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### **Commentary.**

According to Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (who lived in the first century BCE), the Acadine fountain in Sicily had magic properties. Writings were thrown in to it to be tested: if genuine, they floated; if spurious they sank to the bottom. For over 2000 years people have been trying to figure out what writings to trust.

The trustworthiness of records was in question in a number of news items in February. Most startling, perhaps, was the story that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency sometimes plants false documents in its internal files to mislead its own staff. A false declaration that two children were abandoned and were therefore eligible for international adoption is at the heart of a case referred to the Inter-American Court for Human Rights.

Then there were stories about the creation of false or misleading statistics. Takata Corporation apparently reported false test results on its deadly auto air bags. A police office in New York City is challenging the police department's pressure to arrest people for minor offenses to keep statistics sup and avoid "dragging down the arrest rate." <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/21/magazine/a-black-police-officers-fight-against-the-nypd.html> Colombia is still coping with the "false positives" scandal that blew open in 2008 when the public learned that members of the military killed poor or mentally impaired civilians, dressed them as guerrillas, and presented the bodies as those of persons killed in battle to inflate body counts, to make it appear that the military was winning the internal war, and perhaps to receive personal rewards. The "body count" statistics in the Colombian military records were wrong. (<http://colombiareports.com/false-positives/>).

Another trustworthiness question arises when a person argues that a record about him or her is not accurate or is misinterpreted by the public. Ali Bongo, the president of Gabon, is arguing that his birth certificate is not accurate. Lech Walesa insists that the recently-released file on him does not prove that he collaborated with the Communist-era secret police in Poland. And so on.

Archivists routinely provide certified true copies of records in their holdings. They always caution requesters that a true copy does not mean that the information in the item is true. As we move further into the era when electronic manipulation of documents is routine, insisting that a true copy is just that—the truth is the copy not the information—will be harder but more important to reaffirm, particularly when the document can be used for human rights purposes. Unfortunately, we don't have a magic fountain in archives.

### **International news.**

Inter-American Human Rights Commission. The Commission submitted to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights a case on the international adoption of two children from Guatemala. The children, aged two and seven, were taken from their home after an anonymous complaint was received by officials, placed in an institution, and declared abandoned, which made them eligible for adoption. The Commission said that from the first visit to the home "to the declaration of abandonment . . . many irregularities were apparent, as well as the failure to provide evidence." The Commission said the case will be the first time

the Court will rule on “state obligations resulting from the American Convention in international adoption cases.” [http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/PReleases/2016/017.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2016/017.asp)

International Criminal Court. The appeals judges at the International Criminal Court threw out evidence the prosecution had used against Kenya’s deputy president, William Ruto, and his co-defendant. The lower court had permitted the prosecutor to use “written statements or transcripts of statements recanted by four witnesses when they took the stand” because the trial court found that the “witness had been improperly influenced to recant,” reported Human Rights Watch. The appeals judges said the use of the earlier statements “was incompatible with fair trial rights.” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/17/threat-justice-ruto-decision-cautionary-tale-icc-independence>

At the end of January, during the second day of the trial of former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo and his co-defendant, the prosecution showed two videos “purporting to show Gbagbo’s forces shooting at opposition supporters, including during a march on a pro-Gbagbo television station in December 2010 when 45 people were killed and 16 women and girls were raped,” reported *Agence France-Presse*. The source(s) of the video was not reported. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/29/laurent-gbagbo-war-crimes-trial-ivory-coast-clashes>

International Committee of the Red Cross/UNESCO. The two international organizations signed a partnership agreement to undertake joint projects to “enhance the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict.” UNESCO’s Director-General said the agreement “provides opportunities to enhance UNESCO’s ability to collect information on the ground in areas of difficult access.” <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1454>

NATO. NATO announced that its “surveillance planes would help to gather information about migrants on the Syria-Turkey border,” the *euobserver* reported, and will “share its Aegean surveillance data with the EU’s border-control agency, Frontex, and with EU institutions more broadly.” <https://euobserver.com/justice/132231>

United Nations. A confidential report to the Security Council obtained by *Reuters* said that Rwanda is “recruiting and training Burundian refugees with the goal of ousting Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza.” The members of the Group of Experts who prepared the report are monitoring sanctions on the Democratic Republic of Congo, and they found that Burundian fighters trained by Rwanda had crossed over into Congo. The report said, “The Burundian combatants showed the group fake DRC identification cards that had been produced for them in Rwanda, so they could avoid suspicion while in the DRC.” <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-burundi-rwanda-un-idUSKCN0VD04K>

