

INTRODUCTION

This **twenty-ninth 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 2022 and 2023.

Disclaimer. The fact that the NCH presents this news does *not* imply that it shares the views and beliefs of the historians and others mentioned in it.

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	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995

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AFGHANISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2016, 2018, 2021–2022.

In [July] 2022, the Chinese ambassador in Kabul announced that a copper mine located underneath the Mes Aynak archaeological site, home of, among others, Buddhist monasteries and over four hundred Buddha statues, as well as remains of prior civilizations dating as far back as the third century BCE, would soon be opened. In 2007, the Chinese mining giant Metallurgical Group Corporation (now called the MCC-JCL Aynak Minerals Company [MJAM]) signed a contract to mine ore for a thirty-year period. In 2016, after the project had repeatedly been postponed due to financial disagreement between MJAM and the Afghan government, MJAM agreed for an archaeological excavation to take place. In three years, archaeologists unearthed thousands of objects. However, in 2019 the excavation was stopped due to a lack of funding. The site still contained many of the remains that had been too large or fragile to unearth, including many temples, and more layers of historical artifacts that had not yet been found were expected to lie above the copper.¹

In [August] 2022, UNESCO and heritage experts expressed concern over a Taliban construction project close to the site of the Bamiyan Buddha statues – the two largest standing Buddha statues in the world, that had been destroyed, as part of a wider campaign of destruction of pre-Islamic and Buddhist objects, by Taliban officials in 2001 [See NCH *Annual Report 2001*]. The project, aiming to “rebuild” a historic bazaar by turning it into a tourism complex, was thought to ruin the historic site of the former bazaar (late 19th or early 20th century), the niches in which the sixth-century Buddha statues had stood, and the adjacent fragile cliff of Buddhist monastery caves (sixth to eighth century), including the surviving cave frescos.²

On 20 December 2022, the Taliban banned all women, including students of archaeology, history and archival science, to study in public or private universities throughout Afghanistan.³

See also Australia, India, United Kingdom.

¹ [“Ancient Afghan Buddhist City Threatened by Chinese Copper Mine,”](#) *France 24* (22 June 2022); Aletta André, [“Taliban plannen lucratieve kopermijn, mogelijk ten koste van boeddhistisch erfgoed,”](#) *NOS* (4 August 2022).

² Emma Graham-Harrison, [“Fears over Building Works at Afghan Buddhas of Bamiyan Site,”](#) *Guardian* (2 August 2022).

³ Miriam Berger & Susannah George, [“Taliban Bans Women from All Afghan Universities,”](#) *Washington Post* (21 December 2022).

ALBANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2012, 2015–2022.

In [2022], it was revealed how the Communist government (1944–1991), faced with its imminent fall in 1990, decided to destroy immense amounts of archives: some 29,000 files disappeared – generally assumed to detail the crimes committed by the regime and identify their perpetrators. The files were turned into dough with pastry mixers, which could pulp almost a ton of documents each hour. The dough was then loaded on trucks and spilled into rivers or buried underground.⁴

On [1 September] 2022, former President Ilir Meta filed criminal charges against the Information Authority on Former State Security Documents (AIDSSH), after it had released documents showing that Meta had been involved with the Communist-era security police Sigurimi (1944–1991). Meta argued that the release violated the law on politicians' verification procedures [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].

Also in [September], the ruling Socialist Party submitted two draft laws: one that would install further background checks for people who had worked for the Sigurimi during the Communist regime and aspired public office, and one that would allow authorities to reassess lustration certificates that had been issued in the past [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. On 20 October 2022, the Socialist Party-controlled parliament approved these, but it blocked the proposal by the opposition Democratic Party to declassify all the Sigurimi documents and make them available to scholars and the wider public.⁵

On 17 January 2023, the 555th anniversary of the death of Skanderbeg (1405–1468), a feudal lord and military commander who had led a rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, President Edi Rama ordered school pupils to sing the national anthem every first day of the week. The decision was criticized as a use of nationalism to divert attention from claims of Rama's alleged corruption.⁶

See also Kosovo.

⁴ Naomi Tomky, "[How Albania's Government Kneaded Secret Documents Into Dough](#)," *Atlas Obscura* (24 August 2022); Gjergj Erebara, "[Albanian Ruling Party Blocks Public Access to Communist Files](#)," *Balkan Insight* (21 October 2022).

⁵ "[Ilir Meta Files Criminal Charges Against the Files Authority](#)," *Vox* (1 September 2022); Alice Taylor, "[Albanian Ruling Party Proposes Lustration for Electoral Candidates](#)," *Euroactiv* (6 September 2022); Fjori Sinoruka, "[Albania Moves Towards Declassifying Communist-Era Security Files](#)," *Balkan Insight* (10 October 2022); Gjergj Erebara, "[Albanian Ruling Party Blocks Public Access to Communist Files](#)," *Balkan Insight* (21 October 2022).

⁶ Gjergj Erebara, "[PM's Order to Sing National Anthem in Schools Divides Albanians](#)," *Balkan Insight* (18 January 2023).

ALGERIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2001–2019, 2021–2022.

Between 25–27 August 2022, the governments of Algeria and France agreed to open up their archives to a mixed commission of French and Algerian historians, to study contentious issues in the colonial period (1830–1962), including the independence war (1954–1962). When Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune appointed five historians on 30 November 2022, it was reported that many relevant Algerian archives were still locked.

In late December 2022, a co-chairman of the commission, French historian from Jewish-Algerian origin Benjamin Stora [See NCH *Annual Reports 2014, 2021*], was attacked in an anti-Semitic article written by Lotfi Nezzar, son of former Defense Minister General Khaled Nezzar (1990–1993) [See NCH *Annual Reports 2003, 2013, 2018*] on the ultranationalist website *Algérie patriotique*. Stora and “his fellows and his ancestors” were accused of trying to impose a “Pax Judaica” on Algeria by pretending to be supporters of memorial reconciliation. Although few reacted to the racist defamation, President Tebboune in the French newspaper *Figaro* drew attention to the friendship between Stora and French President Emmanuel Macron.⁷

On 1 September 2022, authorities closed the headquarters of Santé Sidi El Houari, a group focused on preserving the cultural and historical heritage of the city of Oran. The governor of Oran had filed a complaint against the association in May, alleging “foreign funding without the approval of the competent authorities.” By the end of 2022, the administrative court of Oran had not yet issued a judgment, but the authorities had frozen the group’s activities.⁸

See also France.

⁷ Steven Philip Kramer, “[Macron in Algeria: The Weight of the Past](#),” *Wilson Center* (29 August 2022); Frédéric Bobin, “[Nomination de la partie française de la ‘commission mixte d’historiens franco-algérienne’](#),” *Le Monde* (26 January 2023).

⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 26.

ANGOLA

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

On 20 August 2022, the corpse of former President José Eduardo dos Santos (1942–2022; in office between 1979–2017) was repatriated from Spain, where he had died, to Luanda. Coming four days before the national elections, the repatriation was criticized by some as a campaigning tool by sitting President João Lourenço (in office since 2017), who had succeeded Dos Santos as president and chairman of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola).⁹

In March 2023, it emerged that official excavations of the remains of those killed during the massacre of 27 May 1977 – a massacre of perhaps as many as 90,000 people used by then President Agostinho Neto and his followers to eliminate thousands of Angolan citizens for alleged involvement in a coup attempt that was never proven [See NCH *Annual Report 2016*] – were carried out recklessly. In 2018, children of those killed and disappeared in the massacre had set up an association, M27, demanding the truth about what happened, the recovery of their parents’ remains, and the issuing of death certificates.

In 2019, President João Lourenço had established a commission to investigate acts of political violence since independence in 1975, including the events of 1977 and the war with Unita rebels (1975–2002). On 26 May 2021, he had issued a public apology for the massacre and asked for forgiveness for this “great evil.” After an official investigation allegedly identified the remains, M27 members refused to provide their DNA to help identify the remains, insisting on an independent inquiry. Then, the government claimed that the remains of four key figures in the uprising had been found. However, a separate independent team of forensic anthropologists found that the bodies were in fact not connected to them. M27 said that some of the perpetrators were still alive, a few of them with significant roles in Angolan politics today.¹⁰

On 4 April 2023, during a ceremony for the twenty-first anniversary of the end of the Civil War (1975–2002), President João Lourenço decorated a former officer of the secret service who had been accused in multiple testimonies of crimes against humanity, including extrajudicial killings, during the war. This coincided with the posthumous decoration of one of the prime victims of the massacre of 27 May 1977

⁹ “[Dos Santos’s Body Arrives in Angola amid Tense Election Campaign](#),” *Al Jazeera* (21 August 2022).

¹⁰ Mary Harper, “[Angola’s 1977 Massacre: Tragic Twist for Orphans of Mass Killings](#),” *BBC News* (25 March 2023); Maarten van Munster & Joris van Wijk, “[Mistaken Identities: How Angola’s Reconciliation Process Derailed](#),” *Justiceinfo.net* (18 April 2023).

(see above). Lourenço was widely criticized for mixing victims and alleged perpetrators in the same ceremony.¹¹

ARGENTINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2022.

Twenty-eight years after 85 people died and more than 300 were injured in the 1994 bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina Jewish Center, court battles continued. In 2015, prosecutor Alberto Nisman, who had accused then-President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of covering up Iran's role in the attack, was found dead. In 2018, a court of appeal said that he appeared to have been murdered. Nobody was convicted in connection with his death. In 2021, a federal court dismissed Nisman's accusation, saying that Fernández de Kirchner's actions did not constitute a crime. In August 2022, President Alberto Ángel Fernández said that Nisman had committed suicide and that he hoped that a prosecutor who charged Vice President Fernández de Kirchner with corruption would not do the same [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2011, 2014, 2016–2021*].¹²

In 2022, Formosa Province authorities denied the pre-colonial existence of the Nivaclé people and thus refused to issue birth certificates and identity cards to its people, especially the elderly. According to civil society organizations, about thirty percent of them remained without identity documents, violating their right to identity and putting them at risk of statelessness.¹³

See also Netherlands, United Kingdom.

ARMENIA

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

See Türkiye.

¹¹ Maarten van Munster & Joris van Wijk, "[Mistaken Identities: How Angola's Reconciliation Process Derailed](#)," *Justiceinfo.net* (18 April 2023).

¹² Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 37.

¹³ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 76.

AUSTRALIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2001, 2003, 2007–2009, 2014–2016, 2018–2022.

In a ground-breaking decision, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC) on 22 September 2022 found that Australia’s failure to adequately protect indigenous Torres Islanders against adverse impacts of climate change violated their rights to culture and privacy. In their complaint, the Islanders had claimed that climate changes had direct harmful consequences on their livelihood, culture, and traditional way of life. Severe flooding had destroyed family graves and left human remains scattered across their islands. They argued that maintaining ancestral graveyards and visiting and communicating with deceased relatives were at the heart of their cultures. In addition, the most important ceremonies, such as coming-of-age and initiation ceremonies, were only culturally meaningful if performed in the community’s native lands. The Islanders also argued that climate changes had reduced the amount of food available from traditional fishing and farming. The HRC took into account the Islanders’ close spiritual connection with their traditional lands, and the dependence of their cultural integrity on the health of their surrounding ecosystems.¹⁴

In [October] 2022, two expert witnesses in the trial against former military lawyer David McBride were not allowed to give testimony because it would allegedly harm public interest. McBride was under prosecution for having leaked documents to ABC News which subsequently lay at the basis of the Brereton Inquiry into war crimes committed by the Australian Defense Force during the War in Afghanistan (2001–2021), that had been published in November 2020 [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. He faced five charges, including unauthorized disclosure of information and breaching the Defense Act. The McBride trial and the expert witnesses decision were heavily criticized by international lawyers and whistleblower protection organizations.¹⁵

On 27 October 2022, the Court of Appeals ruled that Tim Anderson, a senior lecturer in the Political Economy Department of Sydney University (1998–2019), was unlawfully dismissed in February 2019 for imposing a swastika over an Israeli flag in a slideshow presentation about media coverage of the Palestine conflict. The court found that he was allowed to express even “deeply offensive and insensitive” views under the banner of intellectual freedom as long as they did not harass, vilify, or

¹⁴ United Nations Human Rights Committee, [Daniel Billy et alii versus Australia](#) (UN Doc. CCPR/C/135/D/3624/2019) (22 September 2022); United Nations Human Rights Committee, [“Australia Violated Torres Strait Islanders’ Rights to Enjoy Culture and Family Life, UN Committee Finds”](#) (Press release; 23 September 2022).

¹⁵ Christopher Knaus, [“David McBride Will Face Prosecution after Blowing Whistle on Alleged War Crimes in Afghanistan,”](#) *Guardian* (27 October 2022).

intimidate anyone. Backed by the National Tertiary Education Union, Anderson had initially lost his lawsuit against Sydney University in November 2020.¹⁶

In mid-January 2023, President of Timor-Leste and 1996 Nobel Peace Prize laureate José Ramos-Horta called on the Australian government to finally release secret documents relating to the Indonesian invasion and occupation of his country (1975–1999), particularly to the “Balibo Five.” On 16 October 1975, five Australian television reporters were killed while filming an attack of the Indonesian army on the village of Balibo in the run-up to its impending invasion of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. There was evidence, unearthed in 2007, that they were executed by members of the Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus). Intelligence reports showed that Australian officials knew about the Indonesian operation in advance, but the bulk of Australian government archival documents in connection with Balibo, the invasion of East Timor and resulting 24-year occupation were inaccessible for national security reasons. The push to declassify intelligence records about Balibo had been led by Clinton Fernandes, a former Australian army intelligence officer working at the University of New South Wales, Sydney [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2001, 2007, 2010–2011, 2014–2015, 2022*].¹⁷

On 1 June 2023, Australia’s most-decorated living soldier Ben Roberts-Smith (1978–) lost a defamation case against journalists Nick McKenzie, Chris Masters and David Wroe from newspapers *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The Canberra Times* who had accused him in a series of 2018 articles of war crimes in Afghanistan. The outlets were sued over articles alleging he killed unarmed prisoners while serving with Australia’s elite Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2012. The civil trial was the first time a court has assessed accusations of war crimes by Australian forces. Justice Anthony Besanko ruled that four of the six murder allegations – all denied by Roberts-Smith – were substantially true. In the wake of the trial, it became known that Roberts-Smith had invoked a special forces code of silence to intimidate witnesses, and also smeared and threatened others. The case came after the landmark Brereton report in November 2020 (see above) found credible evidence that Australian forces had unlawfully killed 39 civilians and prisoners in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2013 [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].¹⁸

¹⁶ [“Sydney University Wrong to Fire Lecturer over Swastika on Israeli Flag, Judge Says,”](#) *SBS News* (28 October 2022).

¹⁷ Chriss Barrett, [“‘Long Overdue’: Ramos-Horta Calls on Australia to Release Balibo Files,”](#) *Sydney Morning Herald* (16 January 2023).

¹⁸ Jamier McKinnell, [“Everything You Wanted to Know about Ben Roberts-Smith’s Defamation Case,”](#) *ABC News* (29 June 2021); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2022: Events of 2021* (New York: HRW, 2022), 23–24; Tiffanie Turnbull, [“Ben Roberts-Smith: How War Hero’s Defamation Case Has Rocked Australia,”](#) *BBC News* (31 May 2023); Tiffanie Turnbull, [“Ben Roberts-Smith: Top Australian Soldier Loses War Crimes Defamation Case,”](#) *BBC News* (1 June 2023); Tom Housden & Tiffanie Turnbull, [“Ben Roberts-Smith Case: Will Australia See a War Crimes Reckoning?”](#) *BBC News* (3 June 2023); [“Australia: MEAA Welcomes Defamation Judgement on Alleged War Crimes in Afghanistan,”](#) *Ifex* (4 June 2023); Nicholas Yong, [“Ben Roberts-Smith Threatened Witnesses in Defamation Trial, Judge Says,”](#) *BBC News* (6 June 2023).

See also Iran, Papua New Guinea, United Kingdom, Vietnam.

AUSTRIA

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

See Bosnia-Herzegovina.

AZERBAIJAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997–1998, 2008–2013, 2015–2022.

As of 31 December 2022, more than six years after it started, the case against writer of historical novels Akram Aylisli (1937–; pen name of Akram Najaf oglu Naibov) was still ongoing [See NCH *Annual Reports 2013, 2016, 2019*].¹⁹

¹⁹ International PEN, *Case List 2022* (London: PEN, 2023), 61.

BAHRAIN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004, 2008–2012, 2015–2017, 2021–2022.

BANGLADESH

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001, 2004–2006, 2008–2019, 2021–2022.

On 15 July 2022, a Hindu temple was vandalized in Narail district, Khulna, after Akash Saha, a Hindu boy who was later arrested, had made a “blasphemous” Facebook post. Five Muslim men were arrested for instigating the violence. The Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council reported seventy cases of attacks, looting or vandalism of places of worship in 2021.²⁰

BELARUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2000, 2005–2007, 2009–2011, 2014–2022.

The dismissal, arrest and detention of historians and history producers, in the context of the protests against President Aliaksandr Lukashenko’s landslide 9 August 2020 re-election, which the opposition and many governments had denounced as fraudulent, continued in 2022 and 2023 [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*]:

- On 8 July 2021, Andrej Skurko, former editor of newspaper *Nasha niva* and author of the magazine *Nasha historyja* (Our History), was detained and charged with creating debts and causing mass disturbance. On 15 March 2022, he was sentenced to 2,5 years in a penal colony. Together with Skurko, authorities arrested Andrei Dynko, chief editor of *Nasha historyja*, on charges of violating public order. Dynko was released on 21 July 2021, but remained under travel restrictions. Another author for *Nasha historyja*, Andrej Akuška, was also sentenced to 2,5 years in a penal colony.²¹
- On 17 December 2021, Eduard Palčys, a former history student at Belarusian State University, blogger and founder of the website 1863x.com, where he analyzed historical events and their geopolitical relevance, was sentenced to thirteen years in prison. In March 2022, he was transferred

²⁰ “[Bangladesh Government ‘Failing to Protect Minorities’](#),” *UCA News* (19 July 2022).

²¹ PEN Belarus, [Monitoring Violations of Cultural Rights and Human Rights of Cultural Figures: Belarus, January–September 2022](#) (27 October 2022); “[Andrei Dynko](#),” *Viasna Human Rights Center* ([no date]).

- to a high-security “covered prison,” known for its dire conditions, on charges of “disturbing order at the place where the sentence is being served.” As of September 2022, Palčys had spent at least ten days in solitary confinement.²²
- On 15 March 2022, history student Anastasia Voytovich (Vaitovich) [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*] was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for participation in a “human chain.” She had spent almost four months in pre-trial detention and had been declared a political prisoner on 14 December 2021. Voytovich fled Belarus.²³
 - On 10 May 2022, it became known that Dzmitry Niachajeu, a third-year student of the Faculty of History at Belarusian State University, had been detained in Minsk for a post on Instagram.²⁴
 - On 9 June 2022, Mikita Śliepianok, moderator of the Telegram channel *Rezystans* (Resistance) for Belarussian history and culture, was sentenced to three years in a high-security penal colony.²⁵
 - On 13 September 2022, Evgeny Gurinov, a history Ph.D. student at Belarusian State University, was detained and charged with participation in a protest.²⁶
 - On 21 September 2022, fourth-year history student Matsvei Hrankevich (Matvey Grinkevich) [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*] was sentenced to 26 months’ imprisonment in a strict regime colony and put on the “list of terrorists.”²⁷
 - On 8 October 2022, Ihar Baranouski, a local historian from the Brest region and editor of the Greek Catholic Church newspaper *Tsarkva*, was sentenced to fifteen days of administrative arrest for posting a video of the Belsat TV channel on Facebook (Belsat was considered an “extremist resource” by the authorities). In 2020, Baranouski had been detained for participating in protests against President Lukashenko’s re-election.²⁸
 - On 18 October 2022, Sviatlana Silova, a history Ph.D. candidate and associate professor of Hrodna State University, was detained for several days and fined for “storage and distribution of extremist

²² “Eduard Palchys Is a Political Prisoner: Joint Statement by Human Rights Organizations,” *Human Rights House* (5 October 2016); PEN Belarus, [Monitoring Violations of Cultural Rights and Human Rights of Cultural Figures: Belarus, January – September 2022](#) (27 October 2022).

²³ Belarusian Students’ Association, [The State of Academia in Belarus 2021](#) (Belarusian Students’ Association, February 2022), 13; Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 3* (March 2022), 3; “Anastasiya Vaitovich,” *Viasna Human Rights Centre* ([22] March 2022); Belarusian Students’ Association, *State of Belarusian Academia 2022* (no place: BSA, 2023), 4–5.

²⁴ Belarusian Students’ Association, *State of Belarusian Academia 2022* (no place: BSA, 2023), 6.

²⁵ PEN Belarus, [Monitoring Violations of Cultural Rights and Human Rights of Cultural Figures: Belarus, January–September 2022](#) (27 October 2022).

²⁶ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 9* (September 2022), 2.

²⁷ Belarusian Students’ Association, [The State of Academia in Belarus 2021](#) (Belarusian Students’ Association, February 2022), 16; Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 9* (September 2022), 1; Belarusian Students’ Association, *State of Belarusian Academia 2022* (no place: BSA, 2023), 7.

²⁸ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 11* (November 2022), 3.

- materials.” Later that month, she was dismissed. The reason remained vague. Silova was the most important researcher of Belarussian confessional history.²⁹
- In October 2022, the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus (KGB) added Andrei Petrovsky, a history and social science teacher at the Smorgon gymnasium, to the lists of persons “involved in extremist activities.” In March [2022], Petrovsky had shown 11th-graders a video titled “The Constitution has gone into prostitution.” One of his students then denounced him to the authorities, and he was sentenced to eighteen months in a penal colony for “defamation of the President.”³⁰
 - In [November or December] 2022, Siarhei Kozel, a history teacher at secondary school No. 30 in Minsk, was detained. He remained in detention as of January 2023. The reason for his detention was unknown.³¹
 - On 30 November 2022, Vitold Yermalionak, a local historian, teacher, and head of the museum association Heritage of the Miory Region, was detained in Miory, Vitebsk, together with his son. The reason for their detention was unknown.³²
 - On 14 December 2022, Vitali Mohuchau, a history teacher at Minsk State College of Architecture and Civil Engineering, was detained. The reasons for the detention, as well as Mohuchau’s whereabouts, were unknown.³³
 - On 5 and 6 January 2023, two first-year students at the Faculty of History of the Belarussian State University were detained. One of them, Aliaksei Ramanovich, was accused of participating in a strike at Lida Gymnasium in 2020. Both were fined.³⁴
 - On 9 January 2023, a history student (name unknown) at the Faculty of History of Belarussian State University, was detained while participating in an exam, and released the same day.³⁵
 - On 13 January 2023, a tourist group (about eighty people) and its guides were detained. Among the guides were a history teacher (name unknown), an assistant at the department of economic history of Belarussian State Economic University (name unknown), and Ivan Satsukevich, a specialist in the history of Minsk. All tourists were reportedly released after five hours, the guides were detained for 72 hours. The reason for their detention was unknown.³⁶

²⁹ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 10* (October 2022), 1. Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 11* (November 2022), 3.

³⁰ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 10* (October 2022), 1.

³¹ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 1* (January 2023), 2.

³² Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 12* (December 2022), 5.

³³ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 12* (December 2022), 5.

³⁴ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 1* (January 2023), 3.

³⁵ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 1* (January 2023), 3.

³⁶ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 1* (January 2023), 2.

- On 3 March 2023, Ales Bialiatski (Alieś Bialiacki) (1962–), human rights activist, scholar of the history of Belarusian literature and winner of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize alongside Memorial and the Ukrainian Center for Civil Liberties (see below under Russia), was sentenced to ten years in prison for “actions grossly violating public order.” Bialiatski had previously been sentenced to 4,5 years in prison on charges of tax evasion in August 2011 and had been arrested on 14 July 2021 on the same charges together with two colleagues from the Viasna Human Rights Center.³⁷
- On 18 April 2023, two students from the Faculty of History of Belarusian State University, Safia Helman and Daniil Karankevich, were arrested. Helman received ten days of administrative arrest for unknown reasons. After the arrest, security forces released a video of Karankevich in which he allegedly claimed to have participated in a 2020 protest against the re-election of President Lukashenko.³⁸
- On 30 May 2023, journalist and local historian Jaŭhien Mierkis was sentenced to four years of imprisonment in a penal colony for “facilitating” and “participating” in an “extremist organization” for his documentation of the 2020 protests.³⁹

In early December 2021, Larysa Shchytrakova ([1974]–), a historian by education and a freelance journalist working for Belsat TV channel and the human rights website Gomel Spring, was put in pre-trial detention [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. Her son was placed in a “social pedagogical center.” Shchytrakova had previously been working on a project to document the testimonies of the families of Soviet-era dissidents, *The Murdered and the Forgotten*.⁴⁰

Throughout 2022, military cemeteries of Polish soldiers were repeatedly vandalized, with no one held to account. In early July 2022, authorities destroyed a memorial for soldiers of the Home Army – Poland’s underground resistance movement that fought the Soviet and Nazi occupiers during World War II in unison with the London-based government-in-exile, and is believed to have consisted of between 200,000 and 600,000 people – in Mikulishki, Grodno, with 22 crosses being removed and the memorial razed to the ground. Furthermore, on 25 August, authorities allegedly demolished a memorial

³⁷ PEN Belarus, [Monitoring Violations of Cultural Rights and Human Rights of Cultural Figures: Belarus, January–September 2022](#) (27 October 2022); “Belarus: Trial against Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Ales Bialiatski a ‘Shameful Pretense’ of Justice,” *Amnesty International* (5 January 2023); Andrew Osborn, “Belarus Jails Nobel Winner Bialiatski for 10 Years; EU, US Protest,” *Reuters* (3 March 2023).

³⁸ Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 4* (April 2023), 4.

³⁹ PEN Belarus, [Monitoring Violations of Cultural Rights and Human Rights of Cultural Figures: Belarus, January–September 2022](#) (27 October 2022); “Яўген Меркіс,” *Viasna Human Rights Center* ([no date]).

⁴⁰ Larysa Shchytrakova & Yauhen Mierkis, “Fear and Loathing in Belarus,” *Index on Censorship*, 50 no. 1 (2021), 24–25; *Index on Censorship*, Newsletter (13 January 2022).

site containing graves of Home Army fighters in Surkonty: a day after Polish authorities announced that they would remove a monument to Soviet Red Army soldiers, which did not contain any graves.⁴¹

Throughout 2022, authorities targeted schools, bookshops and publishing houses teaching, selling or publishing in Belarusian (despite its status as an official language), regarding it as language of the political opposition. Belarusian-speaking activists, academics, literary and cultural figures and tour guides faced arbitrary arrest. Between January and September 2022, PEN Belarus found 94 violations against sites of historical and cultural heritage or the Belarusian language. On 3 September 2022, a Commission monitoring the quality of books was created. Its main task was to control bookstores for the “ideological component and artistic quality” of their products. In the third quarter of 2022, six books were added to a list of “extremist materials,” including Anatol Taras’s *A Short Course of the History of Belarus of the IX–XXI Centuries*. On 9 January 2023, the Central District Court of Minsk ruled that twelve books on Belarussian history were “extremist materials.” Most of them were related to the “Great Patriotic War” (1941–1945) [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].⁴²

In February 2022, immediately after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a controversial constitutional referendum took place to introduce into the Basic Law, amongst other provisions, the following: “Article 15: The State shall be responsible for the preservation of the historical, cultural and spiritual heritage and the free development of the cultures of all ethnic communities living in the Republic of Belarus. The State ensures the preservation of historical truth and memory of the heroic feat of the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War”; “Article 32: Parents or persons in loco parentis have the ... duty to ... instil culture and respect for the laws, historical and national traditions of Belarus. ... Children may be separated from their family against the will of their parents and other persons in loco parentis only on the basis of a court decision if the parents or other persons in loco parentis fail to fulfil their duties”; and “Article 54: Everyone is obliged to protect the historical, cultural, spiritual heritage and other national values. The manifestation of patriotism, the preservation of the historical memory of the heroic past of the Belarusian people are the duty of every citizen of the Republic of Belarus” [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. The constitutional amendment was clearly inspired by the June 2020 changes in the Russian Constitution [See NCH *Annual Report 2021*].⁴³

⁴¹ Alicja Ptak, “[Poland Lodges Protest over Demolition of WWII Soldiers’ Cemetery in Belarus](#),” *Notes from Poland* (6 July 2022); “[Poland Says WWII Grave Destroyed by Russian Ally Belarus](#),” *Al Jazeera* (25 August 2022); Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 89.

⁴² PEN Belarus, [Monitoring Violations of Cultural Rights and Human Rights of Cultural Figures: Belarus, January–September 2022](#) (27 October 2022); Asveta, *Digest of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s Office on Education and Science: Issue 1* (January 2023), 4; Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 91.

⁴³ European Commission for Democracy through Law (“Venice Commission”), *Belarus: Draft Amendments and Additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus* (Opinion No. 1054/2021) (CDL-REF(2022)007)

A September 2022 publication listed the following among recent examples of arbitrary arrest in Belarus: speaking Belarusian on the street; providing a small independent historical city tour free of charge; opening a book shop with Belarusian history books and literature; singing a Ukrainian song in public; or posting pictures with the historical “red-white-red” flag of Belarus. One could be punished with five-to-eight years of imprisonment for stating that the USSR and Germany illegally attacked Poland in 1939, or for denying and trivializing the “genocide of the Belarusian people” during 1941–1945 and up and until December 1951 [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. In November 2022, the Interior Ministry banned the use of the traditional salute “Long Live Belarus,” adding it to the list of “Nazi symbols and paraphernalia.”⁴⁴

On 1 September 2022, President Aliaksandr Lukashenko, who has a history degree, held an open four-hour history lecture for high school students and students at the Palace of Independence. During the lecture, he threatened Denis Znak, a first-year biology student who had asked a critical question related to the 2020 protests.⁴⁵

On 3 September 2022, Belsat camerawoman and graduate from the Faculty of History and Philology of Mahiliou State University, Darya Chultsova was released after having served a full sentence in a women’s penal colony in Homiel for covering a memorial service in November 2020 [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].⁴⁶

See also Russia.

BELGIUM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2008, 2010–2012, 2021–2022.

On 31 December 2022, the mandate of the parliamentary Commission spéciale chargée d’examiner l’État Indépendant du Congo et le passé colonial de la Belgique au Congo, au Rwanda et au Burundi (Special Commission on the Colonial Past) on the history of the colonization of Congo (by King Leopold II in the Congo Free State in 1885–1908 and by Belgium in 1908–1960), and Rwanda–Urundi

(Strasbourg: 14 February 2021); Ulad Belavusau, “[The “Year of Historical Memory” and Mnemonic Constitutionalism in Belarus](#),” *Verfassungsblog* (8 September 2022).

⁴⁴ Ulad Belavusau, “[The “Year of Historical Memory” and Mnemonic Constitutionalism in Belarus](#),” *Verfassungsblog* (8 September 2022); Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 91.

⁴⁵ Belarusian Students’ Association, *State of Belarusian Academia 2022* (no place: BSA, 2023), 15–16.

⁴⁶ “[Belsat Journalist Darya Chultsova Released After Two Years in Penal Colony](#),” *Belsat* (4 September 2022).

(as trust and mandate territories, 1922–1962) ended and was not renewed, even though none of its recommendations were accepted. In October 2021, the commission had published its 689-page report, and issued 128 recommendations, including the establishment of a remembrance day, the erection of a monument to the victims of “human zoos,” the declassification of archives and the issuing of an official apology to the victims of colonialism. However, on 19 December 2022, a majority in parliament voted against the issuing of an apology, reportedly out of fear that it could lead to reparation lawsuits. It remained unclear how the government would respond to the commission’s other recommendations [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].⁴⁷

On 4 July 2023, in *Hurbain versus Belgium*, the European Court of Human Rights ruled, twelve votes to five, that the order to a newspaper publisher to anonymize the online archived version of a lawful article published twenty years earlier, on grounds of the “right to be forgotten” of the individual responsible for a fatal accident was not a violation of the outlet’s freedom of expression. In 2013 daily newspaper *Le Soir* was ordered in a civil judgment to anonymize, on grounds of the “right to be forgotten,” the electronic archived version of an article originally published in 1994 in the newspaper’s print edition and placed online in 2008. The article mentioned the full name of G., the driver responsible for a fatal road-traffic accident. The applicant appealed, without success. In a judgment of 22 June 2021 [See NCH *Annual Report 2022* under Italy], a Chamber of the Court held, by six votes to one, that there had been no violation of Article 10. On 11 October 2021 the case was referred to the Grand Chamber at *Le Soir*’s request.⁴⁸

See also Bosnia-Herzegovina, Congo (Democratic Republic), Guatemala, Rwanda.

BELIZE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2014.

⁴⁷ Gaëlle Ponselet, “[Belgian Colonial Past: Commission Fails on Apology to Victims](#),” *Justiceinfo.net* (19 January 2023); Julia Crawford, “[Colonial Crimes: The Reparations Movement Stalls in Europe](#),” *Justiceinfo.net* (11 April 2023).

⁴⁸ European Court of Human Rights, [Hurbain versus Belgium: Judgment](#) (Application no. 57292/16) (2021); European Court of Human Rights (Grand Chamber), [Hurbain versus Belgium: Judgment](#) (Application no. 57292/16) (2023).

BENIN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: –.

In November 2021, 26 artworks stolen by French colonists from the then Kingdom of Dahomey during the First (1890) and Second Franco-Dahomean Wars (1892–1894) were restituted. The artworks were supposed to be exhibited at a museum in a former Portuguese fort in Ouidah. However, from [January 2023] onward they were stored instead in boxes at the Marina Palace, the official residence of President Patrice Talon. It remained unclear when they would be moved elsewhere. The artworks were scheduled to be permanently housed at the Museum of the Kings and Amazons of Dahomey in Abomey, which was supposed to be ready at the end of 2022, but not expected to open before January 2024.⁴⁹

BOLIVIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2009–2022.

In 2022, the authorities made insufficient efforts to hold accountable officials responsible for human rights violations under authoritarian governments between 1964–1982. Only a handful had been prosecuted. The armed forces generally refused to share information. After camping outside the Justice Ministry for more than a decade, several victims' associations signed an agreement with the government in August 2022, in which the Luis Arce administration (2020–) committed itself to reparation payments to victims or family members of various authoritarian-era abuses.⁵⁰

On 17 October 2022, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ordered the government to open military archives concerning a case of assassination and forced disappearance. In the judgment *Flores Bedregal versus Bolivia*, the IACHR found Bolivia responsible for the 1980 disappearance of activist Juan Carlos Flores Bedregal and emphasized that it had an obligation to guarantee the right to the truth and the right to access information by releasing military documents. In the case of historical human rights investigations, successive governments had routinely denied access to military and police records to families of the disappeared, official truth commissions, and even State prosecutors.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kate Brown, "[Twenty-Six Royal Objects Looted from Benin by French Soldiers Are Going on View in Paris – Briefly – before Being Returned](#)," *Art News* (25 October 2021); Rachida Houssou, "[Why Treasures Returned to Benin Are Still in Boxes](#)," *Justiceinfo.net* (7 April 2023).

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 83.

⁵¹ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, [Caso Flores Bedregal y otras versus Bolivia: sentencia](#) (2022); National Security Archive, "[State of Bolivia Must Guarantee Right to Truth in Forced Disappearance Case](#)" (24 January 2023).

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2022.

On 8 July 2022, a report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence assessed the official measures adopted to address the atrocities committed during the 1991–1995 armed conflict. It stressed the inadequacy of reparation measures, memorialization processes and history teaching, and measures aimed at promoting inter-ethnic understanding, combating discrimination and curbing incendiary nationalisms, while warning about the tangible risks that these deficiencies posed to peace in the country [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*].⁵²

In [October] 2022, the Institute for Research of Genocide Canada launched a petition to prevent Serbian-Canadian film director Boris Malagurski’s documentary “Republika Srpska: The Struggle for Freedom” to premiere in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands, because it allegedly denied the 1995 Srebrenica genocide and questioned the legitimacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the United Nations. Malagurski denied the claims. As of 13 October, the petition had been signed more than 15,000 times, leading to the cancelation of four screenings.⁵³

BOTSWANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

BRAZIL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2003, 2005–2022.

On 8 January 2023, when in the aftermath of the October 2022 presidential elections thousands of rioters ransacked the presidential palace in the capital Brasilia, large parts of the historical art collection –

⁵² United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, *Visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina* (UN Doc. A/HRC/51/34/Add.2) (8 July 2022).

⁵³ Azem Kurtic, “[Petition Targets Bosnian Serb History Film for ‘Genocide Denial’](#),” *Balkan Insight* (13 October 2022).

accumulated since the presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–1961), when the capital was built – suffered irreparable damage. It included paintings and wooden and bronze sculptures.⁵⁴

On 24 May 2023, Google removed a highly controversial game called *Simulador de Escravidão* (slavery simulator) from its app store, after it caused much outrage. The app, launched by Magnus Games on 20 April 2023, allowed players to “exchange, buy and sell slaves” and to inflict various forms of torture on black characters. The game was widely condemned as violent, cruel, criminal, hateful, and racist. The office of the Public Prosecutor opened an investigation into how the game had been allowed to be placed in the app store. More than four million enslaved people were taken to Brazil in the course of its history. In 1822, 1.5 million of the 3.5 million people living in Brazil were enslaved. Slavery was abolished in 1888 only.⁵⁵

See also Lebanon, Ukraine.

BULGARIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015–2017, 2019–2020, 2022.

See North Macedonia.

BURKINA FASO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2004, 2005, 2013, 2015–2018, 2021–2022.

On [Sunday 23 May] 2021, also known by Christians as Pentecost, extremists destroyed the Parish Saint Paul church in Sandikpenga, Est Region, in an arson attack. On 8 November 2021, the International Missionaries Society reported that 552 evangelical churches had closed in the Est Region. On 12 February 2022, armed men suspected to be Islamist militants severely damaged the St. Kisito de Bougui

⁵⁴ [“Brazil Protests: Artwork Suffers Damage Beyond Repair,”](#) *BBC News* (9 January 2023).

⁵⁵ Matt Murphy, [“Google Removes ‘Slavery Simulator’ Game amid Outrage in Brazil,”](#) *BBC News* (26 May 2023).

seminary in Bougui. On 29 August 2022, a group of 700 imams and Muslim preachers denounced “religious and ethnic intolerance” and urged to “promote national reconciliation.”⁵⁶

BURUNDI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2003, 2005–2015, 2017–2021.

Throughout 2022, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) continued to exhume the bodies of victims of the 1972 Ikiza (“Catastrophe”) or Ubwicanyi (“killings”) – a series of mass killings, often characterized as a genocide, by the Tutsi dominated armed forces against primarily the Hutu population, leading to the death of between 100,000 and 300,000 people – using contested methods. The TRC had for a long time been accused by local human rights groups and international actors of having a bias toward portraying the Hutu population as the sole victims of the killings, in line with the historical narrative of the governing party Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie – Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD–FDD; National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy).

In March 2022, the TRC proposed a genocide denial bill to punish anyone who denied that a genocide against the Hutu people had taken place in 1972. Amnesty International expressed concern that the bill would further restrict the already shrinking civic space and repress the right to freedom of expression.⁵⁷

On 7 September 2022, General Gervais Ndirakobuca, who was under international sanctions and under investigation of the International Criminal Court for his alleged role in the 2015 election violence, was unanimously confirmed as prime minister. During the Civil War (1993–2005), in which approximately 300,000 people were killed, he served as a rebel commander, being nicknamed “Ndakugarika” (“I will kill you”) [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].⁵⁸

⁵⁶ United States Department of State, [2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burkina Faso](#) (2 June 2022); “[Attack on Minor Seminary in Burkina Faso](#),” *Vatican News* (12 February 2022); “[700 Imams Denounce ‘Religious and Ethnic Intolerance’](#),” *Africa News* (29 August 2022).

⁵⁷ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 107, 109.

⁵⁸ “[President Appoints New PM after Warning of ‘Coup’ Plot](#),” *Africa News* (7 September 2022).

CAMBODIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2018, 2020–2022.

