbtq-community-2023-03-07/?utm_source=reddit.com

Chile. President Gabriel Boric said the government, with the groups of families of disappeared detainees, will develop a “national search plan” for the nearly 1,200 victims of the 1973-1990 Pinochet dictatorship whose remains have yet to be found, *EFE* reported. The plan is to draw on the experience and knowledge of searches in other countries of the region, including Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, Paraguay and Colombia. “Official figures show that some 3,200 people were killed by agents of Pinochet’s government, while 40,000 others underwent torture and arbitrary imprisonment.” https://www.laprensalatina.com/search-for-pinochet-era-missing-a-moral-duty-chilean-president-says/?emci=78f52a8e-efc7-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&emdi=dcbd37dc-f0c7-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&ceid=4606001&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

China. The government announced a reorganization that includes the creation of a national data bureau “responsible for coordinating the sharing and development of data resources, as well as planning the digital economy and promoting initiatives,” *Reuters* reported. “The creation of the data bureau reflects growing anxieties that unchecked data collection by private firms and cross-border data transfer could pose national security risks.” https://www.reuters.com/world/china/what-is-chinas-new-government-restructuring-plan-2023-03-08/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Daily-Briefing&utm_term=030823

Colombia. The Red Cross said “the number of internally displaced people . . . increased significantly last year as several armed groups fought for control of rural pockets of the country.” During 2022 “more than 123,000 people had to flee their homes in rural areas . . . to escape conflict, a 60% increase from

2021,” while an “estimated 39,000 people were confined in their villages for days or weeks, due to threats from armed groups.” https://apnews.com/article/red-cross-violence-displaced-people-colombia-rebels-4cbf6e040a96793a3b2e1d6f71852596?emci=eb2193d0-4cca-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&emdi=7e03b2dc-4dca-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&ceid=4606001&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report on “State-sponsored abductions and enforced disappearances” from 1950 to 2016. “The cases follow two patterns: arbitrary detentions inside the DPRK of its nationals, whose whereabouts and fate have been kept secret and the enforced disappearance of foreigners. These include abductions of nationals of the Republic of Korea during and after the Korean War, non-repatriation of prisoners of war, and abductions or enforced disappearances of nationals from Japan and other countries.” The report is based on 80 interviews with victims, consultations with victims’ groups and civil society organizations using a written questionnaire, “materials submitted by families and civil society organizations, and other publicly available information.” <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/korea-dpr/These-ounds-do-not-heal-EN.pdf>

Ecuador. “Ecuador’s national assembly . . . voted to declassify documents tied to investigations into allegations of corruption at public companies, in a bid to shore up impeachment charges against President Guillermo Lasso,” *Reuters* reported. The resolution “allows legislators access to the presidency’s visitor logs and information from the companies regulator.” Apparently declassification is only for use by the legislators not for the public. https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ecuador-lawmakers-declassify-documents-bid-impeach-lasso-2023-03-14/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Egypt. Human Rights Watch said Egyptian authorities are refusing to “provide or renew the identity documents of dozens of dissidents, journalists, and human rights activists living abroad,” in an apparent attempt to “pressure them to return to near-certain persecution in Egypt. The inability to obtain birth certificates or renew essential documents such as passports and ID cards had hampered access to basic rights for dissidents abroad and their dependent family members. It has effectively undermined their ability to travel, live, and work legally and sometimes jeopardized their ability to obtain essential medical care and educational services or reunite with other family members.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/13/egypt-dissidents-abroad-denied-identity-documents>

El Salvador. During the first full year under the anti-gang emergency measures, “66,417 people have been arrested and 4,304 have been released. Rights groups say there have been 11 deaths in custody and 5,802 suspected cases of rights violations,” *AP* reported. https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/el-salvador-marks-year-anti-gang-crackdown-98167162?emci=ab108e60-30ce-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&emdi=c2905ec4-31ce-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&ceid=4606001&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights “expressed concern over mass detentions and other measures implemented during the state of emergency.” OHCHR’s spokesperson said at least 65,000 people, including children, have been detained during the year and found it “especially worrying that 90 people have allegedly died in custody since the state of emergency was first enacted, and only limited information is available on how the investigations into these deaths are proceeding.” El Salvador’s national human rights institution has “collected nearly 8,000 complaints of rights violations against prisoners.” https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1135097?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=99d7f4a2f3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_29_12_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-99d7f4a2f3-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Iran. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran reported to the Human Rights Council on the death in police custody of Jina Mahsa Aini on 16 September 2022 and the ensuing demonstrations and police crackdown. He traced the sequence of documents relating to her death: first the Legal Medicine Organization released a statement saying the death was not caused by blows, then 30 reports reiterated that conclusion, next a public letter by the head of the provincial Medical Council said the signs in photos are consistent with head injury, then 800 members of the Medical Council criticized the head of the Council for intervening, next a group of forensic doctors in Shiraz protested “the interference of security forces in their work and refuted the official cause of death.” Jina Mahsa Amini’s family was denied access to her autopsy report and was subjected to threats and pressure by the authorities. The recordings of Jina Mahsa Amini’s arrest were not released. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134782>