The Human Rights Council published a report on deaths in detention in Syria. Examining the killing of detainees “in official and makeshift detention centres” between 10 March 2011 and 30 November 2015, it concluded that all parties to the conflict carried out “massive and systematized violence.” The report is based on “621 interviews, as well as considerable documentary material.” [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoSyria/A-HRC-31-CRPI\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoSyria/A-HRC-31-CRPI_en.pdf)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UINHCR, the UN refugee agency, said that although “more than 20,000 people in West Africa have gained identity documents in the past year” an estimated one million still are believed to be stateless, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* reported. UNHCR said “many West Africans are left stateless by laws which prevent women passing their nationality to their children and a lack of birth registrations” which means they lack access to basic rights such as the ability to work legally or to obtain healthcare. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160225132737-yc7g3/>

UNICEF. UNICEF published statistics showing that “at least 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation,” most before they were five years old. The global figure is 70 million more than estimated in 2014 “due to population growth in some countries and nationally representative data collected by the Government of Indonesia.” Only 30 countries “have nationally representative data on the practice,” UNICEF warned, adding, “When governments collect and publish national statistics on FGM they are better placed to understand the extent of the issue and accelerate efforts to protect the rights of millions of girls and women.” Ending the practice is part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_90033.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_90033.html)

World Health Organization. The World Health Organization and the international nongovernmental organization Sightsavers issued results of their Global Trachoma Mapping Project. “More than 550 teams of health ministry staff in the countries surveyed were trained to spot the disease and use smartphones with GPS systems to record the data,” including water and sanitation levels. “The app developed for the trachoma survey is also being trialled for gathering information about other diseases on WHO’s list,” reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. The organizers optimistically say that “trachoma, an extremely painful disease which causes blindness, could be eliminated by 2020.” A project leader commented, “We know where it is, we know how prevalent it is, so we know what to do,” surely a great endorsement of the power of documentation. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160210000331-6s0d7/>

Unfortunately, however, a UN panel that reviewed the World Health Organization said it “needs urgent reform to boost its ability to respond to crises, and failure to act now could cost thousands of lives,” reported *Reuters*. The panel recommended a new Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response and said all countries must “meet the full obligations of international health regulations, which . . . set rules on how and when to report disease outbreaks.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20160208164212-u2f9r/>

### **World/general news.**

Business records. The U.S. Senate Committee on Science, Commerce and Transportation issued a Minority Staff report on the defective airbags manufactured by Takata that have caused at least ten deaths and injuries to more than 100 persons worldwide. “Numerous internal documents and emails reference the widespread manipulation of inflator testing results by Takata employees. In a meeting with Committee staff, Takata representatives stated that the most serious data manipulation occurred in 2000; however, emails and documents reviewed by Committee minority staff demonstrate that these data integrity issues continued even in the years after the airbag recalls began, when fatalities had been linked to rupturing airbags. Takata representatives contend that there is no link between the instances of data manipulation and the defects that are the subject of recalls.” [http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/04c489c1-36e8-4037-b60b-c50285f3e436/5D6F21C6E25F0702634A24422FA92CEC.2-23-16-final-takata-addendum-and-exhibits.pdf](http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/04c489c1-36e8-4037-b60b-c50285f3e436/5D6F21C6E25F0702634A24422FA92CEC.2-23-16-final-takata-addendum-and-exhibits.pdf)

Also in the auto industry, Volkswagen internal memos and emails obtained by the German newspaper *Bild am Sonntag* and reviewed by the *New York Times* “suggest that company executives pursued a strategy of delay and obfuscation with United States regulators after being confronted in early 2014 with evidence that VW diesel vehicles were emitting far more pollutants than allowed.” Some VW autos “produced up to 35 times the allowed amount of nitrogen oxide emissions, which are linked to lung ailments and premature deaths.” [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/business/volkswagen-memos-suggest-emissions-problem-was-known-earlier.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/business/volkswagen-memos-suggest-emissions-problem-was-known-earlier.html?_r=0)

Refugee deaths. On the island of Lesbos, refugees and migrants who drown crossing the Aegean Sea trying to reach Europe are buried. The coroner “has photographed and taken DNA samples of more than 200 victims who drowned off Lesbos and the island of Samos, keeping an archive in case relatives seek them out,” reported *Reuters*. The International Organization for Migration said that in 2015 “more than 3,700 people are known to have drowned or gone missing,” but “the actual number is believed to be higher.” <http://news.trust.org/item/20160214120411-6jm7l/>

