
ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights

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Commentary.

Citizenship is complicated. It can be gained by birth or naturalization, excluded by gender or race, lost by a woman's marriage to a foreign national or by act of government, renounced as Maria Callas did with her U.S. citizenship to regain her ancestral Greek citizenship. A person might have serial citizenship without individual effort: a person born in Kiev, Ukraine, during Tsarist rule, for example, would have been a Russian citizen, then a citizen of the USSR, and now a Ukrainian citizen. Dual citizenship is also complicated. One can be simultaneously a Portuguese and U.S. citizen, for example, holding citizenship in two UN member states, or a citizen of both Canada and Cree Nation, one a UN member state and another a national Indigenous body within the state.

Citizenship implies both inclusion and exclusion: you are with us or you are not with us. Issues of citizenship arose remarkably often in February.

“More than 300 Nicaraguans were stripped of their citizenship by authorities in February, including students, journalists, literary figures and human rights defenders,” *Courthouse News Service* reported. On 9 February, 222 of these now stateless persons were forcibly deported to the U.S.; the same day the National Assembly reformed Article 21 of the Constitution to revoke the citizenship of the deportees and “other opposition members already in exile,” which “prevents them from returning to Nicaragua,” *CrisisWatch* reported. <https://www.courthousenews.com/ortega-regime-accused-of-criminalizing-civil-society-in-nicaragua/>; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>

Meanwhile in Israel, the Knesset passed an amendment to the 1952 Citizenship Law, revoking the citizenship or residency of citizens or permanent residents who meet three conditions, *Al Monitor* reported:

1. The person must have been convicted of terror, aiding terror, harming Israeli sovereignty, inciting war or aiding an enemy during wartime.
2. He or she must have been sentenced to jail time.
3. The person or someone on their behalf receives stipends from the Palestinian Authority while in prison.

A court will rule on each pending revocation proposed by the interior minister. It is not clear how many people will be affected.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/02/israel-approves-law-deport-palestinians-convicted-terrorism#ixzz7vlifu5nP>

And then there is the case of Shamima Begum, a British woman who, at the age of 15, went to Syria to marry an ISIS fighter. U.K. “authorities withdrew her British citizenship on national security grounds soon after she surfaced in a Syrian refugee camp in 2019,” *CBS/AP* reported. With her husband and three children now all dead, she wants to return to London, but the Special Immigration Appeals Commission said “evidence was ‘insufficient’ for Begum to win the argument that the deprivation of her British citizenship failed to respect her human rights.” The U.K. also said she “could seek a Bangladeshi passport based in family ties,” but her family said she has “never held a Bangladeshi passport.” Stateless, she is stuck. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/shamima-begum-uk-ex-isis-bride-in-syria-loses-british-citizenship-appeal/>

Turning to cases involving Indigenous bodies, in Finland (see item below) the Sami Indigenous people are confronting the question of citizenship, as the government proposes a new law governing Sami

identity and, therefore, the right to be a part of the population governed by the Sami Parliament. And in Canada (also see item below) a man who has discovered his birthmother was Cree is seeking to have his birth registration changed to he can gain the benefits of a citizen of the Metis Nation.

Citizenship brings benefits such as social security and health care, the right to vote on governance, and the right to have a passport that allows travel across borders. Without citizenship an individual's rights fall away and the person is left vulnerable to arbitrary actions with no legal recourse. The documents of citizenship, from birth certificates to naturalization records to registers of Indigenous groups, are vital records indeed.

SAHR News. On behalf of the International Council on Archives, SAHR prepared three responses to calls for comments by United Nations bodies:

*For the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, a comment on "Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms;"

*For the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a comment on "The importance of casualty recording for the promotion and protection of human rights;"

*For the United Nations' Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, a comment on "New Technologies and Enforced Disappearances."

International news.

United Nations. "Curtailling pollution created by pharmaceuticals, agricultural and healthcare sectors is essential to reduce the emergence, transmission, and spread of superbugs--strains of bacteria that have become resistant to every known antibiotic--and other instances of antimicrobial resistance, known as AMR," the UN Environment Program (UNEP) wrote in a new report. Calling AMR an "urgent and critical threat to animal and plant health, food security and economic development," UNEP made a series of recommendations, including "develop and integrate surveillance approaches, including transparency in data collection for AMR, AMU and antimicrobial residues across all 'One Health' sectors" and "gather accurate data on the socioeconomic risks of AMR, to include data disaggregated by sex and age, and determine how it can be most cost-effectively collected and analysed in low resource settings." <https://www.unep.org/resources/superbugs/environmental-action>

The UN Development Program sponsored a two-year research process to help "understand the nature of violent extremism in Africa to better inform both policy and programming to prevent and address the spread of violent extremism," a follow-up to its 2017 study. "The evidence presented reaffirms the need for a fundamental change of approach to addressing violent extremism in Africa," replacing the "militarized approaches [that] have continued to predominate in sub-Saharan Africa over the last 5 years." The report is the product of an "intensive two-year research process, undertaken in areas of sub-Saharan Africa that have been most directly affected by violent extremist activity. Interviews with former members of VE [violent extremist] groups were conducted in eight countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan." Amazingly, 2,196 "former VE group members were interviewed" for this study between May 2020 and August 2021. This is precious data for future research. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/07/rights-abuses-often-tipping-point-for-extremist-recruitment-un-study-finds>

The Centre for Humanitarian Data, part of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for the fourth year produced *The State of Open Humanitarian Data*. It drew information from its Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) portal, which is "an open platform for finding and sharing data across crises and organizations" with data in six categories: affected people, coordination and context, food security and nutrition, geography and infrastructure, health and education, and population and socio-economy. The report estimates that "73% of relevant, complete crisis data is available across 25 locations with humanitarian operations." <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/2048a947-5714-4220-905b-e662cbcd14c8/resource/9d4121c6-b32b-4eb8-a707-209c79241970/download/state-of-open-humanitarian-data-2023.pdf>

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), “patent applications rose—slightly—to more than 278,000 in 2022—the highest number ever recorded in a single year.” The patenting leader was the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei, which filed “well over 7,600.” https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133992?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=bb5182a419-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_01_01_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-bb5182a419-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

World Health Organization. The World Health Organization’s report, *Trends in Maternal Mortality*, said its data estimated 287,000 maternal deaths worldwide in 2020 (223 per 100,000 live births), which was a decrease from 309,000 in 2016 but far from the UN Sustainable Development Goal of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030. About 70% of the maternal deaths in 2020 were in sub-Saharan Africa. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133802?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=89f98f200e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_02_24_01_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-89f98f200e-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus told the WHO board that an investigation by the U.N. Office of Internal Oversight Services into the report that “dozens of aid workers including some from the WHO were involved in sexual abuse and exploitation during an Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo” found the allegations against senior staff “unsubstantiated,” *Reuters* reported. The three staff members who had been suspended will return to work. The report did find “institutional shortcomings” in WHO’s handling of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and the Director said “these were already being addressed.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-10. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-found-no-managerial-misconduct-who-congo-sex-scandal-2023-01-31/>

World/general news.