Israel. In the February issue of *SAHR News*, I had placed Kafr Qassim in Palestine not in Israel. That was wrong; it is a village in Israel. Thanks to Zohar Aloufi for the correction.

Libya. The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya issued its final report, “concluding there are grounds to believe a wide array of war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed by state security forces and armed militia groups.” Since it was established in 2020 to investigate violations of human rights from the beginning of 2016, it undertook “13 missions, conducted more than 400 interviews, and collected more than 2,800 items of information, including photographic and audio-visual imagery.” The Mission will share with the International Criminal Court “relevant material and findings it has collected . . . and a list of individuals it has identified as possible perpetrators of human rights violations and international crimes.” <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/report-independent-fact-finding-mission-libya-ahrc5283-advance-edited-version-enar>

Mexico. Internal documents of the Ministry of National Defense leaked by the hacker group Guacamaya revealed that the Army monitors (among other people) feminist women in Mexico City, some of them minors, and students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, *Serendipia* reported. https://serendipia.digital/investigacion/el-ejercito-mexicano-espia-a-feministas/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-dataveillance

A document in the release by Guacamaya showed “that the country’s armed forces used Pegasus [spyware] to intercept communications between activist Raymundo Ramos and several journalists regarding allegations of extrajudicial killings by the army,” the *Guardian* reported. Upon hearing the allegations of human rights abuses, the Congress decided to “launch a federal commission to investigate.” https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/15/mexico-to-investigate-alleged-human-rights-abuses-by-military-after-spying-claims?emci=fc370d50-35c3-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&emdi=e5527d49-36c3-ed11-a8e0-00224832e811&ceid=4606001&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

The U.S. NGO National Security Archive posted 20 documents from the Guacamaya leak of Mexican military records that reveal the Mexican military had the Ayotzinapa teachers’ college “under surveillance and considered its students to be subversives,” long before the 43 young men from the school were forcibly disappeared in 2014. “The military records also reveal that Mexico’s National Defense Ministry worked to shield the institution from civilian scrutiny during the investigation into the disappearance . . . and that Mexico’s Defense Secretary oversaw a propaganda campaign to discredit the parents, their lawyers and a group of experts assigned to assist in the case by a United Nations commission.” <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/mexico-ayotzinapa/2023-03-10/guacamaya-leaks-and-ayotzinapa-case>

The Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) on the missing Ayotzinapa students said “Mexican authorities have failed to carry out all arrests ordered by prosecutors over the 2014 disappearance of 43 students and the military has denied access to important information,” *Reuters* reported. The Group “said the military had told them that certain documents and records did not exist even after the GIEI had obtained some of those records.” One of the members of the Group said, “The case cannot be resolved by withholding information or giving answers that don’t match up with reality.” <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/mexico-has-not-carried-out-all-arrest-orders-missing-students-case-experts-say-2023-03-31/>

Montenegro. “Citing a European police agency EUROPOL report to the Montenegrin government from last May, news portal *Libertas Press* on March 23 published photos and SKY app transcripts of police special unit officers and members of the notorious Kavac drug gangs. In the published photos, special unit police officers are seen beating prisoners, putting guns in the mouths, suffocating them and torturing them with electricity,” *BIRN* reported. The NGO Human Rights Action said it had “reported 20 cases of police brutality to prosecution since last 2019, but there was no investigation;” it called on the Special State Prosecution to act. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/24/montenegro-urged-to-probe-photos-of-police-brutality-gang-links/>

