

List of Countries with Disappearances & Background Information (1975-2009)

1. Argentina

By the mid-1970s, economic crisis, social disarray and the active role of the military in politics created a fertile background for a military coup against María Estela Martínez de Perón in 1976, establishing the dictatorship led by the National Process of Reorganization. Along with suppressing most political rights and disrupting the constitutional authority in the country, the military launched a process of violent repression, first against leftist guerrillas and later, particularly during the years of the “Dirty War” (1976-1983), against a broader spectrum of dissidents, many of them young. Among the tactics of violence, forced disappearances—including kidnappings, especially of children, abductions, torture, and murder—stood out. Several sources estimate the total number of disappearances as somewhere between 12,000 and 30,000. At the start of the democratization process, the post-junta governments implemented several mechanisms of transitional justice: Amnesty Laws (repealed in 2005); a Truth Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (established and disbanded in 1983); and trials and exhumations (established 1987). Judiciary action and transitional justice are still contentious issues in Argentine politics.

2. Bolivia

For over two decades (1964-1982), Bolivian political life was dominated by successive right-wing military coups; the governments of René Barrientos Ortuño (1964-1969), Hugo Bánzer Suárez (1971-1978), Alberto Natusch Busch (1979) and, in particular, Luis García Meza (1980-1981) were characterized not only by the suppression of constitutional political rights, the elimination of unionized activism, governmental participation in drug-trafficking, and the imposition of martial law, but also by a bloody campaign against dissidence. During the dictatorship of General García Meza, the most brutal instruments of state coercion against dissidents were the death squads directed by the Ministry of the Interior. According to Human Rights Watch, the results of this systematic repression were 2000 illegal detentions, 1500 exiles and 164 forced disappearances. Under the democratic

governments after 1982, a few mechanisms of transitional justice were created: the National Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances (1982-1984); trials against García Meza himself (sentenced to 30 years), the Minister of Interior (Luis Arce Gómez), and more than 50 of their collaborators; and exhumations.

3. Brazil

Following a decade of negative economic performance and political instability, the Brazilian Armed Forces orchestrated a coup in 1964. This resulted in the deposition of President Joao Goulart and the establishment of a military dictatorship that lasted 21 years (1964-1985). Besides the promulgation of a new, more restrictive constitution in 1967, the members of the junta limited political participation, curtailed political rights, and cancelled union activities throughout the country. The expansion of leftist rural and urban guerrilla movements, as well as students' movements, propelled a massive repression by the state armed forces, including hundreds of forced disappearances during the heightened years of the "Dirty War". Among the targets of these violations of human rights were rural workers, academics, clergy, members of minorities, and other vulnerable groups. The National Truth Commission estimated the number of dead or disappeared to be about 434, but previous official numbers recognized only 362. Before the end of the military dictatorship, Amnesty Laws were established in 1979. After reinstating democracy, the new authorities implemented a few mechanisms of transitional justice, such as exhumations in 1991 and a Truth Commission in 2011.

4. Chile

By the end of 1973, the Chilean economy was characterized by downturns, and the political landscape was unstable. With the support of a significant share of opposition political groups, the business sector, and the middle classes, the country's Armed Forces orchestrated a military coup against the socialist government of Salvador Allende. Soon after the coup, the military Junta, led by General Augusto Pinochet (who gained the control of the Armed Forces and named himself President), established a severe dictatorship that lasted until 1990. Following the example of Chile's Southern Cone neighbors, the new

government restricted political participation, limited the activity of organized labor, increased surveillance of the population, and repressed opposition. Among the instruments to punish its detractors, the dictatorship used extra-judicial executions, torture, exile, and disappearances. Nearly 1,000, or one third of the total number of victims, correspond to enforced disappearances; after a broad wave of repression during the first years of the military government, the use of violence became more focused on specific opposition groups. Amnesty Laws were promulgated in 1978. After the democratic transition, some mechanisms of transitional justice were put in place: the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation in 1990-1991, exhumations in 1991, and trials in 2007.