On 22 September 2022, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (also known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal), a hybrid court made up of Cambodian and United Nations judges set up in 2006 to prosecute violations of international criminal law, including crimes against humanity and genocide, committed by the Khmer Rouge regime in Democratic Kampuchea (1975–1979), held its final session. Throughout its existence, the court had been severely hampered by government non-cooperation and interference, and by internal disagreement [See NCH *Annual Reports 2008, 2010, 2012–2014, 2016*], having resulted in only three convictions: Khieu Samphan, former Khmer Rouge chairman; Nuon Chea, chief ideologist and highest Khmer Rouge leader after Pol Pot; and Kaing Guek Eav (also known as Duch), former commandant of the Tuol Sleng prison, where approximately 16,000 people had been tortured and killed. All had been sentenced to life in prison. Ieng Sary (1925–2013), Deputy Prime Minister and former history teacher, died before his trial ended.⁵⁹

CAMEROON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010, 2012–2014, 2016, 2020–2021.

On 26 July 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the creation of a commission of historians to “shed light” on the Guerre du Cameroun (1955–1964; War of Cameroon) and the opening of all related archives (see below). The announcement was criticized by historian Jacob Tatsitsa as politically motivated and as ignoring research that had already been done on several massacres of Cameroonian nationalists during the war. He further noticed the difficulty of accessing French archives for Cameroonian researchers due to the high costs and difficulties in obtaining a visa.⁶⁰

In late February 2023, the Société camerounaise d’histoire (Cameroon Historical Society) criticized the Commission chargée de travailler sur l’action de la France au Cameroun pendant la colonisation et après l’indépendance du pays (Commission to Study France’s Activities in Cameroon during the Colonial Period and after the Independence of the Country; nicknamed the “Commission Mémoire,” Memory

⁵⁹ AP, “[After 16 Years and 3 Convictions, an International Tribunal Closes Down in Cambodia](#),” *NPR* (22 September 2022).

⁶⁰ Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux, “[Cameroun: ‘La création d’une commission d’historiens est un stratagème pour contourner la reconnaissance des massacres coloniaux’](#),” *Le Monde* (interview with Jacob Tatsitsa; 3 August 2022).

Commission) after French President Emmanuel Macron appointed its two co-presidents, French historian Karine Ramondy for the historical part and Cameroonian singer Blick Bassy for the heritage component. The criticism was directed at the fact that Macron was the sole initiator (while Cameroonian President Paul Biya had been left aside) and that a singer was the co-president of a historical commission. The criticism came after an official initiative to write a large-scale six-volume *L'Histoire générale du Cameroun*, presented by Minister of Arts and Culture Pierre Ismael Bidoung Mpkwat in August 2020, had stalled without explanation and after the official authorization of several history textbooks for use in the secondary schools had dragged on for several years. The Memory Commission was due to complete its work by the end of 2024 and had been promised access to all relevant French archives (taken to France after Cameroon's independence in 1960). Tens of thousands of people died during the war that raged in the period studied by the Memory Commission (1945–1971).⁶¹

CANADA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000, 2002–2003, 2005–2006, 2008–2009, 2012–2022.

In an April 2023 submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review on the Right to Information in Canada, it was reported that the federal Access to Information Act (ATIA) did not apply to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and affiliated committees, and to non-official information in the archives, National Gallery of Canada, and numerous national museums. The ATIA also excluded “confidences of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada,” also known as Cabinet confidences.⁶²

See also Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Vatican.

⁶¹ Valentin Zinga, “Cameroun: La ‘Commission mémoire’ sur le rôle de la France relance le débat sur l’enseignement de l’histoire,” *RFI* (28 February 2023); Elise Lambert, “Guerre du Cameroun: L’Ouverture des archives suffira-t-elle à ‘faire la lumière’ sur les responsabilités de la France?” *Franceinfo* (19 March 2023).

⁶² Centre for Law and Democracy and Others, *Submission to Session 44 of the Universal Periodic Review on the Right to Information in Canada* (Halifax: CLD, 2023), §§ 11, 23.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2006–2009, 2011–2012, 2014–2022.

On 31 October 2022, the Special Criminal Court (SCC) – a hybrid court set up in 2015 to investigate and prosecute human rights violations, notably genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since 2003 – found three former members of the 3R (Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation) armed group guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in 2019. The verdict, the first by the SCC, was hailed as a landmark in providing justice and accountability for crimes committed in the country.⁶³

CHAD

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

On 19 September 2022, the head of the military junta, Mahamat Idriss Déby (1984–), son of the late President Idriss Déby (1952–2021; in power between 1990–2021), announced the allocation of 10 billion CFA francs (€ 15,2 million) to the Compensation Fund for Victims – one of the recommendations of the 2022 National Dialogue – to issue reparations to the victims of human rights violations during the reign of President and war crime convict Hissène Habré (1942–2021; in power between 1982–1990). However, the money, as well as a 5 million dollar allocation by the African Union, amounted to only one sixth of the reparations awarded by a 2016 Extraordinary African Chambers verdict.

Also in September, Clément Abaïfouta, one of the main representatives of the victims and member of the Fund’s board of directors, was threatened by a supporter of President Habré during the National Dialogue.⁶⁴

⁶³ Virginia Pietromarchi, “[CAR: ‘Historic’ Trial Kicks Off, But Not Without Challenges](#),” *Al Jazeera* (25 April 2022); “[CAR War Crimes Trial Postponed for Second Time](#),” *Al Jazeera* (26 April 2022); Vianney Ingasso, “[Central African Republic: Special Criminal Court Hands Down First Judgment](#),” *Justiceinfo.net* (1 November 2022).

⁶⁴ “[Chad Starts ‘National Dialogue’ to Pave Way for Elections](#),” *Al Jazeera* (20 August 2022); Franck Petit, “[Chad’s President Promises to Compensate Habré Victims](#),” *Justiceinfo.net* (14 October 2022).

CHILE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2022.

The courts continued to try agents of Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (1973–1990) for human rights abuses. In June 2022, former military officer Miguel Krassnoff and two former police officers were convicted in the 1975 homicide of a teacher. It was the eightieth conviction for Krassnoff, who participated in the assault on the presidential house during the September 1973 coup against former President Salvador Allende, and it raised his prison sentence to 900 years for crimes against humanity.⁶⁵

In March 2023, President Gabriel Boric announced the National Search Plan to find and identify the people who “disappeared” during Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (1973–1990) and prosecute those responsible. It was the first time that a government backed a permanent search effort. More than 3,000 people were killed and an estimated 40,000 tortured during the dictatorship, with up to 1469 people still missing. As of December 2022, 1482 criminal cases against ex-agents of the dictatorship were going on, but there existed no central body where the information was stored and could be analyzed, causing delays. In February 2023, an investigation found that the Servicio Médico Legal (Legal Medical Service), responsible for forensic testing, had left 89 boxes of dictatorship-era evidence, including unidentified human remains, in a basement where they had been damaged by water and mold.⁶⁶

See also United States.

CHINA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2022.

On 11 August 2022, the Ground Up Film Society removed the award-winning film *Losing Side of a Longed Place* – scheduled to be screened on a two-day festival two days later – after its director refused to yield to demands of the Office for Film, Newspaper and Article Administration to remove a scene, lasting less than a second, depicting the 2014 pro-democracy Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 147.

⁶⁶ Charis McGowan, “[Chile Takes on ‘Moral Duty’ of Finding the Disappeared of Pinochet Regime](#),” *Guardian* (17 April 2023).

⁶⁷ Hillary Leung, “[Hong Kong Film Dropped from Festival after Censors Object to Umbrella Movement Scene Lasting Under a Second](#),” *Hong Kong Free Press* (12 August 2022); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 151.

On 27 October 2022, while teaching an undergraduate class, Xu Songyan, a professor at Southwest University in Chongqing and an expert in Greek history, was eavesdropped on by a student who claimed to be an “information officer” and who notified him to prepare a report. The social media post in which Xu reported the incident on 28 October was later deleted [See also *NCH Annual Report 2021* under Shen Zhihua].⁶⁸

On 28 October 2022, Liu Hanbo (?–2022), a history teacher at Xinzheng No. 3 High School in central Henan province, ostensibly suffered a heart attack and died. In the two weeks before her death, a group of hackers calling themselves *baopo lieshou* (“bombers and hunters”) had repeatedly (on 12, 21, and 28 October) targeted her online classes with more than two hundred students to hurl abuse, play loud music, and spam the chat window. On 2 November 2022, the Xinzheng City’s education bureau announced that it would investigate the cyberbullying.⁶⁹

On 20 April 2023, Taiwan-based book publisher Li Yanhe (pen name: Fucha) “disappeared” and was allegedly detained by Chinese authorities after he had traveled to Shanghai to visit relatives. Li was the founder of Gusa Publishing, known for publishing books on politically sensitive topics including the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. On 22 April, more than forty writers, academics and journalists published a statement to support a call by Gusa Publishing and PEN America for his release.⁷⁰

From 26 April 2023, a fragment of a new history textbook for Grade 8 uploaded on online platform Douyin by a [history] teacher sparked massive criticism online for not being truthful enough in depicting the government’s response to the pandemic. The textbook, published by major textbook publisher People’s Education Press, carried a text box entitled “War on Covid,” reading: “Our country ... protected people’s life safety and health to the largest extent ... We achieved major achievements in coordinating the prevention and control of the pandemic.”⁷¹

In May 2023, XiaoGuo Comedy, China’s largest talk show company, was fined 13.35 million yuan (US\$ 1.8 million) because it had hired stand-up comedian Li Haoshi. Li was likely to be charged with intentionally tarnishing the image of the military and violating the 2021 Law on the Protection of the Status and Rights and Interests of Military Personnel of China in one of his performances. On 13 May

⁶⁸ Yojana Sharma, “[New Research Exposes Power of Classroom Informant System](#),” *University World News* (23 March 2023).

⁶⁹ Cao Yin, “[Bullying a Concern as Teacher Dies after Online Class](#),” *Asia News Network* (4 November 2022); “[Cyberbullies, a Teacher’s Death, and a Classroom Seeking Answers](#),” *Beijing Youth Daily* (18 November 2022).

⁷⁰ Helen Davidson & Chi Hui Lin, “[Fears Grow for Taiwan Book Publisher Believed Held in China](#),” *Guardian* (24 April 2023).

⁷¹ Fan Wang, “[China: History Textbook’s ‘Covid War’ Mention Sparks Discussion](#),” *BBC News* (26 April 2023).

2023, in a punchline, Li had compared the People's Liberation Army with stray dogs chasing a squirrel and mocked a political slogan first used by President Xi Jinping in 2013. The punchline alluded to a scene in the 1956 propaganda film *Battle on Shangganling Mountain*, in which People's Volunteer Army soldiers in the Korean War (1950–1953) chased squirrels for fun in between battles. The joke was recorded by an audience member and posted on the Sina Weibo platform, leading to criticism, boycott calls and sanctions despite Li's apologies.⁷²

On 27 May 2023, Hui Muslims clashed with police over the planned demolition of the dome of the thirteenth-century Najiaying mosque in Nagu, Tonghai County, Yunnan (southern China). A 2020 court judgment had ruled that the mosque's restored domed roof as well as some minarets were illegal, ordering them to be removed. Recent actions to carry out the order probably sparked the demonstrations. Dozens were arrested.

In 2018, hundreds of Hui Muslims in the Ningxia region, northern China, had engaged in a protracted standoff with authorities to prevent their mosque from being demolished. Authorities later relented but insisted that its Arabesque features must be altered. Also in 2018, three mosques in Yunnan were shut down for what was deemed to be "illegal religious education" [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020* under Tibet].⁷³

In the lead-up to the 34th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre on 4 June 2023, authorities restricted the movement and communication of activists and members of the Tiananmen Mothers, a group of relatives of victims of the massacre [See NCH *Annual Reports 2004–2006, 2008–2009, 2017*]. On 27 May 2023, the Tiananmen Mothers released a statement reiterating their call for "truth, compensation and accountability." On the same day, authorities detained activist Chen Siming in Hunan province, because he refused to delete a tweet in which he commemorated the 1989 massacre. In Shandong, police summoned activist Qi Chonghuai and warned him not to participate in any commemorations.

In April 2023, a Hangzhou Court had tried activist and participant in the 1989 pro-democracy movement Xu Guang for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" after he had gone to a local police station to demand the government to acknowledge the massacre. The verdict had yet to be announced.

In June 2023, searches on internet search engine Baidu for the Sitong Bridge in Beijing returned the message: no related places were found. On 12 October 2022, white banners with large red characters criticizing the Chinese Communist Party had been hung over the bridge by Peng Lifa, who had been

⁷² Qian Gong & Jian Xu, "This Is No Joke," *Index on Censorship*, 52 no. 2 (2023), 20–22; Qian Gong & Jian Xu, "[This Is No Joke](#)," *Index on Censorship* (31 May 2023).

⁷³ Nicholas Yong, "[Yunnan Protest: Mosque Closure Sees Clashes with Security Forces](#)," *BBC News* (30 May 2023).

detained by police and “disappeared” shortly after. The banners at Sitong Bridge were particularly sensitive because the character for “Si” is the same as that for four, one of a combination of numbers forbidden to search for in the lead-up to the 4 June anniversary [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. The anniversary was sometimes known as “internet maintenance day” because of the number of websites taken offline.

A new museum dedicated to the Tiananmen Square massacre opened in New York. Despite its location, there were security fears for the museum’s workers.⁷⁴

Hong Kong

Between 2020 and 2022, fearing threats on religious freedom, the Vatican had transferred half a ton of files from its Hong Kong archive to Rome. The files contained private communications with underground mainland clerics, missionary activity, and details of persecution of Catholics in the mainland.⁷⁵

In late April 2023, an official government report concluded that the Leisure and Cultural Services Department had to increase its efforts to “examin[e] library materials for safeguarding national security” in Hong Kong libraries. In November 2021, research by the Hong Kong Free Press had found that since 2010, public libraries had removed 29 out of 149 books about the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre from their shelves, and of the other 120 only 26 were displayed and immediately available for borrowing.

As of May 2023, authorities had removed hundreds of other titles from public libraries as well. These included all the books authored by Hui Po-keung, a former associate professor at the Department of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University [See below and NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. Ma Ngok, an associate professor at the Department of Government and Public Administration at the Chinese University in Hong Kong, also had all his books removed. These included “An Oral History of the Democratic Movement of Hong Kong in the 1980s” (2012), consisting of interviews with ten key democrats of the 1980s. Authorities had also removed “The Secret Journal of Zhao Ziyang” (2009), based on a secret recording of former General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (1987–1989), in which he looked back upon the 1989 Tiananmen massacre and his attempts at political reform [See NCH *Annual Reports 1998–1999, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2017, 2019*].⁷⁶

⁷⁴ “[China: Acknowledge Tiananmen Massacre](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (1 June 2023); Amy Hawkins, “[Chinese Censors Remove Protest Site Sitong Bridge from Online Maps](#),” *Guardian* (2 June 2023); Francis Clarke, “[Tiananmen Massacre Anniversary: Don’t Mention It](#),” *Index on Censorship* (7 June 2023).

⁷⁵ Congressional-Executive Commission on China, [Hong Kong’s Civil Society: From an Open City to a City of Fear](#) (3 October 2022), 37–38.

⁷⁶ Selina Cheng, “[Hong Kong Public Libraries Purge 29 Titles about the Tiananmen Massacre from the Shelves](#),” *Hong Kong Free Press* (21 November 2021); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022*

In June 2022, authorities announced new textbooks for secondary students in Hong Kong [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*], in which most mentions of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre had been scrapped and nothing was said about the annual vigil to commemorate the massacre at Victoria Park, that had been banned by authorities since 2020 [See NCH *Annual Reports 2020–2022*].⁷⁷

The July 2022 annual Hong Kong Book Fair turned down the application from at least three independent booksellers who had published works by participants of the 2019 pro-democracy protests. Books about the 1989 massacre were completely absent.⁷⁸

On 10 September 2022, five speech therapists in Hong Kong, charged in 2021 under the colonial-era sedition law, were found guilty of publishing a series of “seditious” children’s books, called Yangcun, and given a prison sentence of 19 months (they had already spent more than a year in prison awaiting the verdict). In one of the books, a village of sheep fights back against a group of wolves trying to take over their settlement, in what was seen by some as a reference to the attempt of the Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement to maintain Hong Kong’s autonomy against the Chinese government. The authors argued that the books chronicled “history from the people’s perspective.” In January 2023, police arrested a student for sedition after he posted a download link of the Yangcun series on Facebook. On 13 March 2023, two persons were arrested for merely possessing the books; they were released on bail but forced to report regularly to the police.⁷⁹

On 19 September 2022, a Hong Kong man of 43 years [name unknown] who went to the British consulate to pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth II, was detained under the colonial-era sedition law for playing several songs on his harmonica, including “Glory to Hong Kong,” the unofficial anthem of protesters during the 2019 pro-democracy protests, as well as the British national anthem. A large crowd, which had gathered to watch an online live broadcast of the Queen’s State funeral in the United Kingdom, was seen singing along to the tune of “Glory.” The song’s lyrics made reference to the “tears on our land,” and also mentioned “democracy and liberty.” In [December] 2022, authorities pressured Google to delete “Glory” from the top results for users searching for Hong Kong’s anthem, and to replace it with the Chinese national anthem. Google reportedly refused.

(Washington: HRW, 2023), 150; Helen Davidson, “[Tiananmen Square Books Removed from Hong Kong Libraries in Run-up to Anniversary](#),” *Guardian* (16 May 2023); Hong Kong Free Press, “[The Books Hong Kong Is Purging from Public Libraries: An Overview of the Disappeared Titles](#),” *Global Voices* (1 June 2023).

⁷⁷ “[New Chinese History Textbooks for Hong Kong Students Remove Details of Tiananmen Square Crackdown, June 4 Commemorative Vigil](#),” *Young Post* (6 June 2022).

⁷⁸ Peter Lee, “[Crowds Still Flock to Hong Kong’s Book Fair but ‘Sensitive’ Topics Are Absent](#),” *Hong Kong Free Press* (22 July 2022).

⁷⁹ Leo Sands, “[Hong Kong Judge Finds Five Guilty over Children’s Books](#),” *BBC News* (8 September 2022); “[Hong Kong: Five Jailed in for ‘Seditious’ Children’s Books](#),” *BBC News* (10 September 2022); “[Hong Kong: Two Men Arrested for Possessing ‘Seditious’ Children’s Books](#),” *BBC News* (17 March 2023).

On 28 July 2023, a Hong Kong court declined a government request to ban *Glory to Hong Kong*. The request had been filed after the song had been played mistakenly at several sport events instead of the Chinese national anthem *March of the Volunteers*. The court referred to the “right to freedom of expression” and noted the potential “chilling effects” if the government’s request were granted. The government had first applied for a total ban in June, after which the song had been taken down from several online music streaming platforms.⁸⁰

On 25 November 2022, Hui Po-keung – an associate professor at the Department of Cultural Studies at Lingan University until 2021 and author of several historical articles – was found guilty together with four others over their failure to register a protester relief fund and forced to pay a HK\$4,000 (approximately € 475) fine [See above and NCH *Annual Report 2022*].⁸¹

On 13 December 2021, Chow Hang-tung, prominent pro-democracy activist and former vice chairperson of the disbanded Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements (HKASPDM), was among those sentenced to up to fourteen months in prison for organizing, taking part in, and inciting participation in the banned 2020 vigil for victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. On 14 December 2022, the High Court overturned Chow’s conviction, finding that police had not properly explored the options for how the demonstration could have gone ahead in a COVID-safe manner. Facing two other charges under the national security law, Chow remained in custody. On 11 March 2023, a Hong Kong court sentenced Chow, and two other HKASPDM-members, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-Kwong, to 4,5 months in prison for their roles in organizing the annual vigil for the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre on 4 June 2022 [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].⁸²

On 3 June 2023, authorities arrested eight people on charges of “disorderly conduct in a public space,” “doing acts with seditious intent,” and “breaching the peace” for commemorating the 34th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

Performance artist Sanmu Chen was arrested after she had repeatedly chanted “Don’t forget June 4! Hong Kong people, don’t be afraid of them.” Another performance artist, Chan Mei-tung, was also

⁸⁰ Yvette Tan, [“Queen Elizabeth II Funeral: Hong Kong Man Who Attended Tribute Detained,”](#) *BBC News* (20 September 2020); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 151; [“Hong Kong Pressures Google to Remove Protest Anthem from Searches,”](#) *Guardian* (12 December 2022); [“Hong Kong Court Rejects Gov’t Request to Ban Popular Protest Song,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (28 July 2023).

⁸¹ Peter Lee, [“Hong Kong Court Convicts Cardinal Zen and 5 Others over Failing to Register Protester Relief Fund as Society,”](#) *Hong Kong Free Press* (25 November 2022); Hong Kong Free Press, [“The Books Hong Kong Is Purging from Public Libraries: An Overview of the Disappeared Titles,”](#) *Global Voices* (1 June 2023).

⁸² [“Hong Kong Activist Who Staged Tiananmen Vigil Has Conviction Overturned,”](#) *BBC News* (15 December 2022); [“Hong Kong Court Jails Tiananmen Anniversary Vigil Organizers,”](#) *Guardian* (11 March 2023).

detained for unclear reasons. In 2022, she had been arrested for holding a lighter to a potato in the shape of a candle – before the annual Victoria Park vigil was banned in 2020, thousands of candles had been distributed to participants. Police removed Lau Ka-yee and Kwan Chun-pong from Victoria Park, where they had stood with red tape covering their mouths and holding a sign saying: “In mourning for the deceased and victims of 64 [June 4] in respect for Tiananmen Mothers.” A young couple was arrested dressed in white and holding white chrysanthemums – a flower and color typically signifying loss and mourning. Chiu Yan-loy, member of the former Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements (HKASPDM), that had traditionally organized the vigil but was disbanded in 2022, was repeatedly visited by police in the lead-up to 4 June and told not to leave his home that day. Former pro-democracy district councilor Debby Chan was also repeatedly questioned after she had announced on Facebook that she would hand out free candles.

On 4 June 2023, police arrested an additional 23 people suspected of “breaching the peace.” These included pro-democracy activists Alexandra Wong (also known as Grandma Wong), former chair of the Hong Kong Journalists’ Association Mak Yin-ting, and Leo Tang, a former leader of the disbanded Confederation of Trade Unions. Veteran activist and head of the League of Social Democrats, Chan Po-ying, was briefly detained for holding a small LED candle and two flowers at a shopping district near Victoria Park. Former member of the HKASPDM Tsui Hon-kwong was also detained while holding a LED candle. Another woman (name unknown) was arrested while shouting: “Raise candles! Mourn 64!” A young man was detained while carrying a book titled “35th of May” – another way of referring to 4 June. Chow Hang-tung (see above), who was in prison facing two charges under the national security law, went on a 34-hour hunger strike to commemorate the 34th anniversary of the massacre.

Near Victoria Park, hundreds of police conducted stop and search operations and deployed armored vehicles and police vans. Pro-government groups had launched a home fair in the park on 3 June, promoting products from mainland China, that would run until 5 June.⁸³

Tibet

On 11 November 2022, a group of United Nations Special Rapporteurs sent an allegations letter to the Chinese government, warning that around a million children of the Tibetan minority were being affected by Chinese government policies aimed at forcibly assimilating Tibetan people culturally, religiously and linguistically through an expanding mandatory residential school system. In these schools, the educational content and environment was built around the majority Han culture, with textbook content

⁸³ [“Hong Kong Police Detain Eight People on Eve of Tiananmen Anniversary,”](#) *Guardian* (3 June 2023); [“Hong Kong Police Arrest Pro-democracy Figures on Tiananmen Square Anniversary,”](#) *Guardian* (5 June 2023); Martin Yip & Adam Durbin, [“Tiananmen Square: Hong Kong Police Detain Activists on Anniversary of Massacre,”](#) *BBC News* (5 June 2023); Rachel Cheung, [“Torches and T-shirts: Hongkongers Defy Attempts to Forget Tiananmen,”](#) *Guardian* (5 June 2023).

reflecting almost solely the lived experience of Han students. Children of the Tibetan minority were forced to complete a “compulsory education” curriculum in Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) without access to traditional or culturally relevant learning. The Putonghua language governmental schools did not provide a substantive study of the Tibetan minority’s language, history, and culture. The Special Rapporteurs said that the policies ran contrary to the prohibition of discrimination and the rights to education, linguistic and cultural rights, freedom of religion or belief and other minority rights of the Tibetan people [See also NCH *Annual Report 2021*].⁸⁴

A January 2023 report by the London-based human rights group *Free Tibet* documented the destruction of religious historical sites in the Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province. Among the sites destroyed were three large Buddha statues, including the 99-foot-tall “People’s Buddha,” the Drago Monastery (established ca. 920), 45 prayer wheels, and a statue of Vajrayana Buddhist master Padmasambhāva (ca. 8th–9th century), considered a central figure in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet.⁸⁵

Xinjiang

On 31 August 2022, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights expressed deep concern over the destruction of religious sites by authorities in Xinjiang [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*] and over the lack of respect for linguistic rights of ethnic minorities [See NCH *Annual Reports 2020–2021*].⁸⁶

See also Afghanistan, Germany, Greece, Philippines, Vietnam.

⁸⁴ United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, UN Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, and UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, [Allegations Letter](#) (11 November 2022) (UN Doc. AL CHN 6/2022); UN, “[UN Experts Alarmed by Separation of 1 Million Tibetan Children from Families and Forced Assimilation at Residential Schools](#)” (press release; 6 February 2023).

⁸⁵ Free Tibet & Tibet Watch, [Desecration in Drago Country: Destruction of Tibetan Religious Heritage, Arbitrary Detentions and Torture](#) (London: Free Tibet, 2023), 25–29; Roseanne Gerin, “[Report Offers Fresh Examples of Destruction of Religious Sites in Eastern Tibet](#),” *Radio Free Asia* (24 January 2023).

⁸⁶ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, [OHCHR Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of China](#) (31 August 2022), 27–29.

COLOMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–1998, 2000, 2004, 2006–2022.

On 18 February 2022, a burglary took place in the house of Eduardo Andrés Celis Rodríguez (1993–), a researcher of the Commission for Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition (CEV) – established as a result of the 2016 peace accords reached between the government and the largest rebel group, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC; 1948–2016). Copies of a six-hour interview on 16 February 2022 of Celis and CEV Commissioner Alejandro Valencia Villa with Dairo Antonio Úsuga (alias Otoniel), ex-leader of the drug-trafficking group Clan del Golfo (Gulf Clan), were stolen. Later Celis and his family were harassed; he received at least eleven death threats by telephone. Celis went into hiding and in October 2022 into exile in Europe, where he received at least three further death threats by phone and email. One of the callers identified himself as a member of the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC; United Self-defense Forces of Colombia). Before joining the CEV, Celis wrote for the journalistic portal Verdad Abierta (Open Truth), which since 2007 had reported stories of paramilitaries and guerrillas.⁸⁷

On 28 June 2022, the Commission for Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition (CEV) launched its report on the causes and consequences of Colombia’s conflict (1948–2016) [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. Among its recommendations was the declassification of secret files on defense and security matters related to the conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC; 1948–2016). In March 2021, CEV President Francisco de Roux had asked United States (US) President Joe Biden to accelerate the declassification of US federal records related to the conflict. The request remained pending as of August 2022.⁸⁸

On 13 January 2023, Afro-Colombian historian Sergio Antonio Mosquera announced that he was forced to shut down the Fundación Muntú Bantú (Muntú Bantú Foundation, founded 2009), the only museum in Colombia dedicated to the history and culture of Afro-Colombians, and its Centro de Memoria, Documentación y Materialidades Afrodiaspóricas (Center of Memory, Documentation and

⁸⁷ [“Fueron hurtadas las grabadoras de la Comisión de la Verdad con testimonios de alias Otoniel,”](#) *Criterio* (19 February 2022); Juan David Laverde Palma, [“El viacrucis de un investigador de la guerra,”](#) *Noticias Caracol* (8 July 2022); Camila Osorio, [“Andrés Celis, el investigador de la Comisión de la Verdad que tuvo que salir al exilio,”](#) *El País* (12 October 2022); David Riaño Valencia, [“Se intensifican amenazas contra investigador de la CEV que entrevistó a ‘Otoniel,’”](#) *El Espectador* (16 June 2023).

⁸⁸ National Security Archive (Michael Evans), [“‘There is Future if There Is Truth’: Colombia’s Truth Commission Launches Final Report”](#) (28 June 2022); Daniel Ospina Cells, [“Desclasifiquemos los archivos de inteligencia previos a la Constitución de 1991,”](#) *El Espectador* (5 August 2022); Michael Evans, [“A Bloody, Expensive and Prolonged Coercive Effort,”](#) *National Security Archive* (24 August 2022).

Afrodiasporic Materials), located in Chocó Department's capital Quibdó. From December 2022, Mosquera (the museum's founder) and María Fernanda Parra (the museum's director) had received death threats from a local armed group seeking to extort "war taxes" from them. The threats came at a time of growing Afro-Colombian political visibility and representation in public life due to the election of Francia Márquez, the first Afro-Colombian vice president in Colombia's history. The museum's vast archive was hidden.⁸⁹

On 8 June 2023, violent clashes broke out between hooded protesters and the riot police Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios (Esmad) on the campus of the National University of Bogotá, leaving a police officer seriously injured. Protesters had gathered to commemorate the Day of the Fallen Student on 8–9 June, a day established in 1973 and recognizing fallen student protesters since the assassination of law student Gonzalo Bravo Pérez on 7 June 1929. A group of hooded individuals associated with the Jaime Bateman Cayón movement, named after the founder and commander of the 19th of April guerrilla movement, reportedly attacked officers with improvised explosive devices.⁹⁰

CONGO (Democratic Republic)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2000, 2003–2022.

In June 2022, King Philippe of Belgium visited Congo for the first time and reaffirmed his "deepest regrets" for colonial-era abuses but did not offer an apology or raise the issue of reparations. Belgian authorities returned a tooth of the assassinated first Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961) to his family. The relic was taken around Congo ahead of a funeral in Kinshasa.⁹¹

On 30 August 2022, the trial against Belgian filmmaker Thierry Michel, who had been sued by the documentary filmmaking partnership Balufu Brothers for allegedly plagiarizing their 2015 film *The Silence of Forgotten Crimes*, began in Kinshasa. In 2021, Michel had released *The Empire of Silence*, a documentary on impunity for war crimes committed during the Second Congo War (1998–2003), among others. Michel's lawyer claimed that whereas the Balufu Brothers' documentary focused on foreign responsibilities for human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC),

⁸⁹ "[Solidarity with Historian Sergio Antonio Mosquera and Fundación Muntú Bantú](#)" (petition; s.d. [January 2023]); [NCH campaign](#) (3 February 2023); Erica Hellerstein, "[Afro-Colombian Culture Is Under Siege as Armed Conflict Rages On](#)," *Codastory* (6 March 2023).

⁹⁰ "[Disturbios en la Universidad Nacional dejan hasta el momento un policía herido](#)," *El Espectador* (8 June 2023); [Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project](#) (no date); Comisión de la Verdad, "[Día del estudiante caído: poniéndole cuerpo al pensamiento](#)" (9 June 2021).

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 184.

particularly from Ugandan and Rwandan forces, Michel documented war crimes of Congolese, including some who currently held prominent positions in the military. An analysis by the Brussels-based Société civile des auteurs multimédia found that only four images were used in both films. Michel faced up to five years in prison.⁹²

See also Uganda.

CONGO (Republic)

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

COSTA RICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010.

CÔTE D’IVOIRE

See Ivory Coast.

CROATIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2001, 2003–2013, 2015–2022.

On 19 July 2022, a report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence assessed the official measures adopted to address the atrocities committed during the 1991–1995 war. It stressed shortcomings in several areas, including full reparation owed to civilian victims, comprehensive memorialization processes and truth-seeking mechanisms, the promotion of cultural diversity and inter-ethnic mutual understanding, the effective combating of national and ethnic hatred, and the rise in the glorification of war crimes and revisionism

⁹² John Thys, “[DRC: Accused of Plagiarism, Director Thierry Michel Before the Kinshasa Court](#),” *Teller Report* (30 August 2022); Philip Andrew Churm, “[Belgian Filmmaker Thierry Michel Accused of Plagiarism by DRC](#),” *Africa News* (24 September 2022).

with regard to convictions by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. It noted the impasse in the transitional justice agenda in the last nine years and the risk this posed to the sustainability of the transitional justice process, as well as to peace and reconciliation.⁹³

See also Montenegro, Serbia.

CUBA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2002, 2006, 2010–2012, 2015–2016, 2018, 2021–2022.

Throughout 2021, historian, art curator, and anti-censorship activist Carolina Barrero Ferrer (1986–) [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*] was the victim of arbitrary arrest, harassment, censorship, and surveillance. She was placed under house arrest for over 150 days in total. On 28 January 2022, she was detained by State Security agents in El Vedado, Havana. Three days later, she was again detained and also beaten together with activist Daniela Rojo and Camila Rodríguez, the coordinator of the civic platform Justicia 11J, after they had gone to the 10 October Municipal Court in solidarity with the relatives of political prisoners who were on trial. Barrero was released on 1 February 2022. The officers who took her home warned her that she had 48 hours to leave Cuba, or else the mothers of twelve other political prisoners would be prosecuted for public disorder. They escorted her to the airport and forced her into exile.⁹⁴

CYPRUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002, 2005, 2008–2011, 2013, 2015–2018, 2021–2022.

⁹³ United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, *Visit to Croatia* (UN Doc. A/HRC/51/34/Add.1) (19 July 2022).

⁹⁴ “[Cuban Activist Arbitrarily Arrested over a Letter Calling for the Resignation of Alpidio Alonso as Minister of Culture](#),” *Democratic Spaces* (4 February 2021); “[The Political Police Threaten Carolina Barrero and ‘Advise’ Her to Leave Cuba](#),” *Translating Cuba* (8 February 2021); “[The Case in Cuba against Carolina Barrero for ‘Clandestine Printed Matter’ Has Been Shelved](#),” *Translating Cuba* (25 March 2021); International PEN, *Case List 2022* (London: PEN, 2023), 30.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–1998, 2000, 2010, 2013–2022.

On 22 June 2022, a pig farm that stood on the site of the Lety concentration camp, in which 327 Romani were killed during World War II, was demolished, after a campaign to construct a memorial that began in the 1970s, but that had faced significant opposition for more than four decades – except for a small memorial that was unveiled near the farm in [1995] by then President Václav Havel (1936–2011). An estimated 90% of the Czech Roma population was killed during the Holocaust. On 2 August 2022, the commemoration day for the 1944 massacre of 4,300 Sinti and Roma in Auschwitz-Birkenau (also known as Roma Genocide Remembrance Day), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights hailed the government’s decision to demolish the farm, but stressed the importance for all countries in Europe to ensure that school curricula include remembrance of the Roma and Sinti genocide and discuss the dangers of racist ideologies.⁹⁵

In [early 2023], the United Kingdom’s special envoy for post-Holocaust affairs, Lord Pickles, wrote an urgent letter to his Czech counterpart Robert Řehák, urging him to accelerate the adoption of an amendment that would grant a five-year amnesty for Jewish children who had fled to Great Britain in 1939 via so-called *Kindertransporten* (trains that evacuated 669 mainly Jewish children from Prague to London) to apply for Czech citizenship. In 1948, after the Communist Party had seized power in Czechoslovakia (the Czech Republic’s predecessor), a law was passed to strip refugees and any children they would have of citizenship. Unintentionally, the law also barred potentially thousands of children and grandchildren of the children from the *Kindertransporten*. In 1990, a year after the Velvet Revolution, the 1948 law was abolished and citizenship of its victims restored. However, the regulation barring unregistered children remained in effect. In 2013, a new citizenship law granted those born between 1949–1969 a year to apply for citizenship. However, the vast majority of *Kindertransport* descendants had not heard about the new law. In 2021, an amendment to the 2013 law, extending the application period with another five year, had been tabled.⁹⁶

See also Russia.

⁹⁵ [“Czech Roma Reclaim Holocaust Site, but Equality Feels Distant,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (3 August 2022); OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, [“Remembering the Roma Genocide Goes Beyond Commemoration to Fight Today’s Intolerance, OSCE Human Rights Head Says,”](#) (press release; 2 August 2022).

⁹⁶ Robert Tait, [“Czechs Urged to Repeal Law Denying Rights to Kindertransport Descendants,”](#) *Guardian* (9 February 2023).

DENMARK

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2006–2007, 2013, 2016–2020, 2022.

On 9 June 2022, Greenland’s Prime Minister Múte Bourup Egede and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen signed a joint declaration to investigate their mutual historical relations and the impact of colonialism on the Inuit population from World War II to 2022 [See also *NCH Annual Report 2022*].⁹⁷

See also Israel.

DJIBOUTI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013.

In September 2022, on the ninth anniversary of a 2013 ruling by the Constitutional Court, which retroactively and arbitrarily deprived thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent of their nationality, human rights organizations called on the authorities to address the continuing problem of stateless people. Despite a 2014 law that aimed to provide documents for people made stateless by the 2013 ruling, tens of thousands remained without documents, limiting their access to education and healthcare.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ “[Greenland, Denmark Initiate Investigation into Past Relations](#),” *Eye on the Arctic* (9 June 2022).

⁹⁸ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 148.

ECUADOR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2007, 2009–2021.

EGYPT

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2001, 2003, 2006–2007, 2010–2022.

On [22] August 2022, archaeologist and former Minister of Antiquities Zahi Hawass launched a campaign for the repatriation of the Rosetta Stone (a stele inscribed with three versions of a decree issued in 196 BCE in Memphis, Egypt, that is currently held by the British Museum in London, after it had been seized by British forces from Alexandria in 1801), the limestone bust of Queen Nefertiti (1370–1310 BCE; believed to have been crafted in 1345 BCE and currently in the Neues Museum, Berlin, after it had been discovered and taken by a German archaeology team led by Ludwigh Borchardt in Amarna in 1912), and the Dendera Zodiac ceiling (50 BCE; discovered by Vivant Denon in 1799 and taken to Paris in 1822, where it is held by the Musée du Louvre). In 2007 and 2019, Hawass had launched a similar campaign to have the three artifacts on display on loan. All three museums had refused his loan request. By November 2022, Hawass’s petition had been signed 100,000 times. In [November] 2022, Monica Hanna, dean of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, set up a petition reiterating Hawass’s call to the British Museum to return the Rosetta Stone.⁹⁹

On [10] January 2023, authorities in Aswan arrested three people for attempting to steal a statue of Pharaoh Ramses II (1303–1213 BCE). Since 2010, authorities had recovered around 29,000 antiquities that had been illegally transferred abroad.¹⁰⁰

In mid-April 2023, a lawyer filed a complaint accusing the Netflix four-part docudrama *African Queens: Queen Cleopatra* of violating media laws and aiming at “erasing the Egyptian identity.” The film depicted Queen Cleopatra VII (69 BCE – 30 BCE) as a black African (played by black British actress Adele James), sparking widespread condemnation among Egyptians, including from archaeologist and former Minister of Antiquities Zahi Hawass and Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt Mostafa Waziri, accusing the series of falsifying history. In October

⁹⁹ Gareth Harris, “[‘Return Rosetta Stone to Egypt’ Demands Country’s Leading Archaeologist Zahi Hawass](#),” *The Art Newspaper* (22 August 2022); Mustafa Marie, “[Prominent Egyptologist Zahi Hawass Launches Petition To Repatriate Egyptian Artifacts from Major European Museums](#),” *Egypt Today* (23 August 2022); Jack Jeffery, “[Egyptians Call on British Museum to Return Rosetta Stone](#),” *AP News* (30 November 2022).

¹⁰⁰ “[3 Men Arrested over Attempt to Steal 10-Tonne Statue of Egyptian Pharaoh](#),” *Africa News* (11 January 2023).

2020, a similar row had broken out on social media when it became known that Israeli actress Gal Gadot would play Cleopatra in a new movie, with some alleging “cultural whitewashing,” where white actors portray people of color.

On 22 April 2023, the exhibition “Kemet: Egypt in Hip Hop, Jazz, Soul & Funk” in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Netherlands – an exhibition showing Egyptian and Nubian culture through the eyes of artists with African roots – was the target of a similar widespread condemnation, including from a Facebook group called “Egyptian history defenders,” accusing the museum of “blackwashing” and “spreading Afrocentric propaganda.” The museum stated that the exhibition did not claim that ancient Egyptians were black, adding that it did not have an Afrocentric perspective on ancient Egypt. On 7 June 2023, the Ministry of Antiquities banned the archaeologists working for the museum from continuing the museum’s excavations at the Sakkara necropolis near Cairo (where it had been active since 1975) on account of its “falsification of history in the Afrocentric exhibition.”¹⁰¹

See also Sudan, United Kingdom.

