

INTRODUCTION

This **twenty-seventh *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 2020 and 2021.

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			<u>2021</u>	<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>

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Previous *Annual Reports* (1995–2020) were compiled by [Antoon De Baets](#).

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AFGHANISTAN

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

In January 2021, Akal, a publisher in Madrid, issued the book *Afganistán, Una república del silencio: Recuerdos de un estudiante afgano* (Afghanistan, a republic of silence: memories of an Afghan student), written by A.K. (1994–). An autobiography of 208 pages, it told the history of the Hazara ethnic group, a Farsi-speaking minority, who are of Mongolian and Central Asian descent and are mainly Shia Muslims. It included an account of the 1890 genocide of Hazaras by Pashtuns and instances of contemporary violence and corruption by the Taliban, Al Qaeda, Islamic State, and Hizb ut-Tahrir. A.K. was a history teacher, educated at the University of Herat and the University of Santiago de Compostela. He completed the book manuscript in Afghanistan. A.K.'s life was possibly in danger after the book's publication.¹

See also United States.

ALBANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2012, 2015–2020.

On 2 March 2021, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) stated that Albanian prosecutors had still not issued orders to exhume suspected mass gravesites where people who went missing during the Communist dictatorship (1944–1991) could be buried. In 2018, after eight years of negotiations, the government had agreed with the ICMP to investigate and identify the remains of over 6,000 Albanians who were killed or disappeared during that era.

The ICMP was not the first international body to examine the issue. The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances visited Albania in December 2016 and published a critical report in 2017, finding that “Albania had yet to deal adequately with the gross human rights violations committed between 1944 and 1991.” In May 2018, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances encouraged Albania to “redouble its efforts to effectively shed light on enforced disappearances that took place during the communist regime.” Albania should investigate these crimes,

¹ “[Afganistán, una república del silencio: Recuerdos de un estudiante afgano](#),” Akal book presentation (8 May 2021); “[Un erasmus afgano de la USC podría ser asesinado en su país por escribir un libro](#),” *El Correo Gallego* (9 June 2021); A.K., personal communications (8–11 May 2021).

prosecute those responsible and provide reparations to the victims and their families, the committee said [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2017, 2020*].²

See also Kosovo.

ALGERIA

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

In October 2020, forty-two peaceful demonstrators were arrested in Algiers while commemorating the 1988 youth protests. Thirty-three were provisionally released, and nine imprisoned in El Harrach prison, Algiers, before eventually being released. The 1988 protests, between 5 and 11 October, started in Algiers and spread to other cities, resulting in about 500 deaths and 1000 wounded.³

On 27 October 2020, presidential adviser Abdelmadjid al-Sheikh said that Algeria did not rule out international arbitration to resolve its dispute with France over the archives of the French colonial era. Algeria claimed that during the colonial period (1830–1962) French forces smuggled hundreds of thousands of maps and historical documents, including those dating back to the Ottoman era (1518–1830), into France. France claimed that colonial-era related archives were part of France’s sovereignty [See also NCH *Annual Report 2017*].⁴

See also France, Morocco.

ANGOLA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003, 2009, 2017, 2020.

² Fjori Sinoruka, “[Albania’s Search for Communist-Era Missing Persons Stalled](#),” *Balkan Insight* (2 March 2021); Fred Abrahams, “[Communist-Era Disappearances Still Haunt Albania](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (17 March 2021).

³ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 63.

⁴ Abdurazzak Abdallah, “[Algeria May Take France to Arbitration over ‘Stolen’ Archive](#),” *Anadolu Agency* (27 October 2020); “[France Speeds Up Access to Secret Algeria War Archives](#),” *RFI* (10 March 2021); Hossam El Din Islam, “[French Move to Declassify Archive Draws Mixed Reactions in Algeria](#),” *Anadolu Agency* (19 March 2021).

ARGENTINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2020.

Twenty-six years after the terrorist attack perpetrated against the headquarters of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) in Buenos Aires on 18 July 1994, which resulted in the death of 85 people and serious injuries to at least 151 others, court battles continued and no one had been convicted. In September 2020, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) found Argentina responsible for violating the rights to life and physical integrity of the victims, as well as for cover-up operations that resulted in impunity. On 25 March 2021, the IACHR referred to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights a case on the state's responsibility. It was brought by the Asociación Civil Memoria Activa (Citizens' Association for Active Memory), victims and relatives of victims of the attack, who complained that much of the documentation was held secret by the intelligence agencies [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2011, 2014, 2016–2020*].⁵

Pardons and amnesty laws shielding officials implicated in crimes committed under the dictatorship (1976–1983) were annulled by the Supreme Court and federal judges in the early 2000s. As of September 2020, the Attorney General's Office reported 3,329 people charged, 997 convicted, and 162 acquitted. Of 597 investigations into crimes against humanity, judges had issued rulings in 246. As of August 2020, 130 people illegally taken from their parents as children during the dictatorship had been identified and many had been reunited with their families. The large number of victims, suspects, and cases of alleged crimes of the dictatorship made it difficult for prosecutors and judges with limited resources to bring those responsible to justice.⁶

See also Israel.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 43; Amnesty International, *State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 69; *Archives and Human Rights: News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights*, no. 136 (March 2021), 10; "[IACHR Refers Case on Argentina to the Inter-American Court](#)" (press release; 26 March 2021).

⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 39.

ARMENIA

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

In January 2021, Facebook’s Oversight Board upheld a ban on a post that purported to show historical photos of churches in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, with a caption that the Oversight Board said indicated “disdain” for Azerbaijani people. The caption in Russian claimed that Armenians built Baku and that this heritage, including the churches, had been destroyed. It used the term “Taziks” to describe Azerbaijanis, who “were nomads” and “had no history compared with Armenians.” The post ended with a call to end “Azerbaijani aggression” and “vandalism.” The Oversight Board said that the problematic term “Taziks” could be understood as wordplay on the Russian word “aziks,” a derogatory term for Azerbaijanis, featuring on Facebook’s internal list of slur terms. The user appealed the decision, arguing that he intended to highlight the destruction of cultural and religious monuments.⁷

See also Azerbaijan, United States.

AUSTRALIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2001, 2003, 2007–2009, 2014–2016, 2018–2020.

On 24 May 2020, mining firm Rio Tinto destroyed the 46,000-year-old Juukan Gorge caves (rock shelters) in the Pilbara region, Western Australia [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. In August 2020, CEO Jean Sébastien Jacques was fined almost \$5 million in bonuses and the head of Rio Tinto’s Australian iron ore group more than \$1 million, after an internal review found “systemic failures in the cultural heritage management system.” On 11 September 2020, Jacques announced that he and two other senior executives would step down in March 2021, following criticism of the destruction. In early September 2020 it was revealed that in the days running up to the caves’ destruction in May, Rio Tinto had hired lawyers in case opponents tried to seek injunctions to stop them. On 9 December 2020, a parliamentary inquiry panel recommended that Rio Tinto should pay restitution to the affected Indigenous Australians and reconstruct the two destroyed rock shelters. On 3 March 2021, Rio Tinto’s chairman Simon Thompson announced that he would step down as a result of the affair. He had come

⁷ Umberto Bacchi & Avi Asher-Schapiro, “[Remove or Restore? Facebook Oversight Board Wades into South Caucasus Culture Dispute](#),” *Reuters News* (29 January 2021); Mark Frary, “A Debate with No End in Sight,” *Index on Censorship*, 2021 no. 1, 18–19.

under continued pressure in February after the region's elders had accused him of breaking a personal promise.⁸

After two years of deliberations, in July 2020, an administrative appeals tribunal in Dili, Timor-Leste's capital, ruled that documents relating to Australia's involvement in the December 1975 Indonesian invasion and occupation of Timor-Leste (which lasted until 1999) would remain secret, thus upholding the Australian government's refusal to release them. It found that they "could reasonably be expected to cause damage to the security or international relations of the commonwealth." Historian Kim McGrath, author of *Crossing the Line, Australia's Secret History in the Timor Sea* (2017) and PhD candidate at Monash University, Melbourne, had repeatedly sought access from the National Archives to diplomatic cables, intelligence official's testimony, and cabinet documents related to maritime border negotiations between Indonesia and Australia in the 1970s. McGrath's requests were denied under exemptions to the Australian Archives Act (AAT).

Since the partly secret AAT hearing began in 2018, the decades-long dispute between Australia and Timor-Leste over their maritime border ended, with Australia ratifying a bilateral treaty in 2019. The treaty revealed that Australia had profited for decades from oil- and gas fields which were later found to belong to Timor-Leste, and that the delay in ratification added to those profits. McGrath and her lawyers were prevented from hearing the reasons why successive governments had blocked her applications for the documents over a number of years. An AAT deputy president, Stephanie Forgie, delivered two sets of reasons – one public, and one available only to the National Archives and its legal team. Lawyer Bernard Collaery, while researching a book on Australian-Timor-Leste history, said he had been able to access Australian records through the United Kingdom's royal archives that he was not able to access in Australia. Collaery himself faced prosecution for his role in exposing a spy scandal involving Australia's treatment of Timor-Leste.⁹

On 26 October 2020, state authorities in Victoria cut down a centuries-old "birthing tree" – a sacred tree where local Djab Wurrung women traditionally went to give birth and bury their placentas

⁸ Calla Wahlquist, "[Rio Tinto Chiefs Lose Millions in Bonuses over Destruction of Juukan Gorge](#)," *Guardian* (24 August 2020); Ben Butler, Lorena Allam and Calla Wahlquist, "[Rio Tinto CEO and Senior Executives Resign from Company after Juukan Gorge Debacle](#)," *Guardian* (11 September 2020); "[Rio Tinto Chief Jean-Sébastien Jacques to Quit over Aboriginal Cave Destruction](#)," *BBC News* (11 September 2020); Nick Toscano & Hamish Hastie, "[Rio Tinto CEO, Top Executives Resign amid Cave Blast Crisis](#)," *Sydney Morning Herald* (11 September 2020); Melanie Burton, "[Rio Tinto Should Pay Restitution for Sacred Aboriginal Caves Blast – Inquiry](#)," *Reuters* (9 December 2020); "[Rio Tinto Chief to Step Down over Cave Destruction](#)," *BBC News* (3 March 2021); Ben Butler, Calla Wahlquist and Jillian Ambrose, "[Rio Tinto Chairman to Stand Down amid Juukan Gorge Outcry](#)," *Guardian* (3 March 2021).

⁹ Helen Davidson & Christopher Knaus, "[Timor-Leste: Court Upholds Australian Government Refusal to Release Documents on Indonesia's Invasion](#)," *Guardian* (3 July 2020).

afterward – near Buangor to clear land for a highway between Melbourne and Adelaide. On 27 October, Victoria police arrested 25 protesters who refused to leave the site as land clearing work continued.¹⁰

See also China.

AUSTRIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2001, 2005–2007, 2009, 2018, 2020.

See Egypt, Serbia.

AZERBAIJAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997–1998, 2008–2013, 2015–2020.

In June 2016 and July 2020, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of Leyla Yunus (Yunosova) (1955–), director of the Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD), and her husband Arif Yunus (Yunusov) (1955–), an expert adviser for the IPD, after they had filed a complaint about their arrest, pre-trial detention, and medical treatment while in detention in 2014 [See also *NCH Annual Reports 2015–2018, 2020*].¹¹

On 8 October 2020, amid an escalation of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabach, the interior and exterior of the Ghazanchetsots (Holy Savior) Cathedral in Shusha, an iconic site for the Armenian Apostolic Church, was seriously damaged. Armenia accused Azerbaijan of targeting the cathedral.

On 4 May 2021, Caucasus Heritage Watch (CHW), a Cornell University and Purdue University-based NGO that monitored and documented endangered and damaged cultural heritage, shared high-resolution satellite images showing the destruction of an early nineteenth century Armenian cemetery in the village of Böyük Tağlar (Azeri) or Mets Tagher (Armenian). The village was captured by Azerbaijani forces on 9 November 2020, during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. CHW further reported on possible threats to the Surb Amenaprkich (Holy Savior) church, founded in 1846, in the

¹⁰ [“Djab Wurrung Tree: Anger over Sacred Aboriginal Tree Bulldozed for Highway,”](#) *BBC News* (27 October 2020).

¹¹ European Court of Human Rights, *Yunosova & Yunusov versus Azerbaijan* (2016) and (2020).

same village, and to the seventh-century Vankasar church in the district of Agdam (Azeri) or Vankasar (Armenian).¹²

In January 2021, Azerbaijan applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), suing Armenia for its human rights violations during its thirty-year occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh (1988–2020), as well as the 44-day conflict over the region in 2020. A first complaint addressed the 3,890 missing Azerbaijanis in the occupied territories who had been subjected to life-threatening conditions since 1991. Another complaint referred to acts against Azerbaijani civilians, infrastructure (including culturally significant sites), and military personnel (including the mutilation of the bodies of Azerbaijani military personnel by members of the Armenian Army) between July and November 2020. On 1 February 2021, Armenia also applied to the ECHR with similar complaints.¹³

See also Armenia.

¹² [“Nagorno-Karabakh: Armenia Accuses Azerbaijan of Targeting Cathedral,”](#) *BBC News* (8 October 2020); Hugh Eakin, [“When an Enemy’s Cultural Heritage Becomes One’s Own,”](#) *New York Times* (30 November 2020); Amos Chapple, [“Activity at Recaptured Church in Azerbaijan Raises Concern,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (20 April 2021); [“Caucasus Heritage Watch,”](#) *Twitter* (4 May 2021).

¹³ [“Azerbaijan Sues Armenia in ECtHR for Crimes against Humanity,”](#) *Daily Sabah* (5 February 2021); [“Armenia Submits Inter-State Application against Azerbaijan to European Court of Human Rights,”](#) *Armenpress* (2 February 2021).

BAHRAIN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004, 2008–2012, 2015–2017, 2020.

Peaceful protestors experienced excessive use of force during and after the 2011 protests, with Shia religious clergy being particularly targeted. Government violence led to the demolition or vandalism of dozens of Shia mosques and sites of religious and cultural significance and of other signs of Shia presence. The official historical narrative which systematically undermined the role of Baharna and Shia religious and cultural heritage in the country was promoted in the school curricula and media. Shia citizens also experienced discrimination in access to citizenship, public sector employment and government social policies, particularly housing and welfare programs, making them more vulnerable to poverty. Shia rituals during Ashura (the annual commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the Prophet Mohammed’s grandson) were restricted. In 2020–2021, the authorities invoked the Covid-19 pandemic as a reason to prevent gatherings. In the capital Manama, many preachers had their speeches censored in an attempt to prevent mass prayers on the night of Ashura. Some had their sermons contested and criminalized due to “lack of consensus” on Islamic history. Several funeral processions were also attacked with teargas and rubber bullets.¹⁴

BANGLADESH

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

On 9 September 2020, Morshed Hasan Khan, professor in medical science at Dhaka University, was dismissed by a university tribunal. On the same day, a Dhaka University student, affiliated with the student wing of the ruling party Awami League (AL), filed a section 124A case of sedition with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka against Khan. The vaguely defined section 124A of the Bangladesh Penal Code stated that any critique of the government was punishable with up to life imprisonment.

On 26 March 2018, Khan had written an article, titled “Jyotirmoy Zia” (“shining Zia”) published in the daily Naya Diganta, in which he claimed that Ziaur Rahman (1936–1981), founder of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), had declared independence from Pakistan in 1971, while most of the ruling AL leaders, including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920–1975), who is considered the “Father

¹⁴ [United Nations Special Rapporteurs Database 2010–2020](#); Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, *Decade of Oppression: Authoritarianism in Bahrain 2011–2021* ([Stockholm]: Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, 2021), 99–110.

of the Nation,” had fled to India with their family members. Unidentified persons issued multiple death threats over telephone and social media to Kahn for his article. On 2 April 2018, the Dhaka University Registrar’s office discharged Khan from all academic and administrative duties, accusing him of “distorting the liberation war history” and “disrespecting the father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.” On 28 May 2018, the Dhaka University Syndicate formed a five-member inquiry committee led by the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the university to investigate the allegations. For nearly two years, the case was shelved for unknown reasons. On 12 February 2020, university authorities informed Khan that a tribunal had been formed to try the allegations. The tribunal gave him seven days to respond to the accusations, which he did. He was also denied access to his campus residence, where his wife, who was a cancer patient, resided.¹⁵

See also Pakistan.

BELARUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2000, 2005–2007, 2009–2011, 2014–2020.

During 2020, PEN Belarus documented at least 26 cases of discrimination and defamation of the Belarusian language, of the harming of buildings that were part of national historical heritage, and of the “defamation of symbols” that had historical significance and gained relevance in the post-election political situation.¹⁶

On 10 August 2020 – in a context of high tension in Minsk amid widespread anger over President Alexander Lukashenko’s landslide 9 August 2020 re-election, which the opposition and many governments denounced as fraudulent, Miron Vitushka, a Minsk history student was detained while crossing the street in Minsk. On 12 August 2020, Aliaksandr Bystryk, a PhD candidate in the History Department at Central European University, Budapest, and others, were illegally detained when driving on Peramozhtsau Avenue in Minsk. The riot police forced them to unlock their phones; they checked photos, videos and messenger applications. After the police found videos taken at earlier protests on the phones, the group was brought to a district police station. Two, including Bystryk, were beaten by the police. The group was forced to do physical exercises for two hours and meanwhile denigrated. After

¹⁵ “[Professor Sacked and Threatened](#),” *Amnesty International*; “[BCL Declares DU Professor Unwanted on Campus](#),” *Prothomalo* (2 April 2018); “[DU Professor Terminated for Defaming Bangabandhu](#),” *Daily Observer* (9 September 2020).

¹⁶ Belarussian PEN Center, *With No Right to the Culture: Belarus 2020* (Minsk: Belarusian PEN, 2021), 9–10.

about two hours, they were released. They did not receive any legal document concerning their detention. On [1 September] 2020, a history teacher at an elite state school [name unknown] prevented a group of students, who carried the red and white Belarusian flag that had become a symbol of the opposition, from being detained, only to be detained in their place.¹⁷

On 18 August 2020, Konstantin Shishmakov (Kanstancin Šyškaŋ) (1991–2020), the director of the Bagration War History Museum in Volkovysk (Vaŋkavysk), Grodno region, and a local election committee member, were found dead. On 9 August, they had refused to sign the final voting protocol of the election commission. Someone else then signed the protocol for them. After the election, Shishmakov went on vacation and returned to the museum on 15 August. At 17.00 hours that day, he called his wife saying that he would not work in the museum anymore and was going home. It was unclear whether he had resigned or had been dismissed. Nothing was heard from Shishmakov thereafter. On 18 August, employees of the National Art Museum in Minsk took part in a search showing a poster reading: “Where is Konstantin Shishmakov?” A few hours later, a search and rescue team reported that Shishmakov was found dead near Mosty, close to Volkovysk. According to preliminary data by the search and rescue department there were no signs of a crime.¹⁸

On 24 August 2020, police in Belarus summoned 2015 Nobel Prize for Literature winner and oral historian Svetlana Alexievich (1948–) for questioning about coup plotting because she was a member of the new opposition Coordination Council, founded earlier in August 2020 by exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya (Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya). On 9 September 2020, Alexievich reported that she had been harassed with door knocks and phone calls and that masked men tried to break into her home. On 18 September 2020, she left Belarus for treatment in Germany and work in Sweden and Italy.¹⁹

¹⁷ Marci Shore, “[Aliaksandr Bystryk: ‘Lukashenka Is the Abusive Husband Who Beats His Wife when She Wants to Leave...’](#),” *Chronicle from Belarus* (13 August 2020); Christopher Miller, “[Belarus Is Detaining Thousands of Peaceful Protesters. Many Are Telling Gruesome Stories of Physical and Psychological Abuse by Police.](#),” *BuzzFeed News* (14 August 2020); Vladimir Petrovic, personal communication (15 & 17 August 2020); International Partnership for Human Rights, Truth Hounds and Civic Solidarity Platform, *Belarus on Hold: Crackdown on Post-election Protests* (Brussels: International Partnership for Human Rights, 2020), 15; Ben Aris, “[Back to School: Belarusian Students and School Children Clash with Police.](#),” *BNE Intellinews* (2 September 2020).

¹⁸ “[Пропал директор музея в Волковыске, отказавшийся подписать протокол на выборах.](#),” *Volkovysk.by* (16 August 2020); “[Отказавшийся подписать протокол на выборах 29-летний директор музея из Волковыска найден мертвым.](#),” *Nn.by* (18 August 2020); [В Беларуси нашли мертвым 29-летнего директора музея Константина Шишмакова.](#),” *Meduza.io* (19 August 2020); Belarussian PEN Center, *With No Right to the Culture: Belarus 2020* (Minsk: Belarussian PEN, 2021), 12.

¹⁹ “[Belarus Summons Nobel Prize Winner after Minsk Mass Rally.](#),” *BBC News* (24 August 2020); “[Belarus: Nobel Laureate Alexievich Visited by Diplomats amid ‘Harassment’.](#),” *BBC News* (9 September 2020); PEN Belarus, “[A Statement from Svetlana Alexievich, Nobel Laureate and Chair of Belarussian PEN.](#),” (9 September 2020); “[Belarus: Svetlana Alexievich, Nobel Winner and Opposition Figure, Goes to Germany.](#),” *BBC News* (28 September 2020).

From 2016 to 2021, Larysa Shchyakova ([1974]–), a historian by education and a freelance journalist working for Belsat TV channel (2008–) and the human rights website Gomel Spring, had reportedly been in court some 45 times since 2016 because she had no accreditation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (despite repeated applications). In 2017, during the mass protests against the unemployment tax, the police threatened to take away her teenage son on the basis of the “law against social parasites” because she had been on trial so many times. After mass protests broke out against the rigging of the presidential elections in August 2020, she was detained frequently during the protests in order to prevent her from covering them. On 16 February 2021, organized-crime officers searched her house for three hours for protest symbols, money, and bank cards. A computer, two cameras, a video camera, hard disks, SD cards and a voice recorder were confiscated.²⁰

On 8 December 2020, more than 500 scientists from the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB), the Belarussian State University (BSU), the Belarussian National Technical University (BNTU) and other Belarussian and foreign universities and scientific institutes, sent an open letter to the Academy of Sciences urging the leadership to “abandon the practice of politically motivated cuts and pressure on scientists.”

The letter came after seven employees of the NASB History Institute, of which six were historians, had received notification from 17 November onward that their contracts would not be renewed. Vadim Lazika, deputy director of the NASB Institute for Scientific Work, made the bogus claim that the dismissals were part of a reorganization of the History Institute. After the violent crackdown on electoral protests between 9 and 12 August 2020, 49 employees of the History Institute had signed a letter expressing their distrust of the election results and demanding the release of political prisoners and other detainees, an end to torture practices, and the disbanding of the riot police. From 14 August onward, historians had been standing in front of the NASB Presidium building with banners against violence, after Andrey Radoman (*see below*) had been arrested without reason.

The six historians were:

- Ekaterina Krivichanina (Kacjaryna Kryvičanina) (1981–), an associate professor in Contemporary Belarussian History and deputy head of the Center for World History and International Relations. She had further been the head of the History Institute’s trade union, which had created a fund to support employees who were illegally detained or suffered from the actions of the authorities after the August crackdown. Krivichanina, together with Shalanda (*see below*), had been the first to sign the letter. After the protest actions she received numerous emails from the management of the Institute, asking her why she had signed the letter and participated in protest actions, and

²⁰ Larysa Shchyakova & Yauhen Merkis, “Fear and Loathing in Belarus,” *Index on Censorship*, 50 no. 1 (2021), 24–25.

recommending her to “go to a forest” if she wanted to express her opinions. With the non-renewal of her contract, she also lost her apartment as of 31 December 2020.

- Alexey Shalanda (1969–), the head of the Department of Genealogy, Heraldry and Numismatics and deputy chairman of the History Institute’s trade union. Together with the non-renewal of his contract, his department was also abolished. Shalanda had been asked to write about the (officially banned) white-red-white flag. He concluded that as the flag was not a symbol of any political force, it did not deserve a ban, pointing to the fact that President Aliaksandr Lukashenka himself had taken the presidential oath under the white-red-white flag in 1994.
- Nikolay Volkov (1985–), a historical sciences PhD candidate at the History Institute specialized in Belarussian fortifications. On 13 September 2020, he was detained for several days, after which he was fined for participating in the protest actions.
- Vladimir Shipillo (1988–), a junior researcher at the Anthropology Department of the History Institute. On 8 November 2020, he had been arrested, together with Zhlutko (*see below*), for participating in the protest actions.
- Andrey (Alexey) Radaman (Radoman) (1971–), a researcher at the Department of Genealogy, Heraldry and Numismatics, specialized in legal and political history. Radoman was detained in the night of 12–13 August 2020 and beaten in the police department in Minsk. He refused to sign the protocols of detention and administrative offense, because he considered them falsified. He was released the next night. On 20 October, he was forced to pay an administrative penalty for “participating in an unauthorized rally.”
- Alexander Zhlutko (1954–), a philological science candidate at the History Institute and the main specialist of Latin manuscripts at the Institute. On 8 November 2020, he was detained for participating in a protest march and sentenced to ten days of detention.
- Tatyana Popovskaya, a researcher at the History Institute. She had participated in the protest actions. She had not planned to renew her contract.

In solidarity with their dismissed colleagues, five more scholars from the History Institute resigned. Upon receiving their application, the History Institute leadership had attempted to bribe them by offering them contracts for one up to three years. The five historians who resigned were:

- Vladimir Tugai (1951–), a history professor at the History Institute and the head of the Center for World History and International Relations.
- Andrey Matsuk (1978–), a senior researcher at the Department of Medieval and Early-Modern History of Belarus specialized in eighteenth century political history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He had first been detained on 24 September 2020 by riot police at his house and sentenced to thirteen days of administrative arrest. He was one of the initiators of an open letter in defense of

the non-renewal of the contracts of his six colleagues in November. On 11 December, Matsuk was again arrested and sentenced to fifteen days in prison for participating in an “unauthorized mass event” (he had celebrated his birthday in the courtyard of his house). He was released on 26 December 2020.

- Vadim Aniperkov (Vadzim Anipiarkau) (1977–), a historical sciences candidate at the Institute of History.
- Andrey Unuchek (1978–), the head of the Department of Modern Belarussian History specialized in the Belarussian national movement of the early twentieth century and the politics of the Russian empire in Belarussian lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a lecturer at BSU and BNTU, and a playwright.
- Vasily Voronin.²¹

BELGIUM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2008, 2010–2012, 2020.

In 2020, the city council of Antwerp debated how to commemorate and mark the lives of an unknown number of Congolese buried in the city’s Kiel district. On 12 May 1894, a total of 144 people had been transported from Congo, at that time a personal possession of King Leopold II, to Belgium to act in a specially constructed “village” at that year’s world fair in Antwerp, in what is recognized today as Belgium’s first “human zoo.” An unknown number of the men had been buried in the cemetery. When it was cleared in the late 1930 their remains were dumped in a mass grave on which a single sculpture stood without any reference to those buried.²²

On 9 March 2020, nine out of eighteen members of the Scientific Council of Kazerne Dossin – Memorial, Museum and Documentation Center on the Holocaust and Human Rights in Mechelen (Malines) resigned after a conflict with the Executive Board over the mission of the center. While the Board appeared to prioritize the Holocaust over human rights, the Council argued that both aims

²¹ Tatjana Nevedomskaia, “[Лукашенко мстит? За что в Беларуси увольняют историков](#),” *Der Welt* (22 November 2021); “[Семь историков уволены из Института истории, пятеро ушли из солидарности](#),” *Euroradio* (27 November 2020); “[500+ учёных подписали открытое письмо против репрессий](#),” *dev.by* (8 December 2020); Felix Ackermann, “[Unterdrückung und neuer Aufbruch](#),” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (23 January 2021); “[Волков, Николай Александрович \(историк\)](#),” *Wikipedia* (27 May 2021); “[Мацук, Андрей Владимирович](#),” *Wikipedia* (28 May 2021); “[Унучек, Андрей Владимирович](#),” *Wikipedia* (28 May 2021); “[Радоман, Андрей Александрович](#),” *Wikipedia* (28 May 2021); “[Шаланда, Алексей Иванович](#),” *Wikipedia* (28 May 2021).

²² Daniel Boffey, “[New Find Reveals Grim Truth of Colonial Belgium’s ‘Human Zoos’](#),” *Guardian* (5 October 2020).

deserved full attention. Similar tensions over the mission had led to the resignation of director Christoph Busch in November 2019 and to a row about a human rights prize awarded in the Center to a Middle East scholar critical of Israel. Some feared that the Board would instrumentalize the Center on behalf of Israel's policies. The nine scholars included historians Herman Van Goethem, Bruno De Wever, Nico Wouters, Frank van Vree, and archivist Karel Velle.²³

On 19 October 2020, state archivists asked the parliamentary commission investigating Belgium's colonial past to declassify relevant archives, particularly those of the Sûreté coloniale (Colonial Security Service). It was unclear who – the Sûreté de l'État (State Security Service) or the State Archives – was the legal successor to the Sûreté coloniale.²⁴

On 23 October 2020, a court in Ghent ruled in a defamation case initiated in 2018 by Baron Benoît de Bonvoison against the University of Ghent and Lander Van De Sompel. A master history student at that university, Van De Sompel had written a thesis in 2017 about the extreme-right network Westland New Post and the role of de Bonvoison (aka "the black baron") in it. According to its thesis policy, the university had put the approved version online. De Bonvoison had first asked the university to take down the online version. Upon refusal, he initiated the legal case, arguing that his reputation was vilified in the thesis and that it had used press sources selectively and carelessly, and asking for a disclaimer on the title page of the online version and damages from university and author. The court dismissed the claim, saying that the author's methodology and use of sources (including the re-use of press content) as well as the online publication were protected by academic freedom and that the thesis's subject was part of an important historical debate.²⁵

See also Rwanda.

²³ "[Negen wetenschappers van Kazerne Dossin nemen ontslag. Freilich: 'Beter dat ze opstappen'](#)," *Radio 1* (10 March 2020); Bart Eeckhout, "[Michaël Freilich \(N-VA\) haalt fors uit naar wetenschappelijke Raad Dossin](#)," *De Morgen* (10 March 2020); Bruno Struys, Pieter Gordts & Yannick Verberckmoes, "[Wetenschappers nemen ontslag uit raad Dossin-kazerne](#)," *De Morgen* (10 March 2020).

²⁴ "[La commission sur le passé colonial confrontée à l'urgence de déclassifier les archives](#)," *La Libre (Belgique)* (19 October 2020).

²⁵ Dirk Voorhoof, "[Rechtbank vrijwaart academische vrijheid](#)," *De Juristenkrant*, no. 417 (4 November 2020); Marc Boone, "UGent/faculteit wint rechtszaak rond academische vrijheid" (Internal news from the University of Ghent Faculty of Arts and Philosophy) (9 November 2020); Lander Van De Sompel, *De Westland New Post: Pop-up van een veranderende samenleving? De WNP herbekeken* (master's thesis; University of Ghent, 2017, 126 pages).

BELIZE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2014.

BOLIVIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2009–2020.

Bolivia only prosecuted a few of the officials responsible for human rights violations committed under authoritarian governments (1964–1982), partly because the armed forces had at times refused to share information about abuses. A Truth Commission established in 2017 transferred 6,000 case files of victims of the dictatorships to the Plurinational Assembly in December 2019 and presented its final report in March 2020.²⁶

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2020.

In May 2020, the Catholic Church held a mass in Sarajevo commemorating the killings of Croatian Ustaša troops and civilians by Yugoslav partisans at the end of World War II. The event sparked protests in Sarajevo accusing the organizers of attempting to rehabilitate the Ustaša regime.²⁷

In July 2020, the state tourism board, with the support of the municipality of Visegrad, launched a promotional campaign under the slogan “We are waiting for you in Visegrad.” One of the hotels participating in the campaign was Vilina Vlas; it had been one of the infamous rape camps of the War of Yugoslav Succession (1991–1995). At least 200 Bosniak girls and women were held there, and they were sexually assaulted and murdered. The hotel’s past was not mentioned in the campaign.²⁸

In July 2020, the country marked the 25th anniversary of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide when approximately 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed; survivors continued to face

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 97.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 101.

²⁸ Ehlimana Memisevic, “[Promoting a Bosnian War ‘Rape Hotel’ Means Erasing History](#),” *Balkan Insight* (17 August 2020).

insurmountable obstacles to obtaining truth, justice, and remedy. Many of the 94 known sites where victims of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide were buried remained unmarked, with some of the land around the gravesites being ploughed for agricultural use or used for the construction of houses and business premises or the dumping of rubbish. Efforts to memorialize the graves were hampered due to the fact that most sites were located in the Bosnian-Serb dominated Republika Srpska, whose leaders continued to deny the genocide.

Political pressure and lack of resources continued to impede the work of the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Missing Persons Institute. Over 7,200 people remained missing as a result of the armed conflict (1991–1995). In August 2020, the United Nations Committee for Elimination of Discrimination against Women called on BiH to provide immediate and comprehensive support to survivors of wartime sexual violence. In September 2020, the BiH Council of Ministers adopted the long-delayed revised War Crimes Strategy, which set new deadlines for completion of backlog cases. By the end of 2020, over 600 cases were pending before the courts. Prosecution of war crimes continued to be delayed due to systemic deficiencies in the Prosecutor’s Office.²⁹

Most of the case files and evidence from war crime trials held after the wars that broke up Yugoslavia (1991–1999) were not immediately accessible to journalists, researchers and the general public. A total of seventeen courts handled war crimes cases, but the cantonal courts in Novi Travnik and Zenica were among the few that published their judgments. The only way to get access to the other verdicts was by filing access to information requests, a time-consuming task, further complicated by bureaucracy and non-responsiveness to requests. There was a similar issue with evidence used in these trials. Researchers faced problems when trying to get documents from court archives, due to the anonymization of verdicts, which began in 2013, when the courts started to use initials instead of full names and anonymized crime locations, a practice ending only after a “Stop Censorship About War Crimes” campaign. Researchers were told that they could not consult the entire file, but had to demand access to individual documents that interested them, and had to know exactly which documents these were. In cases regarding the area that was under the control of Herzeg-Bosnia, the unrecognized proto-state that was controlled by Bosnian Croats during the War of Yugoslav Succession (1991–1995), much of the documentation was missing entirely.³⁰

²⁹ [“Bosnia and Herzegovina: 25th Anniversary of Srebrenica Massacre Is a Sombre Warning from History,”](#) *Amnesty International* (9 July 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 101, 103; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 92–93; [“Scores of Srebrenica Gravesites Remain Abandoned and Unmarked,”](#) *Balkan Insight* (9 July 2021).

³⁰ [““Stop Censorship About War Crimes’ Campaign Launched,”](#) *BIRN* (28 June 2013); Emina Dizdarevic, Serbeze Haxhijaj, Anja Vladislavljevic, and Milica Stojanovic, [“Access Denied: Most Balkan War Crimes Case Files Not Public,”](#) *Balkan Insight* (28 September 2020).

According to research by *Balkan Insight* in October 2020, a history textbook for 14–15-year-olds in the Republika Srpska approached the War of Yugoslav Succession (1991–1995) with a strong focus on ethnically Serb victims, while downplaying crimes committed by Serbian and Bosnian-Serb perpetrators. Written by Dragiša Vasić, the textbook made no mention of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica other than stating that “in July 1995 the Bosnian Serb Army conquered Srebrenica and Zepa.” It described Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadžić, who was imprisoned for life by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as “a psychiatrist, poet and politician,” who “as founder and leader of the Serb Democratic Party, had an extremely important role in the creation of Republika Srpska, whose first president he was.”³¹

On 8 April 2021, Serb and Croat lawmakers in the House of Peoples (the Bosnian parliament) voted seven against six with one abstention against changes to the criminal code to prohibit the denial of facts about the July 1995 Srebrenica genocide. It was the latest in a series of failed attempts over more than a decade to adopt a new law to outlaw denial of the 1995 genocide. Despite repeated calls for a ban from High Representative Valentin Inzko, the international official monitoring the implementation of the 1995 Dayton peace accords that ended the Bosnian war (1992–1995), the proposals had never received enough votes to pass. In its 2020 progress report on Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Commission had raised concern that political leaders in the country continued to deny the facts about war crimes established by the courts and to glorify their perpetrators. On 25 March 2021, a draft European Parliament report on Bosnia and Herzegovina condemned “any kind of historical revisionism, secessionist rhetoric and related acts, denial or glorification of war crimes committed during the 1990s war.”³²

See also Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia.

BOTSWANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

³¹ Mladen Obrenovic, “[Bosnian, Serbian Schoolbooks Teach Rival Versions of History](#),” *Balkan Insight* (30 October 2020).

³² Milica Stojanovic, “[European MPs Urge Serbia, Kosovo to Intensify War Grave Search](#),” *Balkan Insight* (26 March 2021); Nejra Dzaferagic, “[Bosnia Under Pressure to Adopt Srebrenica Genocide Denial Law](#),” *Balkan Insight* (16 April 2021).

BRAZIL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2003, 2005–2020.

Despite families' struggle for justice, impunity for enforced disappearances persisted and there was no significant progress in clarifying past cases. Domestic law was not brought into line with international treaties and did not include a specific crime of enforced disappearance, which continued to be dealt with under other provisions, such as kidnapping. This gap in the law continued to pose a barrier to the prosecution of those responsible, as well as to the implementation of reparation policies for victims. The justice system also lacked effective and independent systems for the investigations into these crimes.³³

In October 2019, President Jair Bolsonaro appointed Letícia Dornelles, a journalist, actress, and soap opera screenwriter, as the new director of the Casa de Rui Barbosa (a federal public research institution in Rio de Janeiro focused on history, law, philology, and literature) rather than an experienced academic. Many academics, including the Associação Nacional de História (ANPUH; National Historical Association) protested this appointment. In early January 2020, researchers on the board of the foundation were dismissed, which, again, led to protests from scholars. Political scientist Christian Lynch, who had been selected to coordinate one of the Casa's research departments, had his appointment reversed by then-Special Secretary of Culture Roberto Alvim, for critical comments he had made about the government. In May 2020, the newspaper *O Globo* revealed a confidential attempt to turn the research institution into a museum.³⁴

On 31 March 2020, a group of people gathered in front of the army's headquarters in the capital Brasília to commemorate the 1964 coup, which led to a military dictatorship (1964–1985). The demonstration was attended by President Jair Bolsonaro, who referred to the date as "the day of liberty." According to the National Truth Commission, hundreds of people had systematically been tortured, disappeared and extrajudicially executed at the time. Mainly due to the interpretation given to the 1979 Amnesty Law, impunity continued to prevail for the crimes in that era.³⁵

³³ Amnesty International, *State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 98, 99.

³⁴ Conrado Hübner Mendes and Others, *Academic Freedom in Brazil: A Case Study on Recent Developments* (Berlin: Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) & Center for the Analysis of Liberty and Authoritarianism (Laut), September 2020), 21–22; "[Nota da ANPUH-Brasil sobre a direção da fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa](#)" (no place, no date [2020]); Katrin Kinzelbach, ed., *Researching Academic Freedom: Guidelines and Sample Case Studies* (Erlangen: FAU University Press, 2020), 93–94.

³⁵ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 94.

In September 2020, German company Volkswagen admitted that its representatives had cooperated with the dictatorship (1964–1985). The National Truth Commission had found in 2014 that company representatives had provided information about its workers to authorities, which might have resulted in illegal arrests, torture, and other abuses. As part of a settlement agreement with the Brazilian prosecutors, Volkswagen agreed to pay 36 million reais (approximately US\$6.5 million) in compensation to victims and to fund efforts to identify the remains of victims and to educate the public about past abuses.³⁶

BULGARIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015–2017, 2019–2020.

See North Macedonia.

BURKINA FASO

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

On 13 April 2021, a military tribunal announced that former President Blaise Compaoré (1951–) and thirteen others were to face charges over the 1987 murder of former President Thomas Sankara (1949–1987), indicting them for “attack on state security, complicity in murder and concealment of corpse.” The trial was seen as a landmark moment in a 34-year quest for justice, led by the Sankara family and supported by many in the country [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2001, 2016–2018*].³⁷

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 115.

³⁷ “[Burkina Faso: la France n’a pas encore livré toutes ses archives pour le procès Sankara](#),” *RFI* (20 October 2020); Emmanuel Akinwotu, “[Burkina Faso ex-President Compaoré to Face Trial over Thomas Sankara Murder](#),” *Guardian* (13 April 2021); Noel Ebrin Brou, “[Compaoré to Be Charged over Sankara Murder](#),” *BBC News* (14 April 2021).

BURUNDI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2003, 2005–2015, 2017–2020.

Throughout 2020, the Commission vérité et réconciliation (CVR; Truth and Reconciliation Commission) – provided for in the 2000 Arusha peace accords and tasked with investigating ethnic violence in Burundi’s recent past – conducted highly publicized exhumations of mass graves connected to past atrocities. Exhumations were focused on graves linked to the 1972 massacres that primarily targeted Hutu. This focus combined with comments made by public officials was considered polarizing and seen as an attempt to impose a single narrative. The exhumations were carried out in a manner which jeopardized the preservation of valuable evidence and failed to ensure respectful storage of human remains. On 7 January 2021, the CVR presented to parliament an intermediary report focusing on the 1972 massacres. On 15 January 2021, the civil society platform Forum pour le renforcement de la société civile (FORSC; Forum for the Strengthening of Civil Society) criticized it as biased, saying that the CVR relied on selected testimonies, did not investigate archives of local administrations, and solely focused on the violence against Hutu population, failing to address violence against Tutsis and crises preceding the 1972 massacres in 1961, 1962, 1965, 1969, and 1971.”³⁸

The appointments of Prime Minister Alain Guillaume Bunyoni (1972–) and Minister for the Interior, Community Development and Public Security Gervais Ndirakobuca, both under international sanctions for their alleged role in the 2015 election violence, casted doubt over the new administration’s commitment to accountability and raised concerns about the possible interference with criminal investigations into past abuses.³⁹

³⁸ International Crisis Group, “[Burundi: January 2021](#),” *Crisis Watch* (January 2021); Ephrem Rugiririza, “[Commission vérité au Burundi: le rapport de la discorde](#),” *Justiceinfo.net* (4 March 2021); Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 106.

³⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 127.

CAMBODIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2018. 2020.

On 10 April 2021, the Culture Ministry criticized Irish artist Matt Loughrey after he altered photos of victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide (1975–1979) in a profile piece in *Vice*. Loughrey had colorized images of photos taken in the notorious Tuol Sleng prison; smiles were reportedly added to some faces. In the piece, Loughrey had said he had wanted to humanize the victims. The Culture Ministry retorted that altering the images manipulated historical sources and affected the dignity of the victims. Later, *Vice* removed the images for not meeting its editorial standards.⁴⁰

CAMEROON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010, 2012–2014, 2016, 2020.

On 21 May 2019, the dismembered and beheaded body of history and geography teacher Wontai Vondou Olivier ([1987 or 1988]–2019) was found in a bag, his head dumped on the street in Mobile Nkwen, Bamenda (the capital of the Northwest Region). Olivier taught at three Government Bilingual High Schools (GBHS Nitop, GBHS Ntamulung, GBHS Bamendankwe) in Bamenda. A video filmed by the perpetrators, allegedly separatist Ambazonian fighters, and uploaded on social media showed how Olivier had been begging for his life and how he had been tortured. The perpetrators also told the Ambazonian interim-government that they had caught “the spy” and would cut off his head and dump it in Nkwen. Oliver was mistaken for a soldier with the Cameroonian military. In another post, however, suspected separatist fighters alleged that Cameroon troops killed Olivier to frame the rebels, a claim denied by commander General Robinson Agha. Schools – seen as organs of Francophone dominance by rebels – were among the worst hit in the uprising by English-speaking separatists. Hundreds of teachers had been killed, wounded, abducted for ransom, or had their houses torched. According to the United Nations, 81 percent of children were out of school across the North-West and South-West regions in 2019–2020.⁴¹

⁴⁰ “[Cambodia Criticises Edited Photos of Khmer Rouge Victims](#),” *BBC News* (11 April 2021).