Business. NGO Global Witness filed a “groundbreaking greenwashing complaint with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the U.S. agency charged with protecting investors, showing how Shell overstates its investments in renewable energy by including gas-related activities, such as integrated power, gas marketing and trading, hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage.” The NGO estimated that Shell’s efforts at “renewables and energy solutions” was only “1.5% of the company’s overall spending,” and pointed out that “fossil gas is anything but a renewable.” Greenwashing is when a company or organization spends more time and money on marketing itself as being sustainable than on actually minimizing its environmental impact. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/fossil-gas/shell-faces-groundbreaking-complaint-misleading-us-authorities-and-investors-its-energy-transition-efforts/>

Meanwhile in London nearly 14,000 people from two Nigerian communities filed suit against Shell, “claiming it is responsible for devastating pollution of their water sources and destruction of their way of life,” the *Guardian* reported. “A report by the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland found that infants in the Niger delta were twice as likely to die in their first month of life if their mothers lived near an oil spill—a study which suggested there were 11,000 premature deaths a year in the Niger delta.” Shell is preparing to leave the delta after 86 years of operations. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/02/nearly-14000-nigerians-take-shell-to-court-over-devastating-impact-of-pollution?utm_term=Autofeed&CMP=tw_t b-gdnnews&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1675317876

Two French and four Ugandan NGOs brought suit in France against TotalEnergies, saying the development of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline “failed to adhere to a ‘duty of vigilance,’ a 2017 law that compels companies to avoid grave harm to human rights, health, safety and the environment.” However, *AFP* reported, the court ruled the case “inadmissible” because the NGOs “did not currently follow court procedures.” Based on the same 2017 law, two Yemeni men filed suit in Paris; they were “allegedly detained in secret and then tortured by Emirati forces at a gas plant used as a prison” in Yemen, *Middle East Eye* reported. Total is the largest shareholder in Yemen LNG, the company operating the gas plant, where production had stopped in 2015 as Yemen’s war spread around the site. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/business-and-tech/20230228-french-court-dismisses-case-against-totalenergies-e-africa-oil-project>; <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemen-total-lawsuit-torture-detention-uae-gas-plant>

The Hydro Alunorte refinery in Barcarena, Brazil, owned by Norsk Hydro ASA, refines bauxite, which ultimately becomes industrial aluminum. A 2021 class-action lawsuit in the Netherlands on behalf of 11,000 residents of communities around the Alunorte refinery alleges the refinery pollutes rivers and streams, causing health problems including cancer, hair loss, neurological dysfunction, birth defects and

increased mortality. Brazil's Casa Civil, an office that reports to the president, documented "chronic aluminum contamination" in Barcarena's rivers and streams in 2018. "Residents showed *Bloomberg* the results of medical tests . . . in the case of one woman, 175 times the limit for aluminum in her hair and 81 times higher in her blood." *Bloomberg* traced the bauxite/aluminum from Barcarena to Ford Motor Company where it is used in cars and its electronic F-150 pickup truck. The article includes a helpful diagram of the process of extraction of ore. <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2023-ford-f150-electric-car-rainforest-damage/?leadSource=verify%20wall>

For more than 40 years Zantac, manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline, was a bestselling medication for heartburn and related diseases; it was forced off the market in the U.S. in 2020 after the Food and Drug Administration determined that its formula contained ranitidine, a "probable carcinogen." *Bloomberg News* "reviewed court filings, many still under seal, as well as studies, FDA transcripts and new drug applications obtained via Freedom of Information Act requests" which show that "Glaxo had been warned by its own scientists and independent researchers about the potential danger," and the company "also backed flawed research designed to minimize concerns and chose not to routinely transport and store the medication in ways that could have eased the problem. Glaxo sold a drug that might harm people, tried to discount evidence of that and never gave any one the slightest warning." And although the FDA "considered the cancer risks" when approving the drug in in 1970s, "Glaxo didn't share a critical study" with the government. <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/health-law-and-business/zantacs-maker-kept-quiet-about-cancer-risks-for-40-years>

The High Court of Justice in London ruled that the London-registered chemical trading firm Savaro Ltd. is "liable towards the victims" of the explosion of ammonium nitrate in Beirut's (Lebanon) harbor in 2020 that killed more than 200, injured over 6,000 and damaged large parts of the city, *AP* reported. Savaro Ltd. "is suspected of having chartered the shipment of the ammonium nitrate in 2013 that ended up in Beirut. Documents show a handful of senior political, judicial and security officials were aware of the substance in the port for years, but did not take decisive action to get rid of it." Meanwhile, "the Swiss foundation Accountability Now and some of the victims' families filed a lawsuit in Texas [U.S.] against U.S.-Norwegian geophysical services group TGS, which owns a company that allegedly sub-chartered the ship carrying the ammonium nitrate in 2012. Foundation officials said they hoped it would force the company to disclose communications with other parties being investigated." <https://apnews.com/article/london-lawsuits-explosions-26e70e34d65177a190ee1afac0dd42f4>

"In a first-of-its-kind proposed order, filed by the [U.S.] Department of Justice on behalf of the FTC [Federal Trade Commission], GoodRx will be prohibited from sharing user health data with applicable third parties for advertising purposes, and has agreed to pay a \$1.5 million civil penalty for violating the rule." The Federal Trade Commission accused the app's developer, GoodRx Holdings, of sharing sensitive personal data on millions of users' prescription medications and illnesses with Facebook, Google and other companies without authorization. <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2023/02/ftc-enforcement-action-bar-goodrx-sharing-consumers-sensitive-health-info-advertising>

By signing an agreement with the Armenian government and the Eurasian Development Bank, Lydian Armenia gained the right to operate the Amulsar gold mine, *JAMnews* reported. After protests about harm to the environment that the mine would cause, the Armenian government hired a Lebanese company, ELARD, to review the plans. "After a year of research the company published a conclusion that the development of the Amulsar field does not contain 'unmanaged risks' for the environment. But it turned out that the ELARD experts had relied on studies previously conducted by local structures." An Armenian ecologist said that if the mine is "put in operation, the city of Jermuk and Lake Sevan, located next to the mine, 'will be lost to Armenia as resort areas'." For background see *HRWG News* 2018-07. <https://jam-news.net/amulsar-mine-in-armenia/>

Climate change. The Geneva operational center of Doctors without Borders "took the rare step of publishing the full audit of its carbon footprint last year. It also released a roadmap outlining steps to meet its goal of halving emissions by 2030 (based on 2019 baselines)," *The New Humanitarian* reported. https://genevasolutions.news/climate-environment/why-this-ngo-is-publishing-its-carbon-emissions?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email

