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International Human Rights Day is December 10

Commentary.

This issue marks the end of five years of monthly publication of *Human Rights Working Group News*. Here are a few thoughts about coverage since that first, brief issue of December 2009:

First, hacking and tracking: reports of hacking, of systems holding personal information that have had unauthorized intruders, are so frequent that I have stopped reporting all but the largest or those that are in some way distinctive. I do report on studies of the phenomenon; one is in the “general” section below. Similarly, particularly since the revelations made by Edward Snowden in June 2013, there are so many stories on government surveillance that it is impossible to list them all.

Second, although I report on the mishandling of large blocks of paper and audiovisual materials with human rights information, there are so many “I found a medical file on the side of the road” cases that I no longer list them. It is hard to tell whether this seeming epidemic of mishandling physical records is because they are not electronic and therefore viewed as “old stuff” or whether there is simply carelessness unbounded.

Third, there is a wealth of stories on the rapidly increasing use of satellite imagery to track conflict and physical facilities, often with remarkable results. And the immediacy of the images flowing from conflict, picked up and retained outside the conflict zone, is also now a daily phenomenon.

Fourth, corruption, especially governmental, surely has at least secondary human rights implications (siphoning off funds that could be used for health programs, for example), but I list only stories that show a relatively clear link between the corruption and an issue that the Working Group follows. I would be happy to hear contrary arguments about this practice.

Now some thanks: first of all, to Cristina Bianchi, who for all five years has translated the *News* into French, and to Roman Lescano, who for the past several years has been translating it into Spanish. They never complain about grammar or sentences that are too complex; they just do the job. What a gift to us all.

Thanks, too, to Jens Boel, who sends the *News* out to a UNESCO mailing list; to Bryan Corbett, who makes sure the ICA listserve runs; and to all those people who repost the *News*. And thanks to all the people who have sent in items to be included. More, more!

A big thank you to all those journalists and essayists and bloggers who write stories about human rights topics and to groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Center for Transitional Justice, and the International Crisis Group who investigate and report. Thanks, too, to the news digests: RAINbyte, Documentary Heritage News, Social Action Foundation for Equity, Eurasia Review and so many others. None of this would be possible without your work.

The *News* began as an effort to show the wide range of archives that are important to human rights and the diversity of issues that have an archival angle. That has been easy, it turns out. Government records are key, of course, but we have had stories on business records, archives of faith-based groups, medical

records, items from colleges and universities, oral histories and maps and satellite images, databases and diaries. The hard part is moving from observation to action, from knowing that the records are important to preserving them and making them available. For that we have to rely on individuals being aware of human rights issues as they go about the regular business of the archival world. We must rely on the practitioner, remembering always that human rights rest on records.

Human Rights Working Group News. The draft “Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists in Support of Human Rights” remains open for comment through December 31. Comments should be submitted to access@ica.org. The draft is at <http://www.ica.org/15999/news-and-events/basic-principles-on-the-role-of-archivists-in-support-of-human-rights-give-your-opinion.html> Please take time to give us your views.

International news.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The Commission, established by the United Nations in 2011, issued a report based on “over 300 interviews with men, women and children who fled or who are living in ISIS-controlled areas.” The Commission found that ISIS “operates a primitive but rigid administrative system that comprises the Al-Hisbah morality police, the general police force, courts, and entities managing recruitment, tribal relations, and education” and concluded, “The testimonies collected reveal that ISIS seeks to subjugate civilians under its control and dominate every aspect of their lives through terror, indoctrination, and the provision of services to those who obey.” The records of this UN body, including the testimonies, are important evidence for efforts to hold perpetrators accountable, as are the records of the ISIS administration itself.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/11/un-isis-committing-war-crimes-syria-2014111415108320501.html>;
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/HRC_CRP_ISIS_14Nov2014.pdf

International Criminal Court. In a letter to the prosecutor, lawyers representing indigenous persons in Oriente province, Ecuador, asked her to open a “Preliminary Examination” of “the decisions made by Chevron’s [oil company] CEO” that “have deliberately maintained--and contributed to--the polluted environment in which the people of the Oriente region live and die every day.” Among the evidence attached were records from other court proceedings involving Chevron, records of Chevron shareholders meetings and the transcript of Chevron’s “4Q 2011 Earning Conference Call” with its shareholders.