5. Guatemala

Forced disappearances are a distinctive feature of Guatemalan political history, especially during the civil war, a conflagration that lasted around 30 years. As early as the mid-1960s, members of the Guatemalan Communist Party were “disappeared” by the national Armed Forces; official documents from American sources confirm the participation of officials in these crimes. Amnesty International estimates that during the second upsurge of violence, between 1970 and 1974, thousands of Guatemalan citizens disappeared. The third wave of enforced disappearances happened during the most violent years of the civil war, at the beginning of the eighties. During the early years of the conflict, the successive Guatemalan governments targeted specific individuals; by the late stages, authorities ordered attacks on entire villages, in particular in the region known as the “Ixil Triangle”, heavily populated by indigenous Mayan groups. Overall, more than 200,000 people died or disappeared. After the Peace Agreements, mechanisms of transitional justice were put in place, including Amnesty Laws in 1996, the Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that Have Caused the Guatemalan People to Suffer (1997-1999), exhumations in 1998, and the trials of former military personnel in 2009.

6. Namibia

Namibia experienced one of the longest wars of independence on the African continent, from the mid-1960s until the 1990s. The conflict, which quickly became a regional

phenomenon, caused thousands of casualties and countless human rights violations. Some of the most high-profile incidents of forced disappearances can be chalked up to members of the South-West African People's Organization, the victorious party in the conflict against South African colonial rule. One involved 4,200 persons who went missing after their illegal detention by SWAPO during the independence war. The second occurred on the border between Namibia and Angola (Kavango), when President Sam Nujoma ordered the imposition of a state of emergency; more than 1,500 people disappeared between 1994 and 1996. Finally, the third took place in the context of the separatist movement of the Caprivi region. Transitional justice mechanisms have been put in place, including Amnesty Laws in 1989; exhumations were ordered in December 2005.

7. Nepal

Governed for centuries by a hereditary monarchy, Nepal experienced a democratic proto-transition in 1991, when the first elections in the country favored the “People's Movement” coalition. Nonetheless, poverty, inequality, prevalence of caste social hierarchies, and a feudal land tenure system propelled the emergence of a Maoist-style left insurgency in the poorest regions of the Kingdom. Facing a growing threat by the rebels, Kathmandu's government decided to deploy the Royal Army in 2001, a decision which intensified the armed conflict and resulted in massive human rights violations, especially disappearances. Both the military forces and the communist guerrillas were responsible for the crimes; however, the official approach of the latter continuously evolved towards a clearer awareness of the need to respect human rights. The fighting ended in 2006, when a broad coalition of Maoist and pro-democratic stakeholders forced the demission of the monarchy. Overall, between 1996 and 2006, more than 1300 individuals disappeared in Nepal. Among the mechanisms of transitional justice implemented in the country, the most relevant are Amnesty Laws in 2006 and exhumations in 2009.

8. Peru

Peru was dominated by a military dictatorship between 1968 and 1980; amidst economic recession and widespread social unrest, the Armed Forces allowed the establishment of a

Constituent Assembly and the election of the first civil President by 1980. Rampant poverty and the activities of a Maoist extremist group in the Ayacucho region led to a surge in the power of *Sendero Luminoso*, or Shining Path, a guerrilla group that expanded throughout the country during the 1980s, especially in the mountainous and isolated regions of Peru. The number of casualties associated with *Sendero Luminoso*'s activities is 30,000, a fifth of which correspond to enforced disappearances. The successive elected governments increased repression against both Maoist rebels and civilians; this trend was particularly severe during the Presidency of Alberto Fujimori between 1990 and 2000. In 2009, Fujimori was convicted of involvement in several cases of enforced disappearances during his mandate. In addition to this high-profile trial, the country implemented Amnesty Laws, exhumations, and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2001-2003) as policies of transitional justice.

