

Network of Concerned Historians	NCH
<i>Annual Report 2020</i>	http://www.concernedhistorians.org

INTRODUCTION

This **twenty-sixth *Annual Report of the Network of Concerned Historians (NCH)*** contains news about the domain where history and human rights intersect, in particular about the censorship of history and the persecution of historians, archivists, and archaeologists around the globe, as reported by various human rights organizations and other sources. It mainly covers events and developments of 2019 and 2020.

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Cite this report as:

Network of Concerned Historians, *Annual Report 2020*

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				<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2005</u>
<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1995</u>

All *Annual Reports* (1995–2020) were compiled by [Antoon De Baets](#). This year's report was co-edited by Ruben Zeeman.

Please send any comments to antoondebaets@concernedhistorians.org

AFGHANISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2016, 2018.

See Iran, United States.

ALBANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2012, 2015–2019.

In mid-July 2019, ten members of parliament from the ruling Socialist Party (PS/PPSh) wanted to prevent the Institute for the Study of the Crimes of Communism (ISKK), created in 2010 to probe Communist-era crimes in Albania, from studying incidents that happened during World War II. The parliament was reviewing the law that regulated the study of Communism with the aim of banning the study of World War II as part of the Communist period; it also demanded that the fifteen institute employees get security clearance. Institute director Agron Tufa (1967–) said that the proposed changes demonstrated a “Communist-era mentality” to the writing of history. A few months earlier, Spartak Braho, a Socialist Party member of parliament who had been a judge in the Communist era, had accused Tufa of insulting the anti-Fascist resistance during World War II through the publication of books that claimed that war crimes were committed by Communist guerrilla fighters.¹

On 31 October 2019, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) announced in Tirana that it had successfully identified two people who disappeared under the Communist regime. Further progress was impeded because prosecutors did not approve exhumations at Mount Dajti near Tirana and at another known grave site in Ballshi in southern Albania. They did not give reasons. In 2017, a project was started to find and identify some of the 6,000 missing victims of the Communist regime (1944–1991). In 2010, family members of some of those who disappeared under the Communist regime conducted private research at a known unmarked graveyard at Mount Dajti, finding the remains of thirteen people. The two persons identified by the ICMP belonged to these thirteen [see NCH Annual Report 2017].²

¹ Gjergj Erebara, “[BIRN Wins Appeal to Declassify Albanian Secret Police Files](#),” *Balkan Insight* (29 May 2019).

² Gjergj Erebara, “[Search for Victims of Albanian Communism Impeded by Prosecutors](#),” *Balkan Insight* (31 October 2019).

In December 2019, Albanian-Canadian historian Olsi Jazexhi, a history lecturer at the Alexander Moisiu University of Durrës, was barred from teaching his courses the next semester. In August 2019, Jazexhi had visited re-education camps in Xinjiang, China, where in video-recorded interviews he documented the attempts to suppress the language, culture, and religion of the Uyghurs. Jazexhi was accused of lying and spreading “fake news” by Chinese Communist Party media and the Chinese ambassador in Albania. Jazexhi declared that his university had ties to Beijing and believed that his suspension was in retaliation for his outspokenness about the plight of the Uyghurs.³

See also Austria.

ALGERIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2001–2019.

ANGOLA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003, 2009, 2017.

In 2019, the crackdown on peaceful protesters and activists in the Cabinda enclave continued. Between 28 January and 1 February 2019, police arrested 63 Cabinda pro-independence activists ahead of an announced protest to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Simulambuco (1885) that gave Cabinda the status of a protectorate of former colonial power Portugal. Many of the activists were members of the Movimento Independista de Cabinda (MIC; Independence Movement of Cabinda), a peaceful separatist group that wanted independence or autonomy from Angola.

The crackdown started when Angolan security forces arrested eight MIC activists at their homes on 28 January, where they were preparing leaflets for a peaceful protest scheduled for 1 February. Zenaida Machado, Angola specialist at Human Rights Watch, told AFP that “[u]nlike other parts of Angola where we have seen progress in the right to protest and in freedom of expression, the situation in Cabinda remains tense.”⁴

³ Tom Blackwell, “[Canadian Academic Denied University Work, Called Liar by Chinese Media after Exposing Uyghur Camps](#),” *National Post* (11 December 2019).

⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 27; “Thirteen Protesters Freed, Fifty Held Arbitrarily,” *Amnesty International* (3 April 2019); “In Angola’s Oil Region, Separatists Accuse President of Crackdown,” *France24* (18 May 2019).

ARGENTINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2019.

On 26 February 2020, the Appeals Court in Resistencia, the capital of Chaco Province in the north of Argentina confirmed a first-instance ruling that the massacre of members of the indigenous community of Pilagá, carried out by forces of the Gendarmería Nacional on 10 October 1947 in the La Bomba zone, Formosa, was a genocide. The court accorded collective reparations to the Pilagá people. In the absence of many archival records, the massacre had long been denied until new documents were discovered by a documentary filmmaker (possibly Valeria Mapelman) in the Interior Ministry archives.⁵

Pardons and amnesty laws shielding former officials implicated in the crimes of the dictatorship (1976–1983) were annulled by the Supreme Court and federal judges in the early 2000s. As of March 2019, the Attorney General’s Office reported 3,161 people charged, 901 convicted, and 142 acquitted. Of 611 cases alleging crimes against humanity, judges had issued rulings in 221. As of September 2019, 130 people illegally taken from their parents as children during the dictatorship had been identified and many were reunited with their families. The large number of victims, suspects, and cases made it difficult for prosecutors and judges to bring those responsible to justice while respecting their due process rights. Argentine law allows judges to send inmates age seventy and older to serve their time under house arrest. The Attorney General’s Office reported in March 2019 that 650 pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners were under house arrest.⁶

Twenty-four years after the 1994 bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people and injured more than 300, allegedly at the hands of Iranian suspects, no one had been convicted of the crime. In March 2018, an appeals court upheld a decision ordering the pretrial detention of former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner for allegedly participating in a conspiracy with Iranian officials to undermine investigation of the bombing. It was not implemented because she had parliamentary immunity as a senator and she is currently Argentina’s vice president. Alberto Nisman, a prosecutor in charge of investigating the bombing, was found dead in his home in January 2015 with a single gunshot wound to the head and a pistol matching the wound beside him. In June 2018, an appeals court held that Nisman’s death appeared to be a murder. In February 2019, a court acquitted former President Carlos Menem of alleged interference in the initial investigation into

⁵ “[La Cámara Federal consideró como un genocidio la matanza de Rincón Bomba](#),” *El Comercial* (4 March 2020); *Archives and Human Rights: News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights* (March 2020), 10–11.

⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 31.

the AMIA bombing but convicted a former head of intelligence and a judge of interfering. An appeal of the acquittal was pending.⁷

See also Myanmar.

ARMENIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2006, 2010, 2014–2016.

See Turkey.

AUSTRALIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2001, 2003, 2007–2009, 2014–2016, 2018–2019.

In February 2020, the Returned Service League of Western Australia (RSLWA), a veterans' organization, decided to ban the Aboriginal flag and other forms of recognition, such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, from the ceremonies on Anzac Day (a remembrance day on 25 April for the 1915 Gallipoli battle in which the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps participated). The decision sparked widespread criticism. The Returned Service League (RSL) had previously been criticized for ignoring and diminishing the service of Aboriginal soldiers in World War I and other conflicts. According to the Australian War Memorial, at least 1,000 indigenous Australians were recorded to have fought for their nation in World War I.⁸

On 24 May 2020, mining firm Rio Tinto destroyed the 46,000-year-old Juukan Gorge caves, in the Pilbara region, Western Australia, as it expanded an iron ore project agreed with the authorities. The remote heritage site, of which the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura People (PKKP) were the traditional owners (a link confirmed by scientific research), contained many prehistoric caves and artefacts dating back to the last Ice Age. A few days later, Rio Tinto apologized for the distress it caused, saying it was a mistake. It had obtained permission to expand an existing iron ore mine in 2013 – before the significance of the caves was known and the artefacts were discovered.

On 2 August 2013, mining firm OM Manganese had been found guilty of desecrating, in July 2011,

⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 33–34.

⁸ [“Anzac Day: Aboriginal Flag Row in Western Australia,”](#) *BBC News* (21 February 2020).

an Aboriginal site known as Two Women Sitting Down (including a distinctive rocky outcrop known as the Horse's Head) at Bootu Creek, north of Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, which was owned by the Kunapa people. It was the first time a company has been successfully prosecuted in Australia for desecration of a sacred site. The firm was fined A\$150,000 (\$134,000; £88,000). The CEO said: "The company never intended to harm, damage or disrespect the sacred site. We sincerely regret the damage and the hurt caused and I unreservedly apologize to the site's custodians and traditional owners."⁹

On 29 May 2020, in an appeal brought by historian Jenny Hocking, the High Court ruled 6 to 1 to make public letters between Queen Elizabeth II and her representative Governor-General Sir John Kerr (stored at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra since 1978) that would reveal what knowledge she had, if any, of the dismissal of an Australian government in 1975. The decision overturned lower court rulings that 211 letters between the Queen and Kerr before he dismissed the government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam on 11 November 1975 were personal and could never be made public. Kerr dismissed Whitlam's reforming government and replaced him with opposition leader Malcolm Fraser as prime minister to resolve a month-old deadlock in parliament. Fraser's conservative coalition won an election weeks later. On 13 July 2020, the letters were released and they reportedly indicated that Queen Elizabeth II had not been informed in advance about Whitlam's dismissal. In a letter dated 4 November 1975, the Queen's private secretary, Martin Charteris, had told Kerr that his powers to dismiss the government were a "last resort and then only for Constitutional – and not for political – reasons." Whitlam and his supporters consistently claimed that he was the victim of a conspiracy between Kerr and Fraser to remove him from office.

A Monash University academic and Whitlam biographer who had launched the case in 2016, Hocking said that she expected to read the 211 letters at the National Archives of Australia in Canberra soon after a coronavirus lockdown was lifted. In a similar case, the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom had ruled in 2015 that 27 memos written by Prince Charles, the queen's son and heir, to British government ministers could be made public despite objections that their publication might damage public perceptions of the future king's political neutrality.¹⁰

On [10] June 2020, the social media site Facebook incorrectly removed a historical photo from the 1890s of Aboriginal prisoners in chains in Western Australia on grounds of nudity, and then for three days blocked it and even banned users who attempted to posted links to an article that reported the

⁹ "[Mining Firm Rio Tinto Sorry for Destroying Aboriginal caves](#)," *BBC News* (31 May 2020); "[Mining Firm Desecrated Australia Aboriginal site](#)," *BBC News* (2 August 2013); Tiffanie Turnbull, "[Destruction of Ancient Aboriginal Site Sparks Calls for Reform in Australia](#)," *Thomson Reuters Foundation News* (29 May 2020).

¹⁰ Rod McGuirk, "[Australian Court Rules Queen's Letters Can Be Made Public](#)," *AP News* (29 May 2020); "[Gough Whitlam: Queen not Told in Advance of Australia PM's Sacking, Letters Show](#)," *BBC News* (14 July 2020).

removal. Facebook apologized for the mistake. The user had published the photograph in the context of Prime Minister Scott Morrison's claim that there had been no slavery in Australia, before he backed down on those comments a day later.¹¹

In July 2019, the minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt, announced plans to hold a referendum in the next three years on whether to enshrine constitutional recognition of Australia's indigenous people. In May 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders had issued the "Uluru Statement from the Heart," but their recommendations to establish a First Nations voice in the constitution and a truth and justice commission had not been implemented.¹²

See also New Zealand.

AUSTRIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2001, 2005–2007, 2009, 2018.

When in 2019 the exhibition "Lest We Forget" – a Holocaust remembrance project by Luigi Toscano which included photographs of Holocaust survivors – was on outdoor display in Vienna, it was repeatedly subjected to anti-Semitic vandalism. In response, members of the public repaired the works and began holding vigils to protect them.¹³

In December 2019, the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Austrian writer Peter Handke. The ceremony in Stockholm was boycotted by diplomats from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo among others, while North Macedonia did not send any representatives. In 1997, Handke had written a reportedly pro-Serb book about the Balkan wars entitled "A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia," and in 2006, when Slobodan Milosevic died, he had made a speech at the Serbian leader's funeral in his hometown Pozarevac in Serbia. Kosovo's Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli said that the boycott was a protest to support human rights, while Albania's Acting Foreign Minister Gent Cakaj wrote on Twitter that "justification of war atrocities during the Yugoslavia break-up must not be

¹¹ Josh Taylor, "[Facebook Blocks and Bans Users for Sharing Guardian Article Showing Aboriginal Men in Chains](#)," *The Guardian* (15 June 2020).

¹² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 43.

¹³ "[International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust '75 years after Auschwitz – Holocaust Education and Remembrance for Global Justice'](#)" *Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights* (27 January 2020); "[Lest We Forget](#)."

rewarded.” The Croatian foreign ministry said meanwhile that its ambassador would not be attending because an award was being given to someone who was “politically engaged in supporting Slobodan Milosevic’s Greater Serbian policies in the 1990s.” Mats Malm, the head of the Swedish Academy, said that Handke had made “provocative, unsuitable and unclear comments” but had not glorified violence or supported the 1995 Srebrenica genocide.¹⁴

See also Croatia.

AZERBAIJAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997–1998, 2008–2013, 2015–2019.

In December 2017, a collected volume of personal correspondence and diary entries of historian Leyla Yunus [see NCH Annual Reports 2015–2018] was published, in an apparent attempt to discredit her. The book, *Splendor and Misery of Leyla Yunus*, was authored by her former defense lawyer. Excerpts were published on pro-government websites. The appeal of human rights activists and historians Leyla and Arif Yunus was reportedly ongoing as of late 2019.¹⁵

¹⁴ Anja Vladislavljevic & Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Four Balkan States Boycott Nobel Ceremony to Protest Handke,” *Balkan Insight* (10 December 2019).

¹⁵ Website of the Institute for Peace and Democracy: http://www.ipdthinktank.org/about_en.html; *PEN International, Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 85–86; International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 85.

BAHRAIN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004, 2008–2012, 2015–2017.

On 29 January 2020, the Public Prosecutor ordered the arrest of Jassim Al-Abbas, a historian from Al-Ma'amir village, and detained him for seven days pending investigation over the charge of “publishing false information about a historical incident” (probably a blog about the history of an ancient Bahraini mosque). Al-Abbas was taken into custody after he was summoned for interrogation on 30 January 2020. In 2004 or 2008, al-Abbas had established the critical historical website “Sanawat Al-Jareesh” (Years of Al-Jareesh) containing unofficial accounts of Bahraini history; as Bahrain’s most popular website, it had been a frequent target of hacking attempts. After 2011, he had created an Instagram account with the same name (250,000 followers) and posted historical information and documents he had obtained about Bahrain scholars, figures, mosques, and other historical sites. The website was closed. Al-Abbas was released on 4 February 2020.

Al-Abbas wrote several historical works. In January 2020, the Awal Center published his latest book, *Dohat Al-Farisiya*, a study of the extinct Farisiya village.¹⁶

BANGLADESH

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001, 2004–2006, 2008–2019.

See Myanmar.

BELARUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2000, 2005–2007, 2009–2011, 2014–2019.

On 1 February 2019, journalists Ales Kirkevich and Ales Dzianisau were fined 765 Belarusian rubles (about \$370) each in the Leninski district court of Hrodna. The charge followed their story entitled

¹⁶ “[Blogger of ‘Sanawat Al-Jareesh’ Jassim Al-Abbas Arrested](#),” *Bahrain Mirror* (3 February 2020); “[Historian Jassim Al-Abbas's Crime: Documenting ‘Non-Official’ History](#),” *Bahrain Mirror* (7 February 2020); “[Bahrain: Arrest of the Historical Researcher Jassim Al Abbas](#),” *Bahrain Center for Human Rights* (4 February 2020); “[Bahrain: Arresting Al-Abbas and the Ongoing Suppression of Freedom of Expression](#),” *Sky Line International* (4 February 2020); “[Jassim Hussein Al-Abbas](#),” Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project (no date).

Historians Exploring the Ancient Hrodna Cellars which was broadcast on Belsat Television. Both were charged with offenses stipulated in Article 22.9 of the Administrative Code (“illegal production and/or distribution of media content”).¹⁷

In March 2019, the unofficial Dzen Voli (Freedom Day) celebrations, commemorating the establishment of the Belarusian People’s Republic of 1918–1919, seen by the opposition as the foundation of an independent Belarus, were restricted. On 25 March 2019, independent media and civil society representatives were prevented from holding a peaceful commemorative event at Kastychnickaja Square in Minsk amidst heavy policing. At least fifteen people were detained in unmarked police vehicles. All those detained on both days were later released without charge.¹⁸

BELGIUM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2008, 2010–2012.

In June 2020, there were calls and online petitions for statues of King Leopold II (1835–1909) to be dismantled. His statues in Ghent and Ostend were daubed with red paint, with cloth over its head marked with the words “I can’t breathe” (the last words spoken by United States black man George Floyd [1973–2020] as a white police officer knelt on his neck, unleashing renewed protests against racism and inequality). On 9 June 2020, a 150-year old statue of the king was set on fire by protesters in Antwerp and later removed by officials, who said it had been transferred to the Middelheim Museum for public safety reasons. In Brussels, a statue was marked with the word “assassin.” Between 1885 and 1908 Leopold owned the Congo Free State and reigned over the mass deaths of an estimated ten million Congolese. There were at least thirteen statues to Leopold II in Belgium and numerous parks, squares, and street names with his name. The Universities of Mons and Louvain removed busts of the king, following the circulation of student-led petitions. The cities of Kortrijk, Dendermonde and Sint-Niklaas renamed their Leopold II streets (the first two already in 2019). Statues of King Baudouin I (1930–1993) were daubed with red paint in Antwerp and Brussels; in Antwerp, a photograph of the first Congolese Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961) was left at the statue. In 2002, Belgium had formally apologized for its role in Lumumba’s assassination [see NCH Annual Reports 2000, 2002, 2014]. On 17 June 2020, it was announced that a parliamentary commission would investigate

¹⁷ Kira Tverskaya, “[In a Country that Keeps Its Media under a Dome, Belarus’s Independent Journalists Face Mounting Fines](#),” *Index on Censorship* (18 September 2019).

¹⁸ Amnesty International, *Human Rights in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2019), 12; “[Protesters Arrested in Belarus during Opposition Rally](#),” *The Guardian* (25 March 2018).

Belgium's colonial past.¹⁹

On 30 June 2020, the sixtieth anniversary of Congo's independence, King Philippe unexpectedly expressed his "deepest regrets" to Congo for Belgium's colonial abuses between 1885 and 1960 in a letter to Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi, saying that there had been "painful episodes" in their history. It was the first time that a Belgian monarch formally expressed remorse for his country's colonial rule. The remarks, however, fell short of an official apology with legal implications. Protesters and black communities argued that much more needed to be done. For decades, colonial history was barely taught in the country. The education minister announced that secondary schools would teach colonial history from 2021.²⁰

See also Democratic Republic Congo, Ivory Coast, Rwanda.

BELIZE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2014.

BOLIVIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2009–2019.

Bolivia prosecuted only a few of the officials responsible for human rights violations committed under authoritarian governments from 1964 through 1982, partly because the armed forces at times refused to share information with judicial authorities about the fate of people killed or forcibly disappeared. A truth commission established by the government in August 2017 to conduct non-judicial investigations of grave human rights abuses during that period was intended to provide information to prosecutors and judges to convict those responsible. The armed forces had made limited progress in declassifying military files and releasing information about victims of enforced disappearance. In April 2019, the Commission received declassified documents from the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Ministry

¹⁹ "[George Floyd Protests: The Statues Being Defaced](#)," *BBC News* (10 June 2020); Monika Pronczuk & Mihir Zaveri, "[Statue of Leopold II, Belgian King Who Brutalized Congo, Is Removed in Antwerp](#)," *New York Times* (9 June 2020); Anouk van Kampen, "'Kolonistenkoning' Leopold II wankelt plots op zijn sokkel," *NRC Handelsblad* (12 June 2020), 11; Georgina Rannard, "Leopold II: Belgium 'Wakes Up' to Its Bloody Colonial Past," *BBC News* (13 June 2020).

²⁰ Anouk van Kampen, "België onderzoekt koloniaal verleden," *NRC Handelsblad* (18 June 2020), 1; "Belgian King Expresses 'Deepest Regrets' for DR Congo Colonial Abuses," *BBC News* (30 June 2020).

of Justice and historical files from the Plurinational Assembly. The Commission was due to present a final report in 2020.²¹

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2019.

In 2018, the education ministry of the Canton Sarajevo of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) re-introduced history into classrooms, with other FBiH cantons following suit. Thus, a history textbook moratorium in place since 2000 came to an end. In 2000, the Council of Europe had issued a recommendation that Bosnian schools refrain from teaching about the Bosnian War (1992–1995) “to enable historians from all communities ... to develop a common approach.” In response to a 2017 petition submitted by the FBiH Academy of Sciences and Arts, however, a committee of experts was established by the Canton Sarajevo education ministry; it worked from July 2017 until January 2018 to create five new history curriculum units about the war (military-political developments of the 1992–1995 war; military-political developments of the 1992–1996 Siege of Sarajevo; everyday life in the Siege of Sarajevo; war crimes and ethnic cleansing; the Srebrenica genocide). The materials were circulated to teachers in April 2018 and implemented the next month. The Bosnian War became the final topic of twentieth-century history to be taught in the ninth grade of the primary school in Sarajevo.²²

A revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy to improve the process of allocating cases from the war in 1992–1995 across courts has awaited approval by the Council of Ministers since February 2018, made no progress in 2019, slowing down the rate at which war crimes cases were prosecuted. According to information provided by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in August 2019 there were 250 war crimes cases against 512 defendants in the post-indictment phase pending before all courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Between January and June 2019, BiH courts rendered first instance judgments in 26 cases. In total, 29 of 42 defendants were convicted. In March 2019, the United Nations Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunal (MICT) ruled against the appeal of Radovan Karadzic, former Bosnian Serb wartime president, confirming his 2016 conviction for genocide and other crimes and extending his initial 40-year sentence to life in prison. In a positive move, in July 2019 BiH signed agreements with Serbia and Croatia to facilitate better cooperation in

²¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 72; Amnesty International, *Human Rights in the Americas: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 22.

²² Catherine Savitsky, “[Bosnian War Moratorium Lifted in Sarajevo Schools](#),” *EuroClio* (19 August 2019).

the search for missing persons from the 1990s wars.²³

On 12 April 2019, the Serb member of the Bosnian Presidency, Milorad Dodik, called the Srebrenica genocide a myth, stating that the massacre was “something that does not exist,” at a conference discussing war crimes committed during the Bosnian conflict. “[Bosnian Muslims] did not have a myth, so they decided to construct one around Srebrenica,” he said. Dodik had repeatedly downplayed the Srebrenica genocide [see NCH Annual Report 2019]. Other Bosnian Serb politicians have also denied the genocide, including Mladen Grujicic, the current mayor of Srebrenica, who referred to July 1995 as “the moment that Srebrenica was finally liberated. Liberated from the Bosniaks.”²⁴

See also Austria.

BOTSWANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

BRAZIL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2003, 2005–2019.

Inês Etienne Romeu (1942–2015) studied history and went to work in the bank sector. She became a member of the student movement and the Bank Workers’ Union, and of the armed group A Vanguarda Armada Revolucionária Palmares (VAR-Palmares) and the Organização Revolucionária Marxista Política Operária (ORM-Polop). On 5 May 1971, she was arrested on suspicion of participating in the kidnapping of the Swiss ambassador Giovanni Enrico Bucher and until September imprisoned clandestinely in the torture house Casa da Morte (“House of Death”) in Petrópolis. While there, she tried to commit suicide three times. She managed to get out of the clandestine center alive by pretending to have been “turned” by her captors, agreeing to their demand that she spy on her fellow left-wing activists. Due to international pressure, she was released and transferred to a regular prison in Rio de Janeiro where she stayed for eight years. She was released due to the 1979 Amnesty Law and became

²³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 78–79.

²⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 79; Zamira Rahim, “Srebrenica massacre is ‘fabricated myth’, Bosnian Serb leader says,” *The Independent* (14 April 2019); Emilie van Outeren, “De kinderen van Srebrenica leren thuis elk hun eigen waarheid over de genocide,” *NRC Handelsblad* (10 July 2020), 24, 25.

engaged in research into the perpetrators of the dictatorial repression. On 14 August 2019, a federal tribunal in Rio de Janeiro ruled that former army sergeant, Antônio Waneir Pinheiro de Lima (arrested in 2014), should stand trial for the alleged rape of Romeu and other crimes, such as kidnapping, and that these were crimes against humanity not covered by the 1979 Amnesty Law.²⁵

On 31 March 2019, during a Mass celebrated by the Bishop of the Brazilian Military Archdiocese, Dom Francisco Falcão commemorated the 31 March 1964 military coup and referred to musician Caetano Veloso (1942–) as “a moron who sang in the ‘70s whom it is forbidden to ban,” adding: “I would like to give you mouse poison.” Among those present was Joseita Brilhante Ustra, the widow of notorious torturer colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra. Veloso was a political exile during the dictatorship and during Jair Bolsonaro’s presidential campaign, he had criticized the ultra-right-wing measures Bolsonaro promised to implement.²⁶

In 2019, history teacher Valeria Borges and several other teachers were vilified in a YouTube campaign (in an online practice known as “linchamento” – lynching) which accused them of spreading Communism. Borges said that they had been overwhelmed with messages of hate, creating a climate of fear.²⁷

On 1 August 2019, President Jair Bolsonaro appointed Retired Colonel Weslei Antonio Maretti and army officer Vital Lima Santos to the seven-member Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances set up in 1995 to investigate crimes during the military dictatorship (1964–1985) and to pay compensation to the victims’ families. He also appointed two legislators from the Social Liberal Party (PSL; his own party) to the commission. On 30 July 2019, Bolsonaro had also said that the debate about the 2014 truth commission report was “hot air.”²⁸

The perpetrators of human rights abuses during the dictatorship (1964–1985) were shielded from justice by a 1979 Amnesty Law that the Supreme Court upheld in 2010, a decision that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled was a violation of Brazil’s obligations under international law. Since 2010, federal prosecutors had charged about sixty former agents of the dictatorship with killings, kidnappings, and other serious crimes. Lower courts dismissed most of the cases, citing the Amnesty Law or the statute of limitations. A few such cases were pending before the Supreme Court. In August

²⁵ Comissão dos Familiares dos Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos, Instituto de Estudo da Violência do Estado (IEVE) & Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais-RJ e PE, *Dossiê dos Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos A Partir de 1964* (Recife 1995), 6; “[Inês Etienne Romeu](#),” *Wikipedia* (8 April 2013); “[Brazil Torture Victim’s Testimony Triggers Landmark Case](#),” *BBC News* (15 August 2019).

²⁶ International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 29.

²⁷ Max Fischer & Amanda Taub, “[How YouTube Radicalized Brazil](#),” *New York Times* (11 August 2019).

²⁸ “[Bolsonaro Appoints Military Men to Investigate Dictatorship Abuses](#),” *France24* (1 August 2019).

2019, a federal court for the first time approved charges of rape against an agent of the military regime [see item above about Inês Etienne Romeu].

President Bolsonaro praised the dictatorships in Brazil and other South American countries. He had called a convicted torturer “a national hero” [see item above about Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra and NCH Annual Reports 2009, 2019]. He denied that journalist Miriam Leitão had been tortured by the military and that Fernando Santa Cruz, father of the president of Brazil’s Bar Association, had been killed by the regime, but offered no evidence. The Bolsonaro administration packed with allies, some of whom had publicly defended the dictatorship, two commissions that examined requests of compensation for victims of the dictatorship and sought to locate the bodies of the disappeared. From January through September 2019, the amnesty commission had denied 92 percent of the compensation requests.²⁹

BULGARIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015–2017, 2019.

In April 2019, officials in Plovdiv, which were co-hosting the 2019 edition of the European capital of culture with Matera in Italy, said a “Balkan Pride” photo exhibition, opening in July, must be stopped. The exhibition, featuring photographs from past gay pride events that had taken place across the Balkan region, was organized by the Glas foundation, an LGBT rights group. “We don’t want them to do it. And we will stop them, using all legal and, if required, illegal means,” said Alexander Sidi, a member of parliament from the nationalist Bulgarian Nationalist Movement party (VMRO). Svetlana Kuyumdzhieva, artistic director of the Glas Foundation, said the intervention by local councilors was an “ugly provocation.” “This could seriously damage the reputation and image that we’ve been building in the past five years. Such interference with the program can only be treated as discrimination and censorship,”³⁰

Upon visiting Bulgaria in November 2019 Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, expressed alarm when she learned about the “Concept for the Integration of the Unsocialized Gypsy (Roma) Ethnicity” proposed to Prime Minister Boyko Borissov. In February 2019,

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 88–89; Antoon De Baets, “The Censorship of History and Fact-Finding in Brazil (1964–2018),” in Nina Schneider, ed., [The Brazilian Truth Commission in the Latin American Context: Local, National, and Global Perspectives](#) (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2019), 73–74.

³⁰ Martin Dimitrov & Shaun Walker, “Homophobia Scandal Hits Plovdiv, Bulgaria’s European Capital of Culture,” *The Guardian* (7 April 2019); Dimitar Pizhev, “The GLAS Foundation Opened the Exhibition “Balkan Pride # Balkan Pride” in Plovdiv,” *GLAS Foundation* (9 July 2019).