Myanmar. The election commission ordered 40 political parties to dissolve “for failing to meet a registration deadline ahead of elections.” Among the “dissolved” is Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy, which had “already announced that it would not register,” *AP* reported. <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-suu-kyi-election-56e40c56ce6abcd21ba55e6f552efc7a>

The NGO Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is “monitoring the significant increase in labour and human rights abuses of garment workers across the country since the military takeover” on 1 February 2021 and has created a “tracker of allegations of garment worker abuse.” By January 2023, it had “documented 198 cases of alleged labour and human rights abuses perpetrated against at least 104,000 garment workers, revealing widespread and systematic abuse in international brands’ supply chains. The workers affected by allegations recorded so far are employed at 117 factories producing for at least 42 global fashion brands and retailers including Inditex, H&M Group, Bestseller & Primark.” <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/big-issues/labour-rights/myanmar-garment-worker-allegations-tracker/>

Nicaragua. The UN-appointed Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua said the government “has committed serious and systematic violations which amount to crimes against humanity,” *Al Jazeera* reported. The Group “documented more than 100 cases of executions, hundreds of cases of torture and arbitrary detention, and thousands of cases of political persecution” since 2018. Jan Simon, the chair of the Group, told a press briefing that the government was “weaponizing the functions of the state against the population.” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/3/un-experts-accuse-nicaragua-of-committing-crimes-against-humanity>; https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134072?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Pakistan. The National Database and Registration Authority “has issued some 120 million Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC) to 96% of adults in Pakistan. The CNIC database is accessed by about 300 public and private service providers, and there have been several data breaches,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. Now the government has launched Ijazat Aap Ki Service “that allows people to give, or refuse, consent for transactions requiring verification with their national ID.” https://www.context.news/newsletter?id=b1aaf4dcc8fbe33e1e533c98696cede6&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-dataveillance

Peru. Fifteen UN experts “expressed deep concern about ongoing allegations of repression, arbitrary killings, arrests, detention, and enforced disappearances of demonstrators in Peru and urged authorities to establish a genuine dialogue with the people to end the country’s political crisis.” Quoting the published report by Peru’s Ombudsperson’s Office, they said “since the protests began in December 2022, 48 protesters and one law enforcement agent have been killed, while 1301 persons have been injured. Hundreds have been arrested. Allegations of at least one case of enforced disappearance of demonstrators have been received.” The experts “underlined the important role played by the Ombudsperson’s Office in monitoring and collecting evidence of violations and called on the authorities to support the institution, to guarantee its independence and ensure the safety of its staff.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/peru-un-experts-call-end-violence-during-demonstrations-urge-respect-human>

The *New York Times* published the result of its investigation of the lethal force used during the protests that began in early December. “Forty-nine civilians have been killed, and more than 970 have been injured, according to Peru’s ombudsman. . . . The *Times* analyzed hundreds of videos and images, reviewed autopsy and ballistics reports, and spoke to witnesses and experts,” closely examining eight deaths in three locations. It said “the military and the police used delay tactics, often in apparent violation of their own protocols, which call for a reasonable and proportionate amount of force when responding to civil unrest.” And although the Public Ministry is investigating the President and various ministers for crimes related to the protests, it “announced in an internal document on Feb. 27 that it will no longer provide investigative services, including the use of forensics and ballistics experts—services that can be crucial for human rights investigations—unless specifically called for by the country’s top prosecutors.” <https://silk-news.com/2023/03/16/world/protests-in-peru-how-police-used-lethal-force-against-demonstrators/>

Poland. “Jacek Karnowski, a politician key to the liberal opposition’s campaign for the 2019 general elections, was spied on by intelligence services using Pegasus [spyware], *Gazeta Wyborcza* revealed.” The paper says “it found Karnowski’s name on a list of monitored individuals” through the work of the Pegasus Project consortium, a group of 17 news organizations around the world that investigated governments’ spying on journalists, opposition politicians, activists, business people and others using the Pegasus spyware developed by the Israeli company NSO Group. “It is impossible to say what data the services took from Karnowski’s phone, *Wyborcza* reports, because the device was ‘cleaned up’ of data. In Poland, secret services are obliged to delete data they collect if they do not uncover or confirm a

crime during the investigation,” *BIRN* explained. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/03/new-pegasus-target-identified-in-poland/>