<http://chevrontoxico.com/assets/docs/2014-icc-complaint.pdf>; <http://amazonwatch.org/news/2014/1023-rainforest-communities-seek-criminal-investigation-of-chevron-ceo-watson>

United Nations. The human rights committee of the General Assembly adopted a resolution on privacy, saying “the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including the right to privacy” and asking States to “establish or maintain existing independent, effective, adequately resourced and impartial judicial, administrative and/or parliamentary domestic oversight mechanisms capable of ensuring transparency, as appropriate, and accountability for State surveillance of communications, their interception and the collection of personal data.” It also “encouraged” the Human Rights Council to consider establishing “a special procedure” to identify and clarify “principles, standards and best practices regarding the promotion and protection of the right to privacy.”

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/gashc4126.doc.htm>; <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-11-25/un-expands-anti-spying-resolution-to-include-metadata-collection.html>; for resolution see <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/640/40/PDF/N1464040.pdf?OpenElement>

The United Nations held a panel discussion on the significance of the newly-opened United Nations War Crimes Commission records (for background, see *HRWG News 2014-07*). Thanks to Henry Mayer and Bridget Sisk for the information. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49313#.VG5CSbIAQdW>; for a video clip, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lp1Ztjm6hc&list=UU5O114-PQNYkurITg6hekZw>

The United Nations Archives reports that the records of the El Salvador truth commission are now fully processed and described, the paper rehoused and the electronic and audiovisual archives digitally copied. The records of the Guatemala truth commission have been arranged and described and rehoused; the preservation of the audiovisual and electronic records is underway. Both bodies of records remain closed to research use. Thanks to Bridget Sisk, Chief of UN Archives, for the information.

United Nations Special Rapporteurs. Six UN Special Rapporteurs issued an open letter to U.S. President Barack Obama, urging him to override objections from the Central Intelligence Agency and permit the release of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s report detailing CIA interrogation practices. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49451>

World Bank Group. The World Bank released two “Policy Research Working Papers” that point to the importance of records: “The Need for Multiple Types of Information to Inform Climate Change Assessment” and “Informing Migration Policies: A Data Primer.” http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/11/20356974/need-multiple-types-information-inform-climate-change-assessment?cid=DEC_PolicyResearchEN_D_INT; http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2014/11/03/000158349_20141103171843/Rendered/PDF/WPS7082.pdf

World/general news.

Slavery. The Walk Free Foundation released the Global Slavery Index, reporting “an estimated 35.8 million men, women and children around the world are today trapped in modern slavery, 20% more than previously estimated, whether through human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, forced or servile marriage, or commercial sexual exploitation.” The Foundation released an extensive report of its methodology, showing the sources of data, including new surveys and “records kept by governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other groups about specific cases of slavery or indications of slavery.” <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/methodology/#how-did-we-measure-vulnerability>

Data breaches. The Ponemon Institute released its annual study of data breaches, reporting that the total average cost to a company of a data breach worldwide is more than \$3.5 million, 15% more than last year. <http://wallstcheatsheet.com/business/how-much-does-a-data-breach-actually-cost.html?a=viewall>; for the report see <http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/en/it-services/security-services/cost-of-data-breach/>

Privacy. A class action lawsuit was filed in the U.S. State of California against LinkedIn, arguing that the use of LinkedIn’s “reference search functionality . . . allows prospective employers, among others, for a subscription fee, to obtain reports containing ‘Trusted References’ for job applicants who are members of LinkedIn” and this fails to “assure maximum possible accuracy of consumer report information” as required by U.S. law. “In essence,” said the plaintiffs, “LinkedIn has created a marketplace in consumer employment information, where it sells employment information, that may or may not be accurate, and that it has obtained in part from unwitting members,” and potential employers “may make hiring and firing decisions utilizing said information.” <http://ia902606.us.archive.org/30/items/gov.uscourts.cand.281365/gov.uscourts.cand.281365.1.0.pdf>