9. Serbia (Kosovo)

In 1989, Serbian authorities revoked the autonomous status of Kosovo, then a province of Serbia, one of the countries comprising the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Two years later, Kosovo Albanians voted for independence in a referendum, starting more than a decade of repression, in which Kosovo Albanians were particularly hit. By 1998, the situation reached a critical point, amidst generalized violence (including warfare between factions that favored independence and the status quo forces) leading to international intervention by NATO (Operation Allied Force). Human rights violations soared during this military campaign and after the creation of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo in 1999. The number of enforced disappearances reached more than 3,000. In 2001, the authorities of the Republic of Serbia exhumed the bodies of dozens of Kosovo Albanian victims buried in clandestine graves. Between 2003 until the end of 2014, the War Crimes Prosecutor's Office charged 162 defendants with war crimes against civilians and prisoners of war.

10. South Africa

Between 1948 and 1994, the regime led by the National Party created a system of legal racial segregation in South Africa, known as Apartheid. This system was characterized by systematic repression and discrimination against the majority black population of the country; for example, they were forced to live in segregated communities known as “Bantustans”. The nationalist Afrikaner government was harshly condemned by the international community, both from a bilateral and multilateral perspective, including UN Resolution 1761. The majority of human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, occurred in during the late 1980s and 1990s, when certain political groups began to defy Apartheid policies, notably the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress. Besides creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in 1997 authorities enacted Amnesty Laws and ordered exhumations. But more than 2,000 cases of disappearances have not been solved.

11. Uruguay

Enforced disappearances in Uruguay occurred in the context of repressive military dictatorships. Economic slowdown and social distress mobilized significant segments of the population, some of who became urban guerrillas: the *Tupamaros*. Successive civilian governments increasingly relied on the Armed Forces to control leftist opposition groups; in 1973, President Bordaberry ordered the cancellation of Parliament, starting a period of military dictatorship, led by a Junta, which lasted until 1984. Violations to human rights were targeted mainly against the Communist Party and other leftist groups, as well as unions and any other organizations that opposed the regime. Security Forces disappeared about between 200 and 300 people and imprisoned an estimated 8,700 political prisoners, some of whom were tortured. The most significant mechanisms of transitional justice implemented in Uruguay were the establishment of an Investigative Commission on the Situation of Disappeared People and Its Causes and Amnesty Laws in 1985 and exhumations in 2000.

12. Angola

A protracted anti-imperialist struggle, a regionalized civil war, and the spillovers of the Cold War into Africa constitute the most relevant elements of the human rights landscape in this Southwestern African country. When Portugal, the colonial power, granted independence to its African colonies in 1975, the antagonism between political factions resulted in a civil war: the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba; the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), allied with South Africa; and the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FLNA), related to the United States and Zaire. MPLA won the 1992 elections, supervised by the United Nations; however, UNITA continued the guerrilla warfare in its provincial strongholds; after successive failed attempts to reach a political agreement, the civil war ended in 2002, when Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the opposition, died. All parties in the conflict were responsible for egregious human rights violations: mass killings, disappearances, illegal detentions, extra-judicial executions, torture, and others. In 2003, The Provincial Commission of Exhumations of the Bodies Buried in the City of Kuito began the exhumation of thousands of bodies.

13. Honduras

Between 1963, when General López Arellano seized power after a coup, and 1981, when the Junta ceded the Presidency to liberal Roberto Suazo Córdova, Honduras was governed by a military dictatorship. The transition to democracy in the 1980s coincided with the escalation of a regional Cold-War conflict, particularly in Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador. The Reagan administration increased the defense aid to Honduras and both civil and military leaders agreed to provide support to the *Contra* efforts against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. One of the most remarkable consequences of the Reagan approach to Central American security was the formation of “death squads”, designed to repress leftist groups throughout the region; perhaps the best-known was Battalion 3-16, formed by Honduran officers allegedly trained in the US. Most human rights crimes occurred between 1981 and 1984, and some authors claim that nearly 421 political assassinations and disappearances occurred in the country during these years. In terms of transitional justice, besides

amnesties in 1981, a National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights was created in 1993, followed by exhumations in 1994.