Bulgaria's Defense Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Krasimir Karakachanov, who was also the leader of the nationalist VMRO party, proposed controversial measures aimed at the ethnic Roma minority. They defined Roma as "asocial Gypsies," a term used by the Nazis, and called for limits to the number of children some Roma women could have; the introduction of compulsory "labor education schools" for Roma children and forced work programs for sections of the community. They also depicted the Roma as "non-native Europeans" left over from the Ottoman empire.

Karakachanov's party's manifesto also called for the creation of "reservations" for Roma based on the model used for Native Americans or Indigenous Australians, claiming that they could become "tourist attractions."³¹

BURKINA FASO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2004, 2005, 2013, 2015–2018.

BURUNDI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2003, 2005–2015, 2017–2019.

On 8 June 2020, outgoing president of Burundi Pierre Nkurunziza died unexpectedly. When Nkurunziza first came to power following the 1993–2005 Burundian civil war, which pitted Hutu rebels against the Tutsi-led army, he had seemed genuinely committed to the ideals of peace and democracy. As the leader of the National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD–FDD) Hutu rebel group, he had begun negotiating a peace deal in 2001. Two years later he signed the Arusha agreement, which ended the civil war in which 300,000 people died. However, after being re-elected with 92% of the vote in the 2010 poll, which was boycotted by many opposition candidates, Nkurunziza became increasingly authoritarian.

In 2015, Nkurunziza's decision to run for an unconstitutional third term led to an outbreak of protests and violence that spread across the country. He responded with brutal violence. Over the next two years, his youth-led militia group, known as the Imbonerakure, as well as various state security forces, killed more than 1,200 Burundians in an attempt to quash street protests. Four hundred thousand more fled

³¹ "Bulgarian Nationalists' Roma 'Integration' Plan Dismays Rights Advocates," *Balkan Insight* (8 February 2019); Atanas Zahariev, "Democracy under Siege: Bulgaria's Parliament to Vote on Fascist Anti-Roma Strategy," *European Roma Rights Centre* (14 May 2019); Vivek Chaudhary, "'Everybody Hates Us': On Sofia's Streets, Roma Face Racism Every Day," *The Guardian* (20 October 2019); Dunja Mijatović, *Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Following Her Visit to Bulgaria on 25–29 November 2019* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2020), 12, 13.

the country. When the international criminal court (ICC) opened an investigation into crimes against humanity in 2017, he responded by withdrawing Burundi from the Rome statute; the first nation ever to do so [see NCH Annual Report 2018]. In 2019, he went a step further and shut down the United Nations human rights office in the country after 23 years, claiming he had made sufficient progress in human rights.³²

³² Vava Tampa, "Pierre Nkurunziza Obituary," *The Guardian* (12 June 2020).

CAMBODIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2018.

In July 2019, authorities detained two youth activists, Kong Raya [Raiya] and Soung Neakpoan, for participating in a commemoration ceremony on the third anniversary of the murder of prominent political commentator and government critic Kem Ley in Phnom Penh. In November 2019, Raya was denied bail by the Supreme Court. Authorities charged both with “incitement to commit a felony.” They arrested seven people for commemorating the anniversary; and disrupted or canceled commemorations around Cambodia.³³

On 4 August 2019 Nuon Chea (1926–2019), born Lao Kim Lorn, a lifelong revolutionary who served as “Brother No 2” in the Cambodian communist movement for almost half a century, died. He presided over extensive purges of suspected enemies within and outside the ruling party, resulting in the execution of more than 300,000 Cambodians between 1975 and 1979, when the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot controlled what was then known as Democratic Kampuchea. On 7 August 2014, he was found guilty on crimes against humanity by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Country of Cambodia (ECCC) and sentenced to life imprisonment [see NCH Annual Report 2015]. On 16 November 2018, the ECCC found Chea guilty on separate charges, convicting him of genocide, crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 [see NCH Annual Report 2018].³⁴

See also China.

CAMEROON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010, 2012–2014, 2016.

On 24 September 2019, Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) soldiers attacked a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Royal Palace in Bafut, shot and wounded one man, and looted the palace museum, taking several precious artifacts.³⁵

³³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 101; Amnesty International, *Human Rights in Asia-Pacific: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 15.

³⁴ David Chandler, “Nuon Chea Obituary,” *The Guardian* (4 August 2019); Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, [Nuon Chea: Profile](#).

³⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 106.

On 20 April 2020, the Minister of Higher Education sent a letter to the vice-chancellor of the University of Buea (an English-speaking university in a predominantly French-speaking region), ordering him to take measures against Felix Agbor Nkongho Balla, a lecturer in the faculty of law and political science since 2015, for infringing on the “apolitical character of the university.” Wilfred Gabsa, a ministry official, accused Agbor-Balla of turning his classroom “into a political space.” The accusations were based on an examination question in a class called “Political & Constitutional History of Cameroon,” which Agbor-Balla and two other professors had taught on 3 March 2020. The question asked students to think critically about the reasons behind the Anglophone crisis, reading: “The Anglophone crisis and ensuing violence since 2016 was caused by the lawyers’ and teachers’ strike. Assess the validity of this statement.”

The Cameroonian government claimed that armed English-speaking separatists who wanted to create a new state called Ambazonia had terrorized civilians and attacked government forces, prompting the military to retaliate against them. However, English speakers displaced by military raids on their villages recounted how Cameroonian troops opened fire on unarmed civilians and burned down their homes. The university launched disciplinary procedures against Agbor-Balla (but not against his two co-lecturers) for breach of its code of ethics and conduct. He was suspended from teaching and on 5 May 2020 summoned before a disciplinary panel for “non-compliance of professional obligations.” The university formally dismissed him on 6 May 2020 after he protested the unfair treatment and boycotted the hearing.

Agbor-Balla was the founder of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, which documented human rights violations in the Anglophone crisis ongoing since 2016. In 2017, a military court had imprisoned him for eight months on charges of terrorism and incitement of civil war for organizing a peaceful protest in Buea.³⁶

Between 2003 and 2020, activist Andre Blaise Essama repeatedly vandalized the statue of French World War II hero General Philippe Leclerc (1902–1947) in Douala. He decapitated Leclerc’s head seven times and toppled the statue at least twenty times. Each time, the statue, erected in 1948, was restored. Essama was imprisoned several times for it, serving up to six months at a time, sometimes paying a fine to avoid prison. He occasionally took the seven heads of Leclerc on to the streets to “sensitize Cameroonians about the country’s history.” He said that he was inspired by nationalist Mboua Massock, who once graffitied the general’s statue with the words: “Our own heroes and martyrs first.” Essama

³⁶ Siobhán O’Grady, “Divided by Language: Cameroon’s Crackdown on Its English-speaking Minority Is Fueling Support for a Secessionist Movement,” *Washington Post* (5 February 2019); Lewis Mudge, “[No Room for Debate in Cameroon Classrooms](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (1 May 2020); Human Rights Foundation, “[Cameroon Pressures University To Fire Anglophone-Rights Advocate and Lecturer](#)” (13 May 2020); Tunde Fatunde, “[Law Lecturer’s Dismissal over Exam Question Raises Concerns](#),” *University World News* (26 May 2020).

also targeted a statue of Gustav Nachtigal (1834–1885), who arrived in Cameroon in 1884 to establish a German empire. Essama dismissed the argument that statues should be protected because of their historical significance: “If your statue is history, the indigenous people are saying: ‘But you wrote your history on top of my history. It is overshadowing our own histories.’”³⁷

CANADA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000, 2002–2003, 2005–2006, 2008–2009, 2012–2019.

There remained considerable challenges to undoing decades of structural and systemic discrimination against Indigenous people. While Canada officially removed its objector status to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2016 and vowed to implement UNDRIP in accordance with the Canadian Constitution, a private member’s bill to ensure that Canadian laws were in harmony with UNDRIP failed to pass in the Senate in June 2019. In September 2019, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that the federal government wilfully and recklessly discriminated against Indigenous children living on reserves by failing to provide funding for child and family services. The Justin Trudeau government filed an application seeking a judicial review of the ruling in October 2019.

In January 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Committee found that Canada, through the long-controversial Indian Act, was still discriminating against First Nations women and their descendants. In August, the Trudeau government announced that First Nations women would be treated equally under the Indian Act, enabling them to retain their Indigenous status if they marry non-Indigenous men.

In June 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – launched by the government in 2016 to address endemic levels of violence against Indigenous women and girls – released its final report. The inquiry made 231 recommendations and concluded that acts of violence against Indigenous women and girls amounted to “genocide.” Prime Minister Trudeau vowed that the government would develop a national action plan to “turn the inquiry’s calls to justice into real, meaningful, Indigenous-led action.”³⁸

See also Albania, Turkey.

³⁷ Dickens Olewe, “[The Cameroonian Waging War against a French War Hero’s Statue](#),” *BBC News* (1 July 2020).

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 111–113; “[Deaths of Indigenous Women ‘a Canadian Genocide,’ Leaked Report Says](#),” *BBC News* (1 June 2019); “[Canada ‘Complicit in Race-based Genocide’ of Indigenous Women](#),” *BBC News* (3 June 2019); Ian Austen and Dan Bilefsky, “[Canadian Inquiry Calls Killings of Indigenous Women Genocide](#),” *New York Times* (3 June 2019).

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2006–2009, 2011–2012, 2014–2019.

A Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation was signed between the government and fourteen armed groups in Bangui in February 2019. As part of the agreement, a new government was formed, with several members of armed groups appointed to senior positions, including rebel leaders against whom there was credible evidence of responsibility for atrocities in recent years. The deal was the sixth signed since the crisis started in late 2012. Rendering justice for serious crimes continued to be a key challenge in 2019. After a slow start since the Special Criminal Court (SCC) was established in 2015, the court's special prosecutor opened four investigations from 22 priority cases he identified, and the judges conducted investigations into three cases, which were transferred from the ordinary courts. The special prosecutor also examined 27 complaints that individuals submitted to the SCC. The level of court staff overseeing investigations was limited, and additional prosecutors and judges were needed. Ensuring adequate security for court premises, staff, and witnesses and victims remained one of the most significant challenges during 2019, as much of the country remained under the control of armed groups.

The Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) continued its second investigation into the situation in the Central African Republic, into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed since 2012. The ICC combined proceedings against Alfred Yékatom, known as “Rambhot,” and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona began in September 2019. The authorities surrendered Yékatom, an anti-balaka leader, to ICC custody in November 2018. Ngaïssona, also an anti-balaka leader, was transferred to ICC custody in January 2019, after he was arrested in France in December 2018. A decision on whether to confirm the charges against Ngaïssona and Yékatom was expected by the ICC judges in early 2020.³⁹

CHAD

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2012, 2015–2016.

³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 119, 122–123.

CHILE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2019.

On 5 November 2019, Alejandra Araya, history professor, director of the Archivo Central Andrés Bello (Andrés Bello Central Archive; established 1994) at the University of Chile and full professor of human rights at the University of Chile, was participating in a workshop in high school (liceo) 7 Teresa Prats, Santiago, during a peaceful student occupation of the school building when the Carabineros (Carabinieri; national police) reportedly entered it shooting. The mayor of Santiago Felipe Alessandri charged Araya with being “an accomplice of disruption and burglary.” The move, coming during the social protests which began on 18 October 2019 and in which universities participated, was criticized as intimidation.⁴⁰

On 7 February 2020, appeals court judge Mario Carroza indicted retired military officers Eduardo Jara Hallad (director of Departamento II of the Counterintelligence of the Military Intelligence Section, DINE), Mercedes del Carmen Rojas Kushevich (its former chief archivist), and General Carlos Patricio Chacón Guerrero for destruction in the Intelligence School of the Chilean army in 2000–2001 of microfilmed archives of the Central Nacional de Informaciones (National Information Center) covering the period 1980–1982. These included records proving the surveillance of former (1964–1970) President Eduardo Frei Montalva, who was assassinated in 1982.⁴¹

Chilean courts continued to prosecute former police and military officers responsible for human rights abuses during Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (1973–1990). In December 2018, a judge convicted 53 former agents of the Chilean secret police (DINA) for the kidnapping, torture, and enforced disappearance of seven communist leaders in 1976, and the murder of former Communist Party leader, Victor Díaz, in 1977. In January 2019, a judge convicted six men for poisoning to death the former president of Chile, Eduardo Frei Montalva, in 1982 [see item above]. Chile maintained a 50-year veil of secrecy over testimony by victims before the National Commission on Political Prison and Torture from November 2003 to May 2004. The testimony revealed places of detention and torture methods used by the dictatorship and identified former political prisoners and torture victims. The Bachelet administration (2014–2018) submitted a bill to lift the secrecy order in 2017, which generated heated

⁴⁰ “[Declaración de solidaridad con la académica Alejandra Araya, profesora de la Cátedra de Derechos Humanos, Universidad de Chile](#)” (Santiago 12 January 2020); Javier García, “[ACAB, la sigla de la polémica: una escuela de autodefensa y el Archivo Andrés Bello de la U. de Chile](#),” *La Tercera* (15 January 2020); Valentina Rojas Rojo, Personal communication to Trudy Huskamp Peterson (16 & 22 January 2020).

⁴¹ Sergio Jara Román, “[Histórico: Procesan a tres militares en retiro que participaron en la quema de microfilms de la dictadura](#),” *El Desconcierto.cl* (7 February 2020).

debate between those who believed revealing the testimony would violate victims' rights to privacy, and those who believed revealing it was necessary to fully punish the guilty and bring justice to victims. In December 2018, a commission of the House of Representatives approved a bill that would punish anyone who "justified," "approved" of, or "denied" human rights violations committed during the dictatorship with up to three years in prison. The bill, which violated freedom of speech provisions of international human rights law, remained pending at the end of 2019.⁴²

CHINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2019.

In 2019, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) marked the 70th anniversary of its rule by deepening repression. Under President Xi Jinping's leadership, the one-party government tightened its grip over sectors of society it found threatening, such as internet activists and nongovernmental organizations. It strengthened ideological control, particularly in higher education, among religious and ethnic minorities, and within the bureaucracy. It devoted massive resources to new technologies for social control, adding artificial intelligence, biometrics, and big data to its arsenal to monitor and shape the minds and behaviors of 1.4 billion people. Government censorship extended far beyond its borders; its mix of typically financial incentives and intimidation were manipulating discourse about China around the world. Thirteen million Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang were suffering particularly harsh repression. The government's "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Extremism" entailed mass arbitrary detention, surveillance, indoctrination, and the destruction of the region's cultural and religious heritage. Credible estimates indicate that about one million Turkic Muslims were being indefinitely held in "political education" camps, where they were forced to disavow their identity and become loyal government subjects. Others were prosecuted and sent to prison, and some received lengthy and even death sentences for crimes that violated fundamental rights, "splittism" or "subversion."⁴³

On 14 January 2019, Jin Andi (1953–), a freelance writer and probably also a historian, was reportedly released upon the expiry of his sentence [see NCH Annual Report 2013].⁴⁴

⁴² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 125–126.

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 130.

⁴⁴ International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 58–59.

In [2019–2020], Guo Yuhua ([1956–]), a sociologist and historian at Tsinghua University, spoke in defense of her colleague Xu Zhangrun, a law professor, who was interrogated and suspended from teaching after publishing essays critical of President Xi Jinping. Guo was reprimanded by the university's party officials and blocked from social media. She struggled to get copies of her own books, only published in Hong Kong and repeatedly confiscated at customs. Her fieldwork consisted in collecting oral histories from Chinese farmers who had been forbidden to flee their villages amid the famine (1959–1961) following the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960).⁴⁵

In March 2019, Hong Kong Polytechnic University officials handed down disciplinary orders to four students in connection with their commemoration of the 2014 pro-democracy movement.⁴⁶

In April 2019, a Sichuan court sentenced activist Chen Bing to three-and-a-half years for commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.⁴⁷

In April 2019, Sun Peidong, a lecturer at Fudan University, Shanghai, who was under surveillance when she taught a course about the Cultural Revolution, was turned in by her students. Sun had been invited to join Fudan's history department in 2013 by its party secretary, himself a scholar of the Cultural Revolution. From 2015, several of her articles about the Cultural Revolution were rejected by academic journals. Secret police questioned her about her research and her Western connections. After completing fellowships at Harvard and Stanford universities, she returned in September 2018. Meanwhile, a new party secretary was in charge and Sun was blocked from giving public lectures and asked to change the name and content of her course, which she refused. In April 2019, students posted sheets of paper on her office door – printouts of her social media posts and accusations that she was supporting a female student to subvert state power. They also reported her to her department, the university president and university-level party secretary, and attacked her personally online. Anonymous users joined in, cursing her as a traitor and threatening her family in private messages. The department party secretary ordered Sun to write a personal statement pledging that she would stop speaking to foreign media. He threatened to block her from traveling abroad if she did not comply. In 2020, Sun quit her job and left China. Only two other history professors were teaching the Cultural Revolution at Fudan: one retired in 2020, the other was pressured into changing what he taught.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Alice Su, "[Spied on. Fired. Publicly Shamed. China's Crackdown on Professors Reminds Many of Mao Era,](#)" *Los Angeles Times* (27 June 2020).

⁴⁶ Scholars at Risk (Academic Freedom Monitoring Project), *Obstacles to Excellence: Academic Freedom & China's Quest for World-Class Universities* (New York: SAR, 2019), 60.

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 134.

⁴⁸ Alice Su, "[Spied on. Fired. Publicly Shamed. China's Crackdown on Professors Reminds Many of Mao Era,](#)" *Los Angeles Times* (27 June 2020).

A study published in May 2019 by Sheena Chestnut Greitens, University of Missouri, and Rory Truex, Princeton University, surveying over five hundred China scholars, pointed to several problems facing domestic and foreign scholars, including increasing difficulties in accessing archives. According to their survey results, scholars cited more than 150 separate instances of being denied access to archival materials in the past ten years; these included 26% of foreign academics who reported using archives for their research. Respondents reported being denied access to particular materials and sections of archives and having access permissions revoked.

According to historian Charles Kraus, of the Wilson Center, Washington DC, in 2016, the 1988 Archives Law of the People's Republic of China, gave state authorities an ambiguous and broad level of control over the declassification and accessibility of state records. Once declassified and available, materials could later be reclassified or subject to other forms of removal, including digitization and "appraisal" processes. Foreign researchers hoping to gain access to archives needed letters of introduction from a Chinese university and a passport.⁴⁹

In mid-June 2019, the film "*The Eight Hundred*" was withdrawn last-minute from the 22nd Shanghai International Film Festival, where it was scheduled to premiere on 15 June. On 25 June, the 5 July opening of the film was suddenly canceled. The film was based on a historical event: the four-day defense of Sihang Warehouse during the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in October 1937. A battalion with 400 soldiers (the commander leaked disinformation that there were 800) held the building long enough to let the bulk of Chinese forces withdraw from the city before the Japanese entered. At a conference organized by the NGO China Red Culture Research Association on 9 June 2019 in Beijing, participants (including researchers, critics, and a former propaganda official with the general staff of the People's Liberation Army) attacked the film for excessively glorifying the Republic of China, then led by Chiang Kai-shek and his party, the Kuomintang. The published conference report said that the film used "historical debris to cover up the actual truth of history." The battalion's actions had been lauded previously by the Communist government. Although no explicit reason was given by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the cancellation came amid a broadening political crackdown on cultural works that were not sufficiently in tune with Xi Jinping's ideology.⁵⁰

In September 2019, *The Guardian* revealed that TikTok, the popular social network owned by the Chinese company ByteDance and launched in 2017, instructed its moderators to censor videos that mentioned certain topics, according to leaked documents detailing the site's moderation guidelines.

⁴⁹ Scholars at Risk (Academic Freedom Monitoring Project), *Obstacles to Excellence: Academic Freedom & China's Quest for World-Class Universities* (New York: SAR, 2019), 23–25.

⁵⁰ Steven Lee Meyers, "[Patriotic Movie Apparently Falls Afoul of China's Censors](#)," *New York Times* (26 June 2019).

Among the “taboos” were: the Tiananmen Square massacre, Tibetan independence, Taiwanese independence, the 2014 and 2019 Hong Kong protests, Falun Gong, criticism of China’s socialist system, the demonization or distortion of local or other countries’ history such as the May 1998 riots of Indonesia and the Cambodian genocide; and separatism, conflicts between religion sects and between ethnic groups (for instance inciting the independence of Northern Ireland, Republic of Chechnya). The service also banned a specific list of twenty “foreign leaders or sensitive figures” including Kim Jong-il, Kim Il-sung, Mahatma Gandhi, Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Barack Obama, Kim Jong-un, Shinzo Abe, Park Geun-Hye, Joko Widodo, and Narendra Modi.⁵¹

On 8 September 2019, Chinese authorities detained Iwatani Nobu ([1977]–), a professor of modern Chinese history at Hokkaidō University graduate school of law, Japan, while visiting Beijing, on suspicion of spying (under the 2014 Counter-Espionage Law). Invited by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Institute of Modern History, Iwatani had traveled to China to participate in two weeks of research activities. Upon arrival at his hotel, national security authorities raided his room and seized materials related to state secrets. These were reportedly old books and journals relating to the Sino-Japanese war (1937–1945) and the history of the Chinese Nationalists (the Kuomintang) – Iwatani’s area of expertise – that he had purchased at a second-hand bookstore in Beijing. On 15 November 2019, Iwatani reportedly confessed under questioning to illegally collecting a large quantity of state secrets in the past and expressed remorse. He was granted bail and released the same day; he returned to Japan. In the past, Iwatani had worked for the National Institute for Defense Studies at the Japanese Defense Ministry. He specialized in the history of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and collected historical documents around the world, including Taiwan and the United States. It was his second invitation from CASS; the previous visit in 2018 incurred no problems.⁵²

On 11 June 2020, the online meeting platform Zoom confirmed that it ended three Zoom meetings commemorating the Tiananmen Square massacre and terminated the host accounts associated with those meetings – one in Hong Kong and two in the United States – after the Chinese government informed it that the gatherings were illegal in China. Zoom said the accounts have been reinstated.⁵³

⁵¹ Alex Hern, “[Revealed: How TikTok Censors Videos that Do Not Please Beijing](#),” *The Guardian* (25 September 2019).

⁵² Scholars at Risk, [Data Sheet](#) (21 October 2019); “[Academics Protest China’s Detention of Japanese](#),” *NHK World-Japan* (30 October 2019); Jiji Kyodo, “[China Frees Japanese Law Professor Accused of Spying after Obtaining Confession](#),” *Japan Times* (15 November 2019); Shin Kawashima, “[China Releases Professor, but Travel Concerns Persist](#),” *The Diplomat* (2 December 2019); Suvendrini Kakuchi, “[China Research Trips Cancelled over Scholar Spy Charge](#),” *University World News* (4 December 2019); Andrea Fischetti & Antoine Roth, “[Why Did China Detain a Japanese History Professor?](#)” *Tokyo Review* (30 December 2019).

⁵³ Elizabeth Redden, “[Scholars Raise Concerns about Using Zoom to Teach about China](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (12 June 2020).

Hong Kong

On 1 June 2020, Hong Kong police banned a planned vigil marking the Tiananmen massacre on 3–4 June 1989 for the first time in thirty years. Authorities said that the decision was due to health concerns over the coronavirus. Hitherto, Hong Kong and Macau were the only places in Chinese territory where people could commemorate the deadly 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters. Whether the commemoration would be allowed to go ahead in Hong Kong in 2021 – when the new anti-terrorism and anti-subversion law will most likely be in force – remained unclear. Despite the ban, tens of thousands still flocked to the barricaded venue, Victoria Park, to attend the vigil on 4 June 2020. The vigil took place against a background of a new national hymn bill and new security legislation shrinking Hong Kong’s independence from Beijing. It was the first time there had been unrest at a Tiananmen vigil in Hong Kong. Police said they had made several arrests.⁵⁴

In August 2020, 25 Hong Kong democracy activists were charged with taking part in the banned June candlelight vigil (see item above), including activist Joshua Wong, media tycoon Jimmy Lai and leaders of the Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. They were formally charged with “knowingly taking part in an unauthorized assembly.” Lee Cheuk-yan, chairman of the alliance, was also charged, with organizing the assembly.⁵⁵

Inner Mongolia

On 4 April 2019, ethnic Mongolian historian Lhamjab A. Borjigin (1944–) [see NCH Annual Report 2019] was secretly tried at the Xilinhot Municipal People’s Court. In September 2019, Lhamjab was convicted of “national separatism” and “sabotaging national unity,” after a trial that lasted just three hours and during which he said he was denied a lawyer. He was sentenced to a one-year suspended prison term and remained under a strictly monitored form of house arrest in which his movements and personal communications were severely restricted, and he had to report daily to police.⁵⁶

Tibet

In 2019, university professors could reportedly not lecture on certain topics, and many had to attend political indoctrination sessions, while the government restricted course materials to prevent circulation

⁵⁴ “[Tiananmen: Police Ban Hong Kong Vigil for Victims of 1989 Crackdown](#),” *BBC News* (1 June 2020); “[Hong Kong: Tens of Thousands Defy Ban to Attend Tiananmen Vigil](#),” *BBC News* (4 June 2020).

⁵⁵ “Hong Kong Activists Charged Over Traditional Tiananmen Vigil,” *The Guardian* (7 August 2020).

⁵⁶ Qiao Long & Wong Lok-to, “[Third Ethnic Mongolian Writer Held in China’s Inner Mongolia](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (22 April 2019); Leigh Hartman, “[China Arrests Mongolian Historian](#),” *ShareAmerica* (3 July 2019); Scholars at Risk (Academic Freedom Monitoring Project), *Obstacles to Excellence: Academic Freedom & China’s Quest for World-Class Universities* (New York: SAR, 2019), 43, 45–46; PEN America, *Freedom to Write Index 2019* (Washington: PEN America, 2020), 8–9.

of unofficial versions of Tibetan history.⁵⁷

In their continuing campaign to crack down on Islamic traditions, authorities in Gansu, Ningxia, and other Hui Muslim areas demolished domes on mosques and banned the public use of Arabic script. A Chinese Communist Party notice banning retired Tibetan government employees from performing kora, the practice of circumambulating a sacred site, appeared to have been issued in early August 2019.⁵⁸

Xinjiang

In May 2017, Uyghur historian Iminjan Seydin ([1966]–) was arrested by the Public Security Bureau and imprisoned. Seydin had began teaching courses on Chinese history at the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in Urumqi in 1988 upon graduating from Xinjiang University and in 2012 founded the Imin Publishing House. He taught secular courses on revolutionary history, joined several government-sponsored hajj pilgrimages to Mecca, and in early 2017 was sent to Kokterek village, Guma (Pishan) county, Hotan (Hetian) prefecture, to join a work group with the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) Bureau of Religious Affairs. He was called back and then arrested. In May 2019, a closed trial was held at which a book called *the Science of Rhetoric* (aka *Arabic Grammar*) (2014) – published by the Imin Publishing House and containing some references to Islam – was reportedly given as evidence. A document, entitled “Notice on the Censuring of Iminjan Seydin” and issued by the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in November 2019, reportedly mentioned that in February 2019 Urumqi’s Tengritagh (Tianshan) District Court found Seydin guilty of “inciting extremism” and sentenced him to fifteen years in prison, five years’ deprivation of political rights, and a fine of 500,000 yuan (U.S. \$71,000), although it cited no evidence of his crimes. In its notice, the institute also announced that it had ended Seydin’s employment contract after he was detained and placed in a camp. In early July 2020, the official newspaper *China Daily* released a video in which Seydin denied reports that he had been detained, prompting his daughter to suggest the recording was made under duress.⁵⁹

Abdukerem Paltu, a historian working at the Department of History, Kashgar University, was mentioned on a 15 June 2019 *List of Uyghur Intellectuals Imprisoned in China from 2016 to the Present*.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Freedom House, “[Tibet](#)” (2019).

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 138.

⁵⁹ Jilil Kashgary (with Elise Anderson and Joshua Lipes), “[Prominent Uyghur Historian Confirmed Jailed in Xinjiang Over Published Book](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (11 December 2019; updated 6 January 2020); Aysha Khan, “[A Daughter’s Duty: From Boston, a Uighur Woman Champions Her Father’s Release in China](#),” *Religion News Service* (13 February 2020); International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 62; PEN America, *Freedom to Write Index 2019* (Washington: PEN America, 2020), 14; Jilil Kashgary (with Elise Anderson and Joshua Lipes), “[Daughter of Uyghur Historian Questions Legitimacy of State Media Video Denying His Detention](#),” *Radio Free Asia / Uyghur Human Rights Project* (5 July 2020).

⁶⁰ Abduweli Ayup, “[List of Uyghur Intellectuals Imprisoned in China from 2016 to the Present](#)” (15 June 2019);

On 21 July 2019, the State Council Information Office released an official 6,900 words white paper, *Historical Matters Concerning Xinjiang* (in Chinese), arguing that the region was an “inseparable part” of China, that Islam was introduced to Uyghur culture by force, and that internal and external hostile forces including separatists, religious extremists, and terrorists were distorting history and facts to split the country apart. The white paper was criticized by scholars and Uyghur activists as an attempt to rewrite Uyghur history. Among the criticisms was the observation that in 2016, more than two dozen Islamic religious sites had been partially or totally destroyed.⁶¹

In October 2019, a report by the Uyghur Human Rights Project presented evidence of the complete or partial destruction of over a hundred mosques and religious sites (including cemeteries, shrines, domes, and minarets) by the Chinese government. It said that Uyghurs’ Islamic faith has been a major target of the Chinese government’s campaign to eliminate the Uyghur ethno-cultural identity. Termed the “Mosque Rectification Program,” and undertaken with the justification of unsafe construction, the Chinese state had reportedly destroyed thousands of mosques since 2016. The report also contained evidence of the destruction of traditional Uyghur neighborhoods in cities around the region.⁶²

On 26 February 2020, the American Anthropological Association issued a statement protesting the Chinese government’s campaign of eliminating and replacing Indigenous languages and cultural heritage in the Uyghur and Kazakh regions in Xinjiang under the pretext of “countering violent extremism” which resulted in a surveillance state, the disregard of academic freedom, the disappearance of more than 400 Uyghur and Kazakh cultural leaders, and the systematic destruction of sacred lands such as family graves, saint pilgrimage sites, mosques, and traditional Turkic Muslim neighborhoods.⁶³

According to scholar of Uyghur history Rian Thum, a major sacred site in Khotan was bulldozed and turned into a parking lot in [April] 2020. The gravesite of the modern Uyghur national literary hero Lutpulla Mutellip was turned into a park.⁶⁴

See also Albania, Iran, Taiwan.

see also the list on the [Uyghur Victims](#) website.