Freedom of press. Media Freedom Rapid Response, a project of the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom that monitors media freedom violations in EU states and candidate countries, said in its annual report that in 2022, in addition to ten journalists killed—9 in the Ukraine war and one in Turkey—it recorded 415 media freedom violations in EU Member States and 398 in EU candidate countries involving 1,339 individuals or media outlets, *BIRN* reported. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/02/07/ukraine-war-increases-media-freedom-violations-in-europe-report/>

Indian tax authorities searched the *BBC* offices in New Delhi and Mumbai for three days, saying it had evidence of tax evasion, *Al Jazeera* reported. “The Press Trust of India news agency cited unnamed officials as saying . . . that investigators collected financial data from select *BBC* staffers and made copies of electronic and paper data.” The raids came three weeks after *BBC* released a documentary critical of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “leadership as chief minister of the western state of Gujarrat during riots in 2002.” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/17/india-accuses-bbc-of-tax-evasion-after-searching-offices>

Human trafficking. Trials started in early 2023 in the Netherlands and Italy of “two Eritrean men arrested last fall and charged with crimes linked to human trafficking in Libya,” *justiceinfo.net* reported. “They are the result of strong cooperation between states on crimes that the International Criminal Court committed itself to prosecute more than six years ago but has not done.” The Italian case is coordinated by the public prosecutor in Palermo, Sicily; “insider witnesses and informants have historically been key to the mafia trials, which also make Italy and especially Palermo experienced in handling organized criminal networks cases.” The Sicilian prosecutor said that from information provided by an Eritrean who was part of the trafficking network in Libya, they “started with telephone tapping but also with searches and seizures” and have “managed to reconstruct the criminal network of these organizations,” leading to arrests of 14 Eritrean traffickers. https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/112508-human-trafficking-libya-icc-promises-national-courts-act.html?mc_cid=b058da3fa5&mc_eid=cac5f32aeb

Medical records. Using “annual sex-specific age-standardized suicide mortality estimated . . . from the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Health Estimates database,” the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 and World Bank data, researchers found “the suicide mortality rate in the Region of the Americas has been increasing, while decreasing in all other World Health Organization regions,” they reported in *The Lancet*. During the period 2000-2019, suicide rates among males in the Americas “decreased as health expenditure per capita and proportion of the country with a moderate population density increased,” but suicide mortality increased when the area had an increasing rate of homicide, prevalence of intravenous drug and alcohol use, and unemployment rate increase. For females the picture was different, decreasing “as the number of employed medical doctors per 10,000 population and the proportion of the country with a moderate population density increased” and increasing “when relative education inequality and unemployment rate increased.” [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanam/article/PIIS2667-193X\(23\)00024-8/fulltext?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanam/article/PIIS2667-193X(23)00024-8/fulltext?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

A study from Duke University’s Sanford School of Public Policy (U.S.) showed how large is the market for people’s health data. The researcher found 11 companies “willing to sell bundles of data that included information on what antidepressants people were taking, whether they struggled with insomnia or attention issues, and details on other medical ailments, including Alzheimer’s disease or bladder-control difficulties,” the *Washington Post* reported. One company “sold a database featuring thousands of aggregated mental health records, starting at \$275 for 1,000 ‘ailment contacts’.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/02/13/mental-health-data-brokers/>

Migration. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said as of 1 February “nearly 1,000 migrant children separated at the U.S.-Mexico border” by the former administration “have yet to be reunited with their parents,” *Reuters* reported. Of the 998 children still separated, 148 are in the “process of reunification.” The Department said it has done the “painstaking work of combing through ‘patchwork’ information kept by the Trump administration on the policy” and so far has found that “3,924, mostly Central American, children were separated at the border.” https://www.reuters.com/world/us/close-1000-migrant-children-separated-by-trump-yet-be-reunited-with-parents-2023-02-02/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Daily-Briefing&utm_term=020323

A study by the International Organization for Migration found that “digital technology has made it easier for migrant smugglers to exchange money, goods, and information.” The researchers surveyed

531 migrants in transit in the Western Hemisphere region and found “64% had access to a smartphone and the internet during their journey.” https://reliefweb.int/report/guatemala/iom-social-media-facilitates-migrant-smuggling-mexico-central-america-and-dominican-republic?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

The Mexican Refugee Assistance Commission (COMAR) received 12,863 refugee petitions in January 2023, compared to 6,497 filed in January 2022, *Border Report* said. During 2022 the largest number of refugees came from Honduras (more than 31,000), but a COMAR official said, “For the first time in our history Afghan nationals are among the top 10 applicants.” https://www.borderreport.com/immigration/refugee-petitions-soaring-in-mexico/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Technology. In what may be a first, Judge Juan Manuel Padilla in Cartagena, Colombia, “has caused a stir by admitting he used the artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT when deciding whether an autistic child’s insurance should cover all of the costs of his medical treatment. He also used precedent from previous rulings to support his decision,” the *Guardian* reported. The judge “concluded that the entirety of the child’s medical expenses and transport costs should be paid by his medical plan as his parents could not afford them.” That ruling was the same as ChatGPT’s response. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/feb/03/colombia-judge-chatgpt-ruling?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

“Images in a graphic novel that were created using the artificial-intelligence system Midjourney should not have been granted copyright protection, the U.S. Copyright Office said,” reported *Reuters*. It said it could give copyright registration to the book but would “omit images that ‘are not the product of human authorship’ and therefore cannot be copyrighted.” https://www.reuters.com/legal/ai-created-images-lose-us-copyrights-test-new-technology-2023-02-22/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Daily-Briefing&utm_term=022323

The Spanish firm Eliminalia manipulates “online information on behalf of a global roster of clients, an investigation by *The Washington Post* and other media partners found. . . . The investigation, based on nearly 50,000 internal company records, shows that the firm made millions of dollars by selling disinformation services.” The investigation also revealed “how laws meant to protect intellectual property and privacy are being misused to distort online discourse.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2023/eliminalia-fake-news-misinformation/>

Vital records. “While the revolutionary science of genetic genealogy has received well-earned recognition for its role” in solving genealogical mysteries, a sociology professor said “the integral role of the more staid vital records system has mostly gone unnoticed.” Writing in *The Conversation*, she contrasted the decentralized U.S. system of vital records, with over 6,000 local registrar offices nationally, with those of Northern Europe which have “centralized and integrated systems.” https://theconversation.com/how-records-of-lifes-milestones-help-solve-cold-cases-pinpoint-health-risks-and-allocate-public-resources-196871?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily%20newsletter%20February%2015%202023&utm_content=Daily%20newsletter%20February%2015%202023+Version+A+CID_567ebca9f1d11c8e59f12df1e56dff4&utm_source=campaign_monitor_us&utm_term=How%20records%20of%20lifes%20milestones%20help%20solve%20cold%20cases%20pinpoint%20health%20risks%20and%20allocate%20public%20resources