The European Union issued guidelines “calling on” Google “to apply the recent ‘right to be forgotten’ ruling to Google’s entire search empire,” reported the *New York Times*. The guidelines are not binding. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/27/technology/right-to-be-forgotten-should-be-extended-beyond-europe-eu-panel-says.html?_r=2&gwh=ECFB6500A35395E41BDD109E112981A1&gwt=pay&assetType=nyt_now

Thalidomide. Thalidomide was a drug available between 1957 and 1965 that, when taken by pregnant women, caused deaths of an estimated 80,000 unborn children and 20,000 born with severe ailments including the loss of arms and legs. The UK’s Thalidomide Trust hired an investigator “to look through state records in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany” where a criminal trial against the drug’s maker “ended without a verdict in December 1970,” *Reuters* reported. The investigation found that although the prosecutor had “351 witnesses, 29 technical experts and 70,000 pages of evidence,” Federal Health Ministry records show conversations between the Federal Government and the manufacturer on discontinuing the criminal trial that raise questions of “serious conflict of interest in the case.” In Spain, a case against the manufacturer by thalidomide victims was successful in 2013 but overturned in November 2014. In Germany, Westphalia’s Wilhelm University is investigating “the conduct of North Rhine-Westphalia’s government at the time of the 1968 to 1970 trial” but not the Federal Government’s role. <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/11/13/documents-raise-fresh-questions-about-thalidomide-criminal-trial/>

Business records. A jury in West Virginia ordered the Takeda Pharmaceutical Company to pay \$155,000 for destroying its records about the Actos diabetes medicine, concluding that the missing records “blocked a man from proving his claims that the drug caused his cancer,” *Bloomberg News* reported. For background, see *HRWG News* 2014-07. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-11-18/takeda-must-pay-damages-for-destroying-actos-files-lawyer-says.html>

The *New York Times* reported three stories of auto companies and records of life-threatening auto defects: (1) Internal correspondence, including email, was introduced as evidence in a lawsuit over the safety of ignition switches made by Delphi and installed in General Motors vehicles. The switch is linked to at least 33 death and dozens of injuries. http://mobile.nytimes.com/2014/11/22/business/gm-bullied-manufacturer-over-poorly-designed-part-email-says.html?_r=2&referrer=; (2) Under a U.S. system called Early Warning Reporting, automakers are required to disclose claims they receive that blame vehicle defects for serious injuries or deaths. Ferrari was fined \$3.5 million by the U.S. government for failing to submit reports of fatal accidents. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/01/business/ferrari-fined-35-million-for-not-reporting-fatal-crashes.html> (3) An audit commissioned by Honda Motor and conducted by an outside law firm found that Honda “grossly underreported to federal regulators the number of deaths and injury claims linked to possible defects in its vehicles for more than 10 years.” <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/25/business/honda-failed-to-report-defects-full-human-toll.html>

Technology in the courts. Fitbit is a company that makes wearable devices that measure and record activity data such as the number of steps walked and stairs climbed. In a lawsuit in Calgary, Canada, “activity data from a Fitbit” will be used by a law firm “to help show the effects of an accident on their clients,” showing that her “activity levels are now under a baseline for someone of her age and profession,” reported *Forbes*. A different form of personal diary as a record. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/pamyolson/2014/11/16/fitbit-data-court-room-personal-injury-claim/>

In an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronot*, Pope Francis said there was “an agreement between the Vatican and Italy from 1929 that prevents us from opening the [Vatican’s Holocaust-era] archives to researchers at this point in time. But because of the time that has passed since World War II, I see no problem with opening the archives the moment we sort out the legal and bureaucratic matters.” <http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/15409/francis-wants-to-open-holocaust-era-vatican-archives-as-quickly-as-possible>

Bilateral and multilateral news.