EL SALVADOR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2022.

According to data from the Institute of Legal Medicine, the authorities recovered 207 bodies from mass graves between June 2019 and February 2022. However, documents from the Attorney General Office showed that only 158 bodies had been recovered between January 2019 and February 2022, leaving human rights groups and relatives of the deceased worried about the government’s handling of evidence and human remains. Additionally, the government and police reduced the access to information related to mass graves and disappearances, especially after President Nayib Bukele suspended constitutional rights as part of a state of exception in March 2022, officially to contain gang violence.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ David Gritten, “[Egyptians Complain over Netflix Depiction of Cleopatra as Black](#),” *BBC News* (19 April 2023); Gwen Nally & Mary Hamil Gilbert, “[Fear of a Black Cleopatra](#),” *New York Times* (10 May 2023); “[A Statement about the Exhibition ‘Kemet’ in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Netherlands](#)” (updated 16 May 2023); Bart Funnekotter, “[Hoe een Leids museum werd meegezogen in de aanval op een Netflix-serie over Cleopatra](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (12 May 2023); Bart Funnekotter, “[Egypte boos om tentoonstelling: Leids museum mag geen opgravingen meer doen in Egyptische necropolis](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (5 June 2023); “[Gal Gadot’s Cleopatra Film Sparks ‘Whitewashing’ Claims](#),” *BBC News* (13 October 2020); “[Egypt Bans Dutch Archaeologists over Exhibition Linking Beyonce and Rihanna to Queen Nefertiti](#),” *BBC News* (7 June 2023).

¹⁰² Nelson Renteria, “[In El Salvador, Discrepancy over Deaths and Mass Graves Alarms Critics](#),” *Reuters* (3 August 2022).

On 14 October 2022, authorities arrested former Minister of Defense General Guillermo García (in office between 1979–1983), former director of the Treasury Police (a security force associated with enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings during the Civil War [1979–1992]), Colonel Francisco Antonio Morán, and three others, on charges of murdering four Dutch journalists in Chalatenango on 17 March 1982. García had also been named in the 1981 El Mozote Massacre case [See NCH *Annual Reports* 2008, 2012–2013, 2015, 2017, 2019–2022].¹⁰³

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2019.

ERITREA

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

See Ethiopia.

ESTONIA

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

On 16 August 2022, the government decided to remove Soviet-era monuments from public places with the purpose of preventing them “from mobilizing more hostility in society and tearing open old wounds” following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Among the first removals were a tank in Narva, taken to the Estonian War Museum, and a World War II cemetery, relocated with “a neutral grave marker.” Prime Minister Kaja Kallas said that the government would not “afford Russia the opportunity to use the past to disturb the peace in Estonia.” Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu declared that such monuments had been erected to glorify the Russian occupation and had no place in Estonia’s public space. A spokesperson for Russian President Vladimir Putin said that “The war against history, moreover with a

¹⁰³ Gabriela Cáceres, María Luz Nóchez & Carlos Dada, “[Top Former Military Officers Arrested for 1982 Murder of Four Dutch Journalists](#),” *El Faro* (17 October 2022).

common history, and the disposal of monuments for those who saved Europe from fascism, is of course outrageous.”¹⁰⁴

ESWATINI

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

On 13 May 2022, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at participants of a commemoration march, organized by the Swaziland National Union of Students, for the one-year anniversary of the killing of Thabani Nkomonye, a law student at the University of Eswatini who was found dead at the side of the road on 13 May 2021, sparking nationwide protests alleging that he had been killed by police forces.¹⁰⁵

ETHIOPIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2011, 2015–2022.

During the Tigray War (2020–present), Ethiopian and Eritrean military troops destroyed historical monuments in the Tigray region. At least forty, and allegedly hundreds of, churches and monasteries were damaged. In November 2020, after hundreds of civilians had been massacred by Eritrean soldiers, the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in Aksum, originally built in the fourth century and rebuilt in the tenth and sixteenth centuries, was vandalized. In January 2021, more than twenty scholars voiced concern for the sixth-century Debre Damo monastery near Adigrat, which was looted and partially destroyed by gunfire and shelling. In the same month, Eritrean soldiers burned the Feredashum St. Kirkos church.

In Ger’alta, Hawzen – one of the centers of ancient civilization in the Horn of Africa, according to pottery, inscriptions and hagiographic traditions dating as far back as the Aksumite period (early first century–960) – there were many ancient rock-hewn churches and monasteries considered world heritage sites: 31 monasteries and churches were reportedly heavily damaged between November 2020 and March 2022, with many of the church properties looted. Among them were the pre-14th century monastery of Abunä Abraham and the Debre Medhanit Ammanuel Ma’go church in Wuqro. The library of the church and monastery of Maryam Yerefeda was allegedly destroyed.

¹⁰⁴ Denisa Ballova, “[An Empty Tomb in Estonia](#),” *Transitions* (3 August 2022); “[Estonia Removes Soviet-Era Statue Amid Tensions](#),” *Al Jazeera* (16 August 2022); “[Estonia Begins Removing Soviet-Era War Monuments](#),” *BBC News* (16 August 2022).

¹⁰⁵ “[Police Used Tear Gas and Rubber Bullets During Student Protest](#),” *Scholars at Risk* (13 May 2022).

In addition to churches and monasteries, Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers shelled the al-Nejashi mosque in Negash (believed to be founded by an early follower of the Prophet Mohammed in the seventh century) in late November 2020, with Eritrean soldiers reportedly damaging historic tombs and stealing ancient manuscripts and relics. The Wugro Archaeological Museum, and two other archaeological sites around Wugro and in Aksum, were damaged and looted by Eritrean soldiers. Forces of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) reportedly destroyed the Tigray Martyr's Memorial Museum in Mekelle, and toppled the statue of Qeshi Gebru (1962–1982), a woman who fought the Derg regime (1974–1991) in the 1980s, in Humera.

On top of the destruction of historical sites, many historical artifacts were looted. On 1 February 2021, Eritrean soldiers looted the Aksum Archaeological museum. In Mekelle, ENDF forces looted the Emperor Yohannes IV Palace museum and destroyed many of its artifacts. In April 2021, the St. Yared Orthodox Tewahedo Association in Mekelle sent a letter to the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church begging him to halt the “continued looting of our artifacts and our churches.” In February 2022, Hagos Abrha Abay, postdoctoral researcher at the Center for the Study of Manuscript Culture at the University of Hamburg, found that online sales of Ethiopian artifacts had surged since the beginning of the Tigray War. According to Michael Gervers, history professor at the University of Toronto specialized in Tigray culture, the destruction of Tigray's historical sites, manuscripts and relics amounted to “cultural cleansing.”¹⁰⁶

In mid-March 2023, Taye Bogale, an Oromo history teacher and author of a book on the history and politics of Ethiopia, disappeared. His teachings about Ethiopian history had reportedly often been demonized by Oromo radical nationalist groups. On 20 March, Bogale released a picture of himself on social media, showing him visibly bruised in his face and one of his eyes. It was unclear who the perpetrators were. On 28 December 2020, a Facebook post had falsely claimed that Bogale had been shot and killed.¹⁰⁷

See also Sudan, United Kingdom.

¹⁰⁶ [“Heritage Sites Under Siege in Ethiopia's Tigray War,”](#) *Africa News* (30 April 2021); Geoffrey York & Zecharias Zelalem, [“In Tigray's War, Ancient Christian and Muslim Houses of Worship Are Increasingly Under Attack,”](#) *The Globe and Mail* (10 May 2021); Azeb-Tadesse Hahn, [“Civil War to Blame for Surge in Online Sales of Ethiopian Artifacts,”](#) *Der Welt* (10 March 2022); Hagos Abrha Abay, [“First Comprehensive Analysis of the Looting of Tigray's Heritage as Ebay Halts Sale of Ethiopian Treasures,”](#) *Eritrea Hub* (11 February 2022); Hagos Abrha Abay, [“Ethiopia's War in Tigray Risks Wiping Out Centuries of the World's History,”](#) *Jerusalem Post* (30 March 2022); Hagos Abrha Abay, [“Tigray's Ancient Rock-Hewn Churches Are Under Threat: Why It Matters,”](#) *The Conversation* (3 May 2022).

¹⁰⁷ [“False: Ethiopian Historian and Social Media Activist Taye Bogale Has Not Been Killed,”](#) *Pesa Check* (31 December 2020); [“Another Beaten Activist Returns to Family with Severe Beatings from “Deep State” Actors,”](#) *Borkena* (20 March 2023).

FIJI

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

FINLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011–2012, 2017, 2020, 2022.

FRANCE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1999, 2001–2009, 2011–2014, 2016–2018, 2020–2022.

Throughout 2022, the Musée de l’Homme in Paris held on to its collection of 18,000 skulls, including the skulls of more than 200 Native Americans; the bones of Mamadou Lamine Dramé (ca. 1840–1887), a West African Tijani marabout (Islamic religious leader) who led a rebellion against French colonial troops in 1886–1887; and a family of Canadian Inuit who had been exhibited in a human zoo in Paris in 1881. The collection was kept in cardboard boxes in the museum’s basement. Information about it was published online only in limited form, without mentioning names or biographical details of the skulls in its database – officially because of privacy concerns, uncertainty about some of the identities and fear of controversy. However, this policy was criticized as an attempt to hold off any restitution claims. A confidential museum memo deemed it without a “clear legal basis.” Moreover, it contradicted a 2018 government-commissioned report recommending a simplification of the restitution process. State ownership of the collection was a further obstacle, which could only be overcome if a return was voted into law. Although the Ministry of Culture claimed to work on a new restitution law, the government had rejected a Senate proposal to establish a scientific advisory council on restitutions and had, as of November 2022, not considered a Senate bill removing the need for Parliamentary approval for restitution.¹⁰⁸

On 15 February 2022, Parliament adopted a “reparation” bill for the Harkis, Algerians who enlisted to fight for the French occupying forces during the Algerian War (1954–1962). After Algerian independence, more than 91,000 Harkis found refuge in France, of which around 20,000 were housed, for periods varying from days to years, in barracks or tents in the Rivesaltes camp between 1962–1964.

¹⁰⁸ Constant Méheut, “[A Paris Museum Has 18,000 Skulls: It’s Reluctant to Say Whose](#),” *New York Times* (28 November 2022).

The bill fulfilled a commitment made by President Emmanuel Macron in September 2021. Following the bill, several Harkis called on the government to search for the graves of the babies who died in the Rivesaltes camp (it was estimated that dozens of young children died of cold in the camp) [See also NCH *Annual Report 2003, 2006*].¹⁰⁹

In September 2022, the book *Allons enfants de la Guyane* by historian and journalist H el ene Ferrarini revealed for the first time the decades-long history of residential schools in French Guyana, in which indigenous children were forcibly assimilated. It proposed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deal with the system’s legacy.¹¹⁰

In mid-December 2022, after a restoration had darkened the features of a statue of writer Victor Hugo (1802–1885) in his native city of Besan on, two masked men repainted his face in white. The statue had been created by the Senegalese sculptor Ousmane Sow (1935–2016) in 2003. The perpetrators – two students at the local university who were leaders of the far-right student group Cocarde  tudiante – were arrested and faced charges for vandalizing public property with racist motivations. On the photograph they had taken of their work and posted online, they had added a Celtic cross and the words “white power.”¹¹¹

On 17 January 2023, an appeals court in Fort-de-France, capital of the French Caribbean island of Martinique, dismissed a 2005 request from groups seeking slavery reparations. It noted that there was a statute of limitations for the crime of slavery and that a French law already allowed to “bring a memorial contribution to the recognition of slavery and the slave trade.” The court added that it was not for the judiciary to decide whether those measures were sufficient. Slavery was abolished in France in 1848.¹¹²

On 9 March 2023, a court in Bastia, Corsica, ruled that the use of the Corsican language in the island’s local parliament and local laws de facto establishing “the existence of a Corsican people” were unconstitutional. The ruling followed a lawsuit brought by the prefect of Corsica, the highest representative of the French central government on the island. The verdict was heavily criticized by

¹⁰⁹ [“France Approves Reparation Bill for Algeria’s Harkis,”](#) *Asharq Al-Awsat* (16 February 2022); [“The Longing for Closure by Families of the Harkis,”](#) *Africa News* (25 August 2022).

¹¹⁰ Delphine Jung, [“L’Histoire m connue des pensionnats pour Autochtones fran ais,”](#) *Radio-Canada* (12 January 2023).

¹¹¹ Catherine Porter, [“Victor Hugo Statue Takes a Prominent Place in France’s Debate on Race,”](#) *New York Times* (31 December 2022 / 3 January 2023).

¹¹² Rodolphe Lamy, [“Martinique Court Dismisses Slavery Reparations Lawsuit,”](#) *AP News* (19 January 2023).

Corsican politicians. According to UNESCO, the Corsican language was in danger of becoming extinct with only 150,000 native speakers remaining.¹¹³

See also Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Iran, Tunisia, United Nations.

¹¹³ [“Corsican Language Ban Stirs Protest on French Island,”](#) *Guardian* (10 March 2023).

GABON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2016, 2018.

GAMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2016–2018, 2021–2022.

On 25 May 2022, the government issued a White Paper, indicating how it was going to implement the recommendations of the 2019 Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), which had investigated human rights violations committed during the rule of Yahya Jammeh (in office as chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council in 1994–1996, and as president in 1996–2017) [See NCH *Annual Report 2018, 2021–2022*]. However, since then the government had stalled implementation citing lacking financial resources (even though some required very little or no funding), refrained from banning alleged perpetrators from public office, and stalled progress on the Victims Reparations Bill. Moreover, in April 2022, President Amanda Barrow had elected Fabakary Tombong Jatta as Speaker of the National Assembly, despite his repeated attempts to discredit the TRRC. On 12 May 2023, Barrow released a White Paper implementation plan and announced a € 9 million pledge by the European Union.¹¹⁴

GEORGIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2003, 2010–2012, 2014, 2016, 2019, 2022.

On 7 August 2022, members of the Abkhaz Assembly and others launched a campaign calling for the prosecution of the perpetrators of war crimes and ethnic cleansing during the War in Abkhazia (1992–1993) between Georgian government forces and Abkhaz separatists, supported by Russian militants. In the past, two investigations had been opened by the Georgian government, but they stopped after the alleged refusal of Russian officials to cooperate. The number of those killed was 5,738 while more than 200,000 people, mostly ethnic Georgians, were displaced [See also NCH *Annual Report 2011*].¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ali Jaw, "[Victims Center Opposes Nominations of FTJ, Seedy Njie](#)," *The Point* (25 April 2022); Mustapha Darboe, "[Gambia Validates Truth Commission's Work and Promises Justice](#)," *Justiceinfo.net* (26 May 2022); Mariam Sankanu, "[Is the Gambia a Step Closer to Moving on with Trials and Reparations](#)," *Justiceinfo.net* (1 June 2023).

¹¹⁵ Priyanka Shankar, "['Before Bucha in Ukraine, There Was Abkhazia in Georgia'](#)," *Al Jazeera* (5 August 2022).

GERMANY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997–2000, 2003, 2006–2013, 2015–2017, 2019–2022.

In April 2022, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz) warned of the spread of anti-Semitic ideas to mainstream political discourse. In July 2022, vandals chopped down the trees at the memorial for victims of the Buchenwald concentration camp. Chancellor Olaf Scholz was strongly criticized for failing to immediately condemn a statement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas perceived to equate Israeli actions to the Holocaust.¹¹⁶

In [July] 2022, a collection of Uyghur artwork and historical artefacts in Berlin was amended so that all references to “East Turkestan” on maps were changed to the name preferred by the Chinese Communist Party, “Xinjiang.” In another example of interference, Tibetan artists Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin had arranged with a prominent Berlin-based curator to screen their film exploring the early Tibetan resistance and its betrayal by the American CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). However, the subject material proved too sensitive to their Chinese investors who cut of contact with the artists.¹¹⁷

In April 2023, the senate of what was officially referred to as Westphalian Wilhelm University (founded 1780) decided to delete the name of Emperor Wilhelm II (1859–1941; in power between 1888–1918) and call itself University of Münster. Wilhelm II was reputed to have been an anti-Semite, a staunch advocate of colonialism and an opponent of democracy.¹¹⁸

See also Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Latvia, Namibia, Poland, Spain, Sudan, Ukraine.

GHANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002, 2004–2008, 2017, 2019, 2022.

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 250.

¹¹⁷ Index on Censorship, [Whom to Serve? How the CCP Censors Art in Europe](#) (London: IOC, November 2022), 10, 12.

¹¹⁸ Michael Gardner, [“University Drops Reference to Emperor, Region in New Name,”](#) *University World News* (28 April 2023).

GREECE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1999, 2004–2011, 2013–2019, 2022.

On 17 November 2022, the City Court in Athens found the Tibetan-American Tsela Zoksang, the Hongkongese-American Joey Siu and a Vietnamese-American activist not guilty of the offense of attempting to “pollute, damage, and distort a historical monument,” a charge punishable by up to five years. On 17 October 2021 they had hung a Tibetan flag and a flag in support of freedom in Hong Kong at the Acropolis, while chanting “Boycott Beijing 2022” and “Free Tibet.” Greek police confiscated their flags and detained them. In the case, the defense had argued, among others, that the arrest and prosecution were contrary to the 2012 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in *Fáber versus Hungary* (concerning the display of a flag with historical connotations).

In a related case, Tibetan-Canadian activist Chemi Lhamo, joined by American and British human rights activists, protested on 18 October 2021 during the Olympic Torch Lighting Ceremony in Olympia, shouting slogans and holding a banner reading “No Genocide Games” (a reference to the treatment of the Uyghurs in China) as well as a Tibetan flag. The three were detained and held for more than two days in a local prison, before being released pending trial on the same charge.¹¹⁹

On 7 March 2023, Manolis Psarros ([1970]–), an archaeologist working for the Culture Ministry’s Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades responsible for the preservation and protection of antiquities, was beaten on the island of Mykonos by an unidentified man with a possible accomplice in Athens, and left unconscious and bleeding in the street. The attack was likely related to commercial pressure to extend tourism development and research into building activities in areas of archaeological interest on the island. Every year the archaeological services, tasked with protecting Greece’s ancient heritage, vetoed approximately twenty proposals for property construction on Mykonos. On 14 March 2023, archaeologists launched a strike outside the Culture Ministry in Athens to protest the assault. The Culture Ministry condemned the attack. On [21 March], the Association of Greek Archaeologists filed a legal complaint after another archaeologist (name unknown) had received threatening text messages.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ [“Human Rights Activists Face Legal Battle in Greek Courts Following “No Beijing 2022” Protests at Olympic Torch Ceremony,”](#) *Students for a Free Tibet* (20 January 2022); [“Beijing 2021 Olympics Acropolis Protestors’ Trial Set To Take Place on 17 November 2022,”](#) *Justice Abroad* (15 November 2022); [“Huge Win for Beijing 2021 Olympics Acropolis Protestors in Athens Court,”](#) *Justice Abroad* (17 November 2022); European Court of Human Rights, [Fáber versus Hungary](#) (Application no. 40721/08) (24 October 2012).

¹²⁰ Derek Gatopoulos & Petros Giannakouris, [“Assault on Archaeologist Triggers Protests in Greece,”](#) *AP News* (14 March 2023); Tassos Kokkinidis, [“Archaeologist Tasked with Building Permits in Mykonos Brutally Beaten,”](#) *Greek Reporter* (14 March 2023); [“Μύκονος: Απειλήσαν συνάδελφο του αρχαιολόγου με SMS,”](#) *Η Καθημερινή* (21 March 2023); [“Μύκονος: «Θέλουν να ξεμπερδέψουν με την προστασία των αρχαιοτήτων» –](#)

GRENADA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2022.

GUATEMALA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2022.

On 14 June 2022, the Brussels criminal court ordered the arrest, under the principle of universal jurisdiction, of eight former high-level government officials, including former Guatemalan President Fernando Romeo Lucas García (in office between 1978–1982), for their responsibility in the death and disappearance of three Belgian missionaries during the Civil War (1960–1996). Fathers Walter Voordeckers (1939–1980), Ward Capiiau (1950–1981) and Serge Berten (1952–[1982]) were killed or disappeared, because of their activism for better working conditions on the sugar cane plantations on the south coast. The crimes had never been investigated in Guatemala. Three of the accused had already died and three were already in prison for other crimes, including forced disappearances, committed during the Civil War.¹²¹

On 8 July 2022, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ordered Guatemala to adopt urgent measures to protect Miguel Ángel Gálvez, the judge responsible for sending many high-level politicians and military officials, including former President Efraín Ríos Montt (1926–2018; in office between 1982–1983) to trial, and the investigating judge in the case of *José Miguel Gudiel Alvarez and others v. Guatemala* (also known as the Diario Militar case) on the abduction, forcible disappearance and/or execution by State agents of 183 political opponents during the military government of President Oscar Mejía Víctores (1930–2016; in office between 1983–1986). The IACHR highlighted a series of threats and acts of intimidation and surveillance, especially after the indictment of nine retired military and police officials on 6 March 2022 [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. It further criticized the request made by and granted to the Anti-Terrorism Foundation for a preliminary hearing of Gálvez. It urged Guatemala to ensure justice in the Diario Militar case and to guarantee the judicial independence of judge Gálvez by adopting measures to protect his life and personal integrity. On 15 November, Gálvez announced his resignation and went into exile.

[Η δήλωση του αρχαιολόγου που δέχθηκε επίθεση](#),” *Η Καθημερινή* (24 March 2023); Helene Smith, “[Violence Hits Mykonos over Efforts to Preserve Ancient Heritage](#),” *Guardian* (26 March 2023).

¹²¹ Sanne Weber, “[Universal Jurisdiction: What Can Belgian Justice Bring for Guatemalan Victims?](#)” *Justiceinfo.net* (8 July 2022).

Following Gálvez's resignation, plaintiffs in the *Diario Militar* case, as well as the families of the deceased expressed concern over the dismantling of the case. A number of newly-appointed magistrates were reportedly closely linked to Zury Ríos, who aimed at getting a constitutional ban on running for President for being Efraín Ríos Montt's daughter overturned in the lead-up to the 2023 elections.¹²²

In the second half of June 2023, the International Council of Archives Section on Archives and Human Rights expressed concern about the fate of the extensive archives of the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (Group of Mutual Support) – an NGO established in 1984 and dedicated to helping the families of those missing during the Civil War (1960–1996) – after proceedings against its staff.¹²³

GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2009–2022.

On 24 August 2022, a “national conference” forum, set up in December 2021 by junta leader Colonel Mamady Doumbouya to “heal the deep wounds” of a “painful past,” recommended, among others, the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission and the trial of all perpetrators of violence and human rights violations, after hearings collected 4,796 testimonies of human rights violations committed since Guinea's independence from France in 1958. Doumbouya did not commit himself to the forum's recommendations. The hearings were boycotted by many civil society and opposition groups, criticizing what they considered as a tool to justify the September 2021 coup. Critics further pointed out that a Provisional National Commission on Reconciliation had already submitted its recommendations in June 2016 [See *NCH Annual Report 2017*].¹²⁴

On 29 May 2023, lawyers in the 2009 Conakry Stadium massacre trial [See *NCH Annual Reports 2015–2016, 2018–2022*] went on strike, demanding legal aid and improved working conditions. The Guinean Organization for the Defense of Human and Citizens' Rights expressed concern over the strike and called on authorities to find an urgent solution. Already in mid-May, authorities had announced that

¹²² Jo-Marie Burt & Paulo Estrada, “[La CIDH ordena medidas urgentes para proteger el derecho de víctimas y la independencia del juez Gálvez](#),” *WOLA* (21 July 2022); Jo-Marie Burt & Paulo Estrada, “[Clandestine Structures in Guatemala Consummate Witch Hunt against Judge of “Death Squad Dossier” Case](#),” *El Faro* (15 November 2022); Jo-Marie Burt & Paulo Estrada, “[Guatemala's Death Squad Dossier Case Being Dismantled by Corrupt Political-Legal Systems](#),” *WOLA* (4 April 2023); José Luis Sanz, “[With the Death Squad Dossier, I Understood that Guatemala Is Designed for Impunity](#),” *El Faro* (10 April 2023); “[Diario Militar Case](#),” *Open Society Justice Initiative*” ([no date]).

¹²³ International Council on Archives Section on Archives and Human Rights, [Statement of Concern about the Mutual Support Group in Guatemala \(GAM\)](#) (Press release; June 2023).

¹²⁴ “[A Forum Advocates Speeding Up Trials for Political Violence](#),” *Africa News* (25 August 2022).

money for the trial was close to running out. On 28 September 2022, the thirteenth anniversary of the massacre, the trial had begun.¹²⁵

GUINEA-BISSAU

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

GUYANA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2022.

¹²⁵ [“Guinea Trial to Start on Anniversary of 2009 Massacre,”](#) *Africa News* (17 September 2022); Matthias Raynal, [“Conakry’s Groundbreaking Trial Threatened by Financial Issues,”](#) *Justiceinfo.net* (30 May 2023).

HAITI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2000–2003, 2006, 2008–2009, 2013–2022.

In June 2022, an armed group from Martissant, a district of the capital Port-au-Prince, occupied the palace of justice of the capital during more than a week, setting fire to the archives of the courts of first instance of Port-au-Prince and nearby Croix-des-Bouquets on 14 June 2022.¹²⁶

See also Dominican Republic.

HONDURAS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1998, 2001–2002, 2009–2015, 2022.

On 7 November 2022, police and army forces violently evicted 110 Garifuna people from their homes in Punta Gorda, Roatán, after a judge had ruled that their community, founded in 1797, was an “usurpation” of private land. The judge’s ruling allegedly followed a request for removal by the Norman Jones family, who claimed to have owned the land since 1950. The eviction was in violation of the International Labor Organization’s 1989 Indigenous and Tribal People Convention 169, ratified in 1995 and granting the Garifuna, among others, the rights to their ancestral land. In 2015, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights had ordered the state to protect the Garifuna people’s land and to make reparations for dispossession and other types of past violence. As of November 2022, this had not happened. On 8 November 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the eviction.¹²⁷

See also Nicaragua.

HONG KONG

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

¹²⁶ [“Des Bandits détruisent des archives au tribunal de première instance de Port-au-Prince.”](#) *Le Nouvelliste* (15 June 2022).

¹²⁷ Roman Gressier, [“Under Xiomara Castro, Honduran Garifunas Receive JOH-Style Military Eviction.”](#) *El Faro* (16 November 2022).

HUNGARY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1997, 2004, 2007–2022.

On 2 September 2022, a group of six Holocaust survivors protested at the Parliament in Budapest against the unveiling of a bust of Admiral and Nazi wartime ally Miklós Horthy (1868–1957; in power between 1920–1944) in the office of deputy house speaker and member of the far-right Mi Hazánk party, Dóra Dúró. Following criticism of the decision to unveil the statue, Fidesz house speaker László Kover said that all members of Parliament were allowed to decorate their office freely. Repeated Fidesz governments of Viktor Orbán (2010–present) had pushed a campaign of reappraisal for the Horthy regime, including an overhaul of the history curriculum and support for revisionist historical research [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2020–2022*].¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Judit Presinszky & Andrea Horvath Kawai, "[A Desecration of All of Us](#)," *Transitions* (5 September 2022).

INDIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1997, 2000–2022.

On 15 July 2021, over hundred historians from India and abroad endorsed a letter to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education expressing concern over proposed changes to National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) history textbooks and objecting to allegations that the books contained “unhistorical facts and distortions.” On 24 June 2022, senior historian Irfan Habib criticized the downscaling of the Muslim/Mughal history from most of the NCERT textbooks.

In early April 2023, the NCERT presented changes in history, political science and sociology textbooks for Classes 6 to 12 that would become effective from the year 2023–2024 (starting in September 2023) in more than 20,000 schools, after it had made a “list of rationalized content” in December 2021–June 2022 with the stated aim to reduce the curriculum load to help students make a “speedy recovery” from learning setbacks suffered during the pandemic of 2020–2022. Among the topics affected were: the caste (varnas) system and the treatment of minorities; historical figures such as Mahmud Ghazni of Afghanistan (971–1030) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964); the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and Mughal Empire (1526–1857); chapters on protests and popular movements; passages on sedition; Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination (1948) and the temporary ban of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS; the National Volunteer Corps founded in 1925) afterward [See also NCH *Annual Report 2021*]; the Emergency (1975–1977); and the Gujarat riots (2002; see below). Passages on the theory of evolution in science books were moved to higher grades. This was the third large-scale textbook review since the National Democratic Alliance government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party took charge in 2014 (the first was in 2017, the second in 2019). On 8 June 2023, political scientists Suhas Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav – who were advisers for political science books originally published in 2006 for classes 9 to 12 – wrote to NCERT, asking it to remove their names from the print and digital editions of the books because they did not want to be associated with the new curriculum [See also NCH *Annual Report 2012*].¹²⁹

¹²⁹ [“Historians Write to Parliamentary Panel against Proposed Changes to NCERT History Textbooks,”](#) *The Hindu* (20 July 2021); Irfan Habib, [“Dear NCERT, What History Should India’s Students Read? One That Fetches Votes?”](#) *The Quint* (24 June 2022); Ritika Chopra, [“In NCERT Textbook Prune: Mughal Era, Delhi Sultanate, Emergency Impact and 2002 Riots,”](#) *Indian Express* (5 April 2023); Ritika Chopra, [“Purged from NCERT Textbooks: Hindu Extremists’ Dislike for Gandhi, RSS Ban after Assassination,”](#) *Indian Express* (5 April 2023); Ritika Chopra, [“Express Investigation – Part 1: From Emergency to Gujarat Riots, Lessons of Past Deleted from Textbooks of Future,”](#) *Indian Express* (18 June 2022); Ritika Chopra, [“Express Investigation – Part 2: Key Deletions on Caste, Minorities in Revised School Textbooks,”](#) *Indian Express* (19 June 2022); Ritika Chopra, [“Express Investigation – Part 3: Textbook Revision Slashes Portion in History on Islamic Rulers of India,”](#) *Indian Express* (20 June 2022); Sourav Roy Barman, [“Express Investigation – Part 4: At Table Reworking School Curriculum, 24 with RSS Links,”](#) *Indian Express* (21 June 2022); Hannah Ellis-Petersen, [“Indian Government Accused of Rewriting History after Edits to Schoolbooks,”](#) *Guardian* (6 April 2023); Zoya Mateen, [“India History Debate after Chapter on Mughals Dropped,”](#) *BBC News* (21 April 2023);

On 10 May 2022, Ravi Kant Chandan, a Dalit professor of Hindi at Lucknow University (LU), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, was reportedly surrounded, verbally harassed and threatened by students of the right-wing group Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad. The previous day, Chandan had participated in an online debate on the Gyanvapi mosque dispute [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*], during which he repeated an unverified and little supported claim about the origins of the temple – that Mughal Emperor Muhi al-Din Muhammad (also known as Aurangzeb; 1618–1707) ordered the destruction of a temple, and the ensuing construction of the Gyanvapi mosque, due to a rape that had taken place in the temple – put forward by independent activist and former governor of Madhya Pradesh, Pattabhi Sitaramayya (1880–1957) in his book *Feathers and Stones*, explicitly stating that it was not a fact. After the event, an edited clip of Chandan’s words, excluding his qualifying statement, began circulating on social media, with various Hindu groups accusing him of disrespecting Hindu deities.

On 18 May, police charged Chandan under, among others, Indian Penal Code Section 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion), after a complaint had been submitted by LU student Aman Dubey. The same day, Chandan was reportedly verbally abused with caste-based insults and physically attacked by Karthik Pandey, a LU student leader of the democratic-leaning Samajwadi Chhatra Sabha. Chandan filed complaints for both attacks: Pandey was suspended from LU, while the other complaint had not been registered as of 27 May.¹³⁰

On 31 May 2022, Rajni Bala ([1985/6]–2022), a Hindu history teacher at the Gopalpora school in Kulgam, Jammu and Kashmir, was shot dead by terrorists while entering the school premises. She had worked at the school since 2011. Bala and her family had repeatedly requested authorities to be transferred to another school in a safer district. The request had reportedly been accepted by authorities the night before the attack. On 9 June, all schools in Jammu and Kashmir’s Ramban district observed a two-minute silence.¹³¹

On 2 September 2022, the Supreme Court ordered the release on interim bail of human rights activist Teesta Setalvad [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].¹³²

Shuriah Niazi, “[Government Faces Trust Deficit over Introduction of IKS](#),” *University World News* (2 May 2023); Zoya Mateen, “[NCERT Textbooks: Why Some Indian Scholars Are Disowning Books They Wrote](#),” *BBC News* (19 June 2023).

¹³⁰ Ram Puniyani, “[Gyanvapi Mosque: Why the Issue Is Being Revived](#),” *Counter Currents* (11 May 2022); “[Dalit Professor Subjected to Harassment, Threats, and Physical Assault](#),” *Scholars at Risk Freedom Monitoring Project* ([no date]).

¹³¹ “[Another Targeted Attack in Kashmir, Teacher from Jammu Shot Dead](#),” *Hindustan Times* (1 June 2022); Avijit Pathak, “[That Which Dies When a Teacher Is Killed](#),” *Indian Express* (4 June 2022); Manjiri Sachin Chitre, “[Watch: J&K Schools Pay Tribute to Late Teacher Rajni Bala, Observe 2-Minute Silence](#),” *Hindustan Times* (9 June 2022); “[Rajni Bala](#),” *Starts Unfolded* ([no date]).

¹³² Human Rights Watch, “[India: Free, Drop Charges Against Teesta Setalvad](#)” (28 June 2022); “[Indian Activist Teesta Setalvad Gets Bail in 2002 Riots Case](#),” *Al Jazeera* (2 September 2022).

On 15 September 2022, the Bharatiya Janata Party government of Manipur issued an order that all books on the State's history, culture, tradition, and geography be approved by a fifteen-member State-appointment committee before publication. The order further explained that "some books published on the history, culture, tradition and geography of the State contain material which may either distort facts or disturb the peaceful coexistence amongst various communities." The order came in the wake of a controversy in which a Ph.D. thesis by retired Brigadier Sushil Kumar Karma (published as *The Complexity Called Manipur: Roots, Perceptions & Reality*; 2019) claimed that the princely State of Manipur was made of only 700 square miles of the valley area at the time of its merger with India, implying that the hill areas, inhabited by Naga, Kuki and other tribes, were never a part of Manipur. Organizations that criticized the book claimed that the total area of Manipur that had been merged with India in 1949 was 8,620 square miles, citing the *White Paper on Indian States* published in 1950 by the Government of India. Many historians criticized the governmental order as disproportional and, therefore, as an attack on academic freedom [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2012–2013, 2015, 2018*].¹³³

In October 2022, a Hindu mob invaded a madrassa (Islamic institution of learning) in Karnataka State and placed a Hindu idol inside, and another mob attacked a mosque in Gurgaon, Haryana. Both events reportedly resulted from a bogus Hindutva historical narrative, pushed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, that Muslim rulers had for centuries persecuted the "ancient Hindu" population and had destroyed and turned into mosques up to 36,000 Hindu temples. This narrative also fueled a wave of court petitions, filed by right-wing Hindu groups, claiming that mosques, such as the seventeenth-century Shahi Eidgah mosque in Uttar Pradesh and the seventeenth-century Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi [See above and NCH *Annual Report 2022*], were built on the ruins of destroyed Hindu temples. Despite the absence of evidence, and a national law protecting places of worship from being disputed, judges were allowing these cases.¹³⁴

On 12 October 2022, Nripendra Misra, chair of the Nehru museum and library in New Delhi, requested the declassification of the Bucher papers in the museum's possession because of their "importan[ce] for scholarly research." The papers, containing communication between then second commander-in-chief of the army, General Sir Francis Robert Roy Bucher, and India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), believed to include political and military arguments for the special status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir – a status that was revoked by President Narendra Modi in 2019. In 2021, the

¹³³ Snigdhendhu Bhattacharya, "[Publishing a Book on Manipur? Now You Need the Govt's Approval](#)," *The Wire* (18 September 2022).

¹³⁴ Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "[Thousands of Mosques Targeted as Hindu Nationalists Try to Rewrite India's History](#)," *Guardian* (30 October 2022).

Information Commissioner ruled that releasing the papers was in the “national interest,” but did not order the declassification of the documents.¹³⁵

In January 2023, protesters in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, burned excerpts from the popular sixteenth-century epic *Ramcharitmanas*, a retelling of the *Ramayana* (the story of the victory of Hindu deity Ram over demon King Ravana after the latter kidnapped his wife, Sita) composed by Tulsidas. The protests started when Education Minister Chandrashekhar said in Bihar that the epic was derogatory toward women as well as Dalits and “spread hatred in society.” Hindu nationalist groups, including members from the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), organized counter-protests, demanding critics of the work be arrested. At least five people, accused of desecrating the epic, were effectively arrested and in February police invoked the National Security Act against two of them. BJP politician Nandkishore Gurjar wrote to the Supreme Court demanding the death penalty for Swami Prasad Maurya, a leader of a socially-disadvantaged community, who shared Chandrashekhar’s criticism. In Uttar Pradesh, protesters burnt effigies of Maurya and lodged a police complaint, demanding his arrest.

In mid-June 2023, the film *Adipurush*, inspired by the *Ramayana*, was attacked by audiences and critics. Protests were held in different parts of India while some Hindu groups and priests demanded a ban, including for what they called the disrespectful portrayal of Ram and Ravana as angry figures. The right-wing group Hindu Mahasabha filed a police complaint over the film’s “wrong” costumes, illustrations, and choice of words. The All Indian Cine Workers’ Association said the film hurt the sentiments of Hindus. Opposition leaders criticized the film while two cities in Nepal banned all Bollywood films until an “objectionable” line was deleted from it. The film’s director Om Raut and writer Manoj Muntashir received death threats and lived under police protection.¹³⁶

On 22 January 2023, using emergency powers available under the information technology law, the government blocked the airing of the two-part BBC documentary *The Modi Question* on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, as well as barring the sharing of any clips, on the basis that they were “undermining the sovereignty and integrity of India” and “making unsubstantiated allegations.” The documentary used previously uncovered sources to claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had actively prevented police forces from intervening in the 2002 Gujarat riots in which more than 1,000 people were killed, most of them Muslims, when he was the State’s chief minister. The Foreign Ministry criticized the documentary as biased and showing a “continuing colonial mindset.” On 14 February, tax department officials raided BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai to conduct a “survey,” took documents

¹³⁵ Anisha Dutta, “[India Trying to Prevent Declassification of ‘Sensitive’ 1947 Kashmir Papers](#),” *Guardian* (14 February 2023).

¹³⁶ Geeta Pandey, “[Ramcharitmanas: The Hindu Epic Poem Causing a Political Storm in India](#),” *BBC News* (9 February 2023); “[Adipurush: Why Audiences Turned against this Bollywood Epic](#),” *BBC News* (24 June 2023).

and phones of several journalists and sealed the offices. In [May], the Delhi High Court issued a summons to the BBC in a defamation case reportedly filed by a non-profit based in Gujarat. The suit stated that the documentary cast a slur on the reputation of India, its judiciary, and Prime Minister Modi.

Part one of the documentary highlighted a previously unpublished report, obtained by the BBC from the British Foreign Office, claiming that the riots had “all the hallmarks of an ethnic cleansing” and that Modi was “directly responsible” for the “climate of impunity” that enabled them. Modi had long rejected accusations that he had any responsibility for the violence and never apologized for the riots; in 2013, a Supreme Court panel had ruled that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute him [See *NCH Annual Reports 2003, 2005–2012, 2014–2015, 2017, 2022*].

Students who tried to screen the documentary at university campuses were suspended by the university administration, harassed by Hindu organizations, or arrested for a short time by police, including at Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi (arrest, harassment); Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (harassment); Pondicherry University, Kalapet (harassment); Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer (suspension, harassment); Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (harassment); Delhi University, New Delhi (arrest); Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University, New Delhi (arrest); and University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a petition challenging the ban, which was called “illegal, malicious, arbitrary and unconstitutional.”