World War II. The Netherlands’ largest archives on World War II will become accessible digitally after January 2025, *Reuters* reported. The 32 million pages include information on “300,000 mostly Dutch people who The Netherlands investigated for collaboration with German occupiers. Only a fifth appeared before a court, while most concerned light cases like being a member of the nationalist socialist movement.” Some people, particularly first-generation descendants of people named, are concerned that opening the records will also reopen “old hostilities and suspicions.” The final decision on access apparently has not been made. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/dutch-war-archive-name-suspected-nazi-collaborators-online-2023-02-16/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Weekend-Briefing&utm_term=021823

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Algeria/France. In August 2022, France and Algeria announced each country would appoint a number of historians to serve as a joint commission to study “contentious issues of historical memory.” Algeria named its panel members in November; on 26 January France named its five historians, *Le Monde* reported. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-08. <https://histoirecoloniale.net/Nomination-de-la-partie-francaise-de-la-commission-mixte-d-historiens-franco.html>

Argentina/Brazil/Italy/Uruguay. In 2021, an Italian court sentenced former Uruguayan Colonel Pedro Antonio Mato Narbono to life in prison for his role in killing Italian citizens in Argentina in June 1976 as part of the “Plan Condor” counter-insurgency operations in the Southern Cone of South America. The sentence was in absentia; Mato Narbono is living in Brazil where he is a naturalized citizen. The Italian government now has asked the Brazilian authorities to take him into prison to serve his sentence there, *teleSUR* reported. For background on the case, which featured the testimony of archivist Giulia Barrera, see *HWRG News* 2019-07. https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Plan-Condor-Killer-To-Serve-Time-in-Brazil-20230301-0006.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=8

Balkan wars. “The Belgrade Higher Court convicted four former Serb fighters of involvement in the abduction of 20 passengers from a train at Strpci station in Bosnia” in February 1993 who were then killed, *BIRN* reported. Evidence of the massacre was developed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. For background, see *SAHR News* 2023-01. <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/02/07/serbia-convicts-wartime-fighters-of-bosnia-train-abductions/>

El Salvador/United States. “In a newly unsealed indictment, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) asserted that, as part of the accords with the Mara Salvatrucha [gang], the current government of El Salvador protected gang members wanted for crimes in the United States by skirting their extradition or even releasing one of them from prison before he had finished his sentence,” *El Faro* reported. The indictment in the Eastern District of New York was issued for 13 of the MS-13 gang leaders still in El Salvador on charges of “racketeering, conspiracy to materially support terrorism on U.S. soil, and narco-terrorism.” It was “based on testimony of a dozen ex-members of MS-13, videos, phone calls, and text and audio messages.” https://elfaro.net/en/202302/el_salvador/26739/El-Salvador-Government-Protection-of-MS-13-from-Extradition-Emerges-in-DOJ-Indictment.htm?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

France/Spain. Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (Ofpra) is the French government body that rules on asylum and statelessness requests and maintains the historical archives on refugees in France. At the Franco-Spanish summit on 19 January 2023, France and Spain reaffirmed their desire to continue joint efforts to enhance Ofpra’s historical archives on Spanish refugees as part of the construction of democratic memory in Spain and Europe. The previous day Ofpra’s director general and his Spanish counterpart signed a declaration of intent to enhance Ofpra’s archives concerning Spanish refugees through a digitization program, thereby facilitating access to the many documents relating to Spanish refugees. Thanks to Christine Martinez for the link. [Signature d’une déclaration d’intention en matière d’archives entre le Ministère de la Culture et des Sports du Royaume d’Espagne et l’Ofpra | Ofpra](https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/fr/actualites/signature-d-une-declaration-d-intention-en-matiere-d-archives-entre-le-ministere-de-la-culture-et-des-sports-du-royaume-d-espagne-et-l-ofpra)

Germany/Syria. The Berlin court confirmed a sentence of life in prison for Syrian national Moafek D., a former Syrian militia member, for murders in the Yarmouk refugee camp outside Damascus, *AFP* reported. “This is the third trial for war crimes linked to the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to be held in Germany.” For background see *SAHR News* 2023-01. https://www.justiceinfo-net.translate.google.fr/112957-allemaigne-un-membre-dune-milice-syrienne-condamne-pour-crimes-de-guerre.html? x_tr sl=auto& x_tr tl=en& x_tr hl=auto

Grenada/United Kingdom. “An aristocratic British family is to make history by travelling to the Caribbean and publicly apologising for its ownership of more than 1,000 enslaved Africans,” the *Guardian* reported. “The Trevelyan family, which has many notable ancestors, is also paying reparations to the people of Grenada, where it owned six sugar plantations.” “In 1835, the Trevelyan family received £26,898, a huge sum at the time, in compensation from the British government for the abolition of slavery a year earlier. The enslaved men, women and children received nothing and were forced to work a further eight years unpaid as ‘apprentices’.” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/04/british-slave-owners-family-apologise-reparations-trevelyans>

India/Pakistan. In 1960 the World Bank mediated between India and Pakistan on the sharing of the water of the Indus River that borders both countries. Recently tensions have risen between the parties, as Pakistan objects to India’s hydropower dam projects on two of the river’s tributaries and has taken its complaint to the Court of Arbitration in The Hague, “while India has asked its neighbor to enter into bilateral negotiations to modify the Indus Waters treaty.” The terms of the Treaty permit dispute resolution by a neutral expert appointed by the World Bank or by the Court, *Thomson Reuters*

Foundation explained. The records of the original Treaty negotiations are in the World Bank Group archives. https://www.context.news/climate-risks/could-focus-on-climate-ease-water-woes-between-india-and-pakistan?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=context-climate

Israel/Palestine. Akevot Institute published an analysis of the records from the Kafr Qasim Massacre trial held in 1957 which were released by the Military Court of Appeals in August 2022. Consisting of around 8,000 pages, most of which relate to open court hearings, the records include previously unknown documents about Plan Mole, a program to displace Arab communities in frontier areas in the event of war. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-07. <https://www.akevot.org.il/en/article/operation-mole/>

Latin America. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights said it has confirmed the murders of 126 civil rights defenders in 2022. The Commission said it also “was informed of several instances of stigmatizing comments aimed at discrediting efforts in defense of human rights. These comments were sometimes even made by high authorities of the States, as was the case in El Salvador Mexico, and Venezuela.” The Commission stressed that the work of environmental defenders is “essential to ensure a balance between environmental protection and the sustainable development of countries in the Americas.” But underscoring the difficulty of getting hard data about the murders of defenders, Colombia’s Ombudsperson’s Office “reported a total of 215 murders of defenders during 2022, the highest figure for a single year since 2016” or nearly double the Commission’s number for the entire region. https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2023/026.asp