⁴¹ “[Cameroon: History Teacher Killed, Dismembered in Bamenda by Ambazonian Fighters](#),” *Journal du Cameroun* (22 May 2019); Kiven Nsodzefe, “[Cameroon: Anglophone Crisis: Government Opens Investigation To Trace Other Body Parts Of Beheaded Teacher In Bamenda](#),” *Cameroon-Info.Net* (22 May 2019); Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “[Cameroon Teachers Protest Escalating Violence in Separatist Areas](#),” *VOA News* (27 May 2019); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 138.

CANADA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000, 2002–2003, 2005–2006, 2008–2009, 2012–2020.

On 29 August 2020, activists in Montréal pulled down and decapitated a statue of Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald (1815–1891; prime minister 1860–1890). Remembered for his nation-building policies, Macdonald also created the residential school system (*see below*) and sponsored a highly racist Indian Act in 1876. He was also accused of allowing famine and disease to kill many indigenous people and his government forced some First Nation communities to leave their traditional territories, withholding food until they did so.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called the toppling of the statue an act of vandalism. In 2016, the Canadian Elementary School Teachers Association had voted in favor of taking the name Macdonald from schools. In June 2018, the Canadian Historical Association had taken Macdonald's name off its prize for most influential Canadian history book of the year. Macdonald's statue in Montréal had also been decapitated in 1992. In early August 2018, the city of Victoria, British Columbia, had decided to remove a statue of Macdonald, which had been frequently vandalized [See also NCH *Annual Report 2019*].⁴²

On 23 September 2020, the University of Ottawa suspended part-time art historian Verushka Lieutenant-Duval after a student complained that she had used the N-word in a class. Lieutenant-Duval apologized, explaining that she had used it during a discussion about groups who “re-appropriate” or reclaim words and phrases previously used to disparage or oppress. She also said that she was worried that the controversy had been blown out of proportion by people taking extreme positions. Lieutenant-Duval's name, phone number, and home address had been posted on social media, endangering her personal safety. On 20 October 2020, Quebec Premier François Legault suggested that the issue was about academic freedom and censorship.⁴³

On 20 November 2020, four historians and archivists – Robert Bothwell, John English, Paul Marsden, and Timothy Sayle – published an article in *The Globe and Mail*, criticizing the lack of access to the full records about the “1970 October Crisis,” when Quebec's independence movement, the Front de

⁴² Jennifer Ackerman, “[The Statue Dilemma: Indigenous Research Week Tackles Commemoration of Historic Figures](#),” *Regina Leader-Post* (28 September 2018); Mark Wolfram, “[The Past and Future of the Iconoclast](#),” *Historical Dialogues* (4 September 2018); “[Canada Statue of John A. Macdonald Toppled by Activists in Montreal](#),” *BBC News* (30 August 2020); “[Statue of Canada's First Prime Minister Toppled by Protesters](#),” *Al Jazeera* (30 August 2020); “[Trudeau Condemns Toppling of Canada's First PM as 'Vandalism'](#),” *BBC News* (31 August 2020).

⁴³ Amanda Pfeffer, “[Ottawa Professor Apologizes for Using N-word, Regrets Growing Controversy](#),” *CBC* (21 October 2020).

libération du Québec, kidnappé un diplomate britannique et un ministre du Québec, tuant l'un d'eux. Suite aux kidnappements, le gouvernement canadien a utilisé la Loi sur les mesures de guerre et a déployé des troupes à Québec, arrêtant des centaines de personnes. Les auteurs ont écrit que les minutes du cabinet étaient devenues disponibles en 2000 mais que de nombreuses parties avaient été noyées en vertu de la Loi sur l'accès à l'information. L'organisme Canada Déclassifié a mis en ligne des documents déclassifiés liés à la force de tâche fédérale sur les kidnappements. Le principal organe de prise de décision pendant la crise était le comité du cabinet sur la sécurité et l'intelligence, qui recevait tous les briefings de la Gendarmerie royale du Canada (GRC), des Forces armées canadiennes, et du procureur général, ainsi que les briefs et les mémorandums officiels fournis aux ministres clés. Seulement quelques documents du comité ont été rendus publics. Dans le cas des dossiers de la GRC transférés au Service de renseignement de la sécurité (SRS) en 1984, un nombre disproportionné de pages a été noyé. L'emplacement de nombreux dossiers sur la crise était inconnu après que la Commission McDonald ait collecté ceux-ci en 1981 pour rendre compte des activités du Service de sécurité de la GRC. À l'occasion du 50^e anniversaire de la crise d'octobre 1970, en octobre 2020, le Bloc québécois a déposé une résolution exigeant des excuses en parlement, mais elle a été déclinée.⁴⁴

En décembre 2020, l'Institut Yellowhead, un centre de recherche dirigé par une Première Nation, a découvert que le gouvernement et l'Église catholique n'ont mis en œuvre que huit des 94 recommandations de la Commission de vérité et de réconciliation (CVR) de 2015. La CVR a été créée en 2008 pour enquêter sur la façon dont, entre les années 1870 et 1996, le gouvernement a enlevé environ 150 000 enfants autochtones de leurs foyers et les a envoyés dans des écoles « gérées par l'église », ce que la CVR a décrit comme une « culture de génocide » visant les Autochtones. Ces écoles faisaient partie d'un réseau transnational créé pour forcer l'assimilation des enfants autochtones en les éloignant de leurs foyers et communautés, et en interdisant leur langue maternelle ou leurs pratiques culturelles. Les abus physiques, émotionnels et sexuels étaient répandus dans ces institutions, ainsi que le travail forcé. La CVR a calculé qu'au moins 3 201 enfants des écoles résidentielles étaient morts, bien que le total réel puisse être inconnu en raison de décès non enregistrés et de dossiers détruits.

Le 27 mai 2021, une tombe collective contenant les restes de 215 enfants autochtones a été découverte sur les terres d'une ancienne école résidentielle près de la ville de Kamloops, en Colombie-Britannique. L'école résidentielle indienne de Kamloops a été établie en 1890 sous la direction de l'Église catholique romaine et a fermé ses portes en 1978. Des découvertes similaires ont été faites dans d'autres écoles résidentielles (École indienne de Marieval, province du Saskatchewan; Mission de Saint-Eugène, Cranbrook, Colombie-Britannique; École industrielle de l'île Kuper, Colombie-Britannique) en juin et juillet 2021. Le 15 juillet 2021, la Première Nation Tk'emlups te Secwepemc a publié son premier rapport complet sur la découverte des 215

⁴⁴ Robert Bothwell, John English, Paul Marsden, Timothy Sayle, « [October Surprise: Lack of Access to Historic Documents Leaves Canadians in the Dark about the FLQ Crisis](#), » *Globe and Mail* (20 novembre 2020).

unmarked graves at Kamloops. Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, and Kúkpi7 (chief) Rosanne Casimir called on the government to release attendance records to begin the process of identifying potential victims and on the Catholic church to release all its records.⁴⁵

On 6 June 2021, a group of people protesting at Ryerson University in Toronto over the discovery of the Kamloops mass graves (*see above*), toppled the statue of Egerton Ryerson (1803–1882), who was deemed one of the architects of the country’s residential school system. Leading up to the protest, calls to change the university’s name and remove the statue had grown, and the statue had been vandalized.⁴⁶

On 1 July 2021, Canada Day (the anniversary of the founding of the Canadian Confederation in 1867), a group of people, wearing orange shirt to honor the Indigenous children who were sent to residential schools, left a sign that read “we were children once. Bring them home” at a statue of Queen Victoria (1819–1901) in Winnipeg. The group then toppled the statue, as well as a smaller statue of Queen Elizabeth II (1926–). Both royals were seen as representatives of the country’s colonial history. The British Crown had negotiated treaties with indigenous First Nations in Canada and the government had enacted its residential schools policy during Queen Victoria’s reign.⁴⁷

See also Myanmar, Poland, United Kingdom.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2006–2009, 2011–2012, 2014–2020.

In September 2020, the Special Criminal Court, a United Nations-backed hybrid court mandated to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed since 2003, confirmed that ten cases were under investigation. At least 21 people were arrested as a result of investigations in 2019 and 2020 and were in pre-trial detention at the end of 2020.

⁴⁵ Tracey Lindeman, “[Canada: Remains of 215 Children Found at Indigenous Residential School Site](#),” *Guardian* (28 May 2021); “[Canada Mourns as Remains of 215 Children Found at Indigenous School](#),” *BBC News* (30 May 2021); “[Canada: Hundreds More Unmarked Graves Found at Former Indigenous School](#),” *Guardian* (24 June 2021); Leyland Cecco, “[Canada Discovers 751 Unmarked Graves at Former Residential School](#),” *Guardian* (24 June 2021); Hillary Beaumont and Jillian Kestler-D’Amours, “[The Path to Accountability for Canada’s Residential School Graves](#),” *Al Jazeera* (27 June 2021); Leyland Cecco, “[Canada: At Least 160 More Unmarked Graves Found in British Columbia](#),” *Guardian* (13 July 2021); Leyland Cecco, “[First Nation Calls for Release of School Records to Identify Residential Victims](#),” *Guardian* (15 July 2021).

⁴⁶ “[Egerton Ryerson Statue Toppled at Canada Indigenous School Protest](#),” *BBC* (7 June 2021).

⁴⁷ Leyland Cecco, “[Queen Victoria Statue Toppled in Canada amid Anger at Deaths of Indigenous Children](#),” *Guardian* (2 July 2021); “[Statues of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II Torn Down in Canada](#),” *BBC News* (2 July 2021).

However, proceedings lacked transparency and the identities of those arrested were not publicly disclosed. There were also delays in the recruitment of international judges and the establishment of the Court's legal aid system.

The trial of Alfred Yekatom (1975–) and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, Anti-Balaka leaders, began at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in February 2021. They were arrested for war crimes and crimes against humanity and transferred to The Hague in 2018 and 2019 respectively. On 24 January 2021, Mahamat Said Abdel Kani, accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed as a Seleka commander in Bangui in 2013, was flown to the ICC.

In February 2020, the criminal court of Bangui convicted five Anti-Balaka leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity in relation to the 2017 attack in Bangassou, in which at least 62 civilians and ten UN peacekeepers were killed. It was the first conviction for crimes under international law since the conflict started in 2003. However, serious concerns arose during the trial over the rights of the defendants and protection of victims and witnesses.⁴⁸

CHAD

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

See France.

CHILE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2020.

During 2020, Chilean courts continued to prosecute former police and military officers responsible for human rights abuses during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1990). On 6 March 2020, a Chilean court convicted 31 former agents for their roles in the 1974 disappearances of moviemakers Carmen Bueno Cifuentes and Jorge Muller Silva during the security forces' Operación Colombo, in which they forcibly disappeared 119 political prisoners. In September 2020, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would criminalize protected speech of people who "justify," "approve of," or "deny" the

⁴⁸ "[Yekatom and Ngaïssona Case](#)," *International Criminal Court*; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 114; "[Central African Republic: First Seleka Suspect in ICC Custody](#)," *Eurasia Review* (28 January 2021).

human rights violations committed during the dictatorship, punishing them with up to three years in prison.⁴⁹

Chile maintained a 50-year secrecy order that sealed from the public testimony provided by victims before the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture from November 2003 to May 2004. The testimony revealed places of detention and torture methods. Former President Michelle Bachelet's administration (2014–2018) submitted a bill to lift the secrecy order in 2017. In late 2020, the order had been set aside in approximately 15 cases, allowing access to files with testimonies, photographs, and press releases.⁵⁰

In January 2020, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights held a public hearing on Judge Daniel Urrutia Laubreaux's case. The judge had brought his case to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights in 2005, arguing that the Supreme Court had violated his right to freedom of speech when it sanctioned him for criticizing in an academic paper the Court's actions during the Chilean military regime (1973–1990).⁵¹

On [1 October] 2020, the appeals court confirmed the indictment against retired military officers Eduardo Jara Hallad (director of Department II of Counterintelligence of the Military Intelligence Section DINE), Mercedes del Carmen Rojas Kuschevich (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 (CNI; National Information Center) covering the period 1980–1982 [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].⁵²

On 24 November 2020, the criminal complaint against Alejandra Araya, history professor, director of the Archivo Central Andrés Bello (Andrés Bello Central Archive) at the University of Chile and full professor of human rights at the University of Chile, was dismissed due to lack of evidence [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].⁵³

See also Israel.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 155, 156, 159.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 155, 156.

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 160.

⁵² Nicolás Díaz, "[Justicia confirma procesamiento de oficiales \(r\) del Ejército por destrucción de archivos de la CNI.](#)" *Biobio Chile* (1 October 2020).

⁵³ *Archives and Human Rights: News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights* (February 2021), 1.

CHINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2020.

Censorship and surveillance extended beyond national borders during 2020. Complying with strict domestic censorship standards, Chinese tech firms operating outside of the country blocked and censored content deemed to be “politically sensitive,” including topics relating to ethnic minorities, political unrest, and criticism of the government. TikTok, a video-sharing app, deleted numerous videos shared by Uyghurs living abroad to draw attention to their missing relatives. Leaked internal documents showed that the platform had instructed moderators to censor videos featuring “politically sensitive” topics, such as Falun Gong or the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. LinkedIn also blocked profiles from being viewed inside the country if they mentioned “politically sensitive topics” such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, including references to academic study.

On 11 June 2020, the online meeting platform Zoom confirmed that it ended at least four Zoom video meetings commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre or dealing with religious and/or political activities, and terminated the host accounts associated with those meetings – in Hong Kong and the United States – after the Chinese government had informed it that the gatherings were illegal in China. The victims included Wang Dan and Zhou Fengsuo, two of the student leaders in 1989 [See for Wang Dan also NCH *Annual Reports 1995–1998, 2000, 2009, 2014*]. Zoom said the accounts had been reinstated. In December 2020, United States Justice Department prosecutors reported that the China-based executive, Jin Xinjiang (aka Julien Jin) ([1981]–), worked as Zoom’s primary liaison with Chinese law enforcement and intelligence services, sharing user information and terminating video calls at the Chinese government’s request. Zoom dismissed Jin for violating its policies. He was charged with “conspiracy to commit interstate harassment and unlawful conspiracy to transfer a means of identification.” Living in China, Jin faced up to ten years in prison [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].⁵⁴

In March 2017, Shen Zhihua ([1950–]), reputedly China’s foremost historian of the Cold War and specialist of the Korean War (1950–1953), criticized China’s official policy toward North Korea at a university lecture in Dalian. He declared, inter alia: “Judging by the current situation, North Korea is

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Redden, “[Scholars Raise Concerns about Using Zoom to Teach about China](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (12 June 2020); Ellen Nakashima & Drew Harwell, “[Federal Prosecutors Accuse Zoom Executive of Working with Chinese Government to Surveil Users and Suppress Video Calls](#),” *Seattle Times / Washington Post* (18 December 2020); “[US Charges Ex-Zoom Employee with Shutting Down Tiananmen Square Events](#),” *BBC News* (19 December 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 174; Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 122-123; Helen Davidson, “[LinkedIn Blocks Profiles from View in China if Sensitive Topics Mentioned](#),” *Guardian* (18 June 2021).

China's latent enemy and South Korea could be China's friend." His views and the debate about them were not reported in the state news media. But his speech remained on the website of the Center for Cold War International History Studies at East China Normal University in Shanghai, where Shen worked. He restated his views in lectures in Shanghai and, in mid-April 2017, in Xian. The son of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials, Shen previously used his earnings from gold trafficking business to pay for dredging archives in Russia, after serving a prison term (1983–May 1984) on a (reportedly groundless) charge of leaking state secrets.

In November 2020, Shen delivered a live-streamed speech on the rise and fall of the USSR at an academic seminar at Capital Normal University in Beijing, but an hour into the lecture, the feed was suddenly cut off. In a statement, the university blamed a malicious tip-off from students who acted as classroom informants to report "inappropriate speech" of teachers when they make statements allegedly challenging the CCP's or President Xi Jinping's official narratives. Ironically, Shen's lecture was the seventh in a "Four Histories" series at the Capital Normal University History Institute intended to carry out the spirit of Xi's speech on the study of the "Four Histories" (the history of the party, the history of the People's Republic of China, the history of reform and opening up, and the history of the development of socialism).⁵⁵

In late May 2019, Yuan Keqin, a Chinese professor of East Asian political history at Hokkaido University of Education (HUE), Japan, traveled to China to attend his mother's funeral. Days later, authorities arrested him and his wife under unknown circumstances. Authorities released her on the condition that she travel to Japan, retrieve Yuan's laptop and academic materials, and return to China with them. In March 2020, the Foreign Ministry stated that Yuan was "suspected of espionage and had been investigated by the national security authority in accordance with law," reported that he had "made a full confession," and that his case was transferred to the prosecutor. The espionage charge was widely regarded as spurious.⁵⁶

On 19 April 2020, Beijing police detained Chen Mei and Cai Wei for archiving censored news articles, interviews, and personal accounts related to the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic in Wuhan. They remained out of contact with their families. Chen and Cai were involved with Terminus2049, an online project working to archive articles that had been removed from mainstream media outlets and social

⁵⁵ Chris Buckley, "[Criticism of Beijing's North Korea Policy Comes From Unlikely Place: China](#)," *New York Times* (18 April 2017); "[Shen Zhihua](#)," *The China Story* (retrieved 19 April 2017); Dahai Han, "[Malicious Tip-Offs Stifle Academic Freedom in China, Analysts Say](#)," *VOA News* (20 November 2020).

⁵⁶ Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think 2020* (New York: SAR, 2020), 84.

media by state censorship. After the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic, numerous articles relating to the virus were censored.⁵⁷

In September 2020, the film *The Eight Hundred* premiered. The movie had been withdrawn from the Shanghai International Film Festival in June 2019, because it had used “historical debris to cover up the actual truth of history,” according to a published conference report. The cancellation came amid a broadening political crackdown on cultural works that were not sufficiently in tune with Xi Jinping’s ideology [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. It remained unclear what was changed for the September premier.⁵⁸

On 16 December 2020, writer and photographer Du Bin was detained for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” ahead of the launch on 1 January 2021 of his book analyzing early Soviet Communism – indicating that historical inquiry that touches indirectly on the Chinese Communist Party’s governance may be subject to a governmental “veto” in the form of criminal charges. Authorities also questioned Du about his previous books, before eventually releasing him conditionally after 37 days. Du had been detained in 2013 after releasing a documentary on forced labor.⁵⁹

On 9 April 2021, the Cyberspace Administration of China launched a hotline to report online comments that defamed the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its history, vowing to crack down on “historical nihilists” ahead of the Party’s 100th anniversary in July 2021. The tip line allowed people to report fellow netizens who “distorted” CCP history, attacked its leadership and policies, defamed national heroes and “denied the excellence of advanced socialist culture” online. “Historical nihilism” was a phrase used in China to describe public doubt and skepticism over the CCP’s description of past events. The 2018 law [See NCH *Annual Report 2018*] stipulated that people who “insulted, slandered, or infringed upon” the memory of China’s national heroes and martyrs faced prison time of up to three years. In early April, authorities in Jiangsu province detained a 19-year-old man after making “insulting” comments online about Japan’s 1937 occupation of Nanjing.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ [“COVID-19 Activist Faces Five Years in Prison,”](#) *Amnesty International* (18 September 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 167; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 122.

⁵⁸ Steven Lee Meyers, [“Patriotic Movie Apparently Falls Afoul of China’s Censors,”](#) *New York Times* (26 June 2019); Steve Rose, [“The Eight Hundred: How China’s Blockbusters Became a New Political Battleground,”](#) *Guardian* (18 September 2020).

⁵⁹ PEN America, [Freedom to Write Index 2020](#) (Washington: PEN, 2021).

⁶⁰ Cate Cadell, [“China Launches Hotline for Netizens to Report ‘Illegal’ History Comments,”](#) *Reuters* (11 April 2021).

In early May 2021, shares in food delivery giant Meituan fell sharply after its chief executive, Wang Xing, shared a 1,000-year-old poem, *The Book Burning Pit* by Zhang Jie (fl. 877), on the Fanfou social media platform. This Tang dynasty poem was a sarcastic criticism of the Emperor Qin Shi Huang (259 BCE–210 BCE), infamous for killing dissenting Confucian scholars and burning their books. It was interpreted as veiled criticism of President Xi Jinping’s government, comparing the current suppression of dissent with the emperor’s tyrannical rule. On 9 May 2021, Wang deleted the post, saying that the poem was a reference to his company’s competitors.⁶¹

On 4 June 2021, the social media account for the popular Chinese e-commerce app Xiaohongshu was blocked after it had issued a post on the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. It had posted “Tell me loudly: what’s the date today?” on microblogging platform Weibo. The post to its fourteen million followers was swiftly deleted and the Weibo page was replaced by a message saying that it was investigated for violations of laws and regulations. It was unclear whether the post was intended to reference the massacre. Xiaohongshu means Little Red Book, the same name as Mao Zedong’s book of quotations.⁶²

On 28 June 2021, an art performance titled *The Great Journey* was staged at the Bird’s Nest stadium in Beijing, where performers put on set-pieces detailing the history of the Chinese Communist Party. However, significant events such as the Cultural Revolution purges (1966–1976), the Tiananmen Square protests (1989), and the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong (2014–) were reportedly missing.⁶³

Hong-Kong

Following the introduction of the national security law on 30 June 2020, the book project *Hong Kong on the Frontline 1997–2020*, written by Kent Ewing, columnist at the newspaper Hong Kong Free Press was annulled on 19 September 2020 by its publisher FormAsia Books despite the fact that lawyers had gone over the proofs to ensure compliance with the law. Not able to find a designer willing to be associated with the project, a printer willing to print it, and bookstores willing to sell it, the publisher dropped the project.⁶⁴

⁶¹ [“Meituan: China Tech Giant’s Shares Slide over Ancient Poem,”](#) *BBC News* (11 May 2021).

⁶² [“Xiaohongshu Social Media Account Blocked after Tiananmen Post,”](#) *BBC News* (7 June 2021).

⁶³ [“CCP 100: Xi Warns China Will not Be ‘Oppressed’ in Anniversary Speech,”](#) *BBC News* (1 July 2021).

⁶⁴ Kent Ewing, [“My Ill-Fated Book Deal Reveals Hong Kong Self-Censorship under the Security Law,”](#) *Hong Kong Free Press* (15 December 2020).

In early November 2020, a teacher at Ho Lap primary school was deregistered for giving a factually incorrect account of the Sino-British Opium War (1839–1842). He had told students in an online class that Britain waged the war in an attempt to destroy opium in China’s territories, while the British instead tried to sell massive amounts of opium in China whereas Qing dynasty officials tried to ban it. The teacher apologized for the mistake and recorded a correction on the video. On 6 October, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said that a small fraction of teachers was using their teaching responsibilities to “convey wrong messages to promote misunderstanding about the nation.”⁶⁵

On 19 November 2020, students who organized an unauthorized demonstration and procession in commemoration of the November 2019 student protests and campus sieges at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), were threatened with prosecution under the new national security law. CUHK objected to a poster posted online by student groups advertising an exhibition of the 2019 events, saying that the “exhibition’s host has presented a biased portrayal of the [2019] incident.” The student union of CUHK New Asia College, one of the event’s organizers responded that the poster’s protest scenes were taken from major news media and merely depicted the “historical truth.” PolyU banned the screening on campus of two documentary films about the 2019 siege. PolyU student union member Joe Choi reacted saying that the films were “documentaries or histories of the siege of PolyU a year ago. We cannot let the government or the schools try to wipe out our history.” PolyU also objected to union plans for a front-page ad in the anti-government newspaper *Apple Daily* to commemorate the anniversary of the 2019 two-week campus siege.⁶⁶

On 25 January 2021, the University of Science and Technology (HKUST) suspended student union leaders Donald Mak Ka-chun and Lo Kai-ho for a semester for organizing a memorial event on campus amid the Covid-19 pandemic and refusing to remove protest-related materials from notice boards. They were also warned that they could be expelled if any further violations occurred. HKUST said that the union’s May 2020 memorial event – marking the six-month anniversary of computer science student Alex Chow Tsz-lok falling to his death in a car park near the site of a protest – posed public health concerns and violated management’s instruction to not hold the event.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Rachel Wong, “[Hong Kong Teacher Struck Off for Allegedly Promoting Independence as Lam Vows More Action against ‘Bad Apples’](#),” *Hong Kong Free Press* (6 October 2020); Rachel Wong, “[Second Hong Kong Teacher Sacked, This Time for Opium War Blunder as Lawmaker Says Punishment too Harsh](#),” *Hong Kong Free Press* (13 November 2020).

⁶⁶ Mimi Leung & Yojana Sharma, “[Police Start ‘National Security’ Probe of Campus Protest](#),” *University World News* (19 November 2020).

⁶⁷ Chan Ho-him, “[Hong Kong University Suspends Student Leaders over Banned Memorial for Undergraduate Who Fell to His Death near Site of Protest](#),” *South China Morning Post* (25 January 2021); Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, [Factsheet](#) (25 January 2021).

In 2021, authorities for the second year banned a 4 June vigil in Victoria Park commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Police again objected to the event because of social distancing restrictions, prohibiting large gatherings. They also warned that the new national security law could be wielded against Tiananmen mourners. On 6 May 2021, pro-democracy activist and student Joshua Wong [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2017, 2020*] was sentenced to ten months' imprisonment for participating in the 4 June 2020 vigil. On 30 April 2021, Wong had pleaded guilty for participating in the vigil. Three others were also sentenced. Already in August 2020, 25 Hong Kong democracy activists, including Wong, media tycoon Jimmy Lai and leaders of the Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, had been charged with "knowingly taking part in an unauthorized assembly." One of the organizers of the 2020 vigil was Mak Hoi-wah ([1951]–), chairman of the managing committee of a museum dedicated to the 4 June 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre (*see below*). Lee Cheuk-yan, chairman of the Alliance, was also charged with organizing the assembly.

On 31 May 2021, police arrested Alexandra Wong on suspicion of taking part in an unlawful assembly, after she staged a lone demonstration over the prohibition of the vigil. She had chanted slogans in a park holding a sign that read "32, June 4, Tiananmen lament" (32 meaning the thirty-second anniversary of the massacre) and a yellow umbrella, a symbol of Hong Kong's 2014 democracy movement, after which she walked toward Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong.

On 2 June 2021, the operators of the 4 June Museum closed its doors, hours after officials from the Food and Environmental Hygiene department accused it of operating as a place of public entertainment without the required licenses. Three days before, the museum had started a public exhibition commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre. Since the promulgation on 30 June 2020 of the national security law criminalizing a broad spectrum of critical speech in Hong Kong, the only museum in the world dedicated to the 4 June 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre had embarked on a multi-lingual digitization and online archive program in order to preserve the museum's knowledge in case of confiscation and shutdown. These efforts were part of a wider movement in Hong Kong, reportedly initiated by journalism professor at the University of Hong Kong Fu King-wa to chronicle events and preserve history that the Chinese Communist Party would rather see expunged, including so-called Lennon Walls (public spaces where protesters wrote or pasted political messages). Established in 2012 by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, the museum had been vandalized on a number of occasions. It had to move out of its last long-term home, in Tsim Sha Tsui, after the building's managers sued it for violating land-use regulations (ostensibly because the property was supposed to be an office space). Just days before it was scheduled to re-open in the Mong Kok area of Kowloon, in April 2020, a group of vandals broke into the venue and poured salt water into the electrical sockets and switch boxes.

On 4 June 2021, Hong Kong police arrested barrister and human rights activist Chow Hang Tung ([1984]–) for promoting unauthorized assembly. Chow was the vice chairwoman of the Hong Kong

Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movement in China which organized annual vigils for victims of the massacre. She continued to call on residents to commemorate the anniversary in their own ways. Chow had posted on Facebook the message “Turn on the lights wherever you are – whether on your phone, candles or electronic candles.” Pro-Beijing political figures and media put more pressure on the government to ban the Alliance on the grounds that the call for an end to one-party dictatorship in its manifesto was subversive.⁶⁸

Inner Mongolia

On 1 September 2020, authorities in Inner Mongolia issued a directive to reduce teaching in the Mongolian language in favor of Mandarin Chinese. Three core subjects in Inner Mongolian primary and secondary schools would be gradually taught in Mandarin: politics, history, and language and literature. If fully implemented, it would amount to eliminating the core of the Mongolian language teaching curriculum within the education system by 2022. The changes mirrored those already made in Xinjiang in 2017 and Tibet in 2018.

In the weekend before 1 September and until mid-September, crowds of students and parents across several cities in Inner Mongolia were seen protesting the change. Eight Mongols committed suicide, including a government official, a primary school principal, teachers, parents and a student. The protests were heavily repressed. Temtsiltu Shobtsood, chairman of the Inner Mongolian People’s Party and exile in Germany, said that the imposition of Mandarin and the majority Han Chinese culture on minorities in Inner Mongolia was a form of “cultural genocide.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ [“Hong Kong Activists Charged Over Traditional Tiananmen Vigil,”](#) *The Guardian* (7 August 2020); Eric Cheung, [“Control, Alter, Delete: Hong Kong Activists and Academics Are Hurrying to Digitize Historical Records and Artifacts under Threat from Creeping Censorship,”](#) *Rest of World* (26 October 2020); Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 124; Helen Davidson, [“Hong Kong Court Jails Three on Riot Charges despite No Evidence of Rioting,”](#) *Guardian* (6 May 2021); [“Hong Kong: Joshua Wong Jailed over Banned Tiananmen Vigil,”](#) *BBC News* (6 May 2021); [“Hong Kong’s ‘Grandma Wong’ Arrested for Solo Tiananmen Protest,”](#) *Guardian* (31 May 2021); Kenji Kawase, [“Hong Kong’s Tiananmen Museum Forced to Close ahead of Anniversary,”](#) *Nikkei Asia* (2 June 2021); [“Hong Kong’s Tiananmen Museum Shuts Down amid Investigation,”](#) *Independent* (2 June 2021); Chris Yeung, [“Hong Kong Will Be Dark on the Anniversary of the Massacre this 4 June as the National Security Law Bites,”](#) *Index on Censorship* (3 June 2021); Helen Davidson, [“Hong Kong Vigil Leader Arrested as 7,000 Police Enforce Ban on Tiananmen Anniversary Protests,”](#) *Guardian* (4 June 2021); [“Tiananmen: Hong Kong Vigil Organiser Arrested on 32nd Anniversary,”](#) *BBC News* (4 June 2021).

⁶⁹ Helen Davidson, [“Inner Mongolia Protests at China’s Plans to Bring in Mandarin-only Lessons,”](#) *Guardian* (1 September 2020); [“Rare Rallies in China over Mongolian Language Curb,”](#) *BBC News* (1 September 2020); Leen Vervaeke, [“Uitzonderlijk groot protest in Binnen-Mongolië tegen ‘verchinezing’ onderwijs, overheid reageert keihard,”](#) *De Volkskrant* (2 September 2020); Uradyn Bulag, “Dying for the Mother Tongue,” *Index on Censorship*, 49 no. 4 (2020), 49–51; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 161.

Xinjiang

Among the historians and related professionals imprisoned since 2015 were the following:

- On 1 August 2015, teacher Aminan Momixi ([1964]–) was detained along with 37 students with whom she was studying the Koran in her home. She was charged with “illegally possessing religious materials and subversive historical information.”⁷⁰
- In 2016, Ayshem Ehmet, a Uyghur writer, former editor of *Qumul Gazette* and chief editor of the magazine *Qumul Literature*, was sentenced to 18 years in prison. This occurred after his historical novel *Immortal Traces* (1987), depicting Uyghur peasant resistance to their harsh treatment under the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), was banned in 2016.⁷¹
- In 2016, Ablajan Memet (male), a history teacher at Peyzawat No.1 High School in Kashgar, was arrested. He had graduated from the history department of Xinjiang University.⁷²
- In April 2016, Uyghur writer, journalist, webmaster, and government official Omerjan Hasan (Hesen) (pen name: Omerjan Hasan Bozqir) (1965–) was arrested. Aksu prefecture’s Commission for Discipline Inspection announced on its website that Hasan had been expelled from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and was under investigation for writing essays attacking the CCP and government’s ethnic or religious policies in Xinjiang, distorting the history of Xinjiang, instigating ethnic hatred, and opposing China’s unity or territorial integrity. His whereabouts were unknown. Hasan, along with fellow web editor Tursun Memet Marshal, was reportedly sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment the same year. He had published books and articles aimed at the promotion of equal civil and political rights for Uyghurs in China. He also owned and edited a Uyghur-language website and discussion forum “Bozqir” which was blocked shortly after his arrest.⁷³
- In October 2016, writer, educator, and historical researcher Yalqun [Yolqan] Rozi ([1965]–) was arrested without charge and held in an undisclosed location until he was formally arrested on sedition charges (“inciting splittism” or “incitement subversion of state power”) on 30 December 2016. On 3 January 2018, he was reportedly convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” and sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment. Rozi had published several books, articles of literary criticism, and research papers. Between 2001 and 2015, while cultivating ties with state officials,

⁷⁰ Human Rights in China, “[Ethnic Minorities in Custody](#)” (no date); “[Hu Jintao: Let Your People Go](#),” *USCIRF* (20 January 2011); “[Xinjiang Authorities Detain More Than 40 for Possessing ‘Illegal Religious Materials’](#),” *CECC* (18 January 2006).

⁷¹ Uyghur Yardem, “[Detained & Imprisoned Literary Artists](#)”; Uyghur Human Rights Project, *Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review People’s Republic of China* (Washington: Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2018), 3.

⁷² “[List of Uyghur Intellectuals Imprisoned in China from 2016 to the Present](#)” (Last up-dated by Abduweli Ayup on 13 November 2020).

⁷³ PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 62–63; International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 63.

he had served on the state-endorsed textbook compiling committee of Xinjiang Education Press. It is thought that the charges stemmed from concerns around the ideology presented in the literature textbooks (covering classic poems and folk tales) produced by him.⁷⁴

- In 2017, Reyhan Hamut (female), a history teacher at middle school no. 1 in Qizilsu prefecture with a master's degree in journalism from Xinjiang University, was reportedly detained in a concentration camp.⁷⁵
- On 10 March 2017, historian Omerjan (Ömerjan) Nuri (1968–) was arrested. In 1986, he embarked on a four-year history course at the Northeastern Pedagogical University, Changchun, and in 1992 became a history teacher at the Hotan [Khotan, Hetian] Pedagogical Institute. In the 2000s, he received a master's degree in history in Beijing. He went to Turkey in 2006 to obtain a PhD from the Faculty of Language, History and Geography of Ankara University, after which he returned.⁷⁶
- In April 2017, musician Abdurehim Heyit (1964–), a specialist of the *dutar* (traditional lute) and member of the Xinjiang Song and Dance Troupe who wrote many songs reflecting on Uyghur history and culture, was arrested and held without formal charge in Urumchi. The poet who wrote the lyrics, Abdurehim Abdulla, was arrested at the same time. Their arrest was most likely linked to the song “Atilar” (Forefathers). The song, which had previously been cleared by government censors, recalled past sacrifices made by the forefathers and appealed to younger generations to respect them. Due to the phrase “jenglerde shehit” (martyrs of war), however, it was interpreted as encouraging jihad and radicalism. Under the crackdown in Xinjiang, expressions of ethnic pride – even those previously approved by state censors – were conflated with ethnic separatism and criminalized as Islamic extremism. Heyit was reportedly sentenced to eight years' imprisonment.⁷⁷
- In May 2017, Uyghur historian Iminjan Seydin [Eminjan Saidin] ([1965]–) was arrested by the Public Security Bureau and imprisoned. Seydin had begun teaching courses on Chinese history at the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in Urumqi in 1988 upon graduating from Xinjiang University, and in 2012 formed 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 prefecture, to join a work group with the Xinjiang Uygur 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 entitled *The Science of Rhetoric* (aka *Arabic*

⁷⁴ PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 63; Dake Kang, “[Correction: China-Xinjiang-Banished Textbooks Story](#),” *AP* (4 September 2019); Christina Shepherd, “[Fear and Oppression in Xinjiang: China's War on Uighur Culture](#),” *Financial Times* (12 September 2019); International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 63–64.

⁷⁵ Uyghur Yardem, “[Detained & Imprisoned \(Education\)](#).”

⁷⁶ Uyghur Yardem, “[Detained & Imprisoned \(Education\)](#)”; “[Enqere uniwersitetining oqughuchisi ömerjan nuri tutqun qilini ghan](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (14 December 2018).

⁷⁷ Rachel Harris & Aziz Isa Elkun, “[‘Uyghur Dutar King’ Detained in China](#),” *Freemuse* (1 November 2017); Kurban Niyaz, “[Prominent Uyghur Musician Arrested amid Ideological Purge in Xinjiang](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (2 November 2017).

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 ended Seydin’s employment contract after he was detained and placed in a camp. In early May 2020, Seydin suddenly reappeared and praised the government in a video published by a state-run English language newspaper. His comments in the video appeared to have been scripted in an attempt to discredit his daughter’s public testimony about his arbitrary detention.⁷⁸

- At the end of 2017, Erkin Tursun, a history teacher by education, was detained. Tursun had graduated from the history faculty at Xinjiang University, hosted a show on Ili Television, and opened a school of music, arts, dance, and language for Uyghur children. Later, he directed a movie about the social problems facing Uyghurs, such as drug use and high divorce rates. In 2002 or 2003, he had gone to Japan on a cultural exchange program, traveling on a diplomatic passport. His wife, mathematics teacher Gulnar Telet, was also detained. In August 2018, their son Alfred, living in the United States, learned that Erkin Tursun received a prison sentence of between 9 and 11 years on an unknown charge and might be held in Xinyuan prison near Kanas.⁷⁹
- On or around 12 December 2017, Rahile Dawut ([1966]–), an anthropologist and ethnographer who studied Uyghur traditions and folklore, associate professor in the Human Science Institute and founder of the Minorities Folklore Research Center of Xinjiang University, Urumqi, and Gheyretjan Osman ([1958]–), a history and literature professor at the same university, disappeared together with three other academics after they had been called “the leading figures in Uyghur ideology” at Xinjiang University. Uyghur academics with foreign links and specializing in Uyghur Muslim culture, language, or religion were particularly targeted in the crackdown on the Uyghur Muslim population of Xinjiang, which began in April 2017 as a campaign to clamp down on religious extremism, separatism, and terrorism, but had since broadened in scope to include anyone who was critical. The government purged so-called “two-faced” Uyghur teachers, in particular those who paid lip service to the Chinese Communist Party line but were suspected of secretly resisting the

⁷⁸ 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; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 120.

⁷⁹ Uyghur Human Rights Project, *Detained and Disappeared: Intellectuals Under Assault in the Uyghur Homeland* (Washington: UHRP, October 2019), 13–14.

hardline policies. Before 2017, Dawut's work was welcomed by Chinese officials: she had received grants and support from the Ministry of Culture. She had earned an international reputation as an expert on Uyghur shrines, folklore, music, and crafts neglected by previous generations of scholars. Osman was the author of a *Critique of Uyghur Historical Culture*. On 2 July 2021 it was confirmed that Dawut was imprisoned.⁸⁰

- In January 2018, Abdukerim Rahman (1941–2020), known as the father of folklore studies and a professor at Xinjiang University (1964–2011) in Urumqi, was arrested and taken to a “re-education camp,” apparently after charges of being a “two-faced” person. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), he spent terms in prison and many of his collections were lost. In 1979, he was rehabilitated. In 1983, he started the first graduate program in Xinjiang Minority Literature at the university. In 2000 he became a founder of the Folklore Museum at Xinjiang University. He published more than twenty books, including *History of Uyghur Culture*. His book *Uyghur Folk Literature* was reprinted more than ten times. He published a 12-volume *Encyclopedia of Uyghur Folk Literature*, containing thousands of legends, folk tales, epic poems, ballads, and proverbs. In early 2019, Rahman was reportedly released. On or around 17 August 2020, Rahman died. His cause of death was not made public.⁸¹
- In February 2018, Abliz Orhun (male), the former editor in chief of *Xinjiang Difang Zhi* (a Xinjiang regional historiography) and editor of Minzu publishing House, was arrested.⁸²

⁸⁰ Yojana Sharma, “[Scholars Targeted as Uighur Purge Engulfs Universities](#),” *World University News* (28 September 2018); Chris Buckley & Austin Ramzy, “[Star Scholar Disappears as Crackdown Engulfs Western China](#),” *New York Times* (10 August 2018); Uyghur Human Rights Project, *The Persecution of the Intellectuals in the Uyghur Region: Disappeared Forever?* (Washington: UHRP, October 2018), 5–6; Uyghur Human Rights Project, *Detained and Disappeared: Intellectuals Under Assault in the Uyghur Homeland* (Washington: UHRP, October 2019), 5; PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 64; Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think: Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project* (New York: Scholars at Risk, 2019), 17; Darren Byler, “[‘Heaviness in the Stomach’: A Uyghur Daughter Alone in America on Her Birthday during a Pandemic](#),” *Supchina* (1 April 2020); “[Free Rahile Dawut](#)”; Abduweli Ayup, “[List of Uyghur Intellectuals Imprisoned in China from 2016 to the Present](#),” (15 June 2019); “[Petition for the Immediate Release of Professor Rahile Dawut and other Uyghur scholars](#)” (no date); International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 65; “[Jailed Uyghur Scholar Rahile Dawut to Receive ‘Courage to Think’ Award](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (11 November 2020); Joshua Freeman, “[China Disappeared My Professor; It Can’t Silence His Poetry](#),” *New York Times* (23 November 2020); [NCH Campaign](#) (2020).

⁸¹ Amy Anderson, “[How Is Abdukerim Rahman Surviving without his Books?](#)” *Art of Life in Chinese Central Asia* (2 October 2018); Uyghur Human Rights Project, *The Persecution of the Intellectuals in the Uyghur Region: Disappeared Forever?* (Washington: UHRP, October 2018), 6; PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 64; International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 65; Yojana Sharma, “[Alarm over Choice of New Leader for Xinjiang University](#),” *University World News* (15 October 2020); “[Abdikerim Rahman Death](#),” *The Arts of Entertainment* (18 August 2020).

⁸² Abduweli Ayup, “[List of Uyghur Intellectuals Imprisoned in China from 2016 to the Present](#)” (13 March 2021).