On 10 March 2023, University of Delhi (DU) officials expelled Lokesh Chugh, a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Anthropology, and national secretary of the Congress-affiliated National Students’ Union of India (NSUI), for one year, in connection with the screening of the documentary. The NSUI had held a screening of the documentary at the DU Faculty of Arts on 27 January 2023, which the police shut down, detaining 24 students in the process. DU alleged that Chugh was responsible for the situation. Chugh petitioned the Delhi High Court, contending that he was not present at the protest site and did not facilitate, or participate in, the screening. On 27 April 2023, the Court set aside DU’s order and restored Chugh’s admission, holding that the university had failed to afford Chugh the opportunity to respond to its decision.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ [“India Says BBC Film on Modi’s Role in Gujarat Riots ‘Propaganda’,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (19 January 2023); [“India Blocks BBC Documentary on PM Modi from Airing in India,”](#) *Reuters* (22 January 2023); Hannah Ellis-Petersen, [“India Invokes Emergency Laws To Ban BBC Modi Documentary,”](#) *Guardian* (23 January 2023); [“JNU: India Students Angry after Screening of BBC Modi Documentary Blocked,”](#) *BBC News* (25 January 2023); Shuriah Niazi, [“Students Arrested over Banned Modi Documentary Screening,”](#) *University World News* (26 January 2023); Shuriah Niazi, [“Campuses Seething over Government Modi Documentary ‘Ban’,”](#) *University World News* (2 February 2023); Hannah Ellis-Petersen, [“BBC Offices in India Raided by Tax Officials amid Modi Documentary Fallout,”](#) *Guardian* (14 February 2023); Richa Banka, [“Delhi HC Sets Aside DU’s Order to Debar Student over BBC Film,”](#) *Hindustan Times* (27 April 2023); [Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project](#) (no date); [“Indian Court Issues BBC with Summon over Modi Documentary, Says Reports,”](#) *Guardian* (22 May 2023).

On 4 February 2023, Delhi's Saket Court upheld the right of Sharjeel Imam, a Ph.D. student in modern Indian history at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU; New Delhi), and ten others to dissent, and acquitted them in the case involving violence on 13 December 2019 [See NCH *Annual Report 2020*]. Delhi police appealed the ruling. Imam was not released as he faced a probe under the anti-terrorism law known as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in a conspiracy case related to the February 2020 Northeast Delhi riots. The Delhi High Court was to hear Imam's bail plea on 15 March 2023 in the UAPA case.¹³⁸

On 13 April 2023, the University Grants Commission released draft guidelines for the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into undergraduate and postgraduate higher education courses in a move seen as "epistemic decolonization" by some and nationalistic propaganda by others. IKS referred to traditional knowledge which continued to be passed down informally today. Many critics feared that IKS would be defined exclusively from a Hindu nationalist perspective, emphasizing ancient Hindu texts (Vedas and Puranas) only and creating a narrow mindset among students.¹³⁹

In late May 2023, Delhi University's Academic Council passed a motion to remove the chapter "Modern Indian Political Thought" about Pakistan's national poet Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938; often credited with giving birth to the idea of Pakistan), from the political science syllabus. Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh stated that "those who laid the foundation to break India should not be in the syllabus." Iqbal also wrote *Saare Jahan se Achha* (Anthem of the People of Hindustan), a 1904 Urdu language patriotic song for children, which quickly became an anthem of opposition to the British Raj (1858–1947; the rule of the British Crown on the Indian subcontinent).¹⁴⁰

Since its release on streaming service Amazon Prime on 21 July 2023, the Bollywood film *Bawaal* was widely criticized for its "insensitive portrayal" and trivialization of the Holocaust, with Jewish human rights organization Simon Wiesenthal Center asking the platform to remove the film. The film was a love story between a history teacher whose aim was to make Instagram reels to teach World War II and his wife who hoped to save their failing marriage. Some scenes and dialogue drew parallels between

¹³⁸ Apoorvanand, "[Sharjeel Imam's Speech Was Wild and Irresponsible, But Was It 'Sedition'?](#)" *The Wire* (27 January 2019); Shuriah Niazi, "[Sedition Charges against JNU Scholar for Citizenship Speech](#)," *University World News* (30 January 2020); Shuriah Niazi, "[Court Upholds Protesting Students' Rights to Dissent](#)," *University World News* (10 February 2023).

¹³⁹ Shuriah Niazi, "[Government Faces Trust Deficit over Introduction of IKS](#)," *University World News* (2 May 2023).

¹⁴⁰ Milan Sharma, "[Poet Muhammad Iqbal, Who Wrote 'Saare Jahan Se Achha,' Dropped from DU Political Science Syllabus](#)," *India Today* (27 May 2023).

the protagonists' love story and the Holocaust, including a fantasy scene inside a gas chamber and the use of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and the Auschwitz death camp as metaphors.¹⁴¹

INDONESIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2001–2002, 2004–2013, 2015–2019, 2021–2022.

In November 2022, police forcibly broke up a vigil at Jayapura University of Technology and Science to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the abduction and killing of pro-independence leader Theys Eluay (1937–2001). According to reports, police fired tear gas to disperse the students who had raised the Morning Star flag – a symbol of Papuan independence. Fifteen people were arrested, three of whom were subsequently charged with treason and six with offenses relating to violence against police officers. The three students charged with treason remained in detention at the end of 2022, while the others were released on bail.¹⁴²

On 11 January 2023, President Joko Widodo acknowledged “gross human rights violations” between 1965 and 2003 and expressed regret, citing twelve “regrettable” events, including the 1965–1966 massacres (in which at least half a million suspected leftists were murdered); the abduction of democratic activists during protests against Suharto’s presidency (1967–1998) in early 1998; the 1984 killing of civilians by security forces at Tanjung Priok, Jakarta; human rights violations in the region of Papua (where there has been a long-running separatist movement; see above) and during an insurgency of the liberation movement Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) in Aceh province. Human rights violations during the occupation of East Timor (1975–2002) were not mentioned. Widodo’s apology came after he received the report from Komnas HAM (National Commission on Human Rights) that he had commissioned in 2021 to investigate past human rights violations. Widodo was the second president to publicly admit the 1965–1966 massacres, after President Abdurrahman Wahid’s public apology in 2000. Critics said that there were more than twelve atrocities and that Widodo’s expression of regret failed to address government accountability [See NCH *Annual Reports 1996, 2001, 2004–2007, 2009–2013, 2015–2018, 2020*].¹⁴³

See also Australia, Timor-Leste.

¹⁴¹ Geeta Pandey & Cherylann Mollan, “[Bawaal: Bollywood Film Accused of Trivialising Holocaust](#),” *BBC News* (27 July 2023).

¹⁴² Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 193–194.

¹⁴³ Kelly Ng, “[Jokowi Acknowledges Indonesia’s Past Human Rights Violations](#),” *BBC News* (12 January 2023); Saskia Konniger, “[Spijtbetuiging voor wredeheden Indonesië ‘te weinig en te laat’](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (12 January 2023).

IRAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2022.

Throughout 2022, authorities continued to demolish Baha’i cemeteries, as part of a broader pattern of persecution of the Baha’i minority.¹⁴⁴

There was further news in the case of the imprisoned members of the unauthorized Iranian Writers’ Association (IWA) [See NCH *Annual Reports 2020–2022*]. On 9 March 2022, Keyvan Bazhan was released from Evin Prison. Reza Khandan-Mahabadi, the editor of a 19-volume encyclopedia of Iranian fiction, and of a multi-volume book of selected Iranian short stories from the past eighty years, fell sick, most likely with COVID-19, in December 2021. After a stay in hospital, he was summoned back to prison in April 2022. He was released in February 2023.¹⁴⁵

From May to October 2022, the authorities erected fresh concrete walls around the Khavaran mass graves outside Tehran where the remains of several hundred political dissidents executed secretly in 1988 (“the 1988 prison massacres”) were buried, sparking concerns that they could more easily destroy or tamper with the mass gravesite. Five security cameras were erected both inside the gravesite and in the street outside to intimidate mourning families and deter members of the public from visiting the site to pay their respects. Since the massacre occurred, the authorities had systematically and deliberately concealed and destroyed key evidence by repeatedly bulldozing over confirmed or suspected mass grave sites and destroying ad hoc grave markings and trees planted by families. No perpetrators (including President Ebrahim Raisi, who was a member of the 1988 death commissions, and other leading officials) were brought to justice for the past and ongoing crimes against humanity linked to the 1988 “prison massacres” [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2008–2009, 2017, 2021–2022*].¹⁴⁶

In July 2022, historian and documentary maker Hossein Dehbashi was sentenced to six months in prison despite the fact that the Culture and Media Prosecutor’s Office had disagreed with the prosecution and closed the case. Dehbashi was known for producing a promotional documentary for 2013 presidential candidate Hassan Rouhani (president of Iran from 2013 to 2021). In 2015, he had launched and directed the Iran Oral History Project (featuring interviews with key political figures from the past four decades) in collaboration with the National Library and Documentation Center.

¹⁴⁴ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 199.

¹⁴⁵ International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2022* (London: PEN, 2023), 81–83.

¹⁴⁶ Amnesty International, “[Iran: Walls Erected around Graves of Massacre Victims Show Urgent Need for International Investigation](#)” (13 September 2022); Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 200.

Dehbashi had a history of harassment. In November 2018, he was summoned to appear before the Culture and Media Court to respond to accusations from the Ministry of Intelligence, but no further explanation was given. In 2019, the Ministry of Health filed a complaint against him for “disturbing public opinion,” for which he was sentenced to four months in prison (upheld on appeal). In 2020, Dehbashi was charged with “spreading falsehood,” “propaganda against the regime,” and “insulting the clergy,” as a result of a complaint brought by the Ministry of Intelligence.¹⁴⁷

On 9 August 2022, a day after Tehran and Washington wound up indirect talks in Vienna to revive a 2015 nuclear pact, Franco-Iranian Fariba Adelkhah (1959–), a social and political anthropologist, specialist in Shia Islam, and director of research at Sciences Po’s Center for International Studies in Paris, was released on furlough for five days, which was not extended. On 11 February 2023, she was released. On 5 June, the fourth anniversary of her detention, the Committee to Support Fariba Adelkhah and Roland Marshall called for the return of her identification documents and her right to travel back to France [See NCH *Annual Reports 2020–2021*].

On 12 August 2022, novelist Salman Rushdie (1947–), a British-American writer of several historical novels and a historian by training, was stabbed several times in a New York theater by a 24-year-old man reportedly sympathetic to the causes of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran. Rushdie survived the murder attempt. His historical novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) had been considered blasphemous by many Muslims and in February 1989 Iran’s leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had issued a fatwa ordering the killing of the author. From that time onward, Rushdie had received many death threats [See NCH *Annual Reports 1996, 1998–1999, 2013, 2022*].¹⁴⁸

In the context of anti-regime protests following the killing of law student Mahsa Amini (1999–2022) on 16 September 2022, a number of students were arrested:

- On 22 September 2022, Setayesh Daman Afshan, a master student of Ancient Iranian History at Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, was arrested and imprisoned in Sepidar Prison, Ahvaz.¹⁴⁹
- On 30 October 2022, Milad Rabiei, a history student at the University of Mazandaran, was arrested in Babolsar. He was later released on bail.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ HRANA (Human Rights Activists News Agency), “[Documentary Maker Hossein Dehbashi Sentenced](#)” (25 July 2022); HRANA, “[Popular Documentary Producer Summoned to Culture and Media Court](#)” (5 November 2018); HRANA, “[A Daily Overview of Human Rights Violations in Iran for January 20, 2019](#)” (20 January 2019).

¹⁴⁸ George Wright & Nomia Iqbal, “[Salman Rushdie Stabbing Suspect Charged with Attempted Murder](#),” *BBC News* (14 August 2022).

¹⁴⁹ “[List of Detainees in Iran since 16/09/2022](#),” *CFPPI* ([ongoing database]).

¹⁵⁰ “[A Comprehensive Report of the First 82 Days of Nationwide Protests in Iran](#),” *HRANA* (8 December 2022); “[List Created by the Volunteer Committee to Follow-Up on the Situation of Detainees](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (last updated 30 October 2022); “[Kashowra](#),” *Telegram* (1 November 2022).

- On 4 January 2023, the Kashan Revolutionary Court sentenced Alireza Ghamgosar, an archaeology student at Kashan University, to two years in prison on the charge of “assembly and collusion against national security.” On [20 or 28] September 2022, police forces had arrested Ghamgosar in Rasht.¹⁵¹

In October 2022, the government barred people from visiting the Pasargadae and Persepolis – ancient sites dating back to the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550–330 BCE) and containing the Tomb of Cyrus II of Persia (also known as Cyrus the Great; c. 600–530 BCE) – between 27 and 29 October (considered by historians as the day of Cyrus’s death) in fear of antigovernment protests. Since 2016, when thousands of people had gathered at the site, chanting antigovernment slogans such as “Iran is our homeland, Cyrus is our father,” measures against commemorations had intensified.¹⁵²

On 18 November 2022, in the context of anti-government protests following the killing of law student Mahsa Amini (1999–2022) on 16 September 2022, protestors set fire to the ancestral home of founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Khomeini (1902–1989) in Khomein, which had been converted into a museum commemorating his life.¹⁵³

On 8 May 2023, Yousef Mehrdad and Sadrollah Fazeli Zare were hanged after they had been convicted of “blasphemy” for “insulting the Prophet Muhammad” and “promoting atheism.” They had been arrested in May 2020 for their involvement in a Telegram channel called Critique of Superstition and Religion, and had spent months in solitary confinement in Arak prison. In August 2022, a group of United Nations human rights experts had voiced concern over the government’s blasphemy laws, urging the government to decriminalize blasphemy and “ensure the right to freedom of religion or belief and freedom of opinion and expression.”¹⁵⁴

See also Argentina.

¹⁵¹ [“Iran Protests: Two Students Sentenced to a Total of Six Years,”](#) *HRANA* (4 January 2023); [“List of Detainees in Iran since 16/09/2022,”](#) *CFPPI* ([ongoing database]).

¹⁵² [“Iran’s Regime Bans Gathering At Pasargadae In Fear Of Protests,”](#) *Iran International* (29 October 2022).

¹⁵³ [“Iranian Protesters Set Fire to Ayatollah Khomeini’s House,”](#) *BBC News* (18 November 2022).

¹⁵⁴ United Nations Office of the High Commission on Human Rights, [“Iran: UN Experts Alarmed by Escalating Religious Persecution,”](#) (press release; 22 August 2022); [“Iran Hangs Two Men for Blasphemy as Executions Rise amid Unrest,”](#) *Guardian* (8 May 2023); Maziar Motamedi, [“Iran Executes Two ‘Quran Burners’ for Blasphemy,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (8 May 2023).

IRAQ

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000–2022.

In April 2022, a Pax for Peace report showed how residents of Hawija, northern Iraq, continued to suffer from the June 2015 Dutch bombing of a munitions factory that killed at least 85 civilians and injured dozens more. Residents demanded an apology, compensation, and a meaningful explanation of what had occurred.¹⁵⁵

On 19 April 2023, the United Nations (UN) Committee on Enforced Disappearances issued its final report on disappearances in Iraq since 1968, estimated at between 250,000 and 1,000,000 cases. The report identified five waves: the Ba’ath era in federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region (1968–2003); from the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation to the pre-Da’esh period (2003–2014); the proclamation by Da’esh (Islamic State) of an Islamic caliphate over part of the territory of Iraq and military operations against Da’esh (2014–2017); the anti-government protests (2018–2020), and, finally, ongoing patterns (2020–). The UN Committee urged the government to include enforced disappearances as a separate offense in national legislation (as it could not yet be prosecuted) and to establish a comprehensive search and investigation strategy.¹⁵⁶

IRELAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2013, 2015–2016, 2021.

In its 2022 observations on Ireland’s fifth periodic report, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC) raised concern at gaps in the government’s response to past abuse of women and children who resided or were confined in State-funded institutions operated until the late 1990s by religious orders. These institutions included “mother and baby homes” for unmarried women to give birth, “Magdalene laundries” where women and girls were forced to live and work, and institutional homes for children. The HRC criticized deficits in the State redress system offered to survivors. It called for a transitional justice mechanism to establish the truth of what happened in these institutions and to ensure effective remedies, including compensation.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 322.

¹⁵⁶ [“Iraq: Rights Experts Call for New Laws to End ‘Waves of Disappearance’,”](#) *UN News* (4 April 2023).

¹⁵⁷ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 205–206.

In April 2023, Trinity College in Dublin (founded in 1592) decided to de-name the Berkeley Library (opened in 1967) because the renowned philosopher and bishop of Cloyne, George Berkeley (1685–1753), after whom it was named, had been a slave owner on Rhode Island in America in 1730–1731 and a theorist of slavery and racial discrimination.¹⁵⁸

See also United Kingdom.

ISRAEL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000–2003, 2008–2014, 2016–2022.

On 31 July 2022, a group of 120 faculty members at Ben-Gurion University (BGU), Beersheba, signed a letter calling on BGU to withdraw its summoning of Arab student Watan Madi for a disciplinary hearing, after she had quoted an article by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008) that included the word *shahid* – the Arabic for martyr that BGU claimed usually referred to terrorists – during a memorial event to mark 15 May, known by Palestinians as Nakba Day (commemorating the 1948 Declaration of Independence of Israel and the accompanying ethnic cleansing of Palestinians). The summons followed a complaint filed by the BGU chapter of the right-wing group Im Tirtzu [See also NCH *Annual Report 2012*].¹⁵⁹

On 1 August 2022, following the declassification of hundreds of previously classified pages related to the 1956 Kafr Qasem (Kafr Qasim) massacre, Israeli newspaper Haaretz called on the State to “establish an independent committee that will reconsider the State’s policy on publishing historical documents and release information about the country’s past to the public.” The release of the Kafr Qasem records had followed a five-year lawsuit between historian Adam Raz and the research institute Akevot against the State, to force the Israel Defense Forces Archive to release its documents. Haaretz had previously been among the petitioners unsuccessfully seeking the release of classified documents related to the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre [See NCH *Annual Reports 2000, 2010, 2017, 2019–2020*].¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ John Walshe, “[Trinity College Dublin Ponders De-naming Berkeley Library](#),” *University World News* (21 March 2023); John Walshe & Nathan Greenfield, “[Trinity College Dublin Opts to De-name Berkeley Library](#),” *University World News* (28 April 2023).

¹⁵⁹ Nati Yefet, “[120 Israeli Academics Demand Scrapping Complaint Against Student Who Quoted Palestinian Poet](#),” *Haaretz* (31 July 2022).

¹⁶⁰ “[There Are Thousands of Classified Pages Israel Has Yet to Reveal, for the Sake of Healing](#),” *Haaretz* (Editorial; 1 August 2022).

In [January] 2023, Minister of Culture Miki Zohar pledged to “revoke funding that promotes our enemy’s narrative,” to withhold grants from films that “present Israeli soldiers as murderers,” and to require filmmakers to sign a declaration stating that they would not use State funding to create content that “harms the State of Israel or Israel Defense Forces soldiers.” He also said that two producers were required to return their government-funded grants, including Noam Sheizag and Idit Avrahami’s *H2: The Occupation Lab*, a documentary tracking the history of the occupation of Hebron by Israeli forces since the 1967 Six-Day War. Zohar’s comments followed a pressure campaign by far-right activist Shai Glick, who had previously been instrumental in the cancelation of a public screening of the documentary in Pardes Hanna.¹⁶¹

On 1 January 2023, two Jewish extremists desecrated more than thirty graves at the Protestant Cemetery on Mount Zion, close to Jerusalem’s walled Old City. The Anglican Church said the targeting of the crosses clearly suggested that “these criminal acts were motivated by religious bigotry and hatred against Christians.” The same cemetery was vandalized in a similar way nine years ago.¹⁶²

In late May 2023, David Ben Shlomo, an archaeologist at the Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology based at Ariel University in the occupied West Bank, had his lecture at the International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, held in Copenhagen from 22 to 26 May 2023, canceled following pressure from fellow researchers. Ben Shlomo’s affiliation with Ariel University, a settlement university in the occupied territories, had not been mentioned in the congress program. Excavating in occupied territories was considered a violation under international humanitarian and human rights law and Article 2 of 1993 Oslo Accords Annex III because archaeological sites and antiquities were the property of the occupied territory. In addition, the 2014 World Archaeological Congress Dead Sea Accord had “call[ed] on all States and non-State actors ... to refrain from archaeological excavation in occupied territory.” The details of Ben Shlomo’s talk – on findings from the Iron Age in the southern Jordan Valley, located in the occupied West Bank – were removed from the conference website after the cancelation of his presentation.¹⁶³

See also Australia, Egypt, Germany, Palestine, Tunisia.

¹⁶¹ Noa Yachot, “[‘Attack on Freedom’: Israel Moves to Claw Back State Funds from Critical Films](#),” *Guardian* (21 January 2023).

¹⁶² “[Anglican Church and UK Condemn Desecration of Jerusalem Graves](#),” *BBC News* (5 January 2023).

¹⁶³ Oren Ziv, “[After Backlash, Conference Drops Israeli Archeologist for Settlement University Ties](#),” *+972 Magazine* (28 May 2023); World Archaeological Congress, [The WAC Dead Sea Accord: On the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#) (2014); Ziv Stahl, *Appropriating the Past: Israel’s Archaeological Practices in the Westbank* (s.l.: Emek Shaveh & Yesh Din, 2017).

ITALY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2001, 2003, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2016–2019, 2021–2022.

See United States.

IVORY COAST (Côte d’Ivoire)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2004, 2006–2021.

JAMAICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017–2018.

JAPAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2022.

On 13 August 2022, two days before the 77th anniversary of Japan’s surrender in World War II, Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine – a memorial for 2,5 million victims of war, including since 1978 fourteen convicted war criminals, which was considered a glorification of a militaristic and colonial past – in Tokyo. South Korea’s foreign minister expressed “deep concern” over the shrine’s glorification of “Japan’s past war of aggression.” On 15 August, the ministers of economic security and disaster reconstruction and the policy head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party also visited the shrine [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*].¹⁶⁴

In early 2023, plans emerged to institutionalize the revised appointment procedure in an amendment to the law on the Science Council of Japan [See NCH *Annual Report 2021*].¹⁶⁵

On 3 March 2023, 1994 Nobel Literature Prize laureate Ōe Kenzaburō (1935–2023) died. In 2005, Ōe and historian Ienaga Saburō (1913–2002) [See NCH *Annual Reports 1998, 2001*] had been accused of defamation in their respective works, *Okinawa Notes* (1970) and *The Pacific War* (1968), claiming that the “group suicides” of civilians on Zamami and Tokashiki islands during the 1945 Battle of Okinawa had in fact been ordered by Japanese military. Ōe and his publisher had been sued by Umezawa Yutaka, a former garrison commander on Zamami island, and Akamatsu Hidekazu, brother of the late former commanding officer on Tokashiki island Akamatsu Yoshitsugu, seeking huge damages and a publication ban on his books. In particular, Ōe had asserted that thousands of people had been coerced into suicide by the Japanese military at the end of World War II, by telling them that advancing American troops would rape, torture, and murder them. However, Ōe had not identified either of the commanding officers by name or said that they had personally ordered the suicides. Ienaga’s book,

¹⁶⁴ [Japanese Minister Visits Yasukuni Shrine for War Dead: Report](#),” *Al Jazeera* (13 August 2022); Justin McCurry, “[Japan Ministers Visit War Shrine as South Korea Calls for End to Historical Tensions](#),” *Guardian* (15 August 2022).

¹⁶⁵ Science Council of Japan, “[Explanation Note on the Statement of the General Assembly \(December 2022\) Calling Upon the Government To Reconsider Its Planned Amendment of the Law Concerning the Science Council of Japan](#)” (Memo; 7 February 2023).

however, mentioned Umezawa, while a passage regarding Akamatsu's suicide order on Tokashiki had reportedly been expunged from his book in 1986. On 28 March 2008, the Osaka District Court had dismissed the defamation suit, recognizing the "deep involvement" of the Japanese army in the mass suicides, but without determining whether the wartime commanders had ordered them. Its verdict came in the wake of the Education Ministry's 2007 decision to delete references to the military from descriptions of "group suicides" in history textbooks [See NCH *Annual Reports 2008–2009*]. The plaintiffs – who received support of the revisionist association Jiyūshugi shikan kenkyūkai (Study Group for a Liberal View of History) [See NCH *Annual Reports 2001–2002, 2020*] – appealed the verdict twice (in October 2008 for the Osaka High Court and in 2011 for the Supreme Court), but both times the suit was decided in Ōe's favor. In the final one, the Supreme Court ruled that "the military was deeply involved in the mass suicides."¹⁶⁶

See also Philippines, United States.

JORDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003–2004, 2015, 2018, 2022.

In March 2022, the authorities used the Law of Crime Prevention to arrest at least 150 activists, journalists, teachers and others in an apparent effort to stop them from organizing multiple protests, including one to commemorate youth-led anti-government protests that took place in March 2011. The authorities released all of them shortly after their arrest.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ "[Nobel Prize-Winning Author Kenzaburo Oe Dies](#)," *BBC News* (13 March 2023); Ōe Kenzaburō, "[Misreading, Espionage and 'Beautiful Martyrdom': On Hearing the Okinawa 'Mass Suicides' Suit Court Verdict](#)," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* (3 October 2008); Steve Rabson, "[Case Dismissed: Osaka Court Upholds Novelist Oe Kenzaburo for Writing that the Japanese Military Ordered 'Group Suicides' in the Battle of Okinawa](#)," *Japan Focus* (1 April 2008).

¹⁶⁷ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 215.

KAZAKHSTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999–2001, 2007, 2012, 2022.

KENYA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2000, 2002–2005, 2007, 2009–2018, 2020–2022.

On 26 October 2016, Amani Mohammed Mwafujo, a Kiswahili and history teacher at the Tawheed Secondary School, Kwale County, was arrested on terrorism charges, including membership in the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab military group. By March 2019, only two witnesses had testified and an arrest warrant had been issued against the investigating officer for failing to respond to a court summons. On 17 March 2022, Mwafujo was acquitted of all charges. When his family requested to pick him up from the court, the day of his release was postponed twice. On 22 March, six men stopped the matatu (a shared taxi) with which Mwafujo and his family were going home, and abducted him. On 3 September 2022, he resurfaced. His family refused to disclose details, as they were warned by the abductors not to speak to the media.¹⁶⁸

On 23 August 2022, lawyers of the Kipsigis and Talai peoples forced off their ancestral lands around Kericho, a major tea-growing region in the Rift Valley, by British settlers during colonial rule took their case against the United Kingdom (UK) to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. In 2021, six United Nations Special Rapporteurs had jointly expressed “serious concern” at the failure of the UK to offer a public apology or acknowledge their share of responsibility for these colonial-era abuses. The lawyers argued that the British army and colonial administrators had used rape, murder, and arson to seize swathes of arable land in Kericho from its traditional owners.¹⁶⁹

KOREA, NORTH

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

See Korea, South.

¹⁶⁸ Farhiya Hussein, “[Mombasa Man Resurfaces after Five Months in ‘Captivity’](#),” *Nation* (5 September 2022).

¹⁶⁹ AFP, “[Kenyans Taking UK to EU Court over Colonial-Era Abuses](#),” *Capital News* (24 August 2022); United Nations Mandates, [Allegations Letter Regarding Human Rights Violations During the Precolonial and Colonial Period in Western Kenya](#) (UN Doc. AL GBR 5/2021) (31 May 2021).

KOREA, SOUTH

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1998–2001, 2003, 2006, 2008–2010, 2012–2013, 2016–2022.

In July 2022, police raided the home of researcher Jeong Dae-il, an expert in the North Korean Juche ideology at the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU), and confiscated his cellphone, computers, research materials, and a copy of *With the Century*, a memoir by former North Korean President Kim Il-sung (1912–1994), considered controversial in South Korea, on charges of violating the National Security Act (NSA), which prohibits possessing documents associated with anti-State groups. Months earlier, police had raided a publishing house that had printed Kim’s memoir, claiming a violation of the NSA. The police warrant stated that Jeong had possibly been in communication with this publisher regarding the production of the memoir.¹⁷⁰

On 6 July 2022, the National Intelligence Service filed a complaint against two of its former chiefs, Suh Hoon and Park Jie-won, who led the agency during the presidency of Moon Jae-in (in office between 2017–2022), for respectively falsifying evidence and terminating an investigation related to the 2019 deportation of two North Korean fishermen, and destroying intelligence records related to the 2020 shooting of a South Korean fisheries official by North Korean troops.¹⁷¹

On 24 August 2022, a 2020 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) – set up to investigate, among others, human rights violations committed during the military governments of Park Chung Hee (1917–1979; in office as president between 1962–1979), Chun Doo-hwan (1931–2021; in office as president between 1980–1988) and Roh Tae-woo (1932–2021; in office as president between 1988–1993) – found these regimes responsible for atrocities, including killings, enslavement, and rape committed at Brothers Home (a State-funded facility for thousands of “vagrants,” including homeless and disabled people, as well as children, who were indiscriminately kidnapped, with the aim of “beautifying” the streets) from the 1960s to the 1980s. At least 657 people were killed at Brothers Home according to a preliminary examination of records by the commission. No one had yet been held accountable. Jung Geun-sik, the TRC’s chairperson, urged the government to issue a formal apology and explore ways to ease the suffering of the victims.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Scholars at Risk, [Free to Think 2022](#) (New York: SAR, 2022).

¹⁷¹ “[South Korean Spy Agency Files Complaints against Ex-Chiefs Over N.Korea Cases](#),” *Reuters* (6 July 2022).

¹⁷² “[South Korea Military Gov’ts Blamed for Abuses, Deaths at Facility](#),” *Al Jazeera* (24 August 2022); Republic of Korea’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “[About the Commission](#),” ([no date]).

On 31 March 2023, Chun Woo-won, the grandson of South Korea's last military dictator General Chun Doo-hwan (ruled 1980–1988), apologized to relatives of those killed during the 18 May 1980 Gwangju Uprising. Gwangju had been the center of pro-democracy protests against martial law, imposed by Chun after he led a coup, with the crackdown leaving more than two hundred protesters dead or missing, according to official figures [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2012, 2017–2018, 2022*].¹⁷³

See also Japan, Vietnam.

KOSOVO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2021–2022. For previous entries: *see* Serbia.

As of July 2022, there existed no central archive for the Kosovo War (1998–1999), forcing human rights groups, amateur archivists and the State Archives to preserve records separately, often under poor preservation circumstances and without the appropriate security mechanisms.

In late July 2022, Baki Svirca, author of a book on the plundering and destruction of Kosovo's archives by Serbian forces before and during the Kosovo War, called on the United Nations (UN) to hand over the archival documents that were created while Kosovo was a UN protectorate (1999–2008).¹⁷⁴

A 30 August 2022 study by the Humanitarian Law Center in Pristina found that the memorialization of the Kosovo War (1998–1999) was characterized by inaccurate data, nationalist language, ethnic hatred, and the exclusion of groups of victims. It expressed concern that a large number of sites “where serious violations of human rights occurred have faded from the collective memory of our society.”¹⁷⁵

On [16] December 2022, the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) in The Hague sentenced former Kosovo Liberation Army Commander Salih Mustafa to 26 years in prison for war crimes, including torture and arbitrary detention, committed during the Kosovo War (1998–1999). The sentence was hailed as a landmark first verdict by the KSC.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Nadeem Shad, “[S Korea Dictator’s Grandson Sorry for 1980 Gwangju Crackdown](#),” *BBC News* (31 March 2023).

¹⁷⁴ Serbeze Haxhijaj, “[Fractured History: Why Kosovo Has No Proper Wartime Archive](#),” *Balkan Insight* (25 July 2022).

¹⁷⁵ Perparim Isufi, “[Kosovo Urged to Take ‘Inclusive Approach’ to War Memorialization](#),” *Balkan Insight* (30 August 2022).

¹⁷⁶ Xhorxhina Bami, “[Kosovo Ex-Guerrilla Convicted of War Crimes by Hague Court](#),” *Balkan Insight* (16 December 2022).

On 2 May 2023, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti reached a co-operation agreement under European Union mediation to locate and identify people still missing from the 1998–1999 war. According to the European Union, 1,621 people remained unaccounted for, mostly Kosovo Albanians. The deal included the use of satellite data and other advanced technology, including laser mapping, to detect mass graves, the sharing of official files (including “all materials, notes, orders, documents, videos, audio recordings, and any other documents including those having classified status”) and the establishment of a Joint Commission on missing people.¹⁷⁷

KUWAIT

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999–2000, 2004–2005, 2018, 2021.

KYRGYZSTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010–2013, 2016–2017, 2021–2022.

¹⁷⁷ [“Declaration of President Aleksandar Vučić and Prime Minister Albin Kurti on Missing Persons”](#) (press release; 2 May 2023); Kathryn Armstrong, [“Kosovo and Serbia Agree to Help Find War’s Missing,”](#) *BBC News* (2 May 2023).

LAOS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: –.

As 15 December 2022 marked the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of civil society leader Sombath Somphone (1952–), civil society organizations and individuals around the world called on Lao authorities to determine his fate and whereabouts and deliver justice, truth, and reparation to his family members.¹⁷⁸

LATVIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2006, 2008, 2015–2016, 2019, 2022.

On 26 August 2022, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee requested the government to stop the demolition of the Monument to the Liberators of Soviet Latvia and Riga from the German Fascist Invaders in Pārdaugava, and to preserve the already demolished parts, after it had received a complaint that the demolition constituted a violation of the 1966 UN International Pact on Civil and Political Rights. However, the final element of the monument, an obelisk, had already been destroyed the previous day. In June 2022, parliament had approved a law that allowed municipalities to remove up to three hundred Soviet statues, monuments, and memorials.¹⁷⁹

See also Russia.

LEBANON

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2003, 2006–2022.

In 2022, Human Rights Watch found multiple failures, gross negligence, and procedural violations in the case of assassinated critic and archivist Lokman Slim (1962–2021) [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*].¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 228.

¹⁷⁹ Samira Ataei, “‘Een tank is een moordwapen, geen monument’” (interview with Marek Tamm), *De Standaard* (19 August 2022), 12; “[UN Committee Belatedly Requests To Stop Soviet Victory Monument’s Demolition in Pārdaugava](#),” *Baltic News Network* (30 August 2022).

¹⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 378.

On 4 August 2022, the second anniversary of the Beirut port explosion in which 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate ignited in a port warehouse killing more than two hundred people and injuring more than seven thousand, survivors, family members and several human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to set up an independent fact-finding mission. A Lebanese investigation had been stymied by political interference, including more than 25 requests by politicians to dismiss leading judge Fadi Sawan, who was dismissed in February 2021, and his successor Tarek Bitar, who had his investigation suspended in December 2021.

On 23 February 2023, the High Court of Justice in London ruled that the London-registered chemical trading firm Savaro Ltd. was liable for the blast, because of their suspected chartering of the shipment of ammonium nitrate in 2013 that ended up in the Beirut warehouse.¹⁸¹

On 25 January 2023, UNESCO added the Rachid Karamah International Fair in Tripoli, designed in 1962 by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, to the list of World Heritage Sites in danger, due to a lack of financial resources allocated to its maintenance and the risk of development projects violating the integrity of the 70-hectare complex.¹⁸²

LIBERIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2001, 2004–2015, 2018, 2021.

See France.

LIBYA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2003, 2005–2021.

In [March] 2023, requests were made to the Antiquities Department and the government to protect the UNESCO World Heritage Site Sabratha, a Phoenician trading post (potentially dating back to the fifth century BCE) that was rebuilt in the second and third century as one of the most important cities of the

¹⁸¹ Tessa Fox, "[Two Years after Beirut Blast, Lawsuits Raise Hopes for Justice](#)," *Al Jazeera* (4 August 2022); Kareem Chehayeb, "[UK Ruling Delivers Rare Victory for Beirut Blast Victims](#)," *AP News* (23 February 2023).

¹⁸² Dominic Dudley, "[UN Raises Alarm Over World Heritage Sites In Yemen and Lebanon](#)," *Forbes* (25 January 2023).

Roman “Regio Tripolitana.” In July 2016, Sabratha and four other Libyan heritage sites were included in the List of World Heritage in Danger, due to the damage and continuing threat of damage caused by the Civil War (2014–), and to the repeated targeting by vandals.¹⁸³

LITHUANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005, 2009, 2015, 2018, 2021–2022.

¹⁸³ [“Calls to Protect Libyan Heritage Site Spoilt by Vandals,”](#) *Africa News* (6 March 2023).

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, 2021.

MALAYSIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2002, 2007–2008, 2010–2011, 2016–2017, 2019–2022.

In July 2022, the play *A Notional History* [sic] (2019), produced by the Kuala Lumpur-based Five Arts Center, debuted. With the help of history textbooks, inherited memories, official narratives, and video interviews, it aimed at providing a multi-perspective view on the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960; also known as the Anti-British National Liberation War), a guerilla war in which Communist pro-independence fighters of the Malayan National Liberation Army fought forces of the British Empire and Commonwealth, leading to the death of at least 13,500 people [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2012–2013*].

The play contained scenes from *Revolusi '48* (2008), a never-released documentary by political graphic designer and illustrator Fahmi Reza in which exiled Communist guerrillas tell their story on the war and the independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957. Ever since the documentary was made, Fahmi had been the subject of verbal and non-verbal threats. The play also showed footage of a 2018 public forum in Kuala Lumpur called “Should We Rewrite Our History Textbooks,” in which Fahmi had been publicly attacked by right-wing groups, triggering a social media campaign against her.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Nabila Azlan, “[‘A Notional History’ Looks Back in Order To Inch Forward](#),” *Bandar Aktiviti Seni* (15 July 2022); Marco Ferrarese, “[‘Grief and Memory’: Challenging Malaysia’s Historical Narratives](#),” *Al Jazeera* (1 September 2022).

MALDIVES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2004, 2006, 2009–2010, 2013, 2020–2021.

MALI

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011, 2013–2021.

On 5 February 2023, the junta expelled the head of the human rights division of the United Nations (UN) Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Guillaume Ngefa Atonodok Andali, after he had criticized the regime at a UN Security Council briefing on 27 January. Throughout 2022, there had been no progress in ensuring accountability for large-scale atrocities implicating ethnic militias and government soldiers, and no efforts had been made to implement the recommendations of the UN International Commission of Inquiry into war crimes committed by security forces and crimes against humanity committed by Islamist armed groups and ethnic militias between 2012 and 2018.¹⁸⁵

See also France.

MALTA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2012, 2021.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2015.

MAURITANIA

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

¹⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 408; “[Mali Junta Expels UN Mission’s Human Rights Chief](#),” *Africa News* (6 February 2023).

MAURITIUS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2012.

See United Kingdom.

MEXICO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999, 2001–2022.

On 12 August 2022, poet, historian and political scientist Enrique Márquez Jaramillo (1950–), former Executive Director of Cultural Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, received two threats to his personal phone after criticizing the government’s so-called “Fourth Transformation” in his columns in the newspaper *El Universal*. He decided to suspend the publication of his next article due to appear the next day. Márquez had been part of the peace negotiation commission with the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation – See NCH *Annual Reports 1997, 1999*) in 1994 and published 32 books on law, political science and history, and literature. He was awarded the National Prize for Science and Cultural Dissemination Journalism in 2010. The “Fourth Transformation” referred to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s campaign against “privileged abuses” ((including ending corruption and expanding social programs) allegedly comparable to three previous transformations: the War of Independence (1810–1821), the Reform War (1858–1861), and the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917)).¹⁸⁶

On 18 August 2022, the Comisión para la Verdad y Acceso a la Justicia del caso Ayotzinapa (Commission for Truth and Access to Justice in the Ayotzinapa case) published a redacted report about the 2014 Ayotzinapa case of 43 disappeared and murdered students [See NCH *Annual Reports 2015, 2021–2022*]. Its chairman, Alejandro Encinas, said that the official involvement in the disappearances constituted a “State crime,” that high-level officials of the administration of then President Enrique Peña Nieto (in office between 2012–2018) orchestrated a cover-up, and that military personnel bore responsibility either directly or through negligence. The report refuted the so-called “historical truth” – the official version that the students were killed by gang members and burned in a dump on the outskirts of Iguala – and criticized the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SENEDA; Secretariat of National Defense) and the Fiscalía General de la República (Attorney General’s Office) for delays in handing

¹⁸⁶ International PEN, *Case List 2022* (London: PEN, 2023), 33.

over information. Already on 28 March 2022, the Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes (GIEI; Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts), created by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in 2014, had released a report revealing that the armed forces had intentionally destroyed, falsified, and hidden information during and following the 2014 kidnapping.