⁶¹ “[China Steps Up Defence of Xinjiang Policies in Government Report](#),” *The Straits Times* (21 July 2019); Isobel Cockerell, “[Decoding China’s Claims about Uyghur Identity](#),” *Coda* (2 August 2019).

⁶² Uyghur Human Rights Project, “[Demolishing Faith: The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines](#)” (28 October 2019); Bahram Sintash, [Demolishing Faith: The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines](#), *Uyghurism.com & Uyghur Human Rights Project* (October 2019).

⁶³ American Anthropological Association, “[The Assault on Indigenous Peoples in Northwest China Must End](#)” (26 February 2020).

⁶⁴ Magnus Fiskesjö, “[China Ravages Xinjiang Cultural Heritage](#),” (29 April 2020).

COLOMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–1998, 2000, 2004, 2006–2019.

On 19 February 2019, President Ivan Duque appointed Rubén Darío Acevedo Carmona as the new director of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH; National Center for Historical Memory or Museum of Memory). Originally a militant of the left-wing movement in the 1970s, he recently publicly criticized the guerrilla movement, questioned the impartiality of the Justicia Especial para la Paz (JEP; Special Jurisdiction for Peace; a separate tribunal established to prosecute the worst abuses of the 1964–2016 internal conflict), and on 2 February 2019 doubted the existence of an armed conflict in the country (a status conferred to the conflict by the 2011 Victims Law) and the number of its victims in an interview with *El Colombiano*. Eighty-nine victims' organizations urged Duque to reconsider the appointment. Many historians also protested, including the history staff at the National University of Colombia who wrote in a letter: "We are surprised that you, who openly denies the existence of an armed conflict, has accepted directing a state entity whose central purpose is to recognize it." Under Acevedo's directorship, the CNMH did not publicly launch the last report (*Y a la vida por fin daremos todo ... , And we will finally give everything to life ...*) produced under the leadership of the previous director Gonzalo Sánchez [see NCH Annual Report 2019]. Acevedo also said that the narrative of a traveling exhibit meant to test a museum narrative developed over five years by experts who had met victims throughout Colombia focused too heavily on social inequality as a cause of the conflict.

It also became known that in May 2017, Gabriel Cabrera had resigned as director of the history department of the Medellín campus of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, because of an attempt by Acevedo (then associate dean of the Faculty of Human and Economic Sciences) to prohibit courses on Fascism and Marxism.

On 1 February 2020, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience suspended membership of CNMH from its global network of over 275 historic sites, museums and memory initiatives after it had expressed concerns about biased public statements made on behalf of CNMH. On 5 February 2020, the Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado (Movice; movement of victims of state crimes) protested against the celebration of the symbolic first stone for the new Museum of Memory because they were invited for it at the last minute.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Michael Evans, "[Colombia Truth Commission Opens Doors, But Faces Significant Barriers to Access](#)," *National Security Archive* (29 November 2018); "[Darío Acevedo fue nombrado director del Centro Nacional de Memoria](#)," *El Espectador* (19 February 2019); "[Nuevo candidato al Centro de Memoria Histórica, sin acogida](#)," *El Colombiano* (5 February 2019); César Augusto Dúque Sánchez, personal communication (5 July 2019); Christine Armario, "[Colombia's Conflict Spills over to Museum of Memory](#)," *Washington Post* (24 December 2019); International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, "[Statement on the National Center for Historical Memory](#)" (1 February 2020); "[Intelectuales preocupados por el rumbo del Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica](#)," *El Espectador* (11 February 2020), including the letter "El negacionismo no es una

The 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) provided for the creation of a Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) to try those responsible for gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law committed during the conflict (1964–2016). FARC guerrillas and members of the armed forces responsible for crimes against humanity and serious war crimes who fully cooperated with the new jurisdiction and confessed their crimes were subject to as many as eight years of “effective restrictions on freedoms and rights,” but no prison time. At the end of 2019, JEP magistrates had prioritized seven situations for analysis: kidnappings committed by the FARC; false-positive killings; army and FARC abuses against Afro-Colombian and Indigenous people in Nariño province; FARC and army abuses committed in the Urabá region, in the north; FARC and army abuses committed in the northern part of Cauca province; government abuses against members of the Patriotic Union, a political party created by the FARC in the 1980s; and recruitment and use of child soldiers by the FARC.

During 2019, the Special Jurisdiction opened investigations to determine whether four former FARC commanders had failed to fulfill their responsibilities under the 2016 peace accord, including reincorporating former guerrilla fighters into society and testifying before the Special Jurisdiction (JEP). In April, JEP issued a warrant for arrest of one of them, alias “El Paisa,” ruling that his failure to testify before JEP was unjustified. The whereabouts of all four, including the group’s top peace negotiator, alias “Iván Márquez” and alias “Jesús Santrich,” who the United States was seeking to have extradited on drug charges, remained unknown at the end of 2019. In August 2019, these four former FARC commanders, along with about twenty other former mid-level FARC commanders, announced that they were taking up arms again in response to what they called a “betrayal by the state of the peace accord.” In March 2019, the Constitutional Court ruled unconstitutional a 2018 law containing a provision that suspended, unless defendants requested otherwise, Special Jurisdiction prosecutions of armed forces soldiers until the government created a “special and differentiated process” for them.⁶⁶

CONGO (Democratic Republic)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2000, 2003–2019.

In July 2019, a three-judge panel at the International Criminal Court (ICC) unanimously found the rebel leader and former army general Bosco Ntaganda guilty of thirteen counts of war crimes and five counts

política aceptable hoy”; Andrés Bermúdez Liévano, “[Lutte politique pour la vérité et la mémoire en Colombie](#),” *JusticeInfo.Net* (19 March 2020).

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 145–148; Amnesty International, *Human Rights in the Americas: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 35, 37.

of crimes against humanity committed in Ituri in 2002 and 2003. The charges included murder and attempted murder, rape, sexual slavery, attacking civilians, pillaging, displacement of civilians, attacking protected objects, and recruiting and using child soldiers. The judges found that Ntaganda and others agreed on a common plan to attack and drive the ethnic Lendu population out of Ituri through the commission of crimes. In November 2019, the ICC sentenced him to thirty years in prison. Troops under Ntaganda's command also committed ethnic massacres, killings, rape, torture, and recruitment of child soldiers in the Kivus, including when Ntaganda commanded troops in the Rwandan-backed National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) and M23 armed groups, and while he served as a general in the Congolese army. His trial at the ICC only dealt with crimes related to the Ituri conflict.⁶⁷

In June 2020, Belgian King Leopold II's statues were moved to the National Museum in Kinshasa.⁶⁸

See also Belgium, Uganda.

CONGO (Republic)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004–2006, 2008, 2010–2012, 2019.

COSTA RICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

See Ivory Coast.

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 166–168.

⁶⁸ Georgina Rannard, "[Leopold II: Belgium 'Wakes Up' to Its Bloody Colonial Past](#)," *BBC News* (13 June 2020).

CROATIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2001, 2003–2013, 2015–2019.

In January 2019, a Europe-wide universities-led Holocaust Remembrance project found historical revisionism in Croatia among the highest in the European Union.⁶⁹

On 21 August 2019, Hrvoje Klasić, a professor of contemporary history at Zagreb University history department who had criticized the rehabilitation of the World War II fascist Ustaša movement (1941–1944) in Croatia, received an anonymous letter containing a death threat signed in the name of the Ustaša at his office at Zagreb University's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Attached to it was a newspaper excerpt in which Klasić said that he would welcome a decision by the Austrian authorities to ban and sanction the public display of symbols of the Ustaša movement. Klasić had received similar letters and death threats in the past, but the latest contained the most explicit death threat.⁷⁰

In April 2020, President Zoran Milanovic said that a controversial plaque with the Ustaša slogan "Ready for the Home(land)" ("Za dom spremni") should be removed. The plaque commemorated soldiers from a 1990s paramilitary organization called the Croatian Defense Forces. Milanovic had called for its removal after he and other senior Croatian officials, anti-fascists and leaders of Croatia's Serb, Roma and Jewish communities had held a joint commemoration of victims of the Ustaša-run Jasenovac concentration camp. "It should be removed, thrown away somewhere. It has nothing to do with the Homeland War," Milanovic said. The Ustaša killed over 83,000 Serbs, Jews, Roma and anti-fascists at the Jasenovac camp between 1941 and 1945 [see NCH Annual Reports 1996, 2017].⁷¹

On 3 June 2020 Holocaust historian Efraim Zuroff from the Jerusalem-based Simon Wiesenthal Center called upon Croatian political leaders to reject member of parliament Ruža Tomašić's recent statements of sympathy for the Ustaša movement. Zuroff alleged that Tomašić was attempting to whitewash the large-scale atrocities committed by the Ustaša and the World War II-era Independent State of Croatia (NDH).⁷²

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 217.

⁷⁰ Anja Vladislavljevic, "[Ustasa' Letter Threatens Croatian Historian with Death](#)," *Balkan Insight* (28 August 2019); Jonathan Even-Zohar, "['A Society Where I Should Be Quiet Is Not a Society for Me' – Interview with Hrvoje Klasić](#)," *EuroClio* (10 October 2019).

⁷¹ Anja Vladislavljevic, "Croatian President Reignites Row over Ustasa Slogan," *Balkan Insight* (23 April 2020).

⁷² Anja Vladislavljevic, "Croatian MEP Condemned for 'Repulsive' Ustasa Sympathies," *Balkan Insight* (5 June 2020).

See also Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CUBA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2002, 2006, 2010–2012, 2015–2016, 2018.

CYPRUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002, 2005, 2008–2011, 2013, 2015–2018.

See Turkey.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–1998, 2000, 2010, 2013–2019.

In March 2020, Martina Lehmannová, director of the memorial in Lidice – a village razed to the ground by the Nazis after Adolf Hitler singled it out in retribution for the assassination in 1942 of Reinhard Heydrich, deputy leader of the SS, by British-trained Czech and Slovak resistance fighters – forcibly resigned from her post. This came after she refused to question in a television program in June 2019 the discovery by Czech historian Vojtěch Kyncl, member of the Czech Academy of Sciences, that a Jewish woman who had been secretly living in Lidice during the war was arrested – allegedly after being denounced by a neighbor – shortly before it was razed. The disclosure cast a shadow over the village’s status as symbol of national martyrdom. Lehmannová was ousted after survivors of Lidice – under the auspices of the Czech Union of Freedom Fighters, a local group with roots in the former Communist regime – wrote to senior politicians, complaining that she had failed to contradict Kyncl’s research in the documentary. The complaint prompted the intervention of Czech culture minister Lubomír Zaorálek, who accused Lehmannová of failing to empathize with the survivors and told her to resign or face being dismissed. Ten other board members quit in support of Lehmannová. She was replaced by Eduard Stehlík, a military historian and ex-army officer who had written two books on Lidice and who had cast doubt on Kyncl’s research.⁷³

⁷³ Robert Tait, “[Czech Village Razed by Hitler at Heart of Row on Truth and History](#),” *The Guardian* (14 March 2020); “[Czech Museum Director Fired](#),” *Jewish News* (22 March 2020).

On 3 April 2020, officials removed a statue of Soviet Army marshal Ivan Konev (1897–1973) from a local park. In a reaction, Russia’s Investigative Committee said it had opened an investigation into alleged “defiling of symbols of Russia’s military glory.” Two days later, the Czech Embassy in Moscow was attacked by a group of masked individuals. This prompted a diplomatic row between Russia and the Czech Republic. Subsequently, three Czech officials, including Prague Mayor Zdeněk Hřib, were placed under police protection following reports of Russian poison plots. Russians considered Konev to be a war hero credited with liberating much of Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II; for Czechs, however, his legacy was more complicated, as he later commanded the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising and lead reconnaissance missions for the 1968 invasion of what was then Czechoslovakia.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Robert Tait, “Statue Must Tell True Story of Soviet ‘Hero,’ Say Czechs,” *The Guardian* (5 August 2018); Amy Mackinnon, “[As Putin Seeks to Reinvent History, Russia-Czech Relations Hit a New Low](#),” *Foreign Policy* (29 April 2020).

DENMARK

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2006–2007, 2013, 2016–2019.

On 9 November 2019, the 81st anniversary of Kristallnacht, police arrested neo-Nazi activist Jacob Vullum Andersen ([1981]–), leader of the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), and an alleged accomplice after 84 Jewish tombstones were vandalized at a cemetery in Randers. They were charged with gross vandalism and a hate crime offense and put in custody for four weeks. There were also anti-Semitic incidents in four other places in Denmark, involving Nazi-style Star of David stickers and graffiti.⁷⁵

DJIBOUTI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013.

⁷⁵ “[Neo-Nazi Held in Denmark over Jewish Cemetery Attack](#),” *BBC News* (14 November 2019).

ECUADOR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2007, 2009–2019.

A truth commission created by the Rafael Correa administration (2007–2017) to investigate government abuses from 1984 to 2008 documented gross human rights violations against 456 victims, including 68 extrajudicial executions and seventeen disappearances. A special prosecutorial unit created in 2010 initiated judicial procedures in fewer than fifteen cases. Final rulings have been rendered in only two. The remaining cases appear stalled.⁷⁶

In December 2019, United Nations experts recommended to Ecuador “to ensure that textbooks and other educational materials reflect historical facts accurately as they relate to past tragedies and atrocities, in particular slavery, the trade in enslaved Africans and colonialism, so as to avoid stereotypes and the distortion or falsification of these historic facts, which may lead to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.”⁷⁷

In [January 2020] the building Aranjuez in Quito that housed the archaeological, colonial and modern art collections and the archival and photographic collections of the Ministry of Culture was declared at risk of collapse, putting the cultural heritage of Ecuador in jeopardy. At the same time, plans were drafted to transfer the collections to a new museum at the outskirts of the city (at the former headquarters of the Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, UNASUR, Union of South American Nations, in a earthquake-sensitive region). A broad coalition for the defense of the country’s cultural heritage demanded that the government would promptly transfer the collections to another building in the center of Quito.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 172.

⁷⁷ [“Statement to the Media by the United Nations’ Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the Conclusion of its Official Visit to Ecuador, 16–20 December 2019”](#) (Quito, 20 December 2019).

⁷⁸ Santiago Cabrera Hanna, “Ecuador: Fondos bibliográficos y colecciones arqueológicas y de arte están en riesgo” (Press release; [30] January 2020); Santiago Cabrera Hanna, personal communications (30 January & 28 April 2020); Juan Maiguashca Guevara, personal communication (30 January 2020); Diego Araujo Sánchez, [“Patrimonio en peligro,”](#) *El Comercio* (21 January 2020); “Carta abierta al Ministro de Cultura y Patrimonio de Ecuador Juan Fernando Velasco” (28 April 2020), available as petition under the title [“No a traslado de bienes patrimoniales de Ecuador en medio de Pandemia Covid-19”](#) (28 April 2020).

EGYPT

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2001, 2003, 2006–2007, 2010–2019.

In 2019, historian of religions Adam Duker [see NCH Annual Report 2019] returned to the United States on a temporary position at the Departments of History and Religion of Mount Holyoke College.⁷⁹

Despite the accelerated restoration of Jewish heritage (synagogues, cemeteries, bibles) by the government, Jews who were expelled in 1956 during the Suez Crises or fled in 1967 during the Six-Day War were still not allowed access to a vast register of community records, dating back to 1830 and located inside the national archives, ostensibly for national security reasons.”⁸⁰

EL SALVADOR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2019.

Many human rights violations were committed during the armed conflict (1980–1992). In May 2019, a draft Special Law for Transitional and Restorative Justice for National Reconciliation was discussed in the Legislative Assembly. Its text was described by human rights groups as a threat to the right of access to justice for victims and a mechanism for perpetuating impunity. The President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) asked El Salvador to suspend the legislative progress of the bill and the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that the draft bill contained a series of provisions that could translate into a de facto amnesty. Also in May, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence concluded his official visit to El Salvador and expressed concerns about the slow pace of action by the Attorney General’s Office in investigating crimes under international law and human rights violations during the armed conflict, obstacles to accessing military files from 1980–1992, and the insufficiency of the reparation and historical memory processes. In September 2019, human rights organizations and victims’ groups informed the IACHR that state programs for victims’ reparations, created in 2013, had been disestablished as a result of an institutional reorganization implemented by the new government. In December, the IACHR reiterated the need for the new national reconciliation law, expected to be

⁷⁹ Gilgamesh Nabeel & Mina Nader, “[American University Cairo Religion Professor Loses Post in Academic Freedom Fight](#),” *Religion News Service* (14 May 2019); Elizabeth Redden, “[A Donor’s Demands, a Revoked Chair](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (24 May 2019).

⁸⁰ Declan Walsh and Ronen Bergman, “[A Bittersweet Homecoming for Egypt’s Jews](#),” *New York Times* (23 February 2020).

approved in February 2020, to fully comply with El Salvador's international obligations with respect to transitional justice, and also to take into account the voices of the victims.⁸¹

In November 2019, President Nayib Bukele declared that the government would open the military archives related to the December 1981 El Mozote massacre as requested by Jorge Guzmán, an examining magistrate in San Francisco Gotera, Morazán.⁸²

In 2019, the trial continued against former military commanders accused in the 1981 El Mozote massacre (see item above), where soldiers committed mass rapes and killed 978 civilians, including 553 children. Investigations reached hearings in only 14 of 48 cases involving 116 extrajudicial killings committed from 2014 to 2018 that the Salvadoran Ombudsperson for the Defense of Human Rights (PDDH) examined. Two resulted in convictions.⁸³

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2019.

ERITREA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008, 2016, 2018.

ESTONIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2010, 2015, 2017.

⁸¹ Amnesty International, *Human Rights in the Americas: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 49.

⁸² Gabriel Campos Madrid, "[Gobierno dice que abrirá archivos militares](#)," *La prensa gráfica* (3 November 2019); Nelson Rauda, "[Juez de El Mozote envía inspectores a buscar los archivos que el Ejército niega](#)," *El Faro* (26 June 2020).

⁸³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 185.

ETHIOPIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2011, 2015–2019.

A national reconciliation commission was set up in December 2018, resting on two pillars: the first concerning reconciliation, peace and national cohesion, the second to identify “the nature, cause, and dimension of the repeated gross violations of human rights.” What constituted gross human rights violations, however, was not defined.

Between 1974 and 1991, the Derg regime, led by Mengistu Hailemariam, killed over 150,000 people including students, academics, and political opponents, torturing, forcibly disappearing, and arbitrarily arresting many more. Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe in 1991 and was tried and convicted in absentia for genocide and war crimes by an Ethiopian court in 2006. On 28 May 1991, liberation groups overthrew the Derg and formed a coalition government. The coalition pledged to establish human rights in the country and respect the rule of law, but its military also murdered, raped, and tortured civilians in Gambella and the Somali region, and enforced systemic repression around election periods. Between 2014 and 2018, protesters, many of them students, took to the streets. In his inaugural address in 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed apologized for massive rights abuses and welcomed opposition groups back home. “I call on us all to forgive each other from our hearts — to close the chapters from yesterday, and to forge ahead to the next bright future through national consensus,” Abiy said in one address. So far, however, the commission’s mandate remained unclear, and some of its members lacked the necessary technical expertise to effectively carry out the body’s fact-finding function.⁸⁴

On 29 June 2020, in the turmoil and protests following the killing of Oromo musician Hachalu Hundessa (1986–2020), well-known for his political songs often inspired by Ethiopian history, protesters pulled down a statue of royal prince Ras Makonnen Wolde Mikael (1852–1906), sitting on a horse, in Harar, eastern Ethiopia. The father of Haile Selassie (1930–1974), Ethiopia’s last emperor, Ras Makonnen had been an important military figure and former governor of Harar province under then-Emperor Menelik II (1844–1913). Hachalu shared the view of Oromo historians that what was currently known as Addis Ababa was once the home of the Tulama clans of the Oromo, and that they were forced out by Emperor Menelik II. In June 2020, Hachalu had angered the emperor’s supporters after he had accused Menelik II of stealing the horses of Oromos – who saw themselves as warriors and horsemen – when he established Addis Ababa as his seat of power and as Ethiopia’s capital in 1886. Machalu had received several death threats. On 30 June 2020, a statue of Haile Selassie was destroyed in Cannizaro park,

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 207; Solomon Ayele Dersso, “Ethiopia’s Experiment in Reconciliation,” *USIP Press* (23 September 2019); Laetitia Bader, “To Heal, Ethiopia Needs to Confront its Violent Past,” *Human Rights Watch* (28 May 2020).

Wimbledon, south-west London. The damage to the bust was carried out by a group of around 100 people. Haile Selassie lived in Wimbledon in 1936 during his exile following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.⁸⁵

See also Rwanda.

⁸⁵ “[Hachalu Hundessa: Deadly Protests Erupt after Ethiopian Singer Killed](#),” *BBC News* (30 June 2020); “[Hachalu Hundessa – Ethiopia’s Murdered Musician Who Sang for Freedom](#),” *BBC News* (2 July 2020); “[Haile Selassie: Statue of Former Ethiopian Leader Destroyed in London Park](#),” *BBC News* (2 July 2020).

FIJI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004, 2006, 2010.

FINLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011–2012, 2017.

In November–December 2019, the Finnish government, the Skolt Sámi village meeting, and the Sámi parliament all accepted the mandate of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), tasked with investigating atrocities committed against Finland’s Indigenous populations. The TRC’s primary stated goal was to recognize and evaluate the discrimination faced by Sámi people throughout history, and the continuing current effects of the trauma caused by officially sanctioned oppression. It would investigate the forced integration tactics used by the government and the trauma that Sámi people still faced due to Finland’s racist schemes of oppression. TRC preparations started in 2016.⁸⁶

See also Russia.

FRANCE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1999, 2001–2009, 2011–2014, 2016–2018.

In the spring of 2019, it was discovered that the Departmental Archives of the Haute-Garonne had destroyed police and court records of Spanish exiles who came to Toulouse in 1939. Toulouse was known as the exile capital of France and as the fifth province of Catalonia.⁸⁷

On 21 October 2019, a Holocaust memorial plaque in the center of Lyon (installed in 2011) was vandalized. It contained the names of the 86 Jews arrested on 9 February 1943, most of them subsequently murdered in Auschwitz and Sobibor. On the plaque, black paint was used to cross out their names.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ “[Sámi Reconciliation Process Gains Final Approval](#),” *Yle* (18 December 2019).

⁸⁷ Bruno Pardo Porto, “[Francia destruye parte de la memoria histórica del exilio ante la inacción del Gobierno español](#),” *ABC* (2 February 2020).

⁸⁸ Norman Goda, “[The History Behind a Recently Defaced French Holocaust Memorial](#),” *History News Network* (10 November 2019).

On 1 February 2020, historian Jean-Marc Berlière, expert in French police history, criticized the Defense Ministry Historical Service, which since the beginning of 2020 had closed all police files from 1940 until the present, making research on World War II very difficult, if not impossible. On 14 February 2020, a group of French historians started a petition directed to President Emmanuel Macron, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe, Minister of Culture Franck Riester, Minister for the Armed Forces Florence Parly and the Secrétariat général de la Défense et de la Sécurité nationale (SGDSN) to lift access restrictions to the public archives of contemporary history (1940–1970), in particular the instruction of November 2011 (tightened in December 2019) to declassify secret records one by one — threatening historical writing about World War II, the decolonization of Algeria and other subjects.⁸⁹

On 12 June 2020, the State Council ruled that genocide researcher François Graner [see NCH Annual Report 2018] was allowed to consult the archives of late President François Mitterrand. In April 2019, President Macron had appointed a panel of experts to investigate France’s actions in Rwanda.⁹⁰

On 23 June 2020, an activist of the group Brigade Anti Négrophobie vandalized the statue of Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683) outside the National Assembly, spraying the words “nérophobie d’État” (the state’s fear of black people) at the monument’s base before police detained him. Colbert was a statesman who served under King Louis XIV and helped write the *Code noir* (1685; Black Code) on his orders. The *Code noir* set regulations for French colonies in the Americas and the Caribbean, including banning Jewish people from all colonies, defining how slavery would work, and restricting the freedoms of free black people.

In Lille, protesters wrote the words “murderer” and “colonist” on the statue of Louis Faidherbe (1818–1889), a nineteenth-century governor of Senegal when it was a French colony.⁹¹

See also Cameroon, Central African Republic, Iran, Yemen.

⁸⁹ Benoit Robert, “[Les historiens n’ont plus accès aux archives de 39-45, leurs travaux sont menacés](#),” *Ouest-France* (1 February 2020); [Petition text](#); “[Archives, secret défense et crise sanitaire : le rôle opaque du Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale \(SGDSN\)](#),” *L’Humanité* (22 April 2020).

⁹⁰ “[France Grants Researcher Access to Mitterrand’s Archive on Rwandan Genocide](#),” *France 24* (12 June 2020).

⁹¹ “[France Colbert Row: Statue Vandalised over Slavery Code](#),” *BBC News* (24 June 2020); Lucy Williamson, “[Colonial Abuses Haunt France’s Racism Debate](#),” *BBC News* (19 June 2020); Olga Nedbaeva & Fiachra Gibbons, “[Top French Historian Slams Macron’s Hardline Stance on Statues](#),” *AFP* (24 June 2020).

GABON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2016, 2018.

GAMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2016–2018.

See Myanmar.

GEORGIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2003, 2010–2012, 2014, 2016, 2019.

GERMANY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997–2000, 2003, 2006–2013, 2015–2017, 2019.

In December 2019, Sibylle Ehringhaus did not renew her contract as an art provenance researcher at the Georg Schäfer Museum in Schweinfurt, northern Bavaria. Since 2016, she had to verify claims of heirs of Jewish collectors who said that some of their works in the museum had been stolen by the Nazis and should be returned. Ehringhaus said that she was denied access to historical documents vital for her research and forbidden to contact colleagues at another museum with her research inquiries. She added that although she had identified several plundered works, the museum did not seem to have any plans to return them to the heirs of the original Jewish owners.⁹²

On 4 February 2020, the regional appeals court of Saxony-Anhalt in Naumburg ruled on a complaint by Michael Düllmann that a thirteenth-century anti-Semitic carving showing a rabbi and two other Jews with a pig on the wall of the Stadtkirche in Wittenberg (where Martin Luther preached) was defamatory to the Jewish people and should be removed. The court, however, rejected the complaint, saying that

⁹² Catherine Hickley, “[She Tracked Nazi-Looted Art; She Quit When No One Returned It](#),” *New York Times* (17 March 2020); Jenn Gidman, “[Researcher: Museum Won’t Give Up Art Nazis Plundered](#),” *Newser* (20 March 2020).

since the 1980s the church had undertaken serious efforts to contextualize the carving, finding that while the sculpture would be offensive if viewed in isolation, “in the context in which it has been placed by the church it has lost its insulting character.”⁹³

On 2 April 2020, an almost 200-foot (around 60-meter) stretch of the graffiti covered Berlin Wall was demolished in Pankow, northeast Berlin, to make way for new apartments. The Berlin Wall Foundation said it had not been informed about the removal.⁹⁴

On 20 June 2020, the far-left party Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD) unveiled a statue of Communist leader Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) in front of its headquarters in Gelsenkirchen. City authorities had attempted to stop the statue being installed, but the courts had blocked their appeals.⁹⁵

See also Cameroon, Czech Republic, Iran, Iraq, Israel, United Kingdom, United States.

GHANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002, 2004–2008, 2017, 2019.

GREECE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1999, 2004–2011, 2013–2019.

GRENADA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007.

⁹³ “[Anti-Semitic Sculpture to Remain on German Church](#),” *BBC News* (4 February 2020).

⁹⁴ Kate Brown, “[A 200-Foot Section of the Berlin Wall Has Been Torn Down to Make Way for Condos, Leaving Historians Appalled](#),” *Artnet News* (2 April 2020).

⁹⁵ “[Gelsenkirchen: Controversial Lenin Statue Erected in German City](#),” *BBC News* (21 June 2020).

GUATEMALA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2019.