- In February 2018, Abduqeyum Hoja ([1941–]), an archaeology professor, stayed in a hospital in Urumqi when he was arrested, probably because his daughter, Gulchehra, worked for Radio Free Asia. He was released in the same month.⁸³
- In July 2018, police arrested and detained Uyghur publisher, editor, and writer Abdurahman Abey ([1953–]) at an undisclosed location on suspicion of “separatism and religious extremism activities.” Abey served as director of the official Xinhua Bookstore, and from 2005 to 2015 as director and Chinese Communist Party deputy secretary of the Xinjiang People’s Publishing House. In January 2015, he was appointed as the manager of the History Research Office of the Xinjiang Autonomous Political Expansion Committee, a post he “left” in January 2017.⁸⁴
- On 2 September 2018, Gulnar [Gülнар] Obul [Ubul] (female) [(1966)–], a professor at Kashgar University, was dismissed and reportedly charged with “two-faced activities.” Her name was deleted from the university’s website. Obul had been detained for publishing a 2016 article about Uyghur culture and history (entitled “Dialogue on Cultural Formation in Xinjiang”) that included her opinions on religious extremism in 2016. An official source said that Obul had been released from detention two to three weeks after the initial report and transferred to work in Urumqi at the XUAR Bureau of Farm Machinery.⁸⁵
- On 30 November 2018, Askar Yunus [Zhunus] ([1969]–), a leading Kyrgyz historian at the history department of the Academy of Social Sciences of Xinjiang, was arrested on undisclosed charges, probably at his home in Urumqi, and reportedly brought to a “training center.” A member of the Kyrgyz ethnic community and a member of the Chinese Intellectual Foreign Affiliation Society and the Xinjiang History Association, Yunus focused on the ethnic history of the region, the Kyrgyz “golden era” and Kyrgyz-Chinese relations. He published over forty articles and several books. His university confirmed his arrest but did not provide further details. In September 2020, it was reported that he was sentenced to eleven years’ imprisonment.⁸⁶

⁸³ Amnesty International, “[Separated Souls: Uighur Journalist’s Unbreakable Resolve to Help Her Detained Family](#)” (16 March 2018); Uyghur Yardem, “[Detained & Imprisoned \(Scholar\)](#).”

⁸⁴ Uyghur Yardem, “[Detained & Imprisoned \(Publishing\)](#)”; “[Abdurahman Abey](#),” CPJ (no date); Shohret Hoshur, “[Prominent Uyghur Publisher Arrested, under Investigation](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (15 October 2018).

⁸⁵ “[Xinjiang’s Kashgar University Sacks Four ‘Two-Faced’ Uyghur Professors](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (19 September 2018); Uyghur Human Rights Project, *The Persecution of the Intellectuals in the Uyghur Region: Disappeared Forever?* (Washington: UHRP, October 2018), 7; Profile of Askar Zhunus at [Xinjiang Victims Database](#) (11 November 2020); Uyghur Yardem, “[Detained & Imprisoned \(Scholar\)](#)”; “[China: Uyghur Group Defends Detainee Database after Xinjiang Officials Allege ‘Fake Archive’](#),” *HRWF* (13 February 2021).

⁸⁶ Scholars at Risk (Academic Freedom Monitoring Project), *Obstacles to Excellence: Academic Freedom & China’s Quest for World-Class Universities* (New York: SAR, 2019), 49; Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think: Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project* (New York: Scholars at Risk, 2019), 46; “[Xinjiang Authorities Arrest Leading Kyrgyz Historian for ‘Undecided’ Crime](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (30 November 2018); Committee of Concerned Scientists, “[Prominent Historian at the History Research Department of the Academy of Social Sciences of Xinjiang Arrested, Cause Unknown, Whereabouts Unknown](#)” (10 April 2019).

- In 2019, (Haji) Mirzahid Kerim [Kerimi] ([1937]–), a writer and a retired editor at Kashgar Uyghur Press, was detained and sentenced to eleven years in prison, reportedly for writing about Uyghur history and historians and for a speech on an event which was dedicated to his life. In 1959, he had been sentenced to thirteen years in prison for the poem “The baby in the chest” (“Sanduq ichidiki bowaq”), and then kept for another seven years under house arrest. The Chinese government saw the poem as a separatist metaphor. He was released in the 1980s.⁸⁷
- 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*.⁸⁸
- In 2020, Oblez Irehun, a historian working in a publishing house in Beijing was arrested.⁸⁹
- In April 2020, it was announced that Sattar Sawut (1948–) and his deputy at the Xinjiang education department, Shirzat Bawudun (1966–), had been given death sentences with a two-year reprieve, while five other Uyghur men, including editors of the same department, were given lengthy prison terms. In 2016, Sattar had been accused of building a team and planning with his deputy to incorporate content in primary and secondary school textbooks dating back as far as 2003 that was deemed by Xinjiang authorities to be “separatist” in nature and inciting ethnic hatred. The court did not publish its ruling or other documents, and state media did not detail what problems it saw in the texts. The son of one of the editors declared that the passages were about historical tales that had nothing to do with terrorism, and the prosecutions were aimed at cultural destruction and assimilation. The People’s Daily – an official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party providing direct information on the policies and viewpoints of the party – reported: “By changing and distorting history, [Sattar and his co-accused] tried to instill separatist ideas into students, increase national hatred and achieve the purpose of splitting the motherland.” The South China Morning Post described some sections and images in the textbook that referred to a 1940s chapter of Xinjiang history and the short-lived East Turkestan Republic government, or that depicted clashes between Uyghur fighters and Han-looking soldiers during the same period.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Simina Mistreanu, “[The Capital of Xinjiang Is Now in Turkey](#),” *Foreign Policy* (30 September 2019); Uyghur Yardem, “[Detained & Imprisoned Literary Artists](#).”

⁸⁸ Abduweli Ayup, “[List of Uyghur Intellectuals Imprisoned in China from 2016 to the Present](#),” (15 June 2019).

⁸⁹ Yojana Sharma, “[Alarm over Choice of New Leader for Xinjiang University](#),” *University World News* (15 October 2020).

⁹⁰ Javier C. Hernández, “[A Hong Kong Newspaper on a Mission to Promote China’s Soft Power](#),” *New York Times* (31 March 2018); Helen Davidson, “[China Hands Death Sentences to Uyghur Former Officials](#),” *Guardian* (9 April 2021).

Other news from Xinjiang:

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 Uyghur national literary hero Lutpulla Mutellip (1922–1945) was destroyed and turned into a “Happiness Park,” while the grave was moved to an industrial zone in the desert.⁹¹

A September 2020 report of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute provided proof that since at least 2017 the Chinese government had embarked on a Sinicization campaign to rewrite the cultural heritage of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and to strip away any Islamic, transnational, or autonomous elements. Using satellite imagery, it estimated that approximately 16,000 mosques in Xinjiang (65% of the total) had been destroyed (8,450) or damaged (7,550) as a result of government policies, mostly since 2017. A further 30% of important Islamic sacred sites (shrines, burial grounds, and pilgrimage routes, including many protected under Chinese law) had been demolished across Xinjiang, mostly since 2017, and an additional 27.8% have been damaged or altered in some way. In total, 17.4% of sites protected under Chinese law have been destroyed, and 61.8% of unprotected sites were damaged or destroyed.

The authorities provided little justification for the demolition of burial grounds besides making way for urban reconstruction, ensuring “standardization,” or “sav[ing] space and protect[ing] the ecosystem.” Furthermore, authorities also set up crematoria, or “burial management centers,” to conduct the cremation of Xinjiang residents, in contravention of Muslim burial traditions.⁹²

See also France, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, United States.

⁹¹ Magnus Fiskesjö, “[China Ravages Xinjiang Cultural Heritage](#),” (29 April 2020); Human Rights Watch, “*Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots*” – *China’s Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims* (Washington: HRW, 2021), 29.

⁹² Nathan Ruser (with James Leibold, Kelsey Munro & Tilla Hoja), *Cultural Erasure: Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang* (Policy Brief, Report No. 38/2020) (Barton Australian Capital Territory: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, September 2020), 3–5; Helen Davidson, “[Thousands of Xinjiang Mosques Destroyed or Damaged, Report Finds](#),” *Guardian* (25 September 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 165; Human Rights Watch, “*Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots*” – *China’s Crimes against Humanity Targeting Uyghurs and Other Turkic Muslims* (Washington: HRW, 2021), 29–30.

COLOMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–1998, 2000, 2004, 2006–2020.

Impunity for past abuses remained an important human rights concern during 2020. From 2002 through 2008, army brigades across Colombia routinely executed civilians in what were known as “false positives” killings. Under pressure from superiors to show “positive” results and boost body counts in their war against guerrillas, soldiers and officers abducted victims or lured them to remote locations under false pretenses – such as promises of work – shot them dead, placed weapons on their bodies, and reported them as enemy combatants killed in action. The number of allegations of unlawful killings by security forces fell sharply since 2009, though credible reports of some new cases continued to emerge. As of September 2020, the Attorney General’s Office had opened over 2,000 investigations into alleged unlawful killings by army personnel from 2002 through 2008, and had achieved over 900 convictions in cases against more than 1,600 mid- and low-level soldiers, including convictions of the same individual in various cases. Over 250 members of the Armed Forces had testified about their roles in “false positives” killings before the Jurisdicción Especial de Paz (JEP; Special Jurisdiction of Peace), a transitional justice mechanism through which members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC–EP; Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces), members of the Public Force and third parties who participated in the armed conflict (1964–2016) were investigated and put to trial. Authorities largely failed, however, to prosecute senior army officers involved in the killings and instead had promoted many of them through the military ranks. As of September 2020, cases against at least 29 army generals under investigation for false-positive killings had made scant progress. On 18 February 2021, the JEP made public that at least 6,402 people fell victim to “false positives” killings, nearly three times as much as the figure previously admitted by the attorney general’s office [See also NCH *Annual Report 2013*]. The findings came after two years of exhumation of mass graves across the country. Investigations by the JEP were to continue, focusing on provinces in the country not yet prioritized in its probe. On 6 July 2021, the JEP tribunal accused ten members of the military and one civilian of forcibly disappearing 24 people and murdering at least 120 civilians, representing the first charges announced by the JEP in relation to “false positives” killings.⁹³

In mid-September 2020, protesters from the indigenous Nasa and Pijao communities toppled the statue of Spanish conquistador Sebastián de Belalcázar (1479/1480–1551) in the south-western city of

⁹³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 175, 178-179; Joe Parkin Daniels, “[Colombia Tribunal Reveals at Least 6,402 People Were Killed by Army to Boost Body Count](#),” *Guardian* (19 February 2021); “[Colombian Court Accuses Soldiers of Murdering at least 120 Civilians](#),” *Guardian* (6 July 2021).

Popayán which he had founded in 1537. The protestors “put Belalcázar on trial,” finding him guilty of genocide, enslavement, torture, rape, and stealing their ancestral lands. The mayor retorted that it was an act of violence against a symbol of a multicultural city. In April 2021, a statue of Belalcázar was pulled down in Cali. In Bogotá, members of the Misak indigenous group demolished statues of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada (1509–1579), the Spanish conquistador who founded the city in 1638; in June 2021, they daubed a statue of Queen Isabella of Castile (1451–1504), who sponsored Columbus’s 1492 voyage of exploration during which he first set foot in America, in red paint in Bogotá. The ministry of culture has since removed the statue of Queen Isabella and another one of Christopher Columbus nearby “for safety reasons.” On 30 June 2021, anti-government protesters toppled a statue of Christopher Columbus in Barranquilla and vandalized it.⁹⁴

Somewhere between 27 September and 30 September 2020, Campo Elías Galindo Álvarez ([1951]–2020), a retired historian and urban planning expert from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, sede Medellín (National University of Colombia, Medellín location), was assassinated in his home with a knife. The murderer also burned a book and left it on Galindo’s chest. Galindo’s computer was stolen. Galindo had also been a left-wing political leader of the Colombia Humana movement in Medellín and a member of the Frente Amplio por la Paz y la Democracia (Broad Front for Peace and Democracy). It was widely believed that the murder was not a mere computer theft but rather a political assassination due to Galindo’s political activities.⁹⁵

On 3 October 2020, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP; Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) admitted having killed historian Jesús Antonio Bejarano Ávila in 1999. In September 1999, Jesús Antonio Bejarano Ávila (1946–1999), an economist and economic historian from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia and member of the Academia colombiana de ciencias económicas (Colombian Academy of Economic Sciences), was shot dead while he was on his way to teach a class at the Faculty of Economics of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (National University of Colombia) in Bogotá. He was an expert in conflict resolution and had been a key government adviser in the peace negotiations with guerrilla groups during the terms of Presidents Virgilio Barco (1986–1990) and César Gaviria (1990–1994) and a founding member of the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Colombiana (Center of Studies of Colombian Reality) and an active participant in the negotiations with the guerrilla groups. During the Barco government, Bejarano played an

⁹⁴ [“Colombia: Indigenous Protesters Topple Conquistador’s Statue,”](#) *BBC News* (17 September 2020); [“Colombian Anti-government Protesters Topple Columbus Statue,”](#) *BBC News* (30 June 2021).

⁹⁵ César Augusto Duque Sánchez, personal communication (2 October 2020); [“Asesinan en Medellín a historiador y miembro de la Colombia Humana,”](#) *El Tiempo* (1 October 2020); [“Asesinan a Campo Elías Galindo, reconocido historiador de Medellín, cercano a Gustavo Petro,”](#) *Blu Radio* (1 October 2020); [“‘Creemos que fue por su actividad política’: familia de Campo Elías Galindo tras asesinato,”](#) *Blu Radio* (1 October 2020).

important role in the development of the National Plan of Rehabilitation, a foundational strategy for peacemaking in the country. During the early 1990s, Bejarano was a key player in the peace negotiations with the Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar, the then guerrilla coalition of the FARC, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN; National Liberation Army), and the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL; Ejército Popular de Liberación). He was specialized in agricultural history (especially the history of tobacco).⁹⁶

CONGO (Democratic Republic)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2000, 2003–2020.

After his election as President in 2019, Félix Tshisekedi tasked his administration with delivering a proposal for transitional justice mechanisms, but he had yet to fully commit to ending impunity for past and current serious crimes. Some of the military courts and other tribunals adjudicating cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity faced serious shortcomings.⁹⁷

On 1 October 2020 protesters in Kisangani, the capital of Tshopo province, were beaten by police forces as they demanded justice for historic murders and rapes committed in the east of the country. The protest was part of a nation-wide protest calling for a 2010-United Nations (UN) report to be the basis for ensuring justice. This 2010 UN “mapping” report, commissioned after the discovery of mass graves in 2005, documented violent incidents between 1993 and 2003, that could amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The investigation covered the first (1996–1997) and second Congo war (1998–2003), which killed millions and left a legacy of conflict.⁹⁸

See also Belgium, Rwanda.

⁹⁶ “Asesinado Jesús Antonio Bejarano,” *El Espectador* (16 September 1999); “[Jesús Antonio Bejarano Ávila \(1946-1999\)](#),” *Eumed.net. Enciclopedia virtual* (30 November 2011); Jurisdicción especial para la paz, “[Farc asume responsabilidad en homicidio de Álvaro Gómez Hurtado y en otros cinco casos](#)” (Comunicado 132) (3 October 2020); Memoria Histórica FCE [Facultad de Ciencias Económicas] 60 años (2012). “[Homenaje a Jesús Antonio Bejarano](#),” *YouTube* (2012); “Jesús Antonio Bejarano”; <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/R/Clemencia.Rodriguez-1/altar/bejar.html>; “[Jesús Antonio Bejarano Ávila](#),” *Vidas silenciadas*.

⁹⁷ Ida Sawyer, “[DR Congo Rights Abusers Rewarded with Army Promotions](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (18 July 2018); Stanis Bujakera Tshiamala, “[DRC: Under Pressure from the US, Tshisekedi Reshuffles Army](#),” *The Africa Report* (20 July 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 196.

⁹⁸ Kaamil Ahmed, “[DRC Protesters Demand Justice over Unprosecuted Rapes and Murders](#),” *Guardian* (2 October 2020); Amnesty International, *The State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 141.

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.

CROATIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2001, 2003–2013, 2015–2020.

In 2020 war crimes were handled by county courts in Zagreb, Rijeka, Split, and Osijek, while state attorney’s offices were responsible for the investigation process. None of these institutions allowed access to war crimes case archives for journalists, researchers, or the general public. Due to the absence of a statute of limitations on war crimes, all public prosecutor’s office cases were permanently kept at its office, with all the evidence and relevant documents. On 22 February 2021, the Zagreb-based Documenta – Centar za suočavanje s prošlošću (Documenta – Center for dealing with the past) and the Osijek-based Centar za mir, nenasilje i ljudska prava (Center for peace, non-violence, and human rights) criticized the government for the “slow processing of war crimes.” They pointed out that in a number of ongoing war crimes trials, no hearings had been scheduled over 2020 and that hearings in war crimes trials at Osijek County Court were not being scheduled as often as prescribed by Croatia’s criminal code.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Emina Dizdarevic, Serbeze Haxhijaj, Anja Vladislavjevic and Milica Stojanovic, “[Access Denied: Most Balkan War Crimes Case Files Not Public](#),” *Balkan Insight* (28 September 2020); Anja Vladislavjevic, “[Croatia Criticised for ‘Slow Justice’ in War Crime Trials](#),” *Balkan Insight* (22 February 2021).

In July 2020, Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Dunja Mijatović warned that many politicians continued to deny the truth about the Srebrenica genocide, deepening the suffering of the survivors and endangering peace.¹⁰⁰

In August 2020, in the lead-up to the 25th anniversary of Operation Storm (1995), President Zoran Milanovic called the prosecution of Croats at the International Criminal Tribunal of Yugoslavia (ICTY) a “stupid fabrication” to present the Croatian defense war as a “joint criminal enterprise,” adding that “not everyone who was sentenced in The Hague is a war criminal.”¹⁰¹

On 19 May 2021, Hrvoje Klasić, a professor of contemporary history at Zagreb University’s history department, received a letter entitled “Call to the Croatian People: Kill Klasić.” It called for the murder not only of Klasić “but also [of] other well-known traitors who openly and secretly act against the Croatian people” in parliament, the media, some university faculties, and anti-fascist and other non-governmental associations. The letter concluded with the World War II Ustaša movement’s slogan, “Za dom spremni” (“Ready for the Homeland”). In addition, Klasić received many signed letters varying from people recommending him to move out of Croatia to letters with vulgar and obscene wording [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].¹⁰²

See also Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro.

CUBA

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

Between September 2019 and March 2020, the artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcantará was detained at least ten times, often without charge, for performance art pieces in which he wore the Cuban flag while going about daily activities. In March 2020, Law 128/2019 (aka the National Symbols Law) took effect, restricting use of the Cuban flag, seal, and national anthem. These symbols could be used “as a means of publicity only when the messages that are transferred contribute to fostering and developing in people

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 103.

¹⁰¹ “[Milanovic: A Stupid Fabrication about a Joint Criminal Enterprise](#),” *HINA* (4 August 2020); “[Milanović: Nije svako ko je dobio kaznu u Hagu ratni zločinac](#),” *Nezavisne* (4 August 2020).

¹⁰² Anja Vladislavjevic, “[Croatian Historian: Threats Won’t Stop Me Criticising Nationalism](#),” *Balkan Insight* (21 May 2021).

patriotic values and to form a patriotic awareness of respect and veneration for them and the historical tradition of the nation.”¹⁰³

CYPRUS

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

Between 2006 and 30 November 2020, the remains of 993 missing individuals (711 Greek Cypriots and 282 Turkish Cypriots) were identified by the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus in its mission to establish the fate and whereabouts of individuals who were forcibly disappeared during the inter-communal fighting of 1963–1964 and the Turkish invasion of 1974 [See also NCH *Annual Reports* 2005, 2010–2011, 2013, 2016–2018].¹⁰⁴

See also Turkey.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–1998, 2000, 2010, 2013–2020.

In September 2020, Dunja Mijatović, the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, urged the adoption of a bill to bring justice and help women who had been affected by a government-led eugenics agenda from the early 1970s until it was officially abolished in 1993. It is unclear how many women were affected: the European Roma Rights Center said hundreds of women were systematically sterilized throughout the 1990s with the last-known case as recently as 2007. Sterilization was part of a wider social narrative to “discriminate, seclude and eradicate” the Roma population. A draft bill from 2019 proposing a £10,200 payment to victims never reached the statute books.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ [“Nueva ley de símbolos nacionales incluye prohibiciones de uso ‘en sayas, pañuelos y ropa interior’.”](#) *ADNCuba* (10 July 2019); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 188.

¹⁰⁴ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 137.

¹⁰⁵ Anna Koslerova, [“‘I Always Wanted a Girl’: Scandal of Czech Roma Forcibly Sterilised.”](#) *Guardian* (8 March 2021).

DENMARK

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2006–2007, 2013, 2016–2020.

DJIBOUTI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013.

ECUADOR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2007, 2009–2020.

In 2010, 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. As of 2020, final rulings had been rendered in only two cases. Others appeared to be stalled.¹⁰⁶

On 16 March 2021, a broad coalition for the defense of Ecuador’s cultural heritage protested against the neglect and understaffing of the Archivo Metropolitano de Historia de Quito (AMH-Q; Metropolitan Archive of History-Quito), making access to it for historical research nearly impossible.¹⁰⁷

EGYPT

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2001, 2003, 2006–2007, 2010–2020.

On 23 January 2021, seven masked and armed policemen raided the home of the family of Ahmed Samir Santawy ([1992–]), a postgraduate anthropology and sociology student at Central European University in Vienna, Austria, when he was not there, and instructed him to present himself to the National Security Agency (NSA). When Santawy did so on 1 February 2021, security forces arrested him and subjected him to enforced disappearance and beatings until 6 February 2021. He was then brought for questioning before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP). The SSSP accused Santawy of “membership in a terrorist group,” “funding a terrorist organization,” “spreading false news,” and “using social media to spread disinformation.” The bogus charges were reportedly related to his academic work focusing on women’s rights, including the history of reproductive rights in Egypt and the comparison of Egyptian and Islamic abortion laws. In March 2021, Santawy’s lawyer received information that he had been moved out of solitary confinement to pre-trial detention at a maximum-security prison in Cairo. On 22 May, the SSSP opened a new criminal investigation into Santawy over social media posts for a charge of “publishing false news to undermine the state, its national interests and public order and spread panic among the people.” On 22 June 2021, the State Security Emergency Misdemeanor Court sentenced Santawy to four years in prison and a fine of 500 pounds on charges of

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 205.

¹⁰⁷ *Carta abierta al alcalde del Distrito Metropolitano de Quito, Doctor Jorge Yunda Machado, sobre situación del Archivo Metropolitano de Historia (AMH-Q)* (16 March 2021); “[Atiendan urgentemente la situación del Archivo Metropolitano de Historia de Quito](#),” (petition; March 2021).

spreading false news and statements abroad about the domestic situation of Egypt. The conviction was reportedly based on social media posts critical of Egypt's violations of human rights, which Santawy denied writing. Verdicts given by State Security Emergency Courts cannot be appealed. On 23 June, Santawy began a hunger strike.¹⁰⁸

In May 2021, Waleed Salem, a political science doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, Seattle, USA, was stopped at the border. Salem was doing PhD fieldwork on how courts had tried to resolve political disputes in Egypt and Pakistan since the 1950s.

In May 2018, he had been arrested, blindfolded and handcuffed for five days and later accused of "joining a terror group," among other charges. He was then interrogated about the intricacies of the thesis (supervisor, chapter titles, field work) and told that his thesis was about the politicized nature of the Egyptian judiciary. After six months in prison, he was released in December 2018, having to report to a police station twice a week. In May 2020, his first attempt to leave Egypt ended in the confiscation of his passport.¹⁰⁹

EL SALVADOR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2020.

The government failed to make public information related to military operations during the internal armed conflict (1980–1992) and denied judicial access to military operation files related to the 1981 El Mozote massacre. In November 2019, President Nayib Bukele had declared that the government would open the military archives related to the December 1981 El Mozote massacre (1725 victims of which almost 1000 dead; labeled "the largest single massacre in modern Latin American history") as requested by Jorge Guzmán, the magistrate in San Francisco Gotera, Morazán, who had been investigating the case since 2016. On 28 August 2020, Guzmán ordered an inspection of military archives at several barracks in his search for documents relating to "Operation Rescue," the army's sweep of the country's northeast in the final months of 1981 under the guise of countering subversion. The army had for years affirmed that no such documents existed, that they were all destroyed, or, alternatively, that they could not be divulged for reasons of national security. On 18 September 2020, the Ministry of Defense appealed to the Constitutional Court in an attempt to stop this court-ordered review of the military

¹⁰⁸ Scholars at Risk, "[Egypt: 74 NGOs Urge Egyptian Authorities to Release Ahmed Samir Santawy](#)," (14 April 2021); Anna Koslerova, "[A Student Researching Abortion Laws Is Now in One of the World's Strictest Prisons](#)," *Vice* (29 April 2021); "[Four Years' Imprisonment and a Fine of 500 EGP for Ahmed Samir Santawy](#)," *Afte* (22 June 2021); Scholars at Risk, "[Ahmed Samir Santawy, Egypt](#)" ([July] 2021).

¹⁰⁹ Farid Farid, "[Egypt Academics, Researchers Caught In State Crosshairs](#)," *Barron's* (5 June 2021).

archives. On 20 September 2020, the night before the inspections, Bukele unexpectedly ordered a public-health lockdown in San Francisco Gotera. The next day, the Ministry of Defense blocked the judge and inspectors from entering the armed forces headquarters and searching the archives. Guzmán tried again at different army and air force barracks over the next several weeks, always with the same result. On 9 October 2020, the Constitutional Court supported Guzmán but to no avail. Finally, the judge went to the national archives, which were open to researchers, to search for documents. Massacre survivors asked the Prosecutor General to charge Bukele and Defense Minister René Merino Monroy with arbitrary acts, dereliction of duty, and failure to comply with a judicial order for refusing access to the judge. On 9 November 2020, the court in San Francisco Gotera asked the prosecutor's office to investigate the possible theft, destruction, concealment, or displacement of documents and whether Bukele and Merino had blocked the judicial inspection of the archives.

In the absence of military documentation, the survivors had sought to use declassified U.S. documents from the era obtained by the National Security Archive at George Washington University to prove that the military high command had ultimate responsibility for the massacre. While U.S. President Bill Clinton had declassified a tranche of those documents, others remained inaccessible. The El Mozote massacre case had been reopened in 2016 after an amnesty law was annulled by the Constitutional Court.

In mid-January 2021, Archbishop José Escobar Alas refused to open the church archives on the El Mozote archives for judge Guzmán. Tutela Legal, the human rights office that housed the archives under the auspices of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, was active between 1977 and 2013, when it was abruptly closed. It was later reopened. A few days after a public outcry, the archbishop reversed his decision, citing a misunderstanding.¹¹⁰

In February 2020, the Legislative Assembly approved a decree containing the Special Law on Transitional Justice, Reparation, and Reconciliation. This law contained provisions that hindered the investigation and effective punishment of those responsible for crimes under international law. President Nayib Bukele vetoed the decree later that month.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Gabriel Campos Madrid, "[Gobierno dice que abrirá archivos militares](#)," *La prensa gráfica* (3 November 2019); Nelson Rauda, "[El Gobierno Bukele, como los anteriores, niega a las víctimas los archivos de El Mozote](#)," *El Faro* (21 September 2020); Washington Office on Latin America, "[El Salvador Ministry of Defense Should Comply With Court Orders in El Mozote Case](#)," (press release; 22 September 2020); Naomi Roht-Arriaza, "[On El Salvador's 1981 El Mozote Massacre, President Bukele Sides with Impunity](#)," *Just Security* (28 October 2020); Nelson Rentería, "[El Salvador President Faces Probe over Search for Wartime Massacre Files](#)," *Reuters* (10 November); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 219–220; Amnesty International, *State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 153; Rhina Guidos, "[Salvadoran Archbishop Refuses to Open Records on El Mozote Massacre](#)," *National Catholic Reporter* (19 January 2021); Rhina Guidos, "[After Outcry, Salvadoran Archbishop Will Grant Access to Archive on Massacre](#)," *National Catholic Reporter* (22 January 2021).

¹¹¹ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 152–153.

On 11 September 2020, judges at Spain’s highest criminal court, the Audiencia Nacional, convicted Inocente Orlando Montano Morales (1943–), a former Salvadoran army colonel who served as a government security minister, to 133 years in prison after being found guilty of taking part in “the decision, design and execution” of the murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in 1989, in one of the infamous atrocities of El Salvador’s 12-year civil war (1979–1992) [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2009, 2012, 2017–2018*].¹¹²

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2019.

ERITREA

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

ESTONIA

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

ETHIOPIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2011, 2015–2020.

The government took some steps toward ensuring accountability for atrocities and grave human rights violations carried out since 1991, including extrajudicial executions, torture, and mass and arbitrary arrests. These measures offered little hope that victims would see justice for crimes, including killings, torture and other ill-treatment, and excessive use of force, carried out by security forces, including the Ethiopian National Defense Force, the Federal Police and regional police special force units.¹¹³

¹¹² Sam Jones, “[Ex-Salvadoran Colonel Jailed for 1989 Murder of Spanish Jesuits](#),” *Guardian* (11 September 2020).

¹¹³ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 160–161.

In early May 2021, Patriarch Abune Mathias, head of Ethiopia's Orthodox Church, accused the government of committing genocide in Tigray since the conflict there began in November 2020. He also lamented the desecration of ancient Orthodox monasteries and said that massacres had been carried out on church grounds. His comments were made in a video reportedly recorded in April 2021 before being smuggled out of Ethiopia. Mathias also said that his earlier attempts to speak out had been censored. Breaking with the traditional hierarchy of the Ethiopian church, the Orthodox Synod distanced itself from the patriarch's statement.¹¹⁴

See also Zambia.

¹¹⁴ Mary Harper, "[Church Leader Accuses Ethiopia of 'Tigray Genocide'](#)," *BBC News* (9 May 2021); Alex de Waal, "[Ethiopia Tigray Crisis: Warnings of Genocide and Famine](#)," *BBC News* (29 May 2021).

FIJI

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

FINLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011–2012, 2017, 2020.

See Liberia.

FRANCE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1999, 2001–2009, 2011–2014, 2016–2018, 2020.

On [22] August 2020, images of an inscription at a memorial at the site in the village of Oradour-sur-Glane showed the word “martyr” in the text “martyr village” replaced with “liar.” The village had been destroyed by SS troops in 1944, with 642 inhabitants killed, and the ruin preserved in its entirety. President Emmanuel Macron condemned the defacing as “unspeakable.”¹¹⁵

On 9 March 2021, President Emmanuel Macron announced that the declassification of secret archives more than 50 years old would be accelerated, a decision that would facilitate access to documents related to the Algerian War (1954–1962). Under the new rules, authorities would be allowed to declassify archive boxes all at once, speeding up a declassification process for secret documents that had been carried out page by page [See also *NCH Annual Report 2020*]. Some historians, however, said that the new rules barely addressed their complaints. Central to the complaints by historians was the 2011 government instruction that all records between 1940 and 1971 labeled “secret” or “top secret” had to be reviewed for declassification prior to release to the public, contradicting a 2008 law that called for the immediate release of secret documents 50 years after they were produced. The 2011 instruction had been loosely enforced, or even ignored, by archivists in recent years, but the General Secretariat for Defense and National Security, a powerful unit inside the prime minister’s office, had started enforcing the rules in 2020. Tens of thousands of once-public documents were subsequently resealed, impeding historical research and reimposing secrecy on information that had been previously revealed. Already

¹¹⁵ [“Oradour-sur-Glane: Uproar after France Nazi Massacre Site Vandalised,”](#) *BBC News* (22 August 2020).

on 24 September 2020, the French Association of Archivists, the Association of Higher-Education Contemporary Historians and other associations and individuals, supported by the International Council on Archives, asked the Conseil d'état (Council of State) to repeal the inter-ministerial regulation.

Macron's decision came after Benjamin Stora (1950–), a professor of Maghreb history at the Institute of Oriental Civilizations and Languages (INALCO) and the Sorbonne, had advised to put an end to the page-by-page declassification process and to return “as soon as possible” to declassifying any secret document more than 50 years old, as required by the 2008 law, in the report *Les Questions mémorielles portant sur la colonisation et la guerre d'Algérie* (Questions related to the memory about the colonization of and war in Algeria), submitted on 21 January.

In 2020, ahead of Algeria's sixtieth anniversary of independence in 2022, Macron had commissioned Stora to write a report on “the progress made in France regarding the memory of the colonization (1830–1962) of, and war (1954–1962) in Algeria.” This project was the outcome of a dialogue between the heads of state of both countries, with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune appointing Abdelmadjid Chikhi (1945–), director-general of the National Center for Algerian Archives, as Stora's counterpart tasked with conducting research from an Algerian perspective. Stora's report focused on “the scars, lingering legacy and after-effects on French society of the memory of colonization and the Algerian War.” Additionally, it put forward a series of new initiatives that the government could implement to pave the way for a “reconciliation of memories.”

Stora's report, in turn, was criticized by a number of historians, including Algerian historians Afaf Zekkour and Nouredine Amara who attributed a certain “revisionism” to Stora for juxtaposing the 132 years of oppression on a population crushed by the military and political, economic, and cultural cycles of exploitation on the one hand and the outbursts of resistance or counter-violence mounted by this colonized society to alleviate its suffering or to try to end it on the other hand. Professor of political sciences Olivier Le Court Grandmaison (1960–) further criticized Stora's report for omitting significant factual data, particularly about the war of conquest (1830–1903) and the actions of the “infernal columns” of Marshal Thomas Bugeaud (1784–1849) (*see below*) committed as part of a scorched earth policy.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Association des archivistes français, “[Accès aux archives classifiées ‘secret-défense’: Un collectif d’associations et de personnalités saisissent le Conseil d’état](#),” (Press release; 24 septembre 2020); International Council on Archives, “[Communiqué de presse du Conseil International des Archives relatif à la re-fermeture de l’accès aux archives 1940-1970 tamponnées ‘secret’](#),” (13 October 2020); Benjamin Stora, *Les Questions mémorielles portant sur la colonisation et la guerre d'Algérie* (157 pages; January 2021); Renaud de Rochebrune, “[Algeria – France: ‘Apologising Will Not Get to the Heart of the Issue,’ Says Historian Benjamin Stora](#),” *The Africa Report* (26 January 2021); Nabila Ramdani, “[Macron’s Algeria Report Isn’t Progress, It’s a Whitewash](#),” *Foreign Policy* (1 February 2021); Francois Burgat, “[Analysis – Stora Report: France Denies Algerian History Once Again](#),” *Anadolu Agency* (17 February 2021); Constant Méhuet, “[France Eases Access, a Little, to Its Secrets](#),” *New York Times* (9 March 2021); “[France Speeds Up Access to Secret Algeria War Archives](#),” *RFI* (10 March 2021); Hossam El Din Islam, “[French Move to Declassify Archive Draws Mixed Reactions in Algeria](#),” *Andalou Agency* (19 March 2021).

On 29 September 2020, Congolese activist Emery Mwazulu Diyabanza ([1979–]) and four others from the group Unité, dignité, courage (Unity, Dignity, Courage) went on trial charged with attempted theft of a registered artwork for trying to steal a nineteenth-century funeral staff from Chad at the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac indigenous art museum in Paris on 12 June 2020. Diyabanza said on social media he had come to claim back Africa's stolen property, calling the Quai Branly Museum a museum of "stolen objects." His protest was live-streamed and published on YouTube. Diyabanza carried out similar actions at museums in Marseille and Berg en Dal in the Netherlands and he would be sued for them also (in November 2020 and January 2021 respectively). After his arrest in June, Diyabanza sued the French state accusing it of "theft and receiving state goods." He criticized the French government's speed in returning artefacts to African nations. On 14 October 2020, he was fined 1,000 euros for aggravated robbery; three others who joined him received suspended fines and a fourth was cleared of the charges. Diyabanza appealed the ruling.¹¹⁷

On 14 October 2020, the Château des ducs de Bretagne history museum in Nantes put an exhibition about the Mongol Emperor Genghis Khan (1155/1162–1227), planned in collaboration with the Inner Mongolia Museum in Hohhot, China (which would send some 225 pieces), on hold for over three years. It said that the Chinese Bureau of Cultural Heritage demanded that words such as "Genghis Khan," "Empire" and "Mongol" be taken out of the exhibition, that its emphasis would be on the Ming (1368–1644) rather than Mongolian period (1644–1911; also Manchu or Qing dynasty), and that it asked for power over exhibition brochures, legends, and maps. The museum called this censorship accusing the Bureau of wanting to include "elements of biased rewriting of Mongol culture in favor of a new national narrative."¹¹⁸

On 16 October 2020, Samuel Paty (1973–2020), a history and geography teacher, was attacked with a knife and beheaded near his school in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, near Paris. Witnesses heard attacker Abdullakh Anzorov, an 18-year-old man of Chechen origin, shout "Allahu Akbar" ("God is the Greatest.") Anzorov then posted a picture of the beheaded Paty to a Twitter account, along with insults to President Emmanuel Macron and French "infidels" and "dogs." He later fired at police with an airgun before being shot dead in Éragny-sur-Oise, being hit nine times in all. On 5 and 6 October 2020, Paty had taught one or two classes of Enseignement morale et civique (EMS; moral and civic education) about freedom of expression to the fourth year (13- and 14-year-olds) and shown controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad while talking about *Charlie Hebdo* (the satirical magazine that had

¹¹⁷ "[Activists on Trial over Attempt to Steal African Staff](#)," *BBC News* (30 September 2020); "[France Fines Congo Activist for Seizing Museum Artefact](#)," *BBC News* (14 October 2020); Gert van Langendonck, "[Elke Afrikaan is rechtmatig erfgenaam van roofkunst](#)," *NRC Handelsblad* (14 October 2020).

¹¹⁸ Agence France-Presse, "[China Insists Genghis Khan Exhibit Not Use Words 'Genghis Khan'](#)," *Guardian* (14 October 2020).

republished the cartoons in 2015) and the trial taking place relating to the deadly attack it had suffered for it. He had advised Muslim students to look away or leave the room if they thought they might be offended. The class caused an uproar among some Muslim parents with a few posting videos on social media asking for Paty's resignation and one lodging a formal complaint. Paty had also received a number of unspecified threats in the days following the class.

Sixteen people were arrested for interrogation, including four school students (who may have helped identify Paty to Anzorov in exchange for payment), relatives of the attacker, the father of a pupil at Paty's school, and the radical Islamist preacher Abdelhakim Sefrioui (who was accused of having issued a *fatwa* against Paty). Seven of them would appear before an anti-terrorism judge. Three of them, two minors (who took money in exchange for information on Paty) and the pupil's father, reportedly exchanged text messages with Anzorov prior to the attack. The 13-year-old pupil whose complaints induced her father to lodge a legal complaint and start a social media campaign over the incident in which he identified Paty and the school, later admitted that she did not attend the class in which Paty showed the cartoons and that she had lied about her presence.

President Emmanuel Macron called the beheading an "Islamist terrorist attack." In the National Assembly, deputies stood up to honor the teacher and condemn the "atrocious terror attack." On 18 October 2020, rallies with tens of thousands of people were held in Paris and several other cities in support of Paty. On 20 October 2020, Paty was posthumously awarded the Legion d'honneur, France's highest honor.

In the wake of the murder, police raided the homes of dozens of suspected Islamic radicals and Muslim associations, including the Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF; Collective against Islamophobia) and the Sheikh Yassin Collective (an Islamist group named after the founder of the Palestinian militant group Hamas). Some of those questioned had reportedly posted messages of support to Anzorov. The Pantin mosque near Paris was closed for sharing videos on Facebook calling for action against Paty and sharing his school's address in the days before his murder.

On 3 November 2020, two 18-year-old men (one French and one of Chechen origin) and a 17-year-old girl, suspected of having been in contact with Anzorov, were arrested and on 6 November charged with "criminal terrorist conspiracy." On 6 November 2020, prosecutors in Cambrai said three teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17 were charged with "supporting terrorism" for threats made during a national tribute to Paty on 3 November. About 400 such incidents were reported during the minute of silence observed for Paty at schools countrywide. An Algerian man was convicted by a court in Pontoise to six months' imprisonment for "glorifying" Paty's murder on social media and describing Anzorov as a "martyr."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Jean-Michel Décugis, Jérémie Pham-Lê & Ronan Folgoas, "[Yvelines-Val-d'Oise: un professeur retrouvé décapité, un suspect abattu](#)," *Le Parisien* (16 October 2020); Elise Vincent & Nicolas Chapuis, "[Attentat de Conflans: neuf personnes en garde à vue, dont des parents d'élèves et des proches du meurtrier](#)," *Le Monde*

During the night from 31 October to 1 November 2020, the far-right Turkish group Grey Wolves, seen as allied to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, daubed a memorial to the 1915 Armenian genocide near Lyon with yellow graffiti featuring the Grey Wolves' name alongside the letters "RTE" – for Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This action came amid growing tensions between France and Turkey over a territorial dispute in Nagorno-Karabakh since September 2020. France would ban the Grey Wolves.¹²⁰

In the aftermath of the murder of Samuel Paty (*see above*), Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer claimed that "left-wing Islamism" was "wreaking havoc" in French universities. In addition, he later said that it was necessary to "fight" intellectual currents coming from United States universities that viewed society through the lens of ethnic origin, religion, or gender – rather than the republican ideal of equality – because they risked the "fragmentation" of society and created a "vision of the world which converges with the interests of the Islamists." Researchers who focused on areas such as racism, Islamophobia, and French colonialism in particular felt targeted. One hundred academics publicly backed Blanquer's comments, accusing "racialist" and postcolonial scholars of "feeding an anti-white racism and a hatred of France." The Conference of University Presidents (CPU) denied that universities were complicit in terrorism. In early November 2020, an academic colloquium on feminism was canceled after online harassment by far-right trolls. One of the organizers, Sylvie Chaperon, a history professor at the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, said that while it was hard to link the harassment directly to the minister's comments, universities had been weakened by them. In some ways, the debate mirrored developments in the United States and Britain. Both President Donald Trump and a minister

(17 October 2020); "[Macron Calls Paris Beheading 'Islamist Terrorist Attack'](#)," *BBC News* (17 October 2020); "[France Teacher Attack: Suspect 'Asked Pupils to Point Samuel Paty Out'](#)," *BBC News* (17 October 2020); Kim Willsher, "[Macron Speaks of 'Existential' Fight against Terrorism after Teacher Killed in France](#)," *Guardian* (17 October 2020); Kim Willsher, "[Teacher Decapitated in Paris Named as Samuel Paty, 47](#)," *Guardian* (17 October 2020); Gert van Langendonck, "['Er is een Frankrijk voor en een na de onthoofding'](#)," *NRC Handelsblad* (18 October 2020); "[France Teacher Attack: Police Raid Homes of Suspected Islamic Radicals](#)," *BBC News* (19 October 2020); "[France Teacher Attack: Four Pupils Held over Beheading](#)," *BBC News* (20 October 2020); Lucy Williamson, "[Samuel Paty: Beheading of Teacher Deepens Divisions over France's Secular Identity](#)," *BBC News* (20 October 2020); "[France Teacher Attack: Pupil's Father 'Exchanged Texts with Killer'](#)," *BBC News* (20 October 2020); "[France Teacher Attack: Seven People to Attend Court over Samuel Paty's Death](#)," *BBC News* (21 October 2020); "[France Teacher Attack: Macron Hails Murdered 'Quiet Hero'](#)," *BBC News* (22 October 2020); Article 19, "[France: Teacher's Murder a Shocking Attack on Freedom of Expression](#)," (press release; 20 October 2020); EuroClio, "[Statement on the Murder of Our French Colleague Samuel Paty](#)," (21 October 2020); Network of Concerned Historians, "[EuroClio Statement on the Murder of History Teacher Samuel Paty](#)," (21 October 2020); Ruth Smeeth, "[Samuel Paty: An Educator, a Father and a Free Speech Martyr](#)," *Index on Censorship* (blog) (23 October 2020); Norimitsu Onishi & Constant Méheut, "[A Teacher, His Killer and the Failure of French Integration](#)," *New York Times* (26 October 2020); Sarah Elzas, "[Paty Murder Puts Focus on Role of Teachers in Passing on French Values](#)," *RFI* (Radio France Internationale) (2 November 2020); "[Three Teens Charged in French Teacher's Beheading](#)," *BBC News* (6 November 2020); Ruth Smeeth, "Hey, Big Brother – We're Watching You," *Index on Censorship*, 49 no. 4, 52–53; Benjamin Lynch, "World Loses Titans of Free Speech," *Index on Censorship*, 49 no. 4, 97; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 258; "[Samuel Paty: French Schoolgirl Admits Lying about Murdered Teacher](#)," *BBC News* (8 March 2021).