Malaysia/Netherlands/Russia. The Joint Investigation Team looking into the downing of Malaysian plane MH17 in 2014 issued its final report. They said that there is “currently insufficient evidence to go further” in assigning responsibility for the shutdown than identifying the three men, two Russian and one Ukrainian, who have already been found criminally responsible for bringing down the aircraft, *DutchNews.nl* reported. The Dutch prosecutor said it has “strong indications” about Russian President Putin’s decision to approve the delivery of the missile system used to shoot down the plane, but as he is head of state “he has an immunity.” The *New York Times* reported that investigators said one audio intercept, referring to Putin, had the caller saying, “He’s the only one who makes the decision, nobody else.” The prosecutors pointed out that “further investigations by the International Criminal Court and the European Court of Human Rights would use their evidence gathered from interviews, intercepted telephone calls, satellite images and other primary sources.” <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2023/02/strong-indications-but-no-case-against-putin-mh17-investigation/>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/08/world/europe/putin-flight-mh17-missile.html>

Mauritius/United Kingdom/United States. Human Rights Watch issued a 106-page report, “That’s When the Nightmare Started: UK and US Forced Displacement of the Chagossians and ongoing Colonial Crimes,” documenting “the treatment of the Chagossians, an Indigenous people whom the UK and US forced from their homes in the 1960s and 1970s so that a US military base could be built on Diego Garcia, the largest of the islands” of the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. For background, see *HRWG News* 2019-02. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/15/uk-us-expelled-islanders-50-years-ago-crime-against-humanity>

Moldova/Russia. The 2012 decree “that in part underpinned Moldova’s sovereignty in resolving the future of the Transdnistria region” was revoked by Russian President Putin, *Reuters* reported. The 2012 decree had committed Russia “to seeking ways to resolve the separatist issue [of Transdnistria in Moldova] ‘based on respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral status of the Republic of Moldova in determining the special status of Transdnistria.’” The order revoking the 2012 document was published on the Kremlin’s website; Moldova’s foreign ministry said it would “carefully study” the document, not indicating whether there was advance notice of the decision. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-cancels-decree-underpinning-moldovas-sovereignty-separatist-conflict-2023-02-22/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Daily-Briefing&utm_term=022223

Ukraine war. Three UN special rapporteurs said that as of 15 February 2023 they estimated that more than 240 cultural properties in Ukraine have been damaged. “We are also concerned by the severe targeting of Ukrainian cultural symbols. Cultural resources—such as repositories of Ukrainian literature, museums, and historical archives—are being destroyed.” *ArtNews* reported that the Ukrainian website Culture Crimes stated that “there are 553 damaged and destroyed objects of cultural heritage and

cultural institutions of Ukraine.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/02/targeted-destruction-ukraines-culture-must-stop-un-experts> ; <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/ukraine-war-one-year-cultural-heritage-preservation-2261952>

Ukraine is using technology provided by facial recognition company Clearview AI to “scan the faces of dead Russian soldiers to identify their bodies and notify their families,” *WIRED* reported. But identifying the dead using facial recognition technology “raises grave human rights concerns” and could “lead to mistakes and traumatize families.” *WIRED* suggests that the “technology is being used for many purposes in Ukraine, but only its potentially positive use to identify the dead is being publicly discussed.” https://www.wired.com/story/russia-ukraine-facial-recognition-technology-death-military/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=Email_0_EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_content=WIR_Daily_022223&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_022223&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=P6

The Ukrainian NGO Center for Civil Liberties (CCL) won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022. In an interview with *Geneva Solutions*, CCL executive director Oleksandra Romantsova said it began mapping accounts of war crimes with Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea. Since the invasion in 2022 CCL staff and volunteers have gathered evidence of “every kind of war crime except the use of child soldiers” in the areas they have visited. In 2022 CCL also established the “Tribunal for Putin” database “through which over 40 organisations across all regions of Ukraine document probable war crimes,” and in one year “documented over 33,000 violations, although the NGO s behind the initiative acknowledge the true number of war crimes is likely to be significantly higher.” Ukraine’s prosecutor general said “regional authorities have registered more than 65,000 such crimes committed by Russia since Moscow’s invasion in February last year.” https://genevasolutions.news/global-news/one-year-since-russia-s-invasion-ukrainians-seek-justice-for-war-crimes?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email

“Mnemonic, an NGO based in Berlin, has collected more than 3 million records of potential human rights violations and alleged war crimes in Ukraine since the Russian invasion,” *France 24* reported. It has predominantly user-generated content from “Telegram, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook posts,” but the organization’s Ukrainian Archives also includes satellite imagery and news articles. “One of the biggest challenges lies in preserving archived digital records for the long term, as this involves trying to predict technological advances that could affect accessing the records in the future.” <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230228-accountability-and-justice-gathering-digital-evidence-of-war-crimes-in-ukraine>

The Conflict Observatory of Yale University’s School of Public Health Humanitarian Research Lab “identified 43 facilities involved in holding children from Ukraine since Russia’s 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine” and has “collected information about at least 6,000 children from Ukraine ages four months to 17 years who have been held at camps and other facilities.” The facilities are in Russia-occupied Crimea and mainland Russia; the “majority are recreational camps where children are taken for ostensible vacations, while others are facilities used to house children put up for foster care or adoption in Russia.” The “primary purpose of the camps appears to be political re-education” that is Russian-centric. “Consent gathered from parents for their child to attend a camp included signing over power of attorney in some cases, including to an unnamed agent.” For the research, facilities that allegedly host children from Ukraine “were identified through social media posts, government announcements and publications, and new reports. Camp locations and related facilities were then geolocated by referencing photographs, videos, and descriptions of children . . . at the location against reference photographs on the camp’s website or user-generated photographs on mapping sites.” To be included in the report, “each location and thematic claim required independent concurrence by at least two researchers.” <https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/apps/sites/#/home/pages/children-camps-1>

National news.

Australia. The Yoorrook commission, designed and led by Indigenous persons in the state of Victoria, was established to give voice to the First Peoples, *justiceinfo.net* reported. “The stories of past and present injustice told before Yoorrook will go towards creating an official public record of the impact of colonization on First Peoples.” The commission is part of the ongoing process of negotiating a treaty between the state government and local Aboriginal communities. For background, see *SAHR News* 2021-06. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/111986-australia-yoorrook-commission-faces-continued-violence-colonisation.html>

Canada. Families from Manitoba learned that two male babies were switched at birth in 1955, one to a family of Ukrainian heritage and the other to a Metis family where the mother was Cree, the *Globe and Mail* reported. The switch was discovered through an at-home DNA testing kit by the sister of one of the men. Eddy Ambrose, who was raised with the Ukrainian-heritage family, and his daughter “want to join the Manitoba Metis Federation, and he wants his four grandsons to have access to postsecondary financial assistance for Metis Nation students. But for nine months, the Manitoba government has ignored requests from his lawyer to acknowledge the mistake and help him make the changes to his birth certificate necessary to allow him to acquire Metis citizenship.” The government now says it has “no legal responsibility for the mix-up” and Ambrose should contact the province’s Vital Statistics Branch to change the registered birth information. Meanwhile, Richard Beauvais living in the Metis family was subjected to a childhood of hardship, including being “forcibly taken into government custody” and placed with various foster homes. In an interview, he said, “I saw what the government did to Indian kids because they thought I was an Indian kid . . . Not many while people have seen what I’ve seen. It was brutal and it was mean.” https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-switched-at-birth-manitoba/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=230215