Armenia/Turkey. *Al-Monitor* reported that in 2015, a century after the genocide, Armenians are expected to bring up “the issue of Ottoman title deeds on houses and land, including orchards and farmland the Armenians left behind. Having held onto the documents for 100 years, scores of Armenians are expected to use them next year to bring lawsuits in Turkey and abroad.” According to a Turkish historian, some Armenian fathers “give title deeds as wedding gifts to brides in order to keep the genocide awareness alive.” http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/11/armenians-dig-out-ottoman-title-deeds.html?utm_source=Al-Monitor+Newsletter+%5BEnglish%5D&utm_campaign=8d63b8d54a-November_13_2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_28264b27a0-8d63b8d54a-93088897

Australia/Timor-Leste. The Australian Federal Court heard a “top secret” appeal by the Australian government to allow it to continue to deny access to records in two Department of Foreign Affairs files dealing with an Indonesian military offensive across East Timor in 1981, now in the National Archives. The academic who was denied access by the National Archives and then by an Administrative Appeals Tribunal told the media, “The Australian Government is pursuing a secret appeal against a secret judgment about the secret evidence of a secret witness,” reported the *Brisbane Times*. For background, see *HRWG News* 2014-04. <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/attorneygeneral-appeals-against-the-release-of-secret-diplomatic-information-on-east-timor-20141116-11npr.html>

Canada/Korea. A history professor who researched the actions of Canadian troops during the Korean War and found evidence of war crimes told a symposium at the University of Toronto, “It is time to expand and coordinate the research on war crimes beyond the US archives, [remembering that] the war effort, though led by US command, was a UN action, and that Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and

others joined the UN forces,” reported *The Diplomat*. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/speaking-truth-to-power-canadian-war-crimes-in-korea/>

Croatia/Serbia. On the 23rd anniversary of the Vukovar, Croatia, hospital massacre, the Serbian non-governmental organization Women in Mourning called on the Serbian military “to open its archives on missing persons from Vukovar and thus show respect for the victims of war crimes committed by the former Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) and Serb paramilitary forces,” reported *dalje.com*. <http://dalje.com/en-croatia/ngo-calls-on-serbian-military-to-open-its-archives-on-vukovar/528447>

Libya/United Kingdom. “Police investigating MI6’s involvement in the secret abduction of Libyan suspects and their forced return to Tripoli have handed over a file of evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service,” reported *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/31/met-libya-abduction-rendition-cps>

Montenegro/Serbia. On the 90th anniversary of the Royal Yugoslav Army’s killing of “around” 1000 Bosniaks in the Montenegrin village of Sahovici, Bosniak political parties and organizations in Montenegro urged the government to condemn the massacre, return property to the Islamic community and rebuild a ruined mosque. No Muslim families now live in the village, but “according to records from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, there were more than 1,500 Muslim households and about 500 Orthodox families in Sahovici in 1924,” reported *BIRN*. Records of property, possibly in Serbian archives, would be key to property restitution. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/montenegrin-muslims-demand-condemnation-of-sahovici-ethnic-crime?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter&utm_campaign=8c5dd63b22-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_561b9a25c3-8c5dd63b22-311109073

National news.

Argentina. A trial is underway on the role of doctors in cases of baby theft during the 1976-1983 military dictatorship. The head of the Attorney General’s Unit for Child Appropriation Cases told the *International Justice Tribune*, “We analyse documents, including birth certificates, to see if we find anything suspicious that may indicate that a person could have been illegally appropriated. If we come across such evidence, we file a criminal complaint and request a DNA test.” For background, see *HRWG News* 2014-09. Issue No. 170, www.justicetribune.com

Australia. The nongovernmental group People With Disability Australia submitted a 52-page report to the United Nations Committee Against Torture providing evidence of “forced, involuntary or coerced sterilization of people with disability, particularly women and girls with disability and people with intersex variation,” reported *The Guardian*. Last year a Senate committee found “very incomplete” data in Australia on forced sterilizations, but noted that the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra) keeps “very rigorous data” while Victoria had 102 applications to “sterilise people with disabilities in six-and-a-half years but did not keep data on how many were approved, how many dismissed and how many withdrawn.” <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/03/disability-groups-go-to-un-over-australias-forced-sterilisation-practice#.VFETcRujZM.email>

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, “Sensitive Department of Defence documents are being regularly destroyed by defence bureaucrats, with erased files including abuse scandals at Duntroon, ‘chemical and biological warfare’, and ‘treatment of Indonesians captured in Malaysia (in 1964-65)’.” The Defence Department said it was operating in accordance with National Archives records schedules. <http://m.smh.com.au/national/department-of-defence-destroying-and-hiding-sensitive-documents-20141107-11htgy.html>