In September 2022, Futuro Investigates obtained an unredacted copy of the Commission's report from a confidential source in the government, suggesting that the Mexican army was an accomplice in covering up the crimes. The journalist who on 24 September 2022 reported about this unredacted version, Peniley Ramírez, was seriously harassed. On 27 September 2022, special prosecutor and head of the investigation Omar Gómez Trejo resigned, according to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador because he "disagreed with the procedures that were followed." His resignation came after two dozen arrest warrants were canceled. On 15 November, the IACHR published a report saying that there remained "persistent structures within the State apparatus that sought to cover up the crime," and that the government had a duty to the families of the disappeared to clarify the role of the armed forces in the disappearances.¹⁸⁷

On 30 September 2022, in the run-up to the 54th anniversary of the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, in which troops fired on and killed hundreds of student protesters, the National Security Archive published a previously classified report by the United States Central Information Agency (CIA) concluding that then Secretary of the Interior Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1922–2022) "share[d] heavily in the blame." In March 2009, despite ample documentation for his involvement, a federal court had cleared Echeverría from the charge of genocide for the massacre [See NCH *Annual Reports 2001–2004, 2006–2010, 2015, 2019*].¹⁸⁸

See also United States.

¹⁸⁷ "[Mexico Missing Students: Parents Angry at Military's Obstruction](#)," *BBC News* (30 March 2022); Kate Doyle & Claire Dorfman, "[Mexican Military Archives Produce New Revelations in the Ayotzinapa Case](#)," *National Security Archive* (1 April 2022); "[Ayotzinapa Investigations Special Exhibit Page Launch](#)," *National Security Archive* (26 April 2022); *Informe de la Presidencia de la Comisión para la Verdad y Acceso a la Justicia del Caso Ayotzinapa* (Mexico, 18 August 2022) – full report [here](#); "[Truth Commission Faults Mexico Military over 43 Missing Students](#)," *Al Jazeera* (19 August 2022); "[Mexico Arrests Former Top Prosecutor over Missing Students Case](#)," *Al Jazeera* (20 August 2022); "[Six of 43 Missing Mexico Students Were Given to Army: Official](#)," *Al Jazeera* (27 August 2022); Stephanie Brewer, "[Ayotzinapa Case: Key Points to Understand the Mexican Government's New Actions](#)," *WOLA* (31 August 2022); "[Mexico Arrests Military Officials over 2014 Missing Students Case](#)," *Al Jazeera* (15 September 2022); Peniley Ramírez, "[Unredacted Report Suggests Mexican Army Helped Cover Up Missing Students](#)," *Latino Rebels* (26 September 2022); "[Mexico: Prosecutor Investigating Missing Students Case Resigns](#)," *Al Jazeera* (27 September 2022); "[Americas Rights Body Turns Up Heat on Mexico over Missing Students](#)," *Reuters* (16 November 2022); Kate Doyle & Claire Dorfman, "[Guacamaya Leaks and the Ayotzinapa Case](#)," *National Security Archive* (10 March 2023).

¹⁸⁸ Claire Dorfman, "[Echeverría's Legacy of 'Co-opt and Control'](#)," *National Security Archive* (30 September 2022).

MOLDOVA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2003, 2010, 2022.

On 19 April 2022, President Maia Sandu signed into law a prohibition on the use of symbols associated with Russia's military activities abroad. These included the ribbon of St. George and the letters "Z" and "V." Their use by pro-Russian political groups was expected at a traditional demonstration held on 9 May 2022 to mark Victory Day in World War II. While the event was allowed to proceed uninterrupted, people displaying the banned symbols were fined.¹⁸⁹

MONGOLIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007, 2013.

MONTENEGRO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2017, 2021–2022.

On 18 October 2022, the Directorate of Inspection Affairs ordered that a memorial plaque for the former inmates of Morinj detention camp be removed, because it had been installed without permission of the local authorities. During the siege of Dubrovnik by the Yugoslav People's Army (1991–1992), which included a large number of Montenegrin soldiers, 270 Croatian war prisoners and civilians were sent to the camp. The Montenegrin State had so far paid € 1,4 million in compensation to 145 former detainees.¹⁹⁰

On 11 April 2023, it was announced that the Supreme State Prosecution would ask for revision of a 2006 agreement with the Croatian Supreme State Prosecutors that effectively barred the prosecution of Croatian citizens suspected of war crimes committed in the Lora Military Prison in Split during the Yugoslav Wars of Independence (1991–1995). Croatian soldiers were accused of torturing and killing at least 14 Montenegrin soldiers at the Lora prison in 1992.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 255.

¹⁹⁰ Samir Kajosevic, "[Montenegro Authorities Order Removal of Detention Camp Memorial](#)," *Balkan Insight* (18 October 2022).

¹⁹¹ Samir Kajosevic, "[Montenegro Seeks to Indict Croatians for Prison Camp Crimes](#)," *Balkan Insight* (11 April 2023).

MOROCCO / WESTERN SAHARA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2013, 2015–2018, 2020–2022.

On 15 August 2022, the court of first instance in Oued Zem sentenced Fatima Karim to two years in prison for “electronically attacking religion,” related to Facebook posts in which she had satirically commented on verses of the Koran and hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad. During the trial, she had publicly apologized to “anyone who felt offended,” but asserted that her right to freedom of expression was guaranteed by the Constitution. On 13 September, the Court of Appeal of Khouribga confirmed the sentence.¹⁹²

On 1 March 2023, historian Maâti Monjib (1962–) [See NCH *Annual Reports 2016, 2020–2022*] received an official letter from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research informing him that he had been suspended from his duties as professor of history at Mohammed V University, Rabat, with cessation of payment of his salary. The measure was accompanied by a new defamation campaign against him, suggesting that the suspension resulted from his alleged “absenteeism” from his place of work, even though the official letter noted that it stemmed from his sentencing in January 2021 to a year-long prison term.¹⁹³

Western Sahara

Among the Saharawi activists serving a life sentence in various camps and prisons was Brahim Ismaili, president of Center for Preservation of the Collective Saharawi Memory. On 9 November 2010, Ismaili was arrested and taken to Gdeim Izik camp outside El Aaiún. On 13 May 2011, he was released together with other Saharawis, but just outside of the prison’s gates, arrested again and put in Salé prison, 1,200 km up north. In 2020, he was imprisoned in Ait Melloul prison, close to Agadir. In 1987 he had already been abducted and kept in a secret detention center for months.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² “[Morocco: Jail Upheld on Appeal for Blogger Accused of “Undermining Islam” – Lawyer](#),” *Africa News* (14 September 2022).

¹⁹³ Middle East Studies Association Committee on Academic Freedom, [Letter Protesting Ongoing Mistreatment of Moroccan Scholar, Prof. Maati Monjib](#) (17 May 2023).

¹⁹⁴ Tone Sørfoonn Moe, *Imprisoned Students: Personal Stories of a Group of Saharawi Students Held in Moroccan Jails* (Oslo: Norsk Studentorganisasjon, 2020), 85.

MOZAMBIQUE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018, 2020.

A 2023 study reported that some academics felt restricted when intending to disseminate sensitive research findings. Among the historians interviewed, some voiced concerns about having suffered censorship by university leaders when intending to organize conferences for the dissemination of their research findings and publications on topics related to the main opposition party Renamo and the Civil War (1977–1992), among others.¹⁹⁵

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997–2001, 2003, 2005–2006, 2008–2022.

On 14 September 2021, Ye Lin Oo ([1997–]), an archaeology student at Dagon University, Yangon, until the February 2021 coup, and a member of the central executive committee of Dagon University Students' Union was arrested along with five other students' union members in Kyauktada township, Yangon. The six were accused of participating in anti-junta activities. On 10 March 2022, he received a three-year prison term for incitement against the military. On 15 December 2022, a court in Yangon's Insein prison sentenced him to an additional seven-year prison term under the Counter-Terrorism Law.¹⁹⁶

On 13 March 2022, Tun Tun, a staff member at the crematorium of the Aye Nyein Yar Cemetery in Pyay, Bago, was arrested for laying a wreath in commemoration of the anniversary of the death of two youngsters fallen during the crackdown in 2021.¹⁹⁷

On 23 October 2022, the military carried out an airstrike on a music concert in Hpakant, Kachin State, organized by the opposition Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) to commemorate the ethnic organization's 62nd anniversary, in an apparent violation of the laws of war. The attack killed at least

¹⁹⁵ Nelson Casimiro Zavale, "Academic Freedom in Mozambique," in Kirsten Roberts Lyer, Ilyas Saliba & Janika Spannagel, eds., *University Autonomy Decline: Causes, Responses, and Implications for Academic Freedom* (London: Routledge, 2023), 106.

¹⁹⁶ "[Dagon University Student Sentenced to Another 7 Years in Prison](#)," *Radio Free Asia* (16 December 2022).

¹⁹⁷ [List of Arrested](#) ([no date]; link unstable).

eighty people and injured over hundred. Junta forces subsequently blocked access to medical care for those harmed.¹⁹⁸

On 30 November 2022, seven students from Dagon University, Yangon, were sentenced to death by Yangon Insein Prison martial court after a closed trial on the spurious accusation of having shot dead Saw Moe Win, a retired lieutenant colonel who managed a branch of the State-owned Global Treasure Bank on 18 April 2022. Among the students was archaeology student (Ko) Hein Htet. The latter's father, U Thein Shwe, declared that his son left home and went to his friends in Sanchaung Township to play video games in April and that he was later abducted by the military forces, adding that he would file a petition and appeal to reduce the sentences. The guerrilla groups Anti-Fascist Armed Forces and the Yangon Liberation Force, both formed after the coup, had claimed responsibility for the killing.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 434.

¹⁹⁹ Naw Say Phaw Waa, "[Shock as Seven Student Protesters Sentenced to Death](#)," *University World News* (6 December 2022).

NAMIBIA

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

On 13 September 2022, the main opposition party People’s Democratic Movement requested a renegotiation of an agreement with Germany over the crimes committed against Herero and Nama peoples between 1904–1908 (considered by many historians as genocide), on the grounds that it did not provide reparations and that negotiations had not sufficiently involved descendants of the indigenous groups. In May 2021, Germany had announced that it recognized to have committed “genocide” and promised development aid on a “voluntary basis” [See also *NCH Annual Report 2021*]. In the end, the agreement was not signed due to the rejection by a number of Herero and Nama associations.

In January 2023, lawyers submitted a claim on behalf of the Herero and Nama people urging a Namibian court to declare the agreement invalid, as it allegedly violated the Constitution. In February, a group of United Nations Special Rapporteurs criticized the German government for violating the rights of the Herero and Nama people by not including them in talks over reparations. They criticized the government for failing to include reparation measures and the necessary means for reconciliation and expressed concern that development aid as a form of reparation risked “perpetuating rather than rectifying colonial dynamics.” They further urged the government to pay reparations directly to the Herero and Nama people rather than to the government. It was estimated that at least 60,000 Herero and around 10,000 Nama were killed between 1904–1908.²⁰⁰

NEPAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007–2021.

See India.

²⁰⁰ [“Namibia Genocide – Opposition Demands Renegotiation with Germany,”](#) *Africa News* (14 September 2022); United Nations Mandates, Allegations letters to [Germany](#) and [Namibia](#) on the lack of participation of Herero and Nama in talks about reparations for the 1904–1908 genocide (23 February 2023); Kate Connolly, [“UN Representatives Criticize Germany over Reparations for Colonial Crimes in Namibia,”](#) *Guardian* (28 April 2023); Almaz Teffera, [“Germany, Namibia Need a Rights-Respecting Reparations Process: UN Experts Urge Affected Communities’ Participation in Negotiations”](#) (press release; Human Rights Watch, 7 June 2023).

NETHERLANDS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 2004–2005, 2007–2022.

On 5 October 2022, Minister of Justice Dilan Yesilgöz refused complete access by the Lower House (“Second Chamber”) of Parliament to the archive of the so-called Machielse Commission, citing privacy reasons. In 2019–2021, the commission had investigated the government’s conduct in the case of the Argentine-Dutch Julio Poch, a pilot who was charged with having carried out “death flights” under the Argentinian military dictatorship (1976–1983) but who was acquitted in 2017 after eight years on remand.²⁰¹

In late January 2023, after an investigation started in May 2021, the public prosecutor concluded that the sticker actions by Vizier op Links, however intimidating, did not equal harassment in the sense of the Criminal Code and dropped the charges [See *NCH Annual Report 2021*].²⁰²

On 31 January 2023, a demonstrator interrupted a lecture in Aruba attended by King Willem Alexander (educated as a historian), Queen Maxima and Crown princess Amalia as part of their tour through the Caribbean part of the Netherlands. During the lecture on the characteristics of Caribbean law at the University of Aruba, Giselle Sint Jago, a politician for the party Pueblo Rome and a master’s student in law, stood up, held up a flag, and sang the gospel song *Oh freedom*, which is about slavery. She was escorted from the hall and the lecture continued. She later declared that she planned to hand a manifesto to the king calling on him to apologize for the Dutch slavery past as his government had done in December 2022. She also asked for reparations for the descendants of enslaved people and for the Netherlands to enshrine slavery in law as a crime against humanity.²⁰³

When in February 2023 the newspaper NRC Handelsblad searched the recently released archives of the Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst (BVD; Internal Security Service – renamed Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD, General Intelligence and Security Service, in 2002), it discovered that files containing potentially incriminating facts concerning Prince Bernhard (1911–2004), husband of Queen Juliana (1909–2004; in office 1948–1980), had disappeared. The files concerned his alleged prewar

²⁰¹ Marcel Haenen, “[Minister Yesilgöz \(Justitie\) weigert Tweede Kamer onderzoeksarchief in zaak Julio Poch](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (5 October 2022).

²⁰² Marcel Haenen, “[OM: na 2 jaar onderzoek geen vervolging wegens ‘bedreiging’ van stickeractie Vizier op Links](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (27 January 2023).

²⁰³ “[Demonstrator Interrupts Lecture Attended by Royals on Aruba with Freedom Protest](#),” *NL Times* (1 February 2023).

espionage for the Nazis, his alleged 1942 letter to Adolf Hitler, and the 1976 Lockheed corruption scandal, among others [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2007, 2010–2011*].²⁰⁴

On 1 July 2023, at an event marking the 160th anniversary of the 1863 abolition of slavery in the Netherlands, King Willem-Alexander apologized for the roles of the Netherlands and of the Dutch monarchy and the House of Orange in the slave trade and in the slavery in its former colonies. Dutch slave traders trafficked an estimated 600,000 people. Shortly after the ceremony, slavery memorials in Vlissingen and Rotterdam were defiled with racist slogans.²⁰⁵

See also Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, El Salvador, Iraq, Sudan.

NEW ZEALAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2017, 2019–2021.

See Papua New Guinea.

NICARAGUA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2020–2022.

On 2 April 2022, musician Josué Monroy, member of the alternative rock-pop band Monroy & Surmenage, gave a concert for the fifteenth anniversary of the band's founding. During the event, they sang the song *En el ojo del huracán* (In the eye of the hurricane), in which they paid tribute to the April 2018 protests against President Daniel Ortega with phrases such as “We will not be silent” and “April is not forgotten.” Ten days later, Monroy was arrested with three of his colleagues and interrogated and tortured for 48 hours. Later, his identity papers were taken from his house. On 14 April, he was driven to the Honduran border where he was forced to sign a document forbidding him to return to Nicaragua.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Bart Funnekotter & Joep Dohmen, “[BVD-dossier over oorlogsverleden prins Bernhard zoek](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (9 February 2023).

²⁰⁵ Matt Murphy, “[Dutch King Willem-Alexander Apologises for Country's Role in Slavery](#),” *BBC News* (2 July 2023); Veerle Schyns, “[Na excuses van de koning drie slavernijmonumenten beklad of vernield – één per ongeluk](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (4 July 2023).

²⁰⁶ International PEN, *Case List 2022* (London: PEN, 2023), 35.

On 4 May 2022, the National Assembly (75 in favor, 16 abstentions) suspended the legal status of fifty NGO's, including the Jesuit research center of investigative journalism Instituto Histórico Centroamericano (IHCA; Central-American Historical Institute, established in Managua in 1981), on the grounds that they violated Law No. 147 on nonprofit legal entities and Law 977 against money laundering, financing of terrorism, and financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In July 2022, the Museo Arqueológico de Solentiname (Archaeological Museum of Solentiname) on the San Fernando island, with its pre-Colombian exhibitions, also lost its legal status. Between the 2018 nation-wide protests against President Daniel Ortega and the end of August 2022, the legal status of 1.468 NGOs had been suspended. Sandinista member of parliament Filiberto Rodríguez, the leading force behind the suspensions, alleged without giving proof that the NGOs had used donations to undermine the government during the protests.²⁰⁷

On 22 November 2022, hooded police officers arrested Oscar René Vargas Escobar ([1946]–), a sociologist, economist and author of a three-volume *Historia del siglo XX* (2001; History of the 20th century) about Nicaragua in 1893–1909, 1910–1925, and 1926–1939, in Managua and took him to a prison facility known as Nuevo Chipote. On 23 November, the prosecutor's office charged him with “conspiracy to undermine national integrity” and “propagation of false news through information and communication technologies.” Vargas had been a co-founder and adviser to the national leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front in the 1960s, but became a strong critic of Daniel Ortega's government, especially after the April 2018 rebellion (see above). In the last article before his arrest, published on 20 November 2022, he had put forward a strategy for the release of all political prisoners. On 26 December 2022, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted him precautionary measures (urging the State to protect detainees who were in a serious and urgent situation from suffering irreparable harm) for health reasons. In February 2023, the authorities released Vargas, together with more than 200 other political prisoners and forced him into exile.²⁰⁸

NIGER

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2013, 2021.

²⁰⁷ “[Cancelan en Nicaragua a 50 ONGs, diputado dice que así evitan que sigan ‘engañando’](#),” *100% Noticias* (4 May 2022); “[Cancelan personería jurídica a Expica, Museo Archipiélago de Solentiname y otras 8 ONG](#),” *100% Noticias* (18 July 2022); “[Régimen en Nicaragua cancela 100 ONG más, suman 1500 desde que estalló la crisis](#),” *100% Noticias* (24 August 2022).

²⁰⁸ International PEN, *Case List 2022* (London: PEN, 2023), 33–34; “[IACHR Grants Precautionary Measures in Favor of Oscar René Vargas Escobar in Nicaragua](#)” (press release; 28 December 2022); Website of Oscar-René Vargas Escobar: <https://oscarenevargas.com>.

NIGERIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2006, 2008, 2010–2013, 2016–2022.

On 14 May 2022, following the arrest of two Muslim men reportedly involved in the killing of the Christian college student Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu for allegedly “blasphemous” statements [See *NCH Annual Report 2022*], protesters attacked and looted the Holy Family Catholic Cathedral, the St. Kevin’s Catholic Church, and the Evangelical Church Winning All in Sokoto.²⁰⁹

On 20 October 2022, police used tear gas against protesters during the two-year commemoration of the #EndSARS protest at Lekki toll gate [See *NCH Annual Report 2022*]. At least four people were arrested and detained.²¹⁰

On 28 January 2023, Bose Onifade, the mother of history student Pelumi Onifade, who had been killed by police officials on 24 October 2020, pleaded to Lagos Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu to have the corpse of her son returned to the family. The corpse had presumably been kept in government custody ever since Onifade’s death [See *NCH Annual Report 2022*].²¹¹

In mid-May 2023, the Media Foundation for West Africa and the International Senior Lawyers Project submitted an amicus curiae petition to the Supreme Court in support of Muslim gospel musician Yahaya Sharif-Aminu ([1998]–), who was sentenced to death by hanging by an Upper Sharia court in Kano on 10 August 2020 [See *NCH Annual Report 2022*]. The reason for the sentence was a song he had composed as a eulogy to the founder of the Tijaniya Muslim sect, Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse (1900–1975). The song, circulating on Whatsapp, was denounced as blasphemous by critics who said it projected the Senegal-born cleric above the Prophet Muhammed. In March 2020, a mob had burnt down Sharif-Aminu’s family home and demanded the Islamic police, Hisbah, to arrest and prosecute the singer, leading to his conviction.²¹²

²⁰⁹ [“Three Churches Attacked and Looted in Northern Nigeria,”](#) *Persecution.org* (17 May 2022).

²¹⁰ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 277.

²¹¹ Vincent Ufuoma, [“Two Years after He Was Killed, Pelumi’s Family Says Corpse yet to Be Released,”](#) *International Centre for Investigative Reporting* (28 January 2023).

²¹² [“MFWA Offers Insight in Nigerian Death Penalty Appeal,”](#) *Ifex* (17 May 2023); Supreme Court of Nigeria, [Yahaya Sharif-Aminu versus Attorney General: Amicus Curiae Brief](#) (May 2023).

NORTH MACEDONIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2021–2022. For previous entries: *see* Macedonia.

On 4 February 2022, during the lead-up to the 151-year anniversary of the birth of Georgi Delchev (a.k.a. Gotse Delchev, Goce Delčev; 1872–1903), an Ottoman-era revolutionary considered a national hero both by North Macedonians and Bulgarians, the government ordered heightened security measures amid mounting tensions between the two countries. The order followed a statement by Bulgarian member of European Parliament Angel Dzhambazki, who had said that “Macedonia was and will be Bulgarian” and called on Bulgarians to attend the celebration in Skopje en masse.²¹³

On 5 September 2022, the main opposition party Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity launched a campaign for a referendum on the 2017 Law on Ratification of the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation with Bulgaria, that had set demands on, among other things, the representation of historical figures and events in North Macedonia’s history textbooks, so as to reflect Bulgarian views. In late 2020, despite the friendship agreement, Bulgaria began vetoing North Macedonia’s European Union (EU) accession talks, demanding further changes to, among others, the textbook portrayal of the Kingdom of Bulgaria (1908–1946) [See NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*]. In the summer of 2022, an agreement was reached that would allow for the EU accession talks to begin, with one of the conditions being that North Macedonia adopted a Constitutional preamble that named Bulgarians among the founding peoples of the State.²¹⁴

NORWAY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2012, 2016–2017, 2022.

On 1 June 2023, a truth and reconciliation commission, set up in 2018 to examine the historical policy of the authorities related to the Sámi, Kvens and other Indigenous groups, published its final report. The commission found that assimilation policies of “Norwegianization” had led to the endangerment of minority languages and caused cultural, social and mental health consequences for individuals and

²¹³ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “[Hero’s Memorial Day Further Inflames North Macedonia-Bulgaria Relations](#),” *Balkan Insight* (25 January 2022).

²¹⁴ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “[North Macedonia Opposition Seeks Referendum against Bulgaria Deal](#),” *Balkan Insight* (6 September 2022); Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 282.

Indigenous groups as a whole. The commission proposed the creation of a “center for knowledge, research, dissemination and reconciliation.”²¹⁵

²¹⁵ [“Commission Exposes Injustices against Norway’s Indigenous People,”](#) *Guardian* (1 June 2023).

OMAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010, 2017, 2019, 2021.

PAKISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2009–2012, 2014, 2016, 2018–2019, 2021.

On 13 August 2022, the Balochistan cabinet approved the formation of a parliamentary committee to investigate disappearances. The committee was criticized for not involving families of the disappeared [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2009, 2011*].²¹⁶

On 7 September 2022, Abdul Fatah Shaikh, director of the archaeological site and museum of Mohenjo Daro, Sindh province, one of the largest settlements of the Harappan civilization (3300–1300 BC) built around 2500 BC and a UNESCO World Heritage site, warned that the August heavy rains, caused by climate change and the unwillingness of high-emitting countries to reduce their emissions, damaged the protective outer covering on the historic structures.²¹⁷

In January 2023, the blasphemy laws, which already stipulated the death sentence for those deemed to have insulted Islam or the Prophet Muhammad, were broadened with a provision to punish anyone convicted of insulting his wives, companions or close relatives. Critics feared further abuse of the laws against political opponents and religious minorities and sects. A report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan found that in 2021 at least 585 cases had been registered under the blasphemy laws.²¹⁸

On 14 July 2023, police in Kala Gujran, Jhelum district, Punjab province, demolished a minaret of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community and interrogated some of its members for several hours. The police denied its role and some expressed fears that they had acted at the behest of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a far-right Islamic political party. The local TLP leader openly declared that Articles 298 B and C of the Pakistan Penal Code, also known as the blasphemy law, prohibited Ahmadis to call themselves Muslims or to propagate their faith, and therefore provided him the license to demolish Ahmadi minarets because they allegedly insulted Islam.²¹⁹

See also India.

²¹⁶ [“Balochistan Cabinet Approves Commission on Missing Persons,”](#) *Balochistan Post* (17 August 2022).

²¹⁷ Abid Hussain, [“Record Rains in Pakistan Damage Mohenjo Daro Archaeological Site,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (8 September 2022).

²¹⁸ Salman Masood, [“Pakistan Strengthens Already Harsh Laws against Blasphemy,”](#) *New York Times* (21 January 2023); Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, [A Breach of Faith: Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2021/2022](#) (7 February 2023), 10.

²¹⁹ Zofeen Ebrahim, [“Pakistan’s Political Vandals,”](#) *Index on Censorship* (20 July 2023).

PALESTINE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998–2002, 2008–2010, 2013–2015, 2018, 2021–2022.

On 19 September 2022, hundreds of schools in Occupied East Jerusalem remained closed as part of a general strike in protest against attempts by the Jerusalem municipality to introduce an Israeli curriculum on topics such as Arabic, religion and history.²²⁰

On 26 April 2023, Israel's Independence Day, the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen sent a congratulatory video message to Israel's President Isaac Herzog. The Palestinian foreign ministry criticized her remark that Israel had “made the desert bloom,” calling it an “anti-Palestinian racist trope” that falsified and erased Palestinian history by suggesting that the land was previously uninhabited or untended, and by denying the Nakba (the term used by Palestinians to describe the 1948 expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians).²²¹

On 15 May 2023, for the first time in its history, the United Nations (UN) commemorated the mass displacement (“Nakba” or “Catastrophe”) of Palestinians from land that was to become Israel on 15 May 1948, that turned 700,000 Palestinians into refugees. In November 2022, the UN General Assembly had adopted a resolution for this commemorative day and requested the dissemination of archives and testimonies about the Nakba. It also urged “the achievement without delay of an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side, in peace and security, with Israel.” An estimated 5.9 million Palestinians were currently registered as refugees.²²²

See also Australia, Germany, Israel, United Kingdom.

PANAMA

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

²²⁰ Zena Al Tahhan, “[Palestinian Schools in Jerusalem Strike over Israel-Imposed Books](#),” *Al Jazeera* (19 September 2022).

²²¹ Yolande Knell, “[Palestinians Condemn EU's von der Leyen for 'Racist Trope'](#),” *BBC News* (27 April 2023).

²²² [United Nations General Assembly Resolution 77/23](#) (30 November 2022); “[UN Marks 75 years since Displacement of 700,000 Palestinians](#),” *UN News* (15 May 2023).

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2014.

On or around 16 February 2023, New Zealand archaeologist Bryce Barker, working at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia, and Papuan archaeologist Cathy Alex, National Museum officer Jemina Haro, and Ph.D. student Teppsy Beni were abducted and taken hostage by a gang of twenty armed criminals near Mount Bosavi in the highlands. On 25 February 2023, they were released after a ransom was paid during a complex security operation. The archaeologists conducted research in the Great Papuan Plateau to determine the earliest human migration from Papua New Guinea into Australia.²²³

PARAGUAY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2005, 2007, 2009–2010, 2012, 2015, 2020, 2022.

PERU

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2022.

Authorities made slow progress in prosecuting abuses by government forces during the armed conflict (1980–2000). As of September 2022, courts had issued 50 convictions in 92 cases. In February 2022, the Constitutional Court upheld a 2013 decision that the 1986 killing, by Navy officers, of 113 detainees was not a crime against humanity. The ruling allowed the statute of limitations to apply to the officers, which could lead to closing ongoing trials [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2009–2021*].²²⁴

In April 2023, the Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia y la Inclusión Social (LUM; Place of Memory, Tolerance and Social Inclusion), a museum set up in Lima in 2015 to commemorate the almost 70,000 people killed between 1980–2000 by Shining Path militants and the government's armed forces, was forced to close, officially because of its failure to meet municipal safety regulations. Rafael López

²²³ Natalie Whiting, Theckla Gunga & Belinda Kora, "[Inside the Complex Rescue Mission for an Australian Professor Taken Hostage by Armed Bandits in the PNG Jungle](#)," *ABC News* (26 February 2023); Kathryn Armstrong, "[Papua New Guinea Kidnap: Archaeologist Bryce Barker and Colleagues Freed](#)," *BBC News* (26 February 2023).

²²⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 480–481.

Aliaga, the mayor of Lima and founder of the far-right Renovación Popular party, had repeatedly criticized the museum for presenting a “false narrative.” In January, he had called the museum an “offense to the nation,” saying that it “should be put under the control of the armed forces” and that it was time to “take control of the narrative” (by which a denialist version of the events was reportedly meant).²²⁵

PHILIPPINES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2011–2015, 2019–2022.

On 4 July 2022, online trolls harassed public historian Ambeth Ocampo of the Ateneo de Manila University for confronting historical revisionism that glorified the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship (1965–1986). Ocampo had responded to actress Ella Cruz’s statement that likened history to “chismis” (gossip). Cruz played Irene Marcos in the upcoming film “Maid in Malacañang,” a retelling of the Marcos family’s last 72 hours in the presidential palace before fleeing for Hawaii during the 1986 People Power Revolution (also known as EDSA Revolution). In a Facebook post, Ocampo had said, “Don’t confuse history and chismis. History may have bias but it is based on fact, not opinion. Real history is about truth, not lies, not fiction.” Following his reaction, online individuals – supposedly supporters of the Marcoses – attacked Ocampo, calling him “yellow historian,” “paid historian,” and “stupid.”²²⁶

On 9 August 2022, the official Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF; Commission on Filipino Languages) labeled five books as “subversive” after a talk show in far-right outlet Sonshine Media Network International (SMNI) accused the books of “subversion” and red-tagged the authors as “Communists.” A KWF memorandum banned the books, but on 21 September 2022, three KWF members withdrew their signatures from the memorandum after Congress had debated it. The order was rescinded after a strong pushback by the Filipino literary and academic community. The books were:

- “Teatro Politikal Dos” [Political Theater Two] by Malou Jacob. The disputed passages described the EDSA Revolution that overthrew dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. in February 1986 as “the best thing that happened after fifteen years of Martial Law.”

²²⁵ Dan Collins, “[Mayor Closes Museum of Memories in Battle over Story of Peru’s Violent Past](#),” *Guardian* (7 April 2023).

²²⁶ Raffy Cabristante, “[‘Hindi Chismis’: Historian Says History Is ‘Evidence-Based’](#),” *ABS-CBN* (4 July 2022); Jaehwa Bernardo, “[Academics Defend Historian Ambeth Ocampo vs ‘Smear Campaign’](#),” *ABS-CBN* (11 July 2022); Scholars at Risk, [Free to Think 2022](#) (New York: SAR, 2022).

- “Kalatas: Mga Kwentong Bayan at Kwentong Buhay” [Letters: People’s Narratives and Life Stories] by Rommel Rodriguez. The disputed passages were descriptions of Filipinos organizing armed revolution against the government.
- “Tawid-diwa sa Pananagisag ni Bienvenido Lumbera: Ang Bayan, ang Manunulat, at ang Magasing Sagisag sa Imahinatibong Yugtong Batas Militar 1975–1979” [Imparting the Meaning of Bienvenido Lumbera’s Writings: The People, the Writer, and the Magazine Sagisag in the Imaginative Stage of Martial Law 1975–1979] by Dexter Cayanes. The disputed passages were citations of works by Communist rebel leaders José María Sison (1939–2022) and Julieta de Lima, of Marxist art critic Alice Guillermo and works such as John Frow’s *Marxism and Literary History*.
- “May Hadlang ang Umaga” [The Morning is Hindered] by Don Pagusara, based on the author’s experiences as an activist and political prisoner during the martial law era (1972–1986).
- “Labas: Mga Palabas sa Labas ng Sentro” [Outside: Performances from Beyond the Center] by Reuel Aguila. The disputed passages described the arrests of activists, hunger, violence, and poverty during the martial law era (1972–1986).²²⁷

On 3 March 2023, the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) found that the Philippines had violated the rights of victims of sexual slavery perpetrated by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II by failing to provide reparation, social support and recognition commensurate with the harm suffered. The Committee further noted that Philippine war veterans, mostly men, “[we]re entitled to special and esteemed treatment from the Government, such as educational benefits, healthcare benefits, old age, disability and death pensions.” The complaint had been filed in 2019 by 24 Filipina nationals, members of the Malaya Lolás (“Free Grandmothers”) established to provide support to sexual slavery survivors (“comfort women”). They asserted that they had consistently raised their claims at the domestic level, requesting that the State espouse their claims against Japan. Their repeated efforts, however, were dismissed, with their last action turned down by the Supreme Court in 2014. Noting that the Philippines had waived its right to compensation by signing the 1956 Peace Treaty with Japan, CEDAW underlined that this was a case of continuous discrimination, with which the Philippines had breached its duties under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.²²⁸

²²⁷ Karlo Mongaya, [“Filipino Writers and Academics Push Back against Book Censorship,”](#) *Global Voices* (30 September 2022).

²²⁸ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Alonzo et al. *versus* Philippines: Views Adopted by the Committee Concerning Communication No. 155/2020 (UN Doc. CEDAW/C/84/D/155/2020) (3 March 2023); United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, [“Philippines Failed to Redress Continuous Discrimination and Suffering of Sexual Slavery Victims Perpetrated by Imperial Japanese Army, UN Committee Finds”](#) (Press release: 8 March 2023); Elmer Domingo, [“Philippines Urged to Compensate Women Survivors of Wartime Rape by Japanese Soldiers,”](#) *UN News* (8 March 2023); Joel Guinto & Virma Simonette, [“Comfort Women: Last of Japan’s WW2 Sex Slaves Sing ‘Forget Us Not’,”](#) *BBC News* (14 July 2023).

In early July 2023, the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board decided to allow the fantasy movie *Barbie*, due for release on 19 July 2023, to be screened on condition that it blur a 1947 Chinese map depicting contested territorial claims in the South China Sea (the so-called nine-dash line map).²²⁹

POLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2000–2001, 2004–2005, 2007–2011, 2014–2022.

On 28 December 2021, Minister of Education and Science Przemysław Czarnek introduced a new subject, “History and the Present,” for the 2022–2023 high school and technical school curricula [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. The accompanying high school textbook *History and the Present* was criticized, among others by academics from the Warsaw University history department, for not being balanced, instead giving a view of Polish history after World War II that fitted a right-wing, government-endorsed ideology.²³⁰

In March 2022, several non-governmental organizations, including Civicus, criticized the continued practice by the government and its supporters of using so-called “cyclical assemblies,” defined as assemblies regularly organized by the same organizer, at the same location or on the same route, to impede lawful and peaceful “non-cyclical” counter-protests being held at the same place and time. In October 2022, a “cyclical assembly” was used by members of the ruling Law and Justice party to prevent counterprotests during a monthly commemoration in Kraków of the 2010 Smolensk plane crash which killed former President Lech Kaczyński.²³¹

In July 2022, the Ministry of Education and Science published the results of its evaluation of higher education institutions. The evaluation compared the quality of specific institutions and academic journals in order to reassign funding based on the results. It was criticized for using unclear criteria and for being driven by the government’s partisan politics with the aim of giving “scientists and faculties close to the government a high enough assessment.” An analysis by AtMatic, an analytical company

²²⁹ Antoinette Radford, “[South China Sea: Philippines to Allow Barbie Movie but Wants Map Blurred](#),” *BBC News* (12 July 2023).

²³⁰ “[Przemysław Czarnek on a New Subject – History and Present: Students Will Learn about the Circumstances of the Round Table and ‘Partial Betrayal’](#),” *Polish News* (28 December 2021); Wojciech Kosci, “[Academics Say University Evaluation Was Driven by Politics](#),” *University World News* (27 August 2022).

²³¹ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 300.

measuring scholarly output, found that the ministry had inflated selected journals in the fields of history, culture, and religion.²³²

In October 2022, four monuments commemorating the Red Army's "liberation" of Nazi-occupied towns after World War II were demolished in Glubczyce, Byczyna, Bobolice, and Staszow. The actions, based on a 2016 law prohibiting the promotion of totalitarian regimes, were live streamed online and took place simultaneously.²³³

On 27 January 2023, no Russian delegation was invited to the ceremony marking the 1945 liberation of the former Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camp. Russia had always been represented at the event as the camp in Nazi-occupied Poland was liberated by the Soviet Army. But following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum declined to invite Russian officials and its director, Piotr Cywinski, likened the Ukraine war to the horrors of the Holocaust. In response, Russia accused the museum of attempting to "rewrite history."²³⁴

On 19 April 2023, historian Barbara Engelking, head of the Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów (Polish Center for Holocaust Research) at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, was attacked by politicians and media after she had been interviewed on news channel TVN24 about her research. During the interview – part of a series of commemorations of the eightieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 19 April–16 May 1943 – she stated that Polish Jews had received little support from their fellow citizens during World War II [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2020–2022*]. Following the interview, Education and Science Minister Przemysław Czarnek decided to withhold approximately € 180,000 of funding from the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology on the grounds that the government would not fund "people who slander Poles." Following the government's decision, more than 2,700 people on 26 April signed a letter saying that Czarnek's attempt threatened academic freedom.²³⁵

See also Belarus, Benin, Russia.

²³² Wojciech Kosc, "[Academics Say University Evaluation Was Driven by Politics](#)," *University World News* (27 August 2022).

²³³ "[Poland Demolishes Soviet-Era Monuments](#)," *BBC News* (27 October 2022).

²³⁴ "[Ukraine War: Auschwitz Anniversary Marked without Russia](#)," *BBC News* (27 January 2023).

²³⁵ [Protest w sprawie ataku na Prof. Barbarę Engelking](#) (petition signed by 2766 persons; 26 April 2023); Open letter by more than 200 scholars of the Holocaust Era, the Second World War, and Modern and Jewish History (11 May 2023); Anna Rzhevkina, "[Academics in Poland Raise the Alarm over Latest Threat to Academic Freedom](#)," *Science/Business* (7 June 2023).

PORTUGAL

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2017, 2021.

See Australia, Russia.

QATAR

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2010.

ROMANIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007–2008, 2010, 2019, 2021–2022.

In [August] 2022, military prosecutors resent a corrected file about Ion Iliescu (1930–), the country’s leader after the December 1989 Romanian Revolution which overthrew Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, to the court so that he could face trial. Iliescu, then president of the National Salvation Front Committee (CFSN); Gelu Voican Voiculescu, former Deputy Prime Minister; Iosif Rus, former commander of the Military Aviation; and Emil (Cico) Dumitrescu, a former CFSN member, were accused of crimes against humanity. The prosecutors claimed that about 12,600,000 cartridges were fired between 22–30 December 1989, intentionally creating a feeling of terror and causing 862 deaths, 2,150 injuries, severe loss of freedom for hundreds of people and psychological injuries. In April 2019, prosecutors had already sent the file to the court, but the Supreme Court excluded several pieces of evidence submitted by the Military Prosecutor’s Office, including reports drawn up in the 1990s by the Intelligence Service and the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Revolution.²³⁶

On 1 March 2023, Dorin Cioabă, a Romani representative at the Conference of European Roma, expressed his intention to file an international lawsuit against the Romanian Orthodox Church for not recognizing its involvement in the enslavement of Roma in the Romanian Principalities between the 15th and 19th century. He further called on the church to publicly apologize and provide access to their archives. A church spokesman claimed that Roma and Romanians had suffered from slavery together and that the church should not be singled out for exclusive responsibility.²³⁷

RUSSIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–1998, 2001, 2004–2006, 2008–2022.

In 2020, film critic Anton Dolin (1976–) was dismissed as a regular critic on the popular talk show *Evening Purgant* aired on State television because he had criticized Andrei Kravchuk’s *Union of Salvation*, a 2019 film about Tsarist officers and intellectuals who rebelled against the new Tsar Nicholas I in 1825, arguing that the rebels, who demanded a constitutional monarchy, were wrongly

²³⁶ Madalin Necsutu, “[Romania Ex-President Faces Fresh Trial for 1989 Revolution Crimes](#),” *Balkan Insight* (4 August 2022).