China. Three UN special rapporteurs (SRs) said “around a million children of the Tibetan minority were being affected by Chinese government policies aimed at assimilating Tibetan people culturally, religiously and linguistically through a residential school system.” “While on the national level the percentage of boarding students is more than 20%, information received point to the vast majority of Tibetan children in residential schools, almost one million children in total.” The SRs said “the policies run contrary to the prohibition of discrimination and the rights to education, linguistic and cultural rights, freedom of religion or belief and other minority rights of the Tibetan people.” [https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/china-un-experts-alarmed-separation-1-million-tibetan-children-families-and#:~:text=GENEVA%20\(6%20February%202023\)%20%E2%80%93,%2C%20UN%20experts*%20warned%20today](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/china-un-experts-alarmed-separation-1-million-tibetan-children-families-and#:~:text=GENEVA%20(6%20February%202023)%20%E2%80%93,%2C%20UN%20experts*%20warned%20today)

Colombia. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights said it had verified “systematic violence against the members and militants of the Patriotic Union, which lasted for more than two decades [1980s and 1990s] and extended to almost the entire Colombian territory,” in which the government “allowed the UP rank and file as well as elected politicians to be picked off with impunity and even used its own forces in the political genocide,” the *Guardian* wrote. At least 6,000 members of the left-wing party were killed. “The tribunal also condemned successive Colombian governments for failing to investigate the thousands of cases of forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and torture used to stamp out the movement.” The court ordered a variety of means of reparation, including investigations to “establish truth” about the grave violations; unfortunately, the court did not explicitly call for the opening of all relevant archives, although that would be necessary for a comprehensive investigation. Colombia pledged to pay reparations to victims. https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/comunicados/cp_09_2023.pdf; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/01/colombia-reparations-systemic-violence-leftwing-patriotic-union?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

A team of Colombian and U.S. researchers found “that cattle ranching, not coca, is the main driver of forest loss outside the legal agricultural frontier,” they reported in *Nature*, with “serious negative consequences on the Colombian Amazon’s land systems.” They noted that “illicit activities are not well documented in publicly accessible data, making it difficult to connect them with land cover changes observable from remote sensing. Illicit activities may exhibit landscape patterns similar to those of legitimate activities, making it difficult to detect and differentiate illicit activity from other land-use types.” They applied “deep learning algorithms” to Landsat Collection I satellite images (1984-2019) and compared them to available land cover maps and official and published sources 2009-2018 “to differentiate annual patterns of coca farming and cattle ranching,” allowing the researchers to “link land use changes to illicit activities.” https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-023-28918-0?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Democratic Republic of Congo. The UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights said the UN has documented human rights violations and abuses including “mass killings, mutilations and conflict-related sexual violence, causing massive displacement and enduring trauma.” She condemned the “appalling attacks” against communities in the eastern part of the country. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133822?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=89f98f200e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_02_24_01_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-89f98f200e-%5BBLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Denmark/Greenland. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples shared “preliminary observations” on the situation of Inuit people in Greenland. He noted that the “share of people in homelessness with an Inuit background is significantly higher than it is among people in homelessness with a Danish background, however no precise data is available. Nor are there precise statistics of the number of Inuit children living in Denmark and whether they receive education in their mother tongue.” He said he was “particularly appalled” by the forced sterilization of Inuit women, a practice that is now being investigated for the period 1966-1991; he urged the government to “extend the scope of the inquiry into more recent cases and include the oral testimonies of Inuit women.” He was “dismayed” by the practice of taking Inuit children from their families and placing them in foster homes: “parents told me they were coerced into signing agreements to hand over their children to foster care and of their case files being withheld from them.” And he expressed concern over “the adverse environmental and social effects of military activities carried out in Greenland without the free, prior and informed consents of Inuit people” and the lack of compensation for the “relocation and consequent loss of ancestral land and resources.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-03, 07.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/indigenouspeoples/sr/statements/eom-statement-denmark-greenland-sr-indigenous-2023-02-10.pdf>

Ecuador. In October 2022 218 agreements were reached between government and Indigenous communities to halt oil block authorizations and mining concessions in ancestral territories until community consultation laws could be passed, *Reuters* reported. On 24 February CONAIE, an Indigenous organization, said the government has not complied with the accords and withdrew from talks with the government. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-10.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ecuador-indigenous-organization-ends-talks-with-govt-calls-lasso-resignation-2023-02-25/>

El Salvador. A bricklayer, Jose Alfredo Grande Martinez, was arrested on 5 April 2022; police said he was a gang collaborator. Through Guacamaya Leaks *El Faro* obtained an internal police document in which the Control Unit of the Police, the office that corroborates incident reports, said “the officers who arrested him falsified information in their filing, omitted important information on where the alleged facts occurred, and used an ‘unqualified’ source to accuse Grande of illicit association.” Nevertheless, Grande was still in prison as of 16 February 2023.

https://elfaro.net/en/202302/el_salvador/26724/Salvadoran-Police-Confirmed-Arbitrary-Arrest-of-Bricklayer-but-He-Remains-Detained-Nine-Months-Later.htm?utm_source=El+Faro_EN+DB&utm_campaign=2976a36c75-

EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_22_01_08_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9190c89-2976a36c75-363082696

Finland. The Sami are Indigenous people of northernmost Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. In Finland, “more than 90% of traditional Sámi territory . . . is deemed state-owned, where it’s exploited for timber by the state logging company.” Finnish Sami are “without formal land rights . . . [so] to prevent unwelcome developments, the Sámi rely on demonstrating impact to their cultural survival, which is protected by a clause in the Finnish Constitution,” *Mongabay* reported. The immediate question is who is enfranchised in the Sami community. Current law defines an Indigenous person as a person who either has a great-grandparent who spoke Sami as their mother tongue or an ancestor who was registered as a “Laplander.” A proposed new law would both do away with the “Laplander” criteria “and recreate the electoral roll from scratch using the language criterion.” Part of the problem is that “though the full scale of forced assimilation in Finland is still not fully known, documents attest to centuries of efforts to suppress Sámi languages and discourage the practice of Sámi culture and religion. More recently, mass relocations were forced by the construction of massive dams and reservoirs.” Critics say as many as 200 people may be struck of the rolls as non-Sami if the change goes through. Thanks to Normand Charbonneau for the link. <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/02/finlands-debate-over-indigenous-identity-and-rights-turns-ugly/>

France. “On the occasion of the Day of Remembrance of Genocide and the Prevention of Crimes against Humanity, the Ministers of Culture and Justice made public the archives of the trials of Maurice Papon for his role in the deportation of Jews between 1942 and 1944.” Thanks to Christine Martinez for the link. [Justice / Portail / Ouverture complète des archives des procès Maurice Papon](https://www.justice.gouv.fr/actualites/ouverture-complète-des-archives-des-procès-maurice-papon)