Botswana. The Botswana High Court ruled that members of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights group could formally register their organization, Human Rights Watch reported. Groups denied registration are considered to be promoting illegal activity, so the records of registration are essential documents. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/14/botswana-high-court-upholds-basic-freedoms>

Brazil. Brazil’s truth commission is expected to publish its recommendations in December. One of the commissioners, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, told the *International Justice Tribune*, “The evidence is what is most important: the documents which will show the entire chain of command of torture, assassinations,

kidnappings--going from the president of the republic and the defence minister, right down to those who carried out the torture.” The son of a congressman who was “disappeared by the military” and whose fate was revealed during the truth commission investigations told *TV Estadao*, “Our family is happy that such revelations have been made public. The military documents are shocking. They are the evidence that everything we could have suspected actually happened.” Issue No. 170, www.justicetribune.com

Ghana. Ghana’s data protection commission began work and “will hear any complaints from the public regarding personal data,” reported *itwebsfrica.com*. <http://www.itwebafrica.com/ict-and-governance/376-ghana/233805-ghana-commission-established-to-protect-data>

India. The Bombay High Court ordered the Maharashtra government to install CCTV cameras in all police stations across the state “in such a manner that the entire building of the police stations comes under surveillance,” reported *IGOVERNMENT.IN*. The Court ordered “that tapes of CCTV recording should be preserved for a minimum of one year,” but an archival appraisal to determine the final period of retention needs to be done immediately, given the quantity of imagery that will be generated.

http://www.igovernment.in/news/1000774/fix-cctvs-police-stations-hc?utm_source=newsletter-core&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20141119

The United Nations World Population Fund and the International Center for Research on Woman “polled 9,205 men, aged 18 to 49, across seven states in India” and reported that “six out of ten Indian men admit to having perpetrated violence against their wives or partners,” reported the *Times of India*. This is important data to preserve as a benchmark against which to measure progress in curbing violence against women. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Six-out-of-10-Indian-men-admit-violence-against-wives-UN-study/articleshow/45098205.cms?>

Kosovo. The government commission that is verifying who fought for the Kosovo Liberation Army during the 1998-1999 conflict—which makes the person eligible for benefits from the state—has 66,300 applications, of which 16,000 have been registered as approved and 14,000 still need adjudication, reported *BIRN*. See *HRWG News* 2012-09 for background. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-liberation-army-veterans-benefits-from-january-next-year?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter&utm_campaign=f80c0b5327-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_561b9a25c3-f80c0b5327-311109073

The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) is investigating a report published by *Koha Ditore* that EULEX officials met with “intermediaries” of defendants in ongoing cases, took bribes to release two defendants and gave them “access to confidential court material,” *International Justice Tribune* summarized. A British prosecutor said she had discovered the situation “via wiretaps of the defendants’ cell phones.” Issue No. 169, www.justicetribune.com

Montenegro. Montenegro has a strict citizenship regime and prohibits dual citizenship. The interior ministry reported that of 16,000 refugees and displaced people in the country since the Balkan wars of the 1990s, only 1038 have gained citizenship and 58 will get citizenship “if they provide a release from the state of origin,” likely a difficult task. The government “warned that 4800 of them must still apply for permanent residence status by the end of 2014 in order to secure the right to work, education, welfare and healthcare,” *BIRN* reported. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/montenegro-s-passport-still-unattainable-for-refugees?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter&utm_campaign=973c538630-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_561b9a25c3-973c538630-311109073

Myanmar. The International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard University Law School released *Legal Memorandum: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity in Eastern Myanmar*. Based on “more than 1,500 pages of documentation relating to the [government] Offensive in eastern Myanmar, including more than 1,000 pages of draft affidavits (several of which exceed 50 pages in length), 180 pages of expert declarations, and third party reports,” the Clinic concluded that “Myanmar Army personnel from Southern Command and LID [Light Infantry Division] 66 committed crimes against humanity and war crimes” between 2005 and 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/06/world/asia/report-calls-for-war-crime-prosecutions-in-myanmar.html?mabReward=RI%3A15&r=0>; for the report see <http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2014.11.05-IHRC-Legal-Memorandum.pdf>