In early June 2019, in the middle of safe third-country negotiations between Guatemala and the United States, Kimberly Breier, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, blocked the release of a public statement that would have urged Guatemala to back down on its effort to restrict access to the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (AHPN; Historical Archive of the National Police) [see NCH Annual Reports 2013, 2019]. In early July 2019, the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture and Sports informed the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, responsible for administering international donations to the AHPN) that it would take over full management of the archives. On 10 July 2019, Anna Carla Ericastilla, director for more than a decade of the Archivo General de Centro América (AGCA; Guatemala’s national archives), was dismissed on the grounds that she had provided access to the AHPN to foreign institutions, including the University of Texas, and improperly raised funds from donors to pay salaries to archivists. The staff that was reduced from hundreds to 35 people, operating on temporary contracts that needed renewal every couple of months. The investigations unit – which, in the past, constantly reviewed records for information to give to families of the disappeared, human rights investigators, scholars, and prosecutors – was eliminated. Outside researchers were not permitted to conduct their work on AHPN premises but were asked to submit record requests under the Access to Information law. Gustavo Meoño Brenner, who had been dismissed as AHPN director in August 2018, left Guatemala; Ericastilla would give a declaration in her first hearing before the Public Ministry on 18 November 2019 to address the criminal complaint filed against her. She also asked a labor tribunal to order compensation for her unjustified dismissal from the archives.⁹⁶

In July 2019, the Human Rights Ombudsman filed an amparo (a request for the protection of legal rights) with the Supreme Court of Justice to ensure preservation of and access to the AHPN police records (see item above). When no decision was forthcoming, on 3 February 2020 the Ombudsman together with representatives of the prosecutor for human rights and the Association of University Students, in a public hearing renewed the request. On 3 March 2020, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Ombudsman’s position. Applying Article 2 of the American Convention on Human Rights, the

⁹⁶ David Fricker & Antonio González Quintana, “Statement of the International Council On Archives on the Situation of the Historical Archives of the National Police of Guatemala” (16 June 2019); Colum Lynch, “[Guatemala Declares War on History](#),” *Foreign Policy* (30 July 2019); “[Joint Declaration of the International and National Advisory Councils of the Historical Archive of the National Police of Guatemala \(AHPN\)](#)” (English and Spanish versions; 17 November 2019); National Security Archive, “[Joint Declaration on the Guatemala Police Archive](#)” (18 November 2019).

court said that the Interior Ministry must not “threaten the integrity” of the AHPN archives. The Ministry of Culture, which was the home of the national archives, must develop a plan within four months to restore the archive’s staff to numbers sufficient to carry on the work, the Congress must work on a revised archives law, and the government should obtain advice from national and international archivists. The Court cited the 16 June 2019 statement published by the International Council on Archives on the Guatemalan police archives.⁹⁷

The limited progress that Guatemala made in recent years in judging crimes of the past seemed to have come to a standstill. In November 2018, a former special forces member was convicted for his role in the 1982 Dos Erres massacre, in which Guatemalan army special forces killed around 200 civilians as part of its counterinsurgency policy during the armed conflict (1960–1996). In 2011 and 2012, five others had been convicted for their roles in the massacre. However, ten others remained at large and three high-level former officials, including former President Efraín Ríos Montt, died before facing trial. In June 2019, in a case regarding sexual violence against 36 Maya Achí women in the 1980s, a pre-trial judge dismissed proceedings against six former paramilitaries and ordered the immediate release of the defendants after she excluded key evidence from the case, including testimonies from victims and witnesses. At the end of 2019, plaintiffs’ appeals against the decision remained pending, as did the request from the prosecutor to strip the judge of immunity and charge her with malfeasance and denial of justice. The same judge had reached a similar decision in the CREOMPAZ case, involving enforced disappearances and sexual violence at a military base during the armed conflict. The judge barred 123 of the 152 victims from the case and excluded key military documents from the evidence. The prosecutors’ appeals remained pending at the end of 2019.

In March 2019, Guatemalan Congress passed the second (of three required) approvals of a bill that would provide amnesty for genocide and other past atrocities, in clear violation of international human rights law. That same month, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights ordered Guatemala, in a binding ruling, to shelve the proposed legislation and in July 2019, Guatemala’s Constitutional Court issued a similar ruling. However, at the end of 2019, that had not happened.⁹⁸

GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2009–2019.

⁹⁷ *Archives and Human Rights: News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights* (No. 123; February 2020), 1.

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 244.

At least eleven demonstrators were allegedly shot dead by the security forces during protests on 14–16 October 2019. Security forces shot dead three people during a 4 November 2019 funeral procession to commemorate October’s protest deaths. Security forces shot dead three more protesters on 7 November 2019.⁹⁹

Ten years after security forces massacred over 150 peaceful opposition supporters, and raped dozens of women, at a stadium on 28 September 2009, those responsible have not been tried. Judges indicted fourteen people over the massacre, including Moussa Dadis Camara, then-leader of the military junta that ruled Guinea in September 2009, and individuals who remained in positions of power such as Moussa Tiegboro Camara, who was in charge of fighting drug trafficking and organized crime. In August 2019, a steering committee, established in August 2018 to organize the trial, confirmed Conakry’s Court of Appeal as the site for the trial. Justice Minister Mohammed Lamine Fofana stated in November 2019 that the trial would take place no later than June 2020.

With the exception of a handful of cases, impunity largely continued for past human rights abuses. There have been no trials for alleged killings of demonstrators by the security forces during protests in 2018, as well as for demonstrators killed in protests in 2019 (see item above). There have similarly been no trials for the killing of protesters prior to and following the 2015 presidential elections and the 2013 parliamentary elections; for the 2012 killing of six men in the southeastern mining village of Zoghota; or the 2007 killing by security forces of some 130 unarmed demonstrators.

The trial of the former governor of Conakry, Sékou Resco Camara, and the former head of the army, Nouhou Thiam, for the 2010 torture of several opposition detainees, which began in April 2018, was repeatedly delayed.¹⁰⁰

GUINEA-BISSAU

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2012, 2015.

GUYANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997.

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 249.

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 250.

HAITI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2000–2003, 2006, 2008–2009, 2013–2019.

Accountability for past human rights abuses continued to be a challenge. As of November 2019, a re-opened investigation into crimes committed by former President Jean-Claude Duvalier's collaborators remained pending. Duvalier died in 2014, six months after the Port-of-Prince Court of Appeal ruled that the statute of limitations could not be applied to crimes against humanity and ordered that investigations against him should continue for crimes committed during his presidency (1971–1986). Allegations of violations included arbitrary detentions, torture, disappearances, summary executions, and forced exile [see NCH Annual Reports 2000–2001, 2003, 2012–2019].¹⁰¹

HONDURAS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1998, 2001–2002, 2009–2015.

HONG KONG

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996. *See* China.

HUNGARY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997, 2004, 2007–2019.

On 13 February 2019, the Committee of Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences expressed its support for the action of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences aiming to preserve the autonomy of its research and finances.¹⁰²

In June 2019, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán signed a decree to incorporate the 1956 Institute (a historical research center funded in June 1989 and dedicated to the 1956 Hungarian uprising against the Soviet

¹⁰¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 255.

¹⁰² [Letter from Tomasz Schramm \(Head of the Presiding Office of the Committee of Historical Sciences\) to László Lovász \(President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences\)](#) (13 February 2019).

Union) into the Veritas Historical Research Institute and Archive, created by the government in 2014 and which critics said promoted a version of history favoring Orbán's agenda. The 1956 Institute had been part of the national library and its director, historian Janos Rainer, was not consulted prior to the decision. All ten historians employed at the institute resigned. Government spokespersons insisted that the change was intended to improve the efficiency of research.¹⁰³

In 2019, the government withdrew accreditation and funding for the two gender studies masters' programs in Hungary (at Eötvös Loránd University, ELTE, and Central European University, CEU). Andrea Pető, historian in the CEU Department of Gender Studies, received an anonymous threatening email via the website academia.edu because of her lectures dealing with gender, politics, the Holocaust, and war. The email was also anti-Semitic, saying that it "foresaw the eradication of her breed." The CEU offered to provide her with a bodyguard, but she turned the offer down. As a result of the affair, her book on sexual violence during World War II in Hungary moved on to the bestseller list and remained there for weeks. Pető is the author, with Ildikó Barna, of *Political Justice in Budapest after World War II* (2015); co-editor, with Ayşe Gül Altınay, of *Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversation on War, Genocide and Political Violence* (2016), and has edited the volume on War in the *Interdisciplinary Handbook: Gender Series* (Macmillan, 2017). She has also written about the women raped by Soviet soldiers at the end of the Second World War, in *Telling the Untellable* (in Hungarian).¹⁰⁴

In mid-February 2020, after Prime Minister Orbán emphasized national pride in his state-of-the-nation speech on 16 February, the government announced that it would modify the national curriculum in September in order to instill a spirit of national pride in school pupils. The change would affect the teaching of history and literature. Hungarian history would be taught in a continuous form while global history only insofar as it affected Hungary. Military victories would be emphasized, defeats downplayed. State-published textbooks would be pushed. The move was widely criticized, among others by the President of the Történelemtanárok Egylete (TTE; Association of Hungarian History Teachers), László Miklósi. TTE published reports outlining the many errors in new state-published history textbooks.¹⁰⁵

See also Czech Republic.

¹⁰³ Valerie Hopkins, "[Hungary's Viktor Orban and the Rewriting of History](#)," *Financial Times* (25 July 2019).

¹⁰⁴ Sally Gimson, "Macho Politics Drive Academic Closures," *Index on Censorship*, 2019 no. 3, 103; "[Andrea Peto](#)" (CEU website, September 2019); Matthew Reisz, "[History: From a Different Perspective](#)," *Times Higher Education* (16 August 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Nick Thorpe, "[Hungary's New Patriotic Education Meets Resistance](#)," *BBC News* (25 February 2020); Zsolt Istvan Vodli, "[History and Courage: The Position of Teachers in Hungary](#)," *EuroClio* (7 October 2019).

INDIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1997, 2000–2019.

In March 2019, it was announced that National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) history textbooks for class IX would soon no longer contain chapters related to caste conflict. They would be removed as part of the curriculum-rationalizing exercise initiated by Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar to reduce the burden on students. Chapters to be deleted included those on clothing (and how social movements influenced how people dressed), on the history of cricket in India (and its connection to the politics of caste, region and community), and on the growth of capitalism (and how colonialism altered the lives of peasants and farmers). In 2016 already, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had sent a circular to affiliated schools stating that no questions should be asked from the section “Caste Conflict and Dress Change” in 2017 as it was omitted from the syllabus.¹⁰⁶

In October 2019, historian Ramachandra Guha [see NCH Annual Report 2019], filmmakers Adoor Gopalkrishnan and Mani Ratnam, and 46 others, were charged with sedition in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, for writing an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to combat the frequent mob lynchings since he assumed office. The charges (that also included “tarnishing the image of the country,” “undermining the impressive performance of the prime minister” and “supporting secessionist tendencies”) were dropped later.

On 19 December 2019, police detained historian Guha together with 200 peaceful protesters during a demonstration in Bengaluru (Bangalore), Karnataka, against a new citizenship law (see item below), which critics said was prejudicial to Muslims and undermined India’s secular constitution. Several cities, including the capital New Delhi and Bengaluru, imposed curbs on public gatherings after some protests turned violent.¹⁰⁷

On 9 November 2019, the Supreme Court of India unanimously pronounced its verdict in the Ayodhya title dispute case, saying that the Hindu parties would be given the disputed land where the Babri Masjid (mosque) once stood. The Sunni Waqf Board, the biggest Muslim litigant in the case, would be given five acres at a separate “prominent” location in Ayodhya. The court said that a (disputed) report by the

¹⁰⁶ [“NCERT Is Removing Caste Conflict Chapters from Class 9 History Textbooks for HRD Ministry Exercise,”](#) *India Today* (19 March 2019).

¹⁰⁷ [“Indian Police Detain Historian Guha at Protest against Citizenship Law,”](#) *Reuters* (19 December 2020); Soutik Biswas, [“Citizenship Act Protests: How a Colonial-era Law Is Being Used in India,”](#) *BBC News* (20 December 2020); [“Ramchandra Guha, Mani Ratnam, Aparna Sen among 49 Booked for Sedition for Letter to Narendra Modi against Mob Lynching,”](#) *The Hindu* (4 October 2019); Somak Ghoshal, “Modi and His Angry Men,” *Index on Censorship* (2019 no. 4), 27–28.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) provided evidence that the remains of a building “that was not Islamic” were beneath the structure of the demolished Babri mosque. The judgment delivered was in the civil dispute case. The criminal case on the December 1992 demolition of the 450-year-old mosque was still pending in a special Central Bureau of Investigation court in Lucknow [See also NCH Annual Reports 2002–2004, 2006–2007, 2010–2011, 2015, 2017].¹⁰⁸

On 27 November 2019, Pragya Thakur, a controversial member of parliament from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was dropped from a key parliamentary panel after she had called Mahatma Gandhi’s killer “a patriot” during a discussion in the lower house of parliament, repeating the comment for the second time (the first time was in May). Gandhi was killed on 30 January 1948 by Nathuram Godse, an activist with nationalist right-wing groups who saw Gandhi as too moderate. The comment sparked outrage, including from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Thakur later apologized.¹⁰⁹

On 16 January 2020, in the context of wide peaceful protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and NRC (National Register of Citizens), Sharjeel Imam, a PhD student in modern Indian history at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU; New Delhi), delivered a speech at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU; Uttar Pradesh) in which he called for a *chakka jam* – a road blockade – on the highway to Assam, that would be so effective that the North East (which includes Assam) was cut off from the rest of India. Imam was also accused of making an inflammatory anti-CAA speech at Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi. Five states filed FIRs (First Information Reports) for sedition and other grave crimes against him. The chief ministers of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh also issued statements condemning him as “anti-national.” On 27 January 2020, Imam was arrested by the Delhi Police in Jehanabad, Bihar, on sedition charges. Around the same time, JNU’s chief proctor summoned Imam to appear before him for his speech at AMU, “endangering the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the country.” The CAA and NRC were widely believed to be anti-Muslim measures.¹¹⁰

In February 2020, the right-wing Hindutva group Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS) demanded the immediate withdrawal of a Class XI World History textbook published by the Goa Board of Secondary

¹⁰⁸ Supreme Court of India, [M. Siddiq versus M.S. Das and others: Judgment](#) (9 November 2019); “[Ayodhya: Once There Was A Mosque](#)” [timeline], *The Wire* (9 November 2019); “[Supreme Court Verdict: Ram Temple Trust to Get Disputed Ayodhya Land](#),” *The Wire* (9 November 2019); “[Ayodhya Verdict: Indian Top Court Gives Holy Site to Hindus](#),” *BBC News* (9 November 2019); Soutik Biswas, “[Ayodhya Verdict: The Man Who Helped Lord Ram Win](#),” *BBC News* (9 November 2019); B. Z. Khasru, “[Muslims Should Reject Indian Supreme Court’s Land Offer](#),” *History News Network* (12 November 2019); Nandini Surdar, “[Five Acres in Lieu of Citizenship](#),” *The Wire* (15 November 2019).

¹⁰⁹ “[Pragya Thakur: India MP Sacked from Panel for Calling Gandhi Killer ‘a Patriot’](#),” *BBC News* (28 November 2019).

¹¹⁰ Apoorvanand, “[Sharjeel Imam’s Speech Was Wild and Irresponsible, But Was It ‘Sedition’?](#)” *The Wire* (27 January 2019); Shuriah Niazi, “[Sedition Charges against JNU Scholar for Citizenship Speech](#),” *University World News* (30 January 2020).

and Higher Secondary Education (GBSHSE), because it allegedly depicted Marathi King Chhatrapati Shivaji (1627–1680) in a too critical light, calling the content “totally false.” The textbook claimed that when Shivaji attacked Goa in the late 1600s, his forces not only plundered the countryside, but also killed prisoners. In a reaction, Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant hinted that the contentious sections would be deleted from the next print.

In 2016, the HJS was one of several Hindu groups that had demanded the immediate removal of a picture in the Balbharti textbook for Class IV that allegedly depicted Shivaji “embracing” Afzal Khan. On other occasions, the HJS had demanded a ban on a book containing derogatory remarks about Hindutva ideologue V. D. Savarkar (1883–1966) and action against the book’s author and publisher. HJS members, or of its parent group Sanatan Sanstha, were also accused of involvement in the killings of rationalists and activists such as M. M. Kalburgi [see NCH Annual Report 2016].¹¹¹

On 5 March 2020, the Karnataka government – led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – recommended the withdrawal of 46 legal cases, mostly against leaders of the BJP, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and several right-wing organizations (such as Bajrang Dal). These leaders were accused of direct involvement in violence that erupted around the birth anniversary celebrations of 18th-century ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore Tipu Sultan (1750–1799) on 10 November (called Tipu Jayanti), of fanning communal tension in the state, making inflammatory speeches and derogatory comments on Tipu Sultan, and ridiculing then state chief minister Siddaramaiah in their speeches. These cases – ranging from assaults on Muslims celebrating Tipu Jayanti to unlawful assembly – were registered across Karnataka between 2014 and 2018 when the Congress party was in power. While Congress lauded Tipu Sultan as a national hero, the BJP and its right-wing affiliates weaved tyrannical stories of mass murder, torture and pillaging around Tipu Sultan and demanded that he should be condemned.

One day after the BJP had come to power in July 2019, it had announced a state-wide cancellation of celebrations of Tipu Sultan Jayanti, a decision challenged in the Karnataka high court by Bilal Ali Shah, who claimed to be Tipu Sultan’s descendant, and two organizations, Tipu Sultan United Front and Tipu Rashtreeya Seva Sangha, Bengaluru. In January 2020, the court gave the government eight weeks to reconsider its decision and to peruse voluminous records and literature on Tipu before issuing a fresh order. The state was yet to make a new decision on this.¹¹²

On 23 May 2020, the Delhi Police arrested Jawaharlal Nehru University students Devangana Kalita ([1990]–), studying at the Center for Women’s Studies, and Natasha Narwal ([1988]–), a PhD student

¹¹¹ [“Goa: Hindutva Group Objects to Textbook’s ‘Distorted History’ of Shivaji’s Raids,”](#) *The Wire* (20 February 2020).

¹¹² Sukanya Shantha, [“Tipu Jayanti: Karnataka Govt Proposes Withdrawal of Cases Against BJP, VHP Leaders,”](#) *The Wire* (18 May 2020).

at the Center for Historical Studies. Both were founding members of Pinjra Tod, a women's student organization. The arrests were connected to their alleged role in the Jafrabad Metro Station sit-in protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in February 2020 (see also item above). The Jafrabad sit-in had prompted a pro-CAA rally on 23 February and on 24 February riots broke out in northeast Delhi. The two students were arrested under Indian Penal Code sections 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions) and 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty). Freed on bail, Kalita and Narwal were immediately re-arrested by the Crime Branch on new charges ranging from section 147 (rioting), 307 (attempt to murder), 302 (murder), among others, related to the northeast Delhi riots.¹¹³

See also China.

INDONESIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2001–2002, 2004–2013, 2015–2019.

See China, Netherlands.

IRAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2019.

In 2015, the Ministry of Intelligence opened a case against Baktash Abrin, Reza Khandan-Mahabadi, and Keyvan Bazhan, members of the unauthorized Iranian Writers' Association (IWA). The trial started on 22 January 2019 before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court during which they were indicted on the politically motivated charges of "spreading propaganda against the regime" and "assembly and collusion against national security" relating to their publications critical to the censorship of art and literature in Iran as well as their IWA membership. Evidence submitted against them included the publication of the IWA's internal newsletter and statements, the compilation of a book on IWA history, and attendance of the annual commemoration of Mohammad Mokhtari (1942–1998) and Mohammad-Jafar Pouyandeh (1954–1998) – two victims of the so-called Serial Murders (relating to at least fourteen

¹¹³ Aranya Shankar & Jignasa Sinha, "[Delhi Police Arrest Two Women from Pinjra Tod over February Protest](#)," *Indian Express* (24 May 2020); "[Anti-CAA Protest: Pinjra Tod Activists Granted Bail, Rearrested](#)," *The Hindu* (25 May 2020).

dissidents who were killed or disappeared between 1988 and 1998) – as well as the memorial ceremony of renowned Iranian poet Ahmad Shamlu (1925–2000). On 28 December 2019, it was announced on appeal that the verdict for Bazhan had been commuted from six to three and half years’ prison, and the verdicts for Abrin and Khandan, each sentenced to six years’ prison, had been upheld.¹¹⁴

On 7 December 2019, Xiyue Wang [see NCH Annual Reports 2018–2019], a PhD student in the Department of History at Princeton University and a China-born naturalized United States citizen since 2009, was released in a prisoner swap; he went to Switzerland, Germany, and then back to the United States. Later, Wang declared that his Iranian interrogators had wanted to extract a confession of espionage from him.¹¹⁵

On 5 June 2019, Franco-Iranian Fariba Adelkhah (1959–), social and political anthropologist, specialist in Shia Islam, and director of research at Sciences Po’s Center for International Studies (CERI) in Paris, and sociologist Roland Marchal ([1955]–) a senior researcher at CERI with a focus on civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa, were arrested by Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) intelligence agents in Tehran. According to their defense attorney, Adelkhah was charged with “espionage” (later replaced by “propaganda against the political system” and “conspiracy against national security”) and Marchal with “conspiracy against national security.” Marchal was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment. Adelkhah was denied consular assistance. On 24 December 2019, Adelkhah started a hunger strike with Australian co-prisoner Kylie Moore-Gilbert of the University of Melbourne. She ended it on 12 February 2020 after health concerns. On 23 February 2020, she was admitted to a prison hospital for treatment for severe kidney damage. Adelkhah was brought before Tehran’s Revolutionary Tribunal during a closed-door hearing on 3 March 2020 for the first time. On 20 March 2020, Iran and France agreed to swap Marchal and Iranian engineer Jalal Ruhollahnejad (detained in France over alleged violations of American sanctions against Tehran) and he was released the same day. On 16 May 2020, Adelkhah was

¹¹⁴ International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 119.

¹¹⁵ Website about Xiyue Wang: <https://sites.google.com/view/freexiyuewang> “[Wife Pleads for Release of Princeton Student Incarcerated in Iran While Doing Research on Dissertation](#),” *Committee of Concerned Scientists* (9 June 2019); Laura Dean, “[The Threat of War Brings New Fears to an American Hostage in Iran](#),” *New Yorker* (24 June 2019); “[UN Experts Urge Iran to Release Imprisoned American Scholar Xiyue Wang](#)” (press release, 7 May 2019); Hua Qu, “[My Husband Is Unjustly Imprisoned in Iran: The International Community Must Help](#),” *Washington Post* (24 May 2019); Scholars at Risk, [Case Information](#) (7 August 2019); [Template letter to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#) (7 August 2019); Teresa Davis, “[Iran Has Imprisoned a Historian for Three Years: Here’s Why His Research Matters](#),” *Washington Post* (8 August 2019); “[Iran’s Jailed Dual Nationals and Their Uncertain Fate](#),” *BBC News* (1 October 2019); Danielle Ranucci, “[Vigil Marks Third Year of Wang’s Detainment](#),” *Daily Princetonian* (4 October 2019); Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think: Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project* (New York: Scholars at Risk, 2019), 17; Michael Crowley, “[In Prisoner Swap, Iran Frees American Held Since 2016](#),” *New York Times* (7 December 2019); “[US and Iranian Men Released in Prisoner Swap](#),” *BBC News* (7 December 2019); Colin Dwyer, “[Released From Iranian Prison, U.S. Student Xiyue Wang Says He Was Held As A ‘Hostage’](#),” *NPR* (11 June 2020).

sentenced to six years in prison, five for conspiring against national security and one for propaganda against the state. On 5 June 2020, President Emmanuel Macron urged Iran to release Adelkhah.

Adelkhah's research focused on social and political change in Iran during the second half of the 20th century. She had done research in Iran for several months and spent time in the holy city of Qom to examine the movement of Shia clerics between Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq. Among her books were *Revolution under the Veil: Islamic Women of Iran* and *Being Modern in Iran*, about changes in Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution.¹¹⁶

See also Argentina, Iraq, United States, Yemen.

IRAQ

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000–2019.

On 11 January 2020, the Secretary-General of the International Historians Association for Culture, Development, and Social Sciences, Ibrahim Saeed Al-Baidhani, a specialist in American and European modern history and foreign relations, was the subject of a failed assassination attempt in central Baghdad by an unknown group that stabbed him before fleeing. The attack appeared to be connected to a string of violent attacks and kidnappings targeting activists and public figures since the start of nationwide protests in October 2019.¹¹⁷

On 6 July 2020, historian Hisham al-Hashimi (1973–2020) was fatally shot by unknown gunmen

¹¹⁶ [“Fariba Adelkhah: French-Iranian Academic ‘Arrested in Iran’,” BBC News](#) (15 July 2019); Angelique Chrisafis & Jennifer Rankin, [“France Demands Access to Dual-National Academic Held in Iran,” The Guardian](#) (15 July 2019); Ehsan Abdoh-Tabrizi, personal communication (24 July 2019); [“Paris Demands Answers after Franco-Iranian Academic Arrested in Iran,” France24](#) (15 July 2019); [“France Confirms Second Academic Detained in Iran since June,” France24](#) (16 October 2019); John Irish, [“France Demands Iran Release Two of Its Citizens Held since June,” Reuters](#) (16 October 2019); Ehsan Abdoh-Tabrizi, personal communication (28 October 2019); Nasser Karimi, [“Iran Lawyer: No Proof of Charges against 2 French Citizens,” AP News](#) (28 October 2019); Allan Kaval, [“Détenue à Téhéran, l’universitaire franco-iranienne Fariba Adelkhah entame une grève de la faim,” Le Monde](#) (27 December 2019); AFP, [“France Calls for ‘Gesture’ from Iran over Detained Academics,” France24](#) (10 January 2020); [“Iran: Free Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marchal!,” Scholars at Risk](#) (11 February 2020); AFP, [“Jailed French Academic Adelkhah hospitalised in Iran: Lawyer,” France24](#) (25 February 2020); AFP, [“Two Detained French Academics Go on Trial in Iran,” France24](#) (3 March 2020); [“Iran, France to Swap Iranian Engineer, French Academic,” Reuters](#) (20 March 2020); [“Iran Releases French Academic Roland Marchal: French Official,” Reuters](#) (21 March 2020); Christophe Boisbouvier & Franck Mathevon, [“French Academic Roland Marchal Speaks Out after Nine Months of Detention in Iran,” France24](#) (8 April 2020); [“Fariba Adelkhah: French academic ‘Jailed for Six Years’ in Iran,” BBC News](#) (16 May 2020); News Wires, [“Macron Demands Iran Release French-Iranian Academic Fariba Adelkhah,” France24](#) (5 June 2020).

¹¹⁷ [“Iraq: First Periodic Report on Violations during Ongoing Popular Demonstrations,” Gulf Centre for Human Rights \(GCHR\)](#) (30 January 2020); Scholars at Risk, [“Ibrahim Saeed Al-Baidhani”](#) ([February 2020]).

outside his house in Baghdad. A frequent target of the propaganda of Iran-backed militia groups, especially Kataib Hezbollah (“Brigades of the Party of God” or Hezbollah Brigades, an Iraqi Shia paramilitary group which was part of the Popular Mobilization Forces supported by Iran), Hashimi had faced a rising tide of threats. His last work before his assassination, published on 1 July 2020, was “The Internal Dispute within the Popular Mobilization Forces.”

Hashimi was an Iraqi historian and researcher in security and strategic affairs and extremist groups; he was among the world’s leading experts on the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda in Iraq, providing details of its inner workings to the international media and advising the Iraqi government on counterterrorism. He had a historical interest in Al-Dhahabi (1274–1348), a Syrian Islamic historian and expert of *hadiths* (reports of statements or actions of the Prophet Muhammad). He had been arrested and sentenced to prison by Saddam Hussein’s regime, due to his affiliation with Salafi jihadism, only to be released from prison in 2002.¹¹⁸

During 2019, the extremist group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) continued to carry out attacks, mostly killings of community leaders and targeting security forces. Some of the crimes perpetrated by ISIS since 2014 amounted to war crimes and may have amounted to crimes against humanity and genocide. Iraq failed to make war crimes and crimes against humanity specific offenses under Iraqi law. A 2017 United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution created a UN investigative team to document serious crimes committed by ISIS in Iraq. In 2019, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) assisted Iraqi authorities in exhuming at least fourteen mass grave sites left by ISIS in Sinjar, as a first step toward gathering evidence and building cases against ISIS suspects. An Iraqi law from 2009 created commissions to compensate Iraqis affected by terrorism, military operations, and military errors. Compensation commissions in areas that fell under ISIS control have received thousands of compensation requests but had not paid out many claims since 2014.

German judicial authorities continued efforts to investigate ISIS crimes in Syria and Iraq under the international law principle of universal jurisdiction. Member states of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS continued discussions on accountability options for ISIS crimes, including the possibility of establishing a criminal tribunal in the region.¹¹⁹

See also Iran.

¹¹⁸ Mustafa Salim & Louisa Loveluck, “[Leading Iraqi Researcher Assassinated Outside His House in Baghdad](#),” *Washington Post* (6 July 2020); “[Hisham al-Hashimi](#),” *Wikipedia* (9 July 2020).

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 293–295.

IRELAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2013, 2015–2016.

ISRAEL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000–2003, 2008–2014, 2016–2019.

In May 2018, upon returning from a short stint abroad, retired history professor Roger Heacock and his wife – both Birzeit University (a Palestinian university in the occupied West Bank) employees and United States citizens – were given a two- or three-week visa only, although their work permits were valid through the end of the academic year (September 2018). They were given no reason. Heacock had been living in the West Bank since 1983, had been teaching at Birzeit University since 1985, and had his visa renewed every three months. In March 2019, the Heacocks attempted to return to the West Bank (Roger Heacock had a 30-hour teaching assignment at Bethlehem University), but they were stopped at the border with Israel and told that they failed to get the necessary permission from the Israeli military's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories.¹²⁰

In late 2018, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that *Welcome to Jerusalem*, an exhibition at the Jewish Historical Museum in Berlin, paid not sufficient attention to Israel's position, whereupon he reportedly insisted that the German government reconsider the museum's subsidy.¹²¹

In July 2019, the NGO Akevot [see also NCH Annual Report 2017, 2019] released *Silencing: DSDE's Concealment of Documents in Archives*, a report about the Director of Security of the Defense Establishment (DSDE) which exposed a Defense Ministry mechanism to conceal archival records in various archives without any authority under Israeli law. Several historians, including leading critic Ilan Pappé, said that this discovery fitted into a larger pattern of suppressing (removing, reclassifying) official documentation of the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 (the Nakba) from Israeli historians. The documents were collected from Israel State Archives and taken to locked vaults in the Ministry of Defense.¹²²

¹²⁰ Elizabeth Redden, "[Groups Protest Israeli Visa Policies for Foreign Academics Teaching in the West Bank](#)," *Inside HigherEd* (26 July 2019).