Polish private broadcaster *TVN* said the late Pope John Paul II “knew about child abuse in Poland’s Catholic church years before becoming pontiff and helped cover it up,” *France 24* reported. The investigator for the broadcast said he had access to “documents from the former Communist-era SB secret police and rare church documents,” although the “Krakow diocese had refused him access to its own documentary archives. The Polish church has, in the past, refused to provide documents to the judiciary or a public commission of enquiry investigating cases of church abuse of minors.” <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230306-pope-john-paul-ii-covered-up-child-abuse-as-cardinal>

Russia. Members of the UN Working Group on the use of Mercenaries, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and other UN Special Rapporteurs said in a statement “they were ‘deeply disturbed’ by reports of the systematic recruitment of prisoners across Russia by the private military contractor known as the Wagner Group,” said *UN News*. “Reports that recruited prisoners were allegedly taken to a detention facility in the Rostov region for training before being sent to Ukraine, and that they were transferred to Ukraine without identification documents and required to sign a contract with the Wagner Group are deeply disturbing.” https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134447?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=9e9632cbdd-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_11_01_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-9e9632cbdd-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

“Russian authorities . . . raided the homes and offices of multiple human rights advocates and historians with the prominent rights group Memorial that won the Nobel Peace Prize last year,” *AP* reported. And Russia’s Investigative Committee opened a criminal case against Memorial on “charges of rehabilitating Nazism, punishable by up to five years in prison. Memorial runs a database of victims of political repressions, and among the names are three people who were convicted in Soviet times over collaboration with Nazi Germany. The group said that authorities are using those names on the list in their case against Memorial.” <https://www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/russia-raids-memorial-nobel-putin-crackdown/2023/03/21/id/1112934/>

The Sakharov Center, named for Russian dissident Andrei Sakharov, must vacate its current location by the end of April, dismantling its museum exhibit focused on the repressions of the Soviet gulag and removing the Sakharov archives, the *Washington Post* reported. The chair of the Center’s board said he “has no idea where the center will house its museum collection and the archives.” <https://theagiletribune.com/2023/03/02/sakharov-center-forced-to-close-as-wartime-russia-purges-human-rights-groups/news/world/>

Syria. The NGO Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC) issued its annual report, noting “how the February 2023 earthquake in Türkiye and Syria altered the landscape of Syrian justice issues.” Annex II is a very useful list of Syria-related universal jurisdiction cases around the world. <https://syriaaccountability.org/the-state-of-justice-in-syria-2023/>

SJAC also issued a report on the Syrian Government’s intentional use of mine clearance weapons against civilians. “While demining is the conventional usage of these weapons, videos clearly show that Russia and now Syria have used UR-77s [a self-propelled rocket launcher] to kill civilians, inflict severe damage to swaths of land and to gut critical infrastructure.” Unusually, “all video footage of the attacks in this report is filmed by the Syrian Armed Forces. SJAC nonetheless was able to authenticate the accuracy of these videos and confirm that they depict the deployment of these weapons.” In total they identified more than 30 such attacks in 16 locations between 2014 and 2019. <https://syriaaccountability.org/destruction-like-we-had-never-seen/>

Tunisia. Archivist Adel Maizi chaired the “memory committee” at Tunisia’s Truth and Dignity Commission from 2014 to 2019. He was interviewed by *justiceinfo.net* about the work and explained the disposition of the Commission’s archives: “Since the authorities have not set up a structure for the study and development of the truth commission archives, it was forced to deliver its 10,000 boxes of archives to the National Archives, and its audiovisual recordings, containing the private testimony of victims, to the Prime Minister’s office.” https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/113511-adel-maizi-remembrance-is-not-just-about-the-past-it-helps-build-the-future.html?mc_ci

Türkiye. A group of human rights lawyers presented a 4,000-page dossier to the International Criminal Court’s prosecution office, calling on it “to open an investigation into alleged crimes they say were committed by Turkish authorities against thousands of opponents of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan,” *AP* reported. They “alleged that more than 200,000 people were victims of a crackdown that began after a failed 2016 coup.” Included among other allegations was the “‘discriminatory’ withdrawal or refusal to extend passports and refusal to issue identity cards.” <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-erdogan-international-criminal-court-gulen-d721e8daf0e8d57119f5c55d78372d30>

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that Türkiye violated the rights of three academics whose passports were “withdrawn” in 2016 after they “signed a petition calling for an end to the conflict between Turkish security forces and the militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK,” *BIRN* reported. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/21/turkey-unfairly-cancelled-peace-seeking-academics-passports-court/>