²³⁷ Madalin Necsutu, “[Romanian Roma Threaten Church With Lawsuit over Role in Slavery](#),” *Balkan Insight* (2 March 2023).

portrayed negatively. In 2021 Dolin started his own highly successful film channel on YouTube, Radio Dolin. After the invasion of Ukraine, he went into exile in Riga, Latvia. In late 2022, he was declared a “foreign agent.”

There were other cases of film censorship. In 2022, after a screening by secret service FSB, the 2021 film *Captain Volkonogov Escaped*, was banned and removed from programming, posters and film ladders. The story regarded an executioner of Stalin’s secret police during the Great Terror of 1938, Fyodor Volkonogov. When in danger of falling prey to the terror himself, he asked his victims’ forgiveness and fled. The same happened to *Tchaikovsky’s Wife*, Kirill Serebrennikov’s 2022 film about the taboo of Tchaikovsky’s homosexuality. After a legal case, allegedly for embezzling money for his theater in Moscow, Serebrennikov defected to Europe, his theater was closed and his films were banned.²³⁸

In February 2022, longstanding Memorial member Bakhrom Khamroev was remanded under spurious charges of “public justification of terrorism.” In October 2022, charges of “organizing the activities of a terrorist organization” were added to his case.²³⁹

Among those who left Russia after the Russian invasion of Ukraine was one of the leading historians of the NGO Memorial, Irina Scherbakova (1949–). Since the 1970s, Scherbakova had secretly taped interviews with victims of the Stalinist repression. In 1987, she had become co-founder of Memorial.²⁴⁰

On 31 August 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused the Baltic States, the Czech Republic and Poland of, among others, “idealizing Nazism” and “spreading neo-Nazism,” in relation to their support to Ukraine since the 24 February 2022 invasion by Russian forces and the removal of some Soviet-era memorials. The bogus claim of “denazification” had been the justification for the invasion of Ukraine [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].²⁴¹

On 9 September 2022, the Ministry of Justice added Tamara Eidelman – a former history teacher at Moscow School No. 67 living in exile in Lisbon, a producer of history lectures on YouTube, and EuroClio Ambassador in Russia – to the list of “foreign agents.” In July, President Vladimir Putin had

²³⁸ Michel Krielaars, “[Verbannen Russische filmcriticus Anton Dolin: ‘Gelukkig snapt Poetin niks van cultuur’](#),” *NRC Handelsblad* (22 February 2023).

²³⁹ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 310.

²⁴⁰ Irina Scherbakova, *Bruits et couleurs du temps: Une famille dans le siècle soviétique* (originally Russian and German; Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 2022), 239–241.

²⁴¹ “[Russia Accuses the Czech Republic of Disseminating Neo-Nazism, Racism and Xenophobia – No Word on Whether There Is a Plan to “De-Nazify” the Country As They Claim to Do in Ukraine](#),” *Romea.cz* (1 September 2022).

expanded the foreign agents law to not only include individuals and organization that received funding from abroad, but also those who stood under “foreign influence” and “engaged in political activities.”²⁴²

On 7 October 2022, Memorial [See NCH *Annual Reports 2001, 2005–2006, 2009–2022*], founded in 1987, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, together with two civil society organizations from Belarus and Ukraine. The motivation for the prize stated that “The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries. They have for many years promoted the right to criticize power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens. They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy.” Memorial had already been nominated for the prize at least six times (in 2010–2013, 2015, 2018). In 2004, Memorial was awarded the Right Livelihood Award and in 2009 the Sakharov Prize. Another 2022 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Belarusian pro-democracy activist Ales Bialiatski (1962–), had worked as a junior researcher at the Museum of the History of Belarusian Literature in 1989. On 10 December 2022, Yan Rachinsky, head of Memorial, revealed that Kremlin authorities had told him not to accept the Nobel prize because the two co-laureates were deemed “inappropriate.” Rachinsky reported threats to his safety.²⁴³

On 20 October 2022, Denis Skopin, associate professor at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences of Saint Petersburg State University, was dismissed for “an immoral act incompatible with educational functions” because he had participated in an unauthorized rally – a 21 September 2022 street protest against the Kremlin’s decision to draft Russians to fight in Ukraine – after which he spent ten days in prison. Skopin was the author of an English-language book about how people in the Stalinist USSR were forced to remove from group photographs those who had been declared “enemy of the people.” They did this with scissors and with ink.²⁴⁴

On 29 October 2022, Memorial – a history NGO liquidated in late 2021 [See above and NCH *Annual Report 2022*] – was forced to downsize its ceremony of “returning the names.” Since 2007, this annual tribute consisted in a day-long reading of the names, ages, professions, and dates of death of those killed under Stalin at the Solovetsky Stone on Lubyanka Square in Moscow, typically attracting thousands of

²⁴² “[В России появилась династия иноагентов](#),” *Secretmag.ru* (10 September 2022); Andreas Holtberget (EuroClio), personal communication (12 September 2022).

²⁴³ “[Memorial](#),” Nobelprize.org (7 October 2022); Network of Concerned Historians, “[Historians and the Nobel Peace Prize \(1901–Present\)](#)”; Paul Kirby, “[Why Memorial?](#)” *BBC News* (7 October 2022); [Nobel Peace Prize 2022: PRIO Director’s Shortlist](#); Charlie Haynes & Lucy Pawle, “[Nobel Peace Prize: Russian Laureate ‘Told to Turn down Award’](#),” *BBC News* (10 December 2022).

²⁴⁴ Steve Rosenberg, “[Ukraine War: Russia’s Uncertain Future a Product of Its Past](#),” *BBC News* (2 November 2022).

attendees. After the authorities banned it, citing public safety rules related to the coronavirus pandemic as it did in 2020–2021, Memorial was forced to break it into small gatherings across Russia.²⁴⁵

Following the introduction of weekly “patriotic lessons,” known as “Conversations about important things,” alongside the mandatory raising of the Russian flag and the singing of the national anthem into schools across Russia earlier in 2022 [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*], students at Russian universities would be required to attend mandatory lectures on State ideology from 2023 onward. The lecture content was developed under the close supervision of the Kremlin’s first deputy chief of staff, Sergei Kiriyyenko. The ideology course would consist of sections on Russian history, Russian culture, Russian foreign policy, and Russia’s “future image.” Students of history and political science would be required to attend the ideology classes throughout their studies, while those studying other disciplines from the social sciences and humanities would take the course for at least a couple of years. All other students would be expected to attend one year of ideology studies.²⁴⁶

Among the 200 Americans banned in November 2022 from visiting Russia was Timothy Snyder, a historian at Yale University and author of *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (2010), probably because he had made a lecture course for Yale undergraduates, “The Making of Modern Ukraine,” available on the platform YouTube. The series had more than 4.6 million views from nearly seventy countries, with more than 921,000 people having watched the first lecture.²⁴⁷

In January 2023, the Sakharov Center, a museum and cultural venue in Moscow named after Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov (1921–1989), was forced to close before the end of April 2023. A December 2022 law had barred the city of Moscow, the center’s landlord, from supporting entities designated as “foreign agents.” According to chairman Vyacheslav Bachmann and the exiled director Sergei Lukashevsky, the fate of the museum’s exhibition focusing on the repression of the Soviet Gulag and its archives with Sakharov’s records was uncertain.²⁴⁸

On 21 March 2023, after the Investigative Committee opened a criminal investigation against Memorial for alleged “rehabilitation of Nazism,” punishable by up to five years in prison, nine of its leaders – including co-chairs Yan Rachinsky and Oleg Orlov, and Galina Jordanovskaya, Alena Kozlova, Irina

²⁴⁵ Valery Hopkins, “[In Russia, Nobel-Winning Rights Group Is Forced to Downsize Its Tribute](#),” *New York Times* (29 October 2022).

²⁴⁶ Kirill Zikov, “[Russian Universities to Introduce Mandatory Ideology Lectures](#),” *Moscow Times* (26 October 2022).

²⁴⁷ Jennifer Rankin, “[‘Russia Wins by Losing’: Timothy Snyder on Raising Funds for Ukrainian Drone Defence](#),” *Guardian* (28 November 2022).

²⁴⁸ “[Sakharov Center Forced to Close as Wartime Russia Purges Human Rights Groups](#),” *Agile Tribune* (2 March 2023).

Ostrovskaya, and Alexandra Polivanova – were targeted in raids on their homes. Allegations of “rehabilitation of Nazism” dated back to 2021 when Memorial’s staff were accused of having three men on its database – of more than three million victims – who authorities took issue with, including two sentenced for treason and another convicted of working for a Nazi police unit [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].²⁴⁹

On 21 March 2023, criminal investigators interrogated co-chair of Memorial Oleg Orlov (1953–) in a separate case for repeated acts of “discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces for protecting the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, and preserving international peace and security,” based on his single-person anti-war pickets and his social media posts containing criticism of the war and of the government’s slide toward totalitarianism and fascism. The poster he had held on Moscow’s Red Square on 6 March 2022, for example, had contained a slogan with a historical analogy: “USSR 1945 – the country that defeated fascism; Russia 2022 – the country of victorious fascism” [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. On 29 April 2023, the prosecutor’s office formally indicted him under a law introduced days after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. On 8 June 2023, Orlov appeared in court. He faced up to three years in prison.²⁵⁰

On 17 April 2023, Russian-British opposition activist, journalist and historian Vladimir Kara-Murza (1981–) was found guilty of treason, spreading “false” information about the conduct of the Russian army, and being affiliated with an “undesirable organization” before a closed court and sentenced to 25 years in maximum security prison. He would serve his time in a “strict regime correctional colony” and be fined 400,000 rubles (\$ 4,900; £ 4,000). A week before the verdict, he had said to the closed court that his trial reminded him of a Stalin-era show trial of the 1930s. A former adviser to prominent opposition leader Boris Nemtsov (shot dead in 2015), Kara-Murza allegedly survived two poisonings (2015, 2017) by Russian authorities. He was instrumental in persuading Western governments to adopt the so-called Magnitsky Act (a key piece of legislation that helped secure the adoption of sanctions against human rights abusers in Russia). He was arrested in 2022 in Moscow, initially for disobeying a police officer. Later charges, however, were based partly on a speech to politicians in the United States in 2022 (in which he had said that Russia was committing war crimes in Ukraine with cluster bombs in

²⁴⁹ [“Russia Targets Nobel Peace Prize Rights Group with Raids,”](#) *Newsmax* (21 March 2023); Paul Kirby, [“Memorial Raids: Russia Targets Leaders of Banned Nobel Prize-Winning Group,”](#) *BBC News* (22 March 2023); Human Rights Watch, [“Russia: Memorial Co-chair Indicted for ‘Discrediting’ the Military,”](#) *Ifex* (2 May 2023).

²⁵⁰ Paul Kirby, [“Memorial Raids: Russia Targets Leaders of Banned Nobel Prize-Winning Group,”](#) *BBC News* (22 March 2023); [“Russia Targets Nobel Peace Prize Rights Group with Raids,”](#) *Newsmax* (13 April 2024); Human Rights Watch, [“Russia: Memorial Co-chair Indicted for “Discrediting” the Military,”](#) *Ifex* (2 May 2023); Steve Rosenberg, [“Ukraine war: Oleg Orlov Faces Jail Time for Criticising Putin’s War,”](#) *BBC News* (9 June 2023).

residential areas and the bombing of maternity hospitals and schools), and partly on an event for political prisoners (at which he had referred to what investigators called Russia's "supposedly repressive policies"). Kara-Murza's father, Vladimir Sr (1959–2019), had also been a dissident historian and Kremlin critic; Kara-Murza's uncle Sergei Kara-Murza (1939–) was a historian and Kremlin supporter.²⁵¹

In May 2023, Mikhail Belousov, a history lecturer at Saint Petersburg University, was dismissed for criticizing Russia's war against Ukraine. During a meeting with students, he had reportedly stated that "There is some evidence that some topics related to World War II are distorted; however, it is forbidden to discuss the matter as it is punishable by law." On 26 June 2023, the Regional Branch of the Investigative Committee of Russia initiated a criminal investigation against him for "rehabilitating Nazism."²⁵²

In late May 2023, a case was initiated against a local resident of the Orenburg region for allegedly spreading false information about the USSR's activities during World War II. The accused had allegedly reposted information on social media claiming that the USSR was co-responsible with Nazi Germany for the outbreak of World War II due to their partition of Poland in September 1939. A resident of Krasnoyarsk was charged with spreading false information about the Russian army and exonerating Nazism. He or she had allegedly posted on social media that "Stalin was as much of an aggressor as Hitler" and that the Russian armed forces were killing civilians and destroying cities in Ukraine (while referring to the bombing of the theater in besieged Mariupol in April 2022).²⁵³

Occupied Crimea

Since 2016, Russian authorities had allegedly repeatedly damaged the Khan's Palace in Bakhchysarai, a political, religious and cultural center of the Crimean Tatar community dating from the Crimean Khanate period (1441–1783) that was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List in 2003. The authorities had barred a UNESCO fact-finding mission from inspecting the site.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Steve Rosenberg & Kathryn Armstrong, "[Vladimir Kara-Murza: Russian Opposition Figure Jailed for 25 Years](#)," *BBC News* (17 April 2023); "[Vladimir Kara-Murza Tailed by Members of FSB Squad Prior to Suspected Poisonings](#)," *Bellingcat* (11 February 2021).

²⁵² Andrii Nekoliak & Elizaveta Klochkova, "[Weaponizing Russia's Memory Law: On Russia's Mnemonic Dissidents](#)," *Verfassungsblog* (11 July 2023).

²⁵³ Andrii Nekoliak & Elizaveta Klochkova, "[Weaponizing Russia's Memory Law: On Russia's Mnemonic Dissidents](#)," *Verfassungsblog* (11 July 2023).

²⁵⁴ Halya Coynash, "[Russia Causes Irreparable Damage to 16th-Century Crimean Tatar Khan's Palace in Occupied Crimea](#)," *Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group* (9 February 2022).

In [early October] 2022, the Russian authorities in Crimea (annexed from Ukraine in 2014) fined Olga Valeyeva, a Crimea beauty queen, after a video showed her singing *Red Viburnum*, a nineteenth-century military march popular among Ukrainian nationalists. She was accused of discrediting Russia's military and promoting extremist symbols. A second woman who had sung the song along with her was given ten days in prison. Valeyeva said she had been unaware of the song's associations.²⁵⁵

In early January 2023, Duma members proposed an amendment to the anti-extremism legislation to the effect that maps disputing Russia's "territorial integrity" would be classified as punishable extremist materials. The amendment came after maps were distributed in Russia which questioned the "territorial affiliation" of the Crimean Peninsula and the Kuril Islands.²⁵⁶

See also Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Ukraine, United States.

RWANDA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2000–2017, 2019–2022.

In May 2022, genocide fugitives Pheneas Munyarugarama and Protais Mpiranya, wanted by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), were confirmed to have died in 2002 and 2006, respectively. Munyarugarama was accused of mass killings, attacks, and sexual violence against Tutsi civilians. Mpiranya, former head of the presidential guard, was accused of ordering the killing of then Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, and ten Belgian peacekeepers. In September 2022, the trial against Félicien Kabuga, allegedly the chief financier of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, began before the IRMCT in The Hague.²⁵⁷

In June 2023, Emmanuel Nkundiye [pseudonym], a history lecturer at the University of Rwanda's College of Arts and Social Sciences, reported about the problems for teaching history related to the 1994 genocide against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. First, there were overbroad and harsh laws on "genocide ideology" that not only prohibited genocide denial but also critical views of the events. In 2022, at least 44 persons had been prosecuted on this charge. Second, Rwanda no longer used "Hutu" and "Tutsi" as epithets to identify people, as it has been blamed for inciting hatred, causing divisions

²⁵⁵ "[Ukraine War: Crimea Beauty Queen Fined over Song](#)," *BBC News* (4 October 2022).

²⁵⁶ "[Russia Backs Banning of Maps Disputing Official 'Territorial Integrity'](#)," *Reuters* (9 January 2023).

²⁵⁷ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 314–315(

and discrimination. However, it was problematic to teach the genocide without using these ethnic markers. Third, teachers felt anxiety because their students came from families who were either victims or perpetrators.²⁵⁸

See also Congo (Democratic Republic).

²⁵⁸ Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti, "[Genocide: Lecturers Struggle to Teach about 1994 History.](#)" *University World News* (8 June 2023).

SAINT VINCENT

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2014.

SAUDI ARABIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2001, 2006, 2010–2011, 2013, 2017–2021.

SENEGAL

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

On 1 June 2023, in the context of civil unrest over the sentencing of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko for “corrupting youth,” a group of young people used Molotov cocktails to burn down part of the archives of the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. According to archivist Abdourakhmane Kounta, an estimated 20,000 records spanning from 1957 to 2010 were destroyed. Several cars from history department staff were also torched.²⁵⁹

See also France.

SERBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2021–2022. For previous entries, *see* Serbia / Kosovo; Serbia / Montenegro.

In July 2022, after urging the government to officially commemorate the 1995 Srebrenica genocide, the Belgrade office of the NGO Women in Black was daubed with red paint.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Théa Ollivier & Coumba Kane, “[Au Sénégal, neuf morts dans des affrontements avec la police après la condamnation d’Ousmane Sonko](#),” *Le Monde* (1 June 2023); Moussa Ngom, “[Au Sénégal, l’université de Dakar, symbole d’une journée de chaos après la condamnation d’Ousmane Sonko](#),” *Le Monde* (3 June 2023); “[Senegal: Invaluable Archives Destroyed During Unrest at Dakar’s Main University](#),” *Africa News* (10 June 2023); James Tasamba, “[Vital Archives at Senegalese University Destroyed in Protests](#),” *AA* (11 June 2023); “[UCAD Calm after the Riots, but Damage Keeps It Closed](#),” *University World News* (22 June 2023).

²⁶⁰ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 320.

In early September 2022, politician and founder of the right-wing Dveri party, Boško Obradović, sent a tweet calling on parents to tear out a page of an eight-grade history textbook, because it contained information about the LGBTQ+-movement, as part of a discussion of social movements and human rights activists. The textbook, written by Aleksandar Todosijević, historian and president of Udruženje za društvenu istoriju–EuroClio (UDI; Association for Social History–EuroClio), and historian Sanja Petrović Todosijević, in use for merely a year, had been the subject of multiple public attacks from right-wing political circles. Between 27–29 August 2021, UDI had been the subject of a slander campaign, falsely accusing its members of manipulating history [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*].²⁶¹

On 15 September 2022, during his visit in Belgrade, the Director for Eastern European Affairs of the USA-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, Efraim Zuroff, succeeded to achieve the cancelation of a historical conference on the subject of the Croatian concentration camp Jasenovac, to which revisionist historians had been invited to participate. In an interview on Serbian television, he called for the cancelation because it would seriously damage Serbia's reputation [See also NCH *Annual Reports 1996, 2017, 2020*].²⁶²

See also Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo.

SERBIA / KOSOVO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2008–2020. For previous entries, *see* Serbia.

SERBIA / MONTENEGRO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1999, 2001–2007. For previous entries, *see* Montenegro and Serbia; *see* Montenegro.

SEYCHELLES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2019, 2022.

²⁶¹ “[Lekcije iz istorije poslaniku Obradoviću](#),” Mašina (6 September 2022).

²⁶² Simon Wiesenthal Center, “[Simon Wiesenthal Center Succeeds in Cancelling Conference on Jasenovac Concentration Camp with Participation of Revisionist Historians](#)” (Press release; 17 September 2022).

SIERRA LEONE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2000–2012, 2016, 2021.

SINGAPORE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2009–2011, 2015–2016, 2018–2022.

See Sri Lanka.

SLOVAKIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013–2015, 2017, 2022.

Despite an official apology by the government in 2021 for the illegal sterilization of thousands of Roma women between 1966 and 2004, no effective compensation mechanism was in place by the end of 2022. In June 2022, the government apologized for a police raid on Roma communities in Moldava nad Bodvou in 2013 and committed to paying financial compensation for “injustice and suffering, to the victims and their families for their long-term search for the truth.”²⁶³

SLOVENIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2007–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2018, 2021.

In 2022, President Borut Pahor issued a formal apology to over 25,000 people who had been unconstitutionally removed from the official registry of permanent residents thirty years ago, effectively leaving them without Slovenian citizenship. Despite this apology, more than half of the so-called “Erased” did not have their status restored or receive compensation from the State [See NCH *Annual Reports 2007–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2018*].²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 325.

²⁶⁴ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 327.

SOMALIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2003, 2006, 2012–2014, 2019, 2022.

See Kenya.

SOUTH AFRICA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2004, 2006–2010, 2012–2021.

On the tenth anniversary of the 16 August 2012 Marikana massacre, in which 34 people were killed and 78 injured when police fired at mine workers demanding better wages and housing, protesters demanded compensation for the victims, prosecution of those responsible. and the creation of a memorial [See also NCH *Annual Report 2021*].²⁶⁵

On [26 or 27] November 2022, the Chris Hani Memorial Site in Ekurhuleni, commemorating the former leader of the South African Communist Party and anti-Apartheid hero (1942–1993), was vandalized. The desecration followed a Constitutional Court decision to release Hani’s killer, Janusz Walus, who had been sentenced to life in prison, on parole.²⁶⁶

See also United Nations.

SOUTH SUDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2015–2021.

²⁶⁵ “[South Africans Rally to Mark Marikana Massacre 10th Anniversary](#),” *Al Jazeera* (16 August 2022).

²⁶⁶ “[Anti-Apartheid Hero’s Tomb Vandalized after Killer Granted Parole](#),” *Al Jazeera* (29 November 2022).

SPAIN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999, 2002–2022.

On 27 June 2022, the Twenty-First Investigating Court of Barcelona admitted a complaint by Òmnium Cultural (OC) – a Catalan association promoting the Catalan language and culture and supporting the right to self-determination of the Catalan people – to investigate the use of Pegasus espionage software against some of its members, including historian and vice-president Marcel Mauri. An April 2022 research by Citizen Lab had found that Mauri’s phone had been infected by Pegasus three times, including on 24 October 2019, ten days after he had become OC’s vice president.²⁶⁷

In August 2022, more than twenty associations of archivists and librarians, including the Federación Española de Sociedades de Archivística, Biblioteconomía, Documentación y Museística (FESABID; Spanish Federation of Archival, Library, Documentation, and Museum Societies), commented on the draft Law on Classified Information which would replace the 1968 Law of Official Secrets (a law adopted during the Franco dictatorship, 1939–1975). They asked not to classify information concerning human rights violations and complained that the law did not refer to article 20 of the Constitution about the right to information. Furthermore, they objected to the huge penalties for disclosing classified records, the long terms of classification (up to 65 years), and the lack of retroactive declassification which blocked research into the Franquist and transition periods. Throughout 2022, the 1968 Law had remained an obstacle to access to justice.²⁶⁸

In [October] 2022, the memorial stone for Friedrich Windemuth, a German fighter pilot of the Condor Legion – a Nazi German air force unit, sent to fight during the Civil war (1936–1939) to develop methods of strategic bombing that would later be used during World War II, and notorious for the 1937 Guernica bombing – was smashed in half. The vandalism was condemned by the Asociación de Aviadores de la República (Association of Republican Aviators), a group commemorating the Republican pilots who fought against Francisco Franco’s nationalists, because it attacked the “historical memory and dignity of combatants.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ [“CatalanGate: Extensive Mercenary Spyware Operation against Catalans Using Pegasus and Candiru,”](#) *Citizen Lab* (18 April 2022); Mayte Piulachs, [“Judge Will Investigate Espionage against Omnim, but Discards Parts of Complaint,”](#) *El Nacional* (27 June 2022).

²⁶⁸ Miguel González, [“Petición para que no se puedan declarar secretas violaciones de los derechos humanos,”](#) *El País* (12 August 2022); Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 342.

²⁶⁹ Sam Jones, [“Anger in Spain at Vandalism of Memorial to German Fighter Pilot,”](#) *Guardian* (14 October 2022).

In October 2022, the Democratic Memory Act entered into force, replacing the 2007 Historical Memory Law. Under the new law, the search for victims of enforced disappearance during the Civil War (1936–1939) and dictatorship (1939–1975) was a responsibility of the State and judgments passed by military, civil, and special courts on political grounds were annulled. However, the act did not allow for crimes under international law committed during the same period to be pursued.

Among the act's measures were the renaming of the "Valley of the Fallen" mausoleum – considered a glorification of the Franco dictatorship – to its original name, the Valley of Cuelgamuros, and the exhumation of the remains of supporters of the dictatorship from the mausoleum. On 24 April 2023, in order to pre-empt State exhumation, family members removed the remains of Falange founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1903–1936) from the mausoleum, to rebury them at Madrid's San Isidro Cemetery [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].²⁷⁰

See also Angola.

SRI LANKA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2004, 2008–2022.

On 21 July 2022, President Ranil Wickremesinghe took office pledging to uphold the rights of the Tamil and Muslim communities, but refused to join efforts of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council to advance accountability for crimes committed during and after the Civil War (1983–2009) between the government and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*]. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, in her September 2022 report, found that the government "had still not presented a credible new roadmap on transitional justice ... Instead, accountability processes for past crimes were obstructed, perpetrators granted Presidential pardon and the Office on Missing Persons and the Office for Reparations ... ha[d] failed to achieve the tangible results expected by victims and other stakeholders." On 6 October 2022, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution extending the mandate of a UN project to collect and analyze evidence of conflict-era violations for use in future prosecutions, and mandating enhanced UN monitoring of the human rights situation.

Domestic transitional justice bodies, including the Office on Missing Persons and the Office for Reparations, lost the confidence of victims' families further after being undermined by the appointment

²⁷⁰ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World's Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 342; Sam Jones, "[Body of Spain's Fascist Party Founder to Be Removed from Basilica](#)," *Guardian* (23 April 2023); "[Primo de Rivera: Spain to Exhume Fascist Falange Leader](#)," *BBC News* (24 April 2023).

of members not deemed independent. Families complained of being surveilled, intimidated, and restricted from holding peaceful protests and memorialization initiatives, while being pressured to accept financial compensation and death certificates in lieu of certificates of absence until the fate of those forcibly disappeared could be ascertained. In August 2022, Mothers of the Disappeared, a group campaigning to know the fate of missing loved ones, had marked 2,000 days of continuous activism.

On 24 July 2022, the International Truth and Justice Project filed a criminal complaint against former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (in office between 2019–2022) with the attorney general in Singapore, where Rajapaksa lived in self-exile, for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity against the LTTE during the Civil War when he was defense secretary [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].²⁷¹

On 18 January 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the government to fully compensate victims of the 2019 Easter Sunday terrorist attacks and establish mechanisms to ensure truth and justice. The statement followed an early-January ruling by the Supreme Court that had found then President Maithripala Sirisena, his former defense secretary, and two former security and intelligence officials guilty of violating the rights of the victims by failing to prevent the attack. On 21 April 2019, a series of suicide bombings by Islamic State affiliates killed more than 260 people, injuring more than 500.²⁷²

On 27 May 2023, stand-up comedian Nathasha Edirisooriya was arrested at the Bandaranaike International Airport, because she had made “derogatory remarks” about Lord Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama; [sixth or fifth century BCE] – fifth century BCE) in her comedy show Modabhimanya. On 31 May, YouTube-host Bruno Divakara was also arrested for his alleged role in broadcasting Edirisooriya’s video.²⁷³

SUDAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002–2003, 2006–2022.

Throughout 2022, there had been no meaningful domestic steps toward accountability for abuses committed against protesters since the 25 October 2021 military coup, or for prior abuses including the

²⁷¹ Hannah Ellis-Petersen & Rubatheesan Sandran, “[‘A Moment of Opportunity’: Fall of Sri Lankan President Raises Victims’ Hopes](#),” *Guardian* (30 July 2022); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 561–562; Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 345.

²⁷² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “[Sri Lanka Must Ensure Compensation for Victims of 2019 Terrorist Attacks](#),” *UN News* (18 January 2023).

²⁷³ “[Sri Lanka: Comedian and YouTube Content Creator Arrested over Buddhism Satire](#),” *Ifex* (8 June 2023).

3 June 2019 massacre, or decades of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against civilians in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan. On 23 August 2022, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Karim Khan urged the United Nations (UN) Security Council to help deliver justice and ensure accountability for the victims of human rights violations during the War in Darfur (2003–2020). On [25] August, Khan stated that the government of General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan had promised its full cooperation [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2020–2022*]. On 2 February 2023, UN Human Rights Expert for Sudan Radhouane Nouicer urged authorities to ensure accountability for crimes committed since the 2021 military coup, including torture, sexual violence and arbitrary arrests and detentions. More than 120 people had allegedly been killed since the coup.²⁷⁴

On 3 June 2022, security forces used excessive force, killing one, against protesters commemorating the third anniversary of the 3 June 2019 military crackdown [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. In the crackdown protesters had demanded the resignation of dictator Omar al-Bashir (ruled 1989–2019); 128 people were killed. On 30 June 2022, large demonstrations took place nationwide, this time to protest against the 2021 military takeover. The protests were organized to coincide with the anniversary of the 1989 military coup, which overthrew the democratically elected government of President Ahmad Al-Mirghani (in power between 1986–1989) and put al-Bashir in power. Security forces again used excessive force to disperse the demonstrators, resulting in the deaths of nine protesters and injuries to more than six hundred others. Several sit-ins were organized in the capital, Khartoum, in the aftermath of the violence to denounce the use of excessive force by the security forces.²⁷⁵

During the armed conflict that broke out on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), both sides destroyed cultural artifacts and inflicted damage to cultural heritage sites. On 16 May 2023, a library containing thousands of documents, historical works and doctoral theses was destroyed in a fire set by looters at the Muhammad Omar Bashir Centre for Sudanese Studies located at Omdurman Ahlia University, Omdurman.

On 2 June 2023, RSF fighters entered the bioarcheology lab of the National Museum in Khartoum and opened storage containers with mummies and other remains. The director of the museum, Ghalia Gharelnabi – who had been forced to flee to the Netherlands after her house had been hit by an artillery shell – warned that the museum’s collection of more than 100,000 items – including embalmed mummies dating back to 2,500 BCE, and historical artifacts from the stone age, the Kingdom of Kush

²⁷⁴ [“ICC Prosecutor Calls for Justice in Darfur,”](#) *Africa News* (24 August 2022); [“ICC Says Sudan Army Chief Vows Cooperation in Darfur Probe,”](#) *Africa News* (25 August 2022); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 572; [“UN Rights Expert in Sudan Urges Security Reforms, Accountability,”](#) *Africa News* (3 February 2023).

²⁷⁵ [“UN Expert Demands Accelerated Probe Into Sudan Post-Coup Killings,”](#) *Al Jazeera* (4 June 2022); Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 346.

(1070 BCE – 550 AD), ancient Egypt and the Christian and Islamic eras – was at risk of becoming one of the centers of armed clashes. Reports in [late May] indicated that the ancient Egyptian temple of Buhen, that had been rebuilt in the courtyard of the National Museum in Khartoum, was damaged. There were similar concerns for the collections of the Natural History Museum in Khartoum.

RSF forces also occupied the building housing the tomb of the Nubian Mahdi (religious leader) Muhammad Ahmad (1844–1885) – who had led a successful war against Ottoman–Egyptian military rule in 1881, and later achieved a victory over the British colonizing army at the Siege of Khartoum in 1884–1885 – as well as a museum in the former home of Ahmad’s successor Khalifa Abdullahi ibn Muhammad (1846–1899), using it as military basis. Fighting between the SAF and RSF was also reported in and around the historical site of Merowe, housing the archaeological heritage of the former capital of the Kingdom of Kush, Meroë.²⁷⁶

In [May] 2023, Ahmed Hussein Abdelrahman Adam, associate professor of archaeology at the University of Khartoum, head of its archaeology department and director of its museums, went into temporary exile in Switzerland, where he worked at the Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano. In December 2018, Adam had chaired a meeting of University of Khartoum staff which had condemned the violence against civil protesters against the rising bread prices, and called for a peaceful transfer of power. As a result, he had been threatened by telephone and harassed until he had gone into exile for the first time in Germany and Ethiopia (April–June 2019). After the October 2021 coup, the situation worsened, eventually deteriorating into an armed conflict in April 2023. Archaeological sites were occupied by the military, making them inaccessible and causing Adam’s second exile.²⁷⁷

On 15 June 2023, the International Council on Archives expressed its concern about the burning of the Institute of the Industrial Research Institute, a United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) affiliate which held rare collections of research materials and reports on Sudan, as well as the dangerous fighting in areas adjacent to the National Museum, National Record Office, Sudan National Library, Sudan Radio & TV, and the Sudan Section of the Library of the University of Khartoum.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Wagdy Sawahel, “[Reports of Sexual Violence Emerge as Fighting Continues](#),” *University World News* (23 May 2023); Zeinab Mohammed Salih & Jason Burke, “[Sudan Officials Fear for Historical Artefacts Threatened by Fighting](#),” *Guardian* (5 June 2023); Wagdy Sawahel, “[Lawyers Call for War Crime Charges as Destruction Continues](#),” *University World News* (6 June 2023).

²⁷⁷ “[From Sudan to USI with the Scholars at Risk Programme](#),” *Università della Svizzera Italiana* (15 May 2023).

²⁷⁸ “[The International Council on Archives Statement of Concern on Danger to and Destruction of Records during the Civil War in Sudan](#)” (press release, 15 June 2023).

SURINAME

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

SWAZILAND

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

SWEDEN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2017–2018, 2020, 2022.

SWITZERLAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1997, 1999–2000, 2004, 2007–2009, 2014, 2016–2018, 2022.

See also Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sudan.

SYRIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2002, 2004–2022.

In its eleventh Annual Report on Enforced Disappearances published on 30 August 2022, the Syrian Network for Human Rights called on the United Nations Security Council to “establish methods and mechanisms to prevent the Syrian regime from ... tampering with ... the dead.”²⁷⁹

On 29 June 2023, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly approved a resolution (83–11 with 62 abstentions) establishing an Independent Institution of Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic to determine what happened to more than 130,000 people missing as a result of the conflict in Syria (2011–

²⁷⁹ Syrian Network for Human Rights, [The 11th Annual Report on Enforced Disappearance in Syria on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances; the Number of Victims Is Rising](#) (30 August 2022), 52.

present). During the conflict, nearly a half million people were killed and half of the prewar population of 23 million was displaced. In the run-up to the vote, over a hundred civil society organizations and 23 UN human rights experts had urged the General Assembly to establish such an institution to support the families' right to truth.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Edith Lederer, "[UN Votes to Establish Independent Body to Clarify Fate of over 130,000 Syrians Missing in Conflict](#)," *AP* (29 June 2023).

TAIWAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998, 2001, 2008–2010, 2012, 2016–2020, 2022.

See China.

TAJIKISTAN

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

In 2022 a broad assault took place on the cultural heritage of the Pamiris – a small, unrecognized ethnic minority belonging to the Shia Islam Ismaili community. Following anti-government protests in May 2022 in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region – in which according to a May 2022 report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues as many as forty peaceful protesters were killed – the authorities shut down and confiscated the property of multiple local organizations linked to the Aga Khan Development Network working in the fields of education, economic development and religious instruction.²⁸¹

TANZANIA

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

THAILAND

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995, 1999, 2001–2002, 2005, 2007–2022.

²⁸¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, “[Tajikistan: UN Expert Fears Crackdown against Pamiri Minority Could Spiral Out of Control](#),” (press release; 20 May 2022); “[Tajikistan: Stop Abusing Autonomous Region Protesters](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (26 May 2022); Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 356–357.

TIMOR-LESTE

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

On 20 August 2022, President José Ramos-Horta awarded a medal to retired Indonesian army general Abdullah Mahmud Hendropriyono for his “significant contributions to national peace and stability.” The decision was widely criticized, as Hendropriyono was implicated in human rights violations, including abuse, torture and killings, during the Indonesian invasion of East Timor (1975–1976), as military chief in Jakarta against East Timorese students (1991–1993), and as the head of the State Intelligence Agency at the time of the murder of human rights activist Munir Said Thalib [See NCH *Annual Reports 2015, 2018–2019*].²⁸²

See also Australia.

TOGO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2002, 2008–2013, 2017–2018, 2021.

TRINIDAD and TOBAGO

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2018.

TUNISIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2011–2022.

Security forces periodically prevented demonstrations by blocking access to certain locations and used excessive force to disperse demonstrators, including on 14 January 2022 – during the anniversary of the 2011 Revolution – when authorities banned public gatherings on health grounds.²⁸³

²⁸² “[Timorese Slam Award for ‘Rights Abuser’ Ex-General](#),” *Union of Catholic Asian News* (22 August 2022).

²⁸³ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 603.

In March 2023, Adel Maizi, archivist and chair of the memory committee of the Instance Vérité et Dignité (IVD; Truth and Dignity Commission; 2014–2019), and other archivists criticized the transfer in 2019–2020 of IVD archives to the National Archives (for documentary materials) and the Prime Minister’s office (for audiovisual materials containing the testimony of victims made behind closed doors) rather than to a dedicated institution for the preservation of memory. They blamed the lack of a solid legislative framework for this transfer [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2015–2020*].²⁸⁴

On 2 March 2023, Sihem Bensedrine, former President of the Instance Vérité et Dignité (IVD; Truth and Dignity Commission), was summoned on charges of corruption and barred from leaving Tunisia. She was one among seven former IVD members investigated since March 2019. On 31 December 2018, the IVD had sent its final seven-volume, 3,000-page report to then President Beji Caied Essebsi (in power between 2014–2019). Since then, nothing had been done with its recommendations. On 8 February 2021, four United Nations special rapporteurs had sent a letter alerting the government to the risks of using alleged instances of corruption as a pretext to obstruct the transitional justice process, and urged it to “ensure that criminal investigations are not used as a reprisal for the facts contained in the work or reports of the IVD” [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2015–2021*].²⁸⁵

On 11 April 2023, the University of Manouba in Tunis said it would withdraw the title of emeritus professor from historian Habib Kazdaghli, a former dean of its Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities, over his participation in an international academic symposium on the legal and religious status of Jews during the French protectorate in Tunisia (1881–1956), organized by the Tunisian Jewish History Society in Paris alongside Israeli academics, including historian Haïm Saadoun. The university presidency and the scientific committee of the faculty had “denounced” Kazdaghli for his participation, accusing him of using his title for a “dangerous” and “nefarious” purpose, namely the normalization of relations with Israel. Tunisia did not recognize Israel diplomatically. Kazdaghli appealed the decision to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. He stated his opposition to the “Israeli settler project,” but at the same time denounced extremist Tunisian political positions that propagated anti-Semitism and repressed Israeli voices. [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2013–2014*].²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Olfa Behassine, “[Tunisia: Battle over Truth Commission Archives](#),” *JusticeInfo.Net* (16 January 2020); Olfa Behassine, “[Adel Maizi: ‘Remembrance Isn’t Just about the Past, It Helps Build the Future’](#),” *JusticeInfo.Net* (9 March 2023).

²⁸⁵ Olfa Behassine, “[In Tunisia, the ‘Falsified’ Report that Threatens Transitional Justice](#),” *JusticeInfo.Net* (23 March 2023).

²⁸⁶ Simona Gonzalez, “[Historian Vilified over Symposium with Israeli Academics](#),” *University World News* (4 May 2023); Kennedy McCutchen, “[Tunisian Professor Stripped of Title for Participating in Symposium Alongside Israeli Academic](#),” *Endangered Scholars Worldwide* (16 May 2023).

TÜRKIYE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–1998, 2000–2022.

On 21 July 2021, the Council of Higher Education established a new research institute named “International Institute of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity.” Its aim was defined as investigating the “baseless genocide allegations about Armenians, but also crimes against humanity wherever they committed in the world, from America to Africa, from Asia to Europe.” However, historians had achieved near-consensus that the 1915 Armenian massacres had constituted a genocide.²⁸⁷

In October 2021, Caner Perit Özen, a history student, and Ersin Berke Gök, a physics student, both at Boğaziçi University, were imprisoned after they had protested against the appointment of Naci İnci as rector of the university by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. They reportedly spent much of their time in solitary confinement, and with no access to university exam papers, letters by friends and family members, or medication. On 7 January 2022, the Istanbul Twenty-Second Criminal Court of First Instance ordered their release. On 3 February 2023, an Istanbul court sentenced Özen to one year’s imprisonment, Gök to 18 months, and twelve other students to between 12 and 14 months.²⁸⁸

In 2022, the authorities continued to deprive a group dubbed the Saturday Mothers of their right to freedom of peaceful assembly in Galatasaray Square, where they had been gathering regularly to demand accountability for the enforced disappearances during the 1980s and 1990s. In June 2022, riot police prevented the group’s nine-hundredth peaceful vigil, detaining several people. In August 2022, police prevented a peaceful protest by the group to mark the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances at the Altınşehir cemetery and detained 14 people. In the meantime, the prosecution on bogus charges of 46 participants in the seven-hundredth gathering in August 2018 continued. In September 2022, police prevented the Saturday Mothers from making a statement to the press in front of the Çağlayan Courthouse before their fifth hearing and detained 16 people.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Olga Selin Hünler, “Academic Freedom in Turkey,” in Kirsten Roberts Lyer, Ilyas Saliba & Janika Spannagel, eds., *University Autonomy Decline: Causes, Responses, and Implications for Academic Freedom* (London: Routledge, 2023), 157.