¹²¹ Toef Jaeger, "Diplomatieke Nederlandse directeur Joods Museum Berlijn," *NRC Handelsblad* (28 November 2019), 6.

¹²² Akevot, [Silencing: DSDE's Concealment of Documents in Archives](#) (July 2019); International Council on Archives Human Rights Working Group, *Newsletter* (July 2019); Ilan Pappé, "[Israel's Latest Attempt to Erase Palestine](#)," *The Electronic Intifada* (25 July 2019); "[How Israel's Erasure of Palestinian History Perpetuates](#)

See also Croatia, Yemen.

ITALY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2001, 2003, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2016–2019.

See Bulgaria, Ethiopia, United States.

IVORY COAST (Côte d’Ivoire)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004, 2006–2019.

On 15 January 2019, an International Criminal Court (ICC) trial chamber acquitted former President and historian Laurent Gbagbo and his youth minister and militia leader Charles Blé Goudé of crimes against humanity after an almost three-year trial, ending the case before the defense was even required to present evidence. In its written decision on 16 July 2019, the two-judge majority strongly criticized the weakness of the prosecution evidence. The ICC prosecutor appealed the acquittals on 16 September 2019, asking judges to declare a mistrial. At the end of 2019, Gbagbo and Blé Goudé were on conditional release, in Belgium and the Netherlands respectively.

The ICC continued its investigations into crimes committed by pro-Ouattara forces during the post-election crisis of 2010–2011 (which left thousands dead) but had yet to issue arrest warrants. President Alassane Ouattara said that no further suspects would be transferred to the ICC. In the year after President Ouattara’s August 2018 amnesty for crimes committed during the post-election violence, there was little progress in domestic investigations by the Special Investigative and Examination Cell. The cell, established in 2011, had in previous years charged more than two dozen senior military officers and political leaders with crimes against humanity or war crimes. In February 2019, the government stated that the amnesty law did not preclude Ivorian judges from investigating the worst crimes committed during the crisis, noting that it did not apply to individuals who were “members of the military and armed groups.” On 6 November 2019, Ivorian judges confirmed charges against Blé Goudé in Ivory Coast for alleged crimes during the 2010–2011 postelection crisis, including murder, rape, and torture. Other than the Blé Goudé’s case, however, the Special Cell had frozen its investigations, making

[Occupation](#)” (Greg Wilpert Interviews Ilan Pappé) *The Real News Network* (9 August 2019).

it unlikely that alleged perpetrators would ever face trial.

On April 4, three human rights groups, two Ivorian and one international, filed a Supreme Court complaint contesting Ouattara's authority to issue the amnesty, arguing that it violated Ivory Coast's international human rights treaty obligations. At the end of 2019, the case had not yet been decided. Neither the Special Cell nor the International Criminal Court (ICC) had investigated crimes committed during election-related violence in 2000 or the armed conflict in 2002–2003. A government reparations program continued to give victims of the 2002–2011 conflicts financial payments, medical treatment, and other forms of assistance.¹²³

¹²³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 151–152.

JAMAICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017–2018.

JAPAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2019.

In July 2019, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe offered the government's first official apology to families who had members who lived with leprosy and had suffered under the government's segregation policy between 1907 and 1996, after the government decided it would not appeal a district court ruling that ordered the state to pay compensation. In November 2019, Japan's House of Councilors (Upper House) approved a law that would enable compensation for affected families.¹²⁴

On 3 August 2019, organizers of the international Aichi Triennale in Nagoya closed the exhibition "After 'Freedom of Expression?'" (intended to showcase artwork that had been excluded from museums in Japan or elsewhere) that featured a statue symbolizing Korean women forced into sexual slavery during World War II. The artistic director of the triennale, Daisuke Tsuda, said that he regretted the decision, which the governor of Aichi Prefecture said was made after threats of terrorism. More than 16,000 people signed an online petition protesting the decision to halt the exhibit.¹²⁵

In September 2019, five conservative men (including Nobukatsu Fujioka, vice president of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, and Shunichi Fujiki) sued Japanese-American filmmaker Mike Dezaki ([1983–]) before the Tokyo District Court for defamation and breach of contract regarding his two-hour documentary, *Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue*, a film about the sexual slavery system during the Pacific War (1931–1945) which had been shown commercially in Japan and South Korea. The five had been interviewed for the documentary but Dezaki had concluded that they were "revisionists," using terms like "racism" and "sexism" to characterize some of their claims. In addition to defamation, the lawsuit accused Dezaki and Tofoo Films, the distributor, of breach of contract, saying the plaintiffs agreed to be interviewed only for his graduate thesis, not a commercial film. They demanded compensation and a suspension of all public screenings.

¹²⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 314.

¹²⁵ Mokoto Rich, "[The Exhibit Lauded Freedom of Expression: It Was Silenced](#)," *New York Times* (5 August 2019); "[Don't Cancel 'Exhibit of Non-Freedom of Expression Thereafter' at Aichi Triennale](#)" (petition); Kim Tong-Hyung, "[New Statues Stoke Sensitivity between South Korea, Japan](#)," *StarTribune* (28 July 2020).

Due to the affair, the film festival in Kawasaki first canceled screening of the documentary for safety reasons, but upon receiving many signs of solidarity decided in November 2019 to show it after all on the last day of the festival.¹²⁶

See also China, Korea, South, Myanmar, United States.

JORDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003–2004, 2015, 2018.

¹²⁶ Mokoto Rich, "[A Filmmaker Explored Japan's Wartime Enslavement of Women. Now He's Being Sued.](#)," *New York Times* (18 September 2019); "[Japan Festival to Show 'Comfort Women' Film after Backlash.](#)," *BBC News* (3 November 2019).

KAZAKHSTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999–2001, 2007, 2012.

See China.

KENYA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2000, 2002–2005, 2007, 2009–2018.

Despite documentation and investigations into the violence during the 2017–2018 elections, in which more than hundred were killed, the government had yet to bring charges against any security officers. There was also no progress in investigating or holding anyone to account for the violence around the 2007–2008 elections in which 1,100 people were killed. In 2015, President Uhuru Kenyatta announced plans to establish a restorative Ksh10 billion fund (approximately US\$100 million) for victims of human rights abuses, including of the 2007–2008 post-election violence, but did not set up the fund until April 2019 and had yet to make any payouts at the end of 2019. Kenya had yet to surrender three persons wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on allegations of witness tampering in cases relating to the 2007–2008 election violence. Other ICC cases against Kenyatta, Deputy President William Ruto, and former broadcaster Joshua arap Sang collapsed amid witness tampering allegations and state non-cooperation.¹²⁷

KOREA, NORTH

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2006–2007, 2009–2011, 2013–2015, 2017, 2019.

See China, Japan, United States.

¹²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 330–331.

KOREA, SOUTH

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1998–2001, 2003, 2006, 2008–2010, 2012–2013, 2016–2019.

In early July 2019, Japan announced that it would tighten curbs on exports of three materials crucial for advanced consumer electronics because trust with South Korea had been broken over the forced labor dispute [see NCH Annual Report 2019].¹²⁸

On 19 September 2019, a civil society group (probably the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance, an organization supporting former comfort women) filed a complaint against Ryu Seok-chun (aka Lew Seok-choon), a professor of sociology at Yonsei University, for allegedly spreading false information by referring to Korean women sex slaves during World War II as “prostitutes” during a university lecture. The Yonsei University Students Council and alumni, and several civil society groups and political parties either condemned Ryu’s opinion or called on him to apologize. In late September, the university suspended Ryu from teaching and a university ethics committee launched an internal investigation. Stating “harmful facts,” particularly on Japanese wartime aggressions or on North Korea, was punishable in South Korea with up to three years’ imprisonment or fines; stating “harmful falsehoods” was punishable with up to seven years’ imprisonment or fines.

In 2018 a district court in Kwangju had handed down a six-month prison sentence to a former professor of Sunchon National University [name undisclosed] for spreading false information defaming “comfort women,” saying during an April 2017 university lecture that they had gone to Japanese military brothels voluntarily. In October 2017, he was expelled from the university.¹²⁹

See also China, Japan, Korea, North.

KOSOVO

See Serbia / Kosovo.

¹²⁸ Takaya Yamaguchi & Hyunjoo Jin, “[Japan, South Korea Raise Stakes in Dispute over Forced Labor](#),” *Reuters* (9 July 2019); “[South Korea and Japan’s Feud Explained](#),” *BBC News* (23 August 2019).

¹²⁹ Aimee Chung, “[Police Probe Professor for Wartime Sex Slavery Remarks](#),” *University World News* (9 October 2019).

KUWAIT

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2000, 2004–2005, 2018.

KYRGYZSTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010–2013, 2016–2017.

LATVIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2006, 2008, 2015–2016, 2019.

LEBANON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2003, 2006–2019.

An estimated 17,000 Lebanese were kidnapped or “disappeared” during the 1975-1990 civil war. On 12 November 2018, parliament passed a landmark law creating an independent national commission to investigate the fate of the disappeared. On 29 August 2019, the Justice Ministry nominated ten individuals to serve on the committee. Their nominations had to be approved by the Cabinet.¹³⁰

During the civil protests which started in October 2019, anti-protest rioters broke into the compound where the NGO UMAM Documentation & Research (UMAM D&R) was located in Beirut. UMAM D&R held materials relating to the 1975–1990 civil war, including lists of disappeared persons, and took an overt political stand in favor of the protests. The rioters were restrained by the intervention of local people and persuaded not to damage the building and its contents. Threats were made against the UMAM founders.¹³¹

LIBERIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2001, 2004–2015, 2018.

LIBYA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003, 2005–2019.

Governance in Libya remained divided between two feuding entities: the internationally recognized and Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA); and their rivals in eastern Libya, the Interim

¹³⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 358.

¹³¹ Personal communication to Trudy Huskamp-Peterson, in *News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights* (January 2020).

Government, which was supported by the Libyan House of Representatives (HOR) and by the armed group known as the Libyan National Army (LNA). Intermittent armed conflicts in most parts of Libya since the end of the 2011 revolution that ousted Moammar Gaddafi had displaced more than 300,000 civilians.

The United Nations (UN) Security Council established in Resolution 1970 of 2011 individual targeted sanctions and an open-ended embargo on the supply of arms and military equipment to and from Libya. As of September 2019, the UN said it had begun investigating over forty cases of violations of the arms embargo.

General Khalifa Haftar launched his attack to conquer Tripoli on 4 April 2019, supported by LNA units and armed groups, including the al-Kani militia from Tarhouna, his main ally in the west, against the GNA and affiliated armed groups from western Libya. As of November 2019, the fighting, which was concentrated in the southern suburbs of Tripoli, had killed over 200 civilians, injured over 300, and displaced over 120,000. According to the UN Children Fund (UNICEF), as of June, 21 schools were being used as shelters for displaced persons in and around Tripoli. The violence had led to the suspension of school for 122,088 children.

While the extremist group Islamic State (ISIS) no longer controlled territory in Libya, its fighters carried out attacks in the eastern city of Derna and the southern city of Sebha, mostly against LNA fighters. In September 2019, the United States military said it conducted airstrikes on four different days within ten days against ISIS targets in southern Libya, killing a total of 43 alleged militants. These strikes, the first conducted by the US military in 2019, were carried out by drones.¹³²

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, a son of former President Muammar Gaddafi (1942–2011), who was sentenced to death in absentia by a Libyan court in 2015, continued to be subject to an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant for his alleged role in attacks on civilians, including peaceful demonstrators, during the country's 2011 uprising. At the end of 2019, his whereabouts remained unknown. Two other Libyans continued to be subject to ICC arrest warrants: Al-Tuhamy Khaled, former head of the Internal Security Agency under Muammar Gaddafi, for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Libya between February and August 2011, and LNA commander Mahmoud El-Werfalli for the war crime of murder related to several incidents in and around Benghazi between June 2016 and January 2018.¹³³

¹³² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 359–362.

¹³³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 363.

LITHUANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005, 2009, 2015, 2018.

MACEDONIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2006–2008, 2010–2015, 2017–2018.

MADAGASCAR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

MALAYSIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2002, 2007–2008, 2010–2011, 2016–2017, 2019.

In September 2019, the authorities detained dozens of Shiites who were commemorating Ashura, a Shia holy day, in raids around the country. Witnesses reported that the police ill-treated those detained in a raid in Johor, including threatening some detainees with a gun. They were later released.¹³⁴

MALAWI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011–2012, 2019.

See Rwanda.

MALDIVES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2009–2010, 2013.

In November 2018, the Ibrahim Mohamed Solih government established the Commission on Deaths and Disappearances to investigate past attacks on activists and journalists. Cases included the 2014 abduction of Ahmed Rilwan, who had criticized Islamist gangs and exposed government corruption, and Yameen Rasheed, a blogger and activist who was stabbed to death in April 2017. In January 2019,

¹³⁴ Amnesty International, *Human Rights in Asia-Pacific: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 34.

the commission chair, former Attorney General Husnu Al Suood, stated that extremist Islamist gangs had influence over police and criminal courts, and colluded to protect perpetrators and “fix” the outcome of trials. On 1 September 2019, the commission issued a draft report accusing a local extremist group with ties to Al-Qaeda of Rilwan’s murder. On 17 November, the commission reported that local extremists had also murdered a former member of parliament, Afrasheem Ali, in 2012. In both cases, the commission implicated police and politicians in shielding the perpetrators from prosecution. The trial of six suspects accused of killing Rasheed was delayed repeatedly.¹³⁵

After a visit to the country, the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, Karima Bennouna, reported in February 2020 that approximately 80 per cent of Maldivian historical and archaeological sites, including sites relating to the Buddhist, Hindu and Sufi past, had reportedly been destroyed for the construction of resorts and development projects. She was also concerned to hear about the targeted destruction of symbols and monuments by fundamentalists who believed that the statues represented idols prohibited in their interpretation of Islam. These incidents occurred during the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Summit in November 2011 and at the National Museum in February 2012. The National Museum’s pre-Islamic collection contained many pieces that had been smashed and, in some cases, damaged beyond repair. The perpetrators of these attacks had still not been successfully brought to justice despite some ongoing attempts to do so with regard to the events at the National Museum. The rise of fundamentalism had also led to acts of vandalism in one of the oldest cemeteries on Meedhoo in the Addu atoll.¹³⁶

MALI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011, 2013–2019.

The worsening security situation in 2019 provoked a political crisis and led to delays in the constitutional review process and parliamentary elections. The peace process envisioned to end the 2012–2013 crisis in the north made scant progress, including on disarmament and the restoration of state authority. There was scant progress on delivering justice for atrocities committed since 2012–2013, although several investigations were opened by local courts and the Specialized Judicial Unit, including into the 2019 Ogossagou massacre in which at least 150 civilians were massacred. Local

¹³⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 372–373.

¹³⁶ United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, *Visit to Maldives: Report to the Human Rights Council* (Geneva: 21 February 2020), paragraphs 35–36, 53.

groups said the government was reluctant to question or charge leaders of militias (including Dogon and Peuhl militias) credibly implicated in massacres, favoring short-term reconciliation efforts envisioned to mitigate communal tension. In contrast, the Specialized Unit was actively investigating over two hundred terrorism-related cases and in 2018, completed ten trials.

The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2014 to investigate crimes and root causes of violence since 1960, had taken over 14,000 victim and witness statements, but its credibility was weakened by the inclusion of armed group members and exclusion of victims' representatives. Public hearings were scheduled to begin in December 2019.¹³⁷

On 10 September 2019, the United Nations Independent Expert on the Human Rights Situation in Mali asked the government to promptly revise the new "law of national understanding" (July 2019) which if left unaltered may promote impunity for those responsible for serious human rights violations, help circumvent the traditional justice process, and prevent victims from exercising their rights, including the right to know the truth about the violations committed in the past.¹³⁸

MALTA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2012.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2015.

MAURITANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2002, 2009, 2011, 2017, 2019.

Mauritania abolished slavery in 1981, the world's last country to do so, and criminalized it in 2007. The Global Slavery Index, which measures forced labor and forced marriage, estimated that there are 90,000 living in "modern slavery" in Mauritania, or 2.4 percent of the population. Three special courts that

¹³⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 380.

¹³⁸ ["New Mali Law Risks Giving Rise to Impunity for Many Past Human Rights Violations, Says UN Expert"](#) (press release; 10 September 2019).

prosecuted slavery-related crimes had tried a handful of cases since their creation under a 2015 law. According to the 2019 United States State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, Mauritania investigated four cases, prosecuted one alleged trafficker, but did not convict any. Nine appeals cases remained pending at the anti-slavery court.¹³⁹

See also Senegal.

MAURITIUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2012.

MEXICO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999, 2001–2019.

Despite a court ruling in February 2019 in favor of opponents of the Bicentenario-Los Pilares dam in the Sierra de Alamos of Sonora state, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador declared three months later that federal funding would be released in order to finish the dam “as soon as possible.” The 25-storey Bicentenario-Los Pilares barrier loomed above thermal springs where for thousands of years, the Indigenous Guarijío people would gather to commune with their ancestors. The springs – and the land around them – were submerged beneath rising waters, threatening to displace the Guarijío and leave the graves of their forefathers under water.¹⁴⁰

On 29 November 2019, a group of United Nations Special Rapporteurs regretted in a joint declaration the impunity for perpetrators of crimes committed during the “dirty war” (1964–1982) and urged the authorities to clarify the fate and whereabouts of hundreds of persons who disappeared during that period.¹⁴¹

On 10 December 2019, protesters stormed the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City over a painting showing Emiliano Zapata (1879–1919), a hero of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917), naked on an

¹³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 386.

¹⁴⁰ Analay Nuño, “‘Guajirío Culture Is Dying’: Mexican Dam Poised to Displace Living and Flood Ancestors’ Graves,” *The Guardian* (4 August 2020).

¹⁴¹ “[Mexico: UN Experts Regret Impunity for Crimes of ‘Dirty War’](#)” (press release; 29 November 2019).

aroused horse in high heels and a pink hat. They said that Zapata was depicted as gay, finding it offensive and shouting “burn it, burn it.” Zapata’s grandson, Jorge Zapata González, threatened to sue the Palace of Fine Arts. The 2014 work by Fabián Cháirez, called *La Revolución* (The Revolution), was part of an exhibition commemorating the 100th anniversary of Zapata’s death. Museum officials said that they would not remove the painting.¹⁴²

Mexico has relied heavily on the military to fight drug-related violence and organized crime, leading to widespread human rights violations by military personnel. Between December 2012 and January 2018, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) received more than 4,600 complaints regarding alleged military abuses. From January to July 2019, it received 241 such complaints. In 2014, Congress reformed the Code of Military Justice to require that abuses committed by members of the military against civilians be prosecuted in civilian, not military, courts. However, the pursuit of justice for these violations remained elusive. In November 2019, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee highlighted its concern about the 2016 reforms to the Military Code of Criminal Procedures and the Code of Military Justice that provided military prosecutors and judges with ample faculties to search dwellings and intervene in private communications without a warrant.¹⁴³

Since 2006, enforced disappearances by security forces have been a widespread problem. Criminal organizations have also been responsible for many disappearances. Prosecutors and police routinely neglected to take basic investigative steps to identify those responsible for enforced disappearances, often telling the missing people’s families to investigate on their own. By January 2019, the Attorney General’s Office had opened 975 investigations into allegations of enforced disappearances and had pressed charges in only twelve cases. By September 2019, the office’s specialized unit on kidnappings reported having only one open investigation into disappearances committed by non-state agents. In November 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Committee highlighted its concern for “alarming” impunity in cases of disappearances, including those where organized crime and authorities were allegedly colluded.

The 2017 law on disappearances established a single nationwide definition for the crime and mandated the creation of entities to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of disappearances. These include the National Search Commission (CNB) created to coordinate search efforts in the field, and the National Search System (SNB), established to coordinate state institutions involved in the search for the disappeared. In August 2019, Karla Quintana, the National Search Commissioner and head of the CNB, stated that the whereabouts of 40,000 people who had gone missing remained unknown. In

¹⁴² “[Mexico’s Naked Zapata Painting Causes Protests](#),” *BBC News* (11 December 2019).

¹⁴³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 388–389.

November, the commissioner announced the creation of a new national registry for disappeared persons. Authorities noted that the official number of missing persons would likely increase after the establishment of the new registry. According to official numbers, by August 2019, 4,874 bodies had been found in 3,024 clandestine graves nationwide between 2006 and 2019. As of September 2019, the SNB was not yet fully operational.

A Standardized Protocol for the Search of Disappeared and Missing Persons, which the law mandated be in place by April 2018, had likewise failed to materialize. In May 2019, the National Search Commissioner announced the beginning of the process towards a regional search plan in northeast Mexico, and the federal government established a subsidy to provide funds to local search commissions. Victims' families repeatedly denounced serious shortcomings regarding the identification and storage of bodies. Government officials conceded that more than 26,000 bodies remain unidentified.

In August 2019, the National Search Commissioner reported the creation of a national forensic assessment to address obstacles to identifying and storing bodies. The same month, following demands by families, the government announced the creation of an Extraordinary Mechanism of Forensic Identification to identify bodies.¹⁴⁴

See also United States.

MOLDOVA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2003, 2010.

MONGOLIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2013.

MONTENEGRO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2017.

¹⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 390–392.

MOROCCO / WESTERN SAHARA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2013, 2015–2018.

The trial of Maâti Monjib ([1960]–) [see NCH Annual Report 2016], a journalist and historian of political ideas and of the Maghreb, had not ended by the end of 2019.¹⁴⁵

In October 2019, local authorities banned for “security reasons” demonstrations organized in Al Hoceima to commemorate the death of Mouhcine Fikri, a fisherman killed in the town in 2016 during a police campaign against illegal fishing.¹⁴⁶

MOZAMBIQUE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

Impunity for serious abuses by state security forces and the main opposition party Renamo persisted. In July 2019, parliament approved a broad amnesty law that exempted Renamo members from prosecution for crimes committed between 2014 and 2016. During this time, both government security and defense forces and Renamo armed men had been involved in sporadic fighting that led to serious human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances, torture, killings, and destruction of private property.¹⁴⁷

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2001, 2003, 2005–2006, 2008–2019.

On 28 December 2018, a small group of university student activists set fire to a makeshift cardboard coffin containing photos of government and university officials before a crowd of more than hundred students, university officials, and others gathered outside the main gate of Yadanabon University in

¹⁴⁵ Koen Greven, “[‘Kritisch schrijven over de Marokkaanse koning kan niet’](#)” (interview), *NRC Handelsblad* (1 June 2017); Koen Greven, “[‘Over persvrijheid praat je niet in Marokko’](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (16 January 2020); International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 121–122.

¹⁴⁶ Amnesty International, *Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 48.

¹⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 405.

Mandalay. The mock funeral was part of a planned peaceful protest for improved security measures for students following a series of student murders in Mandalay and to bring attention to students' concerns regarding the administration of the university. Plainclothes police officers quickly dispersed the crowd and arrested three students who led the demonstration, including archaeology student Myo Chit Zaw ([2000–]). Five days later, Myanmar authorities arrested four more students, including archaeology student Ye Lin Aung ([1998]–), for organizing a protest to demand the release of the three student leaders. On 13 February 2019, the Amarapura Township Court sentenced the seven students, all members of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), to three months in prison for arson and failing to provide advanced notice of the demonstration to the authorities. The students spent more than eighty days in Obo Prison before being released. Four of the students reported that prison guards beat them in detention.¹⁴⁸

Between 12 and 14 July 2019, state security forces detained and charged eight university students in Yangon who had taken part in a student march on 7 July commemorating the anniversary of a 1962 student protest in which as many as hundred students were killed. The students reportedly chanted anti-government slogans during the march. They were charged with “protesting without permission from authorities.”¹⁴⁹

On 28 August 2019, the NGO Centre for Law and Democracy (Canada) made an analysis of a draft National Records and Archives Law. It noted some weaknesses, including the fact that the proposed system of classification appeared to set rigid periods of secrecy and the fact that access to information was subject to the discretion of officials.¹⁵⁰

In September 2019, two Kachin activists, Paulu and Seng Nu Pan, were sentenced to fifteen days in prison for a street performance marking the eight-year anniversary of the end of a 17-year ceasefire in Kachin State. Paulu received an additional three months in prison for contempt of court, after presenting the presiding judge with a set of broken scales symbolizing the broken justice system.¹⁵¹

The government of Myanmar in 2019 continued to defy international calls to seriously investigate human rights violations against ethnic minorities in Shan, Kachin, Karen, and Rakhine States. A United Nations (UN)-mandated Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) found sufficient evidence to call for the

¹⁴⁸ Athan & Fortify Rights, “*Our Demands Are for All Students*”: *Violations of Students’ Rights in Mandalay, Myanmar* (Belfast, ME, Bangkok, Geneva: Fortify Rights, 2020), 10–13, 35–40, 57–58

¹⁴⁹ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Education under Attack* (New York: GCPEA, 2020), 172.

¹⁵⁰ Centre for Law and Democracy, “[Myanmar: Archives Law Fails to Respect the Right to Information](#)” (press release; 28 August 2019); Toby Mendel, “[Note on the Draft Myanmar National Records and Archives Law](#)” (August 2019).

¹⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 415.

investigation of senior military officials for crimes against humanity and genocide against ethnic Rohingya Muslims. The government had been unwilling to address the root causes of the crises, including systematic persecution and violence, statelessness, and continued military impunity. The FFM ended its mission in September 2019, handing over evidence of serious crimes committed by Myanmar's armed forces against the Rohingya, Kachin, Shan, and Karen ethnic minorities to the newly operational Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM). The UN Human Rights Council mandated the IIMM to follow up from the FFM and collect and preserve evidence of serious crimes to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings.

More than two years after the military's campaign of ethnic cleansing in northern Rakhine State, over 900,000 Rohingya refugees remained in overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, now the largest concentration of encamped refugees in the world. The FFM's final report in September 2019 found that the 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Rakhine State were still the target of a government campaign to eradicate their identity and that they were living under "threat of genocide."

The Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE), established by the Myanmar government in July 2018, operated without transparency, lending further weight to concerns about its credibility to investigate allegations of grave abuses against the Rohingya. Governments such as those of the United Kingdom and Japan continue to support the ICOE despite profound concerns about its independence, impartiality, and working methods.

In July 2019, the United States (US) imposed travel bans against key military leaders, including commander in chief General Min Aung Hlaing, for their role in the persecution of the Rohingya. His second-in-command, General Soe Win, and two other senior officials were also subjected to travel bans. In September 2019, a bill was passed by the US House of Representatives by a huge majority to strengthen sanctions against Myanmar's military leaders.

The European Parliament passed a resolution on 19 September 2019 calling for the imposition of a comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar and referral of the situation of Myanmar to the ICC. The resolution called on European Union members to support efforts aimed at holding Myanmar to account for violations of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention before the International Court of Justice.

On 11 November 2019, Gambia brought a case against Myanmar before the International Court of Justice for its atrocities against the Rohingya as violating the 1948 Genocide Convention. Gambia's filing marked the first time that a country without any direct connection to the crimes relied on its membership in the Genocide Convention to bring a case before the world court. On 13 November in Argentina, Rohingya and Latin American human rights organizations used the principle of universal jurisdiction to file a criminal case against Myanmar's top military and civilian leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, for crimes committed in Rakhine State. This avenue was available for crimes so serious that all states have an interest in addressing them.

Despite strong findings pointing to Myanmar's security forces' responsibility for atrocities against

the Rohingya, the UN Security Council remained paralyzed, making impossible the referral of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the imposition of sanctions on military and government officials implicated in grave abuses against the Rohingya. In May 2019, the report of an independent inquiry into UN involvement in Myanmar was published, finding “systemic and structural failures,” which undermined the UN response to the crisis.

On 14 November 2019, the ICC also confirmed that it would begin investigations into alleged crime against humanity, namely deportation, other inhumane acts, and persecution committed against Rohingya in Myanmar since October 2016. In 2018, the court had confirmed its jurisdiction over the crime of deportation, which was completed in Bangladesh, an ICC member country, as well as other related crimes.¹⁵²

See also Syria.

¹⁵² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 116–117, 409–410, 416–417.

NAMIBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 2006–2009, 2011, 2016–2018.

NEPAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007–2019.

The government of Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli proposed amendments in the law relating to transitional justice, but they did not meet international standards that could ensure those most responsible for the worst crimes committed during the armed conflict and the Maoist insurgency (1996–2006) come to trial. Instead, the current government, like its predecessors, continued to resist amending the transitional justice legislation to abide by a landmark 2015 Supreme Court ruling, which struck down key components of the current law, such as provisions that would allow amnesties even for perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity. A commitment to transitional justice was included in the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, but it was not until 2015 that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and a Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) were finally established. Despite being previously extended, the terms of members of both commissions expired in spring 2019.