¹²⁰ "[Grey Wolves: Far-right Group To Be Banned in France](#)," *BBC News* (3 November 2020).

in Britain's Conservative government had attacked critical race theory, a framework in the social sciences that examined racism embedded in the law and legal institutions.¹²¹

On 19 March 2021, members of the group SOS Racisme defaced a street sign in Paris named after Marshal Thomas Bugeaud (1784–1849), a former military commander and the first colonial governor of Algeria (*see above*). They put up a sign in its place reading: “Avenue of the Butcher Bugeaud,” explaining below that he was a “war criminal” and “the executioner of Algeria’s conquest” who applied a scorched-earth policy and suffocated those who had taken refuge in caves with smoke.¹²²

In [April] 2021, Audrey Kichelewski, an associate professor of contemporary history at the University of Strasbourg who was writing a book about post-war trials of Poles, said she would be “very cautious with the vocabulary” she used and would not cite defendants’ names for fear of being sued by living relatives in Poland.¹²³

On 7 April 2021, President Emmanuel Macron made about 8.000 document linked to France’s role in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda publicly available. The decision followed a government-ordered report released in March, which found that French authorities remained blind to the preparations for genocide.¹²⁴

See also Algeria, Cameroon, Niger, Poland, Rwanda, Syria, Thailand.

¹²¹ David Matthews, “[French Academics Fear Being Scapegoated for Terrorism](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (4 December 2020); Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 164.

¹²² Ahmed Rouaba, “[Colonial Governor of Algeria’s Sign Defaced in Paris](#),” *BBC News* (19 March 2021).

¹²³ David Matthews, “[Polish Pressure Forces Holocaust Historian to Self-censor](#),” *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (15 April 2021).

¹²⁴ “[France Opens Archives on Rwanda Genocide](#),” *Deutsche Welle* (7 April 2021).

GABON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2016, 2018.

GAMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2016–2018.

In November 2019, Fabián Salvioli, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, published his preliminary observations on Gambia, stating that “numerous reports ... indicate that the government has made insufficient efforts to secure and archive documentary and on-site evidence of past violations, which could be used in criminal proceedings. An alarming example [was] that the headquarters of the National Security Agency (NIA [Agence nationale de renseignement]), now informally called State Security Service (SIS), was refurbished in 2017, which could have led to the destruction of possible evidence. The TRRC [Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission] visited the SIS headquarters in 2018 and ordered it to stop the renovations ...” On 6 January 2021, NIA director Ousman Sowe (employed by the agency since its creation in 1995) testified on the destruction of evidence after the fall of the Yahya Jammeh dictatorship (1994–2017) before the TRRC. He was accused of burning NIA documents, a charge he denied.¹²⁵

See also Myanmar.

GEORGIA

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

¹²⁵ [Preliminary Observations from the Official Visit to The Gambia by the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli from 20 to 27 November 2019](#) (27 November 2019); Mustapha K. Darboe, “[Gambie: L’Espion qui en savait trop ou pas assez.](#)” *JusticeInfo.Net* (11 January 2021).

GERMANY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997–2000, 2003, 2006–2013, 2015–2017, 2019–2020.

In April 2021, Culture Minister Monika Grütters announced that Germany would start returning a “substantial” part of the Benin bronzes held in its museums to Nigeria from 2022 onward. The bronzes, which were looted by British soldiers and sailors on a punitive expedition to Benin City in 1897, were subsequently sold to museums in Europe and North America. About 1,100 artefacts ended up in Germany. The Benin bronzes could in the future be held at the Edo Museum of West African Art, a new museum in Benin City designed by the Ghanaian-British architect David Adjaye. The government said it would help fund a pavilion to hold some restituted artefacts until the museum was completed in 2025.

Jürgen Zimmerer, a historian of colonialism at Hamburg University, was critical, saying the government’s announcement amounted to a face-saving exercise rather than an emphatic gesture appropriate to the historic context. “Instead of unconditionally committing itself to returning all looted art, there is only vague talk of a substantial part,” said Zimmerer. “How this part is determined, and by whom, is left unsaid.”¹²⁶

See also Brazil, China, France, Poland, Russia, Syria.

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.

¹²⁶ Philip Oltermann, “[Germany First to Hand Back Benin Bronzes Looted by British](#),” *Guardian* (30 April 2021).

GUATEMALA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2020.

In March 2019, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered Guatemala, in a binding ruling, to shelve the proposed legislation that would provide amnesty for genocide and other atrocities. In late 2020, this had not happened [See also *NCH Annual Report 2020*].¹²⁷

On 15 October 2020, the Minister of Culture and Sports issued decree 934–2020 declaring the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (AHPN; Historical Archive of the National Police) part of the cultural patrimony of the nation. On 27 February 2021, the Constitutional Court confirmed the *amparo* (a request for the protection of legal rights), thereby rejecting the appeal of the Interior Ministry [See also *NCH Annual Reports 2019–2020*].¹²⁸

See also Israel.

GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2009–2020.

Eleven years after security forces on 28 September 2009 massacred over 150 peaceful opposition supporters and raped dozens of women at the Stade du 28 September – named after the day Guinea voted “no” in the French referendum in 1958, which ultimately led to the political independence on 2 October – those responsible had not been tried [See also *NCH Annual Reports 2010–2012, 2015, 2019–2020*]. In November 2019, then-Justice Minister Mohammed Lamine Fofana had stated that the trial would take place no later than June 2020. The International Criminal Court, which had an ongoing preliminary examination of the 2009 massacre, urged the government to meet the June deadline. Fofana was, however, replaced in June by a new minister, Mory Doumbouya, and the trial had yet to begin in late 2020. Five people charged in the case were detained beyond the legal limit while they waited for the trial to start.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 283.

¹²⁸ [Acuerdo ministerial 934–2020](#) (15 October 2020); Lourdes Arana, “[CC confirma amparo que garantiza protección del Archivo Histórico de la PN](#),” *La Hora* (27 February 2021); United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Situation of Human Rights in Guatemala* (UN Doc. A/HRC/46/74) (11 February 2021), paragraph 72.

¹²⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 293.

GUINEA-BISSAU

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

GUYANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997.

HAITI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2000–2003, 2006, 2008–2009, 2013–2020.

Re-opened investigations into arbitrary detentions, torture, disappearances, summary executions, and forced exile during the presidency of Jean-Claude Duvalier (1971–1986) remained pending. In 2014, a Court of Appeal had ruled that statutes of limitations were inapplicable to crimes against humanity, ordering investigations to continue for crimes committed during Duvalier’s presidency [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2000–2001, 2003, 2012–2020*].¹³⁰

On 23 June 2020, former Haitian death squad leader Emmanuel “Toto” Constant (1956–), was deported from the United States and detained. While on the payroll of the US Central Intelligence Agency, Constant founded a paramilitary organization that was complicit in murdering at least 3,000 Haitians in 1991–1994. In 2000, he was convicted in absentia for involvement in a 1994 massacre in the Raboteau neighborhood of Gonaïves [See also NCH *Annual Report 2009*]. Under Haitian law, Constant had the right to a new trial. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urged Haiti to hold him accountable. Given the climate of impunity that characterized the regime of President Jovenel Moïse (1968–2021), lawyers and human rights groups voiced concerns that Constant would go free. In 2018, Jean-Robert Gabriel, who was also convicted in 2000 of involvement in the Raboteau massacre through command responsibility, had been named assistant chief of staff of the reinstated Haitian armed forces by Moïse.¹³¹

See also Israel.

HONDURAS

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

HONG KONG

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996. From 1997: *See* China.

¹³⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 299, 300.

¹³¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 300.

HUNGARY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997, 2004, 2007–2020.

In 2020, defamation and slander remained criminal offenses, along with desecrating the memory of deceased persons. The Criminal Code also prohibited dishonoring or degrading national symbols, while the prohibition on incitement to hatred problematically included incitement to hatred of the nation. Prohibitions on totalitarian symbols and open denial of Nazi or Communist crimes also raised free speech concerns, since they were not limited to contexts where this speech constituted hate speech and they did not include intent requirements.¹³²

In September 2020, the National Core Curriculum was rolled out in elementary and secondary schools. One of the curriculum's goals was for students to learn to be "proud of their people's past." The nation's historical wartime defeats were deleted from textbooks and replaced by portrayals of victorious battles; legends and myths were presented as historical facts. The authoritarian rule of Miklós Horthy (1868–1957) in 1920–1944 was to be portrayed in a positive light, despite the fact that he had passed anti-Jewish laws in 1920 and later became one of Adolf Hitler's close allies. The literature program further removed Nobel Laureate Imre Kertész (1929–2016), who wrote extensively about the Shoah, and German Peace Prize winning author Péter Esterházy (1950–2016) from the curriculum. It made works by József Nyíró (1889–1953), a member of the fascist Arrow Cross Party and an admirer of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, and Albert Wass (1908–1998), who was an avowed anti-Semite and convicted war criminal, mandatory readings. The government of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party had been pushing the rehabilitation of these authors for years, erecting new monuments and naming streets after them [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].¹³³

Charles Kecskemeti (1933–2021) was a historian who went into exile during the 1956 Revolution. He went to France, where he began working at the National Archives in 1957. He joined the International Council on Archives in 1962 as Secretary and then as Executive Secretary (1969–1988), Executive Director (1988–1992), and Secretary-General (1992–1999). He passed away on 2 April 2021. He wrote extensively on archives and archival theory.¹³⁴

¹³² Centre for Law and Democracy, *Restrictions on Civic Space Globally: Law and Policy Mapping Series*, vol. 2, *Europe and Central Asia Region* (Halifax: CLD, July 2020), 28.

¹³³ Felix Schlagwein, "[New School Curriculum Raises Eyebrows in Orbán's Hungary](#)," *Deutsche Welle* (31 March 2021); Amnesty International, *State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 181.

¹³⁴ "[Remembering Dr Charles Kecskemeti](#)," Website International Council on Archives (Paris: ICA, s.d. [2021]).

INDIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1997, 2000–2020.

Throughout 2020, Romila Thapar (1931–), a preeminent historian of ancient India, was the subject of verbal attacks, accusing her of ignorance about ancient Indian history and quickly devolving into “pornographic and sexist” remarks, by supporters of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP; Indian People’s Party) who viewed her as an opponent to be discredited. Her research and writings were seen by BJP supporters as an attempt to undermine BJP efforts to project a unified Hindu tradition stretching back thousands of years, and to paint Muslim rulers of India as nothing more than invaders or tyrants. In 2019, Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru University, where Thapar spent decades teaching, had sent her a letter asking her to submit her curriculum vitae so officials could “review” her status as an emeritus professor, an honorary title normally given for life [See also NCH *Annual Report 2015*].¹³⁵

In February 2020, the Modern College in Pune, Maharashtra, canceled the scheduled program for the Commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, including a lecture by Tushar Gandhi, after a letter with threats from the extremist Hindutva organization Patitpavan.¹³⁶

In [July] 2020, a PhD candidate (name unknown) at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) claimed that faculty at his university labeled him as “separatist” for a research proposal on the political economy of Jammu and Kashmir (an Indian-controlled, Muslim-majority region that the governments of India and Pakistan have disputed for decades). They allegedly pressured him to retitle his research proposal and make it more benign, including by omitting decades from his proposed historical analysis.¹³⁷

On 11 July 2020, Mumbai-based stand-up comedian Agrima Joshua was forced to apologize for a joke made in a video in April 2019 in which she spoofed the naivety of commenters on the site Quora making outlandish claims about a statue for Marathi King Chhatrapati Shivaji (1627–1680) proposed by the government and being planned off the coast of Mumbai. Two men who issued death and rape threats were arrested days later and charged with criminal intimidation and obscenity. However, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh announced that further action would be taken against Joshua because

¹³⁵ Niha Masih, “[In the Battle over India’s History, Hindu Nationalists Square Off against a Respected Historian.](#)” *Washington Post* (3 January 2021).

¹³⁶ “[Six Tables that Tell the Story of Academic Unfreedom in India.](#)” *The Wire* (18 April 2021).

¹³⁷ Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think 2020* (New York: SAR, 2020), 51, 56.

she had supposedly made “offensive comments” on Shivaji [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2004, 2009–2011, 2014, 2020*].¹³⁸

On 26 July 2020, the Uttar Pradesh education board’s decision to drop portions related to Congress’s history, former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) and Lal Bahadur Shastri (1904–1966) from the Class 12 civics syllabus angered Congress, which wrote a letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Governor Anandi Ben Patel urging them to ensure that the relevant portions were reintroduced in the syllabus. Calling it a “conspiracy,” Congress leader Anil Shastri, son of Lal Bahadur Shastri, told the press that the central and state governments wanted to eliminate Congress’s contribution to the freedom struggle and to the post-independence nation building from the school curriculum. The portions dropped from the syllabus included the phase of single party (Congress) dominance, the first three general elections, the nature of Congress’s dominance at the national level, the general election of 1967, the division and re-organization of the Congress, and the party’s victory in the 1971 elections. Topics on “The Rise of Nazism,” Hitler and the Harappan civilization were also dropped from Class 12 history syllabus. Divya Kant Shukla, secretary of the Board of High School and Intermediate Education in Uttar Pradesh, said that all these topics had been removed from the syllabi and not from textbooks.¹³⁹

On 13 September 2020, historian and human rights activist Umar Khalid (1987–) was arrested for his alleged role in deadly riots in New Delhi in February 2020 [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*], in what was condemned as a politically motivated investigation into anti-government figures. He was accused of masterminding the riots and making incendiary speeches under the counterterrorism Unlawful Activities Prevention Act and would be held in police custody for ten days. The riots, in which at least 53 people were killed and hundreds injured, triggered some of the worst religious violence in New Delhi in decades. Both Hindus and Muslims committed acts of violence, but Muslims were disproportionately affected. A report by Amnesty International alleged that Delhi police had “committed serious human rights violations” during the communal riots, including beating Muslim protesters and taking part in the violence alongside Hindu mobs. On 1 September 2020, Khalid had written to the Delhi police commissioner alleging that the investigators were putting pressure on his acquaintances to implicate him in the violence [See also NCH *Annual Report 2017*].¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ “[Agrima Joshua: One More Arrested for Issuing Threat, but Minister Insists Comedian Will Face Action](#),” *The Wire* (13 July 2020).

¹³⁹ Prashant Srivastava, “[UP Congress Threatens to Protest after Topics on Nehru-Shastri Dropped from Class 12 Syllabus](#),” *The Print* (27 July 2020).

¹⁴⁰ Hannah Ellis-Petersen, “[Indian Student Activist Umar Khalid Arrested over Delhi Riots](#),” *Guardian* (14 September 2020); Human Rights Watch, “[India: Arrests of Activists Politically Motivated: Sedition, Counterterrorism Laws Used to Silence Dissent](#)” (press release) (16 September 2020); Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 183.

On 17 September 2020, Jawaharlal Nehru University students Devangana Kalita ([1990]–), studying at the Center for Women’s Studies, and Natasha Narwal ([1988]–), a PhD student at the Center for Historical Studies, were freed on bail but immediately re-arrested by the Crime Branch of the Delhi police on new charges ranging from Criminal Code sections 147 (rioting), and 307 (attempt to murder), to 302 (murder), among others, related to the north-east Delhi riots in February 2020 [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. Their lawyers said that they had been maliciously implicated in the case. On 17 June 2021, they were granted bail two days after their release was ordered. The judges criticized the government for confusing the right to protest with terrorist activity. On 18 June 2021, the Supreme Court would hear the Delhi police appeal against their bail.¹⁴¹

On 25 September 2020, a petition by Lucknow resident Ranjana Agnihotri ([1969]–) and five other Hindus demanded a civil court in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, to remove the Idgah Mosque (built in 1669–1670 during the rule of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb) from what they claimed was “Krishna’s birthplace” and to annul a 1968 court ruling, ratifying a land deal between the (Hindu) Shree Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan and the (Muslim) Management Committee of the Shahi Masjid Idgah, perpetuating the existence of the mosque within the temple premises. The petition asked to excavate the deity’s birthplace. Agnihotri also moved the court as the “next friend of deities” Sri Krishna Virajman and the Asthan Shrikrishna Janam Bhoomi, claiming legal status on their behalf. The respondents of the petition included the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board and the mosque’s Management Committee for the Muslim side and the two temple bodies Shree Krishna Janambhoomi Trust and Shree Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan (arguing that they failed to protect the interests of the deities). The petition also stated that the provision in the Places of Worship Act (1991) that the religious character of a place of worship as it existed on 15 August 1947 would continue to be the same, was “not applicable in this case.”¹⁴²

On 30 September 2020, a court acquitted former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti, all top leaders of the governing Bharatiya Janata Party, of any wrongdoing in the destruction by Hindu mobs of the sixteenth-century Babri mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in 1992 [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2002–2004, 2006–2007, 2010–2011, 2015, 2017, 2020*]. They were not found guilty of charges of “giving provocative speeches leading to demolition of the mosque, creating enmity between Hindus and Muslims and inciting people for riots and public mischief.” The verdict acquitted 32 of the 49 people charged – 17 had died while the case was under way. The court said that

¹⁴¹ “[Pinjra Tod Member Natasha Narwal Gets Bail in Delhi Riots Case](#),” *National Herald* (17 September 2020); “[Delhi Riots: Activists Held over Citizenship Law Protests Leave Jail](#),” *BBC News* (17 June 2021).

¹⁴² “[Petition Asks for Removal of Idgah Mosque From ‘Krishna’s Birthplace’ in Mathura](#),” *The Wire* (27 September 2020).

the destruction of the mosque in 1992 had been the work of unidentified “anti-socials” and had not been planned. The influential All India Muslim Personal Law Board, which represented Muslim social and political groups in India, said it would appeal the ruling in the high court. Many others criticized the ruling as well. Federal investigators had interviewed nearly 850 witnesses and examined 7,000 documents and television footage and photos of what happened on 6 December 2020 to help them frame charges against 49 people, including the BJP leaders. Among these sources, there were numerous credible eyewitness accounts that the tearing down of the mosque had been planned, rehearsed, and carried out with impunity and the connivance of a section of the local police in front of thousands of people. In 2019, the Supreme Court said the demolition had been a “calculated act” and an “egregious violation of law.” The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which also investigated the case, had always maintained that the destruction was a planned event.¹⁴³

On 6 December 2020, Twitter suspended the account of prominent Indian journalist Salil Tripathi. Twitter’s decision, seen as censorship by a number of India’s most well-known writers, lawyers and journalists, came after Tripathi had tweeted on subjects including the 28-year commemoration of the demolition of the Babri Masjid (*see above*).¹⁴⁴

In early 2021, it became known that the annexe portions of the National Archives of India (NAI; established 1891, in Delhi since 1911) were scheduled to be demolished as part of the Central Vista project (a controversial rearrangement of Central Delhi), without it being clear where the hundreds of thousands of records in these annexe portions would be housed instead. The main heritage building would be retained or refurbished. A petition signed by numerous archivists, historians, and other academics aimed at preventing demolition until there was more transparency about a clear plan with proper oversight to regulate the possible relocation of and access to records. On 20 May 2021, Union Culture Minister Prahlad Singh assured researchers that records would be safely preserved while the annexe was being rebuilt. In June 2021, the Delhi High Court dismissed a public interest litigation against the project, saying that the land-use status of the existing building had been changed from “public and semi-public land” to “government land” as per March 2020.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ [“Babri Mosque: India Court Acquits BJP Leaders in Demolition Case,”](#) *BBC News* (30 September 2020); Soutik Biswas, [“Babri Mosque: India’s Muslims Feel More Abandoned than Ever,”](#) *BBC News* (1 October 2020).

¹⁴⁴ Hannah Ellis-Peterson, [“Twitter Accused of Censoring Indian Critic of Hindu Nationalism,”](#) *Guardian* (7 December 2020).

¹⁴⁵ [“Transparency on Demolition of National Archives of India and Transfer of Its Holdings”](#) (petition; 17 May 2021); [Letter about the petition](#) (17 May 2021); [“Transparency Urged in Proposed Demolition of National Archives of India Buildings,”](#) *The Wire* (19 May 2021); Sana Aziz, [“Demolition Squad: India’s Archives and the Central Vista Project,”](#) *Telegraph* (30 May 2021); Arnab Ganguly, [“100 Historians of the World Express Concern over Fate of National Archives,”](#) *Telegraph* (16 June 2021).

On 10 January 2021, the Godse Gyan Shala, a memorial library and “knowledge center” dedicated to Nathuram Godse (1910–1949), the man who shot Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) on 30 January 1948, was inaugurated in Gwalior, a city in the south of India. In recent years, as Hindu nationalism moved from an extremist fringe to mainstream politics, Godse’s public reputation steadily shifted from being condemned as traitor to being venerated as a misunderstood patriot. The library is just one of many recent efforts to memorialize and revere Godse. Hindu Mahasabha, a Hindu nationalist organization, erected several Godse statues, attempted to set up temples in his name, and celebrated Godse’s birthday as a holy day.¹⁴⁶

On 17 May 2021, the Masjid Gareeb Nawaz Al Maroof Mosque, was bulldozed in the district of Baranski in the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP)-led state of Uttar Pradesh. The demolition was in violation of an Allahabad high court order issued on 24 April, which stated that buildings in the state should be protected from any eviction or demolition until 31 May “in the wake of the upsurge of the pandemic.” The building of the mosque dated back to the time of British occupation.¹⁴⁷

See also Malawi, United Kingdom, United States.

INDONESIA

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

In April 2020, police arrested 23 activists in Ambon. They had participated in flag-raising ceremonies commemorating the 70th anniversary of the declaration of independence of the Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS; Republic of South Moluccas). The Ambon court found three of them guilty, sentencing two to two years and a third to three years in prison. On 23 March 2020, the military had instructed every household in Maluku to raise Indonesia’s national flag [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2008–2011, 2014–2015*].¹⁴⁸

See also Australia, Netherlands.

¹⁴⁶ Hannah Ellis-Petersen, “[Mahatma Gandhi’s Killer Venerated as Hindu Nationalism Resurges in India](#),” *Guardian* (17 January 2021).

¹⁴⁷ Hannah Ellis-Petersen, “[Indian Mosque Bulldozed in Defiance of High Court Order](#),” *Guardian* (18 May 2021).

¹⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 333; Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 188.

IRAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2020.

The authorities continued to systematically conceal the fate and whereabouts of several thousand political dissidents who were forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed in secret in 1988. On 3 September 2020, the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and six UN Special Rapporteurs wrote to the government warning that past and ongoing violations related to prison massacres in 1988 may amount to crimes against humanity and that they would call for an international investigation if these violations persisted. They also wrote that they were “further alarmed by the authorities’ refusal to provide families with accurate and complete death certificates, the destruction of mass graves, the ongoing threats and harassment of the families, the lack of investigation and prosecution for the killings, and the statements from the government denying or trivializing the cases and equating criticizing the killings with support for terrorism.” The privately sent letter was published in December 2020.

Between late July and early September 1988, about 30,000 of imprisoned political dissidents across Iran had forcibly been disappeared and then extrajudicially executed in secret after Ayatollah Khomeini had issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) in the summer of 1988 to execute “those who waged war on God.” Death Commissions sent victims to the gallows after mock trials. In 2018 Amnesty International had compiled evidence of the involvement of several individuals who held high positions of power in the enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.

In late April 2021, the authorities ordered members of the minority Bahai religious community to bury their dead in a mass grave for political prisoners executed in 1988. Many felt outraged and feared that by burying people at the site, the regime was trying to destroy mass gravesites of victims of the 1988 prison massacres in a bid to eliminate crucial evidence of crimes against humanity. The site had been bulldozed multiple times in recent decades.

On 19 June 2021, Ebrahim Raisi (1960–) was elected President. As a member of the 1988 Tehran Death Commission, Raisi allegedly sent as many as 3,000 people, mostly members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) opposition movement, to be killed.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Amnesty International, [Blood-Soaked Secrets: Why Iran’s 1988 Prison Massacres Are Ongoing Crimes against Humanity](#) (London: AI, 2018); Hassan Mahmoudi, “[Call For Justice By Survivors Of Iran’s 1988 Massacre](#),” *Eurasia Review* (17 July 2019); United Nations Experts, [Letter](#) (Reference: AL IRN 20/2020) (3 September 2020); Amnesty International, “[Iran: UN Calls for Accountability on 1988 Prison Massacres Marks Turning Point in Three-Decade Struggle](#)” (9 December 2020); Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 53, 190-193, 195; “[Iran ‘Orders Bahais to Bury Dead at Mass Grave for Executed Prisoners’](#),” *BBC News* (29 April 2021); Patrick Wintour, “[Iran’s President-Elect, Ebrahim Raisi, Is Hardliner Linked with Mass Executions](#),” *Guardian* (19 June 2021).

On 26 September 2020, three Iranian writers, Baktash Abtin, Reza Khandan-Mahabadi, and Keyvan Bazhan entered Evin prison to serve sentences related to their critical writings about successive Iranian governments. Members of the unauthorized Iranian Writers' Association (IWA), each of them had published numerous books of Iranian history, sociology and literary criticism. They had been convicted on charges of "spreading propaganda against the system" and "assembly and collusion against national security" on 15 May 2019. The charges related to their joint authorship of a book about the history of the IWA which for decades had been critical of successive Iranian governments. They were also accused of visiting the graves of dissident poets and writers. Khandan-Mahabadi and Abtin were each sentenced to six years' imprisonment, while Bazhan was sentenced to three and a half years in prison.¹⁵⁰

On 3 October 2020, 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, was temporarily released from prison with an electronic ankle bracelet [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].¹⁵¹

See also Lebanon.

IRAQ

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000–2020.

In August 2020, Iraqi police arrested a suspected member of Islamic State (IS) and were led to a stockpile of 32 hidden Syriac books and manuscripts looted from Assyrian churches across Mosul during IS occupation (2014–2017). The texts were crucial to understanding and preserving ancient communities such as the Assyrians, an ethnic group indigenous to parts of Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran.¹⁵²

See also Kuwait.

¹⁵⁰ PEN International, "[Iran: Three Writers Face Lengthy Prison Sentences](#)" (3 May 2019; with an update 17 May 2019); PEN International, "[Iran: Writers Baktash Abtin, Reza Khandan-Mahabadi and Keyvan Bazhan Imprisoned](#)" (Rapid Action Network, update 2: no. 02/2020) (30 October 2020).

¹⁵¹ "[Fariba Adelkhah: French-Iranian Academic Temporarily Released in Iran](#)," *BBC News* (3 October 2020); Scholars at Risk, *Free to Think 2020* (New York: SAR, 2020), 41.

¹⁵² Joe Snell, "[Syriac Manuscripts Recovered from Suspected Islamic State Fighter in Mosul](#)," *Al-Monitor* (30 September 2020).

IRELAND

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

In the autumn of 2020, the new Minister for Education, Norma Foley (appointed in June 2020), proposed a controversial Retention of Records Bill that would seal the records with testimonies of abuse survivors submitted in the 2000s to state investigations into abuse in (Catholic) residential institutions, all administrative records, and evidence relating to all operations in general until at least 2095. The bill did not provide for survivors to be given a copy of their own testimonies or asked whether they wished their testimonies to form part of the national historical record during their lifetimes. In April 2019, Foley’s predecessor, Joe McHugh, had controversially claimed that the bill was needed in order to overturn current legislation which would see the destruction of the records. A joint parliamentary committee had deferred consideration of the bill in November 2019. Maeve O’Rourke, a lecturer at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, who had been working with and on behalf of survivors since 2009, said: “Denying survivors the opportunity to place their testimonies – if they wish, voluntarily – in a national archive creates a risk that future generations will not learn of this history.”¹⁵³

ISRAEL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000–2003, 2008–2014, 2016–2020.

In 1953, Hungarian-Jewish journalist Malchiel Greenwald (Malkiel Grünwald) distributed a self-published pamphlet in which he accused Rezsó Kasztner (aka Rudolf or Yisrael Kastner) (1906–1957), one of the leaders of Hungarian Jewry and head of the Zionist Rescue Committee in wartime Budapest, of having made a deal with SS leader Adolf Eichmann in 1944 to allow the emigration of 1,684 Jews while the rest, hundreds of thousands of Jews, were led to the extermination camps. He declared that Kasztner was guilty of collaboration with the Nazis; of “preparing the ground for the murder” of Hungarian Jewry; of profiteering with Nazi war criminal S.S. Commander Kurt Becher; and of helping the latter to evade punishment after the war. Greenwald was charged with defaming Kasztner. In the June 1955 ruling of the District Court of Jerusalem, Kasztner was acquitted of the first, second, and fourth counts. The verdict triggered the fall of the cabinet of Prime Minister Moshe Sharett. Kasztner, who had moved to Israel after the war resigned his position as a spokesman for the Ministry of Trade and Industry (1952–1955). The Attorney-General appealed the district court’s judgment. On 3 March

¹⁵³ Jessica Ní Mhainín, “What Has the Government Got to Hide?” *Index on Censorship* (19 no. 3, 2020), 20–21.

1957, Kasztner was shot by right-wing extremist, former Irgun member and former Shin Bet informant Ze'ev Eckstein, immediately after the appeal hearings were concluded. He died of his injuries twelve days later. In January 1958, the Supreme Court reversed the verdict, accepting the main part of the appeal, stating that the lower court had “erred seriously”: Kasztner was convicted of the first two charges, his acquittal on the fourth charge remaining intact. In March 2021, historian Nadav Kaplan ([1945]–) who investigated the assassination and security agency Shin Bet’s involvement in it, filed a petition in the High Court to force the release of Shin Bet’s file on the case. One month after Kasztner’s assassination, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had placed a restriction order on the identity of the Shin Bet security agents to testify in a court case on the issue.¹⁵⁴

A State Comptroller report revealed that about 1,300,000 historical files in the Israel State Archives were hidden from the public eye, despite the fact that the confidentiality assigned to them by Israeli law had expired. The need to file an application, the complexity and duration of the document’s reclassification process, and the limited disclosure by various archives were serious barriers for researchers. In a series of freedom-of-information petitions filed in recent years, regarding Israeli defense exports to dictatorships (e.g. ties with the dictatorship in Haiti, with the government in Sri Lanka during the civil war, with the juntas in Argentina and Chile and with the Hutu regime during the civil war and 1994 genocide in Rwanda), courts accepted the official position that the documents should not be disclosed for fear of harming national security and foreign relations.

In late 2019, Italy Mack, a Jerusalem-based human rights defender, had demanded an inquiry from the chief prosecutor over Israel’s role in the Guatemalan civil war (1960–1996), which killed more than 200,000 people, but the prosecutor’s investigation progressed slowly due to the defense ministry’s stalling of the disclosure of sensitive documents.¹⁵⁵

On 18 January 2021, the Lod District Court in Israel banned the screening and distribution of the 2002 documentary *Jenin, Jenin* directed by Mohammed Bakri (1953–), a Palestinian citizen of Israel, in a defamation case filed in 2017 by Nissim Magnagi, an Israeli army officer who appeared in the film. The court also found that some of the representations in the film were untrue. In addition to prohibiting all screenings of the film in Israel, the court issued an order to confiscate 24 copies of the film and ordered Bakri to pay NIS (shekels) 175,000 (\$55,000) in damages as well as NIS 50,000 (\$15,500) in legal expenses. The film showed a set of interviews with Palestinians who lived in the Jenin refugee

¹⁵⁴ *Guardian* (23 April & 14 June 1999); Jenni Frazer, “[On Quest to Clear Kasztner, Historian ‘Shocked’ to Prove Nazi Collaboration](#),” *Times of Israel* (15 November 2016); Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (originally 1963; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2006), xv, 143; Ofer Aderet, “[An Israeli Suspected of Nazi Collaboration Was Murdered: What Is Israel Hiding?](#),” *Haaretz* (21 March 2021).

¹⁵⁵ Eldad Ben Aharon & Eitay Mack, “[Israeli Archives Censorship Regulations and Oral History](#),” *Jerusalem Post* (22 August 2020); “[Israel’s Role in War Crimes Committed during the Guatemalan Civil War](#),” *TRT World* (18 February 2021).

camp, north of the occupied West Bank, at the height of the Second Intifada in April 2002 when it was invaded by the Israeli military for eleven days. The 54-minute film depicted without commentary the events which led to a massacre through stories of survivors. The film had already been banned by the Israel Film Council shortly after its release in 2002 after a complaint by five Israeli soldiers, but a Supreme Court ruling on 11 November 2003 had overturned that ban as an unlawful infringement on Bakri's freedom of expression. Bakri intended to appeal the 2021 District Court's decision and file a petition in the Israeli High Court. In 2002, Human Rights Watch had reported that at least 52 Palestinians, including women, children and elderly, and 23 Israeli soldiers were killed in the assault, accusing Israel of war crimes.¹⁵⁶

See also Belgium, Palestinian Territories, Poland, United Kingdom.

ITALY

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

Impunity remained for many of the crimes committed by mafia organizations. On 21 March 2021, a report by the anti-mafia association Libera – an organization that fights for mafia victims' right to be remembered – concluded that almost 80% of the approximately 600 cases of innocent victims of organized crime had remained unsolved or had been only partially solved. Most investigations were closed for lack of evidence, while many others were trapped in endless trials and dozens were awaiting judicial action.¹⁵⁷

See also Poland.

¹⁵⁶ [“Israeli Court Bans Screening of ‘Jenin, Jenin’ Documentary,”](#) *Court House News* (12 January 2021); [“Israel Bans Screening of ‘Jenin, Jenin’ after Soldier’s Lawsuit,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (12 January 2021); Mustafa Abu Sneineh, [“Filmmakers Denounce Israel Ban on Palestinian Documentary ‘Jenin, Jenin’,”](#) *Middle East Eye* (20 January 2021); [“Lift the Ban on Mohammed Bakri’s ‘Jenin, Jenin’”](#) [[Petition](#)] (no date [January 2021]); [NCH Campaign](#) (2021); Documentary “Jenin, Jenin” on [Vimeo](#) (53’55 minutes); Human Rights Watch, *Israel, The Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian Authority Territories: Jenin, IDF Military Operations* (New York: HRW, May 2002); Daphne Barak-Erez, “The Law of Historical Films: In the Aftermath of *Jenin, Jenin*,” *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* (Spring 2007), 495–522; Supreme Court of Israel sitting as High Court of Justice, [Bakri and Others versus Israel Film Council. Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport](#), Petition for an Order Nisi (11 November 2003).

¹⁵⁷ Libera, [Dirriti Viv!](#) (Rome: Libera, 2021); Lorenzo Tondo, [“‘No Peace Without Justice’: Families of Italy’s Mafia Victims Wait for Closure,”](#) *Guardian* (12 July 2021).

IVORY COAST (Côte d'Ivoire)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004, 2006–2020.

The Supreme Court was yet to rule on a 2019 petition from human rights organizations to cancel a 2018 law granting an amnesty to hundreds of people accused or convicted of crimes committed in 2010 and 2011.¹⁵⁸

The appeal against the 2019 acquittal of former President and historian Laurent Gbagbo and former Minister Charles Blé Goudé by the International Criminal Court remained pending.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 132–133.

¹⁵⁹ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 132–133.

JAMAICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017–2018.

JAPAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2020.

In mid-September 2020, former prime minister Shinzo Abe visited the controversial Yasukuni war memorial (established in 1869) just days after stepping down. The shrine honored Japan's war dead, but also convicted war criminals. Abe declared that he had gone there to inform the spirits of the shrine of his resignation. His 2013 visit to the shrine had angered China and South Korea. Visits by Japan's leaders to the shrine had previously been seen as a lack of remorse for its militaristic past [See also *NCH Annual Reports 2002, 2010*].¹⁶⁰

On 1 October 2020, in an unprecedented move, the new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga refused to appoint six scholars as new members to the Science Council of Japan (a representative organization of the Japanese scientist community founded in 1949 and consisting of 210 scholars that makes policy recommendations independent from the government). It was the first time that such a rejection was made public since the nomination system was introduced in 2004. No explanation was given. Some of the six scholars had voiced opposition to the controversial national security legislation (2015; permitting Japan to deploy military forces to respond to foreign attacks under certain conditions) and the anti-conspiracy legislation (2017). Critics saw the action as a political intervention in academic freedom. The six rejected academics included Sadamichi Ashina at Kyoto University and Shigeki Uno at the University of Tokyo, who were members of the Association of Scholars Opposed to the Security-related Laws, and Yoko Kato, a professor of Japanese modern history at the University of Tokyo. On 3 October 2020, the Japanese Historical Council issued a statement calling on Suga to rescind the decision. On 6 November 2020, 226 academic societies of liberal arts (including philosophy, literature, and historical science) jointly demanded that the government explain why it refused to appoint the six scholars. In the November 2020 extraordinary session of the Diet (Japanese parliament), Suga reiterated that he would not reappoint the rejected scholars. He insisted that his actions were "relevant and legal."¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ "[Yasukuni Shrine: Japan's Ex-PM Abe Visits Controversial Memorial](#)," *BBC News* (19 September 2020).

¹⁶¹ "[PM Suga Refuses to Appoint 6 Scholars to Science Council of Japan in Unprecedented Move](#)," *The Mainichi* (2 October 2020); "[Academic Societies in Japan Issue Joint Statement](#)," *NHK* (6 November 2020); Suvendrini Kakuchi, "[Pressure Piling Up against PM's Science Council Decision](#)," *University World News* (8 December 2020).

See also China; Korea, South; Netherlands, Russia, Singapore, United States.

JORDAN

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

2020); Edward Vickers, "[Undermining Social Sciences and Humanities](#)," *University World News* (29 January 2016); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 374.

KAZAKHSTAN

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

KENYA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2000, 2002–2005, 2007, 2009–2018, 2020.

Extrajudicial killings, abusive evictions, and lack of accountability for serious abuses remained significant challenges throughout 2020. Arrest warrants remained pending before the International Criminal Court against three persons on allegations of witness tampering in cases relating to the 2007/2008 election violence [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. Killings by police remained largely unaddressed, with the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), a civilian police accountability institution, unable to investigate and prosecute most of the over 2,000 incidents of police killings currently on its files. IPOA managed only six successful prosecutions since its establishment in 2011.¹⁶²

KOREA, NORTH

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

KOREA, SOUTH

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1998–2001, 2003, 2006, 2008–2010, 2012–2013, 2016–2020.

On 1 January 2021, the Seoul Central District Court ordered the Japanese government to pay 100 million won (\$91,800) each to twelve Korean women forced into sexual slavery for Japan’s troops during World War II, saying the Japanese government committed “intentional, systematic and wide-ranging criminal acts against humanity.” It also granted a provisional execution of the compensation order, making it possible to immediately seize Japanese government assets. The Japanese government said the same day that “under the principle of exemption from sovereignty under international law” the court had no

¹⁶² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 390.

jurisdiction over Japan and that it would “never accept” the order. The court replied that the immunity claim was not valid because the case involved “anti-humanity acts systematically planned and perpetrated by the accused.” The case had been filed in 2013 by the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. It was the first time that a South Korean court held the Japanese government responsible for the sexual slavery system.

A decision on another case, in which eleven former “comfort women” were seeking similar compensation, was scheduled for March 2021. Japan accused South Korea of undermining the 1965 treaty that established diplomatic ties between the two nations, under which Japan provided South Korea with \$500 million in aid and cheap loans. It insisted that all claims arising from its colonial rule (1910–1945), including those involving forced laborers and sexually enslaved women, had been settled by the treaty. The South Korean government reacted to the court order by vowing to seek an “amicable solution.” On 21 April 2021, the same Seoul Central District Court (but with a different panel of judges and plaintiffs) ruled that Japan had sovereign immunity in the case, and as a foreign state, was not liable to pay compensation in the civil suit.¹⁶³

See also Japan, United States.

KOSOVO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: *See* Serbia.

Neither the Serbian government nor the Kosovan government was doing enough to ensure that the remaining 1,600 people who went missing as a result of the Kosovo War (1998–1999) were found. Between 2016 and 2020, the remains of 18 people who disappeared during the Kosovo War were identified in Serbia, while another 32 missing persons were identified in Kosovo. Both governments had asked each other to open up wartime military archives, but no concrete steps had yet been taken.

On 27 August 2020, associations of Serb and Kosovo Albanian missing persons’ families (the Association of Kosmet Victims and the Missing Persons Resource Center in Pristina) told a press conference that both countries must open up wartime archives and reveal information about people who were still listed as missing from the Kosovo War. They demanded the opening of all the archives and evidence related to potential graves, comprehensive and professional investigations, and witness

¹⁶³ Choe Sang-Hun, “[South Korean Court Orders Japan to Pay Compensation for Wartime Sexual Slavery](#),” *New York Times* (7 January 2021); “[South Korea Seeks “Amicable Solution” to Comfort Women Issue with Japan](#),” *Kyodo News* (23 January 2021); Nicolas Rocca, “[Seoul Court Decision Reignites Japan-Korea War of Memory](#),” *JusticeInfo* (15 February 2021); “[South Korea Court Sides With Japan in ‘Comfort Women’ Case](#),” *Newsmax* (21 April 2021).

protection. They said that at the moment there were 1,643 people still listed as missing from the Kosovo War. On 30 August 2020, International Day of the Disappeared, families of missing Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians in both Belgrade (the Serbian capital) and Pristina (the Kosovan capital) together called on their governments to open military archives to help identify burial sites.

On 25 March 2021, the European Parliament (EP) adopted a report calling on Kosovo to do more to investigate suspected wartime gravesites and resolve the remaining missing persons cases from the Kosovo War. The report also called on the authorities in Pristina to open all wartime archives.¹⁶⁴

In 2020, the Kosovo Judicial Council, the country's highest judicial body, did not yet have a specific archive of evidence of war crimes committed during the Kosovo War (1998–1999). As late as 2018, the European Union's rule-of-law mission EULEX handed over around 900 war crimes files and around 2,000 files on missing persons to the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council, but these were spread around in court archives and only a few of the war crimes cases had been registered at the Criminal Records Center, a database of completed criminal cases in Kosovo. These files were not accessible to journalists, researchers, or the general public. The situation was made more complicated because Kosovo and Serbia did not cooperate; the evidence that EULEX and UNMIK (the United Nations mission in Kosovo responsible for investigating serious crimes cases before EULEX) had been able to obtain from Serbia had often been insufficient to prove criminal responsibility, which resulted in a considerable number of investigations being dropped or suspects being acquitted.¹⁶⁵

Impunity persisted for those responsible for the transfer of bodies of over 900 Kosovo-Albanians from Kosovo to Serbia in 1999. In November 2020, human remains, believed to be Kosovo Albanians, were discovered in a quarry in Kizevak.¹⁶⁶

Proceedings began at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) established in The Hague in 2016. On 24 June 2020, the Hague-based Specialist Prosecutor's Office (SPO) filed a ten-count indictment with the KSC, charging President Hashim Thaçi along with former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) General Staff Kadri Veseli, Rexhep Selimi, and Jakup Krasniqi with war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the murder of around hundred civilians, including Serbs, Roma and ethnic Albanian

¹⁶⁴ Milica Stojanovic, "[Serbs, Kosovo Albanians Make Joint Appeal for Missing Persons](#)," *Balkan Insight* (27 August 2020); European Parliament, *2019-2020 Reports on Kosovo* (2019/2172(INI), 25 March 2021), § 70; Milica Stojanovic, "[European MPs Urge Serbia, Kosovo to Intensify War Grave Search](#)," *Balkan Insight* (26 March 2021); Milica Stojanovic, "[Serbia, Kosovo Must Make Missing Persons a Priority: Report](#)," *Balkan Insight* (27 April 2021); Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 217–218, 315.