²⁸⁸ “[Turkey: Immediately Release Ersin Berke Gök and Caner Perit Özen](#),” *International Federation for Human Rights* (6 January 2022); “[Turkish Court Approves Release of Two Jailed Bogazici Students](#),” *Al-Monitor* (7 January 2022); “[Turkey: Criminalisation & Ill-Treatment of Ersin Berke Gök & Caner Perit Özen](#),” *United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures* (Joint Communication; 3 May 2022); Hamdi Firat Buyuk, “[Turkish Court Jails 14 University Students over Massive 2021 Protests](#),” *Balkan Insight* (3 February 2023).

²⁸⁹ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 370.

On [22] February 2022, the Diyarbakır 13th High Criminal Court acquitted nine members of the Diyarbakır Bar Association who stood trial for charges of insulting the Turkish nation and inciting hatred and hostility among the people. The charges were based on reports released between 2016 and 2018 in which the association used the term “genocide” when referring to the 1915 mass killings of Armenians and condemned the suspension of a member of parliament for using the word “Kurdistan” during a speech in parliament.

On 22 April 2022, Garo Paylan, an Armenian member of Parliament for the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), said that he faced an unprecedented level of backlash due to a motion (submitted by him annually for seven years) to recognize the 1915 mass killings of Armenians as a genocide and to remove the names of the perpetrators from public venues. The motion was rejected by the Parliament Speaker on the grounds that it was against the parliamentary bylaws. Most of the criticism came from ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) politicians.

On 25 April 2022, the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office launched an investigation into Republican People’s Party (CHP) deputy Sezgin Tanrikulu for sharing a post on Twitter on 24 April (Armenian Remembrance Day) in which he wrote that “107 years ago on April 24, 1915, hundreds of Armenians were detained and exiled. Many died or were lost in the process.” He was charged with “public denigration of Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey” (Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, TCK).²⁹⁰

On 14 July 2022, thirty-six tombstones were vandalized and destroyed in the 600-year-old Jewish Hasköy Cemetery in Istanbul.²⁹¹

TURKMENISTAN

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

In 2022, the authorities continued to discriminate against women and girls and LGBTQ+ people, arbitrarily restricting their rights, freedoms and bodily autonomy in the name of cultural traditions and Turkmeniçilik (Turkmen national identity).²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Stockholm Center for Freedom, “[Court Acquits Diyarbakır Lawyers Tried for Armenian Genocide, Kurdistan Remarks](#)” (22 February 2022); Stockholm Center for Freedom, “[Armenian MP Faces ‘Unprecedented’ Backlash over Motion Seeking Genocide Recognition](#)” (25 April 2022); Stockholm Center for Freedom, “[Turkish Authorities Launch Investigation into CHP Lawmaker for Commemorating Armenian Remembrance Day](#)” (25 April 2022).

²⁹¹ Zvika Klein, “[600-Year-Old Jewish Cemetery in Turkey Vandalized, Graves Destroyed](#),” *Jerusalem Post* (15 July 2022).

²⁹² Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 374.

UGANDA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2009, 2011–2013, 2015–2017, 2019–2021.

On 8 February 2022, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Uganda to pay US\$ 325 million to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for “wrongful international acts,” including the occupation of parts of eastern DRC and the support of armed groups during the Second Congo War (1998–2003), leading to the deaths of 10,000 to 15,000 people. The ICJ further ruled that there was “insufficient evidence” for the DRC claim that Uganda was responsible for 180,000 civilian deaths. The landmark ruling ended a legal dispute begun in 2005 when the ICJ ruled that Uganda had to pay reparations without settling an amount. In 2008, it was estimated that the war and its after-effects, such as malnutrition and diseases among displaced people, had caused the death of 5.4 million people.²⁹³

On 3 February 2023, authorities terminated the mandate of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights Office in Uganda, established in 2005, from the end of 2023 onward, on the grounds that Uganda’s human rights record had improved and “dynamic internal institutions” had been developed. The decision was criticized by the opposition. In November 2022, an expert member of the UN Committee against Torture had found that torture and ill-treatment continued to be widespread, while Human Rights Watch concluded that accountability for serious human rights abuses committed by security forces had remained elusive throughout 2022. Accountability for crimes committed during the conflict between government forces and the Lord’s Resistance Army (1987–present), including abuses by the government’s armed forces, remained limited. The army claimed that soldiers who committed abuses had been prosecuted and convicted but did not provide any details of such cases.²⁹⁴

See also Congo (Democratic Republic).

²⁹³ Joe Bavier, “[Congo War-Driven Crisis Kills 45,000 a Month: Study](#),” *Reuters* (22 January 2008); “[Mixed Reactions Follow ICJ Ruling Asking Uganda to Pay \\$325m in Reparation to DRC](#),” *Africa News* (10 February 2022); “[Uganda Pays First Installment of \\$325m War Reparations to DRC](#),” *Al Jazeera* (12 September 2022).

²⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2022: Events of 2021* (New York: HRW, 2022), 628; “[Uganda to Terminate Mandate of UN Rights Office](#),” *Africa News* (8 February 2023).

UKRAINE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 2009–2011, 2014–2022.

Following the 24 February 2021 invasion by Russian forces, hundreds of streets, squares and other locations named after Russian historical figures were renamed and memorial plaques removed. Additionally, many statues were (scheduled to be) demolished, books written by Russian nationals could no longer be published, and Russian movies were banned.²⁹⁵

In March 2022, a 70-year-old woman was fined 35,000 rubles (\$ 544) after she brought flowers and a handmade “No to war” sign on a blue and yellow paperboard to the monument for writer Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861) in Simferopol to commemorate the anniversary of his birth on 9 March. The judge dismissed the woman’s argument that she supported peace and highlighted that the use of colors of an “unfriendly country” contributed to the offense. The fine presented a significant financial burden for her as the amount corresponded to the double of her monthly pension.²⁹⁶

On 10 March 2022, Leyla Ibragimova [Leila Ibrahimova], deputy of the Zaporizhzhya Regional Council and Director of the Melitopol History Museum, was kidnapped by seven Russian soldiers who raided her home in Melitopol [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. After an interrogation and the confiscation of her family’s phones and computers, she was released. The next morning, however, she was picked up again for another interrogation. Ibragimova, an ethnic Crimean Tatar, was an advocate for her local constituency, including around 12,000 Crimean Tatars. During the interrogation, she was asked about Azad, a local Crimean Tatar organization, and pressed to give the names and addresses of activists and opinion leaders in the area, which she refused.

Subsequently, Russian forces took the museum’s curator, Halyna Kucher ([1962]–), at gunpoint to the museum and asked to show a Russian “expert” where the museum’s Scythian gold was. She refused to cooperate. On 30 April 2022, she was abducted from her home and her whereabouts remained unknown. Russian soldiers oversaw the removal of at least 198 rare gold artifacts from the museum. The gold objects dated back to the fourth century BCE and the Scythian empire.

The kidnappings were seen as an extension of Russian policies in Crimea. Since 2014, when Russian forces illegally annexed Crimea, a Russification policy discouraged schools from teaching Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian (two of the official languages, next to Russian), almost all independent Crimean

²⁹⁵ Mansur Mirovalev, “[How Ukrainians ‘De-Russify’ Themselves](#),” *Al Jazeera* (15 September 2022).

²⁹⁶ Office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, *Situation of Human Rights in Ukraine in the Context of the Armed Attack by the Russian Federation: 24 February – 15 May 2022* (Geneva: OHCHR, 29 June 2022), paragraph 119.

Tatar media outlets were closed, activists' homes were being searched, and at least twenty people "disappeared."²⁹⁷

Russian forces continued to destroy cultural heritage sites in Ukraine [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*]:

- In late February or early March 2022, the Izyum Local Lore Museum, Kharkiv region, was struck by missiles. The museum was established in 1920 to "preserve the historical and cultural heritage and spread knowledge" through a collection of books, paintings, and works of art relevant to the history of the region.²⁹⁸
- In early March 2022, Russian missiles damaged a number of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University buildings, exploding in the university's Rare Book Library, which housed 60,000 of the university's 3,350,000 books and manuscripts.²⁹⁹
- During the occupation of Kherson by Russian forces, between 2 March and 11 November 2022, Russian soldiers and State agents looted at least two museums (the Kherson Regional Art Museum and the Kherson Regional Museum), the St. Catherine's Cathedral, and the Kherson Regional Archives. At least some of the items were taken to Occupied Crimea. In [late-October] 2022, pro-Russian officials removed the bones of eighteenth-century Commander Grigory Potemkin (1739–1791) from the cathedral and moved them, together with his statue, further into Russian-occupied territory. As Potemkin had played a central role in the annexation of Crimea after a peace agreement with the Ottoman Empire in 1783, he was a central figure in President Vladimir Putin's justification of the 2014 invasion of Crimea, and had been mentioned in a number of his speeches since the 24 February 2022 invasion. Reportedly from June 2022 onward, and especially between 30 October and 4 November, soldiers began looting the Kherson Regional Archives, taking almost all of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century records, including collections of regional maps, a large collection of pre-war newspapers, almost everything related to the pre-revolutionary period, a rare "Code of Laws of the Russian Empire" and a collection of the Kherson zemstvo (a local government system

²⁹⁷ Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska, "[Russia's Crackdown on Crimean Tatars Foreshadows Wider Repression](#)," *AlJazeera* (12 March 2022); "[Andrei Kurkov on Russia's War against Ukrainian Culture](#)," *Index on Censorship* (29 March 2022); Andrey Kurkov, "Culture in the Cross Hairs," *Index on Censorship*, 51 no. 2 (July 2022), 64; PEN America, [Ukrainian Culture Under Attack: Erasure of Ukrainian Culture in Russia's War Against Ukraine](#) (New York: PEN America, 2022); "[A Second Worker at the Melitopol Museum of Local History in Ukraine Has Reportedly Been Abducted by Russian Soldiers](#)," *Artnet* (5 May 2022); Jeffrey Gettleman & Oleksandr Chubko, "[Ukraine Says Russia Looted Ancient Gold Artifacts from a Museum](#)," *New York Times* (30 April 2022).

²⁹⁸ PEN America, [Ukrainian Culture Under Attack: Erasure of Ukrainian Culture in Russia's War Against Ukraine](#) (New York: PEN America, 2022).

²⁹⁹ Nathan Greenfield, "[Crimes against the World – Russia's Attacks on Universities](#)," *University World News* (14 August 2022).

- instituted by the Russian Empire during the nineteenth century).³⁰⁰
- On 28 April 2022, Russian forces stole valuable paintings, religious relics and other items from the Mariupol Museum of Local Lore and History, the Museum of Folk Life, and the Kuindzhi Art Museum, all in Mariupol.³⁰¹
 - On 30 April 2022, Russian soldiers looted the Museum of Local History in Melitopol, taking, among other things, rare Scythian gold artifacts [see above under Ibragimova].³⁰²
 - On 6 July 2022, a Russian missile strike destroyed the university museum and library of the H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University in Kharkiv.³⁰³
 - As of 5 October 2022, UNESCO had verified damage to 199 sites since 24 February 2022 – 84 religious sites, 13 museums, 74 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 18 monuments, and 10 libraries. As of 22 February 2023, almost one year after the Russian invasion, UNESCO had verified damage to 241 sites – 106 religious sites, 18 museums, 86 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 19 monuments, and 12 libraries.³⁰⁴
 - On 17 November 2022, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy said that 529 cultural heritage and cultural institutions had been damaged or destroyed since the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. A report of PEN America, published on 2 December 2022, argued that deliberate attacks on cultural heritage had both been a central motive and tactic of Russia’s campaign of aggression and Russification in Crimea and Ukraine since 2014 (thereby continuing a centuries-old trend of Imperial Russian and Soviet efforts to deny, assimilate, and eliminate Ukrainian culture and language). The report distinguished damage to local “houses of culture”; the removal of Ukrainian textbooks and other books from school libraries; threats and violence to museum and other cultural workers; damage to and destruction of (at least 49) libraries and archives; the seizure and destruction of Ukrainian literature and Ukrainian-language books from public libraries in the occupied territories; and the killing of writers, artists, and cultural workers.³⁰⁵
 - On 24 November 2022, Russian forces looted the History Museum in Nova Kakhovka, Khersonska region.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁰ Anna Chernova & Rob Picheta, “[Russia Removes Bones of 18th-Century Commander Revered by Putin from Occupied Ukrainian City](#),” *CNN* (28 October 2022); “[Ukraine: Russians Pillage Kherson Cultural Institutions](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (20 December 2022).

³⁰¹ “[Ukraine: Russians Pillage Kherson Cultural Institutions](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (20 December 2022).

³⁰² “[Ukraine: Russians Pillage Kherson Cultural Institutions](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (20 December 2022).

³⁰³ “[Missile Strike Kills a Security Guard and Damages University Facilities](#),” *Scholars at Risk* ([no date]).

³⁰⁴ UNESCO, “[Damaged Cultural Sites in Ukraine Verified by UNESCO](#)” (6 October 2022); UNESCO, “[Damaged Cultural Sites in Ukraine Verified by UNESCO](#)” (22 February 2023); Yasmine Salam & Dan De Luce, “[‘Just the Way the Nazis Did’: Evidence Suggests Russians Are Stealing Art from Ukraine on a World War II Scale](#),” *NBC News* (6 April 2023).

³⁰⁵ PEN America, *Ukrainian Culture Under Attack: Erasure of Ukrainian Culture in Russia’s War Against Ukraine* (New York: PEN America, 2022); PEN America, “[Report Exposes Putin’s War on Ukrainian Culture](#),” *Ifex* (5 December 2022); Jason Farago, “[When Cultural Heritage Becomes a Battlefield](#),” *New York Times* (27 December 2022).

³⁰⁶ “[Ukraine: Russians Pillage Kherson Cultural Institutions](#),” *Human Rights Watch* (20 December 2022).

- On 23 July 2023, Russian missiles hit the historic center of Odessa (UNESCO World Heritage), badly damaging the Transfiguration Cathedral, Odessa's largest Orthodox church. The church had already been demolished by the Soviet Union in 1939, but it had been rebuilt in 2003. Russia had stepped up attacks on Odessa, a port city, after it had withdrawn from the United Nations-backed grain deal on 17 July 2023.³⁰⁷

In September 2022, when the Ukrainian forces liberated communities that had been under Russian control for six months, it transpired that there had been a systematic attempt to eliminate the Ukrainian curriculum, in particular of history, literature, and language, and replace it with a Russian one [See also *NCH Annual Report 2022*]. This included the destruction of school textbooks, Ukrainian flags, and children's work. Several teachers had resisted: head teacher Lidiya Tilna was detained for 19 days and beaten for refusing to teach the Russian curriculum; head teacher Liliya Sirous hid 2,200 books after being told to destroy them. Deputy director at Balakliya Five school Inna Mandryka refused to cooperate and was dismissed, but after her dismissal she launched an underground online school from her basement and created a syllabus of online lessons and distributed it to teachers scattered all over Ukraine and Europe.³⁰⁸

Among those killed at the frontline in the war against Russia were:

- On or around 5 October 2022: historian and archaeologist Viacheslav Zaitsev (?–2022). He was the head of the information and publishing department of the Khortytsia National Reserve and a deputy of the Zaporizhzhya City Council.
- On 18 October 2022: historian Yurii Kostyk (?–2022). An alumnus of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, he successively worked at the Danylo Halytsky Lviv National Medical University, taught the history of Ukraine in English to foreign students, and was a researcher in the Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine.
- On or around 17 November 2022: Serhiy Myronov (?–2022), a Kyiv tour guide, activist, author of the blog *Vanishing Kyiv*. At his own expense, he restored historical doors and windows in old Kyiv houses. He died of wounds in the hospital.
- On or around 29 November 2022: Vadym Stetsyuk (1982–2022), a historian and teacher of the Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohienko National University. A history teacher and researcher at the Kamianets-Podilskyi State Historical Museum, he was the author of more than 120 scientific

³⁰⁷ James Waterhouse & George Wright, "[Ukraine War: Russian Strikes on Odesa Damage Orthodox Cathedral](#)," *BBC News* (23 July 2023).

³⁰⁸ Zhanna Bezpiatchuk & Sofia Bettiza, "[Ukraine War: Tortured for Refusing to Teach in Russian](#)," *BBC News* (1 October 2022).

publications.

- On 6 January 2023, librarian Vitalii Pyvovarov (?–2023) was killed near Bakhmut. He had graduated from the history faculty of Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, and was pursuing a postgraduate degree. He worked in the State Archive of the Zhytomyr Region and Zhytomyr State Administration, and later at the Oleh Olzhych Regional Scientific Library. He volunteered to join the ranks of the Armed Forces.
- On 16 January 2023, after four months of being in a coma as a result of a severe battle wound, Kharkiv historian and antiquarian Valerii Romanovskyi passed away (?–2023). He was an associate professor at the Department of Cultural Studies of the Kharkiv State Academy of Culture and a member of the Kharkiv Historical and Philological Society. He taught the history of Ukrainian and world culture, worked on the memoirs of Pavlo Zholtovskyi, and wrote a commentary on the memoirs of Yuri Shevelyov.
- On 2 February 2023, archaeologist Andrii Fylypchuk (?–2023) was killed during a combat mission in the East of Ukraine. He had graduated from Lviv Ivan Franko National University. In 2011–2014, he did postgraduate studies at the archaeology department. Together with his father, archaeologist Mykhailo Fylypchuk, he had explored the Slavic sites of Ciscarpathia. Since 2015, he had worked as the deputy director for scientific work of the Old Plisnesk Historical and Cultural Reserve.
- On 14 March 2023, historian, archaeologist, ethnographer, and musician Yuri Kovalenko (?–2023) was killed in battle in the Luhansk region. He had taken part in numerous archaeological expeditions and, since 1999, headed the scientific research department at the Hlukhiv National Reserve. In 2014 he joined the Black Tulip mission as a volunteer and engaged in repatriating more than 150 deceased Ukrainian defenders' bodies back from the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. He had enlisted in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2020, meanwhile defending his Ph.D. in 2021.

In addition:

- On 24 March 2022, historian, translator, and publicist Serhiy Zaikovsky (?–2022) was killed during an assault on the Lukyanivska village, near Kyiv. A graduate of Kharkiv National University, he specialized in the history of the ancient world and the Middle Ages.
- On 21 April 2022, historian and writer Serhiy Burov ([1938]–2022) died in besieged Mariupol. He devoted his life to researching the history of the city, and was its honorary citizen. He wrote *Mariupol: The Past* (2003) and *Mariupol and Its People* (2011).
- On April 25, Russia shelled the Kupyansk local history museum with missiles. The museum director Iryna Osadcha and worker Olena Vodopianova were killed in the workplace.

In addition:

- On 5 March 2022, Russian occupiers shot dead Church Slavonic and Greek language teacher, historian, and translator Oleksandr Kisliuk (–2022) in Bucha, near Kyiv. He worked as a teacher of ancient languages, translated classical texts and published about the history of the Cossacks based on Latin sources.³⁰⁹

On 15 December 2022, in a resolution adopted by 507 votes in favor, 12 against with 17 abstentions, the European Parliament recognized “the Holodomor, the artificial famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine caused by a deliberate policy of the Soviet regime, as a genocide against the Ukrainian people, as it was committed with the intent to destroy a group of people by deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.” While condemning “the current Russian regime’s manipulation of historical memory for the purpose of regime survival,” the European Parliament called “on the Russian Federation, as the primary successor of the Soviet Union, to officially recognize the Holodomor and to apologize for these crimes.”³¹⁰

Among those (temporarily) emigrated or exiled since the Russian invasion of February 2022 were:

- Linguist Yurii Kovbasko, who moved from Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University in Ivano-Frankivsk to Guarapuava, Paraná State, Brazil, with a two-year fellowship. He worked on a *Diachronic Corpus of the Ukrainian Language of the Diaspora* in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century;
- Sociologist Olena Strelnyk, who was employed on a two-year emergency fellowship at the Technical University of Munich funded by the university and DFG, the German Research Foundation. She collected oral histories of the war in Ukraine and in exile.³¹¹

According to a February 2023 report from the Yale University Conflict Observatory, an initiative supported by the United States State Department, Russia had placed at least 6,000 Ukrainian children at 43 camps and institutions in Russian-occupied regions in Ukraine or in Russia, or with new families, as part of its “systematic ... approach to the relocation, re-education and, in some cases, adoption and

³⁰⁹ Rodina Iryna, “[People of Culture Taken Away by the War: 2022](#)” (PEN Ukraine; 4 February 2023); Rodina Iryna, “[People of Culture Taken Away by the War: 2023](#)” (PEN Ukraine; 19 July 2023).

³¹⁰ “[European Parliament Resolution of 15 December 2022 on 90 Years after the Holodomor: Recognising the Mass Killing through Starvation as Genocide](#)” (Strasbourg: EP, 15 December 2022). European Parliament, “[Holodomor: Parliament Recognises Soviet Starvation of Ukrainians as Genocide](#)” (press release; Strasbourg: EP, 15 December 2022).

³¹¹ Nathan Greenfield, “[Will Ukraine’s Brains Return? And What If They Don’t?](#),” *University World News* (20 May 2023).

forced adoption of Ukrainian children. The report defined “re-education” as “the promotion of cultural, historical, societal, and patriotic messages or ideas that serve the political interests of Russia.” It included the inculcation of the official Russian vision of national culture and history. It took many forms, including the school curriculum, field trips to cultural or patriotic sites throughout Russia, lectures from Russia’s veterans and historians, and military activities.³¹²

On 20 July 2023, Culture and Information Policy Minister Olexander Tkachenko tendered his resignation after President Volodymyr Zelenskiy had told Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal to find alternative funding for cultural projects, among others, because “[m]useums, cultural centers, symbols, television series are important, but we have other priorities.” Tkachenko wrote on Telegram: “Culture in wartime is important as this war is not just about territory but also people – our memory, history, language and creativity despite the war ... Private and State funding for culture in wartime is no less important than for drones. Culture is the shield for our identity and our borders.” Earlier that day, Tkachenko had defended, among others, the allocation of the equivalent of \$ 13.5 million to complete a museum devoted to Ukraine’s man-made 1930s famine Holodomor.³¹³

See also Estonia, Poland, Russia.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2013, 2016.

UNITED KINGDOM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998–2001, 2003–2004, 2006–2022.

In 2013, the Royal Military Police (RMP) launched an investigation into alleged murder raids by Special Air Service (SAS) operatives in Afghanistan, during the War in Afghanistan (2001–2021), specifically the operation of one SAS squadron in Helmand in 2010–2011 that was reportedly responsible for 54 unlawful killings in a six-month period. RMP investigators were obstructed in their efforts to gather

³¹² *Russia’s Systematic Program for the Re-Education & Adoption of Ukraine’s Children: A Conflict Observatory Report* (New Haven: Yale School of Public Health Humanitarian Research Lab) (14 February 2023), 5–6, 14, 18; Missy Ryan, “[Russian ‘Re-Education Camps’ Hold Thousands of Ukrainian Kids, per Report.](#)” *Washington Post* (14 February 2023).

³¹³ “[Ukraine’s Zelenskiy Calls for Spending Restraint, Minister Offers to Resign.](#)” *Reuters* (21 July 2023).

evidence by the British military and their findings were misinterpreted by the Ministry of Defense after they had closed their investigation in 2019.

In August 2022, an investigation by the BBC (British Broadcasting Company) found evidence suggesting that General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, the former head of Special Forces, was briefed about the alleged unlawful killings in Helmand, but kept the records away from the RMP investigators. Likewise, it found that high-level officers of Special Forces were aware of concerns over unlawful killings, but failed to report to the RMP, despite a legal obligation to do so. Instead, concerns had been put in a classified file with access restricted to a handful senior Special Forces officers.³¹⁴

In the autumn of 2021, historian Nicolas Bell-Romero submitted a 50-page draft report about the past links of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University, with transatlantic slavery within the framework of larger research on the university's legacies of enslavement undertaken by him and historian Sabine Cadeau. Finding that financial benefits from enslavement outweighed the College's contribution to abolition, the report caused a rift among college faculty – with some pushing to prevent its publication. A long response to the criticisms did not change the situation and Bell-Romero refused to redraft his report in collaboration with a life fellow in history. In the summer of 2022 the newspaper *The Telegraph* picked up the case, quoting at length the anonymous critics but identifying Bell-Romero by name as a “woke activist.” When in July 2022 another newspaper submitted a freedom of information request to access the report, the College eventually published it online in August.³¹⁵

After freedom of information requests were issued to 140 British universities by the newspaper *The Times*, it was revealed that some universities removed books from reading lists or made them optional to protect students from “challenging” content, including depictions of slavery. The investigation also found 1,081 examples of trigger warnings across undergraduate courses.³¹⁶

On 28 September 2022, the Court of Appeal ruled that due to the “high value” of the Colston statue [See *NCH Annual Reports 2020, 2022*] and the violent way it was brought down, defendants in similar cases in the future would not be able to use human rights defenses. The judgment was seen by human rights activists as a blow to the right to protest.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Hannah O'Grady & Joel Gunter, “[SAS Unit Repeatedly Killed Afghan Detainees, BBC Finds](#),” *BBC News* (12 July 2022).

³¹⁵ Samira Shackle, “[The Backlash: How Slavery Research Came under Fire](#),” *Guardian* (1 June 2023).

³¹⁶ “[Universities Admit Purge of ‘Challenging’ Books to Protect Students](#),” *Telegraph* (9 August 2022).

³¹⁷ Katy Watts, “[Colston 4 Judgment: ‘The Government Is Tearing Up Our Protest Rights’](#),” *The Bristol Cable* (28 September 2022).

In October 2022, Munib al-Masri (1934–), a Palestinian business owner and former politician, brought a petition to the government asking for a formal acknowledgement and apology for war crimes committed by British forces against Palestinians during the British rule of Palestine (1917–1948). The petition came with a 300–page dossier of evidence of British atrocities, including during the Arab Rebellion of 1936–1939. In a statement the Ministry of Defense said it was aware of historical allegations against armed forces personnel during the period and any evidence provided would be “reviewed thoroughly.”³¹⁸

In the autumn of 2022, the journal *Index on Censorship* organized a survey among 28 historians and journalists who worked with archives related to the Royal family. Ten responded, the majority of which wanted to remain anonymous. Eight respondents said that their research into the royal family had been affected by the refusal of the royal archives to grant access to key materials and deplored the excessive secrecy. One of them was historian Andrew Lownie (1961–) who gained access in 2022 to the diaries and personal correspondence (preserved at Southampton University) of Lord Louis Mountbatten and Lady Mountbatten, part of the British Royal Family’s inner circle, after a protracted and expensive legal battle (See also below).

Since 2010, there had been a blanket exemption to the Freedom of Information Act for all official correspondence relating to the monarch and to the heir and second-in-line to the throne. The exemption was introduced during the decade-long battle by *Guardian* journalist Rob Evans to gain access to the so-called “black spider memos” (letters and memorandums written by Prince Charles, now King Charles III, to certain government departments), arguing that they constituted lobbying and should be released in the public interest.

Rory Cormac, working at the University of Nottingham and co-author of *The Secret Royals*, pointed to three specific areas where more openness would contribute to a greater understanding of contemporary history: the 1956 Suez crisis, Northern Ireland, and the role played by the monarchy in the final phase of the British Empire. The personal archives of past prime ministers (Anthony Eden at the University of Birmingham and Harold Macmillan at Oxford University) were subject to restrictions on royal material. There were also files which had been reclassified after historians found information that proved uncomfortable to the Royal Family [See also NCH *Annual Report 2020*, Jenny Hocking case under Australia].³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Tom Bateman, “[UK Apology Sought for British War Crimes in Palestine](#),” *BBC News* (7 October 2022).

³¹⁹ “Special Report [on royal secrecy],” *Index on Censorship*, 51 no. 4 (December 2022), 1, 49–64 (survey results on p. 56; Lownie on pp. 57–58; Hocking on pp. 59–61); Information Commissioner’s Office: Freedom of Information Act 2000, [Decision Notice](#) (18 December 2019), [Information Notice](#) (19 December 2019) [on the Mountbatten archives]; Andrew Lownie, “Monitoring Terrorists, Gangs – and Historians,” *Index on Censorship*, 52 no. 2 (2023), 82–83.

In 2023 historian Andrew Lownie (1961–) revealed that his freedom of information requests over the past years demonstrated that his social media accounts, speaking engagements, newspaper articles and crowdfunding activities had been monitored by the Cabinet Office and the Foreign Office since at least 2018 and that his past, including an employment tribunal and defamation cases in which he was the defendant, was being investigated. These operations were likely mounted because Lownie had found huge gaps in the archival record (called "dry cleaning the records") during research for his 2016 biography of spy Guy Burgess (1911–1963), his 2019 biography of Lord Louis Mountbatten (1900–1979) and Lady Mountbatten (1901–1960) (see above), and his 2021 biography of the Duke of Windsor (who was King Edward VIII in 1936; 1894–1972). The gaps showed that the British government failed to adhere to the Public Record Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Lownie found similar gaps in Irish archives.³²⁰

On 15 February 2023, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report on the deportation by the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) of the entire population of the Chagos islands in the Indian Ocean so the US could build a military base on Diego Garcia, the largest island. The boat carrying the final Chagossians to be expelled from the islands arrived in Mauritius in June 1973. HRW detailed the ongoing "colonial crimes against humanity" committed by the UK in the Chagos Islands, explaining why UK authorities should prosecute these crimes, pay full compensation, and issue a meaningful apology for losses experienced as a result of these crimes [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2012–2013, 2021*].³²¹

On 26 April 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak dismissed a call for the government to apologize and pay reparations for the United Kingdom's prominent historical role in the slave trade and in slavery. He said: "What I think our focus should now be is, of course, understanding our history and all its parts, not running away from it, but right now making sure we have a society that's inclusive and tolerant of people from all backgrounds ... But trying to unpick our history is not the right way forward and is not something we'll focus our energies on." In 2006, then Prime Minister Tony Blair had expressed "deep sorrow" for Britain's role in slavery.³²²

In May 2023, Buckingham Palace declined a request by the Ethiopian government to return the remains of Prince Alemayehu (1861–1879) on the grounds that it would "disturb [...] the resting place of a

³²⁰ Andrew Lownie, "Monitoring Terrorists, Gangs – and Historians," *Index on Censorship*, 52 no. 2 (2023), 82–83.

³²¹ Human Rights Watch, *"That's When the Nightmare Started": UK and US Forced Displacement of the Chagossians and Ongoing Colonial Crimes* (New York: HRW, 2023).

³²² Joshua Nevett, "[Slavery: Rishi Sunak Rejects Call to Apologise and Pay Reparations](#)," *BBC News* (26 April 2023); Mohamed Madi & Celestina Olulode, "[King Charles III as Head of State in St Vincent and the Grenadines 'Absurd'](#)," *BBC News* (8 May 2023).

substantial number of others” who were buried in the catacombs of St. George’s Chapel in Windsor Castle. A previous request to then Queen Elizabeth II in 2006 was declined because of the alleged difficulty of identifying the prince’s remains. Prince Alemayehu had been taken to England by British soldiers looting his father’s imperial citadel after the 1868 Battle of Magdala.³²³

In [early May] 2023, the eyewitness statement of Captain Robin Green given for a 1982 board of inquiry related to the attempted June 1982 landing on the Falkland Islands / Islas Malvinas, was released after a freedom of information request by Crispin Black, a retired colonel and one of the survivors of the landing, prompting calls for the full release of the inquiry’s files. On 8 June 1982, the landing ships Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad were attacked by Argentinian Skyhawk planes, as part of the Falkland / Islas Malvinas War (April–June 1982), killing dozens of service personnel and injuring more than 150. In September 1982, a board of inquiry had collected witness statements of the attempted landing, which remained secret. The files were due to remain sealed until 2065, despite several declassification attempts.³²⁴

On 20 May 2023, a man climbed a scaffold at the front of the BBC headquarters in London and hit the Prospero and Ariel statue (sculpted by Eric Gill [1882–1940] in 1933) with a hammer in an apparent protest. There had been calls for the statue to be removed because, according to a 1989 biography, Gill had recorded sexually abusing his daughters in his diaries. In January 2022, another protester had damaged the statue as well.³²⁵

Northern Ireland

Despite a commitment from the Northern Irish government in November 2021, an independent public inquiry was not established into “mother and baby homes,” “Magdalene laundries,” and “workhouses.” Between 1922 and 1990, many women and girls who had become pregnant outside marriage, had been sent to these institutions, where they had suffered arbitrary detention, forced labor, ill-treatment, and the forced adoption of their babies [See also above, under Ireland, and NCH *Annual Report 2016*, under Ireland].³²⁶

³²³ Jamie Grierson, “[Buckingham Palace Declines to Return Remains of ‘Stolen’ Ethiopian Prince, Say Reports](#),” *Guardian* (23 May 2023); Jibat Tamirat & Cecilia Macaulay, “[Ethiopia’s Prince Alemayehu: Buckingham Palace Rejects Calls to Return Royal’s Body](#),” *BBC News* (23 May 2023).

³²⁴ Daniel Boffey, “[UK Ministers Urged to Unseal Files on Falklands Attack that Killed 56](#),” *Guardian* (5 May 2023).

³²⁵ “[Man Climbs BBC HQ Scaffolding and Hammers at Statue](#),” *BBC News* (20 May 2023).

³²⁶ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 386.

On 4 August 2022, the journal *Index on Censorship* (IoC) expressed concern over two lawsuits filed by Sinn Féin politician Gerry Kelly against journalist Malachi O’Doherty and columnist Ruth Dudley Edwards, claiming aggravated damages for the latter’s comments on Kelly’s role in the 25 September 1983 Maze Prison escape, in which 38 Irish Republican Army prisoners had escaped the maximum security prison HMP Maze. IoC condemned both suits as SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits against Political Participation) and sent a media freedom alert, the seventh on the United Kingdom since January 2022, to the Council of Europe.³²⁷

On 20 and 21 August 2022, 325 African men, women and children were ceremonially reburied on Saint Helena. In 2008, archaeological digs during the construction of the island’s airport had uncovered their remains, which had then been stored in boxes in a stock room of an old prison. The reburial followed a remembrance ceremony on 21 May 2021.

Decades after Britain’s 1807 ban on the slave trade, the Royal Navy began patrolling the Atlantic, intercepting slave ships that violated the ban and taking the captives to Saint Helena (1840–1872). Of these more than 25,000 formerly enslaved, “liberated” Africans, some were shipped further to the Caribbean islands to work on the plantations but most died in quarantine camps on Saint Helena. At least 8,000 men, women and children were buried anonymously on the island (the largest burial ground of enslaved Africans in the world). The 325 reburied persons formed part of this larger group.³²⁸

On 15 December 2022, several United Nations experts warned that the proposed Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill before the United Kingdom (UK) Parliament failed to comply with the UK’s obligation to investigate serious human rights violations committed during the “Troubles” (1969–1998) and denied truth and remedy for victims. They expressed concern that the Bill replaced Troubles-related criminal investigations with reviews to be undertaken by a planned Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, whose truth-seeking mandate was so severely limited that it would be tantamount to a de facto amnesty scheme [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*].³²⁹

³²⁷ [“Index on Censorship Files Media Freedom Alert after Sinn Féin MLA Legal Action,”](#) *Index on Censorship* (4 August 2022).

³²⁸ St. Eustatius Afrikan Burial Ground Alliance, [“St. Helena to Honor 325 ‘Liberated’ Afrikans with Ceremonial Reburial”](#) (press release; 30 August 2022); Equality & Human Rights Commission, [“CEO Speech at St Helena’s Day: Memorial Ceremony for the Formerly Enslaved”](#) (12 August 2021).

³²⁹ United Nations (UN) Experts, [“UK: UN Experts Voice Concern at Proposed Blanket Impunity to Address Legacy of ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland”](#) (Press release; 10 August 2021); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2022: Events of 2021* (New York: HRW, 2022), 706; UN Experts, [“UK: Flawed Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’ Bill Flagrantly Contravenes Rights Obligations, Say UN Experts”](#) (Press release; 15 December 2022); UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, *Follow-up on the Visits to Burundi, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka* (UN Doc. A/HRC/48/60/Add.2) (5 August 2021), 9–16; Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 387.

See also China (Hongkong), Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, India, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Russia, Sudan, United States.

UNITED NATIONS

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2022.

On 15 September 2022, an International Roundtable on Roma and Memorialization (“Advancing Recognition and Remedy for the Dark Chapters of the Romani Past and their Impact on the Present”) under United Nations auspices stated that Romani history included periods of slavery, the Holocaust and other episodes of persecution, evictions and expulsion, and coercive sterilization of Romani women, adding that the dark chapters of Romani history had yet to be properly acknowledged and memorialized. As a result, legacies of anti-gypsyism continued to be a powerful force in societies throughout the world. It recommended action at the level of history textbooks, sites of memory, historical museums, and oral history, among others.³³⁰

On 29 March 2023, the delegations of France and South Africa at the 52nd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council delivered a Joint Statement on Behalf of a Group of Seventy Countries on Academic Freedom, arguing, among others, that academic freedom was “key to human rights education but also essential for technical and scientific progress,” and noting that attacks on academic freedom were on the rise. It also affirmed that “[w]ithout academic freedom, there is no safeguard against the manipulation of information or against the distortion of history.”³³¹

UNITED STATES

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1995–2022.

In June 2021, Republican Governor of Texas Greg Abbott signed House Bill 2497, creating the “1836 Project,” a committee set up to promote “patriotic education,” mainly through pamphlets given to people receiving their driver’s licenses and by advising State agencies on how to teach history at

³³⁰ *Roma and Memorialization: Advancing Recognition and Remedy for the Dark Chapters of the Romani Past and their Impact on the Present* (Outcome Document of the International Roundtable; Geneva, 15 September 2022).

³³¹ [“Joint Statement on Behalf of a Group of 70 Countries on Academic Freedom at the 52nd Session of the Human Rights Council”](#) (29 March 2023).

monuments, landmarks, and other public history places [See also NCH *Annual Report 2021*]. The bill – an allusion to the “1619 Project,” a project founded in August 2019 by historian and journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and named after the year that slavery began in the colonies that would become the United States (US), and exploring the impact of slavery on US history and modern life [See NCH *Annual Report 2020–2022*] – was criticized for being part of a Republicans’ push in Texas and nationwide to limit the discussion of “critical race theory” [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*] in schools, for promoting the State’s “Christian heritage,” and for excluding enslaved people and indigenous groups from a historical narrative that had Texas’s independence begin in 1836, when it broke free from Mexico (even though its 1836 constitution legalized slavery).

In August 2022, the committee approved a 15-page pamphlet containing the “patriotic” telling of Texas history, that would be distributed alongside new driver’s licenses. The pamphlet was criticized for failing to hold institutions accountable for slavery and other forms of oppression of indigenous Texans, Tejanos, Blacks, and women, and for reinforcing the “Texas creation myth” – a narrative, refuted by historical research, that portrayed the 1836 battle at the Alamo as a liberation struggle, omitting that Texans specifically opposed Mexican laws that would free enslaved workers needed to farm their cotton [See also NCH *Annual Report 2021*].³³²

In 2022, despite unprecedented support in Congress and significant movement on reparations initiatives at State and local levels, the federal government failed to create a commission to study the legacy of enslavement and develop reparations proposals. In light of Congress’s inaction, racial justice advocates urged the Joe Biden administration to create such a commission by executive order on Juneteenth [19 June] 2022. In August 2022, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concluded that the State had failed to implement international anti-racism legal standards, and urged it, for the first time, to establish a commission to study and develop reparations proposals.