Pakistan. The *Express Tribune* reported that the Punjab government is computerizing its land records but the Board of Revenue says it is “facing strong resistance from the land mafia and certain revenue functionaries. In several districts, some records, including the register haqdarar zameen, field books, garwari, taghaurat and mutations, have gone ‘missing.’” <http://tribune.com.pk/story/785820/land-management-records-land-mafia-missing-data-hindering-computerisation/>

Philippines. A year after Typhoon Yolanda devastated the Philippines, *Rappler* surveyed the condition of public records in four agencies. The Philippine Statistics Authority “reported that all documents in the local civil registries of Hernani and Lawaan towns in Eastern Sama—around 25,000 birth, marriage, and death certificates in all—were completely destroyed” and are being reconstituted from the records of the central Civil Registration Department. Audit records in at least 19 agencies were “totally damaged or washed out,” but only one Registry of Deeds was “greatly damaged” destroying 800 or 900 original copies of land titles (the existing land titles are now being digitized). Voter registration books in approximately 28 towns were destroyed but were reconstructed using provincial or national central files. <http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/74110-after-yolanda-government-recover-public-documents>

South Africa. A court in the Western Cape ruled that court documents are accessible only to “parties in litigation or those who have a personal interest therein,” reported *Business Day Live*. The judge ruled that a court registrar and the parties to the litigation can be held in contempt of court for giving court documents to the media. This is a major setback for monitoring the activities of courts. <http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/2014/11/04/ruling-puts-publics-access-to-court-documents-in-jeopardy>

Spain. “Defence Minister Pedro Morenés has said that the government will not be [de]classifying some 10,000 armed services documents from the Civil War and Franco dictatorship era because of insufficient resources to analyse their contents,” reported *The Local*. The previous government had promised to declassify the records from the 1936-1968 period that reportedly contain “information relating to concentration camps as part of the post-Civil War repression meted out by the Franco regime, files on deserters, documents about censorship during the period and plans to cope with potential invasions by other countries. The texts also deal with Spanish policy in its last remaining colonies in North Africa, such as Western Sahara, now claimed by Morocco, and the acquisition of military supplies from the US government.” <http://www.thelocal.es/20141113/defence-ministry-dumps-plan-to-declassify-files>

Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in the U.K., said it “documented 1,917 deaths in Syrian prisons since the start of 2014, among them 27 children under the age of 18 and 11 women,” reported *naharnet*. “The Observatory said the bodies of some of those killed in jail were turned over to their relatives, while other families were simply told their loved ones had died and instructed to collect a death certificate. In some cases families were forced to sign documents saying their relatives had been killed by opposition forces.” <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/153637-observatory-nearly-2-000-dead-in-syria-jails-this-year>

The *International Justice Tribune* reviewed efforts to document crimes committed by the Syrian government during the ongoing conflict. The U.S. has withdrawn its half million dollars in annual support for the Commission for International Justice and Accountability but cited “plans to fund documentation of crimes by ISIS.” The cuts, said the Commission’s director, mean the Commission “will not be able to continue the planned document acquisition and operations planned for next year’s case files.” The Commission says it has “prosecution ready case files and up to one million pages of documentary evidence analysed by military and command structure specialists.” Issue No. 169, www.justicetribune.com

United Kingdom. The government released a review of two prior reviews “looking at information held in connection with child abuse from 1979-1999.” The review focused “on registered files” and “found nothing to support a concern that files had been deliberately or systematically removed or destroyed to cover up organized child abuse.” The reviewers commented, “[I]f files are destroyed too early (even if within an established document retention policy) opportunities may be lost. We were reassured as to how the police procedures now require criminal intelligence to be recorded and retained, compared with the period under scrutiny in this review.” <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-peter-wanless-and-richard-whittam-gc-review;see%20also%20http://lawrenceserewicz.wordpress.com/2014/11/17/records-management-and-the-wanless-report-on-home-office-files/>