### **Bilateral and multilateral news.**

Bangladesh/Myanmar. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics began surveying the number of Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar living in Bangladesh. “About 33,000 Rohingya have been documented in two official camps,” reported *UCAN*, but “another 300,000 to 500,000 remain unaccounted.” The survey will be followed by a census and “the information gathered will be used to create a community database.” Many of the refugees have “no documents or job prospects.” [http://www.eurasiareview.com/17022016-bangladesh-begins-survey-of-undocumented-rohingya-muslims/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29](http://www.eurasiareview.com/17022016-bangladesh-begins-survey-of-undocumented-rohingya-muslims/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29)

Belgium/France. Belgium's federal prosecutor confirmed that "surveillance footage of a high-ranking Belgian nuclear official" was seized by police from the home of one of the men arrested as a suspect in the November 13 attacks in Paris, reported the *New York Times*. "The purpose of the footage retrieved" was "not clear" but "could have been part of a plot to abduct" the man.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/world/europe/belgium-nuclear-official-video-paris-attacks.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/world/europe/belgium-nuclear-official-video-paris-attacks.html?_r=0)

Bosnia/United States. A Bosnian man who came to the U.S. as a refugee and did not disclose his criminal record was deported for "misrepresenting important material matters" on his immigration application, reported the *Associated Press*. <http://www.startribune.com/man-faces-jail-time-for-concealing-bosnian-war-past/368424241/>

Cuba/Dominican Republic/ United States. In 1975 President Gerald Ford established the United States President's Commission on CIA Activities within the United States. Now 86 pages of the Commission's final report detailing CIA assassination plots against Fidel Castro of Cuba and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic have been released following a Freedom of Information request filed by the nongovernmental National Security Archive. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB543-Ford-White-House-Altered-Rockefeller-Commission-Report/>

Egypt/Finland/Germany/Italy. Privacy International published a report on the Egyptian government's Technical Research Department (TRD). Using "original documentation provided in confidence," the report shows the TRD's "extensive ambitions to purchase surveillance technologies" from Western companies including Nokia Siemens Networks and Hacking Team, who have "sold them sophisticated surveillance technologies, even as Egypt was, and indeed still is, in the throes of violent conflict."

[https://privacyinternational.org/sites/default/files/egypt\\_reportEnglish.pdf](https://privacyinternational.org/sites/default/files/egypt_reportEnglish.pdf)

France/French Polynesia. Between 1966 and 1996 France carried out nuclear tests in French Polynesia. In 2010 France passed a law authorizing compensation for military veterans and civilians "whose cancer could be attributed to the test programme," reported *AFP*, but only "around 20 people have received compensation" although about 1000 people have applied. During a February visit to Papeete, the territorial capitol, French President Hollande said, "The processing of applications for compensation for victims of nuclear tests will be reviewed." <http://www.afp.com/en/news/hollande-acknowledges-impact-nuclear-testing-pacific>

France/Gabon. To be president of Gabon, the person must be born in the country. Claims have been made by journalists and opponents of the incumbent president, Ali Bongo, now running for another term, that he was born in Congo or Nigeria. The half-sister of the president has obtained a copy of Ali Bongo's birth certificate from the archives of French Equatorial Africa held in Nantes, France, which says that he was born in 1959 in Brazzaville, Congo. The president's lawyer is challenging the validity of the document.

<http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20160229-gabon-acte-naissance-ali-bongo-plainte-nantes-onaida-succession-omar>

Islamic State. Researchers from the U.S. Military Academy and Georgia State University published a report on the Islamic State's use of children as suicide bombers. They "recorded instances of young people (both younger children and youth) who were featured in official Islamic State reports as 'martyrs' from January 1, 2015, to January 31, 2016," downloading photographs "sourced from Islamic State propagandists on Twitter" and also drawing "directly from the Islamic State's official Telegram channel." They found 89 images, which they "coded according to 24 variables," and concluded that the "data unambiguously suggests that the Islamic State's mobilization of children and youth for military purposes is accelerating." <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/depictions-of-children-and-youth-in-the-islamic-states-martyrdom-propaganda-2015-2016>