Germany. The German Federal Constitutional Court ruled unconstitutional a 2019 law passed by the city of Hamburg that allowed police to use data analytics software marketed by the company Palantir on citizen phone contacts. The court “issued strict guidelines . . . about how automatic data analysis tools

like Palantir's can be used by police, and it warned against the inclusion of data belonging to bystanders, such as witnesses or lawyers," *WIRED* reported. https://www.wired.com/story/palantir-germany-gotham-dragnet/?utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=cm&utm_mailing=WIR_SubPersRec_I_02012020&utm_medium=email&utm_source=crm&utm_term=WIR_PersRec_CYGNUS_2023-02-22

Guinea. The Dixinn Criminal Court is trying the case of the massacre in Conakry stadium on 28 September 2009 when more than 150 people died. On 14 February the hearing of plaintiffs began, *justiceinfo.net* reported. The first party, a woman who said she had been gang raped, was called to appear prior to the court deciding whether her testimony should be heard behind closed doors. Unfortunately, when she entered the courtroom the press cameras had not yet been turned off (the case is a media sensation in Guinea) and she was seen live on television and on the Internet. For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-11. <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/113089-guinea-victims-have-their-say-at-the-stadium-massacre-trial.html>

Guyana. Twenty-one Indigenous communities of South Rupununi called on the Government "to demonstrate its commitment to respect" its promise to engage with the communities in decision-making over the "threat of commercial agri-business, mining, or logging destroying our lands." They were especially concerned that a body called ART-TREES issued carbon credits to Guyana, which sold the credits to Hess oil, which made the first payment to Guyana for those credits. The communities said they "are not opposed to the idea that Indigenous peoples should benefit through monetary payments for our hard work protecting our forests and providing climate services. But our work should be recognized first and foremost through titling and legal recognition of our lands. . . . It would only be proper that once our titles are legally secured, that our people can then decide if and how they want to participate in carbon markets and sell carbon credits." https://www.kaieteurnews.com/2023/02/17/whats-missing-in-the-carbon-credits-debate-titling-of-indigenous-lands/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

Haiti. A new report by the Human Rights Service of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti said "from 8 July to 31 December 2022, gang violence resulted in 263 murders in the Brooklyn neighbourhood of Cite Soleil, an impoverished, densely populated commune near the capital Port-au-Prince. It documented at least 57 gang rapes of women and girls, as well as kidnappings and sexual exploitation. On one day alone, 8 July, gang members murdered 95 people, including six children." During a visit to Haiti, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called the findings "horrifying." https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133392?utm_source=UN+News++Newsletter&utm_campaign=f28a60f519-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_02_11_01_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-f28a60f519-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

India. "Police in Assam have arrested more than 1,800 men for marrying or arranging marriages to underage girls," Assam's chief minister said. More arrests are expected, "including of people helping to register such marriages in temples and mosques," *Reuters* reported. The minister said the "Assam government has registered cases related to child marriage against 4,004 people." https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indian-police-arrest-1800-men-crackdown-underage-marriage-2023-02-03/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=Daily-Briefing&utm_term=020323

Iran. *CNN* said it has collected "dozens of testimonies" since the uprising began in September 2022 and has established that persons arrested to crush the movement were held not only in official prisons and police stations but also in "an extensive network of illegal clandestine jails, or black sites." *CNN* pinpointed the locations of more than three dozen such black sites. A woman previously held in one said she was videotaped "from head to toe" and told to say "foreign media influenced you to come to the street." Former prisoners said those arrested were "nearly always" forced to sign a confession "professing to being part of a terror group, seeking to topple the state or sowing disorder, charges that carry long-term imprisonment or the death sentence." <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2023/02/middleeast/iran-torture-jails-black-sites-mahsa-amini-protests-cmd-intl/>

Ireland. "Ads submitted to Facebook, TikTok and YouTube containing extreme violent hate against the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland were almost all approved for publication by the platforms, according to a new test carried out by Global Witness." <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/extreme-and-violent-anti-lgbtq-hate-approved-publication-leading-social-media-platforms/>

Lebanon. Thieves broke into the National News Agency in Beirut and stole five computers and the server containing photos of events from 1961 to the present, including coverage of the country's 1975-

1990 civil war. While calling it a “crime of national proportions,” the Information Minister said “only part of the photo archive had been taken and the ministry still had the database,” *BBC* reported. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-64789141.amp>

Nigeria. “At least 25,000 people have been reported missing in northeastern Nigeria since the bloody conflict with jihadist groups began—more than half of them children—according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),” *AFP* reported. A Red Cross volunteer at a displaced persons camp in Yola said that every time new people arrive they are asked if they know of people missing and then collect names, places of birth, physical characteristics, and photographs: “for a single case we will sometimes have collected 70 different bits of information.” Amnesty International said that tens of thousands of people have been “illegally arrested by the security forces” and often held in secret, making them impossible to identify; it estimated as many as 10,000 have died in custody. “Despite the hurdles, 3,534 people who disappeared after attacks, abduction and arrest have been traced by the ICRC since 2018, and 95 children or vulnerable adults have been reunited with their families.” https://www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20230209-i-shouted-their-names-the-hole-left-by-nigeria-s-disappeared?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

The National Human Rights Commission appointed a “Special Independent Investigative Panel on human rights violations in the implementation of counterinsurgency operations in the northeast. The panel will, among other things, focus on investigating *Reuters* report which alleged that Nigerian Military was involved in abortion of many pregnancies in the North East in the last 10 years.” For background, see *SAHR News* 2022-12. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigerian-rights-commission-panel-probe-abortion-allegations-against-military-2023-02-01/>

Pakistan. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan issued the report “A Breach of Faith: Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2021/22.” Reviewing cases from July 2021 to June 2022, the Commission “observed with considerable alarm several developments . . . that belie the state’s commitment” to the principle. It pointed to a bomb attack on a Shia mosque in March 2022 that left at least 62 people dead and almost 200 injured; at least two attacks on the Christian community; around 60 cases of forced conversion of which 70% were girls under the age of 18; police data showing that 585 cases were registered under blasphemy laws, applied disproportionately against religious minorities; desecration of sites of worship; hate speech; and discrimination in education and employment. <https://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2023-A-breach-of-faith-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-in-2021-22.pdf>