The TRC had registered 58,052 complaints of abuses, including allegations against senior figures, while the CIEDP had registered over 3,200 cases of people who remain “disappeared” over ten years since the conflict ended. However, neither commission had completed a single investigation before the commissioners’ mandates expired. Victims’ groups objected to the stalled system for appointing new commissioners, which appeared designed to ensure that selected candidates were acceptable to political leaders and the army. They also demanded that the transitional justice law be amended before the commissions resumed work, and that they be consulted on strengthening the process, demands which the government had so far resisted. Members of the international community, including diplomatic missions in Kathmandu and United Nations special rapporteurs, continued to warn the government that if a transitional justice process that met international standards was denied within Nepal, perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity might be subject to prosecution abroad under the principle of universal jurisdiction.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 418–419, 422.

NETHERLANDS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 2004–2005, 2007–2019.

On 24 December 2019, the Council of State ruled that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the state organ responsible for the National Archives, had to decide about early access to search the Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging (CABR; Central Archives for Special Criminal Jurisdiction) for information about guards in Dutch concentration camps (Vught, Amersfoort) who were still alive [see NCH Annual Report 2019].¹⁵⁴

On 10 March 2020, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands offered apologies “for excessive violence on the part of the Dutch” during the period from Indonesia’s declaration of independence in 1945 until 1949. The Dutch government had previously apologized to Indonesia and paid some damages to survivors for violence carried out during colonial rule. In 2011, Tjeerd de Zwaan, the then Dutch ambassador, had apologized for killings in 1947 in Rawagede in the province of West Java. Two years later, de Zwaan had also apologized for killings in 1947 on the island of Sulawesi.¹⁵⁵

On 27 or 28 June 2020, the Monument Indië–Nederland (Monument [Dutch East] Indies–Netherlands) in Amsterdam was defaced with the slogan “Van Heutsz is alive!” written in red ink over it. From its erection in 1935 until 2001, the monument had been dedicated to Jo van Heutsz (1851–1924), the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies since 1904 who as a military officer had previously been responsible for the brutal “pacification” of Aceh after a protracted war (1873–1904). In 1967 and 1984 bombs exploded at the monument and in 2001 it was renamed and refurbished after Van Heutsz’s statue had been removed.¹⁵⁶

See also Ivory Coast, Rwanda.

¹⁵⁴ Karel Berkhout, “[Minister van OCW moet oordelen over openbaarheid oorlogsarchief](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (24 December 2019); Council of State, [Judgment](#) (24 December 2019).

¹⁵⁵ Stanley Widiyanto, “Dutch King Apologizes for ‘Excessive Violence’ in Colonial Indonesia,” *Reuters* (10 March 2020); Maartje Geels, “Excuses koning voor Nederlands geweld bij onafhankelijkheid Indonesië,” *NRC Handelsblad* (10 March 2020).

¹⁵⁶ Thijs Niemantsverdriet, “Monument Indië–Nederland: Gemoderniseerd monument blijft weerzin oproepen,” *NRC Handelsblad* (1 July 2020), 12–13.

NEW ZEALAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2017, 2019.

In 2018, on a morning, Maori activist Taitimu Maipi, eighty years old, painted the bronze statue of British Captain John Hamilton (1820–1864) and broke his nose with a claw hammer in a downtown square of the city of Hamilton (named after the captain). The act of vandalism, intended as a reminder of the pain that white settlers inflicted on the Indigenous Maori people, led to a police warning. The ensuing debate in a local newspaper was picked up by Hamilton-born Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern who in September 2019 announced that the national school curriculum for both primary and secondary schools would be changed within the next three years to require lessons on the 19th-century New Zealand Land Wars (1845–1872), in which British troops killed more than 2,000 Maori. The Land Wars broke out after the signing of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi between the colonial government and the Maori. Disputes over land sales grew into major campaigns to confiscate territory and reinforce British sovereignty.

Some residents complained about the damage to public property and argued that removing the statue would be akin to erasing history. Others argued that there were not many Maori statues or any kind of acknowledgment of their role. At the time of writing, New Zealand history was reportedly an elective in school, and the Land Wars were not part of the curriculum.¹⁵⁷

In September 2019, the organizers of a fleet of ships (including a replica of Captain James Cook's HMS Endeavour, which landed in the country in 1769) that would circumnavigate New Zealand in October to mark 250 years since the arrival of European settlers, cancelled a scheduled stop in the North Island village of Mangonui after complaints by Maori. "The celebration is a renewal of the colonial myth that they discovered us," said Anahera Herbert-Graves, head of the Northland Ngāti Kahu iwi, "We're looking at people who behaved like barbarians wherever they went in the Pacific." In 2018, local authorities removed a Captain Cook statute from Gisborne (or Tuuranga-nui, the place where Cook came ashore) after it was repeatedly vandalized with graffiti. A similar statute was vandalized in Australia in 2018 ahead of Australia Day. In early October, British High Commissioner Laura Clarke delivered a statement of regret to local tribes – known as iwi – over the nine Indigenous people who died during the first meeting between Cook and the Maori, stopping short of issuing an apology.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Jamie Tarabay, "[How Charlottesville's Echoes Forced New Zealand to Confront Its History](#)," *New York Times* (2 December 2019).

¹⁵⁸ Joshua Cheetham & Frances Mao, "[The Countries Grappling with Their European Heritage](#)," *BBC News* (19 September 2019); "[NZ Anniversary: New Zealand Divided over Cook's Landing](#)," *BBC News* (8 October 2019).

NICARAGUA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998.

On 15 September 2018, police detained Ricardo Baltodano, a history professor at the Polytechnic University of Nicaragua and an active member of the civil society group *Articulación de Movimientos Sociales y Sociedad Civil* (Connection of social movements with civil society). The group played a leading role in the student-led protest movement that started in April 2018, demanding democratic reforms and calling for President Daniel Ortega's resignation. Thirty police officers raided Baltodano's home shortly after he returned from a protest. He fled to his neighbor's house, but police arrested him shortly thereafter. On 18 September, police accused Baltodano of terrorism, murder, and other crimes. He was held incommunicado for the following nine months. He was released on 11 June 2019.¹⁵⁹

NIGER

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2013.

NIGERIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2006, 2008, 2010–2013, 2016–2019.

In July 2020, elected officials in Lagos state called on the state's governor to look into renaming some of the streets in order to remove the reminders of colonialism and slavery: Lugard Avenue, named after Nigeria's first Governor-General, Sir Frederick Lugard (1858–1945), responsible for amalgamating Nigeria's southern and northern protectorates in 1914; Bourdillon Road, named after the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Nigeria, Sir Bernard Bourdillon (1883–1948); and Victoria Island, named after Queen Victoria (1819–1901).¹⁶⁰

NORWAY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2012, 2016–2017.

¹⁵⁹ Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think: Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project* (New York: Scholars at Risk, 2019), 15.

¹⁶⁰ Joshua Adetunji, "[Lagos Lawmakers Propose to Decolonise Street Names](#)," *BBC News* (2 July 2020).

OMAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010, 2017, 2019.

PAKISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2009–2012, 2014, 2016, 2018–2019.

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998–2002, 2008–2010, 2013–2015, 2018.

See Israel.

PANAMA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003, 2008, 2013, 2015–2017.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2014.

PARAGUAY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2005, 2007, 2009–2010, 2012, 2015, 2019.

Writer and teacher Nelson Aguilera's appeal to the constitutional section of the Supreme Court [see NCH Annual Report 2015] was at a standstill as of December 2019. Aguilera reported that he was required to attend court and register each month. It was suggested that his sentence for plagiarism may have been influenced by the fact that Garay's brother, César Garay Zuccolillo, was a Supreme Court judge.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 37; International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 38.

PERU

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2019.

In 2018, President Martín Alberto Vizcarra Cornejo passed a decree establishing a genetic profile bank to help in the search for the disappeared.

Efforts to prosecute grave human rights abuses committed during the armed conflict (1980–2000) had mixed results. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated that almost 70,000 people died or were subject to enforced disappearance during the armed conflict. Many were victims of atrocities by the Shining Path and other insurgent groups; some were victims of human rights violations by state agents. Authorities made slow progress in prosecuting abuses committed by government forces during the conflict. As of September 2019, courts had issued rulings in 86 cases related to abuses committed during the conflict, including 44 convictions.

In December 2017, then-President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski granted former President (1990–2000) Alberto Fujimori a “humanitarian pardon,” based on claims of illness, but in October 2018, a Supreme Court judge overturned the pardon. Fujimori returned to prison in January 2019. In February, the Special Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court upheld the decision. In November 2018, Fujimori was charged for his alleged role in forced sterilizations of mostly poor and Indigenous women during his presidency. The case was pending at the end of 2019. More than 5,000 victims of forced sterilizations committed between 1995 and 2001 had registered in a government registry at the end of 2019.

Also at the end of 2019, former President (2011–2016) Ollanta Humala continued to face criminal investigations for his alleged role in atrocities and cover-up of egregious human rights violations committed at the Madre Mía military base, in the Alto Huallaga region, during the armed conflict. Courts made little progress in addressing abuses, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture, committed during the earlier administrations of Fernando Belaúnde (1980–1985) and Alan García (1985–1990).¹⁶²

PHILIPPINES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011–2015, 2019.

In November 2019, the University of the Philippines, Diliman campus, launched a new General Education subject that would cover the years of military rule during the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship

¹⁶² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 456–547.

(1972–1986). It was presented as a way of countering attempts by political allies of Marcos (1917–1989), including the incumbent Rodrigo Duterte government, to whitewash the crimes, corruption, and human rights abuses in that period. The Marcos family thought that the subject would be “one-sided” while the armed forces feared that it would be used as a recruitment tool for “Communist rebels.” President Duterte openly expressed admiration for Marcos and his government called on the public to “move on” from the horrors of dictatorial rule and even called those years the “Golden Age” of Philippine history.¹⁶³

POLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2000–2001, 2004–2005, 2007–2011, 2014–2019.

In [September] 2019, four Polish historians involved in the creation of the Museum of the Second World War [see NCH Annual Report 2017] in Gdańsk – Paweł Machcewicz, Janusz Marszałec, Rafał Wnuk, and Piotr Majewski – sued the museum’s new director, Karol Nawrocki, over the infringement of their copyright for the exhibition’s content and managed to halt other changes to the museum.

Another Gdańsk museum, the European Solidarity Center (ECS), also clashed with the historical views of the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party. The latter interpreted the roundtable talks of 1989 (negotiations between the Solidarity opposition movement and the then Communist government leading to a transition to democracy) as a “lost opportunity” for Poland which it sought to repair today, arguing that many of the leading characters highlighted at the ECS main exhibition – such as Lech Wałęsa, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bronisław Geremek and Andrzej Wajda, were responsible for abandoning Poland’s conservative national values. The PiS-led government found the ECS exhibit’s narrative blatantly one-sided. Officially launched in 2007, the ECS opened in 2014 on the grounds of the former Lenin Shipyards – the birthplace of the Solidarity movement.

Gdańsk’s mayor, Paweł Adamowicz, a strong opponent of PiS, was assassinated on 14 January 2019. Adamowicz had cultivated the idea of Gdańsk being a “free city” – a reference to the Free City of Danzig, as the city and surrounding area was known from 1920 to 1939.¹⁶⁴

As of November 2019, historian Dariusz Stola, the first director of the Polin Museum of the History of

¹⁶³ Karlo Mongaya, [“University of the Philippines Unveils New Subject on the Marcos Dictatorship to Counter Historical Revisionism,”](#) *Global Voices* (14 November 2019).

¹⁶⁴ Adam Reichardt, “Standing Up for Freedom,” *Index on Censorship* (2019 no. 1), 68–69; Estera Flieger, [“The Populist Rewriting of Polish history Is a Warning to Us All,”](#) *The Guardian* (17 September 2019); Emilie van Outeren, [“In Polen zet de regering zelfs de geschiedenis naar haar hand,”](#) *NRC Handelsblad* (11 October 2019); United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, *Visit to Poland: Report to the Human Rights Council* (21 February 2020), paragraph 25.

Polish Jews (2014–2019) [see NCH Annual Report 2019], was still awaiting the confirmation of his renewed contract, despite having been chosen in a selection process.¹⁶⁵

In [October] 2019, Filomena Leszczyńska, a niece of the late Edward Malinowski, sued historians Jan Grabowski and Barbara Engelking in the District Court of Warsaw for defamation because in their 2018 book *Dalej jest noc* (It Is Still Night) they had written that Malinowski had been “an accomplice in the deaths of several dozen Jews who were hiding in the woods [near his village during World War II] and were ousted to the Germans.” Supported by the Polish League against Defamation (Reduta Dobrego Imienia, RDI), Leszczyńska stated that the book confused two men with the same name and merged their biographies. Her uncle Edward Malinowski was, in fact, a Polish hero who, risking his life, helped Jews and hid them from the Germans. Leszczyńska demanded rectification and a financial compensation.¹⁶⁶

On 12 November 2019, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki wrote to streaming company Netflix insisting on changes to *The Devil Next Door*, a documentary about the Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk, saying that a map shown in it located the death camps within modern-day Poland’s borders rather than Third Reich borders. He added that it was important to “honor the memory and preserve the truth about World War II and the Holocaust” and accused “certain works” on Netflix of being “hugely inaccurate” and “rewriting history.” A few days later, Netflix announced that it would amend the map “to avoid any misunderstanding.”¹⁶⁷

See also Hungary, Russia.

¹⁶⁵ [“Dariusz Stola, Head of the POLIN Museum, in the Midst of a Political Storm”](#) (16 February 2019); [“Statement of Professor Dariusz Stola, Director of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews”](#) (22 February 2019); Slawomir Grunberg and Others, [“Petition for Stola”](#) (no date [February 2019]); United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, *Visit to Poland: Report to the Human Rights Council* (21 February 2020), paragraph 26; Madeline Roache & Olivia Waxman, [“World War II in Europe Ended 75 Years Ago—But the World Is Still Fighting Over Who Gets to Say What Happened,”](#) *Time* (8 May 2020).

¹⁶⁶ [“The Trial against Barbara Engelking and Jan Grabowski,”](#) *Polonia Institute* (1 November 2019); United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, *Visit to Poland: Report to the Human Rights Council* (21 February 2020), paragraphs 37, 76; Madeline Roache & Olivia Waxman, [“World War II in Europe Ended 75 Years Ago—But the World Is Still Fighting Over Who Gets to Say What Happened,”](#) *Time* (8 May 2020).

¹⁶⁷ [“Poland Reacts Angrily to Netflix Nazi Death Camp Documentary,”](#) *BBC News* (12 November 2019); [“Netflix to Amend Devil Next Door Series after Poland Complaint,”](#) *BBC News* (15 November 2019).

PORTUGAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017.

See also Angola.

QATAR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010.

ROMANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007–2008, 2010, 2019.

RUSSIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1998, 2001, 2004–2006, 2008–2019.

On 2 October 2018, historian Sergei Koltyrin ([1953]–2020), director of the District Museum in Medvezhegorsk, Karelia, since 1991 and member of Memorial, was arrested after he publicly rejected attempts to rewrite history about the mass graves of victims of the terror at Sandarmokh in Karelia and criticized the contentious excavations by the Military History Society [see Yuri Dmitriev case below]. He and another person, Yevgeny Nosov, were remanded in custody until 27 November 2018 on disputed pedophilia charges (sexual abuse of a 13-year-old in September 2018). Koltyrin had written a confession after initially denying the act, with many of his supporters believing that he had been pressured to confess. On 27 May 2019, Koltyrin was sentenced to nine year's imprisonment in a corrective labor colony after a closed-door trial without independent legal assistance. Nosov was sentenced to eleven years for allegedly acting as Koltyrin's accomplice. Koltyrin was convicted under three articles of the criminal code—one about alleged depraved actions; a second about sexual relations with respect to a person over twelve but under fourteen, carried out by a group by prior agreement; and the third (as in Dmitriev's case) an arms offense. On 2 April 2020, Koltyrin died in the Medvezhegorsk prison hospital from cancer. On 4 March 2020, a court in Medvezhegorsk had ordered his release on humanitarian grounds, noting a deterioration in his health and arguing that he should be allowed to see relatives before he died, but prosecutors had filed an appeal against the judge's decision and Koltyrin died before that appeal could be overturned. His funeral was planned for 6 April, but due to the Covid-19 crisis, the family was not allowed to attend.¹⁶⁸

In mid-March 2019, the Federal Security Service (FSB) refused to declassify the names of members of Stalin's so-called three-judge panels that issued death sentences without trials during the Great Terror

¹⁶⁸ Halya Coynash, "[Russia Arrests Second Historian of Stalin's Terror](#)," *Human Rights in Ukraine* (3 October 2018); Matthew Luxmoore, "[In Russia's North, A Gulag Grave Site, A Child-Abuse Trial, And A Battle Over Historical Truth](#)," *RFE/RL News* (24 June 2019); Jamie Dettmer, "[No End in Sight for Jailed Gulag Historian Yuri Dmitriyev](#)," *Voice of America* (4 November 2019); "[Sergei Koltyrin Has Died](#)," The Dmitriev Affair: The Life, Work And Trials of Yuri Dmitriev (2 April 2020); Matthew Luxmoore, "[Russian Historian Jailed On Disputed Pedophilia Charges Dies In Custody](#)," *RFE/RL News* (2 April 2020); Halya Coynash, "[Historian of the Soviet Terror Dies in a Russian Prison](#)," *Human Rights in Ukraine* (3 April 2020); Andrew Higgins, "[He Found One of Stalin's Mass Graves: Now He's in Jail](#)," *New York Times* (27 April 2020).

of 1937–1938 in which as many as 700,000 people were executed. Two Moscow courts approved the FSB refusal to grant historian Sergei Prudovsky [see NCH Annual Report 2015] access to files containing the names of so-called Troika judges of the NKVD (secret police at the time). Senior FSB legal adviser Yelena Zimatkina reportedly told the court that Prudovsky’s position (he called the judges “butchers”) could “harm both the living relatives of officials who signed the protocols and the objective assessment of the 1937–1938 historical period.” Meanwhile, the head archivist in Novosibirsk region barred researchers from accessing local NKVD files pending an examination for classified materials.

In an article titled “The KGB Archives: A Year After the Coup,” in the edited volume “Modern Russia: A View From Within,” historians Arseny Roginsky (1946–2017) and Nikita Okhotin (1949–) had mentioned several campaigns of archival destruction in the past, including orders in the Khrushchev era to destroy documents that “defamed honest Soviet citizens.”¹⁶⁹

Ten years after her abduction and murder, in 2019, the suspected killers of historian Natalia Estemirova (1958–2009) [see NCH Annual Reports 2010–2012, 2015] had still not been brought to justice.¹⁷⁰

On 28 October 2019, authorities in Tver ordered to take down two metal plaques commemorating the 1940 Katyn massacre. The plaques had been affixed to the facade of Tver State Medical University (which once was the regional headquarters of the secret police NKVD) in 1991. They carried inscriptions commemorating those who died in its basement: the 6,000 Poles estimated to have been transported east as prisoners of the invading Soviet forces to a camp near Ostashkov, secretly shot in Tver (Kalinin), and clandestinely buried near Mednoye. In a letter to the university’s rector Lesya Chichanovskaya, the local prosecutor’s office said that crucial documents relating to the plaques’ origins were missing from the archives and that their inscriptions were “not based on documented facts.” The Tver branch of the Communists of Russia political party had initiated the campaign to get the plaques removed. Aleksandr Guryanov, the coordinator of Memorial’s Polish research team, saw the order to remove the plaques in Tver as part of a years-long effort to rewrite the history of the Katyn massacre. In 2019, Memorial released a three-volume book listing the names and biographies of 6,287 Polish inmates of the Ostashkov camp.¹⁷¹

On 23 March 2020, the municipal court extended the pretrial detention of Yuri Dmitriev [see NCH Annual Reports 2018–2019] until 25 June 2020. Several thousand people signed a petition calling for

¹⁶⁹ “[Russian Authorities Seal Stalin-Era NKVD Archives](#),” *Moscow Times* (14 March 2019).

¹⁷⁰ Michel Forst, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, [World Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders](#) (December 2018), 427; Amnesty International, *Human Rights in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2019), 25.

¹⁷¹ Matthew Luxmoore, “[In Removal of Plaques Marking Katyn Massacre, Critics See Russian Campaign To Rewrite History](#),” *RFE/RL News* (22 December 2019).

Dmitriev to be placed under house arrest for the duration of the Covid–19 pandemic. On 7 May 2020, the Supreme Court upheld the municipal court decision. On 22 July 2020, Dmitriev was sentenced to three and a half years on the charge of sexual assault for abusing his foster daughter. He was cleared of all other charges. He was set to be released in November 2020 due to time already served. His supporters received the verdict with relief as he was given a much shorter prison term than the fifteen years requested by the prosecution.

After two Karelian historians (Yuri Kilin, a history professor at Petrozavodsk State University, and Sergei Verigin) in June 2016 proposed the controversial theory that the Sandarmokh mass graves could contain hundreds of graves of Soviet prisoners of war held in Finnish concentration camps and then killed by Finnish forces during their occupation of Karelia in World War II, excavations sponsored by the Military Historical Society (a state-funded organization created by President Putin in December 2012, headed by Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky, and of which Kilin and Verigin were members) took place at Sandarmokh in the summers of 2018 and 2019, uncovering the remains of sixteen corpses that supposedly proved that the killing at Sandarmokh was, at least in part, the work of foreigners. Anatoli Razumov, director of the Center for Recovered Names in St. Petersburg, described this as an attempt to create “hybrid history” designed to confuse and distort. Antti Kujala, a historian at the University of Helsinki, took a similar view.¹⁷²

See also China, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, United States.

¹⁷² Website about Yuri Dmitriev: <https://dmitrievaffair.com>. Petition for Yuri Dmitriev: <https://www.change.org/p/chairman-of-petrozavodsk-city-court-a-a-sudakov-public-appeal-in-defense-of-yuri-dmitriev>; Memorial petition for Yuri Dmitriev (27 March 2020): <https://www.memo.ru/en-us/memorial/departments/intermemorial/news/375> PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 89–90; PEN International, “[Fair Trial Must Be Guaranteed for Memorial Historian and Human Rights Activist](#)” (4 November 2019); Jamie Dettmer, “[No End in Sight for Jailed Gulag Historian Yuri Dmitriyev](#),” *Voice of America* (4 November 2019); Matthew Luxmoore, “[Russian Historian Jailed On Disputed Pedophilia Charges Dies In Custody](#),” *RFE/RL News* (2 April 2020); Halya Coynash, “[Historian of the Soviet Terror Dies in a Russian Prison](#),” *Human Rights in Ukraine* (3 April 2020); Andrew Higgins, “[He Found One of Stalin’s Mass Graves: Now He’s in Jail](#),” *New York Times* (27 April 2020); International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 90–91; “[Russian Court Upholds Decision To Extend Detention of Prominent Gulag Historian](#),” *RFE/RL News* (7 May 2020); PEN America, *Freedom to Write Index 2019* (Washington: PEN America, 2020), 8; “[Russian Historian Jailed in Controversial Sex Abuse Case](#),” *BBC News* (22 July 2020); PEN, “[Conviction of Russian Writer and Historian ‘Deplorable’](#)” (New York 22 July 2020); Yuri Dmitriev, “[Closing Statement before the Court](#),” *Meduza* (21 July 2020).

RWANDA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000–2017, 2019.

Twenty-five years after the 1994 genocide, a significant number of people responsible for the genocide, including former high-level government officials and other key figures, have been brought to justice. In recent years, the government had requested extradition treaties with dozens of countries in an attempt to try remaining genocide suspects in Rwanda. In 2018, it ratified treaties with Ethiopia, Malawi, and Zambia. On 28 January 2019, genocide-suspect Vincent Murekezi was extradited to Rwanda from Malawi “courtesy of a prisoner exchange agreement” where he had been convicted of fraud-related offenses. In March 2019, Dutch police arrested a Rwandan man suspected of being involved in the genocide, after an extradition request. According to a local media report published in August 2019, Rwandan judicial authorities had sent out over 1,000 extradition requests for genocide suspects. In November 2019, the trial began in a Belgian court of genocide-suspect Fabien Neretse, charged with thirteen counts of murder and accused of causing an “incalculable” number of additional deaths.¹⁷³

In May 2020 French authorities arrested Félicien Kabuga (1935–) in Asnières-sur-Seine. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda had charged him with genocide and crimes against humanity. He was allegedly the main financier of ethnic Hutu extremists. He also co-founded and funded the notorious Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), a Rwandan broadcaster that actively encouraged people to search out and kill anyone who was from the Tutsi ethnic group. Kabuga was expected to be transferred to the custody of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) at The Hague, where he will stand trial.¹⁷⁴

See also Democratic Republic of Congo, France.

¹⁷³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 485–486.

¹⁷⁴ “Félicien Kabuga: Rwanda Genocide Suspect Arrested in France,” *BBC News* (16 May 2020).

SAINT VINCENT

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2014.

SÃO TOMÉ

Previous *Annual Report* entries: —.

SAUDI ARABIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2001, 2006, 2010–2011, 2013, 2017–2019.

With few exceptions Saudi Arabia did not tolerate public worship by adherents of religions other than Islam and systematically discriminated against Muslim religious minorities, notably Twelver Shia and Ismailis, including in public education, the justice system, religious freedom, and employment. Government-affiliated religious authorities continued to disparage Shia and Sufi interpretations, versions, and understandings of Islam in public statements, documents, and school textbooks.¹⁷⁵

See also China, United States, Yemen.

SENEGAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2017–2018.

On 7 February 2020, director of the Archives of Senegal Fatoumata Cissé Diarra condemned the destruction on 4 February 2020 of a large part of the archives of the Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal (OMVS; Senegal River Basin Development Authority) in Saint-Louis during a fishermen's protest to obtain permits for Mauritanian waters.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 490.

¹⁷⁶ “[Saint-Louis : La Directrice des Archives condamne la destruction d’une partie du patrimoine documentaire de l’OMVS](#),” *APS – Agence de Presse Sénégalaise* (7 February 2020); “[Saccage des archives de l’OMVS](#),” *ASF-France – Archivistes sans frontières* (22 February 2020).

See also France.

SERBIA / KOSOVO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008–2019.

In August 2019, RECOM (a coalition of civil society organizations in the post-Yugoslav countries advocating for the establishment of an official Regional Commission to establish the facts about crimes committed in 1991–2001) said that certain state institutions, such as the Defense Ministry of Serbia and some wartime commanders possessed information on the locations of a large number of mass graves, but that this information was kept in private archives.¹⁷⁷

Progress on prosecutions for crimes committed in the 1991–1995 wars was slow and lacked political will, adequate resources and strong witness support mechanisms. The low numbers of high-ranking officials prosecuted and convicted by courts remained a problem. By August 2019, the Belgrade Appeals Court had convicted five lower ranking officials of war crimes, while the first instance court had rendered two convictions and three acquittals. At the end of 2019, 56 individuals were under investigation for war crimes, and 20 cases were pending before Serbian courts. Since the establishment of the War Crimes Prosecutor Office in 2003, 133 judgments had been issued, of which 83 were convictions and 50 acquittals. In July 2019, Chief Prosecutor Serge Brammertz at the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) expressed concern to the United Nations Security Council that in Serbia, and other former Yugoslav countries, convicted war criminals were considered heroes and glorified by politicians, with widespread denial by public officials of war crimes. He called on Serbia and neighboring countries to support the regional cooperation process to hold war criminals to account.¹⁷⁸

Kosovo

The Hague-based Specialist Chambers and Prosecutor's Office trying serious war crimes committed during the 1998–1999 Kosovo war summoned three suspects during 2019 for questioning but had issued no indictments at the end of 2019. In July 2019, the Hague Prosecutor's Office summoned Kosovo

¹⁷⁷ [“The Fate of the Persons Missing in the 1990s Wars in the Balkans: Obstruction instead of Civilisational Prospects and a Humanitarian Dimension,”](#) *Humanitarian Law Center* (29 August 2019).

¹⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 497–498.

Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj for questioning, prompting his resignation. Former senior Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters were expected to be indicted and stand trial.

The Human Rights Review Panel, an independent body set up in 2009 to review allegations of human rights violations by staff of the now-concluded European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), ruled in thirteen cases between January and September. Twenty-four cases were pending before the panel at the end of 2019. Since its existence, the panel had registered 200 cases.¹⁷⁹

On 25 April 2020, outgoing Prime Minister Albin Kurti dismissed his adviser Shkelzen Gashi for saying that individual Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters committed crimes during the 1998–1999 war, which sparked a furious backlash. Gashi, a history and politics expert, said in an interview that individuals within the KLA committed crimes against civilians, including ethnic Albanians. He added that the facts had been reported by international watchdogs and cited in trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia as well as in domestic cases prosecuted by the UN's Kosovo mission UNMIK and the EU's rule-of-law mission EULEX.

Threats to Gashi continued, leading to a group of over forty civil society organizations in Kosovo issuing a joint statement in June 2020 saying that Gashi had been “threatened and insulted in the worst way by the general public, but also by many personalities and politicians including president Hashim Thaçi,” Kushtrim Koliqi, the head of Pristina-based NGO Integra, whose work focuses on peace, dealing with the past and human rights, said that the campaign against Gashi was “a warning for any serious idea or initiative that intends to deal with the past properly.”¹⁸⁰

On 29 July 2020, the United States Ambassador to Kosovo, Philip Kosnett, expressed his concern about a draft law on Protection of the Kosovo Liberation Army War Values, because it obliged “any public official and citizen of the Republic of Kosovo ... to respect and protect the war values determined by this law in any time and circumstance within the country and abroad.” According to the draft law, the so-called values of war include the KLA itself as an armed military formation, its veterans, flag, soldier's oath, coat of arms, the General Staff, Political Directorate, staffs of operational areas and archives, as well as the Adem Jashari Memorial Complex in Prekaz and other complexes.¹⁸¹

See also Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 335–336.