Israel/Palestine. An assistant professor at the University of Maryland estimates that "about one-third" of the documents Israel declassified in the 1980s that related to "orders given to the nascent Israeli army to expel Palestinians during the 1948 war" have been reclassified, according to an interview reported by *972* magazine. <http://972mag.com/classified-politicizing-the-nakba-in-israels-state-archives/117216/>

Korea/United States. A dispute over heritage which led to a lawsuit has been settled. In 2003 the records of the Korean National Association were discovered in the attic of a building being renovated in Los Angeles, California. The Association had "functioned as a government in exile, and led independence efforts against Japanese colonial rule in the Korean peninsula in the early 1900s," reported the *Los Angeles*

*Times*. Some Korean American argued that the records should remain in the U.S., while others argued that they should be preserved “with other contemporaneous archives at the Independence Hall in South Korea.” The parties agreed that the University of Southern California will digitize the 15,000 to 16,000 pages and send the originals to South Korea. <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-lost-korean-papers-20160224-story.html>; for a description of the records, see <http://libguides.usc.edu/c.php?g=235047&p=1559980>

Kosovo/Serbia. Following a trial held in absentia (that is, without the presence of the person being tried), a Serbian court found eight former Kosovo Liberation Army men guilty of acts of terrorism, including the ambush and killing of six Yugoslav Army soldiers in September 1998. The lawyer representing the family of one of the soldiers killed told *BIRN*, “The court determined their guilt thanks to video clips, so these were the key evidence.” <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-ex-guerillas-jailed-for-kosare-crimes-02-17-2016>; <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=31236&lang=de>

The president of Kosovo’s government commission on missing persons told the press, “Opening up the archives of Serbia’s military and police can lead [us] to mass graves,” reported *BIRN*. He also said the commission will “seek assistance from the international community to obtain military satellite images that also can help identify the locations of mass graves.” An estimated 1,600 persons are still missing since the 1998-99 war. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-asks-access-to-serbia-s-archives-on-search-for-missing-persons-02-03-2016>

South Asia. Plan India and Bangladesh’s “social enterprise” DNet developed and launched a database program called the Missing Child Alert (MCA) that will include the victim’s name, photo and place of origin. It is being used initially by ten charities in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, but the intent is to share the information on missing children across all countries of South Asia. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160215000317-gpu3k/>

## **National news.**

Afghanistan. The United Nations reported that “civilian casualties of the war in Afghanistan rose to record levels for the seventh year in a row in 2015,” reaching 3545 non-combatant deaths and 7457 civilians injured. “Ground engagements” caused 37% of the casualties, followed by roadside bombs (21%) and suicide attacks (17%). According to *Reuters*, the UN has recorded 59,000 civilian casualties in Afghanistan since 2009. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160214101002-yf49k/>

Brazil. Using the freedom of information law, *Reporter Brazil* obtained information from the Ministry of Labor showing that from May 2013 to May 2015 the Ministry “fined 340 Brazilian companies for using slave labor,” reported *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160215174624-kgqrk/>

Cyprus. The Commissioner for Humanitarian Issues said Cyprus will “fully investigate information from the Red Cross archives as part of efforts to establish the fate of missing persons on Cyprus,” reported *in-cyprus*. Nearly 1500 people are still missing, and the “Red Cross archives are important and extensive since the organization was present during the Turkish invasion of 1974,” the Commissioner said. <http://in-cyprus.com/cyprus-to-investigate-red-cross-archives-on-missing/>

Egypt. Egypt forcibly closed a prominent human rights organization, the Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, that “documents complaints of torture in custody,” reported *AFP*. This demonstrates why a vulnerable nongovernmental organization needs to find an archives outside the area of risk that is willing to serve as a safe haven for copies of its records. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/02/18/Egypt-orders-closure-of-prominent-human-rights-organization.html>

Germany. The trial of Reinhold Hanning, a guard at the Nazi’s Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, opened. According to the *New York Times*, “Prosecutors have built their case on the dates Mr. Hanning served in the camp and on the number of people who died during that time, based on information gleaned from meticulous records kept by the Nazis.” [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/world/europe/reinhold-hanning-trial-auschwitz.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/world/europe/reinhold-hanning-trial-auschwitz.html?_r=0)



Guinea. Human Rights Watch (HRW) sent a letter to the Prime Minister, expressing concern over the plan of Guinea's telecommunications regulator to "put in place a center for control and oversight of traffic, (voice and data)" from Guinea's four major mobile phone companies. The regulator said the center is "to verify revenues of service providers for tax assessment purposes," but the system would also give the government access to "the phone numbers of both parties to the call, the time and date, the call duration, and even the approximate location of the people making the call." HRW urged the government to insure that the system will not invade the privacy of users. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/05/guinea-protect-phone-users-privacy>