Peru. In the wake of the violent protests in December 2022, Amnesty International sent an investigative team to Peru. Its initial findings were “the Army and National Police of Peru (PNP) have unlawfully fired lethal weapons and used other less lethal weapons indiscriminately against the population, especially against Indigenous people and campesinos [rural farmworkers]” during the repression of the protests. Amnesty team members conducted interviews and its Crisis Evidence lab “verified 36 pieces of photographic and video material, of which at least 11 point to excessive and sometimes indiscriminate use of lethal and less lethal force by the authorities.” Amnesty received information about “46 cases of possible human rights violations and documented 12 cases of deaths from the use of firearms” and “received information on serious shortcomings in the investigation of human rights violations and the administration of justice.” After conducting “an analysis based on data from the Peruvian Ombudsman’s Office, using concentration of protests and the number of deaths due to repression as parameters,” it found “that the number of possible arbitrary deaths due to state repression is disproportionately concentrated in regions with largely Indigenous populations,” suggesting “that the authorities acted with a marked racist bias, targeting populations that have historically been discriminated against.” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/peru-lethal-state-repression/>

Portugal. The commission investigating sexual abuse by members of the Roman Catholic Church delivered its final report, *Reuters* wrote. The commission said that during the past 70 years “at least 4,815 children” were abused and this was the “absolute minimum” number of victims. The commission is preparing a list of accused priests (“more than 100”) to send to the Church and to the public prosecutor’s office. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/thousands-abused-by-members-portuguese-church-past-70-years-2023-02-13/>

Russia. The government amended a 2005 law to ban officials from using most foreign words when carrying out official duties, *Reuters* reported. The text read, “When using Russian as the state language of the Russian Federation, it is not allowed to use words and expressions that do not correspond to the norms of modern Russian ... with the exception of foreign words which do not have widely-used corresponding equivalents in Russian.” A list of foreign-based words that can still be used is to be published. “The amendments do not mention any punishments for those who fail to respect the updated law.” <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-bans-government-officials-using-most-foreign-words-2023-02-28/>

Spain. “Spanish authorities must thoroughly investigate reports that Pegasus and Candiru spyware was used to target Catalan public figures and activists in Spain following the independence bid in 2017,” two UN special rapporteurs (SRs) said. “Between 2017-2020, the devices of at least 65 Catalan minority politicians and activists were reportedly targeted by a complex and sophisticated spying programme, whose victims included Catalan minority leaders, Members of the European Parliament, legislators, jurists, and members of civil society organisations.” The SRs said they are “concerned that the widespread use of this type of spyware may lead to increased self-censorship, which has a chilling effect on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression and the rights of freedom of assembly, as well as other violations of the rights of minorities and their effective participation in public life.” Who now controls the data obtained by these systems? <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/spain-un-experts-demand-investigation-alleged-spying-programme-targeting>

Spain’s parliament approved legislation that will allow persons over 16 to change their legally registered gender on official documents without medical supervision, ease abortion limits for those aged 16 and 17, and make the country the first in Europe to introduce paid menstrual leave. It also bans conversion therapy--punishable by hefty fines--and ends public subsidies for groups that “incite or promote LGBTIphobia,” the *Guardian* reported. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/16/spain-passes-law-allowing-anyone-over-16-to-change-registered-gender>

United States. “There are two long-running major national abortion data-gathering efforts in the United States: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Abortion Surveillance Report, which began collecting data in 1969, and the Guttmacher Institute’s Abortion Provider Survey, which began data collection in 1973,” *The 19th* reported. With the Supreme Court’s 2022 decision in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* allowing states to ban abortion, researchers are concerned that collecting valid data, which has always been difficult, will become even more difficult with significant levels of underreporting as more people will seek abortions outside medical facilities. “Incomplete data on abortions could lead to less accurate calculations on the failure rates of various contraceptives and less knowledge about who gets pregnant. It could also lead to less information about the kind of reproductive support people need.” https://19thnews.org/2023/02/abortion-data-rates-after-dobbs/?utm_campaign=morning_rounds&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=248011178&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--Z1vqof6npjd6-h9caMWIwBCwCAXBa2wArelal00_0DLKRmyaWvubgcDVVcewfl6EUmFxZ5-EYVipG10q_R47XRZg&utm_content=248011178&utm_source=hs_email

Indigenous Ojibwe tribal members have treaty rights to fish in Late Superior, one of the U.S. Great Lakes. Today tribal citizens “see Great Lakes pollution as a continued encroachment on how Ojibwe communities exercise those rights,” *Undark* reported. The Lake has “lingering mercury and PCBs” that “bioaccumulate in animals at levels high enough to warrant fish consumption advisories” and PFAs, the “forever chemicals” linked to a range of health problems, including cancer. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a rule that “would compel states to account for treaty rights, such as fishing and wild rice gathering, when setting standards under the Clean Water Act,” but the rule is not yet adopted. https://undark.org/2023/02/28/does-pollution-of-the-great-lakes-violate-tribal-treaty-rights/?utm_source=Undark%3A+News+%26+Updates&utm_campaign=a7d287e535-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5cee408d66-185e4e09de-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research combined “income tax data with birth, death and hospitalization records and demographic data from the Census Bureau and the Social Security Administration” and found that of the infants born to first-time mothers from 2007-2016 in California “the richest mothers and their newborns are the most likely to survive the year after childbirth—except when the family is Black,” the *New York Times* reported. “The richest Black mothers and their babies

are twice as likely to die as the richest white mothers and their babies.” https://buffalonews.com/childbirth-found-to-be-deadlier-even-for-rich-black-families/article_778723d7-b4aa-5f37-8627-32b28e5f0d69.html

Meetings, publications.

VII Coloquio Internacional, Del Papiro a la biblioteca virtual will be held in Havana, Cuba, 4-7 September 2023. Submit individual papers or panels prior to July 2023 to Biblioteca de la Casa de las Américas: coloiuodelpapiro@gmail.com, rositagonzalezvaldes71@gmail.com, dirbiblioteca@casa.cult.cu

Jessica Barnes, “The Ukraine War, Grain Trade and Bread in Egypt,” *Middle East Research and Information Project*: <https://merip.org/2023/02/the-ukraine-war-grain-trade-and-bread-in-egypt/>

Karen E. Ferree, Lauren Honig, Ellen Lust, Melanie L. Phillips, “Land and Legibility: When Do Citizens Expect Secure Property Rights in Weak States?” *American Political Science Review*: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/land-and-legibility-when-do-citizens-expect-secure-property-rights-in-weak-states/02ABF2F423907B7A28C243E4D54EFB5E>

Melissa Sanchez and Maryam Jameel, “Death on a Dairy Farm: Risking Workers’ Lives for the Milk We Drink,” *ProPublica*, *USA Today* and *El Faro*: https://www.propublica.org/article/wisconsin-dairy-farm-jefferson-rodriguez?utm_source=email&utm_medium=editorial&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=230223

Georgina Sturge, “Public Programs Are Only as Good as Their Data,” *WIRED*: https://www.wired.com/story/government-data-health/?bxiid=5c48efcf2ddf9c4807adf975&cndid=53684912&esrc=sign-up-page&source=EDT_WIR_NEWSLETTER_0_DAILY_ZZ&utm_brand=wired&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_content=WIR_Daily_020423&utm_mailing=WIR_Daily_020423&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nl&utm_term=P5

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