¹⁸⁰ Serbeze Haxhijaj, “Kosovo PM Sacks Adviser for Criticising Wartime Guerrillas,” *Balkan Insight* (26 April 2020); Serbeze Haxhijaj, “‘Lynch Mob’ Campaign Against Kosovo Rights Activist Condemned,” *Balkan Insight* (4 June 2020).

¹⁸¹ Xhorxhina Bami, “Kosovo Pushes Ahead with Law to Protect KLA's Reputation,” *Balkan Insight* (30 July 2020).

SERBIA / MONTENEGRO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2007. *See* Montenegro and Serbia / Kosovo.

SEYCHELLES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2019.

SIERRA LEONE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2012, 2016.

SINGAPORE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2009–2011, 2015–2016, 2018–2019.

In 2019, activist Jolovan Wham [see NCH Annual Reports 2018–2019] faced charges for organizing a peaceful protest on a train and a candlelight vigil for a condemned prisoner.¹⁸²

SLOVAKIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013–2015, 2017.

See Czech Republic.

SLOVENIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2018.

¹⁸² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 501.

SOMALIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2003, 2006, 2012–2014, 2019.

SOUTH AFRICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2004, 2006–2010, 2012–2019.

On 29 May 2020, the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) in Bloemfontein ruled that the South African History Archive (SAHA) prevailed in a legal case (started in August 2014) for access to information held by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB). SAHA's request was based on a public interest provision of the 2000 Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) No. 2. The information regarded secret apartheid era records from the period 1980–1995 that could reveal corruption at the time.¹⁸³

SOUTH SUDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2015–2019.

South Sudan did not make progress in establishing the African Union (AU)–South Sudanese hybrid court envisioned in the 2018 peace agreement. It had yet to sign the memorandum of understanding with the AU or promulgate legislation to establish the court. In April 2019, the government hired Gainful Solutions Inc., a United States (US)-based lobby group, to “reverse current sanctions and further block potential sanctions” and “delay and ultimately block establishment of the hybrid court ...” Following public criticism, the terms of the contract were later revised to exclude blocking of the hybrid court.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ South African History Archive, [Press Release: Openness Prevails in Victorious Judgment in SCA Appeal](#) (30 May 2020).

¹⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 525–526.

SPAIN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999, 2002–2019.

On 3 March 2020, historian Oriol Junqueras (1969–), who as a former vice president for Catalonia (2016–2017), was serving a thirteen-year sentence for his role in the illegal secession push against Spain by the Catalan government in 2017, was allowed to leave prison to take up part-time teaching work at a university. Junqueras had been elected to the European Parliament in May 2019 while in custody. He would be allowed three furloughs a week to teach classes at the University of Vic (Universitat Central de Catalunya; Central University of Catalonia). On 19 December 2019, the European Court of Justice ruled that Junqueras had parliamentary immunity as he was an elected member of European Parliament and should have been released from prison.¹⁸⁵

See also France.

SRI LANKA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2004, 2008–2019.

In March 2019, Sri Lanka supported a consensus resolution of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, requesting that the government “implement fully” the measures set out in a 2015 resolution, and encouraging “the adoption of a time-bound implementation strategy.” This included a number of commitments to justice and accountability for violations committed during the civil war (1983–2009) between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, through an office of missing persons, an office for reparations, and by setting up an independent accountability mechanism including international investigators, prosecutors, and judges. Despite important initial developments after the 2015 resolution – including lifting severe restrictions on freedom of speech and association, holding consultations, releasing some civilian land held by the military, and re-establishing an independent government human rights commission – progress slowed considerably. Commissioners were appointed to the Office for Reparations in April 2019.

The Office on Missing Persons (OMP) began work in 2018, recording over 14,000 cases, but made little progress in discovering their whereabouts. Relatives of the forcibly disappeared protested against the OMP, questioning its authority and independence. Other commitments not met by the government

¹⁸⁵ AP, “[Jailed Catalan Independence Leader to Teach at University](#),” *ABC News* (3 March 2020); “[Oriol Junqueras](#),” *Wikipedia* (9 March 2020).

included security sector reform and repealing the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). A Counter Terrorism Act (CTA) to replace the PTA was drafted, but it also contained provisions that would facilitate abuse.

In May 2019, ethnic Tamil victims' groups marked ten years since the end of the civil war with protests and vigils against the government's failure to address conflict-related violations and provide redress. Some families of people forcibly disappeared during the war reported intimidation by soldiers. The army also disrupted Tamil memorial events. In May 2019, families of the disappeared from Ampara were at a remembrance ceremony when soldiers arrived and destroyed or removed banners and decorations, and threatened to arrest the participants.¹⁸⁶

SUDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2003, 2006–2019.

Following months of protests, President (1989–2019) Omar al-Bashir was ousted in April 2019 and replaced by a military council. Following negotiations between the military leaders and opposition groups, a transitional government led by a “sovereign council” composed of military and civilian members replaced the military council in August. The agreement to form the transitional government included setting up a national independent investigation into the events of 3 June 2019, when the paramilitary force Rapid Support Forces (RSF) attacked a protesters' sit-in in Khartoum. The agreement also called for accountability for all past abuses under the al-Bashir government. Because women played an important role in the protests, women's rights groups expressed disappointment that few women were included in a transitional government. The government had yet to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in respect of cases against al-Bashir and four other men on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur.

On 30 June 2019, the anniversary of al-Bashir's assumption of power in 1989, RSF soldiers opened fire on protesters calling for justice for the 3 June 2019 victims, as they crossed a bridge linking Khartoum and Omdurman, killing eight. Another three bodies were found the next day in Omdurman covered with banners used in protests, with blood stains on their bodies and a megaphone near where the bodies were found. The father of one victim said he believed his son died from torture.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 527–529.

¹⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 531, 534.

See also Syria.

SURINAME

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2004, 2009–2010, 2012–2013, 2015–2016, 2018.

SWAZILAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011, 2013, 2016–2018.

SWEDEN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2017–2018.

On 9 November 2019, Nazi-style Star of David stickers were plastered on the Great Synagogue and Bajit Jewish Center in Stockholm.¹⁸⁸

At the end of the autumn semester in 2019, senior lecturer Inga-Lill Aronsson at Uppsala University was reprimanded after four students complained when she used the Swedish word *neger* (negro) as an example when asked how to look up in older archives words that today were considered controversial or offensive. “You enter the word directly into [the] window,” she explained in a panel debate on classification and knowledge organization in the master program on archival science, library and information science, museum and heritage studies. This was reported as a provocation by the four students present, stating that she had no right to use this word since she was not of color and had not experienced racism. A social media storm erupted after the news leaked, with most condemning the move as “political correctness.”¹⁸⁹

See also Austria.

¹⁸⁸ “[Neo-Nazi Held in Denmark over Jewish Cemetery Attack](#),” *BBC News* (14 November 2019).

¹⁸⁹ Jan Petter Myklebust, “[Lecturer Is Told that the Word ‘Negro’ Can Never Be Used](#),” *University World News* (18 January 2020).

SWITZERLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999–2000, 2004, 2007–2009, 2014, 2016–2018.

See Brazil, Iran, Turkey.

SYRIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2002, 2004–2019.

On 23 October 2019, Hadi Al Khatib, a human-rights activist and video archivist, and Dia Kayyali, a collaborator of Witness (an NGO helping people use digital tools to document human rights violations), accused the video-channel YouTube and other companies of censorship and erasure of history because they had taken down more than 200,000 videos that included evidence of government attacks in Syria and elsewhere because they were flagged as being violent or propaganda. Since 2017, YouTube had also taken down a number of accounts that were trying to document the Syrian conflict (2011–), including pages run by groups such as the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the Violation Documentation Center, and the Aleppo Media Center. Khatib also said that activists in Sudan, Yemen, and Myanmar had similar problems with important content being removed.¹⁹⁰

Tens of thousands of persons have been detained or disappeared since 2011, the vast majority by government forces. Thousands died in Syrian government custody from torture and horrific detention conditions. In 2019, the government updated the records of hundreds thought to be disappeared or dead, but none of their families had received their loved ones' remains or additional information from authorities. A report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, published in June 2020, stated that the Syrian government was responsible for 98.9 percent of cases of torture resulting in death (out of 14,388 cases) between 2011 and June 2020.¹⁹¹

See also Iraq.

¹⁹⁰ Mathew Ingram, "[YouTube Takedowns Are Making It Hard to Document War Crimes](#)," *Columbia Journalism Review* (24 October 2019).

¹⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 541–542; Syrian Network for Human Rights, *The Ninth Annual Report on Torture in Syria on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture* (London: Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2020).

TAIWAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2001, 2008–2010, 2012, 2016–2019.

On 25 February 2019, the Transitional Justice Commission (TJC; established 2018) stated that a total of 1,056 people who were killed or unjustly convicted in the crackdown during and after the 2/28 Incident (28 February 1947; with the crackdown continuing until May 1947 and leaving an estimated 18,000 to 28,000 people dead) were expected to be exonerated. By May 2020, the total exonerated for the entire period of the White Terror (1947–1987) was 6,000, but in name only: criminal records remained because the passage of time had made retrials impracticable. On 7 July 2019, President Tsai Ing-wen said that she would press the National Security Bureau and other agencies to declassify major cases from the White Terror era (as she presided over a ceremony in Taipei marking the exoneration of another 2,006 political victims. Tsai pointed to the passage of the Political Archives Act on 4 July 2019, containing regulations for the collection, review, and declassification of documents on political cases. On 26 February 2020, the TJC launched a searchable online database of curated court files of 9,800 victims of political persecution during the White Terror era.¹⁹²

On 8 March 2020, a two-volume “Draft Report on the Truth of the 228 Incident and Transitional Justice” (1.260 pages), written by ten Taiwanese historians and scholars for the Memorial Foundation of 228 (see item above), was published during a ceremony held at the National 228 Memorial Museum. It built on the investigation report released by the Executive Yuan (1992) and a study on the accountability of perpetrators released by the foundation (2006), incorporated new, declassified archival materials, and touched upon the role of the government intelligence agencies, the deployment of government troops in quelling the uprising and the casualties including individuals from mainland China. The report was meant to be submitted to the Transitional Justice Commission (TJC).¹⁹³

See also China.

¹⁹² Chen Yu-fu, “[Declassification Slowing Justice Process: Source](#),” *Taipei Times* (31 December 2018); “[Agency to Release Third Exonerations List](#),” *Taipei Times* (27 February 2019); Jason Pan, “[Tsai Vows to Open White Terror Files](#),” *Taipei Times* (8 July 2019); Matt Yu & Matthew Mazzetta, “[TJC Unveils Online Database of Persecutions in Martial Law Period](#),” *Focus Taiwan* (26 February 2020); Violet Law, “[Taiwan Targets Truth Not Justice As It Investigates Darker Times](#),” *Al Jazeera* (26 May 2020).

¹⁹³ Emerson Lim, “[New Report on 228 Incident Published in Pursuit of Transitional Justice](#),” *Focus Taiwan* (8 March 2020).

TAJIKISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017–2018.

In July 2019, the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) visited Tajikistan. It expressed concern that the existence of mass graves and the fate of thousands of persons unaccounted for in connection with the 1992–1997 civil war remained a “virtually unaddressed issue” and that more should be done “to deal with issues related to truth, justice, reparation and memory in relation to the serious human rights violations.” The working group also pointed to a “number of recent and previous cases of Tajik individuals, reportedly political opponents who were residing abroad and were forcibly returned to Tajikistan. In some cases, these individuals have appeared in detention in Tajikistan after short periods of disappearance, while in a few instances their whereabouts are still unknown.”¹⁹⁴

TANZANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010, 2016–2017.

THAILAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1999, 2001–2002, 2005, 2007–2019.

As the chief of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) junta, Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha wielded power from 2014 to 2019 that was unhindered by oversight or accountability. While the NCPO disbanded after the new government took office in July 2019, the constitution protected junta members and anyone acting on the junta’s orders from ever being held accountable for human rights violations committed during military rule. No redress was available for victims of those human rights violations. The government still had not repealed all of the human rights violating NCPO orders.¹⁹⁵

Despite evidence showing that soldiers were responsible for most casualties during the 2010 political confrontations with the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (the “Red Shirts”) that left at least ninety dead and more than 2,000 injured, no military personnel or officials from the government

¹⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 552.

¹⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 559.

of former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva (2008–2011) had been charged for killing or wounding demonstrators or bystanders.¹⁹⁶

TIMOR-LESTE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003–2013, 2015–2018.

TOGO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002, 2008–2013, 2017–2018.

TRINIDAD and TOBAGO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

TUNISIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2011–2019.

In 2013, Tunisia adopted legislation to address crimes of the past, which included the creation of an Instance Vérité et Dignité (IVD; Truth and Dignity Commission). The commission was mandated to investigate all serious human rights violations from 1955 to 2013 and was designed to provide accountability for torture, forced disappearances, and other past abuses. During the years it operated, from 2013 to 2018, the commission received more than 62,000 complaints and held confidential hearings for more than 50,000 of these. On 26 March 2019, the commission published its five-volume 2000-page report analyzing and exposing the senior officials and state institutions responsible for systematic human rights abuses over five decades. It outlined the role of former Presidents Habib Bourguiba (1957–1987) and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (1987–2011) and others in torture, arbitrary detention, and numerous other abuses. The commission documented abuses not only against political opponents but against their families, including sexual assaults of the wives and daughters of opposition

¹⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 563.

members.

The commission named former Prime Minister (2011) and President (2004–2019) Caid Essebsi (1926–2019) as complicit in torture when serving as the interior minister for Bourguiba (1965–1969). The law also tasked the commission with referring cases of torture, forced disappearance, and other serious abuses to thirteen specialized chambers created within ordinary courts. The commission's recommendations included reform of the judicial and security sectors, the creation of an independent body to monitor the work of the security forces, the harmonization of laws with the Constitution, measures to establish accountability for crimes committed and other steps to strengthen the rule of law. The government failed to publish the report in the official gazette or present a plan to implement the IVD's recommendations, as required by Article 70 of the Transitional Justice Law. The parliament had yet to establish a specialized parliamentary committee to oversee implementation of the recommendations.

By the end of the commission's mandate, it had transferred to the specialized courts 173 cases of human rights violations, including cases of torture, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary detentions. The specialized courts opened at least 78 trials around the country, involving 541 victims and 687 accused. In at least thirteen trials, the defendants did not attend; in sixteen others, only their lawyers appeared. The largest trade union for the security forces asked its members not to appear in court, saying that the trials were vindictive. The Ministry of Interior appeared reluctant to implement court subpoenas of indicted suspects to the hearings. The first case before a specialized court involved the forced disappearance of Kamel Matmati, an Islamist activist whom the police arrested in 1991. It opened in Gabes on 29 March 2018, and was continuing at the end of 2019.¹⁹⁷

TURKEY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2000–2019.

On 17 April 1995, writer and journalist Ahmet Altan (1950–) [see NCH Annual Report 1997] was dismissed from *Milliyet*, charged with “inciting racial hatred,” and given a twenty-month suspended sentence because in a satirical column entitled “Atakürt,” he had suggested that the Turkish independence war after World War I (1920–1922) had been led by Kurds rather than Turks and that the country was called Kurdey (“Kürdiye”). He also wrote that Atatürk was a dictator. Over the rest of his journalistic career, including as chief editor of the daily *Taraf* (2007–2012), he faced continual charges

¹⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 569; Amnesty International, *Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 65–66.

on grounds ranging from raising the Armenian genocide to insulting the president. In September 2008, for example, when he published an article titled “Oh, My Brother” dedicated to the victims of the Armenian genocide, he was charged under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code for “denigrating Turkishness.” The claim was initiated by the far-right Great Union Party. Altan is the author of historical novels spanning the half-century before the rise of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He was sentenced to life imprisonment after the failed July 2016 coup (in February 2018) on sedition charges, later changed into terrorism charges, but in early July 2019, his life sentence was overturned.¹⁹⁸

On 20 December 2017, Çayan Demirel (1977–) and Ertuğrul Mavioğlu (1961–) were charged with disseminating propaganda in favor of a terrorist organization (Article 7/2 of Law no. 3713 on Counter-Terrorism) for their documentary film *Bakur* (“North” in Kurdish). The documentary explored the conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), showed the daily lives of PKK guerrillas in three camps in southeast Turkey in 2013, and focused on the withdrawal of the PKK from Turkey during the peace process that started in 2013 and collapsed in July 2015. The film was scheduled to premiere at the Istanbul Film Festival in May 2015, but the screening was canceled by the Turkish Ministry of Culture, on the grounds that the film did not have the required registration certificate. As Demirel gave his deposition in Istanbul on 28 December 2017, dozens of filmmakers came in solidarity to protest outside the courthouse, holding signs that read “Sinema Yargılanamaz! Keep Films Out of Court!” The first hearing in their case took place on 18 January 2018. The Batman 2nd High Criminal Court sentenced both directors to four years and six months in prison *in absentia* on 18 July 2019. Demirel and Mavioğlu remained free pending appeal but were subject to a travel ban.

Demirel had started working on historical documentaries in 2000, after he had received his degree from the Faculty of Economics. In 2006, he had completed his first ever documentary called 38, which reflected on the incidents of the Dersim Massacre (1936–1938) [see NCH Annual Reports 1998, 2002, 2007–2008, 2012, 2015]. He then founded Surela Film Production in 2009 and directed his award-winning documentary *Prison Number 5: 1980–84* that same year. Mavioğlu worked as a journalist for nearly thirty years at multiple newspapers and television stations. He spent eight years in prison during the period 1980–1991, following the September 1980 military coup. He was also granted two awards from the Progressive Journalists Association.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ H. Cemal, “Freedom of Expression in Turkey,” *Free Speech Debate* (April 2012); Human Rights Watch, *Ifex Alert* (7 July 1997); Ahmet Altan, “Knowing that They Are there, Helps Me Keep Smiling in My Cell,” *Index on Censorship* (2019 no. 2), 84–88; Alison Flood, “Tackling News Stories that Journalists Aren’t Writing,” *Index on Censorship* (2019 no. 3), 59; “[Ahmet Altan](#),” *Wikipedia* (28 September 2019); Index on Censorship and Others, [Statement](#) (4 November 2019); PEN America, *Freedom to Write Index 2019* (Washington: PEN America, 2020), 12, 16.

¹⁹⁹ International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 99–100.

In March 2018, parliament speaker İsmail Kahraman allegedly barred female actresses from performing at the Grand National Assembly, in which they were commemorating the 1915 Gallipoli battle. This decision was reportedly made after an emergency meeting held just an hour before the performance was due to start.²⁰⁰

On 29 May 2018, Evren Altinkas arrived at the University of Guelph, Canada, to start working as a visiting history professor. He had had a history of dissidence since 2000. While a teaching assistant in history at the public Dokuz Eylül University in Izmir (1994–2012), Altinkas went to King’s College, London (1999–2000) to get his masters in Mediterranean studies. His master’s thesis on the Kurdish people in Turkey was, however, not recognized in Turkey. Later, he began teaching political science classes at the university, with a focus on democracies around the world. Pro-government students allegedly reported him to his superiors. He was officially warned several times until he left the university in 2012, moving on to the private Avrasya University in Trabzon (2012–2014). During the 2013 protests, Altinkas spread his views on the social media: he criticized the ongoing attacks on academic freedom, increasing nationalism and religious authoritarianism, and discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities. As a result, the university asked him to leave. Altinkas then went to the public Artvin Coruh University, Artvin (2013–2014), where he was eventually forced out after rector told him that he and his wife were under investigation. Following a short stint at Girne American University, in Cyprus (2014–2015), Altinkas was unemployed until he left Turkey for Canada. At Guelph, he taught courses on politics and the history of the Middle East and did research into Ottoman and Turkish history.²⁰¹

Büşra Ersanlı (1950–) [see NCH Annual Reports 2012–2013, 2018] – emeritus professor of political science at Marmara University specialized in historical subjects – was acquitted after the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled in July 2019 that the rights of ten academics who had signed the 2016 petition of the Initiative of Academics for Peace [see NCH Annual Reports 2017–2019] had been violated.²⁰²

On 25 March 2019, the United Nations (UN) Mandates of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of nonrecurrence wrote a six-page Letter of Allegations to the Turkish government saying that they had “received alleging violations attributable to Turkey in relation to the

²⁰⁰ Freemuse, *The State of Artistic Freedom 2019: Whose Narratives Count?* (Copenhagen: Freemuse, 2019), 59.

²⁰¹ Graeme McNaughton, “[‘Never Come Back’: Turkish Professor Finds New Home in Guelph](#),” *Guelph Mercury* (28 November 2018); Scholars at Risk, *Email about Evren Altinkas* (23 December 2019).

²⁰² PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 101; International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 101.

tragic events that affected the Armenian minority from 1915 to 1923, and their consequences for the population concerned.” On 17 May 2019, Turkish Ambassador Sadik Arslan (Turkey’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva) responded that the UN letter “will be left unanswered by the Government of Turkey,” further stating that “my authorities were rather baffled by the communication” which he described as “ill-intended and politically motivated.”²⁰³

In June 2019, authorities detained Baki Tezcan, an associate professor of history specialized in the early modern Ottoman period at the University of California, Davis, upon his arrival in Istanbul with his wife and children. A signatory of the 2016 peace petition [see item above], Tezcan had been indicted for it in May 2018. An Istanbul court overseeing the case had requested that the United States Department of Justice turn over Tezcan after he missed the first hearing in his trial, but the latter had responded in January 2019 that his signing the petition was protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The court then issued an arrest warrant which was executed in June 2019 when Tezcan returned to Turkey. Tezcan was quickly released from custody, but his legal status remained unclear in the wake of the July 2019 Constitutional Court decision (see item below). His next hearing was scheduled for October 2019.²⁰⁴

In July 2019, Ayşe Gül Altınay, professor of cultural anthropology and director of the Gender and Women’s Studies Center at Sabancı University in Istanbul [see NCH Annual Report 2019], was reportedly free to travel abroad.²⁰⁵

On 26 July 2019, the Constitutional Court ruled with a one-vote majority that ten educators who had signed the 2016 petition of the Initiative of Academics for Peace (entitled “We Will Not Be a Party to This Crime!”) (see item above) had been tried in violation of their rights. The decisions of the Constitutional Court are binding on inferior courts. According to pro-state media, however, 1,071 academics signed a manifesto condemning the Constitutional Court judgment. The number “1071” was also a reference to the Malazgirt (Manzikert) battle in 1071 (in which the Seljuks defeated the Byzantine Empire).²⁰⁶

²⁰³ United Nations Mandates of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of nonrecurrence, [Letter to Turkish Government](#) (Reference AL TUR 1/2019) (25 March 2019); Harut Sassounian, “[UN Questions Turkey on the Armenian Genocide in Stunning Letter](#),” *Armenian Weekly* (25 June 2019),

²⁰⁴ Robert Quinn, “[Fighting to Protect—and Define—Academic Freedom](#),” American Association of University Professors (no date [September 2019]); Rebecca Bihn-Wallace, “[UC Davis Professor Arrested in Turkey Recalls Experiences](#),” *The Californian Aggie* (4 October 2019).

²⁰⁵ Brennan Cusack, “[Turkey’s Crackdown on Academics Represses History Once Again](#),” *New York Times* (8 July 2019); Ann Rigney, personal communication (16 July 2019).

²⁰⁶ Sophia Paley, “[Cases against Academics for Peace Have Become Emblematic of the Attacks on Freedom of Expression in Turkey](#),” *Index on Censorship* (28 August 2019).

See also Hungary.

TURKMENISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2004, 2009, 2011–2012, 2015–2019.

UGANDA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2017, 2019.

In 2019, the case of Dominic Ongwen, alleged former Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) commander charged with seventy counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, continued at the International Criminal Court (ICC). In October 2019, the court announced that closing statements in this case would commence on 10 March 2020. Two ICC warrants remained outstanding for the arrest of LRA leaders Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti, who was presumed dead. The International Crimes Division (ICD) of the High Court continued the trial of alleged former LRA commander Thomas Kwoyelo – in custody since his capture in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2009 – on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The trial had numerous delays. In September 2019, the ICD confirmed charges of terrorism, murder, attempted murder, aggravated robbery against Jamil Mukulu, alleged leader of the rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and 37 others.²⁰⁷

UKRAINE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2009–2011, 2014–2019.

In October 2019, Alex Krakovsky filed suit against the Ministry of Justice after it issued an order in June 2018 barring the copying of documents larger than letter-size as well as files thicker than 1.5 inches, old printed books, and listings of documents. The court in Kyiv ruled partially in Krakovsky’s favor, saying that people have the right to copy documents with cameras – with the caveat, however, that people would be required to fill out a form requesting specific documents. Since 2011, Krakovsky had sued more than a dozen archives that obstructed access to their records in some form; he won all the cases. Krakovsky planned to appeal the ministry but after hearing that the case would be tied up in court for one to two more years, he decided against it.²⁰⁸

See also United States.

²⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 594–595.

²⁰⁸ Greg Stricharchuk, “[Access and Digitization on Trial: Alex Krakovsky’s Archival Battle in Ukraine](#),” *H-Ukraine* (18 December 2019).

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2016.

See Yemen.

UNITED KINGDOM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998–2001, 2003–2004, 2006–2019.

In July 2019, Elizabeth Ford, an American music historian specialized in eighteenth-century Scottish music, received a letter from the Home Office, saying that her leave to remain, granted a year before, was erroneous, and that she had to leave the United Kingdom within two weeks. Ford had been working in the country for eight years, first at Glasgow University and then as a research fellow at Edinburgh University and was due to begin a research fellowship at Oxford University. Researchers from abroad criticized the British visa system as “hostile, cumbersome and punitively expensive.” Ford herself called it “arcane and arbitrary.”²⁰⁹

On 23 January 2020, Selina Todd, a historian at St Hilda’s College, University of Oxford, specialized in the modern history of women and the working class and associated with campaign group Women’s Place UK (WPUK), was given two security guards (male staff members) to accompany her to lectures after she received threats from transgender rights activists on social media and email networks. Accusing her of being “transphobe,” the activists reportedly believed that Todd’s views on the need to protect women’s spaces, such as single-sex refuges, from people who self-identify as women but are anatomically male were unacceptable. In early March 2020, Todd was disinvited (“no-platformed”) to address the Oxford International Women’s Festival (29 February – 14 March 2020).²¹⁰

On 7 June 2020, anti-racist protesters tore down the statue of slave trader Edward Colston (1636–1721) in Bristol and threw it into the harbor. A member of the Royal African Company, which transported about 80,000 men, women and children from Africa to the Americas, Colson bequeathed his wealth to

²⁰⁹ Anna Fazackerley, [“US Academic Given Two Weeks to Leave UK after Eight Years,”](#) *The Guardian* (17 September 2019).

²¹⁰ [“Oxford Professor Given Protection Following Threats from Trans Activists,”](#) *BBC News* (25 January 2020); Camilla Turner & Ewan Somerville, [“Oxford University Professor Given Security Guards for Lectures after Threats from Transgender Activists,”](#) *Telegraph* (23 January 2020); [“Oxford University Professor Condemns Exclusion from Event,”](#) *BBC News* (4 March 2020).

charities. The statue was retrieved on 11 June 2020 and would become a museum exhibit. Also on 7 June 2020, the statue of Winston Churchill (1874–1965) on Parliament Square in London was sprayed with graffiti declaring him a “racist” and it had a Black Lives Matter sign attached. On 10 June 2020, a monument erected in the Scottish capital Edinburgh in 1823 commemorating Henry Dundas (1742–1811), a politician who delayed the abolition of slavery, was spray-painted with the words “George Floyd” and “BLM” (for Black Lives Matters). Dundas had put forward an amendment to a bill which would have abolished slavery in 1792, opting for a more “gradual” approach. This allowed the practice to continue for fifteen years longer than it otherwise would have done.

On 11 June 2020, a statue of Robert Baden-Powell (1857–1941), founder of the Scouts movement, was to be removed in Poole amid fears that it was on a “target list for attack.” Baden-Powell had been criticized by campaigners who accused him of racism, homophobia and support for Adolf Hitler and fascism. A statue of slaveholder Robert Milligan (1746–1809) was also removed from outside the Museum of London Docklands, while in Oxford thousands of people called for the removal of a statue of British imperialist Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902). On 17 June 2020, the governors of Oriel College, Oxford University, voted to remove the controversial Rhodes statue; they would also launch an “independent commission of inquiry” into his legacy, which also included the Rhodes scholarships.²¹¹

The Ivor Bell trial [see NCH Annual Reports 2012–2017, 2019] took place in mid-October 2019. On 16 October, Justice John O’Hara ruled that the Boston tapes that implicated Ivor Bell and Gerry Adams in the McConville murder were inadmissible. Apparently concurring with witness Kevin O’Neill, a professor of history from Boston College, the judge also said that Boston tapes interviewer Anthony McIntyre had an agenda and was not a “neutral interviewer” in respect of Adams, the peace process and the 1998 Belfast Agreement.²¹²

See also Australia, China, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Turkey, United States, Yemen.

²¹¹ [“George Floyd Death: Protesters Tear Down Slave Trader Statue,”](#) *BBC News* (7 June 2020); [“Robert Baden-Powell Statue To Be Removed in Poole,”](#) *BBC News* (11 June 2020); [“George Floyd Protests: The Statues Being Defaced,”](#) *BBC News* (10 June 2020); [“Churchill Statue ‘May Have To Be Put in Museum’, Says Granddaughter,”](#) *BBC News* (13 June 2020); Sean Coughlan, [“Oxford College Wants to Remove Rhodes Statue,”](#) *BBC News* (18 June 2020).