India. *The Hindu* reported that police in Uttar Pradesh state "destroyed documents that could have helped to prove the involvement of the Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel in the Hashimpura massacre of 1987, even while the trial is still pending." The massacre occurred when 42 men from a minority community were seized during riots, taken to a "nearby canal" and killed, according to the prosecution. Last year a case against the alleged perpetrators collapsed due to "insufficient evidence"; it is now on appeal. The documents were "weeded out" on April 1, 2006. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/hashimpura-massacre-up-police-destroyed-papers-on-massacre/article8180328.ece>

Telegana state is "computerising" its land records, but officials have discovered that "nearly 2.8 lakh [land] survey numbers are missing," reported *Deccan Chronicle* (a lakh equals 100,000, so 280,000 records). In addition to the missing records, the documents were written in at least five different languages "in cursive, which is difficult to read and understand" and the "scripts are proving to be difficult to interpret or translate by the current generation." Some districts have called in language experts to assist in data entry. <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/230216/check-up-2-8-lakh-land-records-go-missing.html>

Italy. The government released "thousands of previous classified documents related to fascist and Nazi war crimes committed in Italy during World War II," reported *Forward*. The historical archives of the Chamber of Deputies put on its website an index to an estimated 13,000 pages of the material. <http://forward.com/news/breaking-news/333576/italy-cracks-open-fascist-era-cabinet-of-shame-archives/>

Kosovo. Unemployed veterans of the 1998-1999 war who were registered by a government commission as a war veteran receive government pensions of 170 euros a month, reported *BIRN*. In February 2015 the commission said it had verified only 23,684 of the 65,000 who asked for veteran status. This February a group of the unregistered staged a rally, demanding that the government deal with appeals of their status; the ministry of labour and social welfare said it is checking 3400 appeals. [http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kla-veterans-protest-over-state-benefits-02-01-2016?utm\\_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm\\_campaign=67e03b89a6-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a1d9e93e97-67e03b89a6-319755321](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kla-veterans-protest-over-state-benefits-02-01-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=67e03b89a6-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-67e03b89a6-319755321)

Mexico. Members of the panel of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission who are investigating the case of 43 college students who disappeared after being detained by police in Iguala in 2014 told a news conference that they are "being given limited access to new information uncovered by government investigators," and were not given "access to videos that could clarify what happened that night," reported the *Associated Press*. <http://www.bigstory.ap.org/article/72b2759014e945e899b5643ef05aac91/experts-say-obstacles-blocking-probe-missing-students>

Myanmar. The Transnational Institute published a "primer" on land issues in Myanmar. It noted that under the new Farmland Law "farmers who have been growing on hereditary land for their livelihoods can only possess land by means of official registration. As the registration process is not easily accessible for rural people, the land policies put them at risk." Another law, the Vacant, Fallow, and Virgin Land Law, says that "land that is not currently titled and being used in certain ways is seen as a 'wasted asset'" which the government can reallocate. The Institute said that "getting the issue of land into the peace process" is essential because "important questions around access to and control of land are at the heart of the civil war, and unless they are addressed well, real peace is likely to remain out of reach." <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/the-meaning-of-land-in-myanmar>

New Zealand. *Radio New Zealand News* reported that veterans "are up in arms about a plan to destroy records and case files held by Archives New Zealand" after the records are fully digitized. They are concerned that parts of their military service records will be lost while transferring the records to the new format. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/295921/war-vets-up-in-arms-over-archive-nz-plans>

Nigeria. The Nigerian army established an office of human rights “to continue training officers about the need to respect the rights of citizens in the ongoing fight against Islamic insurgent group Boko Haram,” reported the *Voice of America*. The archives for the new office need to be established immediately and robustly protected. <http://venturesafrica.com/story/nigerian-army-establishes-offices-to-handle-human-rights-violations/>

Poland. The Institute of National Remembrance released “portions of decades-old files” that indicate that former President Lech Walesa was a Communist informer in the 1970s, reported the *New York Times* and many other sources. The files were “seized” at the house of the last Communist interior minister, who wrote a letter in 1996 to the Polish Central Archives of Modern Records, explaining that “he had kept the files hidden so that they would not be used against Mr. Walesa and the Solidarity movement” that he led. Walesa has denied the implications of the records. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/world/europe/lech-walesa-poland.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/world/europe/lech-walesa-poland.html?_r=1)