¹⁶⁵ Emina Dizdarevic, Serbeze Haxhijaj, Anja Vladisavljevic, and Milica Stojanovic, "[Access Denied: Most Balkan War Crimes Case Files Not Public](#)," *Balkan Insight* (28 September 2020).

¹⁶⁶ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 315.

opponents. Following the indictment, Thaçi travelled to The Hague on 13 July, where he was questioned for four days over his role as a KLA-leader during the Kosovo War (1998–1999). On 5 November Thaçi announced that he stepped down as president, after war crimes charges against him were confirmed by a pre-trial judge at the KSC.

In September 2020, the SPO summoned Agim Çeku, former Prime Minister and KLA commander, for questioning. In the same month, proceedings opened against former KLA commander Salih Mustafa, indicted for the arbitrary detention, cruel treatment, torture, and murder of civilians at Zllash detention camp in April 1999. Confidential SPO files naming protected witnesses were anonymously leaked to the KLA War Veterans' Organization; subsequently two officials were transferred to the court, and publicly indicted in December 2020 for the obstruction of justice, witness intimidation, and secrecy violations.¹⁶⁷

See also Montenegro, Serbia.

KUWAIT

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

On 28 March 2021, eight tons of documents and other items taken during the 1990 invasion by Iraq, were returned by the Iraqi government, in the third shipment that the country received since 2019. The shipment contained archives from Kuwait University, the information ministry, and other institutions [See also NCH *Annual Report 2003*].¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Marija Ristic, "[Kosovo Specialist Prosecutor Charges Thaci with War Crimes](#)," *Balkan Insight* (24 June 2020); Xhorxhina Bami and Xheneta Murtezaj, "[Hague War Crime Prosecutors Quiz Kosovo President Thaci](#)," *Balkan Insight* (13 July 2020); Xhorxhina Bami, "[Kosovo President 'Pleased' after Four-Day War Crimes Questioning](#)," *Balkan Insight* (17 July 2020); "[Kosovo War Crimes Court Arrests First Suspect](#)," *Al Jazeera* (24 September 2020); Xhorxhina Bami, "[Hague Prosecutors Publish Kosovo Guerrilla's War Crimes Indictment](#)," *Balkan Insight* (25 September 2020); Xhorxhina Bami, "[Kosovo President Thaci Resigns to Face War Crimes Charges](#)," *Balkan Insight* (5 November 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 396; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 217–218.

¹⁶⁸ "[Kuwait Receives Tonnes of National Archives from Iraq](#)," *France24* (28 March 2021).

KYRGYZSTAN

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

Ten June 2020 marked ten years since the outbreak of the 2010 South Kyrgyzstan riots, a period of ethnic violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks following the ousting of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, in which 400 people were killed and nearly 2,000 homes destroyed. Authorities failed to ensure accountability for crimes committed during the violence, or justice for the people arbitrarily arrested and convicted in trials marred by widespread allegations of ill-treatment and torture in the aftermath [See also NCH *Annual Report 2011*].¹⁶⁹

See also China.

¹⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 406, 407.

LATVIA

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

LEBANON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2003, 2006–2020.

On 18 August 2020, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) found guilty Salim Jamil Ayyash, a senior member of Hezbollah, of the bombing of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on 14 February 2005 [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2010–2011, 2013–2015*]. Another Hezbollah figure, the group's former military commander Mustafa Badreddine, who was killed in Syria in May 2016, was initially accused of being the link to Ayyash [See also NCH *Annual Report 2019*]. However, the STL could not verify Badreddine's involvement.¹⁷⁰

On 4 February 2021, Lokman Mohsen Slim (1962–2021), a Shiite publisher and archivist who criticized Iran-backed Hezbollah, was found shot dead in a car near Sidon in southern Lebanon, an area reportedly controlled by Hezbollah. Slim had accused the Shia Islamist militant group of intimidation tactics and intolerance of other political views. Slim had made documentaries with his wife and led efforts to build an archive on Lebanon's sectarian civil war (1975–1990). In an interview on Saudi's al-Hadath television shortly before his death, Slim had said he believed Hezbollah had a role in the port blast that ripped through Beirut in August 2020, killing 205 people and wounding more than 6,500. In December 2019, he had declared that his family home and offices were targeted by people gathering in the garden, chanting slurs and threats, holding Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah and Amal's leader Nabih Berri responsible. At the time, Slim had also said he had received death threats after speaking in a debate at an anti-government Beirut camp. On 22 March 2021, three United Nations experts called on the government to ensure a credible and effective investigation into Slim's death.

In 1990, Slim had founded the independent publishing house Dar al-Jadeed which published Arabic literature and articles that stirred controversy. Some were censored and banned by the Lebanese General Security, including the first Arabic translations of former Iranian reformist president Muhammad Khatami's writings. In 2001, he established UMAM Productions, a film company which produced films

¹⁷⁰ Special Tribunal for Lebanon, *The Prosecutor v. Ayyash et al.: Amended Indictment* (Leidschendam: STL, 2013), 2; Special Tribunal for Lebanon, *The Prosecutor v. Ayyash et al.: Summary of Judgement* (Leidschendam: STL, 2020), 148-149; Martin Chulov, "[Hezbollah Member Found Guilty over Killing of Rafik Hariri](#)," *Guardian* (18 August 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 419.

such as *Massaker*, about the crimes of six perpetrators in the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre. In 2004, he co-founded the UMAM Documentation and Research center, an open archive about Lebanese history, including the missing from the civil war (1975–1990). He published several historical documents and acquired the film footage of a major producer of Lebanese motion pictures and advertising. In 2005, he launched Hayya Bina (Let's Go), a project to promote citizen involvement throughout the political process and to criticize the sectarian system; it gave rise to several public advocacy projects within Shia areas. Slim was also an outspoken critic of Lebanon's political class, of the repression of the 2011 uprising in Syria, and of Iran's regional involvement. In recent years, he also helped many Syrian groups collect important materials on the war in Syria [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].¹⁷¹

LIBERIA

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

Despite the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) issued in June 2009, which recommended criminal prosecutions and the establishment of a Specialized Tribunal for war crimes committed in Liberia, no one had yet been prosecuted or tried for crimes committed during the First and Second Liberian civil wars (1989–1997 and 1999–2003) that left more than 250,000 dead and hundreds of thousands of refugees. In 2012, former President Charles Taylor (1948–) had been sentenced to fifty years' imprisonment for carrying responsibility for crimes committed by rebel forces during Sierra Leone's civil war (1991–2002) by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). He was, however, not charged with crimes committed in Liberia, as the competence of the SCSL was limited to crimes committed in Sierra Leone [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2008–2012, 2015*].

On 3 December 2020, the trial against Alien Kosiiah started in Switzerland. Kosiiah, a teenager when the conflict began, became one of the “big men” in the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), which fought against the troops of Charles Taylor in the First Liberian civil war

¹⁷¹ “[Lokman Slim, Prominent Hezbollah Critic, Shot Dead in South Lebanon](#),” *France 24* (4 February 2021); Tala Michel Issa, “[Who Is Lokman Slim: A Profile on Lebanese Activist, Hezbollah Critic Shot to Death](#),” *Al Arabiya English* (4 February 2021); “[Lokman Slim: Prominent Hezbollah Critic Shot Dead in Lebanon](#),” *BBC News* (4 February 2021); *Archives and Human Rights: News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights* (no. 134, January 2021), 1; Benjamin Lynch, “[The Murder of Publisher and Activist Lokman Slim Is a Stark Warning to Media in the Country](#),” *Index on Censorship* (24 February 2021); [Website UMAM Documentation & Research](#); United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, “[Lebanon: Intellectual's Murder Needs In-depth Inquiry to Dispel Doubts over Justice System, Say UN Experts](#)” (press release; 22 March 2021); Maha Yahya, “[The Assassination of Lokman Slim – Silencing No Lamb](#),” *Qantara* (5 February 2021); Sune Haugballe & Henrik Andersen, “[Political Assassinations and the Revolutionary Impasse in Lebanon and Iraq](#),” *Middle East Report Online* (11 May 2021).

(1989–1997) [See also NCH *Annual Report 2018*]. Kosiah was sentenced to twenty years. On 1 February 2021, the trial of Gibril Massaquoi began in Tampere, Finland. Massaquoi, a Sierra Leonian national who held leading positions as Lieutenant-Colonel and spokesman within the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during the Sierra Leonian Civil War (1991–2002) and worked closely with Charles Taylor, was charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder and aggravated rape, committed during the Second Liberian Civil War (1999–2003).¹⁷²

LIBYA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003, 2005–2020.

Officials and members of militias and armed groups responsible for crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations enjoyed near total impunity, while judges and prosecutors were targeted by militias and armed groups. Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, a son of Muammar Gaddafi who was sentenced to death in absentia by a Libyan court in 2015, was wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his alleged role in attacks on civilians, including peaceful demonstrators, during the 2011 uprising. Gaddafi's whereabouts remained unknown. Two others 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 between February and August 2011, and Libyan Arab Armed Forces commander, Mahmoud El-Werfalli, for the war crime of murder related to several incidents in and around Benghazi between June 2016 and January 2018. Al-Werfalli remained a senior leader in the Saiqa Force of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2014, 2018–2020*].¹⁷³

See also United Kingdom.

¹⁷² [“Liberian Rebel Commander Accused of Cannibalism Goes on Trial in Switzerland,”](#) *Guardian* (3 December 2020); [“Liberia: Trial of former RUF Commander Set to Begin before Finnish Court,”](#) *Front Page Africa* (26 January 2021); Saira Huusko and New Narratives, [“Frustration Shows on Final Day of Massaquoi Trial in Finland,”](#) *Premium Times* (13 February 2021); [“Swiss Court Convicts Liberian Rebel of Rape, Killings and Cannibalism,”](#) *Guardian* (18 June 2021).

¹⁷³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 423; Amnesty International, *State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 231.

LITHUANIA

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

On 1 February 2021, four historians (Alvydas Nikžentaitis, director of the Institute of History; Loreta Skurvydaitė, dean of the Faculty of History of Vilnius University; Vasilijus Safronovas, director of the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology at Klaipėda University in Klaipėda and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas; and Marius Sirutavičius, Department of History of Vytautas Magnus University) expressed concern to the Seimas (national parliament) over the appointment in June 2020 of a new director of the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania (LGGRTC). They stated that the choice for Adas Jakubauskas (1964–) “was not driven by the scholarly opinion of scientists, but by a politicized approach to sensitive, socially disruptive past events, ignoring basic criticism of historical sources,” and proposed setting up a scientific council at the LGGRTC, to which Lithuania’s academic institutions carrying out historical research would delegate their representatives.

Upon his installment, Jakubauskas had appointed new members to the LGGRTC, who openly started to push historians into the “right way”: the latter were told how to work with sources, how to present the “right history” and how to “fight in the propaganda war.” One of the new members, for whom a special post was created, was Vidmantas Valiušaitis (1956–), a long-time journalist, publicist, and author of books with an ultra-nationalist view of Lithuanian history. Valiušaitis’s views on history had been criticized by historians from Lithuania and around the world who study the period of the Nazi-occupation (June 1941–January 1945), and by the Lithuanian Jewish Community, that released a statement “to point out that in several recent publications Vidmantas Valiušaitis intentionally distorted the facts and publicized falsehoods concerning the anti-Semitic activities of the Lithuanian Activist Front and the Lithuanian Provisional Government of 1941.”

On 12 March 2021, Mingailė Jurkutė, a historian working at the Faculty of History of Vilnius University and specializing in the Lithuanian guerilla war against the Soviet occupation during its early years (1944–1953), was dismissed from the LGGRTC after accusations of disclosing “secret information.” The dismissal followed an online opinion piece in which she had criticized Jakubauskas and others, for attempting “to spread propaganda.” Jurkutė is the author of, among others, *CIA Intelligence in the Baltics (1947–1953)* (2020) and co-editor of *Democracy in Lithuania: Civil Spirit versus Totalitarianism at the Defining Moments of the Twentieth Century* (2011).

On 19 March 2021, a Seimas working group that examined the situation at the LGGRTC expressed doubts about whether Jakubauskas could continue to lead it and proposed that the Seimas resolve the issue. On 1 April 2021, the Seimas voted to dismiss Jakubauskas.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Modesta Gaučaitė, “[Valiušaitis’s Appointment Worries Historians and Jewish Community](#),” *Lithuanian Jewish Community* (28 July 2020); “[Representatives of the Institute of History and Three Universities Refuse to](#)

Valdas Rakutis, a history professor affiliated to the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania (LGGRTC) and a former adviser to the armed forces who was elected to the Seimas in 2020, resigned as chairman of the Seimas commission on the state's historical memory and apologized to "all the people who felt offended" after he had declared in a statement published on the public broadcaster's website on 27 January 2021 (Holocaust Memorial Day) that there had been "no shortage of Holocaust perpetrators among the Jews themselves."¹⁷⁵

[Cooperate with the LGGRTC,](#)” *Penkiolika minučių* (1 February 2021); “[Lithuanian Media Respond to Changes at Genocide Center,](#)” *Lithuanian Jewish Community* (9 February 2021); Mingailė Jurkutė, “[Two Noreikas: Laser Sight against Flintlock Musket in Information Wars,](#)” *Lithuanian Jewish Community* (12 February 2021); Loreta Skurvydaitė, personal communication (15 March 2021); “[It Is Proposed to the Seimas to Decide whether Jakubauskas Can Continue to Lead the Genocide Center, the Working Leader Welcomes such a Step,](#)” *Baltic News* (19 March 2021).

¹⁷⁵ Gil Skorwid & Patrick Smith, “[How a Chicago Teacher Sparked a ‘Memory war,’ Forcing Lithuania to Confront Its Nazi Past,](#)” *NBC News* (4 April 2021).

MACEDONIA

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

See North Macedonia.

MADAGASCAR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

MALAWI

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

In October 2018, the High Court in Blantyre granted an injunction temporarily suspending work on a statue for the Indian non-violent resistance leader Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948). The case had been initiated by the Gandhi Must Fall group, which accused Gandhi of using racial slurs against black Africans. It cited quotes from his writings, in which he described Africans as “savages” or “the Natives of Africa” and “kaffirs” (an racial slur for a black African). On 1 October 2020, the Indian High Commission unveiled a bust of Gandhi in the capital Lilongwe [See also *NCH Annual Report 2019*].¹⁷⁶

MALAYSIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2002, 2007–2008, 2010–2011, 2016–2017, 2019–2020.

In July 2020, the home minister banned *Rebirth: Reformasi, Resistance and Hope in New Malaysia* under the Printing Presses and Publications Act after claims that the book’s cover resembled the country’s coat of arms. The book, compiled by editor Kean Wong, contained a collection of writings about the 2018 general election and subsequent events. Police raided the publishing company and

¹⁷⁶ “[Malawi Court Halts Work on Gandhi Statue after Critics Brand Him Racist](#),” *BBC News* (31 October 2018); Peter Jegwa, “[Gandhi Bust Put Up in Malawi Despite Previous Protests](#),” *BBC News* (2 October 2020).

questioned journalist Tashny Sukumaran and seven Malaysiakini journalists who had authored chapters.¹⁷⁷

MALDIVES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2009–2010, 2013, 2020.

On 23 October 2019, a transitional justice bill was submitted to parliament, but no justice mechanism for investigating past incidence of torture and other abuses had been set in place. Shortly after President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih (1962–) assumed power, in November 2018, the United Nations (UN) Committee against Torture applauded the new government’s plans to include transitional justice in its legislative agenda [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. However, the government was also said to turn a blind eye to repeated calls by the UN’s human-rights mechanisms.¹⁷⁸

A government-appointed commission investigating deaths and enforced disappearances found that groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda were responsible for the murder of several prominent activists and politicians, including journalist Ahmed Rilwan in 2014 and blogger Yameen Rasheed in 2017. The commission also recommended that the police charge former Vice President Ahmed Adeb for intervening to release two suspects. After accusing the justice system of shielding suspects from prosecution, the commission announced in June 2020 that it was unable to proceed further with its investigations. No convictions were made.¹⁷⁹

MALI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011, 2013–2020.

The International Commission of Inquiry, established under the 2015 peace accord to investigate serious violations between 2012 and January 2018, submitted its report to the United Nations Secretary-General on 16 June 2020. By early 2021, the report has remained confidential. Public hearings scheduled for 2020 by the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2014 to investigate crimes

¹⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 429.

¹⁷⁸ Mushfiq Mohamed, “[Maldives’ Rocky Road to Transitional Justice](#),” *Himal Southasian* (28 October 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 436.

¹⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 436.

and root causes of violence since 1960, were delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The National Commission for Human Rights investigated some abuses and issued numerous communiqués but appeared reluctant to investigate abuses by the security forces.¹⁸⁰

In July 2020, the trial of Al Hasan ag Abdoul Aziz ag Mohamed before the International Criminal Court started. He was accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Timbuktu while he was a member of the Ansar Eddine, an armed group which controlled the city during the Islamist occupation of northern Mali between 2012 and 2013 [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2016–2018*].¹⁸¹

MALTA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2012.

A memorial to Daphne Caruana Galizia (1964–2017) in Valletta – a journalist, writer, and anti-corruption activist murdered on 16 October 2017 – was torn down every night by authorities and put back every day by her supporters.¹⁸²

In January 2021, Kevin Cassar, a former candidate for the Partit Nazzjonalista (PN; Nationalist Party), criticized the deficient record-keeping by the former government led by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat (2013–2020), reportedly enabling impunity for lies, corruption, and crimes. According to Cassar, the missing records were non-existent, private, secret, lost, concealed, destroyed, or “in the process of being collated,” including some cabinet minutes.¹⁸³

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2015.

¹⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 445.

¹⁸¹ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 20, 241.

¹⁸² Ifex, *Annual Report 2019* (Toronto: Ifex, 2020), 11.

¹⁸³ Matthew Mirabelli, “[Absent Records Hide Culpability – Kevin Cassar](#),” *Times of Malta* (24 January 2021).

MAURITANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2002, 2009, 2011, 2017, 2019–2020.

MAURITIUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2012.

See United Kingdom.

MEXICO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999, 2001–2020.

The administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador took steps to determine and publish the true number of people disappeared. In 2019, human rights defender Karla Quintana was appointed to head the Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda (CNB; National Search Commission). She created a national forensic assessment to address obstacles to identifying and storing bodies. In March 2020, the Extraordinary Mechanism for Forensic Identification – an autonomous, interdisciplinary task force – was created by decree to identify the more than 38,000 unidentified bodies awaiting forensic analysis. In August 2020, the government recognized the supervision of the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances to consider cases in Mexico. Families of victims would be able to submit cases to the committee once they had exhausted their legal options domestically. Federal authorities declared that 6,957 people had been registered missing during 2020. The total number of people reported disappeared since 1964 was 82,647, with 63,939 disappearances recorded in the past decade.¹⁸⁴

On 26 September 2020, the Attorney General’s Office for the first time issued arrest warrants for members of the military and federal police force in relation to the abduction and disappearance of 43 students in 2014. That day marked the six-year commemoration of the students’ disappearance from the Raul Isidro Burgos Teachers’ College in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero state, prompting a massive outcry and demonstrations demanding justice and accountability [See also NCH *Annual Report 2015*].¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 454–455; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 244.

¹⁸⁵ “[Mexico Issues New Warrants in 2014 Students’ Disappearance Case](#),” *Al Jazeera* (26 September 2020).

On 10 October 2020, the government removed a prominent bronze statue of Christopher Columbus and surrounded another with high metal fencing ahead of an annual protest that marks the explorer's arrival in the Americas in 1492. Authorities said the statue was taken away for restoration work, but added that it was also time for reflection on Columbus's legacy.¹⁸⁶

On 7 January 2021, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (1953–) announced a proposal to eliminate several autonomous government agencies, including the independent Instituto Nacional de Acceso a la Información Pública y Datos Personales (INAI; National Institute of Access to Public Information and Personal Data). The INAI played an important role in ensuring that journalists and human rights defenders could obtain the necessary information to document and expose human rights violations and corruption scandals. Prior to the 2002 creation of the Federal Institute for Access to Information (IFAI, which later became the INAI) and the 2013 reform that granted it autonomy and made its resolutions legally binding, official secrecy was the norm, posing a major obstacle to the defense of human rights. Journalists, activists, and citizens had no recourse when denied access to basic public information needed to reveal abusive practices. The INAI played a significant role in documenting the accountability for past crimes: in 2015, an INAI ruling forced the Attorney General to release the records of its investigation into the 2014 disappearance of 43 students in Iguala, Guerrero (*see above*), revealing major inconsistencies, including that key suspects had been tortured. Moreover, hundreds of freedom of information requests made through the INAI enabled activists to determine the location of more than 2,000 mass graves across the country.¹⁸⁷

In May 2021, writer Julián Herbert was unable to organize an event in Torreón, state of Coahuila de Zaragoza, to promote his book *The House of the Pain of Others: Chronicle of a Small Genocide*, because his conclusions proved too controversial. The book described how during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917), upon conquering the railway town Torreón on 13–15 May 1911, revolutionaries led by their commander Benjamín Argumedo massacred 300 Chinese in an anti-Chinese pogrom executed with the help of local mobs. It also disputed the local narrative that the pogrom was a spontaneous uprising by poor Mexicans, arguing instead that anti-Chinese racism was rife in Torreón and across Mexico. The victims of the massacre were buried in common graves, nobody was tried for the crime, no monument was erected, and the genocide remained largely unmentioned for 110 years. Commemoration attempts met resistance: a commemorative plaque was stolen and a statue erected in a

¹⁸⁶ [“Mexico Removes Christopher Columbus Statue before Annual Protest,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (12 October 2020).

¹⁸⁷ [“Mexico: Public Accountability, Privacy under Threat,”](#) *Human Rights Watch* (28 January 2021); Arturo Ángel, [“AMLO ataca la transparencia... y la democracia,”](#) *New York Times* (18 January 2021).

public park in 2007 was vandalized and later removed. On 17 May 2021, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador commemorated the event in Torreón.¹⁸⁸

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.

On 5 September 2020, the parliament-backed Documentation Center, which would archive statements, indictments, judgments, and other source material related to the country's role in the 1990s wars (1991–1995), opened in the capital Podgorica. Since the country became independent in 2006, it had held just eight trials for war crimes committed in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo during the War of Yugoslav Succession (1991–1995) and the Kosovo War (1998–1999). No new war crimes cases were initiated in 2020, while senior wartime officers suspected of offenses were not prosecuted.¹⁸⁹

In December 2020, the Bošnjačka stranka (BS; Bosniak Party) proposed a parliamentary resolution to recognize the 1995 Srebrenica genocide, but the ruling majority voted against it. In 2009, the parliament had issued a declaration accepting a European Parliament resolution on Srebrenica, which declared 11 July a day of remembrance for the victims of the genocide, but although the declaration condemned the

¹⁸⁸ David Agren, "[Mexico Faces Up to Uneasy Anniversary of Chinese Massacre](#)," *Guardian* (16 May 2021); Sergio Mendoza, "[Sobre la matanza de chinos, hay diversas versiones: Jorge Zermeño Infante](#)," *El Sol de la Laguna* (10 February 2021).

¹⁸⁹ Samir Kajosevic, "[Montenegro Parliament Opens War Crimes Documentation Centre](#)," *Balkan Insight* (5 October 2020); Samir Kajosevic, "[Montenegro 'Failing to Deal with Wartime Crimes': Survey](#)," *Balkan Insight* (6 May 2021).

crimes, as well as other crimes committed during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (1991–1995, 1998–1999), the word genocide was not mentioned. On 17 June 2021, parliament adopted an amended resolution that recognized the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. The amendment called for condemnation of all war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and disapproved singling out parties in the attribution of responsibility for such crimes.¹⁹⁰

MOROCCO / WESTERN SAHARA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2013, 2015–2018, 2020.

On 7 October 2020, the Public Prosecutor at the Court of First Instance in Rabat announced that historian, journalist, and human rights activist Maâti Monjib ([1961]–) was charged with money laundering and embezzlement [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2016* and *2020*]. The national brigade of the judicial police (BNPJ) summoned him for interrogation in Casablanca on 19 and 26 October and on 2 November 2020. Four of his female family members were subjected to questioning and harassment as well. Monjib said that the purpose of these lawsuits was to punish him because of a recent radio interview in which he criticized the General Directorate of Territorial Surveillance (DGST; internal intelligence) for its repression of political opponents. In October 2020, he launched a three-week hunger strike in protest of a travel ban imposed by Moroccan authorities when he attempted to board a flight to Norway to hold a seminar.

On 29 December 2020, eight plainclothes security forces arrested Monjib at a restaurant in Rabat and placed him in pre-trial detention in El Arjat prison to be investigated for embezzlement and money laundering. The charges apparently stemmed from the receipt of foreign funds to conduct training workshops for citizen journalists in the Ibn Rochd Center. Reporters without Borders said that Monjib was subjected to “an all-out campaign of judicial, police, and media harassment.” On 27 January 2021, Monjib was sentenced to one year in prison and a penalty of 15,000 dirhams (1,380 euros) on charges of “fraud” and “undermining state security.” Monjib and his lawyer were absent during the trial and only informed about the judgment through its publication on the ministry of justice website. On 4 March 2021, Monjib went on hunger strike. After nearly three weeks, he was temporarily released on 23 March 2021. His passport was confiscated. His appeal was due to be heard in April 2021.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Samir Kajosevic, “[Montenegrin Minister Criticised for Srebrenica Genocide Denial](#),” *Balkan Insight* (29 March 2021); Samir Kajosevic, “[Montenegro Minister Sacked for Querying Srebrenica Genocide Rulings](#),” *Balkan Insight* (17 June 2021).

¹⁹¹ Website: <https://maatimonjib.net/>; Middle East Studies Association of North America, [Letter to King Mohamed VI and Prime Minister Saadeddine Othmani](#) (3 November 2020); Intissar Fakir, “[Interview with Moroccan Human Rights Activist Maâti Monjib](#),” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (29 October 2020); Committee to Protect Journalists, “[Moroccan Authorities Arrest Journalist Maati Monjib](#)” (29

Western Sahara

The Polisario Front (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro; Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro – a Sahrawi (Saharawi) movement aiming to take control over the Western Sahara), considered by the United Nations to be the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people and their right to self-determination, failed to ensure that those responsible for committing human rights abuses in previous decades in refugee camps it administered in Tindouf, Algeria, were brought to account.¹⁹²

See also Spain.

MOZAMBIQUE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018, 2020.

December 2020); Thomas Borst, “Kritische journalist en activist gearresteerd in Marokko,” *NRC Handelsblad* (30 December 2020); Reporters without Borders, [“Leading Moroccan Journalist Held on Money-Laundering Charge”](#) (5 January 2021); “Prominent Moroccan Historian and Human Rights Activist Arrested in Rabat,” *Middle East Eye* (30 December 2020); Amnesty International, [Morocco: Human Rights Defenders Targeted with NSO Group’s Spyware](#) (London: AI, 2019); Amnesty International, [“Urgent Action: Academic Arbitrarily Detained: Maati Monjib”](#) (UA: 001/21) (Index: MDE 29/3481/2021); Abdellah Hammoudi & Richard Falk, [“Freedom for Professor Maati Monjib”](#) [petition] ([7] January 2021); Koen Greven, “‘Sacharov van Marokko’ als crimineel voor de rechter,” *NRC Handelsblad* (19 January 2021), C3–4; Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Database, [Monjib](#) (17 September 2015) and [Monjib](#) (29 December 2020); [“Amnesty International exhorte le Maroc à libérer l’historien Maati Monjib,”](#) *Le Monde* (28 January 2021); [“Au Maroc, l’historien Maati Monjib condamné à un an de prison pour ‘fraude’ et ‘atteinte à la sécurité de l’Etat’,”](#) *Le Monde* (28 January 2021); Comité de soutien à Maâti Monjib, Communiqué de presse (1 February 2021); Présentation synthétique de l’affaire Maâti MONJIB (Maroc), [www.maatimonjib.net](#) (no date); Movement for Solidarity with Maati Monjib in America, “Update about Dr. Maati Monjib’s Imprisonment” (4 February 2021); *La Détention politique au Maroc: Dossier préparé par le Comité de soutien à l’historien Maâti Monjib et à tous les détenus politiques et d’opinion au Maroc* (Paris, February 2021); Maâti Monjib, *Communiqué : Maâti Monjib en grève de la faim* (Prison Al Arjat 2, Salé, 4 March 2021); Amnesty International, Urgent Action: Academic Arbitrarily Detained (UA: 001/21; Index: MDE 29/3481/2021) (5 January 2021); Adel Abdel Ghafar, [“The Arrest of Maati Monjib and the Continued Retreat of Human Rights in Morocco”](#) *Brookings Institution* (9 March 2021); Comité de soutien à Maâti Monjib, “Communiqué de presse” (10 March 2021); [“Statement from U.S. Committee for the Defense of Maâti Monjib”](#) (14 March 2021), *Jadaliyya Reports* (17 March 2021); Comité France de soutien à Maâti Monjib, *Communiqué* (22 March 2021); Koen Greven, “Marokko laat vooraanstaand journalist Monjib alsnog vrij,” *NRC Handelsblad* (24 March 2021), 13; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 50, 253; Reporters without Borders, [“Moroccan Journalist Freed after 20 Days on Hunger Strike”](#) (24 March 2021); Reporters without Borders, [“European Union Urged to Take Action to Secure Release of Moroccan and French Journalist Maâti Monjib”](#) (24 March 2021 – Updated on 26 March 2021); [NCH Campaign](#) (2021).

¹⁹² Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021).

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2001, 2003, 2005–2006, 2008–2020.

In April 2019, authorities charged seven members of poetry troupe the Peacock Generation with “online defamation” under Section 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Law and Sections 505(a) and 505(b) of the Penal Code for posting online videos of their peaceful Thangyat street performances criticizing the military. Thangyat is a traditional art form fusing poetry, comedy, and music for satirical ends often with a political twist, performed during the New Year water festival in April; it was banned between 1989 and 2013. One member was acquitted, but six members of the group were sentenced in October and November 2019 to between two and six years’ imprisonment. On 17 April 2021, the last three members were pardoned and released from prison.¹⁹³

On 2 September 2020, Canada and the Netherlands joined Gambia’s legal bid to hold Myanmar accountable over allegations of genocide against its mostly Muslim Rohingya minority. They urged other states to support Gambia’s legal fight, which was launched in November 2019 [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].¹⁹⁴

On 13 March 2021, Ko Phone Maw, a 23-year-old chemistry student shot dead by riot police on the campus of the Rangoon Institute of Technology during the March 1988 uprising, was commemorated. When students protested by sitting down near Pyay University, Bago region, soldiers used tear gas and live ammunition against them. One 19-year-old first-year student at Maritime University was shot dead and other students were seriously injured.¹⁹⁵

Among those detained after the military coup of 1 February 2021 were:

- (Daw) Nan Sandar Cho (female), assistant archivist at Hpan-An University, detained in Hpan-an Township, Karen State, on 9 February 2021 for her involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). On 28 May 2021, she was sentenced to two years with hard labor.
- (Ma) Chue Chit Chit Kyaw (female), history student (distance education), detained in Insein Prison on 27 February 2021 for protesting against the military coup, later released.

¹⁹³ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 258; *Wordt Vervolgd* (June/July 2021), 47.

¹⁹⁴ “[Canada, Netherlands Join Gambia’s Genocide Case against Myanmar](#),” *Al Jazeera* (4 September 2020).

¹⁹⁵ Naw Say Phaw Waa, “[Military Invades Campuses, Student Leaders Tortured](#),” *University World News* (18 March 2021); Kyaw Phyoo Tha, “[Remembering Two Deaths that Changed the Course of Myanmar’s History](#),” *The Irrawaddy* (13 March 2018).

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- (Mg) Zwe Htet (male) history student (distance education), detained in Yangon Region on 27 February 2021 for protesting against the military coup, later released.
 - (Ko) Sai Win Htut (male), history student, detained in Monywa Township, Sagaing Region, on 27 February 2021, released on 28 February 2021.
 - (Mg) Phyo Pyae Soe (male), first-year history student at Mawlamyine University, detained in Yangon region on 3 March 2021 for protesting against the military coup.
 - (Mg) Thar Linn Oo (male), third-year history student, detained on 3 March 2021.
 - (Mg) Htoo Eaint Sithu (male), third-year archaeology student, detained in Yangon Region on 3 March 2021 for protesting against the military coup.
 - (Ko) Myo Htet Naing Linn (male), second-year history student at Myitkyina University, detained on 20 April 2021.
 - Saw Min Naing (male), history student, detained in Insein Prison on 12 April 2021.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, [Under Detention List \(Last Updated on 31 March 2021\)](#), and updates 17 May and 27 June 2021.

NAMIBIA

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

NEPAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007–2020.

More than 14 years since the November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement promised justice to victims, hardly any perpetrator had been held accountable for crimes committed during the Nepalese Civil War (1996–2006). Since their establishment in 2014, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) had received 63,718 complaints, and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) had received 3,223 complaints from family members saying their loved ones had disappeared during the war, but neither had completed any case. The government failed to address concerns that the TRC and the CIEDP lacked independence. In January 2020, new commissioners were appointed to both bodies following a process that was rejected by victims' groups after authorities failed to hold meaningful consultations. The government further failed to amend the Enforced Disappearances Enquiry, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2014 to bring it in line with international human rights law and standards, as repeatedly ordered by the Supreme Court. On 27 April 2020, the Supreme Court rejected a government petition seeking to overturn a landmark 2015 ruling, which required the government to remove amnesty provisions from the 2014 Transitional Justice Act. The ruling party also continued to appoint people implicated in conflict-era crimes to positions of power without thorough and independent investigations. In October 2020, the National Human Rights Commission named 286 alleged individual perpetrators and highlighted the government's failure to implement the Commission's recommendations and hold perpetrators to account.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 485, 487; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 261; Binod Ghimire, "[Tenure of Two Transitional Justice Bodies To Be Extended but This Is Not Enough, Stakeholders Say](#)," *The Kathmandu Post* (4 February 2021).

NETHERLANDS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 2004–2005, 2007–2020.

On 14 August 2020, Aliansi Mera Putih (AMP), an Indonesian activist group, protested against the commemoration of the victims of the Japanese occupation (1942–1945) of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), by painting Kami belum lupa (“We have not forgotten”) and 4 juta korban (“4 million victims”) on the Indies Monument in The Hague. According to AMP, no attention was paid to the four million Indonesian victims of violence and oppression and the event neglected the Indonesian war of Independence (1945–1949) that follow the Japanese capitulation.¹⁹⁸

On the night of 3 December 2020, a mural called “The Wall of Surinamese and Black Heroes” was besmirched and vandalized by unknown perpetrators. The mural was part of the building that housed The Black Archives (established in 2016 to document the history of black emancipation in the Netherlands) and the Ketj Koti festival organizers in Amsterdam, among others. Some of its archivists, such as cultural anthropologists Jessica de Abreu (1989–) and Mitchell Esajas (1988–), had been victims of real-time and online intimidation, including an extreme-right attack that took place in November 2019 during a work meeting of Kick Out Zwarte Piet (Kick Out Black Pete; established 2014) in The Hague. Nobody was arrested for the attack. The mural had been created by artists Hedy Tjin and Dewi “Butterfingas” Elsinga in the summer of 2020 as an extension of the exhibition “Surinamers in Nederland: 100 jaar emancipatie en strijd” (“Surinamese People in the Netherlands: 100 Years of Emancipation and Struggle”).¹⁹⁹

In January 2021, former Minister for Development Cooperation Jan Pronk and Member of Parliament Sadet Karabulut criticized in a radio interview the fact that the Dutch archives about the military coup that brought Desi Bouterse to power in Suriname in 1980 (five years after independence from the Netherlands) were closed until 2060. The question whether Dutch Colonel Hans Valk (1928–2012), military assistant of the Dutch embassy at the time, assisted in the coup, and if so, alone or on Dutch instructions and in what capacity, had been investigated by parliament [in the 1980s] but two crucial supplements were never made public for privacy reasons, and on expiry of the term, for national security reasons. Answering Karabulut’s questions in the matter, Minister of External Relations Stef Blok said

¹⁹⁸ Bastiaan Nagtegaal, “[Indisch Monument in Den Haag daags voor herdenking beklad](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (14 August 2020).

¹⁹⁹ The Black Archives, “[Vandalizing the Building of Vereniging Ons Suriname and The Black Archives Is an Attempt to Racist Intimidation](#)” (press release; [3] December 2020); Koninklijk Nederlands Historisch Genootschap (Royal Netherlands Historical Society), [Verklaring KNHG t.a.v. aantasting pand van The Black Archives](#) (press release; 4 December 2020); Thijs Niemantsverdriet, “Interview Mitchell Esajas en Jessica de Abreu – Black Archives,” *NRC Handelsblad* (29 December 2020), 12–13.

that the two supplements had been accessible for strictly confidential scrutiny by Members of Parliament and historians. On 2 February 2021, the House of Representatives demanded more archival openness and less secrecy in a vote. In late February 2021, researcher Ellen de Vries published *Hans Valk: Over een Nederlandse kolonel en een coup in Suriname* (Hans Valk: Regarding a Dutch Colonel and a Coup in Suriname), a book that contained the eight secret documents as annexes. Her analysis questioned Valk's alleged central role in the 1980 coup.²⁰⁰

On 21 March 2021, Nadia Bouras (1981–), a historian of immigration at the University of Leiden and a member of the Netherlands Institute in Morocco (NIMAR) who actively participated in the public debate about migration, found a sticker from the radical right-wing platform Vizier op Links (Watch the Left; established June 2020) on her door. The sticker contained the following text: “Location Watched. This location is being watched by followers of Watch the Left. Go to vizieroplins.org to pass on tips and map left-wing activism.” Vizier op Links also shared her address data online (“doxing”). Bouras filed a report about this intimidation with the police. Around a week before Vizier op Links targeted Bouras's home, it published online photos of the home of historian Geert Mak (1946–), who had given a televised lecture warning about the dangers of modern-day fascism and later allegedly received messages from “angry people” threatening to go to his home. Among the politicians, writers, and academics targeted were also politician Huub Bellemakers and artist Yuri Veerman who were harassed after they had compared radical right-wing political leader Thierry Baudet to a Dutch national-socialist and Hitler respectively.²⁰¹

On 11 May 2021, a court in Amsterdam ruled in summary proceedings that the film “De Oost” (The East) – a film about atrocities committed by the Dutch during Indonesia's independence war (1945–1949; in the film 1946–1947 in particular) made by Jim Taihuttu – did not need a new disclaimer as demanded by the Federatie Indische Nederlanders (FIN; Federation of Dutch-Indonesians) and that the film makers, New Ams Film Company, did not act unlawfully by refusing to incorporate such a new disclaimer in their film. The actual disclaimer stated at the end: “This film is inspired by true events. Certain events, characters, and dialogues were fictionalized for dramatic purposes.” FIN had demanded that a new disclaimer precede the film, saying that Dutch military intervention followed the Bersiap (a

²⁰⁰ “[Archieven over Surinaamse coup 1980 nog steeds gesloten](#),” *BNN Vara: Redactie De Nieuws BV* (28 January 2021); “Tweede Kamer wil dat documenten over staatsgreep van Bouterse openbaar worden,” *NRC Handelsblad* (4 February 2021), 11; Hans Buddingh’, “‘Het plan voor de coup van Desi Bouterse kwam niet van Nederland’,” *NRC Handelsblad* (1 April 2021), 11.

²⁰¹ “Vizier Op Links plakt stickers op voordeuren ‘ter observatie’,” *NRC Handelsblad* (22 March 2021), 3; “[Zeker vier aangiftes in twee maanden tegen Vizier op Links vanwege intimidatie](#),” *Nu.nl* (22 March 2021); Steven Derix & Kees Versteegh, “Dreigende sticker op de voordeur,” *NRC Handelsblad* (23 March 2021), 3; Scholars at Risk, [Academic Freedom Monitoring Project](#) (21 March 2021).

period of extreme anti-Dutch violence in 1945–1946, that the film did not intend to give a complete or truthful version of history, and that the film mixed facts and fiction.²⁰²

Curaçao

In June 2020, the Plataforma Sklabitut i Herensha di Sklabitut (PSHS; Platform for Slavery and the Heritage of Slavery) based in Curaçao (an Antilles island in the Caribbean that is part of The Netherlands), sent a letter to Prime-Minister Mark Rutte, asking to rehabilitate Curaçao's freedom fighter Tula (aka Tula Rigaud) (?–1795). On 17 August 1795, Tula led a rebellion against the Dutch colonial regime, a day that is still remembered on Curaçao as the *Dia di Lucha pa Libertad* ("Day of struggle for freedom"). For a long time, Tula was described as a villain, an image that slowly changed from the 1970s onward, resulting in Tula being mentioned in 2020 in the revised Dutch canon – a set of historical topics officially recommended for secondary school education. It was unknown whether the Dutch government had plans for Tula's official rehabilitation.²⁰³

See also France, Myanmar.

NEW ZEALAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2017, 2019–2020.

In June 2021, three university lecturers in Chinese politics and history spoke out about their classes being observed and sometimes photographed by unenrolled individuals. They suspected that the information was channeled to the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese embassy called claims that spies were infiltrating New Zealand universities groundless.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Rechtbank Amsterdam, [Stichting Federatie Indische Nederlanders versus New Ams Films Company: Summary Proceedings](#) (2011); Frank Vermeulen, "Analyse: Westerling en de Celebes-Affaire," *NRC Handelsblad* (12 May 2021), 6.

²⁰³ Frank Quirindongo, "Rappelbrief aan de Regering van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden m.b.t. de Rehabilitatie van onze Nationale Held Tula," (Curaçao 17 June 2020).

²⁰⁴ Craig McCulloh, "[Chinese Embassy Dismisses Claims Spies Infiltrating NZ Universities](#)," *RNZ (Radio New Zealand)* (29 June 2021).

NICARAGUA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2020.

In April 2020, police arrested at least five and injured two demonstrators commemorating the 2018 protests in Esquipulas, Moyogalpa.²⁰⁵

On 31 July 2020, an unidentified hooded man threw a petrol bomb into the chapel of the Blood of Christ of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Managua, severely damaging the chapel and destroying a 382-year-old crucifix. Cardinal Leopoldo José Brenes called it an act of terrorism. The attack came after tensions between some Catholics and supporters of President Daniel Ortega. Ortega's government had accused many bishops and priests of siding with his opposition. Supporters of Ortega had led actions against some churches, including Managua's cathedral, when critics of Ortega took refuge there in November 2019. The protests had been part of a crisis which began in April 2018 after Ortega had announced social security and pension reforms. The Archdiocese said the attack was the most recent "in a series of sacrilegious acts, violations of Church property, and attacks on churches." On 29 July 2020, unidentified people had vandalized the chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Nindiri, Masaya. On 25 July 2020, there had been an attack on the chapel of Our Lord of Veracruz parish in Masaya district.²⁰⁶

NIGER

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2013.

In 2020, the sultan of Birnin Konni told a BBC film crew directed by writer Femi Nylander and documentary film-maker Rob Lemkin that the crimes against humanity committed during the 1899 French invasion of the country, had been covered up by the French authorities for decades. The French commander, Paul Voulet (1866–1899), had captured the sultan's town, killing between 7,000 and 15,000 of its Hausa inhabitants. The invasion, which lasted for six months until Voulet was shot, was the subject of the BBC film *African Apocalypse* (2020).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 493.