United Kingdom. A report on London’s Metropolitan Police led by Baroness Louise Casey found institutional racism, sexism and homophobia in the police. The 363-page report’s Annex B on methodology described a range of sources and stated, “The Review has been given an unprecedented level of access to Met documents, data, staff, officers and sites.” <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023.pdf>

United States. A research team used 2015-2021 data from New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Philadelphia on firearm assaults that resulted to an injury to a child, they reported in *JAMA Public Health*. Taking 15 March 2020 as the start of the pandemic, they found that “the pandemic was associated with nearly a 2-fold increase in child firearm assault rates,” with the increase largest in New York City and among non-Hispanic Black children whose rate more than quadrupled. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2802128?utm_term=030823&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_medium=referral&_hsmi=249413462&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9TYw3sqca9GrOD9t2qmuM8qK_mUmxhrLpfJBEfK-hqnOEqLrKqPZY_2Ru_bb9dRfdZu2gCMQv433Y2LlccyivsrIIWw&utm_source=For_The_Media

A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “using US period-linked birth and death data” found that “Black babies experienced the highest rate of sudden unexpected deaths (SIDS) in 2020, dying at almost three times the rate of White infants,” the *Washington Post* reported. The research also “found a 15% increase in sudden infant deaths among babies of all races from 2019 to 2020, making SIDS the third leading cause of infant death in the United States after congenital abnormalities and the complications of premature birth.” https://www.phillytrib.com/news/rise-in-infant-deaths-hits-black-families-hardest-study-finds/article_51519c4a-185e-5b0d-8f75-999628fb0c2f.html

The U.S. Department of Justice investigated the Louisville, Kentucky, police department and concluded that it and its county government “engage in a pattern or practice of conduct that deprives people of their rights under the Constitution and federal law.” The finding was based on police and county government data, “many thousands of documents and thousands of hours of body-worn camera footage,” and interviews. https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1573011/download?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

The U.S. Department of Justice announced that “a federal jury convicted former Bureau of Prisons Lieutenant Kevin Pearce . . . on two counts of obstruction for writing false reports about the assaults of two federal inmates by corrections officers under Pearce’s command.” <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-kentucky-federal-prison-lieutenant-convicted-covering-assaults-two-federal-inmates>

Data released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation said “reported hate crime incidents increased 11.6% from 8,120 in 2020 to 9,065 in 2021,” *Axios* reported. “Around 65% of the victims were targeted because of their race, ethnicity, or ancestry,” while 16% were linked to sexual orientation and 14% to religious bias. <https://www.axios.com/2023/03/13/fbi-hate-crimes-2021-increase>

“To provide researchers with the tools they need to analyze the impact of U.S. border security policy, EFF [Electronic Frontier Foundation] is releasing a new map and dataset of more than 290 surveillance towers installed by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) along the border with Mexico. Compiled using public records, satellite imagery, road trips, and even exploration in virtual reality, EFF’s data

serves as a living snapshot of the so-called ‘virtual wall,’ from the California coast to the lower tip of Texas.” <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2023/03/cbp-expanding-its-surveillance-tower-program-us-mexico-border-and-were-mapping-it>

A Norfolk Southern train carrying 1.6 million pounds of hazardous chemicals derailed on 3 February in the small Ohio town of East Palestine. “In leaked audio heard by the *Guardian*, a [Norfolk Southern] manager . . . can be heard explaining to a former carman that they should stop tagging railcars for broken bearings. The manager says doing so delays other cargo. A wheel-bearing failure was cited as the cause of the crash in a preliminary report released by the National Transportation Safety Board.”

https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/mar/03/us-rail-workers-east-palestine-ohio-train-crash?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=230303

Publications.

Freedom House published *Freedom in the World 2023*, its 50th annual comparative report: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2023/marking-50-years>

The Syria Justice and Accountability Centre’s training on the principles of genocide crimes is available in English and Arabic: <https://syriaaccountability.org/documentation-practices/#gen>

Sana Mustafa, “Flipping the narrative: The roots of the refugee protection system are colonial and racist,” *The New Humanitarian*: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/first-person/2023/03/14/flipping-narrative-roots-refugee-protection-system-are-colonial-and-racist?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=9b6ebcf3de-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_17_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-9b6ebcf3de-75545741

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