Russia/Chechnya. Ramzan Kadyrov, the Chechen leader, posted a video on Instagram showing the leader of Russia’s political opposition, Mikhail Kasyanov, “in a gunman’s crosshairs,” reported *The Guardian*. Kadyrov has 1.6 million Instagram followers; Instagram deleted the video saying it violated “its rule that users respect on another.” The deputy chairman of the opposition party called the video an “instigation to murder.” <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/01/ramzan-kadyrov-video-opposition-mikhail-kasyanov-rifle-sights>

Serbia. “Over 3,000 buildings expropriated during World War II will be handed over to Serbia’s main Jewish organization after parliament adopted a law on the restitution of Holocaust victims’ assets,” reported *BIRN*. “A request for the return of assets will be submitted by a Jewish municipality and assessed by the Serbian Agency for Restitution before the assets are transferred to the Jewish municipality or the request is rejected.” What kind of documentation will be required to establish ownership was not reported. [http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-holocaust-victims-reclaiming-wwii-confiscated-assets-02-19-2016?utm\\_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm\\_campaign=7509d4139e-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_a1d9e93e97-7509d4139e-319755321](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-holocaust-victims-reclaiming-wwii-confiscated-assets-02-19-2016?utm_source=Balkan+Transitional+Justice+Daily+Newsletter+-+NEW&utm_campaign=7509d4139e-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a1d9e93e97-7509d4139e-319755321)

South Africa. *News 24* reported that at a press conference at Wits University the Minister of Higher Education warned that “important historical records, like the draft copy of former president Nelson Mandela’s Rivonia trial speech, which are housed in most universities, are in danger of being destroyed by violent fringe groups.” In response some students asked the Minister “to remove the archived material so they could freely burn down the university library.” <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/historical-records-like-rivonia-trial-documents-could-be-destroyed-nzimande-20160229>

Syria. Eighteen Syrian human rights nongovernmental organizations issued a statement to the Syrian negotiating parties, the International Syria Support Group, and the United Nations Special Envoy to Syria and his team. Among their demands were (1) access by “an independent, impartial, and neutral organization” to “all prisons and detention facilities in Syria” and to issue “a full and official list of prisoners’ names to determine the persons still held in custody by all parties to the conflict, in preparation for creating a catalog of missing persons who do not appear on any prisoner list,” and (2) creation of an “national independent commission of inquiry” which would have “full access to all regions of Syria within the control of the negotiating parties, as well as access to examine all official records and interview witnesses and security officials.” <http://syriaaccountability.org/updates/2016/02/04/a-statement-issued-by-syrian-organizations-working-in-the-field-of-documentation-accountability-and-transitional-justice/>

The Syrian Center for Policy Research, until recently based in Damascus, issued a report saying that at least 470,000 Syrians had died as a result of the ongoing war and putting the economic cost at \$255 billion, “essentially wiping out the nation’s wealth,” reported the *New York Times*. This is another nongovernmental organization whose records need protecting in a safe haven elsewhere. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/world/middleeast/death-toll-from-war-in-syria-now-470000-group-finds.html?smtyp=cur&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/world/middleeast/death-toll-from-war-in-syria-now-470000-group-finds.html?smtyp=cur&_r=0)

Taiwan. An apartment building in the city of Tainan collapsed during an earthquake on February 6, causing 115 deaths. In the aftermath the city government said it would look at the other buildings built by the same company. Of the two buildings built by the firm that survived the quake, “the Public Works Bureau did not have records of structural and safety assessments of either,” *Reuters* reported. The man

who built the building that collapsed was arrested, and the prosecutor's office said the apartment building's "design and construction did not match calculations made in its structural and steel blueprints" and "at least half of the main beam joints were missing compared to the building's structural calculation books."

<http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/taiwan-city-looks-developers-other-buildings-after-quake-collapse>

The letters arrived 60 years late, but they were welcome because they were "among 177 uncovered in the past decade that were written by victims of the political repression known as the White Terror" in Taiwan between 1947 and 1987, reported the *New York Times*. Although records for the period are available in the archives, researchers said "there has not been a thorough and transparent examination" of them. They believe many records from the period were destroyed, and "they also believe others have been kept from surfacing through willful neglect."