²⁰⁶ "[Nicaragua Catholic Cathedral Attacked with Firebomb](#)," *Catholic News Agency* (31 July 2020); "[Crucifix in Managua Cathedral Torched in 'Hatred of the Church'](#)," *Vatican News* (1 August 2020).

²⁰⁷ Femi Nylander & Rob Lemkin, "[Will Macron's New Commission Face Up to All of France's Colonial Atrocities?](#)," *Guardian* (16 February 2021).

NIGERIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2006, 2008, 2010–2013, 2016–2020.

There was little progress on accountability for security force abuses within the context of the conflict with Boko Haram in the northeast. The report of the Presidential Judicial Panel set up in August 2017 to investigate the military's compliance with human rights obligations, allegations of war crimes, and other abuses had still not been made public despite repeated calls from civil society and international actors.²⁰⁸

In September 2020, followers of Osun, the Yoruba goddess of fertility, accused filmmaker Tobiloba Jolaosho of desecrating the Osun Osogbo sacred grove in western Nigeria. Jolaosho was arrested on charges of breach of peace for allegedly recording a pornographic movie at the site, a United Nations-designated World Heritage Site since 2003. Every year, thousands of people attend the Osun Osogbo festival, a traditional celebration that is thought to be 600 years old.²⁰⁹

On 1 June 2021, President Muhammadu Buhari tweeted “Many of those misbehaving today are too young to be aware of the destruction and loss of lives that occurred during the Nigerian Civil War. Those of us in the fields for 30 months, who went through the war, will treat them in the language they understand.” The tweet followed a spate of attacks on offices, mainly in the south-east, blamed on regional secessionists. It referred to the Biafran secession war (1967–1970) which took place in the south-east and ended in 1970 with the defeat of the secessionist forces with more than a million people, mostly civilians, killed through starvation. Some users saw the post as a veiled threat toward the secessionist movement. Twitter removed the post. On 4 June 2021, the government suspended Twitter's operations in the country and said it would prosecute anyone found to have breached the ban. Twitter had played a crucial role in the #EndSars anti-police brutality protests which shook Nigeria in 2020.²¹⁰

See also Germany.

²⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 503.

²⁰⁹ “[Nigerian Porn Star Arrested ‘for Filming’ at Sacred Osun Osogbo Ground](#),” *BBC News* (14 September 2020).

²¹⁰ “[Muhammadu Buhari: Twitter Deletes Nigerian Leader’s ‘Civil War’ Post](#),” *BBC News* (2 June 2021); “[Nigeria’s Twitter Ban: Government Orders Prosecution of Violators](#),” *BBC News* (5 June 2021).

NORTH MACEDONIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: *See* Macedonia.

On 25 December 2020, Prime-Minister Zoltan Zaev said in an interview that “Bulgaria is not a fascist country; Bulgaria is our friend,” adding that his government had removed some plaques on historical wartime monuments that contained the words “Bulgarian fascist occupation.” The comments were part of an interview in which Zaev talked about North Macedonia’s efforts to persuade Bulgaria to lift its blockade on the start of North Macedonia’s European Union membership talks. A number of historians objected to Zaev’s words. Ljubica Spaskovska, a member of the North Macedonian team in the joint North Macedonia-Bulgaria history commission, distanced herself from the remarks. She was soon joined by her colleague on the same commission, Ognen Vangelov. In 1941, the then Kingdom of Bulgaria had joined the Axis powers, and as such was given much of today’s North Macedonia, which it had long claimed as Bulgarian territory.²¹¹

NORWAY

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

See also Morocco.

²¹¹ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “[North Macedonia PM’s Remarks About History Hit a Nerve](#),” *Balkan Insight* (26 November 2020).

OMAN

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

In 2020, authorities censored 51 literary works from the 25th annual Muscat International Book Fair, either due to the authors' political activities or the content of their works. Among the books was Said bin Sultan Al-Hashimi's *Al-Rabee' al-Omani* (the Omani Spring), in which he documented the Omani Protests of 2011. *Al-Rabee' al-Omani* had already been banned for the annual Muscat International Book Fair in 2018 and 2019, together with a number of other works by al-Hashimi. The list further included *Hara'ir al-Rabee'* (Heroines of the Spring), written by Habiba al-Hinaiya, a women's rights activist and founder and executive director of the Omani Association for Human Rights (OCHR) [See also NCH *Annual Report 2010*].²¹²

In 2013, writer and activist Musallam Al-Ma'ashani ([1960]–) was sued after publishing a book entitled "Dhofar: The Diary of February 25" (after the 25 February 2011 protests in the Dhofar governorate that initiated the Omani Spring). Although not printed or distributed in Oman, it included three chapters documenting with pictures the protests in Salalah, the capital of the Dhofar governorate. Al-Ma'ashani was sentenced to five months' imprisonment and a fine of 500 Omani Rials (US\$1,300) for distributing a book without a license and to six months' imprisonment, later reduced to two months, and a fine of 500 Rials for writing publications that incited hatred and spread discord in society. The book was confiscated. In November 2019, Al-Ma'ashani was again arrested on unclear charges, after having crossed the border from Yemen. Due to Covid-19 his trial was postponed indefinitely. He was released on 25 April 2020 with a bail of 3,000 Rials (\$7,800).²¹³

²¹² "[Omani Human Rights Activist Silenced and Pushed into Exile](#)," *CIVICUS* (25 April 2017); "[Radio Programme Banned from Hosting Omani Writer Said Sultan Al Hashimi](#)," *Omani Association for Human Rights* (15 April 2019); "[Censorship Continues under Oman's New Sultan at Muscat International Book Fair 2020](#)," *Omani Association for Human Rights* (2 March 2020); "[Habiba – Oman](#)," *Equality Now*; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 515.

²¹³ "[Writer and Civil Activist Musallam Al-Ma'ashani Must Be Freed](#)," *Gulf Center for Human Rights* (18 November 2019); "[Trial of Writer and Civil Society Activist Musallam Al-Ma'ashani Postponed Indefinitely](#)," *Gulf Center for Human Rights* (2 June 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (Washington: HRW, 2021), 515.

PAKISTAN

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

In the week of 15 March 2021, the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) canceled without explanation an online conference to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Bangladesh War of Liberation, planned from 23 to 27 March in collaboration with the National Institute of Pakistan Studies (NIPS) of Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad. The conference, spearheaded by the LUMS School of Humanities and Social Sciences, was to be titled, “War, Violence & Memory: Commemorating 50 Years of the 1971 War.” According to LUMS politics professor Hassan Javid concerns had been raised over scheduling the conference on 23 March, which was also the day when Pakistan officially adopted its first constitution and became a republic in 1956.²¹⁴

See also Egypt.

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

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

Between 11 and 25 June 2020, authorities in Gaza arbitrarily arrested more than fifty Fatah-affiliated activists in relation to their plans to organize demonstrations to mark the fourteenth anniversary of the in-fighting between Fatah and Hamas. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights reported that most of the activists said they were tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention. None of the detained was charged and all were subsequently released.²¹⁵

On 21 May 2021, the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in Ramallah said that during the recent violence between Israel and Gaza Palestinians 44 cultural institutions (including cultural centers, bookstores, and publishing houses) were affected in the Gaza Strip, with many buildings associated to them demolished or damaged by Israeli airstrikes. Gaza-based author Mahmoud Joudeh said that “Destroying cultural institutions in Palestine is ... an attempt to obliterate Palestinian culture.” Tahseen Alyan, a researcher

²¹⁴ [“Lahore University Stokes Outrage for Cancelling Event on Bangladesh’s Liberation from Pakistan,”](#) *The Print* (21 March 2021).

²¹⁵ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 283.

at the Al-Haq human rights organization in the West Bank said that the attack on cultural institutions violated article 53 of the First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions.²¹⁶

See also France, Israel, United Kingdom.

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, 2020.

PERU

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2020.

Efforts to prosecute grave abuses committed during the armed conflict (1980–2000) have had mixed results. Almost 70,000 people were killed or subject to enforced disappearance by the Shining Path, other armed groups, or state agents during the armed conflict, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated. The vast majority of those killed were low-income peasants; most spoke indigenous languages. Authorities had made slow progress in prosecuting abuses committed by government forces during the conflict. As of September 2019, courts had issued 46 convictions in 88 cases. In 2018, then-President Martin Vizcarra established a genetic profile bank to help search for those disappeared during the armed conflict.

²¹⁶ Hanady Salah, "[Israeli War Adds Scars to Palestinian Psyche](#)," *Al-Monitor* (26 May 2021).

An investigation into former President Alberto Fujimori's role in forced sterilizations of mostly poor and indigenous women during his presidency was ongoing. As of November 2019, 5,247 people had registered as victims of forced sterilizations committed between 1995 and 2001, the Ministry of Justice reported. In February 2021, Congress passed a law that would allow the compensation of victims of forced sterilizations that occurred during his administration (1990–2000). Over 350,000 women and 25,000 men were sterilized against their will as part of a plan to reduce the birth rate in the rural and Indigenous communities. At least 18 people died during the surgery. The law was part of the Programa de Inversión Responsable (PIR; Integral Reparation Plan) created in 2006 to compensate victims of human rights violations.

Courts had made little progress in addressing abuses, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture committed by security forces during the earlier administrations of Fernando Belaunde (1980–1985) and Alan Garcia (1985–1990). Criminal investigations continued into the role of former President Ollanta Humala (2011–2016) in killings and other atrocities committed in 1992 at the Madre Mía military base, in the Alto Huallaga region, and in their cover-up.²¹⁷

Throughout 2020, the archeological site of Caral, the oldest city in the Americas dating back to ca. 2600 BCE and a UNESCO world heritage site since 2009, was invaded at least nine times by illegal squatters reportedly belonging to one family. They claimed that the site of the ruins was given to them during the agrarian land reform legislated by President Juan Francisco Velasco Alvarado's government (1968–1975). In addition to the invasions, Ruth Martha Shady Solís (1946–) – professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (National University of San Marcos) and the archaeologist who discovered the Caral-Supe civilization in 1994 – and her lawyer received multiple death threats mostly via telephone calls and messages to various workers at the archeological site. She accused the police and local prosecutor of insufficiently protecting her and the site, especially during the last three years. She was not threatened for the first time: in 2003, when she started her work as director of the site, she was shot in the chest during an assault on the site, for which she had surgery. From 2006 to 2012, she had been president of ICOMOS–Perú (International Council on Monuments and Sites–Peru).²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 532–533; [“Peru to Compensate Victims of Forced Sterilizations,”](#) *TeleSUR* (25 February 2021).

²¹⁸ [“Ruth Shady denuncia indiferencia policial frente a invasiones en Caral,”](#) *La República* (7 December 2020); [“Ruth Shady denuncia inacción de la PNP ante invasiones en Caral,”](#) *El Popular* (7 December 2020); Dan Collins, [“Squatters Issue Death Threats to Archaeologist Who Discovered Oldest City in the Americas,”](#) *Guardian* (3 January 2021); [“Ruth Shady: conoce a una de las 100 mujeres más influyentes del mundo,”](#) *La República* (24 November 2020).

PHILIPPINES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011–2015, 2019–2020.

On 18 March 2021, Potenciano Malvar, physician, local historian, and chairman of the Butuan Calagan Historical and Cultural Foundation, filed a criminal complaint for defamation against the members of the Mojares-panel – tasked with conducting queries and recommendations to determine the site of the first Catholic Mass in the country in 1521. Malvar alleged that the panel had produced a falsified report with libelous claims and with conclusions that caused dishonor and discredit to his person, reputation, and years of research. He demanded 20 million Philippine pesos in moral damages.

In May 2018, President Rodrigo Duterte had issued Executive Order No. 55 that created the National Quincentennial Commission (NQC) to organize commemorative activities for the quincentenary anniversary of the first celebration of Easter Sunday Mass on the country's shores in 1521. The location of the first Easter Sunday Mass had been a topic of debate for a long time, some believing that it was celebrated in Butuan (Mindanao), as the Spanish tradition held, other in Limasawa (Southern Leyte), as historical research asserted. To solve the issue, the NQC had formed an investigating panel led by Resil Mojares, the National Artist for Literature, and consisting of five well-known historians. This Mojares-panel was the fourth official panel to solve the issue following the 1980 Workshop Panel, the 1995 Gancayco Committee; and the 2008 panel led by historian Benito Legarda Jr. All three panels had found that the site of the First Easter Sunday Mass was Limasawa Island.

After a year-long research process, the Mojares-panel concluded that, despite arguments presented by proponents of the Butuan thesis, there was no evidence to reverse previous conclusions. It also concluded that Malvar's position paper, arguing for the Butuan-thesis, was "based on conjectures from ideas derived from secondary sources including a fictional account of the Magellan Expedition." In July 2020, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) adopted the Mojares-panel recommendations and decided that the commemoration of the first Catholic mass was to be held in Limasawa. In June 2021, the panel members were acquitted.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Alexander Lopez, "[Quest to Name Butuan Site of First Catholic Mass Takes Legal Turn](#)," *Philippine News Agency* (19 March 2021); Ben Serrano, "[Raps Filed vs Panel over 1st Philippine Mass Claim](#)," *Philippine Star* (21 March 2021); Jenny Ortuoste, "[The 'Limasawa 6' Case: Criminalizing Research?](#)," *Manila Standard* (14 June 2021); John Nery, "[Weaponizing the Law... against History](#)," *Inquirer.net* (15 June 2021); Bob Couttie, personal communications (18–21 June 2021).

POLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2000–2001, 2004–2005, 2007–2011, 2014–2020.

Over 2019 and 2020, historian Dariusz Stola, the first director of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews (2014–2019), was still awaiting the confirmation of his renewed contract, despite having been chosen in a selection process. In 2021, he was a history professor at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2019–2020*].²²⁰

In [October] 2019, Filomena Leszczyńska ([1940/1941]–) sued Jan Grabowski (1962–), a Polish-Canadian history professor at the University of Ottawa, and Barbara Engelking (1962–), a historian with the Polish Center for Holocaust Research in Warsaw, for defamation of her late uncle Edward Malinowski in the District Court of Warsaw. In their 2018 co-edited, 1,700-page, two-volume book *Dalej Jest Noc: Losy Żydów w Wybranych Powiatach Okupowanej Polski* (Night Without End: The Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland), the historians had written as a side note that Malinowski had contributed to the death of 22 Jews hiding in a forest near the village of Malinowo, north-east Poland, of which he was an elder (sołtys). However, Malinowski had been acquitted from a charge of collaboration with the Nazis in a Communist court trial in 1950. At the center of the case was testimony given by Maria Wiltgren (née Estera Siemiatycka) to the USC Shoah Foundation in 1996. A Jewish woman, she had described how Malinowski had helped her to survive under an assumed “Aryan” identity by putting her in a group of Poles sent to work in Germany, adding, however, that he had cheated her out of money and possessions. In *Dalej jest noc* Wiltgren was quoted as saying that she “realized that he was an accomplice in the deaths of several dozen Jews who had been hiding in the woods and had been turned over to the Germans, yet she gave false testimony in his defense at his trial after the war.” Ahead of Malinowski’s trial in 1950, an anti-Communist gang intimidated and beat up witnesses, some of whom then changed their testimony.

Supported by the Polish League against Defamation (Reduta Dobrego Imienia, RDI), Leszczyńska argued that the book provided “inaccurate information” and harmed her good name and that of her family. Leszczyńska demanded 100,000 zlotys (\$27,000) in damages and an apology in the newspapers. On 9 February 2021, the District Court ruled that Grabowski and Engelking had to issue a written apology to Leszczyńska for “providing inaccurate information” in suggesting that Malinowski had helped killing Jews in World War II, and had to publish an apology on the website of the Polish Center

²²⁰ 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).

for Holocaust Research, conceding that the claimant's right to "respect for the memory of a relative" had been infringed. The court, however, did not award damages and also rejected that the apology describe Malinowski as a "Jew-saving hero." Engelking and Grabowski appealed the ruling.

International organizations and academics condemned the judgment. Sascha Feuchert, director of the Arbeitsstelle Holocaustliteratur at the University of Giessen, Germany, summarized a more general opinion: "For many incidents in the Holocaust, we only have the testimonies from survivors. Of course they need to be checked and discussed in academic debates as far as possible. But this court ruling and its conclusions not only threaten the foundations of research based on survivor testimony, it could also be a gift for Holocaust deniers" [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2017–2020*].²²¹

On 4 February 2021, Katarzyna Markusz, a journalist and PhD candidate at the Polish Academy of Sciences, was questioned by police in Warsaw on suspicion of "slandering the good name of the Polish nation." A researcher of Polish-Jewish history, anti-Semitism, and World War II, and an organizer of commemorations for Polish Jews who died in the Holocaust, Markusz had written an article on the left-wing news website *Krytyka Polityczna*, in which she asked: "Will the day come when the Polish authorities admit there was widespread hostility to the Jews among Poles, and that Polish participation in the Holocaust is a historical fact?" The case was dropped.²²²

In March 2021, an ultra-conservative Polish Catholic group threatened to sue a French radio station for "infringing the reputation of the republic of Poland" by supposedly implicating Poland in Nazi war crimes during a program. The Polish League Against Defamation launched lawsuits against newspapers

²²¹ ["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); Wojciech Czuchnowski, ["The Plan to Destroy Holocaust Scholars: Polish Anti-Defamation League Goes after the Authors of the Book 'Night Without End',"](#) *Gazeta Wyborcza* (23 January 2021); ["Fears Rise that Polish Libel Trial Could Threaten Future Holocaust Research,"](#) *Guardian* (3 February 2021); Vanessa Gera, ["Future of Holocaust Research in Poland Hinges on Libel Case,"](#) *AP News* (4 February 2021); Vanessa Gera & Monika Scislowka, ["Holocaust Scholars Ordered to Apologize in Polish Libel Case,"](#) (9 February 2021); ["Polish Court Tells Two Holocaust Historians to Apologise,"](#) *BBC* (9 February 2021); Andrew Higgins, ["Polish Court Orders Scholars to Apologize Over Holocaust Study,"](#) *New York Times* (9 February 2021); ["U of O Holocaust Scholar Ordered to Apologize in Polish Libel Case,"](#) *CBC News* (9 February 2021); ["Statement by Prof. Barbara Engelking and Prof. Jan Grabowski,"](#) *Polish Center for Holocaust Research* (10 February 2021); Jo Glanville, ["A Gift for Holocaust Deniers': How Polish Libel Ruling Will Hit Historians,"](#) *Guardian* (12 February 2021); Daniele Boschi, ["La storia in tribunale,"](#) *Historia ludens* (19 February 2021); Masha Gessen, ["The Historians Under Attack for Exploring Poland's Role in the Holocaust,"](#) *The New Yorker* (26 March 2021); Anna Wójcik, ["Historians on Trial,"](#) *Verfassungsblog* (11 March 2021).

²²² Ofer Aderet, ["Polish Journalist Quizzed by Police for Writing that Poles Were Involved in the Holocaust,"](#) *Haaretz* (7 February 2021); David Matthews, ["Polish Pressure Forces Holocaust Historian to Self-censor,"](#) *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (15 April 2021).

and broadcasters in Spain, Italy, and Germany, invoking concepts such as a right to “national pride” for Poles.²²³

On 13 April 2021, philosopher Stanisław Krajewski (1950–) resigned from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum advisory council after Culture Minister Piotr Gliński had appointed Beata Szydło (1963–), a former prime minister and member of the ruling Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS; Law and Justice) party, to serve on the council. His resignation was followed by those of historians Marek Lasota (1960–) and Krystyna Oleksy, the latter a former deputy director of the museum.

Krajewski, who was to begin his third four-year term on the advisory council, feared that the appointment of Szydło was another move in the direction of making “the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum part of their historical policy.” After PiS took power in 2015, its leaders launched what they described as a “historical policy offensive” aimed at building pride in the nation’s past, by using museums, state media and other tools to promote a patriotic view of history.²²⁴

Despite having adopted the Terezin Declaration in 2009 to ensure “assistance, redress, and remembrance for victims of Nazi persecution,” Poland remained the only in the European Union that had not legislated on Jewish property restitution. Experts, commissioned by the Israeli government in 2006, estimated that about 170,000 private properties had been wrongfully seized from Jewish victims of the Shoah and nationalized by the communist government.

In 1997, the government had passed legislation to enable restitution claims for certain types of properties. However, a majority of claims still had not been resolved, and most of the resolved claims had not led to restitution or compensation. Additionally, the regulatory commission had applied a narrow interpretation of the law to exclude many Jewish properties. In October 2017, the government published draft legislation, which would have enabled claims to be made by some original owners and their families, but not by Shoah survivors and their families. On 24 June 2021, the lower house of parliament passed a draft legislation that would set a statute of limitations of ten to thirty years, depending on the case. The move was widely criticized as it could bar owners and their descendants from receiving compensation after a certain date.²²⁵

See also France, Russia.

²²³ David Matthews, “[Polish Pressure Forces Holocaust Historian to Self-censor](#),” *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (15 April 2021).

²²⁴ Vanessa Gera, “[Three Resign from Auschwitz Council after Politician Appointed](#),” *Associated Press* (16 April 2021).

²²⁵ “[Around the Bloc – 9 December](#),” *Transitions* (9 December 2019); Jo Harper, “[Nationalized Jewish Property: Warsaw’s Restitution Problem](#),” *Der Welt* (27 January 2020); “[Poland Defends Law That Could Block Jewish Restitution Claims](#),” *Der Welt* (25 June 2021).

PORTUGAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017.

In February 2021, prominent anti-racism activist Mamadou Ba was the target of a petition asking for his deportation for stating that the death of a colonial officer should not be commemorated. André Ventura, a lawmaker for and president of the far-right Chega political party made public derogatory remarks against him and against ethnic minorities.²²⁶

²²⁶ Victoria Waldersee & Catarina Demony, "[Council of Europe Urges Portugal to Confront Its Colonial Past](#)," *Business Day* (24 March 2021).

QATAR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010.

ROMANIA

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

Despite a 2001 law for the protection of the national heritage, the country remained an important source for black market antiquities in the European Union, with the authorities recovering 3,423 heritage items in 2020, according to police statistics.²²⁷

RUSSIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1998, 2001, 2004–2006, 2008–2020.

In 2020, the authorities opened a criminal case under Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code against Nikolay Gorelov, a Kaliningrad blogger, for a satirical piece from 2014–2015 about World War II. The piece explored various controversial themes, including crimes committed by the Soviet Red Army against the civilian population. It contained fictional monologues by contemporary and historical figures, including Adolf Hitler, who said that the Soviet Union’s victory in World War II “strengthened Stalin’s regime,” that “Russians ha[d] nothing to be proud of,” and that therefore “the victory [...] would ... remain the only thing that would give Russians at least some sense of their own significance.” In June 2020, the case was closed due to the expiry of the statute of limitations.²²⁸

In 2020, authorities arrested at least four people for supposed affiliation with Nurdzhular, a group of followers of the late Turkish theologian Said Nursi (1877–1960), banned as extremist in 2008, even though it had no history of incitement or violence. Experts repeatedly questioned the existence of such an organization in Russia and stated that the works of Said Nursi did not contain any extremist views. At least seven Nursi followers remained on Russia’s “List of Terrorists and Extremists,” their assets frozen, and travel restricted [See also *NCH Annual Report 2012* under Turkey; *NCH Annual Report 2014* under Russia; *NCH Annual Report 2019* under Turkmenistan].²²⁹

In 2020, Memorial – an international historical educational charitable and human rights society – requested that the Prosecutor General’s Office provide information about eleven prosecutors who had

²²⁷ Marcel Gascón Barberá, “[From Icons to Gold Detectors: How Romania’s Heritage Crime Went Underground](#),” *Balkan Insight* (23 April 2021).

²²⁸ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 23.

²²⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 566.

sat on the extrajudicial “troikas” of the Great Terror (1936–1938). Memorial needed their biographies for a historical reference book about all “troika” members, a joint project of Memorial, the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, the State Archive, and the Federal Security Service (FSB) Central Archive. The Prosecutor General’s Office refused, relying on the Federal Law “On the Protection of Personal Data” that required the consent of any individual for the disclosure of his or her personal data. Memorial challenged that decision in court, arguing that personal data laws were inapplicable to archival materials. Ian Rachinsky, head of Memorial, told the media that the new policy of the authorities “would make the creation of any encyclopedias and biographical reference books impossible.” According to Memorial lawyer Marina Agaltsova, the representative of the Prosecutor General’s Office justified shielding Stalin-era prosecutors based on the fact that they “had served the Homeland.” Memorial lost at trial in July 2020 and on appeal in March 2021, but the case was still ongoing. Separate requests to copy materials in FSB archives, addressed by Memorial to the FSB Central Archive and to the FSB of the Karelia region, were denied with the explanation that the FSB internal rules did not permit the copying of materials in the FSB archives. Memorial challenged the refusals in courts but so far lost every appeal in both of these cases. It planned to take the matter to the Supreme Court.²³⁰

In 2020, the Moscow directorate of the Federal Security Service (FSB) denied Sergey Prudovsky, a historian doing research on the 1937–1938 operation by the NKVD (the FSB’s predecessor) against former personnel of the Chinese Eastern Railway, access to the minutes of “troika” meetings from that case in order to compile the list of victims. The officials said that the document contained “confidential information,” specifically the names of “troika” members. The FSB representative said that disclosure of their names “could harm both the living relatives of those officials and the objective assessment of the 1937–1938 historical period.” Prudovsky commented that the names of “troika” members were in the public domain already, and that the FSB argument was a pretext to frustrate identifying the victims. He challenged the FSB decision in court and lost at trial, but his case was still ongoing.²³¹

In May 2020, Alexander Zhuravlev, a Duma deputy, proposed to add a new Article 354.2 to the Criminal Code. The proposed provision would make it a crime to “declare the USSR responsible for starting World War II,” “deny the leading role of the USSR in the victory over the Axis countries in World War II,” or equate Communism and Nazism. The bill largely duplicated the already existing provisions of Article 354.1, and it was doubtful whether it would become law. Yet its ideas kept

²³⁰ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 54.

²³¹ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 56.

circulating in official circles, ostensibly as a potential response to the European Union's September 2019 Resolution, which effectively equated the Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes.²³²

In June 2020, the government's effort to cement the official historical narrative culminated in a series of amendments to the Constitution of Russia. It declared the Russian Federation the "successor" of the Soviet Union (Article 67.1 §1); proclaimed that the Russian Federation "honors the memory of defenders of the Homeland" and "protects historical truth" (Article 67.1 §3); warned that "diminishing the significance of the people's heroism in defending the Homeland is not permitted" (Article 67.1 §3); and directed the government to "inculcate patriotism" in children (Article 67.1 §4). Russian historians voiced serious concerns about the impact of the amendments.²³³

In July 2020, the Duma (parliament) adopted presidential amendments to the law "On Education in the Russian Federation" which defined the concept of *vospitaniye* (moral education) and prescribed that education at schools and universities should include not only knowledge and skills, but also spiritual and moral values. The new version of the Federal Law mandated that educational institutions inculcate in their students, "the sense of patriotism and civil consciousness, respect toward the memory of the Homeland's defenders and courageous acts of the Homeland's heroes."²³⁴

In July 2020, Svetlana Prokopyeva from Pskov became the first journalist in Russia convicted under Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code for condoning terrorism. The prosecution asked that she be imprisoned for six years, but following an outcry, she was instead fined 500,000 rubles (about EUR 5,600). Prokopyeva had expressed her opinion on the radio about the underlying causes of a suicide bombing attack by a 17-year-old anarchist against a local Federal Security Service (FSB) office in Arkhangelsk. She had argued that a "ruthless state" had raised someone who saw violence as the only path, and she compared the young man to the Narodnaya Volya revolutionaries of 19th-century Russia. One of the witnesses against Prokopyeva lambasted her for using that historical analogy. He drew a parallel between 19th-century press coverage of Narodnaya Volya and Prokopyeva's reporting: "I see such condoning terrorism by the 19th-century press as one of the steps in the destruction of Russia's statehood, its weakening, and the pursuit of geopolitical interests by other States-competitors."²³⁵

²³² International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: "Crimes against History"* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 29.

²³³ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: "Crimes against History"* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), §§ 3, 99.

²³⁴ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: "Crimes against History"* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 103; Katrin Kinzelbach, ed., *Researching Academic Freedom: Guidelines and Sample Case Studies* (Erlangen: FAU University Press, 2020), 120–121.

²³⁵ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: "Crimes against History"* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 39.

In September 2020, during an incident at the Moscow International Book Fair, prosecutors charged Memorial for failing to mark all its books with a “Foreign Agent” stamp, even those that had been printed before the passing of the “Foreign Agent” law in 2012. Memorial argued that the law could not be applied retroactively, yet courts sided with the prosecutors. Following the incident, the organizers of the book fair marked the Memorial stand with four signs announcing that Memorial was a “Foreign Agent.” The combined amount of fines under the “foreign agents” law against Memorial by mid-2020 was 5.3 million rubles (approximately US\$69,000).²³⁶

In a joint September 2020 communication, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence, and the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, said that the Russian authorities should ensure the return of Soviet-era deportees within two years. Russia’s parliament had yet to implement the judgment of the Constitutional Court.²³⁷

On 29 September 2020, after an appeal by the prosecutors, the Karelian Supreme Court increased the prison term for Karelian historian Yuri Dmitriev (1956–) to thirteen years. On 16 February 2021, the court rejected Dmitriev’s appeal. Dmitriev would take his appeal to the Supreme Court [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2018–2020*]. On 29 September 2020, historian Anatoly Razumov, head of the Restored Names Center at the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg, was detained outside the Petrozavodsk court building during the Dmitriev hearings as he was giving an interview to a journalist holding a sign in support of Dmitriev that read: “Let’s not allow a second Sandormokh to happen.”²³⁸

In November 2020, Duma deputy Alexey Chepa proposed revoking the 2010 statement by the Duma that had officially recognized Soviet responsibility for the 1940 Katyń massacre, although that statement had been accompanied by the disclosure of key original Soviet-era documents, and had built on the 1990 admission of responsibility by the Soviet government. In the same month, the government-funded Russian Military Historical Society (RMHS) held a conference to deny the responsibility of the USSR for the 1940 Katyń massacre. According to the conference’s final document, the historical consensus

²³⁶ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 73; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 563.

²³⁷ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 129.

²³⁸ Website about Yuri Dmitriev: <https://dmitrievaffair.com>. “Yuri Dmitriyev: Russian Historian’s Sex Abuse Sentence Increased,” *BBC News* (29 September 2020); Olivier Rolin, “Yuri Dmitriev: Historian of Stalin’s Gulag, Victim of Putin’s Repression,” *New York Review of Books* (7 October 2020); American Historical Association, [Letter to Anatoly Vladimirovich Nakvas, Chairman of the Supreme Court of Karelia](#) (20 October 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 563, 571; “[Russian Court Rejects Jailed Gulag Historian’s Appeal against Long Sentence](#),” *Reuters* (16 February 2021); International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), §§ 53, 80–82, 105; United Nations Mandates, [Allegations Letter Regarding Yuri Dmitriev](#) (2021); [NCH Campaign](#).

around Katyń “should be considered as one element of a more general propaganda campaign to declare the USSR responsible for starting the Second World War.” Reacting to the announcement of the conference, Alexander Guryanov, a historian and the head of the Polish Program at International Memorial, wrote a letter to conference organizers expressing his view about the responsibility of the USSR for the war crimes at Katyń, and identifying the underlying political nature of RMHS’s conclusions. In response, conference delegates threatened him with prosecution under Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code.

In Tver, the 2020 removal of the plaques in memory of Polish prisoners of war executed there in 1940 [See NCH *Annual Report 2020*] was accompanied by statements from the local prosecutor and the regional government denying that historical fact. Meanwhile, the federal authorities had neither rebutted those claims nor rebuked the revisionists.²³⁹

On 12 November 2020, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu issued an order (published 23 March 2021) canceling earlier orders from 2007 and 2009 that declassified archival documents about World War II (1939–1945). The order effectively blocked almost all access to Russian military archives from the World War II period. On the same day, another order (published 1 January 2021) required “expert opinions” on all World War II documents before they were released for access. The opinions would be given by “expert commissions” that would work on them until late 2024. Critics feared that anything which gave a negative impression regarding the Red Army and Soviet authorities would be blocked, including information about the real losses of the Soviet armed forces and about the greatest military failures of the Red Army.²⁴⁰

In January 2021, President Vladimir Putin formally urged the Duma to adopt a law that would “prohibit making public statements that equate the role of the USSR and Fascist Germany during the Second World War (1939–1945),” and a bill to that effect was formally introduced in the Duma on 5 May 2021. On 9 June 2021, the Duma adopted the bill banning the identification of the goals and actions of the USSR with those of Nazi Germany in World War II, and prohibiting the denial of “the decisive role of the Soviet people in the defeat of Nazi Germany and the humanitarian mission of the USSR in the liberation of European countries.” The authors of the initiative emphasized the inadmissibility of mixing and equating the actions of “defenders of the Fatherland” with “the actions of soldiers aimed at the

²³⁹ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), §§ 96, 119.

²⁴⁰ Halya Conash, “[Russia Blocks Military Archives in Further Effort to Distort the Truth about World War II.](#)” *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group* (31 March 2021).

destruction of peoples, and persons found guilty of committing crimes in accordance with the verdict of the Nuremberg Tribunal.”²⁴¹

In their January 2021 communication to the Russian authorities, nine independent experts of the United Nations Human Rights Council juxtaposed the welcome creation of the government-sponsored Wall of Grief in Moscow in 2017, with the 2018–2019 government-sanctioned desecration of the Sandarmokh mass graves, and concluded that “symbolic measures lack[ed] merit if their purpose [was] to create a one-sided interpretation of events, or worse still, to give birth to a false memory of the nature and circumstances of past crimes, whatever their scale.”²⁴²

In February 2021, the Russian Military Historical Society (RMHS) requested that the authorities prosecute Alexander Nevzorov, a journalist and publicist, under Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code, for his remarks about Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya (1923–1941), an iconic Soviet partisan executed by the Nazis for acts of sabotage. In 1941, Kosmodemyanskaya had burned Russian villages in which the occupying German army was garrisoned. Nevzorov said on the radio that Kosmodemyanskaya was not a hero, but rather a “fanatic who followed an unlawful order.” The RMHS claimed that Nevzorov’s statement “amount[ed] to slander against the Soviet State and falsification of historical truth.”²⁴³

In February 2021, Duma member Irina Yarovaya proposed an amendment to Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code that would criminalize defamatory or denigrating statements about World War II veterans, punishable by up to five years’ imprisonment. The amendment built upon two earlier proposals to criminalize speech “insulting the sentiments of the Great Patriotic War veterans,” brought by the Communist Party and the Parliament of the Chechen Republic in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Yarovaya emphasized that the law would apply to statements not only about living but also deceased veterans. This would practically outlaw any discussion of crimes committed by Soviet soldiers during World War II. In March 2021, the Duma adopted the amendment. All amendments became law on 5 April 2021.²⁴⁴

In [February] 2021, World War II veteran Ignat Artemenko ([1927]–) sued opposition leader Aleksey Navalny for defamation. Navalny had made a public comment over a video clip advertising the 2020 constitutional amendments which allowed President Vladimir Putin to stand for election for two further

²⁴¹ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 29; “Госдума запретила «отождествлять цели и действия» СССР и Германии во Второй мировой войне,” *Novaya Gazeta* (9 June 2021); “Дума приняла закон о запрете отождествлять роль СССР и нацистской Германии,” *Tass* (9 June 2021).

²⁴² International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 179.

²⁴³ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 25.

²⁴⁴ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: “Crimes against History”* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 28.

terms. In his comment, Navalny had been dismissive of Artemenko's part in this video, without directly mentioning the veteran or the latter's role in World War II. However, the comment, accusing Artemenko and others appearing in the video of being traitors, was widely used on state propaganda channels as supposed proof of Navalny's disrespect for veterans. On 20 February 2021, a court found Navalny guilty. He received a huge fine (the equivalent of \$11,500 or £8,200). On 29 April 2021, the court rejected Navalny's appeal against the fine. In appearing before the court via a video-link from prison, Navalny accused President Vladimir Putin of attempting to rule Russia "forever" and caring only about "clinging to power."²⁴⁵

On [3 February] 2021, Alexander Ryabchuk, a history and social science teacher from Rostov-on-Don, was arrested for five days under Art. 20.2 of the Administrative Code ("participation in an unauthorized rally, resulting in interference with the functioning of life support facilities"). During the arrest, his house was searched. On 23 January 2021, Ryabchuk had stated on his Instagram account that he was broadcasting live from an unauthorized rally in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Rostov-on-Don. The same day, he had recorded a half-hour video in which he had shared his view of the political situation in Russia and told how the rally went. On 25 January, the director of Lyceum N11, where Ryabchuk had been teaching for seven years, asked him to remove all videos about the action from his Instagram page, and warned about the possible consequences of public coverage of the protest. On 26 January, the director of a private school, where he had only worked for two days, told him about a call from "influential people from law enforcement agencies or the Ministry of Education" and terminated his contract. On 29 January, Ryabchuk was forced to resign from Lyceum N11.²⁴⁶

In March 2021, a group of Russian senators and other top government officials held a roundtable discussion at the Federation Council (the upper house of Russia's parliament). Its participants said that Russian history must become a key weapon in a "mental war" or "memory war" against the West. They called for enhanced "censorship, [State] ideology, and propaganda." Vladimir Medinsky proposed the adoption of an official State History Policy.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ ["Alexei Navalny: Putin Critic Loses Appeal against Jailing,"](#) *BBC News* (20 February 2021); Halya Coynash, ["Russia Exploits War Veterans for Offensive against Opposition Activists and Historical Truth,"](#) *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group* (1 March 2021); Sarah Rainsford, ["Gaunt Navalny Attacks Putin as Network Is Disbanded,"](#) *BBC News* (29 April 2021).

²⁴⁶ ["«Учитель года» из Ростова-на-Дону арестован за участие в митинге,"](#) *Kommersant* (4 February 2021); ["Teacher of the Year' in Rostov-on-Don, Fired from School and Arrested for 5 Days after Participating in the Action on January 23,"](#) *Chernaya Kobra* (7 February 2021); ["Russians Risk Jobs for Supporting Navalny,"](#) *Borneo Bulletin* (21 February 2021).

²⁴⁷ International Federation for Human Rights, *Russia: "Crimes against History"* (Paris: FIDH, 2021), § 100.

On 3 March 2021, Denis Karagodin ([1983–]) was sued by Sergei Mityushov for defamation of his deceased father. Mityushov demanded to shut down Karagodin’s website, the online museum karagodin.org. Denis Karagodin was the great-grandson of Stepan Karagodin (1881–1938), a prosperous peasant farmer and village leader who had resisted the Bolsheviks after the 1917 Russian Revolution. During his research into his great-grandfather’s fate, Denis Karagodin discovered that his great-grandfather had secretly been shot by the secret police in Tomsk in January 1938 on fabricated charges of espionage for Japan – to be posthumously exonerated in 1955 only. On his website, Denis Karagodin documented how local authorities had obstructed his research, which had started in 2012, at every step. He also mentioned that Alexei Mityushov (?–1967), an inspector of the NKVD (secret service) in Novosibirsk, had signed a document stating that Stepan Karagodin’s execution had taken place. Sergei Mityushov, Alexei Mityushov’s son, declared that karagodin.org discredited his father and “crossed a political line,” saying that the NKVD’s job was to “fight criminals and their relatives,” working in “a hard, harsh time.” A few weeks later, a separate complaint by an unknown veteran from Ryazan was filed with police against Denis Karagodin for allegedly violating the privacy of NKVD employees and committing libel.²⁴⁸

On 14 April 2021, four students from the Higher School of Economics and Moscow State University of Civil Engineering – Armen Aramyan, Alla Gutnikova, Vladimir Metelkin, and Natalia Tyshkevich – were arrested. They were journalists at online magazine *Doxa* – an independent student magazine about the realities of modern university life, founded in 2017 – and their arrest came after reporting on protests in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and publishing a video on 22 January 2021 in which they argued that the expulsion of students from the university for participating in actions in support of Navalny was illegal. The video prompted media watchdog Roskomnadzor to order its removal, a decision which *Doxa* subsequently challenged. They were charged with “involving a minor in committing acts that pose a danger to the life of a minor.” Natalia Tyshkevich ([1994]–) was a history graduate and she worked in a museum for architecture. *Doxa*’s offices were searched along with the homes of each of the four on trial, with their equipment seized. The journalists were put under heavy pre-trial restrictions, which prevented them from leaving their homes or using the internet.²⁴⁹

See also China, France, Ukraine.

²⁴⁸ Robyn Dixon, “[He Spent Years Uncovering the Stalin-era Execution of His Great-Grandfather – Lawsuits Seek to Bury the Evidence](#),” *Washington Post* (9 May 2021); Benoît Vitkine, “Denis Karagodin: enquêteur-citoyen,” *Le Monde* (11 June 2021), 4.

²⁴⁹ Benjamin Lynch, “[Russia: Index Expresses Concern over the Arrest of Doxa Journalists](#),” *Index on Censorship* (16 April 2021); “[Doxa Solidarity Statement](#)” ([14] April 2021); Eva Cukier, “Russische autoriteiten zitten niet te wachten op *doxa*,” *NRC Handelsblad* (11 May 2021), 14–15.

RWANDA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000–2017, 2019–2020.

On 17 February 2020, gospel musician Kizito Mihigo (1981–2020) was found dead in a police cell in Kigali. On 13 February 2020, he had been charged with attempting to illegally cross the border with Burundi, joining terrorist groups, and corruption after he was arrested during an attempt to flee Rwanda. Police accused him of trying to join rebel groups fighting against Rwanda, but government critics said Mihigo had no such intention and in fact wanted to get to Belgium where he had lived before. They also dismissed the police version of his death as suicide by hanging, believing instead that he was murdered.

An ethnic Tutsi, Mihigo had fled the country after his father and some relatives were killed in the 1994 genocide. He returned home once the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the mainly Tutsi rebel movement led by Paul Kagame, had taken power. As a Catholic, he became well-known for his reconciliation work and religious songs and he was initially embraced by the government. His concerts drew tens of thousands of fans. In his 2014 song *Igisobanuro Cy'urupfu* (The Meaning of Death), released to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the genocide, Mihigo suggested that everyone killed during the 1994 genocide should be remembered whether they were ethnic Hutus or Tutsis. The authorities saw this as openly challenging the official narrative that the 1994 genocide was a genocide of the Tutsis and viewed it as a reference to the post-genocide revenge killing of ethnic Hutus by the RPF in and outside the country. Although the RPF said that the revenge killings took place on a small scale and those who committed them had been punished, the government viewed comparing these killings with the mass slaughter of Tutsis as a form of genocide denial.