14. Lebanon

Most of the enforced disappearances in Lebanon occurred during the civil war, a conflict that engulfed the country between 1975 and 1991. The key drivers of the war were the political instability caused by the National Pact of 1943, which divided up the legislative and executive offices of the government between Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shia Muslims. While this confessional agreement was based upon the ratios of different sectors from the 1932 Census, by the 1970s, the Muslim population was considered to be much higher; mounting dissatisfaction with the Pact led to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. After successive failed attempts at negotiation, the parties agreed to a ceasefire in 1989 in the Ta'if Accords. This war had devastating impacts on the economy and society of Lebanon: the International Center for Transitional Justice estimates 144,000 people died, 198,000 suffered serious injuries, and 17,415 disappeared. Besides the enactment of Amnesty Laws, no further transitional justice mechanisms have been implemented thus far.

15. Senegal

The military conflict between the Senegalese Armed Forces and the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance* (a region in the south of the country), which officially started in 1982, resulted in dozens of enforced disappearances by both parties. The causes of this conflict were profound disagreements on the nation-building process, the marginalization of the local elites, and social distress. Major human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, were a key characteristic of the conflict. After an initial ceasefire agreement in 1991, violence and human rights violations continued throughout the 1990s. In 2000, Abdoulaye Wade won the presidential elections. After several failed peace attempts, an agreement was reached in 2004, and in 2003, Senegalese authorities implemented Amnesty Laws.

16. Croatia

Croatia was the second country to secede from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; in the context of the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, the conflict between the Croatian Army and the Yugoslav People's Army engulfed the country for more than five years. Croatia was quickly recognized by the international community and gained a seat in the UN in 1992 after an initial ceasefire negotiated by the same organization. Nonetheless, a significant portion of the country's territory was still under Serb control, in particular, in the Republic of the Serbian Krajina. As a result, the Croatian Armed Forces launched two military operations ("Flash" and "Storm") to retake those areas; after a few months, both parties signed the Erdut Agreement which completed the return of the disputed areas to Croatia. Massive human rights violations resulted from this war, including 6,406 enforced disappearances. In 1996, an international forensic team began exhumations under the auspices of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

17. El Salvador

By the end of the 1970s, the unstable political situation of El Salvador—especially after the military coup against President Carlos Humberto Romero in 1979—, increasing social inequalities, and the effect of regional geopolitical trends stand out as causes of the Salvadoran civil war, a military conflict that devastated the country between 1981 and 1992. A significant number of leftist opposition groups coalesced into the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* at the beginning of the 1990s; they decided to launch a full-scale attack against the military government, thus triggering the war. Between 5,000 and 10,000 individuals were forcibly disappeared. In 1982, the Armed Forces killed more than 700 civilians around the village of El Mazote. A Truth Commission was established in 1992, and exhumations began the same year. The Truth Commission worked for one year and investigated atrocities committed between 1981 and 1991.

18. Liberia

Liberia experienced at least two waves of human rights violations, corresponding to the phases of a protracted civil war: 1989-1996 and 1999-2003. In December 1989, Charles Taylor launched a military operation against the government of Samuel Doe, in an

operation that triggered the first Liberian civil war. In the following months, international forces, from both the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations, intervened to stabilize the situation. Another wave of military conflict started in 1999, after Taylor regained the Presidency in 1997. The most devastating phase of the war occurred between June and July 2003, when the opposition organized large-scale raids in the capital; this resulted in a thousand civilian casualties, more than a million displaced persons and a humanitarian disaster. By the end of 2003, UN forces were deployed throughout the country to enhance pacification efforts; in addition, a transitional government was set up for two years. In 2005, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established, lasting from 2006 to 2009. In 2012, Charles Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in jail by a UN-backed war crimes court.