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/04/world/asia/taiwan-white-terror-executions.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/04/world/asia/taiwan-white-terror-executions.html?_r=0)

Tunisia. The director of the national archives announced that the archives of the president are now available for use by the truth commission.

<http://www.espacemanager.com/les-archives-de-la-presidence-finalement-mises-la-disposition-de-livd.html>

United Kingdom. "Companies with over 250 employees will have to publish their gender pay gap" under new Government proposals, reported the *Independent*. Starting in 2018, the government will publish statistics on the gender pay gap to show "which types of companies are the worst offenders."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/gender-pay-gap-new-measures-uk-companies-a6868466.html>

The National Crime Agency announced that, using data from police forces, "reports of online dating-related rape have risen by more than 450 percent in six years," reported *VICE News*.

[https://news.vice.com/article/online-dating-rape-reports-rise-450-percent-in-five-years?utm\\_source=vicenewsfb](https://news.vice.com/article/online-dating-rape-reports-rise-450-percent-in-five-years?utm_source=vicenewsfb)

In June 2014 a police whistleblower alleged that police officers were shredding or deleting police records relating to Jenny Jones, a peer of the Green party who is also the deputy chair of the official committee that scrutinizes the Metropolitan police. The police began an investigation, which produced a report last year that the police now refuse to release to Lady Jones. Deputy police commissioner Craig Mackey told her that documents were destroyed on the day the whistleblower cited "but the Met could not establish that they related to her." The Met's domestic extremism unit "maintains a database recording the political activities of thousands of political activists," *The Guardian* reported, "and has been accused of overstepping the mark and collecting information about campaigners who have engaged in peaceful protest." Mackey explained that "following concerns" that the unit was holding too much data, it was encouraged "to remove data which is either too old, inappropriate or irrelevant on a regular basis."

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/01/police-refuse-release-report-destroyed-files-green-party-peer-jenny-jones>

United States. In December 2014 the Senate Intelligence Committee released a summary of its report on the Central Intelligence Agency's torture program. At the same time the Committee sent the full report to the Justice, Defense and State Departments and the Central Intelligence Agency, all of which were advised by the Justice Department not to open the copies, pending the resolution of a related freedom of information act lawsuit. An article in *Al Jazeera America* urged the Archivist of the United States to declare that the copies of the Senate Intelligence Committee's report in the hands of the Executive branch agencies are federal records. Doing so would make it possible to have those copies of the report reviewed for release under the terms of the freedom of information act, which applies to the Executive branch agencies but does not apply to Congressional records.

<https://nsarchive.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/the-archivist-of-the-us-should-call-the-torture-report-what-it-is-a-federal-record/>

The *Washington Post* reported that the Central Intelligence Agency at times creates "internal memos that contain false information about operations and sources overseas." "Officials" told the Post that "there is no clear mechanism" for labeling or identifying these items (referred to as "eyewash"). At least two such records are cited in the report of the Senate Committee on Intelligence on torture (see previous item).

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/eyewash-how-the-cia-deceives-its-own-workforce-about-operations/2016/01/31/c00f5a78-c53d-11e5-9693-933a4d31bcc8\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/eyewash-how-the-cia-deceives-its-own-workforce-about-operations/2016/01/31/c00f5a78-c53d-11e5-9693-933a4d31bcc8_story.html)

The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine released an updated report on the health effects associated with deployment in the Gulf War of 1991. The panel listed



conditions associated with “Gulf War illness” but complained it could not establish a clear link between health and the effects of the war because “objective exposure data gathered during and after the war have been, and are expected to continue to be unavailable” to researchers. [http://www.nap.edu/catalog/21840/gulf-war-and-health-volume-10-update-of-health-effects?utm\\_source=NAP+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=6c839f821d-NAP\\_mail\\_new\\_2016\\_02\\_16&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_96101de015-6c839f821d-103629561&goal=0\\_96101de015-6c839f821d-103629561&mc\\_cid=6c839f821d&mc\\_eid=64566d7fe9](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/21840/gulf-war-and-health-volume-10-update-of-health-effects?utm_source=NAP+Newsletter&utm_campaign=6c839f821d-NAP_mail_new_2016_02_16&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_96101de015-6c839f821d-103629561&goal=0_96101de015-6c839f821d-103629561&mc_cid=6c839f821d&mc_eid=64566d7fe9)