²¹² Ryan McChrystal, “Failing to Face Up to the Past,” *Index on Censorship* (2019 no. 2), 49; Gerry Moriarty, [“Jean McConville’s Murder, the Boston tapes, Gerry Adams and the Ivor Bell Trial,”](#) *Irish Times* (17 October 2019).

UNITED STATES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2019.

On 29 December 1997, a group called Friends of Acoma – people protesting the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Juan de Oñate (1550–1626; founder and governor of the colony of New Mexico in 1598) in New Mexico – cut off the right foot of a 1991 statue of Oñate in Alcalde, New Mexico, with an electric saw. In 1599, Oñate had killed 800 Indigenous people in Acoma Pueblo, enslaved the remaining 500, and amputated the right foot of at least 24 of the Acoma men. For these crimes, he was sentenced in 1606 and he had to resign in 1610. The protesters left a note that read: “We took the liberty of removing Oñate’s right foot on behalf of our brothers and sisters of Acoma Pueblo.” On 15 June 2020, authorities in Alcalde removed the statue. Later that day, gunfire broke out during a protest in Albuquerque to demand the removal of a 2004 statue of Oñate outside the Albuquerque museum. One victim was hospitalized, and the police took into custody several members of a right-wing militia called the New Mexico Civil Guard and made up of armed white gunmen. Hours later, the mayor announced that the statue would be removed until “the appropriate civic institutions” could determine how to proceed.²¹³

Recognition grew in 2019 that current racial disparities in policing, criminal justice, and other aspects of American life could not be understood without reference to slavery and its continuing impact on society. The United States (US) Congress held an historic hearing on Juneteenth – a day commemorating the 19 June 1865 announcement of the abolition of slavery in the US – to discuss possible ways to account for these harms, including reparations and more investment in black communities to address continued inequality and discrimination.²¹⁴

In August 2019, a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a federal lawsuit against Hanover County and its school board in the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia over two schools that commemorated Confederate leaders (Lee-Davis High School and Stonewall Jackson Middle School). It argued that both schools violated the First and Fourteenth Amendment rights of African American students by forcing them “to champion a legacy of segregation and oppression in order to participate in school activities.” According to the lawsuit, as of 2018, 31 Virginia schools were named for Confederate figures; 18 of them had been removed by the

²¹³ Simon Romero, “[Statue’s Stolen Foot Reflects Divisions Over Symbols of Conquest](#),” *New York Times* (30 September 2017); Simon Romero, “[Man Is Shot at Protest Over Statue of New Mexico’s Conquistador](#),” *New York Times* (15 June 2020); Sarah Mervosh, Simon Romero & Lucy Tompkins, “[Reconsidering the Past, One Statue at a Time](#),” *New York Times* (16 June 2020).

²¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 606.

end of 2018. Hanover school board members, however, had voted 5 to 2 to keep the Confederate school names after some residents had petitioned for change. Earlier in 2019, the county board of supervisors had declined to reappoint one of the two school board members who voted to change the names.²¹⁵

On 1 October 2019, the National Security Archive (NSA) together with Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) and the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) filed a motion in the District Court for the District of Columbia for a temporary restraining order to compel the White House to create and preserve records of foreign leader phone calls and meetings with the president, and records of White House practices and policies. News reports indicated that no such records existed for at least five meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, one meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and a meeting with Saudi Arabian Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. The motion cited recent whistleblower revelations that the White House had restricted access to presidential transcripts of calls and meetings such as the controversial 25 July 2019 call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and that such records were placed into a “codeword-level system solely for the purpose of protecting politically sensitive – rather than national security sensitive – information.” On 4 November 2019, the three organizations sued Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the State Department for violating the Federal Records Act by failing to create and preserve essential State Department records. On 10 February 2020, the judge dismissed the suit on the grounds that courts lacked the authority to review the chief executive’s “day-to-day compliance” with the Presidential Records Act. She added that the ruling “should not be interpreted to endorse” the White House’s records-keeping practices, “nor does it include any finding that the Executive Office is in compliance with its obligations.” The NSA, CREW, and SHAFR appealed the ruling.²¹⁶

On 27 November 2019, the University of North Carolina (UNC) Board of Governors agreed to settle a lawsuit filed by the North Carolina division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV; founded 1896) over a Confederate monument (nicknamed Silent Sam) that had stood on the UNC campus in Chapel Hill since 1913 before demonstrators toppled it in August 2018 [see NCH Annual Report 2019]. UNC agreed to pay SCV 2.5 million dollars to take custody of the monument. The decision was widely criticized.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Gregory Schneider, “[NAACP Challenges Legality of Confederate Names on Virginia Schools](#),” *Washington Post* (16 August 2019).

²¹⁶ National Security Archive, “[Archive, CREW, Historians Ask Federal Judge to Preserve Head of State Records](#)” (Washington, 1 and 2 October 2019); National Security Archive, “[Archive, CREW, Historians Sue Pompeo, State Department over Failure to Create Records](#)” (Washington 5 November 2019); National Security Archive, “[Court Rejects Archive Lawsuit over Trump’s Abuse of Records Law](#)” (Washington 11 February 2020).

²¹⁷ David Blight, Fitzhugh Brundage, and Kevin Levin, “[A University’s Betrayal of Historical Truth](#),” *The Atlantic* (9 December 2019); Scott Jaschik, “[UNC Will Give Away Confederate Statue](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (2 December 2019); for the legal case, see: <http://www.concernedhistorians.org/le/646.pdf>;

On [9] December 2019, after a three-year Freedom of information Act (FOIA) legal battle and two federal lawsuits, the *Washington Post* won the release of a set of confidential government documents revealing that senior United States officials failed to tell the truth about the war in Afghanistan throughout the 18-year campaign (2001–2019), making rosy pronouncements they knew to be false and hiding unmistakable evidence that the war had become unwinnable. As part of a federal project called “Lessons Learned” and examining American policy failures in Afghanistan, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction ([SIGAR](#); created by Congress in 2008 to investigate waste and fraud in the war) interviewed 428 people who had a direct role in the conflict, from generals and diplomats to aid workers and Afghan officials. The documents included more than 2,000 pages of previously unpublished notes of these interviews. They were soon nicknamed the “Afghanistan Papers,” an allusion to the “Pentagon Papers,” a secret history of the American involvement in Vietnam revealed in 1971. In addition, the *Washington Post* also obtained hundreds of confidential memos (known as “snowflakes”) by former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld from the National Security Archive.²¹⁸

In December 2019, Louisiana Tech University briefly removed instructor of history Michael Savage from teaching about race and other topics before reinstating him. Savage had asked students in a course to reflect on what it was like to wake up every day in the United States as someone of their respective racial group. The follow-up discussion included a discussion of colonization. A student’s parent allegedly complained to the administration about an intimidating learning environment, and Savage was removed as instructor for two sections of a world history course. The history department staff supported Savage.²¹⁹

On 4 January 2020, United States (US) President Donald Trump made a threat via Twitter (reiterated to reporters on 5 January) that his forces had “targeted 52 Iranian sites” some of which were “important to Iran & the Iranian culture” in case Iran would attack Americans or US assets in retaliation for the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani on 3 January 2020. The 52 targets represented the 52 Americans who were held hostage in Iran for 444 days after being seized at the US embassy in Tehran in November 1979.

Academic researchers of Iranian history, archaeology, art and culture, based in national museums and universities across the world, deplored the threat, stating that Trump’s statement was contrary to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954)

<http://www.concernedhistorians.org/le/647.pdf>;
<http://www.concernedhistorians.org/le/649.pdf>.

<http://www.concernedhistorians.org/le/648.pdf>;

²¹⁸ Craig Whitlock, Leslie Shapiro & Armand Emamdjomeh, “[The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War](#),” *Washington Post* (9 December 2019); Gillian Brockell, “[‘Modern-day Pentagon Papers’: Comparing the Afghanistan Papers to Blockbuster Vietnam War Study](#),” *Washington Post* (9 December 2019).

²¹⁹ Colleen Flaherty, “[Professor Removed Then Reinstated Over Discussion on Race](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (17 December 2019).

and the Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Protocols (1977), and that the International Criminal Court considered the destruction of cultural heritage to be a war crime. The ruins of the ancient Persian capital of Persepolis (in modern-day southwest Iran) were reportedly on the target list. Other sites threatened were 24 sites of pre-Islamic and Islamic heritage that were designated by UNESCO as being of universal significance. These were imperial monuments from the Bronze Age to the Elamite, Achaemenid, Sasanian, Ilkhanid, Ziyarid, Safavid and Qajar eras.

In March 2017 – only weeks after Trump’s inauguration – the United Nations Security Council, with the United States as a permanent member – had unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the “unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, inter alia destruction of religious sites and artefacts” in armed conflicts.²²⁰

On 18 January 2020, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) apologized for substantially altering a photo of the January 2017 Women’s March in Washington by Getty Images photographer Mario Tama in at least four places. The photo would be used as a “promotional graphic” for an exhibition on the 19th Amendment (voting rights for women and the suffragist movement), entitled “Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote.” The changes included removing the president’s name from signs that read “God Hates Trump” and “Trump & GOP – Hands Off Women,” and blurring out the word “vagina.” NARA archivist David Ferriero said in a statement that the decision to blur the signs was driven by a desire “to avoid accusations of partisanship or complaints that we displayed inappropriate language in a family-friendly Federal museum.” The Society of American Archivists called it a violation of its Code of Ethics. The American Historical Association called the alteration to “sanitize or whitewash history” a “lapse in professional ethics” but applauded NARA’s admission of the mistake and apology. The photo was removed and restored, unretouched, on 22 January 2020.²²¹

In February 2020, Native American burial sites in Arizona were blown up by construction crews building the US-Mexico border wall. Authorities confirmed that “controlled blasting” had begun in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, a UNESCO-recognized natural reserve which included the

²²⁰ “[Condemn Trump’s Threat to Iran’s Cultural Heritage](#),” *The Guardian* (7 January 2020); Rick Noack, “[The Disturbing History behind Trump’s Threat to Target Iranian Cultural Sites](#),” *Washington Post* (6 January 2020); “[Defenders of History Take Aim at Trump’s Threat to Strike Iran’s Cultural Sites](#),” *New York Times* (5 January 2020); Shadi Khan Saif, “[Academics Decry Trump’s Threat to Hit Cultural Sites](#),” *University World News* (25 January 2020).

²²¹ “[National Archives Sorry for Censoring 2017 Women’s March Signs](#),” *BBC News* (19 January 2020); American Historical Association, [Letter to National Archives and Records Administration Regarding Alteration of Photograph](#) (19 January 2020); “[SAA Statement: NARA Exhibit on 2017 Women’s March in Washington, DC](#)” (19 January 2020), Jennifer Tucker & Peter Rutland, “[How the National Archives’ Notorious Alteration of a Women’s March Photo Is Part of a Long American Tradition](#),” *Artnet* (24 January 2020).

sacred burial site Monument Hill. Democrat congressman Raul Grijalva called the destruction “sacrilegious” and said that the government, in waiving the Native American Graves Protection Act, failed to consult the Tohono O’odham Nation. Crews reportedly also destroyed ancient saguaro cacti, which the O’odham saw “as the embodiment of their ancestors.”²²²

In February 2020, German professor and expert on far-right politics Hajo Funke was invited to teach classes on right-wing populism and the far right and on political and historical memory in the spring semester at the University of Virginia, but his visa was delayed by United States immigration authorities without any reason. The classes were being taught via videoconferencing while Funke continued to wait for his visa. It is believed that his 2014 travel to Iran to visit his wife’s family was the most likely reason for the delay.²²³

In mid-February 2020, Gayle Colston Barge, vice president of Bellevue College, Seattle, acknowledged that she had removed a reference in the description accompanying the campus mural “Never Again Is Now,” an art installation depicting two Japanese American children in a World War II incarceration camp and created by Seattle artist Erin Shigaki. The project commemorated the day President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (19 February 1942), authorizing the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II. One sentence in a paragraph about Japanese immigrants and their connection to Bellevue was whited out: “After decades of anti-Japanese agitation, led by Eastside businessman Miller Freeman and others, the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans included the 60 families (300 individuals) who farmed Bellevue.” On 2 March 2020, the trustees of the college announced that Barge and college president Jerry Weber were dismissed. Barge apologized but did not explain why she ordered the removal. Board of trustees Chair Rich Fukutaki’s family members had been among those imprisoned during World War II.²²⁴

On 20 March 2020, Tamara Lanier, a resident from Norwich, Connecticut, sued Harvard University for the wrongful seizure, possession and expropriation of old photographs of two enslaved people of which she believed to be a descendant. In 1850, Harvard professor Louis Agassiz had commissioned daguerreotypes of an African-born enslaved man in South Carolina named Renty and his daughter Delia, also enslaved, using them to support his pseudoscientific theory of polygenism (“Africans have different origins from Europeans”) to justify slavery. Lanier claimed that through oral history and years of research, including consultations with genealogists, she had determined that she was the descendant

²²² “[Native Burial Sites Blown Up for US Border Wall](#),” *BBC News* (10 February 2020).

²²³ Elizabeth Redden, “[Visa Obstacles Thwart Renowned Foreign Scholars](#),” *HigherEd* (24 February 2020).

²²⁴ Paige Cornwell, “[Bellevue College President, Vice President Out after Mural on Japanese American Incarceration Was Altered](#),” *Seattle Times* (2 March 2020).

of Renty and Delia. Renty's image was still used on the cover of a Harvard publication about anthropology and photography that the university sold for \$40. More than forty descendants of Louis Agassiz supported Lanier's efforts and wrote an open letter to Harvard University asking the university to relinquish the photos, but Harvard refused to acknowledge Lanier's claim to the photos.²²⁵

In March 2020, anthropologist Doug Bailey destroyed more than 1,200 transparencies from the now closed Adan E. Treganza Anthropology Museum of San Francisco State University. He culled 35-millimeter images from decades-old research projects that were now considered unethical and soaked them in diluted sodium oxychloride. The images on the transparencies consisted of animal dissections, graphic drawings and photographs of human reproduction and female anatomy, fossilized human skulls, ethnic profiling, animals in captivity in zoos and game reserves, and ethnographic field photos. It was part of his efforts to create what he called a new discipline, art/archaeology. He labeled his action "Releasing the Archive."²²⁶

On 9–10 June 2020, within a context of widespread anti-racist manifestations following the death of George Floyd (1973–2020) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, police custody on 25 May 2020, statues of Confederate leaders and Italian explorer Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) were torn down or defiled as pressure grew on authorities to remove monuments connected to slavery and colonialism. On 10 June 2020, a statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis (1808–1889) was toppled in Richmond, Virginia. Elsewhere in the city, a statue of Columbus was pulled down, set alight and thrown into a lake a day earlier. Also on 10 June 2020, a statue of Columbus was toppled in Saint Paul, Minnesota, while statues of Columbus were vandalized in Boston (Massachusetts), Baltimore (Maryland), Miami (Florida), and Kenosha (Wisconsin). The one in Boston was decapitated. In Philadelphia, supporters went to court to block the removal of a Columbus statue. In Portland, Oregon, demonstrators protesting police killings toppled a statue of Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), one of the country's founding fathers who also enslaved more than 600 people. In Sacramento, a marker to John Sutter (1803–1880), a settler famous for his role in the California gold rush who enslaved and exploited Native Americans, was taken down.

In Dallas, construction crews removed a statue of a Texas Ranger, long seen as a mythical figure in Texas folklore, amid concerns over historical episodes of police brutality and racism within this law enforcement agency. On 21 June 2020, the American Museum of Natural History in New York decided

²²⁵ Robyn Doyon-Aitken, Lucy Nalpathanchil & Ryan Caron King, "[Connecticut Woman Explains Why She's Suing Harvard for Family Photos](#)," *Connecticut Public Radio* (26 February 2020); Matthew Schwartz, "[Harvard Profits from Photos of Slaves, Lawsuit Claims](#)," *Connecticut Public Radio* (21 March 2019); Robyn Doyon-Aitken & Lucy Nalpathanchil, "[Who Owns History? Connecticut Woman Sues Harvard for Family Photos](#)," *Connecticut Public Radio* (14 April 2020); Tamara Lanier, "[Harvard: #FreeRenty](#)" (petition; no date).

²²⁶ Matt Itelson, "[Professor Bailey Destroys Archival Research Images in the Name of Art, Ethics](#)," *University Updates San Francisco State University* (11 May 2020).

to relocate a bronze statue of President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) atop a horse, flanked by nameless Native American and African men on foot, at the museum’s entrance. Critics said that the statue depicted Black and Indigenous people as subjugated and racially inferior. In October 2017, a group called the Monument Removal Brigade had splashed red paint at the statue’s base, saying the monument represented “patriarchy, white supremacy and settler-colonialism.” On 24 June 2020, a bronze statue of John Calhoun (1825–1832), vice president of the United States and an advocate of slavery, was removed from Marion Square in Charleston, South Carolina [see NCH Annual Report 2017]. A statue of Union General Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1855), a former slave owner, was removed in San Francisco. Grant had defeated the slave-owning Confederacy during the Civil War (1861–1865).

In an act of apparent retaliation, a statue of former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) was toppled in Rochester, New York, on 5 July 2020. On 5 July 1852, Douglass gave a famous speech “What, to the American Slave is your Fourth of July?” saying that the Independence Day celebrations were a sham in a nation that still enslaved its black citizens.

On 27 June 2020, President Donald Trump signed an executive order calling for protesters who targeted monuments to be imprisoned. The measure said that anyone who damaged a public statue must be prosecuted to the “fullest extent of the law.” On 3 July 2020, Trump signed another executive order on Building and Rebuilding Monuments to American Heroes.²²⁷

On 27 June 2020, the wake of worldwide antiracist protests, Princeton University announced that it would remove the name of President and historian Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924; Princeton University president 1902–1910; United States president 1913–1921) from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs because of his racist beliefs and policies and rename it into the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs [see NCH Annual Report 2016]. Earlier in June, Monmouth University, New Jersey, removed Wilson’s name from one of its most prominent buildings.²²⁸

See also China, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Iran, Israel, Japan, Libya, Mauritania, Myanmar, Serbia/Kosovo, South Sudan, Turkey, United Kingdom, Yemen.

²²⁷ “[Confederate and Columbus Statues Toppled by US Protesters](#),” *BBC News* (11 June 2020); Kelly Grovier, “[Black Lives Matter protests: Why Are Statues So Powerful?](#),” *BBC News* (12 June 2020); Sarah Mervosh, Simon Romero and Lucy Tompkins, “[Reconsidering the Past, One Statue at a Time](#),” *New York Times* (16 June 2020); Meagan Flynn, “Theodore Roosevelt Statue, Flanked by African and Native American Men, To Be Removed in New York,” *Washington Post* (22 June 2020); “[Trump Orders Statues Be Protected from ‘Mob Rule’](#),” *BBC News* (27 June 2020); “[Frederick Douglass: Historic US Black Activist’s Statue Toppled](#),” *BBC News* (6 July 2020).

²²⁸ “[Princeton to Remove Woodrow Wilson’s Name from Policy School](#),” *BBC News* (28 June 2020).

URUGUAY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2013, 2015–2018.

The failure to ensure justice, truth and reparation for crimes against humanity committed under the former military regime (1973–1985) remained an outstanding concern. Of the 187 criminal investigations opened on these crimes, 91% had not been prosecuted and convictions had been secured in only fourteen cases. Out of the 196 enforced disappearances acknowledged by state authorities, the fate of 163 people remained unresolved. Only eight of the 44 people forcibly disappeared inside Uruguay had been located. The Supreme Court upheld again the statute of limitations for crimes against humanity committed between 1973 and 1985, in breach of international law. Special Reparatory Pension to victims of state violence between 1973–1985 was denied for those who received other pensions or social benefits.²²⁹

UZBEKISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2014, 2016.

In March 2017, Andrei Kubatin, a specialist on the history and culture of the Turkic world, was arrested by the National Security Service (later: State Security Services) on fabricated treason charges: he had supposedly connived to hand classified historical documents to the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Ankara's foreign aid agency, in exchange for payment of \$1,000. Investigators argued that the materials in question could be used to incite anti-patriotic, pan-Turkic sentiments and provide insider information about Uzbekistan's geological reserves. Kubatin's defenders dismissed the charge, arguing that the material in question was freely available to the public. Kubatin was sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment, later reduced to five years on appeal. He was tortured in prison. On 26 September 2019, however, the Tashkent regional criminal court suddenly ordered his release. He was fully exonerated and charges against him were dropped. Some connected the release with the visit to Uzbekistan by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Diego Garcia-Sayán.²³⁰

²²⁹ Amnesty International, *Human Rights in the Americas: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 84.

²³⁰ "[Uzbekistan: Scholar Imprisoned for Espionage Absolved and Released; Rights Activists Warn More Needs to Be Done to Ensure Justice Prevails](#)," *Eurasianet* (27 September 2019); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 620.

On 9 August 2019, two United Nations Special Rapporteurs had received information concerning urban regeneration projects that would result in the destruction of historic neighborhoods in Samarkand, and ongoing demolitions of houses in Tashkent, in violation of the rights to housing and to culture of about 6,500 residents.²³¹

See also Turkey.

²³¹ [United Nations Special Rapporteurs Database 2010–2020](#).

VATICAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2019.

On 2 March 2020, the Vatican archives regarding World War II were made accessible to the public, with the purpose to shed light, among other things, on the role of Pope Pius XII (1876–1958) in connection with the Holocaust [see NCH Annual Reports 1998, 2000, 2004, 2011, 2015].²³²

VENEZUELA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2003–2004, 2006, 2009–2010, 2012, 2014, 2017–2019.

The authorities reported that, as of June 2019, 44 people were detained and 33 arrest warrants were issued for people allegedly responsible for killings during demonstrations in 2017 and 2019. Authorities claimed that five agents of FAES (a special police force created in 2017 to combat drug trafficking and criminal organizations, replacing in 2019 the Operaciones de Liberación y Protección del Pueblo, OLPs, “Operations to Liberate and Protect the People,” in security operations) were convicted of attempted murder and other crimes for events occurred in 2018, and that another 388 FAES agents were under investigation for alleged crimes committed in 2017 and 2019. Impunity for human rights abuses, however, remained the norm. In July 2019, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that factors contributing to impunity included “lack of cooperation by security and armed forces with investigations,” “the tampering with crime scenes” by security forces, the de facto immunity of senior officials, and lack of judicial independence.²³³

VIETNAM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2006, 2009–2013, 2016–2017, 2019.

In January 2019, a new cybersecurity law entered into effect, despite concern expressed at both the domestic and international level that it could criminalize a broad swath of online expression. Article 8 of the law prohibited people from “distorting history, denying revolutionary achievements, destroying the national solidarity block,” and “providing false information, causing confusion amongst the

²³² “[Vatican Opens Archives of Holocaust-era Pope Pius XII](#),” *BBC News* (2 March 2020).

²³³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 628.

Citizens, [and] causing harm to socioeconomic activities.” Article 16 of the law, similarly, set out an overly broad definition of what constituted propaganda against the state, including “insulting the [Vietnamese] people, the national flag, national emblem, national anthem, great men, leaders, famous people or national heroes.” By its overbroad language and vague wording, the provision gave the authorities excessive and arbitrary powers to ban a range of legitimate activities. The Press Law prohibited publishing or broadcasting information which was against the Republic, including anything that distorted, defamed or negated the administration, distorted history, undermined the implementation of international solidarity or caused division among people.²³⁴

See also United States.

²³⁴ Amnesty International, *Human Rights in Asia-Pacific: Review of 2019* (London: AI, 2020), 66; Centre for Law and Democracy, *Restrictions on Civic Space Globally: Law and Policy Mapping Series, vol. 1, Asia Pacific Region* (Halifax: CLD, July 2020), 65.

WESTERN SAHARA

See Morocco / Western Sahara.

YEMEN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2003, 2010, 2013–2016, 2018–2019.

On 3 September 2019, the United Nations Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen reported that all parties to the conflict (September 2014 – September 2019) damaged and destroyed cultural property. The old city of Sana'a, with its unique architecture and Islamic heritage, had been impacted by airstrikes since 2014. In Ta'izz, Al-Qahira (the Cairo Castle) sustained significant damage. The city of Sa'dah was heavily affected, also predominantly as a result of airstrikes, including the historic old city and the historic mosque of Imam al-Hadi (partially destroyed in May 2015). The ancient citadel of Baraqish, an archaeological protected site in al-Jawf governorate, was destroyed in 2014. During the confrontations in Aden in 2015, the renowned al-Husseini Shia Mosque (built at the end of the 19th century) in the Craiter area under the control of Houthis-Saleh forces, was partially destroyed during a coalition airstrike in July 2015. Once the Southern Resistance took over the area, they renamed it the Mosque of the Sunni Martyrs. The seventh-century Ahmed al-Fazah Sufi Mosque and Mausoleum in al-Hudaydah (Hodeida) were destroyed in June 2018 while the area was under the control of the United Arab Emirates-backed Giants Brigades. In 2014, the National Museum of Ta'izz, while under occupation by the Houthis, was shelled by the Resistance forces, which took it over in August 2015. In February 2016, the Houthis shelled the museum causing extensive damage. Similarly, in Aden, Houthi-Saleh fighters took control over the Military Museum (founded 1918), establishing therein a military warehouse and a secret detention facility. In addition to its looting by the Houthis, a coalition airstrike struck the museum in July 2015, destroying the northeast wing of the museum. There was also great concern for the old town of Zabid, Yemen's capital from the 13th to the 15th century, and the archipelago of Socotra. In Zabid, a large collection of more than 1,000 manuscripts was removed from the Zabid museum.²³⁵

In early 2020, the Houthis imposed sectarian academic materials, including new curricula, and dismissed opposing faculty members at public universities in Houthi-held provinces such as Sana'a, Ibb, Dhamar, Umran and Hajjah. At the University of Sana'a, for example, Houthis introduced the following courses: Military Media, Contemporary History of Yemen, the Arab-Israeli Conflict and National Education. The new material was reportedly largely imported from Iran and linked to the

²³⁵ [“UNESCO Condemns the Intentional Destruction of a Historical Mosque and Mausoleum in the Hodeida Governorate of Yemen”](#) (press release; 30 October 2018); [Situation of Human Rights in Yemen, Including Violations and Abuses Since September 2014: Report of the Detailed Findings of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen](#) (UN Doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.1) (3 September 2019), paragraphs 845–857; Mwatana for Human Rights, [The Degradation of History: Violations Committed by the Warring Pasts against Yemen's Cultural Property](#) (Sana'a: Mwatana; November 2018).

legacy of Hussein al-Houthi, a key Houthi military leader. The strategy was meant to transform universities into recruitment hubs for the Houthis.²³⁶

In April 2020, the Ministry of Culture accused the Houthis of tampering with old manuscripts (including of the Great Mosque in Sana'a), seizing rare manuscripts and databases, dismissing employees qualified to preserve antiquities and replacing them with non-specialists and loyalists to the group. Activists and government sources confirmed that the Houthis, since their coup against the legitimate government in 2014–2015, had looted and smuggled antiquities, historical manuscripts, artifacts and collections to fund their activities.²³⁷

The armed conflict in Yemen (2015–present) has resulted in the largest humanitarian crisis in the world; parties to the conflict killed and injured thousands of Yemeni civilians. According to the Yemen Data Project, more than 17,500 civilians were killed and injured since 2015, and a quarter of all civilians killed in air raids were women and children. More than twenty million people in Yemen were experiencing food insecurity; ten million of them were at risk of famine. Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) led a coalition of states in Yemen against Houthi forces that, in alliance with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, took over Yemen's capital, Sana'a, in September 2014. In September 2019, a United Nations (UN) Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen stated that "The parties to the conflict in Yemen are responsible for an array of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. Some of these violations are likely to amount to war crimes." The Group also stated that several world powers, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, may be complicit in war crimes in Yemen through arms sales and intelligence support given to the Saudi-led coalition. The parties failed to acknowledge any responsibility for violations and refused to take any meaningful steps to remedy the situations in which they occurred. This resulted in a pervasive lack of accountability, which heightened disregard for the protection of the Yemeni population and fomented a climate of impunity.

Despite mounting evidence of violations of international law by the parties to the conflict, efforts toward accountability had been inadequate. However, on 20 June 2019, the United Kingdom (UK) government agreed to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia after the Court of Appeal in London ruled that the government's refusal to consider the latter's laws-of-war violations in Yemen before licensing arms sales was unlawful. The ruling required the UK government to reconsider its decision on arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The UK was appealing the court decision. Despite multiple congressional efforts in the United States (US) to end US arms sales to Saudi Arabia that could be used unlawfully in Yemen,

²³⁶ "[Houthis Continue to Target Yemen's Higher Education Sector](#)," *Asharq al-Awsat* (8 January 2020).

²³⁷ "[Houthis Tamper With Yemeni Manuscripts, Govt Calls on UNESCO to Interfere](#)," *Asharq al-Awsat* (4 April 2020).

President Donald Trump used his veto power to block such efforts and continued his support to Saudi Arabia, American's largest weapons buyer. France was under pressure to stop its arms sales to members of the Saudi-led coalition after a surge in its sales to Saudi Arabia. A positive step was the extension of the mandate of war crimes investigators in Yemen by the UN Human Rights Council in September 2019 after the group found evidence of grave violations by all sides in the conflict.²³⁸

See also Syria.

²³⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2020: Events of 2019* (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2020), 646–647.

ZAMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2015.

See Rwanda.

ZIMBABWE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2001, 2004, 2006, 2008–2015, 2018.

See Ethiopia.