“Scotland Yard is carrying out a search of the Barbara Castle archives at the University of Oxford’s Bodleian Library to try and locate a copy of the ‘Dickens Dossier,’ the missing file containing allegations of organized child abuse by politicians and other prominent figures,” reported *The Independent*. An investigative journalist said Castle had given him the dossier containing names of “16 MPS, senior policemen, head teachers and clergy” but it was seized by Special Branch officers in a raid on his office in 1984. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/scotland-yard-searching-bodleian-library-for-dickens-dossier-on-alleged-child-sex-abuse-9857200.html>

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary said police failed to record “more than 800,000 offences, including a quarter of all sexual crimes, reported to them by the public each year,” reported *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/18/police-dismiss-one-in-four-sex-crimes-watchdog#VGso-4Fc8L0.email>

United States. The United States public was riveted on the grand jury proceedings in the case of the unarmed teenager shot by a policeman in Ferguson, Missouri. The grand jury did not indict (send to trial) the policeman, and the prosecutor released thousands of documents and audio and video recordings shown to the grand jury. For an analysis of the records, see the *New York Times*. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/30/us/raised-hands-and-the-doubts-of-a-grand-jury-.html?_r=0

An internal review of Pentagon records revealed that “hundreds” of troops who served in Iraq since 2003 believe they were exposed to chemical warfare agents, reported the *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/07/world/middleeast/-more-than-600-reported-chemical-weapons-exposure-in-iraq-pentagon-acknowledges.html>

Controversy arose over two proposed records destruction schedules. In one, the Central Intelligence Agency proposed to delete all emails except those of a handful of senior officials; in the other the Department of Homeland Security proposed to delete the records of the Einstein network monitoring system data: “master files and output of an electronic information system information system which performs information technology infrastructure intrusion detection, analysis and prevention.” A final determination has not been made on either schedule. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/19/cia-destroy-emails_n_6184810.html; <http://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2014/11/dhs-set-destroy-governmentwide-network-surveillance-records/99737/>; <http://www.computerworld.com/article/2852679/dhs-and-cia-digital-purge-plans-to-delete-emails-and-network-surveillance-records.html>

The Juvenile Law Center released a study, “Juvenile Records Confidentiality and Expungement Scores.” It reported, “[T]he vast majority of states are failing to protect highly sensitive information contained in juvenile court records, creating barriers to education, employment and success for American youth.” The Center recommends that all juvenile arrest records should be “automatically sealed and expunged.” <http://jlc.org/blog/new-study-reveals-majority-us-states-fail-protect-juvenile-records>

In the records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a researcher located the FBI copy of a letter written by the FBI and sent anonymously to Martin Luther King, Jr., to push King into taking his own life. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/16/magazine/what-an-uncensored-letter-to-mlk-reveals.html?_r=1

United States/Illinois. The Chicago Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church released 15,000 pages of documents detailing complaints against 36 priests for sexual abuse. <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2014/11/06/archdiocese-to-release-thousands-of-pages-of-priest-sex-abuse-files/>

United States/Louisiana. Five detectives, all with the special victims section of the New Orleans Police Department, followed up on only 14% of the hundreds of reported sex crime cases, reported the Office of the Inspector General. For 65% of the calls there were no records: a “total void of information.” <http://www.nolaoig.org/uploads/File/Public%20Letters/2014/ROI%20%20Sex%20Crimes%20FINAL%20141111.pdf>

Publications

The *Records Management Journal* invites submissions for a special issue: “Justice records across national boundaries: Considerations for records management.” Extended abstracts (500 words)/commitment to writing an article are due by 20 January 2015 to julie.mcleod@northumbria.ac.uk

“Camps of Death,” a documentary directed by film-maker Avdo Huseinovic for the Association of Concentration-Camp Detainees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was shown for the first time at the Bosnian Culture Centre in Sarajevo. The documentary shows 30 camps in which Bosniaks were detained from 1992 to 1995. “This project will have its true meaning in ten or 15 years, but it is important to me that we speak about these crimes while witnesses are still alive... Witnesses are dying, and many have taken their stories of suffering to the grave,” the film-maker said. For information about the documentary, contact the Association of Concentration-Camp Detainees. www.logorasibih.ba#sthash.4HZn3DPm.dpuf

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