On 7 April 2014, the twentieth anniversary of the genocide, Mihigo was reported missing and days later the police paraded him in front of the media, accusing him of plotting terrorist attacks and working with opposition movements with the aim of toppling the government. His music was then banned on all local radio and television stations. In February 2015 he was sentenced to ten years in prison for planning to kill the president and conspiring against the government. Although Mihigo pleaded guilty to all charges, his lawyer later told the court his client had been speaking emotionally and that there was no evidence to convict him. Mihigo said later that he was coerced into pleading guilty. He was convinced that his song got him into trouble. "I was told that I had to plead guilty. They said if I didn't plead guilty, they would kill me," he told an activist on the phone from prison in 2018. In September 2018, Mihigo was pardoned by Kagame but his movements were restricted and he had to report regularly to the police. Shortly before his death, he told Human Rights Watch that "he was being

threatened to provide false testimony against political opponents” and that he wanted to flee the country.²⁵⁰

The government continued with extradition requests for suspects of the 1994 genocide [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. On 25 August 2020 the authorities issued an international arrest warrant for former Rwandan spy chief Aloys Ntiwiragabo who had been identified by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) as one of the architects of the genocide. France had opened a probe into alleged crimes against humanity by the ex-military official on 25 July. In May 2020, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals had announced that the remains of another high profile genocide suspect – Augustin Bizimana, the minister of defense in 1994 – were identified in a grave in Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo. In 1998, the ICTR had indicted Bizimana on 13 counts of genocide and other related crimes.²⁵¹

The Penal Code criminalized direct and indirect incitement to genocide. The latter could be problematic, particularly when considered in light of a 2018 law targeting genocide ideology [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2009–2011, 2013–2014*]. Some crimes under the 2018 law were either ambiguous or risked silencing legitimate discussions about national history, such as prohibitions on minimizing the gravity of genocide, distorting the facts of genocide, or claiming that there was a double genocide in Rwanda. While Rwanda’s history made genocide denial particularly serious, watchdog groups alleged that such laws had been applied in a politicized manner and that the current legal framework facilitated such misuse. Numerous critics, defectors, and journalists, as well as international human rights organizations, alleged that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) had facilitated, allowed, or conducted war crimes and crimes against humanity of its own during the civil war. These allegations personally implicated President Paul Kagame as RPF leader during the conflict, and called into question his personal mythology as a peace bringer and hero. A 2021 report by Freedom House concluded that the government systematically targeted individuals who questioned its version of Rwandan history.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Amnesty International, “[Rwanda: Shocking Death of Gospel Singer in Custody Must Be Effectively Investigated](#)” (17 February 2020); “[Kizito Mihigo: Singer Found Dead in Rwandan Police Cell](#),” *BBC News* (17 February 2020); Abu-Bakarr Jalloh, “[Rwanda Gospel Singer Kizito Mihigo’s Death Likely a ‘Political Assassination’](#),” *Deutsche Welle* (21 February 2020); “[Kizito Mihigo: The Rwandan Gospel Singer Who Died in a Police Cell](#),” *BBC News* (29 February 2020); “[Rwanda Singer Kizito Mihigo Planned to Kill Paul Kagame](#),” *BBC News* (27 February 2015); Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 307; “[Igisobanuro Cy’urupfu](#)” (song), *YouTube*.

²⁵¹ “[Rwanda Issues Warrant for 1994 Genocide Suspect in France](#),” *Al Jazeera* (26 August 2020); “[Le Rwanda a émis un mandat d’arrêt international contre Aloys Ntiwiragabo, accusé de genocide](#),” *Le Monde* (26 August 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 577; “[Deceased - Bizimana, Augustin \(MICT-13-39\)](#),” *International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals*; Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 308.

²⁵² Centre for Law and Democracy, *Restrictions on Civic Space Globally: Law and Policy Mapping Series*, vol. 5, *Sub-Saharan Africa* (Halifax: CLD, July 2020), 73; Nate Schenckan & Isabel Linzer, *Out of Sight, Not Out*

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, 2017–2020.

On 11 November 2020, several people were wounded after a bomb attack at a Remembrance Day ceremony on a cemetery for non-Muslims in Jeddah. The ceremony commemorated the end of World War I.²⁵³

See also Lebanon.

SENEGAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2017–2018, 2020.

SERBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: *See* Serbia / Kosovo; Serbia / Montenegro.

In 2020, cases of war crimes committed in Serbia during the wars of 1991–1999 were only dealt with by the War Crimes Prosecutor’s Office and the Special Department for War Crimes of the Belgrade Higher Court. The latter refused to make first-instance verdicts public, although the Commissioner for

of Reach: The Global Scale and Scope of Transnational Repression (Washington: Freedom House, 2021), 22, 23.

²⁵³ “[Several Wounded in Remembrance Day Bomb Attack at Saudi Cemetery](#),” *BBC News* (11 November 2020).

Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection had recommended this. Journalists and members of the public were able to submit Freedom of Access to Information requests for case documents, but there were limitations and sometimes the information provided by the court depended on the wording of the request.²⁵⁴

No progress was made toward implementing the national war crimes strategy, opening investigations into the backlog of more than 2,500 war crimes cases, or indicting senior police or military officials for command responsibility. Prosecutions of low-level perpetrators in cases transferred from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) were extremely slow. New legislation providing reparation to victims of war (1991–1995) discriminated against civilian victims. A series of cumulative conditions required a higher percentage of bodily injury, only applied to those injured in Serbia and discriminated between physical and psychological damage. An estimated 15,000 people, including relatives of the missing and survivors of sexual violence, still had no right to reparation.

The first trial in Serbia for war crimes in Srebrenica was marred by further delays, because the defendants, who were not being held in custody during the proceedings, failed to show up in court. Eight Bosnian Serb former police officers resident in Serbia were charged with the killing of more than 1,300 Bosniak civilians in July 1995. The trial had been postponed 18 times since it began in December 2016 because the accused claimed to have poor health. Since 2019, 30 percent of all hearings in war crimes cases had been postponed at Belgrade Higher Court – the only court that dealt with such trials.²⁵⁵

Students in Serbia were reportedly given a one-sided view of the War of Yugoslav Succession (1991–1995) in history textbooks. The topic was taught in the eighth grade of primary schools (age 14) and the third or fourth grade in secondary schools (ages 17 or 18). A September 2020 policy paper by the Belgrade-based NGO Fond za humanitarno pravo (FHP; Humanitarian Law Center) outlined how war crimes committed during the 1990s were presented “with a selective choice of information used to portray the Serbian nation as the main victim of the armed conflicts.” It also suggested that “[w]hen the lesson deals with human losses, human rights violations and war crimes, it either does not specify who the victims were or only discusses crimes against ethnic Serbs.” Teachers were specifically recommended to “condemn the still ongoing murders and executions of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, who are allegedly protected by agreements which are not applied in practice.” Additional research by *Balkan Insight* in October 2020 found that a history textbook for 14–15 year olds, written by Momcilo Pavlovic and Djordje Djuric, did not acknowledge the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica, instead describing

²⁵⁴ Emina Dizdarevic, Serbeze Haxhiaj, Anja Vladislavljevic & Milica Stojanovic, “[Access Denied: Most Balkan War Crimes Case Files Not Public](#),” *Balkan Insight* (28 September 2020).

²⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 586; Milica Stojanovic, “[Justice on Hold: War Trial Delays Jeopardise Serbia’s Progress to EU](#),” *Balkan Insight* (1 February 2021); Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 315.

it as “a war crime and crime against humanity” of which “[t]he information about the total number of victims is disputable.”²⁵⁶

On 25 March 2021, the European Parliament adopted a report urging the government to increase efforts against hate speech and the glorification of war criminals, expand support for domestic prosecutors in bringing perpetrators to justice, and tackle “falsification of the facts established by the ICTY [International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia].” The report further appealed to the government to step up efforts in recognition and implementation of court verdicts on war crimes, and in investigations of gravesites. The government continued to deny that the 1995 Srebrenica genocide had been a genocide, rejecting international court verdicts and accusing them of anti-Serb biases.²⁵⁷

On 9 May 2021, the Austrian writer and 2019 Nobel Literature Prize Peter Handke (1942–) was given the Order of Karadjordje’s Star of the First Degree, one of the state’s highest honors, by President Aleksandar Vučić for his “special merits and successes in representing the state (Serbia) and its citizens.” Many in the Balkans saw Handke as an apologist for Serb war crimes committed during the Yugoslav War of Succession (1991–1995) [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*].²⁵⁸

On 9 May 2021, a picture of Četnik movement leader Dragoljub “Draža” Mihailović (1893–1946) was displayed alongside that of Partisan leader Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) at a state-sponsored event at the National Theater in Belgrade to commemorate Victory Day in World War II. Milovan Pisarri, a historian from the Belgrade-based Center for Public History, said that “unfortunately, this is not strange” because the Serbian authorities have sought to repaint the nationalist Četnik as anti-Fascists, despite the fact that they had collaborated with Axis occupation forces. Mihailović’ Četnik forces were accused of committing war crimes against Bosnian Muslims and Croats as well as against Communists during World War II. The Četniks were banned during the Communist era, but gained more popularity in Serbia in the 1990s. In 2004, Serbia adopted a law that gave World War II veterans from the Partisan and Četnik movements equal rights. Mihailović was rehabilitated by Belgrade High Court in 2015.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Milica Stojanovic, “[Serbian History Textbooks ‘Give One-Sided View’ of 1990s Wars](#),” *Balkan Insight* (8 September 2020); Mladen Obrenovic, “[Bosnian, Serbian Schoolbooks Teach Rival Versions of History](#),” *Balkan Insight* (30 October 2020).

²⁵⁷ European Parliament, *2019–2020 Reports on Serbia* (2019/2175(INI), 25 March 2021), §71; Milica Stojanovic, “[European MPs Urge Serbia, Kosovo to Intensify War Grave Search](#),” *Balkan Insight* (26 March 2021); Milica Stojanovic and Samir Kajosevic, “[In Serbia and Montenegro, Srebrenica is Still Politically Toxic](#),” *Balkan Insight* (8 July 2021).

²⁵⁸ “[Serbia Honors 2019 Nobel Prize-Winner For Literature, Who Denies Srebrenica Genocide](#),” *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* (10 May 2021).

²⁵⁹ Milica Stojanovic, “[Serbia Displays Chetnik’s Image at World War II Victory Event](#),” *Balkan Insight* (11 May 2021).

SERBIA / KOSOVO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008–2020. *See* Serbia.

SERBIA / MONTENEGRO

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

SEYCHELLES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2019.

SIERRA LEONE

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

On 9 September 2020, the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone, based in The Hague, said in a statement that Augustine Gbao was granted conditional early release. Gbao, a former leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), had been given a 25-year sentence in 2009 for crimes against humanity, including terrorism, extermination, murder, rape and sexual slavery [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2008–2011*]. During the civil war (1991–2002), the RUF carried out a series of atrocities in an attempt to gain control over the lucrative mining districts. The conflict, financed largely by so-called “blood diamonds,” left 120,000 people dead and tens of thousands mutilated.²⁶⁰

See also Liberia.

²⁶⁰ [“Sierra Leone ex-Rebel Leader Augustine Gbao Granted Early Release,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (9 September 2020).

SINGAPORE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2009–2011, 2015–2016, 2018–2020.

On 20 March 2020, the National University of Singapore (NUS) canceled the contract to publish *Coup, King, Crisis: A Critical Interregnum in Thailand*, edited by Pavin Chachavalpongpun (1971–), probably due to political pressure, although the book, submitted as a manuscript in October 2018, had already been peer-reviewed, revised, designed and available for pre-order online. The collection of essays dealt critically with the Thai monarchy in the transitional period between the 2014 military coup and the 2019 elections. It was subsequently published by Yale University’s Council on Southeast Asia Studies in December 2020. The self-exiled dissident political scientist Pavin has been an associate professor in Kyoto University’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies since 2012. He was also the administrator of the million-member Royalist Marketplace Facebook group (blocked in Thailand on 24 August 2020) [See also NCH *Annual Report 2017*].²⁶¹

See also Thailand.

SLOVAKIA

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

SLOVENIA

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

An open letter circulating among artists and academics, published on 17 November 2021 and bearing more than 1,000 signatures at the beginning of December, took aim at a project to build a Museum of Slovenian Independence, for which the government had allocated funds in its draft budget for 2022. The museum, the letter stated, would be a “propaganda institution, promoting a nationalist narrative

²⁶¹ Joyce Lau, “[Academic Calls for Press Boycott Over Cancellation of Book on Thailand](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (28 January 2021); Concerned Scholars of Southeast Asian Studies, [Petition to Peter Schoppert, Director, NUS Press](#) ([2020]); “[Facebook Blocks Thai Access to Group Critical of Monarchy](#),” *BBC News* (25 August 2020); Joyce Lau, “[Thai Protests Raise Academic Freedom Issues](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (28 August 2020); Ang Hwee Min, “[NUS Press Says It Chose Not to Publish Essays on Thai Politics after Consulting with ‘Stakeholders Inside and Outside the University’](#),” *CNA (Channel News Asia)* (25 January 2021).

about the past aimed mainly at buttressing the ideological agenda of the ruling Slovene democratic party.” In a press release published on 13 December the government said that these characterizations were incorrect, claiming that the museum would be “subject to international standards and curated by professional historians with no political affiliations.”²⁶²

SOMALIA

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

SOUTH AFRICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2004, 2006–2010, 2012–2020.

On the eight anniversary of what had become known as the Marikana massacre, the government still failed to release a report on recommendations on policing that a commission of inquiry published in July 2018. On 16 August 2012 police shot dead 34 striking miners outside the Marikana mine, owned by Lonmin Mine Plc, near Rustenburg, North West province. Overall, some 47 people were killed in Marikana on 12–16 August 2012, including miners, four security guards, and two police officers. There had been no convictions and the families were still waiting for reparations, including adequate compensation for their loss.²⁶³

See also Zambia.

SOUTH SUDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2015–2020.

In February 2020, the parties to the 2018 peace deal formed a transitional government of national unity led by President Salva Kiir, with Riek Machar as first vice president, and four other vice presidents from opposition groups. However, the parties did not implement most of the major provisions of the

²⁶² Dorian Batycka, “[Concerns Rise about Cultural Freedom in Slovenia](#),” *Apollo* (23 December 2020).

²⁶³ Mia Swart, “[South African Gov’t Urged to Release Marikana Recommendations](#),” *Al Jazeera* (16 August 2020); Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 327.

peace deal including security arrangements or establishing accountability mechanisms. In September 2018, rival factions had re-committed to a 2015 peace deal that called for the establishment of a Commission for Truth, Healing and Reconciliation, the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, and the Compensation and Reparations Authority, each with a distinct function but with the joint purpose of addressing past abuses.

In June 2020, the United Nations Human Rights Council renewed the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, which reported human rights abuses and impunity for widespread atrocities committed in South Sudan's conflict (2013–2020), despite the 2018 peace agreement and formation of a unity government. In July, local missions of the European Union, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, and the United Kingdom deplored the high levels of sexual and gender-based violence affecting children and women and highlighted the ongoing impunity for past abuses.

On 29 January 2021, the government approved the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan. The court, to be staffed with South Sudanese judges as well as judges assigned by the African Union, was envisioned in the peace agreement of 2018 to try perpetrators of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity committed during the South Sudanese Civil War (2013–2020), which killed nearly 400,000 people and forced four million South Sudanese to flee their homes. Since the 2018 peace deal, leaders had repeatedly sought to block the establishment of the court: a memorandum of understanding to be signed with the African Union was still pending and communications on next steps between the African Union and South Sudan were lacking.²⁶⁴

SPAIN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999, 2002–2020.

On 23 February 2021, the last statue of General Francisco Franco on Spanish soil was removed, after the enclave of Melilla had voted to take down the monument, which had stood at the gates of the city on the north-west coast of Africa. Members of the far-right Vox party had voted against its removal, saying that the statue, erected in 1978, commemorated Franco's role as commander of the Spanish Legion in the Rif War (1920–1927; a conflict Spain fought against Berber tribes in Morocco).²⁶⁵

See also Afghanistan, Philippines, Poland.

²⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 611, 616, 617; Jale Richard, "[Cabinet Approves Establishment of Hybrid Court](#)," *EYE Radio* (30 January 2021); Nyagoah Tut Pur, "[A Glimmer of Hope for South Sudan's Victims](#)," *Human Rights Watch* (31 January 2021).

²⁶⁵ "[Franco: Melilla Enclave Removes Last Statue of Fascist Dictator on Spanish Soil](#)," *BBC News* (24 February 2021); "[Last Public Statue of Spanish Dictator Franco Is Removed](#)," *Guardian* (23 February 2021).

SRI LANKA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2004, 2008–2020.

On 26 February 2020, Sri Lanka announced at the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council in Geneva that it was withdrawing from its commitments to provide justice and accountability for war crimes and other grave violations committed during and since the civil war between the government and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (1983–2009). President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (1949–), who ran on a platform of protecting “war heroes” from prosecution, was defense secretary during the administration of his brother, then-President (now Prime Minister) Mahinda Rajapaksa (1945–), when the alleged abuses took place. Several senior members of his government, including the defense secretary, Kamal Gunaratne, and army chief General Shavendra Silva, were also implicated.

Since 2020, Rajapaksa had appointed at least 28 serving or former military and intelligence personnel to key administrative posts, among which senior military officials who were implicated in UN reports in alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity during the final years of the conflict. Families of the disappeared and human rights defenders reported heightened surveillance and threats from the intelligence services. The core group on Sri Lanka at the Human Rights Council (Canada, Germany, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and the United Kingdom) called for “an end to impunity for the violations and abuses of the past,” but did not show leadership in presenting a new resolution to advance international accountability. On 27 January 2021, the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) released a report, stating that nearly twelve years after the armed conflict ended, impunity for grave human rights violations and abuses by all sides was more entrenched than ever, with the current government proactively obstructing investigations and trials, and reversing the limited progress that had been previously made. On 23 March, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution mandating the OHCHR to gather and preserve evidence for future prosecutions and make recommendations to the international community on steps they can take to deliver on justice and accountability.²⁶⁶

On 2 June 2020, President Mahinda Rajapaksa established a Presidential Task Force for Archaeological Heritage Management in the Eastern Province, consisting almost entirely of Sinhalese members, including security officials and Buddhist monks, raising fears that it would disadvantage the

²⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 625, 626, 629; “[Sri Lanka on Alarming Path towards Recurrence of Grave Human Rights Violations – UN Report](#),” OHCHR (27 January 2021); “[Sri Lanka: UN Rights Chief Decries Mounting Abuses](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (29 January 2021); Karen McVeigh, “[UN Resolution Hailed as ‘Crucial Turning Point’ for Victims of Sri Lanka Civil War](#),” *Guardian* (24 March 2021).

predominant Tamil and Muslim communities. Rajapaksa said the purpose of the task force was to “preserve our Buddhist heritage.” The government declined to include the national anthem in the Tamil language on national occasions, such as the Independence Day celebrations on 4 February 2020, despite the preceding years’ practice of singing it in two languages as a significant gesture toward reconciliation.²⁶⁷

On 1 December 2020 the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka refused to hear the appeal and dismissed the case of eleven families, both Muslim and Christian, that had taken up a legal battle against a mandatory cremation policy for all bodies suspected to be infected with Covid-19, accusing the government of violating their freedom of religion and fundamental rights under the constitution. The policy was seen by several human rights activists as part of an ongoing attack on the Muslim community, led by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was elected in 2019 on a wave of anti-Muslim sentiments, following the Easter suicide bombings by Islamist militants in April 2019, which left 267 dead. Political, religious, and community leaders representing the Muslim community repeatedly requested the government to change its “cremate only” policy, pointing to the more than 190 countries allowing burials and World Health Organization advice. The government argued that burials could contaminate ground water, based on the authority of an expert committee, the composition and qualifications of which were unknown. On 1 January 2021, the Sri Lanka Medical Association, a Sri Lankan expert committee, accepted that burial was permissible. United Nations special rapporteurs wrote twice to the government, in April 2020 and January 2021, urging it to respect the wishes of those who seek burial, and to recognize that the disregard of Muslims’ feelings may lead them not to present bodies for cremation. On 24 February 2021, the government reversed its mandatory cremation policy. It was alleged that as many as 200 Muslims had been cremated.²⁶⁸

See also Israel.

²⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 628; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Promotion Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka: Report* (27 January 2021), paragraphs 22, 30; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “[Sri Lanka on Alarming Path towards Recurrence of Grave Human Rights Violations – UN Report](#)” (press release) (27 January 2021).

²⁶⁸ “[Another Nail in the Coffin for Religious Tolerance in Sri Lanka](#),” *Daily FT* (18 April 2020); Meera Srinivasan, “[Sri Lanka SC Rejects Petitions against Covid-19 Cremation](#),” *The Hindu* (2 December 2020); Hannah Ellis-Petersen, “[Muslims in Sri Lanka ‘Denied Justice’ over Forced Cremations of Covid Victims](#),” *Guardian* (4 December 2020); “[Covid-19: Sri Lanka Forcibly Cremates Muslim Baby Sparking Anger](#),” *BBC* (26 December 2020); Patrick Wintour, “[Muslim Families Complain to UN over Sri Lankan Covid Cremations](#),” *Guardian* (9 February 2021); “[Covid-19: Sri Lanka Reverses ‘anti-Muslim’ Cremation Order](#),” *BBC* (25 February 2021).

SUDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2003, 2006–2020.

The Attorney General’s Office formed several committees to investigate past crimes and rights abuses, including in Darfur, but no investigation had yet led to prosecutions. Authorities announced the discovery of two mass graves during 2020 they said contained the remains of military personnel killed during former President Omar al-Bashir’s rule (1989–2019). The National Committee of Inquiry, established to investigate the killing and injuring of protesters on 3 June 2019, had not concluded its work. On that day, members of the Rapid Support Forces and other security forces fired live ammunition at peaceful protesters outside the military headquarters in Khartoum, killing at least 100 and injuring 700 others.²⁶⁹

On 11 February 2020, a member of the sovereign council, a collective presidency body composed of both civilians and military, announced the government’s commitment to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC), which officials reaffirmed throughout 2020. On 22 August 2020, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok affirmed that the government had reached a deal with rebel groups in February that all five Sudanese ICC suspects, including former President Omar al-Bashir (1944–), should appear before the court in The Hague, on charges related to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide carried out in Darfur. The ICC had issued arrest warrants for al-Bashir in 2009 and 2010. However, the transitional government continued to fail to meet its obligation to surrender them to the ICC, and still had not ratified the ICC Rome Statute. In June 2020, Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al- Rahman (also known as Ali Kushayb), a former senior commander of the Janjaweed militia, surrendered to the ICC to answer charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur.²⁷⁰

In July 2020, illegal gold diggers destroyed the 2,000-year-old Jabal Maragha archaeological site (dating from the Meroitic period between 350 BCE and 350 CE) in the eastern region of the Sahara desert. Earlier, at Sai, a river island in the Nile, hundreds of graves, some dating back to the times of the pharaohs, had been raided and destroyed by looters. “Out of a thousand more or less well-known sites in Sudan, at least a hundred have been destroyed or damaged,” said Hatem al-Nour, Sudan’s director of antiquities and museums.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 631; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 341.

²⁷⁰ “[Sudan’s Omar al-Bashir a Step Closer to Facing War Crimes Charges](#),” *Al Jazeera* (23 August 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 631; Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 341.

²⁷¹ “[Sudan’s Jabal Maragha: Illegal Gold Diggers Destroy Ancient Site](#),” *BBC News* (24 August 2020).

SURINAME

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

See The Netherlands.

SWAZILAND

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

SWEDEN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2017–2018, 2020.

See Syria.

SWITZERLAND

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

See Liberia.

SYRIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2002, 2004–2020.

In April 2020, the trial of two alleged former Syrian intelligence officials began in Koblenz, Germany, in a landmark case on torture in one of Syria’s detention facilities (*see below*). The same month, the first trial addressing genocide by an ISIS suspect against the Yazidi minority began in Frankfurt. Other countries, including France and Sweden, were pursuing similar cases under their universal jurisdiction laws. On 24 February 2021, Eyad al-Gharib, a former colonel in the Syrian intelligence service, who carried out orders in one of President Bashar al-Assad’s notorious prisons, was found guilty of being

an accomplice to crimes against humanity by the Koblenz court, in the first victory for efforts worldwide to bring legal accountability for atrocities committed in Syria's civil war (2011–).²⁷²

On the third year commemoration of the regime's chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun, on 4 April 2017, and the second of its attack on Douma City, on 7 April 2018, victims were still awaiting accountability. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) noted that despite the accurate and highly credible investigations, which confirmed the occurrence of the Khan Sheikhoun and Douma attacks, the United Nations Security Council had so far failed to take economic, political or military sanctions to implement its relevant resolutions. Regime forces perpetrated crimes against humanity, ranging from extrajudicial killing to sexual violence and torture, with all these crimes being perpetrated in a systematic and widespread manner, and war crimes, through indiscriminate shelling, and the destruction of building and facilities, since 2011. All of these had yet to be addressed with any form of accountability.²⁷³

On 9 February 2021, Syrian authorities announced that they believed having found the body of archaeologist and historian Khaled al-Asaad (1934–2015) in Kahloul, east of Palmyra [See also NCH *Annual Report 2016*].²⁷⁴

In [February 2021], Aleppo's city council announced that bodies buried in one of the biggest makeshift graveyards, in a park next to the Salah al-Din mosque, would be relocated to a large state cemetery on the outskirts of the city. In 2018, the Aleppo authorities first began to relocate bodies from the city's informal cemeteries, but identifying and documenting the inhabitants of all of the irregular gravesites proved to be a serious challenge which was soon abandoned. It appeared the city council paid no attention to the dignity of the dead: unverified pictures circulated widely on social media, showing skulls and bones lying haphazardly among red soil, and graveyards left with earth and makeshift headstones disturbed. According to Mohamed Kaheel, who directed the Aleppo opposition's forensic medicine commission, the purpose of transferring the graves was so that in the future, when criminal investigations would be carried out, a lot of important forensic evidence would be lost.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 646; Bethan McKernan, "[Germany Convicts Former Assad Regime Agent in Historic Syria Torture Verdict](#)," *Guardian* (24 February 2021).

²⁷³ "[On the 3rd Anniversary of the Syrian Regime's Chemical Attack on Khan Sheikhoun and the 2nd of Its Attack on Douma City, the Victims Still Await Accountability](#)," *SNHR* (7 April 2020); Syrian Network for Human Rights, *Tenth Annual Report: The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2020* (London: Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2021), 83.

²⁷⁴ "[Syria 'Finds Body of Archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad Beheaded by IS'](#)," *BBC News* (9 February 2021).

²⁷⁵ Bethan McKernan and Ahmad Haj Hamdo, "['A Crime on Top of a Crime': Assad Regime Reburies Aleppo's War Dead](#)," *Guardian* (15 March 2021).

TAIWAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2001, 2008–2010, 2012, 2016–2020.

TAJIKISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017–2018, 2020.

TANZANIA

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

THAILAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1999, 2001–2002, 2005, 2007–2020.

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 99 dead and more than 2,000 injured, no military personnel or officials from the government of then-Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva had been charged for killing or wounding demonstrators or bystanders.²⁷⁶

On 19 August 2020, the authorities filed a complaint against historian Pavin Chachavalpongpun (1971–), an associate professor of politics at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, Japan [See also NCH *Annual Report 2017*], for opening a popular Facebook page with commentary on the monarchy. On 24 August 2020, after the Thai government threatened legal action, Facebook blocked access in Thailand to this page, “Royalist Marketplace,” on which a million-member group discussed the monarchy. The page could still be accessed from outside Thailand. A new Facebook group set up by Pavin on 24 August 2020 in the evening gained more than 400,000 followers overnight. Pavin was one of three dissidents the Thai government had warned its citizens to stay away from. The other two were British journalist Andrew MacGregor Marshall, who had published a book critical of the Thai

²⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 658.

monarchy, and Thai political history professor Somsak Jeamteerasakul [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2011, 2014–2015, 2017*] who was an outspoken critic of the monarchy and lived in exile in France.²⁷⁷

On 20 September 2020, in a context of ongoing student-led protests since February, anti-government demonstrators cemented a commemorative “People’s Plaque” close to a field known as Sanam Luang (Royal Field), near Bangkok’s Grand Palace, in a challenge to Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn. The plaque proclaimed in Thai: “The people have expressed the intention that this country belongs to the people, and not the king.” Organizers said the plaque was a replacement for another marking the end of absolute monarchy in the 1930s, which went missing in 2017 [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2018–2019*]. The demands of protesters took an unprecedented turn in August 2020, when a 10-point manifesto for reform to the monarchy was read out at a rally. The sociology student who delivered the manifesto, Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul, had said that its intention was “not to destroy the monarchy but to modernize it, to adapt it to our society.” However, she and her fellow activists were accused of “chung chart” (“hatred of the nation”).²⁷⁸

On 19 October 2020, police searched the publishing house Fah Diew Kan and interrogated founding editor Thanapol Eawsakul. The police warrant reportedly cited three books: one written in 2013 by emeritus historian Thongchai Winichakul that was found to be “dangerous” in the context of the ongoing protests and to incite “hatred of the institution of the monarchy”; and two by political scientist and historian Nattapol Chaiching (*see below*). The warrant also said that “it is ... believed that the ... books were produced with the aim of creating agitation and resistance among the people, which is an offense against state security.”²⁷⁹

On 5 March 2021, Priyanandana Rangsit filed a THB50 million (US\$1.6 million) civil lawsuit against Nattapol Chaiching [Nattapol Chaiching] (a political scientist and historian teaching at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in Bangkok and head of its Local Government Program), his thesis supervisor Kullada Kesboonchu-Mead (a lecturer in political science at Chulalongkorn University), and academic publisher Fah Diew Kan (Same Sky Books) for harming the reputation of the clan of her grandfather Prince Rangsit Prayurasakdi (1885–1951), the son of King Chulalongkorn Rama V (1853–1910). She further requested a temporary injunction to immediately stop the distribution of a 2013 book based on Nattapol’s thesis, and the 2020 book *Khun Seuk Sakdina Phraya Insi* (“The Junta, the Lords, and the Eagle”). The lawsuit followed the ban of

²⁷⁷ [“Facebook Blocks Thai Access to Group Critical of Monarchy,”](#) *BBC News* (25 August 2020); Joyce Lau, [“Thai Protests Raise Academic Freedom Issues,”](#) *Inside HigherEd* (28 August 2020).

²⁷⁸ [“Thailand Protests: Activists Challenge Monarchy by Laying ‘People’s Plaque’,”](#) *BBC News* (20 September 2020).

²⁷⁹ Scholars at Risk, [“Thailand: End Crackdown on Peaceful Student Protesters”](#) (2 November 2020).

Nattapol's PhD thesis, entitled "Thai Politics in Phibun's Government under the US World Order (1948–1957)," by Chulalongkorn University (CU), where Nattapol had obtained his PhD with distinction in 2009. The widely praised thesis had investigated how the United States had intervened in Thailand in 1948–1957 to support police and military groups and the resurgence of the monarchy. Eventually, the intervention led to the 1957 coup by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1908–1963) and the establishment of a royalist authoritarian regime.

In [2017], while doing research on Thai politics under King Bhumibol Adulyadej Rama IX, royalist political philosopher Chaiyan Chaiyaporn at CU had found a mistake in Nattapol's PhD thesis, as evidence did not support a conclusion he had drawn on Prince Rangsit's interference in the government during his regency (1947–1951). Chaiyan Chaiyaporn reported this to CU claiming that Nattapol had falsified the fact in order to tarnish the monarchy, and demanded revision. When Nattapol subsequently wanted to revise the thesis, he was told that university regulations did not allow amendments to theses that were approved and published. After a CU investigation in 2018, the thesis examination committee and the faculty of political science concluded that Nattapol's mistake was unintentional and that the passage containing it could be removed without affecting the argument in that chapter or the thesis as a whole. Yet, despite this conclusion, CU blocked access to the dissertation.

In the meantime, interest in the historical role of the monarchy in politics made Nattapol's second book *The Junta, the Lords and the Eagle* a bestseller in 2020. His books became influential among youth and student protesters demanding reform of the monarchy. In February 2021, a petition signed by some 400 alumni and submitted to CU demanded further action against Nattapol, resulting in CU setting up an investigation committee to review the latter's academic integrity. Depending on its findings, the investigation could lead to a revocation of Nattapol's degree or other disciplinary action under research misconduct rules.

On 26 March 2021, 279 Thai scholars signed a petition asking CU to halt its attack on Nattapol and uphold academic freedom, stating that in *The Junta, the Lords, and the Eagle* he had rectified the mistake that could not be altered in his PhD thesis, and that it did "not directly alter the theme or main proposal of Dr Nattapol's thesis." The petition was followed by an international statement on 5 April calling for policies to provide protection to students and faculty members. The Association for Asian Studies, in a separate statement on 7 April, joined the call and urged the Bangkok Civil Court to dismiss the lawsuit.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Thongchai Winichakul & Tyrell Haberkorn, "[A Censored Thesis, Then a Defamation Lawsuit: Academic Freedom in Thailand](#)," *New Mandala* (19 March 2021); Thongchai Winichakul & Tyrell Haberkorn, "[International Scholars Appeal to Chulalongkorn University to Defend Academic Freedom](#)," *Prachatai* (5 April 2021); Association for Asian Studies, "[AAS Statement on Academic Freedom in Thailand](#)," (7 April 2021); Sulakshana Lamubol, "[Historian Influential with Protesters Is Investigated](#)," *University World News* (13 April 2021).

TIMOR-LESTE

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

See Australia.

TOGO

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

In September 2020, security forces killed one person and injured several others when they used tear gas canisters to disperse a traditional celebration in the Prefecture of Doufelgou.²⁸¹

TRINIDAD and TOBAGO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

TUNISIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2011–2020.

On 24 June 2020, the government took a step for transitional justice by publishing in its Official Journal, the final report of the Truth and Dignity Commission, a body tasked by a 2013 transitional justice law to investigate and expose serious human rights violations that took place in Tunisia from 1955 to 2013. On 26 March 2019, the commission had published its five-volume 2000-page report. It analyzed and exposed the multi-layered and intricate system of oppression and corruption prevalent for sixty years, and included recommendations for political, economic, administrative, and security sector reforms to safeguard against a return to repression. Trials of people accused of human rights violations perpetrated between 1955 and 2013, referred by the Commission, continued before specialized criminal chambers, albeit at a slow pace with frequent adjournments, while security force and police unions continued to boycott the process. Also in June, the government established a reparations fund for victims, and

²⁸¹ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 358.

relatives of victims who had died between 1955 and 2013. The reparations included financial compensation, rehabilitation, professional integration or education, the restitution of rights and official apologies. The fund was activated on 24 December [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2015–2020*].²⁸²

TURKEY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2000–2020.

On 16 June 2021, the International Press Institute (IPI) and eighteen international freedom of expression organizations sent open letters to Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gül and a number of political parties to urge authorities to investigate the unsolved murder of Kutlu Adalı (1935–1996), after allegations by convicted mob leader Sedat Peker that former Interior Minister Mehmet Ağar had organized Adalı's killing.

On 17 March 1996, Adalı, a Turkish-Cypriot journalist and peace activist who wrote critically about the government of the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, had penned a newspaper article about the alleged involvement of the Directorate of Civil Defense Organization in Northern Cyprus in the smuggling of historical artifacts taken from a tomb in the monastery of St. Barnabas. He was killed by unknown assailants in his house on 6 July 1996. From 1980 onward, Adalı and his wife had repeatedly been subjected to harassment, varying from threatening phone calls to an attack on his house with machine guns. In 2005, the European Court of Human Rights found that Turkey had violated Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to life) for its “failure to carry out an adequate and effective investigation into the circumstances surrounding the killing” of Adalı.²⁸³

On 30 June 2020, the government canceled the operating license of Şehir University in Istanbul (founded in 2009) based on a presidential decree of April 2020. Among the libraries that were confiscated in the process was the one of historian of the Ottoman empire Fuat Köprülü (1890–1966).²⁸⁴

See also France, United States.

²⁸² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 663; Amnesty International, *State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 53, 360, 362.

²⁸³ European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Adali v. Turkey (Application no. 38187/97): Judgement in the Case of Adali v. Turkey* (Strasbourg: ECHR, 2005); “[International Groups Call on Turkey to Investigate New Allegations Related to Journalists' Unsolved Murders](#),” *IFEX* (16 June 2021).

²⁸⁴ Kaya Genç, “Tearing Down the Ivory Tower,” *Index on Censorship*, 49 no. 4 (2020), 29–31.

TURKMENISTAN

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

UGANDA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2017, 2019–2020.

On 4 February 2021, Dominic Ongwen, a former commander in the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), was found guilty on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, sexual slavery, abduction and torture, at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. Analysts in Uganda said the judgment suggested progress toward ending impunity in a country with a long history of conflict. On 6 May, the ICC sentenced Ongwen to 25 years in prison. Two ICC warrants remained outstanding for the arrest of LRA leaders Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti. The latter was presumed dead. [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2016–2017, 2019–2020*].²⁸⁵

UKRAINE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2009–2011, 2014–2020.

On 16 April 2015, historian and journalist Oleg Buzyna (–2015), a long-time contributor of controversial opinion pieces about Ukrainian history in the *Segodnya* newspaper and a pro-Russian commentator who publicly denounced Ukrainian nationalism, was shot dead by two masked attackers near his house in Kyiv. He had been frequently attacked verbally and physically by nationalists in the past. On 18 June 2015, Interior Minister Arsen Avakov announced that police had arrested two suspects, Andriy Medvedko and Denys Polischchuk, two Donbas war veterans from the ultra-nationalist group Sich C14. Both denied the killing, saying that they did not know each other before their arrest, that numerous witnesses confirmed they were both not in Kyiv that day, and that police planted evidence in the case and had taken DNA samples by force. In 2017, the Kyiv Prosecutor’s Office sent all case materials to the court where, despite dozens of hearings, the case was still pending as of late January 2020. Buzyna had a reputation as a provocateur who publicly denounced almost every person, tradition, tragedy, or event sacred to most Ukrainians (including national poet Taras Shevchenko [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2014, 2016, 2018*] in his 2000 book “Taras Shevchenko the Ghoul”). He openly opposed Ukrainian nationalism and called Russia’s war against Ukraine in the Donbas “a civil conflict.”

²⁸⁵ Jason Burke and Samuel Okiror, “[Ugandan ex-Child Soldier Guilty of War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity](#),” *Guardian* (4 February 2021).

Born in the family of a KGB officer, Buzyna used to dress in the Russian Empire's White Guard uniform for historical reconstruction events.²⁸⁶

No justice, truth or reparation was attained for any of the victims of enforced disappearance, secret detention and torture of civilians by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) from 2014 to 2016, and not a single suspected perpetrator was prosecuted. The new SBU head noted in June 2020 that the agency currently had no secret prisons, but said nothing of such practices in the past, and denied torture. The four-year-old investigation into this practice was handed over by the Military Prosecutor's Office to the State Investigation Bureau in December 2019, but by the end of 2020, had yielded no tangible results.²⁸⁷

Although Ukraine was not a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC), it accepted the court's jurisdiction over alleged crimes committed on its territory since November 2013. The ICC prosecutor's preliminary examination as to whether it should open an investigation into abuses committed during the armed conflict (2014–) remained ongoing.²⁸⁸

In March 2020, members of Russian law enforcement agencies visited the homes of several Crimean Solidarity members, including its current coordinator Mustafa Seydaliyev, and human rights defender Abdureshit Dzhepparov, and served them with an official written warning against taking part in future “unsanctioned actions” (any protest or commemorative events).²⁸⁹

In October 2020, Viktor Medvedchuk, an influential Ukrainian politician and friend of Vladimir Putin, sued journalist Vakhtang Kipiani for his 2019 book *The Case of Vasyl Stus* because it suggested that Medvedchuk had been complicit in Stus's 1980 prosecution. Vasyl Stus (1938–1985) was a dissident poet, historian, archivist, and human rights activist who died in Soviet labor camp Perm 36 after many years of imprisonment. During a trial in 1980, he had been sentenced to ten years' labor camp for “anti-Soviet activity.” Medvedchuk had been his defense lawyer. In 1981, Yuriy Lytvyn, a poet and human rights activist imprisoned with Stus and also defended by Medvedchuk, had declared that the case against Stus was fabricated and that the “passivity” of Medvedchuk was due to “instructions from above.” The court in Kiev banned references to Medvedchuk in the book, especially in the chapter “Did Attorney Viktor Medvedchuk kill Vasyl Stus?” Despite the censorship order, the book continued to be printed in its entirety in Ukraine and topped the bestseller lists shortly after the judgment.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ “[No Conclusions in 2015 Murder of Reviled Pro-Russian Journalist Buzyna](#),” *Justice for Journalists* (24 January 2020).

²⁸⁷ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 373.

²⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 698.

²⁸⁹ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 376.

²⁹⁰ Stephen Komarnyckyj, “Poet Who Haunts Ukraine,” *Index on Censorship*, 50 no. 1 (2021), 90.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2016.

UNITED KINGDOM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998–2001, 2003–2004, 2006–2020.

In March 2020, the government introduced legislation in the Overseas Operations Bill creating a “presumption against prosecution” for members of the armed forces accused of crimes, including torture, committed overseas more than five years ago. In April 2021, the bill was voted down in the House of Lords, because it undermined “some of the most basic legal standards.” The peers wanted torture and war crimes to be excluded from the five-year limit on prosecutions.²⁹¹

On 20 June 2020, James Furlong ([1984]–2020), a history and politics teacher at Holt School, Wokingham, and two others were stabbed to death in a terrorist attack at the Forbury Gardens in Reading. At least three others were injured. The perpetrator was Khairi Saadallah ([1994]–). A former teenager member of the Islamist militia Ansar al-Sharia during and after the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi in Lybia, Saadallah had fled the civil war (2011–) there in 2012 and he was granted asylum for five years in 2018 after lying about his past. With a history of debt and homelessness, alcohol, and substance misuse, and “suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder,” he had six previous convictions for some 16 offenses (including two for racially or religiously aggravated harassment, eight for offenses of violence, and two for the possession of a knife). He had only been released from prison for another offense fifteen days before the attack. He was charged with three counts of murder and three counts of attempted murder. In November 2020, he pleaded guilty. On 11 January 2021, Saadallah was sentenced to life imprisonment. The judge said that it was a terrorist attack and that the purpose was to advance an extremist Islamic cause.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 705; Dan Sabbagh, “[Peers Vote to Halt Plans to Limit UK Soldiers’ Accountability for War Crimes](#),” *Guardian* (13 April 2021).

²⁹² Phil Creighton, “[Holt School History Teacher Killed in Forbury Gardens Stabbing](#),” *Wokingham.today* (21 June 2020); “[Reading Terrorist Attack: First Victim Named as ‘Wonderfully Talented’ Teacher James Furlong](#),” *Grimby Telegraph* (21 June 2020); Luke Powell & Flora Thompson, “[Park Terror Suspect Khairi Saadallah’s History Revealed in Court Papers](#),” *Grimby Telegraph* (22 June 2020); “[2020 Reading Stabbings](#),” *Wikipedia* (3 May 2021); Costas Pitas, “[Libyan Jailed for Life for UK Attack that Killed Three](#),” *Reuters* (11 January 2021); Lizzie Dearden, “[Reading Terror Attacker Khairi Saadallah Given Whole-Life Prison Sentence for Murdering Three Victims](#),” *Independent* (11 January 2021); Central Criminal Court, [The Queen versus Khairi Saadallah: Sentencing Remarks](#) (11 January 2021).

In August 2020 the United Kingdom-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) found that Facebook algorithms “actively promote” Holocaust denial content. According to the ISD typing “holocaust” in the Facebook search function brought up suggestions for denial pages, which in turn recommended links to publishers which sold revisionist and denial literature, as well as pages dedicated to the notorious British Holocaust denier David Irving. The results followed a Facebook decision to ban conspiracy theories about Jewish people “controlling the world” and content depicting blackface. On 12 October this decision was followed by a ban on content denying the Holocaust.