As of July 2022, some 870,000 Native American artifacts, including nearly 110,000 human remains, that should have been returned to Native American tribes under the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), remained in the possession of colleges, museums and other State institutions across the country. The number excluded an unknown amount of items held by private institutions not covered by the NAGPRA. Furthermore, many tribes objected to the NAGPRA requirement to explain the cultural significance, including its usage in tribal ceremonies, of items sought for repatriation, as this information had historically been kept secret from non-tribal members. In

³³² Heidi Pérez-Moreno, [“Texas’ 1836 Project Aims to Promote ‘Patriotic Education,’ But Critics Worry It Will Gloss over State’s History of Racism,”](#) *Texas Tribune* (9 June 2021); Sneha Dey, [“1836 Project’s Pamphlet to Promote a ‘Patriotic’ Version of Texas History,”](#) *Kera News* (26 September 2022).

January 2023, a research by ProPublica found that almost half of the artifacts were held by ten institutions, including the Interior Department.³³³

On 24 January 2022, Republican Governor of Virginia Glenn Youngkin – who won the governorship in 2021 partly by promising to root out “critical race theory” and other “inherently divisive” subjects from public education – created a tipline shortly after taking office. He announced that parents should report teachers who discussed “divisive” concepts in the classroom by emailing a @governor.virginia.gov email address. Youngkin denied media outlets’ formal requests for copies of the tipline submissions under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on the grounds that they constituted the governor’s “working papers and correspondence” exempted from the FOIA.

On 13 April 2022, The Washington Post, Associated Press, NPR and other media outlets sued Youngkin in the Richmond Circuit Court, seeking copies of submissions arguing that exemptions for working papers and correspondence did not apply to the tipline submissions – in part because the submissions were reportedly shared with individuals outside of the governor’s office, including the American Enterprise Institute, a right-leaning think tank. On 8 August 2022, nonprofit ethics watchdog group American Oversight and law firm Ballard Spahr filed a second suit in Arlington County Circuit Court, seeking documents that showed how Youngkin and his staff used the tipline, including how they responded to tips submitted.³³⁴

In April 2022, PEN America started collating an Index of School Book Bans to document decisions to ban books in school libraries and classrooms in the United States from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022. Among the 1,145 banned books in the Index, 16% were history books (123 titles) or biographies covering historical topics or figures (61 titles). Of the total, 111 featured individuals or narratives centered on protagonists of color (10%). This included 42 children’s picture books, including biographies of Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Duke Ellington, Sonia Sotomayor, Nelson Mandela, and Malala Yousafzai.

Between July and December 2022, book bans increased to 1,477. Among the banned books were Ibram X. Kendi’s *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*; The Nib’s *Be Gay, Do Comics: Queer History, Memoir, and Satire*; Deborah Willis’s *Reflections in Black*:

³³³ Philip Marcelo, “[Wounded Knee Artifacts Highlight Slow Pace of Repatriations](#),” *AP News* (29 July 2022); Logan Jaffe, Mary Hudetz & Ash Ngu, “[America’s Biggest Museums Fail to Return Native American Human Remains](#),” *Pro Publica* (11 January 2023); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 661, 663.

³³⁴ Laura Vozzella, “[Media Outlets File Suit over Va. Gov. Youngkin’s Teacher Tip Line](#),” *Washington Post* (13 April 2022); Hannah Natanson, “[Va. Gov. Youngkin Faces Second Suit over Teacher Tip Line](#),” *Washington Post* (8 August 2022).

A History of Black Photographers, 1840 to the Present; and Don Nardo's *Life in a Nazi Concentration Camp*.³³⁵

In May 2022, a Tulsa, Oklahoma, county judge denied in part a “motion to dismiss” made by the city of Tulsa and other defendants as part of a lawsuit brought on behalf of survivors and descendants of the 1921 Tulsa race massacre for damages and continuing harm stemming from it. The denial constituted the first time a case for reparations for the massacre had made it past the “motion to dismiss” stage and would enable the last three known survivors of the massacre, all over hundred years old, to have the merits of their case heard in court [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*].³³⁶

On 28 July 2022, climate change-caused rising floodwaters of the Troublesome Creek breached the Hindman Settlement School's archive in Knott County, Kentucky destroying many of its archival records.³³⁷

Research of PEN America found that up and until August 2022, the amount of proposed educational gag orders – State level bills introduced with the intent to restrict teaching and discussion of race, racism, gender and United States (US) history in K-12 schools (schools from Kindergarten to twelfth grade), higher education, and State agencies and institutions – had increased 250 percent compared to 2021, with 36 different States having introduced 137 gag order bills. Most of the bills continued to target teaching about race, however an increasing number also targeted the teaching of LGBTQ+ history. The bills, 136 of which were introduced solely by Republican legislators, were more specifically targeted at higher education (37%), put forward more severe punishment ranging from loss of State funding for institutions to criminal charges for teachers, and were more frequently accompanied by lawsuits of conservative groups and education officials asking courts to interpret the gag orders as broadly as possible. PEN America had previously concluded that the bills had chilling effects on the teaching of the history of slavery, the emancipation of women, and the treatment of Native Americans, leading to the effective banning of a wide swath of historical and other educational materials and resulting in the effective self-censoring of educators and educational institutions on these topics, leading to the erosion of academic freedom [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].

On 2 August 2022, the Critical Race Theory Forward Tracking Project, set up by the Law School of the University of California at Los Angeles, found that 495 attempts, varying from State-level to school-

³³⁵ PEN America, [Banned in the USA: Rising School Book Bans Threaten Free Expression and Students' First Amendment Rights](#) (April 2022); [PEN America's Index of School Book Bans \(July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022\)](#); [Pen America Index of School Book Bans – Fall 2022](#).

³³⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 663.

³³⁷ Tina Irvine, [“Climate Change Just Erased the Past in Kentucky: Where Will It Happen Next?”](#) *History News Network* (7 August 2022).

board level efforts, had been made to limit the teaching of critical race theory (CRT) since September 2020 (the month that a Pennsylvania local school district's anti-CRT policy began), spread over all States except Delaware. Especially in Virginia, Florida, Missouri, and in Congress, anti-CRT proposals had been most frequent. Of the 495 attempts, 94% targeted schools and colleges, of which around one hundred were official attempts to limit or eliminate CRT from college classrooms.

On 1 May 2023, PEN America reported that the number of gag order bills introduced since 2021 had risen to 306 in 45 States, of which 22 had become law in 16 States. Two additional States had enacted educational gag orders via executive orders or policies. It noted a trend shift from classroom censorship to curricular control, from bills that banned lists of so-called "divisive concepts" in classroom instruction toward bills that restricted curricular content, and from focusing on academic speech to focusing on academic structure, proposing to close academic departments and prohibit certain majors and minors and academic programs rather than targeting individual professors' teaching [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2021–2022*].³³⁸

On 1 August 2022, Airbnb promised to remove from its website rental apartments that once housed enslaved people, after outrage had erupted over the listing of the Panther Burn Cottage at the Belmont Plantation in Greenville, Mississippi, that had housed enslaved people in the 1830s.³³⁹

On 8 August 2022, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) executed a search warrant at the Florida resort related to Trump's handling of presidential records in violation of the Presidential Records Act [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. They were looking into potential violations of the Espionage Act, which made it illegal to keep or transmit potentially dangerous national security information. They removed twenty boxes of material, including eleven sets of classified files from the property. Some of the documents reportedly required special clearance beyond top secret clearance, while another document described a foreign government's military defense, including its nuclear capabilities.

On 26 August 2022, the FBI's search-warrant affidavit revealed that a preliminary review of the fifteen boxes of documents that had been retrieved by the National Archives and Records Administration from Trump's Florida resort in mid-January 2022, fourteen contained documents with

³³⁸ Sylvia Goodman, "[Researchers Did a Deep Dive Into Efforts to Restrict Critical Race Theory: Here's What They Found](#)," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (3 August 2022); Jeremy Young & Jonathan Friedman, "[America's Censored Classrooms](#)," *PEN America* (17 August 2022); "[Florida Educators and Students File Lawsuit Challenging 'Stop W.O.K.E.' Law](#)," *ACLU* (18 August 2022); PEN America, *PEN America Index of Educational Gag Orders* (ongoing database); "[CRT Forward Tracking Project](#)," *UCLA* (ongoing database); Eddie Cole, "[Limiting Academics' Freedom to Tell the Truth about Racism Is Not New](#)," *Washington Post* (3 October 2022); Jeffrey Sachs, Jeremy Young, Jonathan Friedman, "[From Classroom Censorship to Curricular Control](#)," *PEN America* (1 May 2023).

³³⁹ Marlene Lenthag, "[Airbnb Removes Mississippi 'Slave Cabin' From Listings After Viral TikTok Video](#)," *NBC News* (2 August 2022).

classification markings, including 67 marked as confidential, 92 marked as secret, and 25 marked as top secret. On 30 August, the Department of Justice said it had evidence that classified documents had deliberately been concealed from federal investigators, when they had searched and received 38 classified documents from the resort in June, in an attempt to “obstruct the government’s investigation.”

On 9 June 2023, the District Court of Florida released a 37-count indictment, including allegations that Trump had twice illegally disclosed national security information, attempted to hide classified documents after they had been subpoenaed by the Department of Justice, and hoarded materials of the highest sensitivity after he left the White House. According to the indictment, the documents included details of United States (US) nuclear weapons programs, the potential vulnerabilities of the US and its allies, and US plans for retaliatory military attacks. Of the 37 counts, 31 were for “willful retention of national defense information,” meaning that prosecutors believed Trump knew that what he was doing was unlawful, and that they had recordings of him apparently speaking about that and the testimony of witnesses.³⁴⁰

On 20 August 2022, the American Historical Association (AHA) restricted public access to its Twitter account because “[a] conversation about history has been invaded by trolls uninterested in civil discourse in last 12 hrs. ... Therefore conversation is temporarily limited to our community. AHA condemns all harassment of members of our community & others who replied in good faith.” The move followed a controversy over a column by AHA President James Sweet on 17 August 2022, in which he had complained about presentist tendencies in the historical profession, especially when the past was read through the prism of contemporary social justice. After a wave of criticism, Sweet on 19 August 2022 had published an apology, with some finding this unnecessary, others insufficient. The “trolls” included white nationalist and neo-Nazi Richard Spencer, who on 20 August 2022 had tweeted: “I just read this man’s offending column; it was reasonable in the extreme. Apparently, being a Rankean historian causes ‘harm’ and ‘pain.’ It’s ridiculous.” On 21 August 2022, AHA executive director James

³⁴⁰ Martin Pengelly, “[Trump Tore Up Records Turned Over to House Capitol Attack Committee](#),” *Guardian* (1 February 2022); Jacqueline Alemany, Josh Dawsey, Tom Hamburger & Ashley Parker, “[National Archives Had to Retrieve Trump White House Records from Mar-a-Lago](#),” *Washington Post* (7 February 2022); “[US National Archives Requests Legal Probe of Trump over Handling of Documents](#),” *BBC News* (10 February 2022); Hugh Lowell, “[US House to Investigate whether Trump Broke Law in Handling of Documents](#),” *Guardian* (10 December 2022); Martin Belam, “[FBI Seizes Documents at Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Home – Live Reaction](#),” *Guardian* (9 August 2022); “[Donald Trump Says FBI Agents Raided His Mar-a-Lago Florida Home](#),” *BBC News* (9 August 2022); “[Trump Search Warrant: FBI Took Top Secret Files from Mar-a-Lago](#),” *BBC News* (13 August 2022); Gareth Evans, “What We Do and Don’t Know about the FBI Search of Trump’s Home,” *BBC News* (15 August 2022); “[Classified Records: 700 Pages Retrieved at Trump Home in January](#),” *Al Jazeera* (23 Augusts 2022); Maya Yang, Martin Pengelly & Chris Stein, “[Trump Search Affidavit Reveals Potential for ‘Evidence of Obstruction’ at Mar-a-Lago – As It Happened](#),” *Guardian* (26 August 2022); “[FBI Says Trump Does Likely Moved in Effort to Obstruct Probe](#),” *Al Jazeera* (31 August 2022); “[Seized Trump Documents Showed Foreign Nation’s Nuclear Capability](#),” *Al Jazeera* (7 September 2022); Hugo Lowell & Léonie Chao-Fong, “[Indictment Charging Trump with Mishandling Classified Documents Unsealed](#),” *Guardian* (9 June 2023); Anthony Zurcher, “[How Trump, Biden and Clinton Secret Files Cases Compare](#),” *BBC News* (12 June 2023).

Grossman said: "... Our priority is to make sure that our followers are not harassed by trolls, while encouraging comments from the historical community and the public ..."³⁴¹

On [11 September] 2022, the 49th anniversary of the United States-backed military overthrow of Chilean democratically-elected President Salvador Allende (1908–1973), the National Security Archive called on President Joe Biden to release former President Richard Nixon's President's Daily Briefs of 8 September 1973, believed to contain initial reporting on specific coup preparations by the Chilean military, and of 11 September 1973, containing the Central Intelligence Agency's report on the actual invasion.³⁴²

In the Fall of 2022, a number of school boards in Missouri banned *Maus* – a 1972 Pulitzer prize-winning graphic novel by Art Spiegelman narrating how his parents survived the Holocaust – in line with a Summer 2022 State law that made the provision of "explicit sexual material" to a student a Class A misdemeanor. In June 2023, the board in Nixa, Springfield, Missouri, also began debating the novel [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].³⁴³

On 4 October 2022, District Judge James Boasberg ruled against the National Security Archive in support of a claim from the Central Intelligence Agency that the so-called Perroots memo be classified even though it had already been published in the State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series in a 2021 volume concerning United States (US)–Soviet Union relations from January 1983 through March 1985. The retrospective memo from Lieutenant General Leonard Perroots, who served as assistant chief of staff for intelligence of the US Air Forces Europe during a 1983 NATO nuclear weapons command exercise, and as director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (1985–1989), recorded his disquiet over the nuclear weapons command exercise and the Soviet reactions to it. The entire FRUS volume was taken offline by the State Department's Office of the Historian.³⁴⁴

On 11 November 2022, Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota, refused to renew the contract of adjunct professor and art historian Erika López Prater, because on 6 October 2022 she showed an online class in global art history images of a fourteenth-century painting depicting the Archangel Gabriel

³⁴¹ Coleen Flaherty, "[Presentism, Race and Trolls](#)," *Inside HigherEd* (22 August 2022); James Sweet, "[Is History History? Identity Politics and Teleologies of the Present](#)," *Perspectives on History* (17 August 2022), preceded by an "[Author's Note](#)" (19 August 2022).

³⁴² Peter Kornbluh, "[The Coup in Chile: What Did Nixon Know and When Did He Know It?](#)," *National Security Archive* (12 September 2022).

³⁴³ Greg Sargent, "[As More Schools Target 'Maus,' Art Spiegelman's Fears Are Deepening](#)," *Washington Post* (14 June 2023).

³⁴⁴ US District Court for the District of Columbia, [National Security Archive versus Central Intelligence Agency](#) (4 October 2022); Editorial Board, "[An Official U.S. History Revealed a Cold War Nuclear Scare: Now Back to the Vault](#)," *Washington Post* (16 October 2022).

delivering to the Prophet Muhammad his first Quranic revelation. She had provided students with a content warning about two minutes prior to displaying the art, allowing students to turn off their video feeds in advance if they chose. A senior in the class, who was also president of the Muslim Student Association at Hamline, later complained that the pictorial depictions of Muhammad had offended her.

On 7 November 2022, Hamline University described the lecture as “undeniably inconsiderate, disrespectful and Islamophobic” and said that “respect for the observant Muslim students in that classroom should have superseded academic freedom.” Mark Berkson, chair of Hamline’s religion department, defended López Prater in a letter to the student paper *The Oracle*, which was removed from the website two days later. PEN America and several academics called the affair “one of the most egregious violations of academic freedom in recent memory.” López Prater sued Hamline’s Board of Trustees for defamation before the District Court of Minnesota. The university admitted that its use of the term “Islamophobic” was flawed.³⁴⁵

On 22 November 2022, Daily Dot – an outlet analyzing internet culture – reported that while the Wikileaks website had allegedly leaked ten million documents in the last decade, less than 3,000 remained accessible in the website archive. Wikileaks did not give an explanation. None of the tools to submit documents was working.³⁴⁶

In early January 2023, a new app, called Historical Figures, developed by Amazon software engineer Sidhant Chadda, became available in Apple’s app store. It allowed users to chat with any of 20,000 notable people from history, reanimated by artificial intelligence GPT-3 technology in an attempt to simulate their perspective. The historical people included dictators such as Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders, Pol Pot and other dictators from the past. It appeared that these historical figures sometimes invented answers or justified, downplayed or exonerated themselves for the atrocities committed under their responsibility. Some critics feared that the app would be used to spread hate online. Others denounced the app’s confusing categorization as, for example, Simon Wiesenthal was put in the same lineup as the people he helped to track down and prosecute. Still others criticized the fact that it cost

³⁴⁵ “[PEN America Cites ‘Egregious Violation’ of Academic Freedom by Hamline University](#)” (Press release; Washington: PEN America, 23 December 2022); Amna Khalid, “[Most of All, Hamline’s Decision Offends Me as a Muslim](#),” *History News Network* (29 December 2022); Scott Jaschik, “[Academic Freedom vs. Rights of Muslim Students](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (3 January 2023); Vimal Patel, “[A Lecturer Showed a Painting of the Prophet Muhammad; She Lost Her Job](#),” *New York Times* (8 January 2023); “[US Professor Sues University over Prophet Muhammad Image Row](#),” *Al Jazeera* (18 January 2023); Ryan Quinn, “[Report: Adjunct Who Showed Images of Prophet Was ‘Vilified’](#),” *Inside HigherEd* (22 May 2023).

³⁴⁶ Mikael Thalen, “[WikiLeaks Website Is Struggling to Stay Online—as Millions of Documents Disappear](#),” *Daily Dot* (22 November 2022).

money to ask a question, with the app charging extra to get access to high-profile historical figures such as dictators.³⁴⁷

On 3 March 2023, entrepreneur Bert Ellis, a member of the Board of Visitors (supervisory board) of the University of Virginia (UVA), apologized after his text messages to some other board members were disclosed through a freedom of information request. In the messages, sent over the summer of 2022, he had disparaged administrators and certain student groups. In one message, Ellis pointed out the webpage of UVA Vice Provost for Academic Outreach and architectural historian Louis Nelson, writing: “Check out this numnut who works for [UVA Provost Ian] Baucom and has nothing to do but highlight slavery at UVA.” Together with Maurie McInnis, Nelson had edited the collection *Educated in Tyranny: Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s University* (University of Virginia Press, 2019).³⁴⁸

On 12 April 2023, Scholastic editors offered author Maggie Tokuda-Hall to license her book, “Love in the Library” (Candlewick Press, 2022), aimed at six- to nine-year-olds, for use in the classroom on the condition that she remove a description of past and present instances of racism in the United States in the author’s note on the cover. The book narrated how Tokuda-Hall’s grandparents met and fell in love at an incarceration camp in Idaho that held Japanese Americans during World War II. After widespread protest among librarians and educators and from inside the company, Scholastic editors, one of the largest distributors of books and resources in American schools, apologized to the author and the illustrator, Yas Imamura, and offered to publish the book with the original author’s note, but Tokuda-Hall declined the offer.³⁴⁹

On 13 April 2023, Bakersfield College, California, dismissed Matthew Garrett, a historian and co-founder of the conservative campus free speech group Renegade Institute for Liberty, for what it said were “immoral” and “unprofessional” conduct, “dishonesty,” and “unsatisfactory performance.” Allegations against Garrett included holding an in-person event in violation of COVID-19 protocols; cursing at a colleague; sending a potentially threatening email to a trustee; but also penning an op-ed; distributing a flier; posting on social media; and other “hostile comments” since 2019. PEN America criticized the dismissal for mixing job-related conduct that may merit investigation with spurious

³⁴⁷ David Ingram, “[A Chatbot that Lets You Talk with Jesus and Hitler Is the Latest Controversy in the AI Gold Rush](#),” *NBC News* (20 January 2023).

³⁴⁸ Nick Anderson, “[U-Va. Board Member Apologizes for Disparaging Text Messages](#),” *Washington Post* (3 March 2023).

³⁴⁹ PEN America, “[Suppressing Words and History Harms the Rising Generation](#)” (Press release; 14 April 2023); Patricia Alter & Elizabeth Harris, “[Asked to Delete References to Racism from Her Book, an Author Refused](#),” *New York Times* (6 May 2023; updated 11 May 2023).

speech-related charges, which complicated an assessment of whether the dismissal was fair. Garrett appealed the decision.³⁵⁰

On 13 April 2023, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Senate Bill 817, which encouraged students and employees to report professors teaching “divisive concepts” in public colleges and universities. The bill was criticized for limiting the teaching of racism, gender and sexuality issues in United States history and for its chilling effect on academic freedom [See also NCH *Annual Report 2022*].³⁵¹

In May 2023, the Bob Graham Education Center in Miami Lakes moved the poem, *The Hill We Climb*, by Amanda Gorman (1998–), from the elementary library section to the middle school section (from 11 years), after on 29 March 2023 a parent had asked the school to remove the poem entirely, claiming it contained indirect “hate messages.” Gorman, who had recited the poem at President Joe Biden’s inauguration in January 2021, said she had written this poem about the history of slavery and racial hatred “so that all young people could see themselves in a historical moment.” The parent had also asked the removal of *ABCs of Black History*, a book for six-to-eight-olds, alleging that it indoctrinated the critical race theory: it was moved as well.³⁵²

On 1 May 2023, the 10th District Court in Galveston, Texas, granted a request by retired oilman, philanthropist and executive director of the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), J. P. Bryan, against TSHA President Nancy Baker Jones, in order to prevent a TSHA board meeting at which he expected to be dismissed. Bryan argued that the makeup of the board – allegedly composed of 12 academics and 8 non-academics – was not balanced, thereby violating TSHA bylaws. He feared that the academics wanted to “demean the Anglo efforts in settling the western part of the United States for the purpose of spreading freedoms for all.” TSHA member and former State land commissioner Jerry Patterson made a plea to withhold \$ 480,000 from the budget of the TSHA if it did not restore the balance, thereby putting its non-profit status at risk. Several TSHA members who attended the board meeting did not want to share their names or university affiliation with the press for fear of retaliation. In recent years, controversies had arisen over the Alamo narrative and Texas colonists’ fight for

³⁵⁰ [“Notice of Decision to Terminate,”](#) *Fire* (14 April 2023); Sara Weissman, [“A Free Speech Violation or Overdue Discipline?”](#) *Inside HigherEd* (28 April 2023); PEN America, [“Firing of Tenured Professor at Bakersfield College ‘Blurred Lines’ Between Protected Speech and Conduct that May Merit Investigation, Says PEN America”](#) (Press release; 2 May 2023); District Court for the Eastern District of California, [Garrett & Miller versus Kern Community College District, Complaint: Demand for Jury Trial](#) (2021).

³⁵¹ Ryan Quinn, [“Tennessee Again Targets ‘Divisive Concepts’,”](#) *Inside Higher Education* (18 April 2023).

³⁵² [“Amanda Gorman’s Inauguration Poem Moved by School after Parent’s Complaint,”](#) *BBC News* (24 May 2023).

independence from Mexico, which some argued was primarily to preserve slavery [See also NCH *Annual Report 2021*].³⁵³

On 5 May 2023, the United Nations International Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement called on the government to boost efforts to promote accountability for past and future violations by police. It noted that slavery had left a deep and long-lasting entrenched legacy on the United States, which could be perceived through generational trauma.³⁵⁴

In early June 2023, the Davis School District north of Salt Lake City, Utah, removed the King James Bible from elementary and middle schools following a December 2022 complaint from a parent that it contained “vulgarity and violence” within the meaning of a 2022 law banning “pornographic or indecent” books from schools. The bible had also been removed from libraries in a Texas school district in 2022. In May 2023, students in Kansas requested to have the bible removed from their school library.³⁵⁵

On 28 July 2023, Judge Raag Singhal of the District Court Southern District of Florida threw out a \$ 475m (£ 369m) defamation lawsuit brought by Donald Trump against news channel Cable News Network (CNN). CNN had described Trump’s unsubstantiated claim that the 2020 presidential election had been stolen from him as a “Big Lie” and Trump had argued that the phrase referred to a Nazi-era propaganda campaign used to justify the persecution of Jews and created a “false and incendiary association” between him and Hitler. The judge said that CNN’s comments constituted statements of opinion and not false statements of fact, and that therefore it was not defamation.³⁵⁶

Florida

On 15 December 2021, Ron DeSantis, governor of Florida, announced his “Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees Act” (Stop W.O.K.E Act, later redubbed Individual Freedom Act, IFA) which would give parents the power to sue local school districts that teach lessons, including history lessons, rooted in critical race theory (already banned in Florida public schools since June 2021). Critics feared that this initiative would create a witch-hunt atmosphere complete with financial incentives for nuisance

³⁵³ [“Wealthy Texas Activist Sues President of State’s Historical Association,”](#) *Galveston Daily News* (3 May 2023); Josephine Lee, [“Those Who Don’t Know the Past ...,”](#) *Texas Observer* (15 May 2023).

³⁵⁴ [“USA: Slavery Has Left a Deep and Long-Lasting Legacy on the Country, UN Experts Say,”](#) *UN News* (5 May 2023).

³⁵⁵ Max Matza, [“Utah Primary Schools Ban Bible for ‘Vulgarity and Violence’,”](#) *BBC News* (3 June 2023).

³⁵⁶ District Court Southern District of Florida, [Donald Trump versus CNN](#) (28 July 2023); Alys Davies, [“Judge Dismisses Donald Trump’s ‘Big Lie’ Lawsuit against CNN,”](#) *BBC News* (30 July 2023).

lawsuits. The act went into effect on 1 July 2022. A lawsuit against the act argued that it violated constitutional rights and would have a dangerous chilling effect on academic freedom. Robert Cassanello, an associate professor and president of the United Faculty of Florida at the University of Central Florida, requested a judge to block the law. Cassanello, who taught classes in Reconstruction (1865–1877), Jim Crow America (1865–1965) and civil rights movements, and argued that the law “restrict[ed] his ability to accurately and fully teach these subjects” [See NCH *Annual Report 2022*]. On 17 November 2022, federal judge Mark Walker issued an injunction against the act, rejecting the argument that because university professors are public employees, the State has an unfettered authority to limit what they may say in class. He also criticized the lack of precision in the definition of actions that were forbidden in the act. The State would appeal the decision.

On 29 December 2022, the University of North Florida was asked to report its “expenditure of State resources” on programs and courses related to critical race theory and to diversity, equity, and inclusion, at the behest of DeSantis.³⁵⁷

On 8 March 2022, the Republican-dominated senate in Florida passed the Parental Rights in Education bill, also known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, which critics said would “erase” LGBTQ+ history [See also NCH *Annual Report 2021*].³⁵⁸

On 12 January 2023, the Florida Department of Education rejected a draft Advanced Placement (AP) interdisciplinary course on African American Studies that would be launched as a pilot in sixty high schools nationwide in 2024–2025, on the grounds that it violated Florida State law (because it discussed critical race theory) and would serve as “a vehicle for a political agenda” and as “woke indoctrination.” The rejection included readings from African American historians, including Robin D. G. Kelley and Nell Irvin Painter, and sections including “the Movement for Black Lives,” “Black Struggle in the 21st Century,” and “the Reparations Movement.” AP courses gave students the chance to take college-level courses before graduation. The revised curriculum was published by the US College Board on 1 February 2023, the first day of Black History Month. On the same day, the Organization of American

³⁵⁷ Ed Kilgore, “[DeSantis Enlists Litigious Parents for Anti-Woke Crusade](#),” *Intelligencer* (15 December 2021); Susan Svrluga & Lori Rozsa, “[In Florida, DeSantis’s Plans for Colleges Rattle Some Academics](#),” *Washington Post* (1 July 2022); United States District Court Northern District of Florida (Tallahassee Division), *Pernell and Others versus Florida Board of Governors of the State University System* (1) [Defendant’s Response in Opposition to Plaintiffs’ Motion for a Preliminary Injunction](#); (2) [Order Granting in Part and Denying in Part Motions for Preliminary Injunction](#) (2022); Nathan Greenfield, “[Judge Strikes Down Florida’s ‘Anti-Woke’ Law for Universities](#),” *University World News* (25 November 2022); Emma Pettit, “[A Florida University Is Assembling List of ‘CRT’ Courses on DeSantis Request](#),” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (3 January 2023).

³⁵⁸ Maya Yang, “[Florida: Republican Panel Advances Bill to Ban LGBTQ+ Discussion in Schools](#),” *Guardian* (24 January 2022); “[‘Don’t Say Gay’ Bill: Florida Senate Passes Law Marginalizing LGBTQ+ People](#),” *Guardian* (8 March 2022).

Historians criticized the Florida Department of Education's decision [See also NCH *Annual Report 2015*].³⁵⁹

On 31 January 2023, in his budget speech, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced his plan to stop State universities and colleges from offering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs as well as any teaching related to critical race theory (CRT) and “to prohibit them from using any funding, regardless of source, to support DEI, CRT and other discriminatory initiatives.” Earlier, Florida College System presidents representing 28 State colleges had signed a statement endorsing this policy. DeSantis also announced that Florida would require all students in its colleges and universities to take a “Western Civilization” course.³⁶⁰

In March 2023, textbook publisher Studies Weekly faced criticism after it revised an elementary school social studies textbook for the first grade in Florida so that the story of Rosa Parks (1913–2005), a civil rights activist who refused bus segregation in 1955, no longer included references to segregation or race. The New York Times compared three versions of the Rosa Parks story in the textbook: a lesson used in March 2023, an initial version created for the State textbook review, and a second updated version. In the first, the Parks story was clearly explained; in the second, race was mentioned indirectly; in the third, race was not mentioned at all. Studies Weekly made similar changes to a fourth-grade lesson about segregation laws that arose after the Civil War (1860–1865).³⁶¹

On 3 March 2023, the American Historical Association (AHA) published a statement calling the HB 999 Bill on Postsecondary Educational Institutions filed by the Florida House of Representatives “a hostile takeover of a State’s system of higher education” and a “frontal attack on principles of academic freedom and shared governance.” In highlighting the consequences for history education, the AHA emphasized that “HB 999 allow[ed] political appointees unprecedented oversight of day-to-day

³⁵⁹ Abené Clayton, “[Ron DeSantis Bans African American Studies Class from Florida High Schools](#),” *Guardian* (20 January 2023); Bethany Bell, “[Florida’s Rejection of an AP Course Is the Latest Salvo in a Very Old War](#),” *Washington Post* (26 January 2023); Roderick Ferguson, “[Fear of a Black Studies Planet](#),” *History News Network* (30 January 2023); African American Studies Faculty in Higher Ed, “[Open Letter In Defense of AP African American Studies](#)” (31 January 2023); Organization of American Historians, “[OAH Statement on AP African American Studies](#),” (1 February 2023); Olivia Waxman, “[The Real Reason Florida Wants to Ban AP African-American Studies, According to an Architect of the Course](#),” *Time* (1 February 2023); “[The Black Scholars Ron DeSantis Doesn’t Want Students to Read](#),” *Boston Review* (1 February 2023); “[US Black History Syllabus Changed after Florida ‘Woke’ Claims](#),” *BBC News* (2 February 2023).

³⁶⁰ Sara Weissman, “[A Subtle Subterfuge, an Outrage or Both?](#)” *Inside HigherEd* (3 February 2023); Erica Hellerstein, “[Why Florida’s New University Restrictions Are ‘Straight Out of the Global Authoritarian Playbook’](#),” *Coda Story* (7 February 2023); Nathan Greenfield, “[DeSantis Ignites Ideological War against Universities](#),” *University World News* (7 February 2023); Marybeth Gasman, “[Let’s Take Back the HE Narrative from People like DeSantis](#),” *University World News* (11 February 2023).

³⁶¹ Sarah Mervosh, “[Florida Scoured Math Textbooks for ‘Prohibited Topics’ – Next Up: Social Studies](#),” *New York Times* (16 March 2023; updated 20 March 2023).

educational decisions” and pointed to the unreasonableness of “unelected partisan actors decid[ing] that any ‘general education core courses’ somehow ‘suppress or distort significant historical events.’” As of 22 March, eighty organizations had signed onto the statement.³⁶²

On [25] March 2023, Principal Hope Carrasaquilla of Tallahassee Classical School, Florida, was forced to resign after a parent complained that showing Michelangelo’s seventeenth-century nude marble statue of the biblical David during a sixth-grade Renaissance art class was an exposure to pornography. The lesson also included references to Michelangelo’s “Creation of Adam” painting and Botticelli’s “Birth of Venus.” The forced resignation came after on 23 March Governor Ron DeSantis had moved to expand a law that banned public schools from teaching sexual education and gender identity.

On 18 May 2023, a similar incident occurred in the United Kingdom. A poster for an Italian restaurant with Michelangelo’s David statue was barred from Glasgow subway, with the firm managing the advertising space requesting for the poster to be edited to hide the statue’s nudity.³⁶³

On 26 April 2023, in an unprecedented decision, the Board of Trustees at New College in Sarasota (the only liberal arts college in Florida’s public education system) denied tenure to five professors who had already been approved by committees made up of their colleagues, chairs and faculties. Among them was Nassima Neggaz who taught the history of religion (with a focus on Islam). The 6–4 vote against each professor was carried by the six new Board members whom Governor Ron DeSantis had appointed after dismissing six trustees in January 2023. No reason was given for the decision, which according to critics violated the collective bargaining agreement.³⁶⁴

In May 2023, Marvin Dunn, a black professor emeritus of history at Florida International University, and the non-profit Miami Center for Racial Justice launched a banned book project to ensure students learn about African American history at a time when Florida’s 2022 Stop WOKE Act (see above) was restricting the teaching of systemic racism in schools. He hoped to directly connect with parent–teacher organizations to provide banned titles and books that teach topics restricted under the law at no cost.³⁶⁵

³⁶² American Historical Association, “[AHA Statement Opposing Florida House Bill 999](#)” (3 March 2023).

³⁶³ Antoinette Radford, “[Principal Fired after Florida Students Shown Michelangelo Statue](#),” *BBC News* (25 March 2023); Davide Ghiglione, “[Italian Art Experts Astonished by David Statue Uproar in Florida](#),” *BBC News* (27 March 2023); Carol Duncan, “[Glasgow Subway Poster Blocked over Michelangelo Statue Nudity](#),” *BBC News* (18 May 2023).

³⁶⁴ “[Five New College Professors Denied Tenure](#),” *ABC News* (26 April 2023); Nathan Greenfield, “[Professors Are Victims as DeSantis’ Culture War Hots Up](#),” *University World News* (6 May 2023).

³⁶⁵ Naomi Feinstein, “[‘Getting the Truth to Our Students’: Black Historian Marvin Dunn to Distribute Banned Books](#),” *Miami New Times* (4 May 2023).

On 16 May 2023, the American Historical Association (AHA) condemned a recent ruling by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) that “would eliminate almost entirely the history of LGBTQ+ people from the Florida social studies curriculum.” The AHA asked “that the FLDOE reconsider its vague and destructive policy of censorship, and instead encourage the teaching of accurate and inclusive histories of the United States and the world.”³⁶⁶

On 19 July 2023, Florida’s Board of Education approved the 2023 Social Studies curriculum. In its African-American studies section, taught to students in sixth through eighth grades, it would include lessons on how “slaves developed skills” that could be used for “personal benefit.” On 21 July 2023, in a forceful condemnation of the curriculum, Vice President Kamala Harris tweeted about “extremists in Florida who want to erase our full history and censor our truths.” Governor Ron DeSantis dismissed the criticism.³⁶⁷

See also France, Germany, Greece, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

URUGUAY

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001–2013, 2015–2018, 2021.

UZBEKISTAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2005–2014, 2016, 2020.

³⁶⁶ American Historical Association, “[AHA Statement Opposing Exclusion of LGBTQ+ History in Florida](#)” (May 2023).

³⁶⁷ Kerry Breen, “[Florida’s New Black History Curriculum Says ‘Slaves Developed Skills’ that Could Be Used for ‘Personal Benefit’](#),” *CBS News* (21 July 2023).

VATICAN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2019–2020, 2022.

On 25 July 2022, Pope Francis apologized for the “evils committed by so many Christians” in the residential school system in Canada [See NCH *Annual Report 2021–2022*]. He was criticized for failing to denounce the “Doctrine of Discovery” – a colonial-era justification to seize lands inhabited by non-Christian, indigenous nations – shifting the blame from the institutional effort of forcibly removing Indigenous children to individuals, and for not acknowledging the Church’s instigating role in committing “cultural genocide.” The criticism joined calls for the repatriation of land, artifacts, records and human remains that were taken from Indigenous nations by the Church.³⁶⁸

See also China (Hongkong).

VENEZUELA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2003–2004, 2006, 2009–2010, 2012, 2014, 2017–2021.

In June 2022, six activists were arbitrarily detained in Caracas at a vigil in memory of Neomar Lander, a teenager killed during a protest in 2017.³⁶⁹

VIETNAM

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1996–2006, 2009–2013, 2016–2017, 2019–2020, 2022.

A decree issued on 31 August 2022 restricted international nongovernmental organizations from doing anything against “national traditions, identity or great national unity” of Vietnam. No definitions of these terms were provided in the decree, but groups deemed to violate these provisions would be shut down.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Anya Zoledziowski, “[The Pope’s Apology to Canadian Residential School Survivors ‘Left a Deep Hole.’](#)” *VICE* (27 July 2022).

³⁶⁹ Amnesty International, *Report 2022/2023: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: AI, 2023), 397.

³⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023: Events of 2022* (Washington: HRW, 2023), 693.

In early May 2023, the government strongly protested against a coin issued by Australia on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its withdrawal from the Vietnam War (1954–1975), that included an image of the controversial yellow flag of South Vietnam. The flag was flown by so-called boat people who fled the country (1975–early 1990s) after the Vietnam War (1954–1975) and unification of the country. In July 2018, a court had sentenced three women to four years in prison on charges of spreading anti-State propaganda after they held up yellow flags in public. In January 2022, national television station aired a football match between Vietnam and Australia with a ten-minute delay as some Australian fans had brought yellow-striped flags to the stadium.³⁷¹

On [3] July 2023, the Department of Cinema banned the film *Barbie*, due for release on 21 July 2023, over a scene featuring a 1947 Chinese map depicting contested territorial claims in the South China Sea (the so-called nine-dash line map), which was called offensive and a violation of national laws. Since 2019, the films *Abominable*, *Pine Gap* and *Uncharted* had been pulled for the same reason. On [7] July 2023, the organizers of a concert of South Korean pop group Blackpink in Vietnam apologized for their website displaying the same map. In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague had ruled against Chinese claims in the South China Sea, but Beijing had not recognized the judgment.³⁷²

See also Greece.

³⁷¹ Joel Guinto & Bui Thu, "[Vietnam Objects to Australian Coin with War-Era Yellow Flag](#)," *BBC News* (5 May 2023).

³⁷² Nicholas Yong, "[Barbie Movie Gets Vietnam Ban over South China Sea Map](#)," *BBC News* (3 July 2023); Joel Guinto, "[South China Sea: Blackpink Vietnam Concert in Trouble over China Map](#)," *BBC News* (7 July 2023).

WESTERN SAHARA

See Morocco / Western Sahara

YEMEN

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2001, 2003, 2010, 2013–2016, 2018–2022.

On 25 January 2023, UNESCO added seven archaeological sites in Marib, containing landmarks of the ancient Kingdom of Saba (1200 BCE–275 CE), to the list of World Heritage Sites in danger. Since the Civil War had begun in September 2014, many cultural heritage sites in Yemen had been damaged, including the Old City of Sana’a, the twelfth-century Taiz Citadel (also known as Al-Qahira Castle), and the Dhamar Museum which used to host a collection of 12,500 artifacts that was completely destroyed in May 2015. The World Heritage Sites in danger list further included the Old Walled City of Shibam, the Old City of Sana’a and the Historic Town of Zabid [See also NCH *Annual Reports 2003, 2019–2020*].³⁷³

³⁷³ Dominic Dudley, “[UN Raises Alarm over World Heritage Sites in Yemen and Lebanon](#),” *Forbes* (25 January 2023); UNESCO, “[Gallery: Heritage at Risk in Yemen](#),” ([no date]).

ZAMBIA

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 2009, 2015, 2021.

ZIMBABWE

Previous *Annual Report* entries: 1998–2001, 2004, 2006, 2008–2015, 2018, 2021.