United States/California. The California Concerned Parents Association, a nongovernment organization, “sought statewide data to prove its case that students with identified needs are not being provided adequate services” by their schools. The Association asked the court to order the California Department of Education to turn over public school records on about 10 million students, and the court ordered the release, reported the *San Jose Mercury News*. The review “will be overseen by a court-ordered special master in electronic discovery,” and the attorneys are to keep the records confidential and either return or destroy them after use. Parents worried about the privacy of their child’s information have until April 1 to ask the court to order that their child’s data not be released. [http://www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts/ci\\_29524376/10-million-calif-student-records-about-be-released?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=csn](http://www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts/ci_29524376/10-million-calif-student-records-about-be-released?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=csn)

“Pacific Gas and Electric Company says it has lost 12 years of gas-line repair records” for part of the San Francisco Bay area, reported *SFGate*. This is especially worrying because this is the company whose pipeline near San Bruno exploded in 2010 killing 8 people and another exploded in Carmel in 2014 destroying a house. <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/PG-E-can-t-find-original-records-for-South-Bay-6797229.php>

United States/Illinois. A team of attorneys, approved by a Federal judge, have been reviewing 466 Chicago police files on closed homicide cases (known as “street files”). The *Chicago Tribune* reported that of the first 60 cases that the team has been able to compare with “evidence that was disclosed by police and prosecutors at the time of trials,” in more than 90 percent of the cases “information in the street file was not in the defense files”—that is, apparently it was not provided to the defense as required by law. The city denied that any evidence was improperly withheld. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-chicago-police-street-files-met-20160212-story.html>

United States/Michigan. Flint, Michigan, continues to be in a water crisis, with lead in the city water greatly exceeding the healthful limit. “Figuring out which homes in Flint have lead services lines is vital to resolving the Flint water crisis,” *Michigan Radio* reported, but the city did not know where its lead service lines were: “Until now, those records have lived on 3-by-5 index cards, old maps, and in the minds of Flint water department employees.” The University of Michigan has now created a database for the city to use, taking information from the records; however, 11,196 residential properties have “unknown service line connections.” <http://michiganradio.org/post/flint-now-knows-where-4000-lead-service-lines-are-records-11000-homes-missing#stream/0>

## **Publications, courses.**

The Danish Institute for Human Rights published a very useful “Human rights impact assessment guidance and toolbox” which it describes as “Guidance and practical tools for conducting, commissioning, reviewing or monitoring human rights impact assessments of business projects and activities.” Business archivists should find this especially interesting. <http://www.humanrights.dk/business/tools/human-rights-impact-assessment-guidance-and-toolbox>

The New York Public Library, in cooperation with the University of South Carolina, published “the archive of the Green Book” which “was a travel guide published between 1936 and 1966 that listed hotels, restaurants, bars, gas stations, etc., where black travelers would be welcome.” <http://publicdomain.nypl.org/greenbook-map/>

An article, “The Right to Universal Birth Registration,” by Paula Gerber and Melissa Castan of the Monash University (Australia) Faculty of Law, is available at [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2602058](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2602058)

Swisspeace announced that the latest version of its resource collection on “Archives and Dealing with the Past” is available both on its website and for download as a pdf:

<http://archivesproject.swisspeace.ch/resources/resource-collection/>

Swisspeace is offering a course on dealing with the past, to be held in Basel, Switzerland, 9-13 May 2016. “This course is designed for both practitioners and academics interested in bridging their own experiences with critical conceptual insights and practical knowledge on dealing with the past.” A draft program and information on the application procedure and tuition fees can be found at:

<http://www.swisspeace.ch/courses/individual-courses/dealing-with-the-past.html>

The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Right Studies (MIGS) is now accepting applications for its Professional Training Program for the Prevention of Mass Atrocities, to be held in Montreal, Canada, 1-3 June 2016. The program “is tailored to mid- to senior-level professionals interested in human rights, international security, extremism, and the prevention and interdiction of mass atrocity crimes.” For details see <http://migsinstitute.wix.com/migs2016>

The German Federal Archives is offering a ten day archival seminar, “Modern Diplomats of the Holocaust,” 21-31 August 2016. The goal is to give “a thorough introduction into the handling of German records related to the Holocaust,” for “archival staff members (particularly from Eastern Europe) and Holocaust researchers who work with German archival records and would like to enlarge their knowledge on archival sources.” Persons interested should apply by 15 April at <http://www.ehri-project.eu/ehri-archival-seminar-modern-diplomatics-holocaust>

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