Also in October, the Institute for Research of Genocide Canada sent an open letter to the social network’s CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, asking for a similar ban on the denial of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. Numerous groups distorting the facts about the Srebrenica genocide remained on the social network, spreading misinformation, using hate speech in posts and allowing hate speech in comments. The phenomenon was particularly prominent around the anniversary of the genocide in July each year. Facebook could not give an official statement on the initiative to ban Srebrenica genocide denial, but pointed out that it already had policies that prohibited the praise of any hate crime or mass murder²⁹³

In January 2021, the United Nations (UN) International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea ruled the historical claim of the United Kingdom (UK) to sovereignty over the Chagos Islands to be an “unlawful occupation.” The UK retained possession of the Chagos archipelago after Mauritius gained independence in 1968, paying Mauritius more than £4 million for the islands. In the early 1970s, between 1,500 and 2,000 islanders were forcibly deported so that the largest island, Diego Garcia, could be leased to the United States to use as an airbase. None of them were ever able to return. In 2019 an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), endorsed by the UN General Assembly, had found the UK in breach of international law by seeking to maintain its claim to the archipelago. The UK ignored the ICJ and the UN opinions, dismissing them as advisory, which prompted Mauritius to go to the international maritime court to press its claim.²⁹⁴

On 23 February 2021, Secretary of Culture Oliver Dowden and Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston organized a round table with leaders of 25 heritage charities, museums and art galleries, with the aim of warning organizations against focusing too much on Britain’s imperial history. In the months leading up to the round table, Corrine Fowler, a professor of postcolonial literature at Leicester University and the director of the Colonial Countryside project (exploring links between national properties and

²⁹³ Alex Hern, “[Facebook and Instagram Ban Antisemitic Conspiracy Theories and Blackface](#),” *Guardian* (12 August 2020); Mark Townsend, “[Facebook Algorithm Found to ‘Actively Promote’ Holocaust Denial](#),” *Guardian* (16 August 2020); James Clayton, “[Facebook Bans Holocaust Denial Content](#),” *BBC* (13 October 2020); Nejra Dzaferagic, “[Facebook Urged to Ban Srebrenica Genocide Denial](#),” *Balkan Insight* (27 October 2020).

²⁹⁴ Patrick Wintour, “[UN Court Rejects UK Claim to Chagos Islands in Favour of Mauritius](#),” *Guardian* (28 January 2021).

colonialism) and a National Trust project (investigating the African, Caribbean, and Indian connections of eleven country houses) had been at the center of a growing row over Britain's approach to history.

In September 2020, a National Trust-commissioned 115-page interim report entitled *Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links With Historic Slavery* (co-edited by Fowler) had highlighted that 93 trust properties were linked to wealth from plantations and the slave trade, while others were important to understanding Britain's colonial history. Many Members of Parliament (MPs) and several right-wing historians and newspaper columnists took exception to the report's references to Winston Churchill's role in colonial administration and his opposition to Indian independence. Historian Andrew Roberts accused the trust of "wokery" and of "trying to imply a moral equivalence between colonialism and slavery." In December 2020, Fowler and several other academics working on another trust project, *Colonial Countryside: National Trust Houses Reinterpreted*, had been accused of holding "biased" views about colonialism.

In January 2021, the Common Sense Group of more than fifty Tory MPs had asked Dowden to investigate how funding was agreed for the Colonial Countryside project, which it described as an "ideologically motivated endeavor" to rewrite history.²⁹⁵

On 16 March 2021, the British Committee for Universities for Palestine (BRICUP), John Chalcraft, a professor of Middle East history and politics at the London School of Economics, and James Dickins, a professor of Arabic at the University of Leeds, produced a report listing 294 revisions to the secondary education textbooks *Conflict in the Middle East c. 1945–1995* (2016), and *The Middle East: Conflict, Crisis and Change 1917–2012* (2017), aimed at changing what they saw as favoring the Israeli point of view.

In 2019, the Zionist Federation had launched an online petition for the removal of the textbooks published by Pearson. Following the petition, Pearson commissioned Parallel Histories, an organization that provided material for students to understand conflicts from different sides, to examine their accuracy. They suggested some changes in terminology but found "no overall bias." However, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and UK Lawyers for Israel continued to protest. The books were taken off the shelves until 2020, when Pearson published a revised edition.²⁹⁶

In May 2021, a row erupted over the publication of *The History Maker*, a book by Robert Cohen (1965–). Cohen was asked by his United States (US) publisher Random House to rewrite part of the 800-page

²⁹⁵ Jamie Doward, "[I've Been Unfairly Targeted, Says Academic at Heart of National Trust 'Woke' Row](#)," *Guardian* (20 December 2020); Jessica Murray, "[Politicians Should not 'Weaponise' UK History, Says Colonialism Researcher](#)," *Guardian* (22 February 2021).

²⁹⁶ Liz Lightfoot, "['Serious Concerns': UK Education Row as Israel-Palestine Textbooks Pulled](#)," *Guardian* (8 June 2021).

book after failing to take into account enough black historians, academics, and writers. Cohen added an 18,000-word chapter, plus extra material in existing chapters, to include individuals such as the abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), the sociologist W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963) and the author Toni Morrison (1931–2019). Upon hearing about Random House’s request, Julieanna Richardson, the founder and executive director of The HistoryMakers, a US-based non-profit educational institution set up to collate oral and video records of the experiences of African Americans as well as their family histories, was furious that Cohen had largely omitted black history until prompted to write more, and claimed that he had appropriated the name of her organization. She sent “cease and desist” letters to Random House, to Weidenfeld & Nicolson, the book’s British publisher, and to Cohen. In June, Random House cancelled Cohen’s contract following “editorial differences.” Weidenfeld & Nicolson and his new US publisher Simon & Schuster postponed the publication until March 2022, aiming for a “cooling-off period.” Cohen suggested that his book bear the new title of *Making History*.²⁹⁷

Northern Ireland

In March 2020, the government issued proposals to address the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland (1969–1998) which were not compatible with human rights standards and departed from commitments made in the 2014 Stormont House Agreement and subsequent government statements and agreements. The proposals would limit prosecutions of those suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law and human rights violations and abuses during the conflict [See also NCH *Annual Report 2016*].²⁹⁸

The government refused to launch a public inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane, a Belfast lawyer killed in 1989, despite a 2019 Supreme Court ruling, which found that his murder was not effectively investigated in line with human rights standards [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2010, 2016*].²⁹⁹

See also Australia, France, Nigeria, Thailand.

²⁹⁷ Richard Brooks, [“Publication Delayed of Epic History Book Amended after Being Called ‘Too White’”](#), *Guardian* (19 June 2021).

²⁹⁸ Amnesty International, *Report 2020/21: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2021), 381.

²⁹⁹ Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 381.

UNITED STATES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2020.

Between 31 May and 1 June 1921, in a span of about 24 hours, a white mob invaded the Black community of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, resulting in the Tulsa Race Massacre. The trigger of the attack had been a call to lynch a black man for assaulting a white woman based on flimsy evidence. No one was held accountable for the massacre. Some historians put the massacre's death toll at 300, but it took one century for a search for mass graves to be underway. For decades, the story of the massacre was largely erased from history: official records were lost or destroyed, the Tulsa newspapers did not mention it, and Oklahoma history books did not teach it (although from the fall of 2020, the massacre would be a part of the Oklahoma school curriculum).

In 2001, Oklahoma's "Tulsa Race Riot Commission" had recommended that Oklahoma and Tulsa issue reparations to the survivors of the massacre and their descendants but it was ignored. However, the Tulsa Reparations Coalition, formed in April 2001, began to gain national traction. In 2003, a legal team filed a civil lawsuit (Alexander versus Oklahoma) against Tulsa, the Tulsa Police Department, and Oklahoma on behalf of more than 200 survivors and descendants of victims of the massacre. The federal district and appellate courts in Oklahoma dismissed the claims because the statute of limitations had expired. The United States Supreme Court declined to hear the case. A June 2020 petition tried to persuade Congress to lift the statute of limitations from any reparations claim. On 1 September 2020, a group of Oklahomans, led by 105-year-old survivor Lessie Benningfield Randle, filed a lawsuit demanding reparations and arguing that racial inequality in Tulsa today can be traced back to the 1921 massacre. In 2021, the Library of Congress changed its subject heading for the historical event from "Tulsa Race Riot" to "Tulsa Race Massacre."

On 11 May 2021, Governor Kevin Stitt of Oklahoma was ousted from the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission (established 2015), after he had signed H.B. 1775, a bill that claimed to combat racism and sexism in the state's public schools but that commission members said would undermine their goal of teaching the state's painful history of racial discrimination. The legislation would ban the teaching of certain concepts about race in Oklahoma schools, a measure that was seen as part of a larger conservative backlash to the teaching of "critical race theory." Among others, the law banned teaching that a person, "by virtue of his or her race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex." On 1 June 2021, President Joe Biden flew to Tulsa to mark the 100th anniversary of the massacre; he became the first sitting president to do so.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ ["Reparations for 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Survivors and Descendants"](#) (petition to State of Oklahoma, City of Tulsa, and U.S. Congress) ([June] 2020) [see also [NCH Campaign](#)]; Ed Pilkington, "[Trump Rally in Tulsa Spurs Renewed Call for 1921 Racial Massacre Reparations](#)," *The Guardian* (18 June 2020); Adam Gabbatt,

A decade after dozens of detainees were held in a CIA-operated secret detention program – authorized from 2001 to 2009 – during which systematic human rights violations were committed, including enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, no person suspected of criminal responsibility had been brought to justice for these crimes. The limited investigations conducted into those crimes were closed without charges being brought against anyone.³⁰¹

On 18 August 2020, President Donald Trump announced he would pardon Susan B. Anthony, who had been arrested in 1872 for voting, in violation of laws permitting only men to do so. The act of executive clemency was announced at a White House ceremony marking the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment to the United States constitution, which expanded the right to vote to women. Anthony was fined \$100 for her illegal act. Historians doubted whether Anthony may have wanted presidential clemency, which historians said had likely been available to her during her own lifetime, both because it would have admitted guilt and because she wore her conviction with pride.³⁰²

On 2 September 2020 sanctions were imposed on Fatou Bensouda, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and Phakiso Mochochoko, its director of jurisdiction, complementary, and cooperation division. The sanctions came after the ICC decision to open an inquiry into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Afghanistan since 1 May 2003. On 2 April 2021, President Joe Biden lifted the sanctions. The sanctions were preceded by a peace agreement between the government and the Taliban. Under the agreement, no mention was made of human rights, and impunity was preserved for serious crimes under international law by all parties.³⁰³

On 12 September 2020, a bronze statue of a Confederate soldier known as “At Ready” in front of the Albemarle County courthouse, where it had stood since 1909, was taken down in Charlottesville, Virginia, the scene of a far-right rally in 2017. Albemarle County had voted to dismantle the statue in

[“Woman, 105, Leads Lawsuit Seeking Reparations for 1921 Tulsa Massacre,”](#) *The Guardian* (1 September 2020); Human Rights Watch, *The Case for Reparations in Tulsa, Oklahoma: A Human Rights Argument* (New York: HRW, 2020; 73 pages); Maurice Willows, *Disaster Relief Report – Riot June 1921* ([Washington: American Red Cross, 30 December 1921; 100 pages); District Court for Tulsa County, State of Oklahoma, *Joe Lockard versus T.D. Evans, Mayor and Others* (petition 23 August 1921); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 708–709; Michael Levenson, [“Tulsa Race Massacre Commission Ousts Oklahoma Governor,”](#) *New York Times* (14 May 2021); Kathryn Schumaker, [“What Is Critical Race Theory and Why Did Oklahoma Just Ban It?”](#) *Washington Post* (19 May 2021); Rebecca Jones, [“Tulsa Massacre: The Search for Victims, 100 Years On,”](#) *BBC News* (27 May 2021).

³⁰¹ Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 385.

³⁰² Tom McCarthy, [“Trump to Pardon Women’s Suffrage Leader Susan B Anthony,”](#) *Guardian* (18 August 2020); Kevin Liptak, [“Trump’s Pardon May Be Undermining Anthony’s Wishes, Historians Say,”](#) *CNN* (18 August 2020).

³⁰³ [“Afghanistan”](#) *International Criminal Court*; Julian Borger, [“US Imposes Sanctions on Top International Criminal Court Officials,”](#) *Guardian* (2 September 2020); [“US Lifts Trump Administration’s Sanctions on Top ICC Prosecutor,”](#) *Guardian* (2 April 2021); Amnesty International, *State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21* (London: AI, 2021), 59.

August, the first decision to be made under a new law for removing Civil War monuments in Virginia introduced earlier in 2020.³⁰⁴

On 14 October 2020, ten Senators wrote to the Librarian of Congress to endorse a proposal to change the Library of Congress Subject Heading from “Armenian massacres, 1915–1923” to “Armenian Genocide, 1915–1923.” They argued that neither the Constitution nor any legislation provided that the President or Secretary of State was the primary authority on making historical genocide determinations. The Proxmire Act of 1988 (implementing the 1948 Genocide Convention) included no mention of genocide determinations, whether by the President, Secretary of State, or any other Cabinet member. The presidential memorandum delegating certain authorities from the 2018 Elie Wiesel Act to the Secretary of State only referred to reporting on “ongoing atrocities” and “countries and regions at risk of atrocities,” not historical cases like the Armenian genocide. Both houses of Congress had passed resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide. They also argued that the scholarly consensus was that “Armenian Genocide,” not “Armenian massacres,” was the most accurate description of the tragedy.

On 23 April 2021, the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Joe Biden became the country’s first President to declare formal recognition of the genocide.³⁰⁵

On 1 December 2020, the National Security Archive, the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, the American Historical Association, and the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington filed suit against President Donald Trump, seeking to enforce the Presidential Records Act and prevent any destruction of records during the presidential transition. The lawsuit cited the inadequacy of White House policies that only required a screenshot of instant messages to be saved, preserving only the graphic content, when the law required “a complete copy” to be preserved, including digital links and attachments. As the Biden White House, in power since 20 January 2021, formally rescinded the screen shot policy and required complete electronic copies to be preserved in official records systems, the plaintiffs on 11 February 2021 informed the judge that they voluntarily dismissed the suit, leaving open the possibility of re-filing if any Trump records destruction came to light in the future.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ “[Charlottesville: Confederate Soldier Statue Removed](#),” *BBC News* (12 September 2020); “[Tulsa Race Massacre: President Biden Commemorates 100-year Anniversary](#)” (1 June 2021).

³⁰⁵ Ten United States Senators, [Letter to Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress](#) (14 October 2020); Julian Borger and Martin Chulov, “[Biden Becomes First US President to Recognise Armenian Genocide](#),” *Guardian* (24 April 2021).

³⁰⁶ National Security Archive, “[Archive, Historians, CREW Sue White House, Seek to Preserve Presidential Records During the Transition](#)” (1 December 2020); US District Court for the D.C., NSA, SHAFR, AHA, CREW *versus* Donald Trump, Executive Office of the President, Jared Kushner, David Ferriero, NARA, [Complaint](#) (1 December 2020); “[Historians Having to Tape Together Records That Trump Tore Up](#),” *Guardian* (17 January 2021); National Security Archive, “[Lawsuit Saves Trump White House Records](#)” (11 February 2021).

On 10 December 2020, two senators introduced two Smithsonian museum bills –regarding a National American Latino Museum and an American Women’s History Museum – and sought a unanimous vote of all hundred senators. However, Republican Senator Mike Lee, from Utah, cast a dissenting vote, thus blocking unanimous approval. Lee condemned politics based on identity and said that the museums would “further divide an already divided nation.” He argued that stories of Latinos and women should be told in the existing American History Museum. Measures supporting the museums had already been overwhelmingly passed earlier in 2020 by the House of Representatives.³⁰⁷

On 10 December 2020, Garrett Felber, a tenure-track assistant professor in the Arch Dalrymple III Department of History at the University of Mississippi (UM), received a letter from the department chair, Noell Wilson, informing him that she had recommended the non-renewal of his employment contract as per 31 December 2021. The reason she gave was that Felber had repeatedly refused to meet by phone or Zoom (although they had communicated in writing). The tension leading to the dismissal began in late October 2020, when Felber, an outspoken critic of the university administration, tweeted that Wilson had rejected a \$42,000 grant he had been awarded to support “Study and Struggle,” a political education project on mass incarceration and immigrant detention in Mississippi, while months earlier, another grant for the same project had been accepted and promoted by UM. Wilson, he also tweeted, had called the project political rather than historical and said that it could potentially harm the history department’s ability to procure funding but that the real reason for the rejection was that the university would lose its “racist donors” if it supported an antiracist program such as his project. In a letter to the UM Chancellor hundreds of historians supported Felber’s views, calling the contract non-renewal an assault on academic freedom and pledging not to speak at UM until he was reinstated. The UM confirmed the contract non-renewal in a response to the American Historical Association.³⁰⁸

On 26 December 2020 a statue of Breonna Taylor ([1994] –2020), which was erected about two weeks earlier to honor her memory after she was shot and killed on 13 March 2020 during a police raid of her apartment, was smashed in Oakland, California.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ [“Mike Lee: Lone US Senator Blocks Women’s and Latino Museums,”](#) *BBC News* (11 December 2020); Savannah Behrmann, [“‘Hyphenated Identity Groups’: Utah GOP Sen. Mike Lee Blocks Legislation for Latino and Women History Smithsonian,”](#) *USA Today* (no date [10 December 2020]); Stephen Pitti, [“What Americans Don’t Know about Latino History Could Fill a Museum,”](#) *Los Angeles Times* (16 December 2020); Stephen Pitti (and 210 signatories), [“Historian Letter to Senate Rules Committee”](#) (16 December 2020).

³⁰⁸ Christian Middleton, [“UM Fires History Professor Who Criticizes ‘Powerful, Racist Donors’ and ‘Carceral State,’”](#) *Mississippi Free Press* (15 December 2020); [“Letter to Chancellor Boyce and Chair Wilson \[of University of Mississippi\]”](#) (Google Doc; 16 December 2020); Megan Zahneis, [“His University Celebrated His Success, Then It Fired Him,”](#) *Chronicle of Higher Education* (17 December 2020); Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), [Letter to Chancellor Boyce](#) (18 December 2020); Colleen Flaherty, [“Ole Miss Doubles Down on Professor’s Termination,”](#) *Inside HigherEd* (12 January 2021).

³⁰⁹ [“Oakland Police Investigate Smashed Statue of Breonna Taylor,”](#) *Guardian* (29 December 2020).

On 15 January 2021, in an announcement to students enrolled in his course of Chinese Politics, Rory Truex, an assistant professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University, said that he would “recommend that students who are currently residing in China should not take the course this year.” The reasons given were that the course contained “material that the Chinese government would find sensitive.” Examples given included Western sources about the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution and the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre which were banned in China. Students participating in the course would not be permitted to record lectures or precepts, all written assignments would be submitted for blind grading without students’ names to preserve anonymity, and students’ faces would be edited out of lecture recordings. Truex also emphasized that he would not self-censor the content of his course. Reactions within the university praised Truex for his sensitive approach.³¹⁰

On 29 January 2021, three United Nations Special Rapporteurs wrote a so-called allegations letter to the United States (US) government about the impact of the increased US military presence on the island of Guam, Micronesia, and the failure to protect the indigenous Chamorro people from the loss of their traditional lands, territories, and resources; from serious adverse environmental impact; and from the loss of ancient cultural artifacts, sacred places, burial grounds, and ancestral remains. The US military buildup reportedly endangered as many as 269 historic properties.³¹¹

On [4] February 2021, the Arkansas Art Academy in Rogers fired history and social sciences teacher Josh Depner for sending an email to state legislatures objecting to legislation that would punish schools mentioning the 1619 Project in their curriculum (*see below*). The school said that Depner had violated their “personal technology agreement” and “code of ethics” by sending the email from his professional address.³¹²

On 4 February 2021, the Korean Association of Harvard Law School (KAHLS) issued a statement in response to the article “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War” by J. Mark Ramseyer, the Mitsubishi Professor of Japanese Legal Studies at Harvard Law School, and his accompanying editorial (“Recovering the Truth about the Comfort Women”), in which he described the coercive sexual slavery system organized by Japan during the Pacific War (1931–1945) as a “consenting, contractual process.”

³¹⁰ Kathy Smail, “[Amid Digital Crackdown, Chinese Politics Professor Recommends Students in China Avoid His Class](#),” *Daily Princetonian* (15 January 2021).

³¹¹ Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples; and the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, [Allegations Letter AL USA 7/2021](#) (29 January 2021).

³¹² Max Brantley, “[Rogers Teacher Fired for Hot Email to Legislators over Pending Legislation to Restrict Social Studies Teaching](#),” *Arkansas Times* (4 February 2021; Zack Linly, “[Students Protest Firing of Arkansas Teacher Who Called Lawmakers Out for Being Fragile AF Over 1619 Project Curriculum](#),” *The Root* (6 February 2021).

The statement said that Ramseyer’s denialist arguments were factually inaccurate and misleading, ignoring and going against decades of Korean scholarship, primary sources, and third-party reports. The review in which Ramseyer’s article was published (online in December 2020; printed version pending) also issued a statement of concern about its use of historical evidence. Alexis Dudden, a history professor at the University of Connecticut, described Ramseyer’s article as “academic fraud” analogous to Holocaust denialism.³¹³

On 25 February 2021, the contract of Lora Burnett, a history professor at Collin College, a community college in McKinney, Texas, was not renewed, after she had sent critical tweets about the college’s handling of the Covid-19-pandemic and about the vice-presidential debate held in the run-up of the presidential elections of November 2020. On 28 January 2021, president of Collin College, H. Neil Matkin – who had called the pandemic “blown out of proportion” – had also ended the contracts of professor in humanities Audra Heaslip and professor in developmental studies Suzanne Jones after both had raised concerns about the college’s Covid-19 reopening. Jones was also criticized for her participation in an open letter calling for the removal of Confederate statues in 2017.³¹⁴

On 5 March 2021, judge Camille Sarrouf ruled that ownership of the images of two enslaved people taken in the 1850s belonged to the photographer [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. Harvard University said the photographs were “powerful visual indictments of the horrific institution of slavery.” Descendant Tamara Lanier said that the judge missed the humanitarian aspect and intended to appeal the decision.³¹⁵

On 8 March 2021, Audrey Truschke, an American historian teaching South Asian history at Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey, was subjected to online harassment and threats by the Hindu right-wing group Hindu on Campus who also wrote an open letter, reportedly signed by 5,000 persons, to Rutgers expressing “concerns” over Truschke’s views on Twitter. Hindu on Campus was a student-led

³¹³ [“KAHLS Statement in Response to Professor J. Mark Ramseyer’s Article ‘Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War’”](#) (4 February 2021); Elizabeth Redden, [“Harvard Law Professor Accused of Denialism in Rewriting ‘Comfort Women’ Narrative,”](#) *Inside HigherEd* (16 February 2021); Ariel H. Kim & Simon J. Levien, [“Journal Delays Print Publication of Harvard Law Professor’s Controversial ‘Comfort Women’ Article Amid Outcry,”](#) *The Harvard Crimson* (14 February 2021); Mark Ramseyer, [“Recovering the Truth about the Comfort Women,”](#) *Japan Forward* (12 January 2021); Alexis Dudden, ed., [“Supplement to Special Issue: Academic Integrity at Stake: The Ramseyer Article – Four Letters,”](#) *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 19 no. 5 (1 March 2021), 2 pages; Youmi Kim & Mike Ives, [“A Harvard Professor Called Wartime Sex Slaves ‘Prostitutes’ – One Pushed Back,”](#) *New York Times* (26 February 2021); Jeannie Suk Gersen, [“Seeking the True Story of the Comfort Women: How a Harvard Professor’s Dubious Scholarship Reignited a History of Mistrust between South Korea and Japan,”](#) *New Yorker* (26 February 2021).

³¹⁴ [“Dallas’ Confederate Memorials Scream ‘White Supremacy,’”](#) *Dallas Morning News* (4 August 2017); Adam Steinbaugh, [“Collin College Fires Third Professor in Transparent Campaign to Cull Its Critics,”](#) *FIRE* (26 February 2021); Hady Mawajdeh & Bill Zeeble, [“Collin College Professors’ Fight for COVID-19 Protocols Shifts to a Fight over Free Speech,”](#) *KERA News* (17 March 2021).

³¹⁵ [“Judge Dismisses Suit over ‘Slave Ancestor’ Photos at Harvard,”](#) *BBC News* (5 March 2021).

group wanting to create “a safe space for diaspora Hindus to share their experiences with anti-Hindu bigotry and standing together against racism.” Truschke said she had been facing an “avalanche of hate speech, anti-Muslim sentiments, misogyny, violent threats, things endangering my family ... and aggression toward my students.” Rutgers issued a statement in support of Truschke.

On 11 August 2018, one of Truschke’s lectures in Hyderabad, titled “Unpopular Stories: Narrating the Indo-Islamic Past and Navigating Present-day Prejudices” and organized by the Krishnakriti Foundation, had been canceled after members of the Bajrang Dal, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and Bharatiya Janata Party had written letters to the police, in which they complained about Truschke’s views on Hinduism. Truschke had planned to speak on three topics: Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1618–1707), the purported role of Islam in the death of Indian Buddhism, and Sanskrit narratives of Indo-Islamic rule. According to Truschke, she had “lightly” self-censored her book *Aurangzeb: The Man and The Myth* (2017) after Hindu nationalist pressure in order to comply with Indian laws that protected religious sentiments.³¹⁶

On 15 April 2021, the virtual annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) erupted in controversy after members realized that one of the sessions, “Curation, Repatriation, and Accessibility: Vital Ethical Conversations,” had allowed a talk arguing against the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990; NAGPRA). The NAGPRA gave Native Americans rights to the human remains and cultural artifacts of their ancestors. The presentation was given by Elizabeth Weiss, a physical anthropologist at San José State University, SAA member, and co-author with James Springer of the controversial book *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* (2020). Its title was “Has Creationism Crept Back into Archaeology?” Her argument was that NAGPRA gave “control of research over to contemporary American Indian communities,” who may request repatriation or refuse to participate in certain research partly because of religious beliefs. Many archaeologists were reportedly shocked that the SAA gave a platform to what they considered anti-Indigenous views. Some were considering leaving the SAA and starting a new society.³¹⁷

In 2021, a number of proposed measures, largely ignoring the role of slavery and campaigns of anti-Mexican violence and aiming to promote patriotism in the classrooms and public spaces of Texas, was expected to become law. One bill that passed the House on 25 May 2021 banned teaching the 1619 Project (aiming to reframe U.S. history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the center of the national narrative [*see below*]) and limited how teachers in Texas

³¹⁶ [“Rutgers University Stands by Audrey Truschke after Online Attacks, Statement from Hindu Group,”](#) *The Wire* (9 March 2021); Audrey Truschke, [“Silencing Scholarly Voices, One Event at a Time,”](#) *The Wire* (20 August 2018).

³¹⁷ Lizzie Wade, [“An Archaeology Society Hosted a Talk against Returning Indigenous Remains: Some Want a New Society,”](#) *Science Magazine* (19 April 2021).

classrooms discuss the ways in which racism had influenced the legal system in the state, long a segregationist bastion, and elsewhere. More than 220 Texas historians and teachers across the state signed a letter opposing the bill. Another bill would create a committee to “promote patriotic education” about the state’s secession from Mexico in 1836 largely by men who were fighting to expand slavery. A third bill would block exhibits at San Antonio’s Alamo complex from explaining that major figures in the Texas Revolution were slave owners (*see below*).

The proposed measures came as nearly a dozen other Republican-led states sought to ban or limit how the role of slavery and pervasive effects of racism were taught. Idaho was the first state to sign into law a measure that would withhold funding from schools that teach such lessons. Lawmakers in Iowa, Louisiana, New Hampshire, and Tennessee had introduced bills that would ban teaching about the enduring legacies of slavery and segregationist laws, or that any state or the country is inherently racist or sexist. In South Dakota, a vague “act to prohibit the use of curricular materials that promote racial divisiveness” appeared, and in Arkansas HB1231 was named “To Prohibit the Use of Public School Funds to Teach the 1619 Project.”

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell had singled out the 1619 Project in a letter condemning the Biden administration’s proposal to teach about racism and slavery’s legacy in the nation’s public schools. Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General, wrote to the Biden administration to argue that they should not be “imposing the deeply flawed and radical teachings of critical race theory into the classroom.” The Attorneys General of at least nineteen other states signed it.³¹⁸

In late April 2021, Nikole Hannah-Jones, a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer for *The New York Times Magazine*, was appointed to the Knight Chair in Race and Investigative Journalism at the Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill on a five-year contract. Despite support from the UNC-Chapel Hill chancellor and faculty, she was denied a tenured position after the board of trustees failed to approve the journalism department’s recommendation, contrary to the fact that the last two people in the position were granted tenure upon their appointment. Critics pointed to political and donor pressure of conservative groups who had been concerned about Hannah-Jones’s founding role in *The New York Times Magazine*’s 1619 Project, launched in August 2019 and named for the year that slavery began in the colonies that would become the United States: Hannah-Jones won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for commentary for her introductory essay to the Project. The successful 1619 Project ignited a continuing debate about the legacy of slavery, but had also faced criticism from historians over certain claims, and from conservatives who labeled it

³¹⁸ Simon Romero, “[Texas Pushes to Obscure the State’s History of Slavery and Racism](#),” *New York Times* (20 May 2021); Ta-Nehisi Coates, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore & Martha S. Jones, “[We Stand in Solidarity With Nikole Hannah-Jones](#),” *The Root* (25 May 2021); Kate McGee, “[Texas Educators Worry Bill Limiting the Teaching of Current Events and Historic Racism Would “Whitewash History](#),” *Texas Tribune* (26 May 2021).

“propaganda,” “unpatriotic,” and “too focused on racism.” Hannah-Jones threatened to sue UNC-Chapel Hill.

On 30 June, amid mounting pressure, the board of trustees granted her tenure during a special closed session. The vote, which happened in public, was nine to four. On 7 July 2021, however, Hannah-Jones announced that she declined the offer of tenure. In a letter she explained that she could not imagine working at a school named after “a man who ignored ... all of my credentials ... because he believed that a project that centered Black Americans equaled the denigration of white Americans.” Leading up to the vote on the board of trustees, Walter Hussman Jr., after whom UNC’s Hussman School of Journalism and Media was named and who was one of the most important donors of UNC Chapel Hill, had reportedly opposed Hannah-Jones’s appointment, writing to the chancellor and at least one board member to express his worries “about the controversy of tying the UNC journalism school to the 1619 project.”³¹⁹

In May 2021, Tennessee became the first state to pass what queer-rights advocates branded as “Don’t Say Gay” laws, which either forbade the teaching of LGBTQ+ history in K-12 schools (schools from Kindergarten to twelfth grade) outright, or allowed parents to choose whether their children would participate in lessons that included it. Within days, Montana followed, while similar bills were under consideration in Arkansas, West Virginia, Iowa, and Missouri.³²⁰

Thirteen May 2021 marked the thirty-sixth anniversary and the first official day of remembrance for the 1985 bombing of the Black liberation group MOVE. On 13 May 1985, a police helicopter flew over a communal house occupied by members of MOVE, a separatist organization that bore comparison to the Black Panthers combined with back-to-nature environmental activism, and dropped on to its roof a bomb. At the same time, Philadelphia police fired over 10,000 rounds of ammunition at the house in which children were known to be present. The bomb ignited a fire that was allowed to burn for almost an hour before emergency responders were called in. Eleven people linked to the group were killed, among them five children, some 61 houses were razed to the ground, and 250 people left homeless. No

³¹⁹ Katie Robertson, “[Nikole Hannah-Jones Denied Tenure at University of North Carolina](#),” *New York Times* (19 May 2021); Joe Killian & Kyle Ingram, “[After Conservative Criticism, UNC Backs Down from Offering Acclaimed Journalist Tenured Position](#),” *NC Policy Watch* (19 May 2021); Ta-Nehisi Coates, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore & Martha S. Jones, “[We Stand in Solidarity With Nikole Hannah-Jones](#),” *The Root* (25 May 2021); Colleen Flaherty, “[A Breach of Trust?: UNC Chapel Hill Professors Demand a Vote on Nikole Hannah-Jones’s Tenure Case](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (25 May 2021); Wallace Hettle, “[Keep History Teachers Free to Teach, in Iowa and the Nation](#),” *History News Network* (20 June 2021); Colleen Flaherty, “[Tenure for Hannah-Jones](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (30 June 2021); “[Nikole Hannah-Jones Issues Statement on Decision to Decline Tenure Offer at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and to Accept Knight Chair Appointment at Howard University](#),” *NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund* (6 July 2021); Scott Jaschik, “[Hannah-Jones Turns Down UNC Offer](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (7 July 2021).

³²⁰ Gabriel Arana, “[The Republican Plot to Ban LGBTQ History in Public Schools](#),” *The New Republic* (28 June 2021).

Philadelphia official ever faced criminal consequences for the atrocity. The only person held criminally liable was Ramona Africa, one of only two MOVE members who managed to escape the attack – she was charged with riot and conspiracy, and served seven years in prison.

In November 2020, Philadelphia’s governing council approved a resolution that apologized for the “immeasurable and enduring harm.” The 2021 anniversary was overshadowed by the discovery in April 2021, that the bones of two of the children had been held for almost four decades in the anthropology collection of the University of Pennsylvania. The bones were being used as a “case study” in an online course, entitled *Real Bones: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology*, focusing on “lost personhood” – cases where an individual cannot be identified due to the decomposed condition of their remains. Since 2019 the bones had also been used for teaching purposes without permission of the parents.

On 13 May 2021, mayor of Philadelphia Jim Kenney announced that he had dismissed the city’s health commissioner, Thomas Farley, after it was revealed that the bones of an undisclosed number of MOVE victims had been incinerated and dumped by the city without the knowledge or permission of living relatives. Farley had become aware of the bones’ existence in 2017 and instead of attempting to identify and returning them to the families made the decision to “cremate and dispose them.” On 14 May, Kenney stated that the remains had actually been stored at the medical examiner’s office for 35 years.³²¹

On 14 May 2021, President Joe Biden revoked two executive orders (EO) issued by former President Donald Trump to punish vandals who destroy monuments (EO 13933 of 26 June 2020) and to build a sculpture garden to honor American heroes (EO 13934 of 3 July 2020).³²²

On 4 June 2021, the Microsoft search engine Bing blocked image and video results for the phrase “tank man,” a reference to the iconic image of the lone protester facing down tanks during the 1989 protests in Tiananmen Square, in countries including the United States, Germany, Singapore, France, and Switzerland. It prompted accusations of possible censorship on the protest anniversary, but Microsoft spoke of an “accidental human error.” Microsoft Bing was one of the few foreign search engines that were accessible in China, because the company has agreed to censor results for sensitive terms such as the Dalai Lama, Tiananmen Square, or Falun Gong. In 2009, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof had received censored results on Bing when he searched for some of the topics censored in

³²¹ Ed Pilkington, “[Philadelphia City Council Apologises for Deadly 1985 Move Bombing](#),” *Guardian* (13 November 2021); Ed Pilkington, “[Bones of Black Children Killed in Police Bombing Used in Ivy League Anthropology Course](#),” *Guardian* (23 April 2021); “[Philadelphia Holds Day of Remembrance for 1985 Move Bombing That Left 11 Dead](#),” *Guardian* (13 May 2021); Ed Pilkington, “[Philadelphia Incinerated Remains of Police Bombing Victims Without Telling Families](#),” *Guardian* (13 May 2021); “[Philadelphia Says Remains of 1985 Bombing Victims Were Not Destroyed](#),” *Guardian* (15 May 2021).

³²² “[Biden Revokes Trump Order to Punish Statue Vandals](#),” *BBC News* (15 May 2021).

China, using simplified Chinese language characters. In 2014, Bing was censoring results for Chinese-language users in the United States for many of the same search terms that Bing censored in China.³²³

On 16 June 2021, PEN America, the American Historical Association, the American Association of University Professors, and dozens of history associations signed a *Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History*. They opposed the legislative proposals being introduced in at least twenty states across the United States that targeted the teaching of racism and related issues in American history in universities and aimed at prohibiting the teaching of so-called “divisive concepts.” The associations argued that these bills risked infringing academic freedom by suppressing teaching and learning about the role of racism in the history of the United States and sought to substitute the judgment of politicians for the judgment of professional educators. “A white-washed view of history cannot change what happened in the past,” the statement said.³²⁴

On 1 July 2021, the Bullock Texas State History Museum canceled a book event hours before it was supposed to start. The event centered around the book *Forget the Alamo: The Rise and Fall of an American Myth* by Bryan Burrough, Chris Tomlinson, and Jason Stanford. It dealt with the so-called “Texas creation myth,” which assumed that in 1836 around 200 Texians fought against thousands of Mexican troops, buying General Sam Houston enough time to defeat the tyranny of Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna and win freedom for Texas. This narrative, refuted by historical research, omitted that Texians specifically opposed Mexican laws that would free enslaved workers needed to farm their cotton. *Forget the Alamo* explored the 1836 Battle of the Alamo as a fight to ensure the preservation of slavery, as enshrined in the original Texas Constitution. The book event had to be canceled following an order from the museum board, made up of Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick and state House Speaker Dade Phelan (all Republicans), and three others.

In 2018, a panel reviewing the state history curriculum had suggested not to require seventh-graders to learn that those who died at the Alamo were “heroic.” The panel was fiercely criticized by Abbot and other Republican leaders. In June 2021, Abbot had signed into law an act establishing “the 1836 Project” to “promote patriotic education” and had put the discussion on whether critical race theory should be taught on the agenda for an upcoming special legislative session. In the days leading up to the event, the conservative Texas Public Policy Foundation had compared *Forget the Alamo* to the 1619 Project

³²³ Julia Carrie Wong, “[Microsoft Blocks Bing from Showing Image Results for Tiananmen ‘Tank Man’](#),” *Guardian* (5 June 2021); “[Microsoft Says Error Caused ‘Tank Man’ Bing Censorship](#),” *BBC News* (5 June 2021).

³²⁴ PEN America and others, [Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History](#) (Washington: PEN America, 16 June 2021).

(see above), calling it “an effort to diminish the great figures of history and place slavery at the center of every story.”³²⁵

On 10 July 2021, the statue of General Robert Lee (1807–1870) was removed from Market Street Park in Charlottesville, Virginia. In August 2017, plans to remove the statue had prompted a “Unite the Right” march that drew hundreds of neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and Ku Klux Klan members to Charlottesville. Heather Heyer, an anti-racism protester, was killed by a neo-Nazi who drove into her. After the protests, officials had continued to push for the removal of the statue, but they were prevented from acting by legal action and changes to the law. In April 2021, Virginia’s highest court ruled that the statue could be taken down. The statue of General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson (1824–1863) was also removed. Local officials said they planned to redesign the park spaces where the statues had been located “in a way that promotes healing and that tells a more complete history of Charlottesville” [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2017, 2020*].³²⁶

See also China, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Haiti, Thailand, United Kingdom.

URUGUAY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2013, 2015–2018, 2020.

Over the weekend of 1–2 May 2021, intelligence reports and orders belonging to two extinct repressive bodies of the dictatorship (1973–1985) were found in Artillery Group number 5, a military unit which functioned as a detention and torture center for political prisoners in 1972–1974. They belonged to the Information and Defense Service (SID) and the Coordinating Body for Anti-Subversive Operations (COCA), which were repressive institutions before and after the 1973 military coup. As of May 2020, 197 people were still reported missing. At least 380,000 Uruguayans were forced into exile during the dictatorship.³²⁷

³²⁵ Peter Weber, “[Texas State History Museum Abruptly Cancels Speech by Authors of New Book on the Alamo](#),” *The Week* (2 July 2021); Jason Stanford, “[Opinion: Texas Republicans Rush to Guard the Alamo from the Facts](#),” *Washington Post* (5 July 2021); Heather Cox Richardson, “[July 7, 2021 Entry](#),” *Letters from an American* (7 July 2021).

³²⁶ “[Charlottesville Takes Down Robert E Lee Statue that Sparked Rally](#),” *BBC* (11 July 2021).

³²⁷ “[Uruguay: Military Withheld Information on Dictatorship Crimes](#),” *teleSUR* (13 May 2021).

UZBEKISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2014, 2016, 2020.

See Kyrgyzstan.

VATICAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2019–2020.

VENEZUELA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2003–2004, 2006, 2009–2010, 2012, 2014, 2017–2020.

Impunity for human rights abuses remained the norm in 2020. In July 2020, the United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that contributing factors included security forces tampering with crime scenes and withholding information; conflicts of interest; and security forces' intimidation, threats, and reprisals against victims and their families. In September 2020, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission created by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate allegations of atrocities since 2014 concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that pro-government groups and high-level authorities, including disputed-President Nicolas Maduro, had committed violations amounting to crimes against humanity, including extrajudicial executions, politically motivated detention and torture, and abuses against protesters. The mission found that the judiciary contributed to arbitrary arrests, impunity for egregious abuses, and denial of justice to victims.³²⁸

VIETNAM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2006, 2009–2013, 2016–2017, 2019–2020.

³²⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 736, 739-740.

WESTERN SAHARA

See Morocco / Western Sahara.

YEMEN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2003, 2010, 2013–2016, 2018–2020.

In October 2020, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council renewed and strengthened the mandate of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen. In their third report, the group of experts urged the international community to address the longstanding impunity for serious crimes, including by recommending the creation of a “criminally focused investigation body” and calling on the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court.³²⁹

³²⁹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 755.

ZAMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2015.

On 26 April 2021, Sishuwa Sishuwa, a lecturer in modern history at the University of Zambia with a focus on nineteenth and twentieth century African history, was accused of sedition in a letter by the Zambian ambassador to Ethiopia and permanent representative to the African Union, Emmanuel Mwamba, to the Inspector General of Police. Since 2018, Sishuwa had been on temporary research leave at the University of Cape Town's Institute for Democracy, Citizenship, and Public Policy in South Africa. On 19 March 2021, he had written an opinion article in the independent local newspaper *News Diggers* (republished on 22 March 2021 in South Africa's *Mail & Guardian*) on the potential for unrest in Zambia after the general elections, entitled "Zambia may burn after the August election." The next day, the University of Zambia released a statement dissociating itself from his views, suggesting that Sishuwa was not currently employed by the university because he was on a temporary research leave. Mwamba initially responded to Sishuwa's article with a March 29 Facebook post in which he accused the columnist of "being a hired gun," calling the opinion piece an attempt to "scandalize Zambia, harm its reputation and impose a false and alarming international narrative." In April 2021, Sishuwa sued Mwamba, seeking damages for defamation and malicious falsehood in connection with the Facebook post. Mwamba retaliated by laying the sedition charge against Sishuwa with police. A letter signed by more than hundred academics from Zambia, Africa, and the rest of the world rejected the sedition allegation and called on the university to guarantee his continued employment and his right to academic freedom. The sedition charge was pending.³³⁰

ZIMBABWE

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

The Mnangagwa administration had so far failed to implement recommendations of the Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, established to investigate widespread violence in the aftermath of the August 2018 elections. The commission presented its report to President Mnangagwa in December 2018, and found that six people had died and 35 others were injured as a result of actions by state security forces.

³³⁰ ["International Academics Reject Sedition Charge against Zambia's Dr Sishuwa,"](#) *Mail & Guardian* (30 April 2021); ["Zambian Columnist Sishuwa Sishuwa Could Face Sedition Charge for Opinion Piece on Election,"](#) *Committee to Protect Journalists* (12 May 2021); Scholars at Risk, ["Sishuwa Sishuwa"](#) (26 April 2021).

It recommended that perpetrators be held accountable and that compensation be paid to families of the deceased and those who lost property.³³¹

³³¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Events of 2020* (New York: HRW, 2021), 758.