19. Sierra Leone

In 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched a military invasion on Sierra Leone, triggering an 11-year civil war that devastated the country. In 1992, a member of the Armed Forces led a coup against President Joseph Momoh; in the following months, the main goal of the successive governments was to stop the advance of RUF. In 1996, the recently elected Kabbah administration signed a peace agreement with the rebels in Abidjan. However, hostilities continued, and Kabbah was toppled in 1997 by Major Paul Koroma (through the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council) who later forged an alliance with RUF. As a consequence of international pressure, Kabbah was reinstated as President in 1998, but the ARFC/RUF alliance took advantage of his weak position to initiate a full-scale attack on Freetown from their regional strongholds in 1999. This was considered the worst phase of the war in terms of human rights. After a fragile peace process supported by the UN and characterized by further international peacekeeping operations, both parties agreed to a ceasefire in November 2000. The conflict officially ended in 2002, and several mechanisms of transitional justice have been implemented: Amnesty Laws, exhumations and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that worked from 2002 to 2004.

20. Chad

Even though the Chadian civil war ended in 1979, the political and security situation of the country was remarkably unstable and continued to deteriorate after the peace agreements; by 1982, Hissène Habré, a former commander of *Frolinat* (a rebel group) and Minister of Defense, gained control of the country, initiating a dictatorship that lasted for eight years. His government was supported by the United States and France who saw the country as a stronghold against the expansionist regime of Muammar Gaddafi in neighboring Libya. Habré's government was characterized by violations of human rights, notably against specific ethnic groups: Sara, Hadjerai, Chadian Arabs, and Zaghawa. Of the 40,000 cases of abuse (murders and torture) during the government of Habré, most were perpetrated by the Documentation and Security Directorate. Several mechanisms of transitional justice have been implemented, including Amnesty Laws and a Truth Commission that worked from 1990 to 1992. In 2015, Habré went on trial on charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture before the Extraordinary African Chambers in the Senegalese courts.

21. Ethiopia

In 1974, a military Junta overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie. The leader of the coup, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, seized power and consolidated his grip over the country through the *Derg*, based upon the systematic repression of the opposition; among the main targets were secessionist rebels in Eritrea and Tigray, and other leftist groups, such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party. The regime is widely considered responsible for the famine that hit the country from 1984 onwards and for taking advantage of these conditions to enforce relocations of entire populations (the "villagization"). Mengistu was overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. In 1991, a Special Prosecutor's Office was established. It investigated thousands of former state agents for crimes against humanity. Several trials followed and dozens of officials were charged *in absentia*. In 1994, some mass graves were exhumed.

22. Algeria

In 1992, the military decided to stop electoral activity and declared a state of emergency. Islamic insurgency—including terrorist attacks—became a common feature of Algeria's

largest cities. Security forces sought to neutralize the Islamic militias. In this context, more than 7,000 enforced disappearances occurred between 1992 and 1998, with 3,030 individuals buried in mass graves. Between 2003 and 2005, an Ad Hoc Inquiry Commission in Charge of the Question of Disappearances was established.

23. Cambodia

In 1975, Prime Minister Non Lol and Sisowath Sirik, a member of the Cambodian Royal Family, orchestrated a coup against the heir to the throne, Norodom Sihanouk, and established the Khmer Republic, with the assistance of the United States. The Kampuchea Communist Party, also known as the *Khmer Rouge*, launched its own coup to topple the monarchy, with the support from China and North Vietnam. The new regime's attempt to create an agrarian, Marxist society in Cambodia resulted in one of the most egregious humanitarian tragedies of the century: relocation of entire villages, repression of opposition groups, famine, and executions. Between 740,000 and 3.31 million people died as a consequence of the *Khmer Rouge*. In 1979, a coalition of Vietnamese troops and Cambodian opposition groups overthrew the regime; since then, several mechanisms of transitional justice have been implemented, including Amnesty Laws in 1994 and 1996, exhumations in 2003 and the creation of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia also in 2003.

24. DR Congo

In 1960, Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu orchestrated a military coup against President Patrice Lumumba and established a personal dictatorship that lasted until 1997. Between 1996 and 1997, the Rwandan Army and the Alliance for Democratic Liberation (a coalition opposed to Mobutu) launched a full-scale invasion of eastern Zaire (where large refugee camps from the Rwandan genocide were located), forcing the dictator to flee. His successor, Laurent Kabila turned against his former Rwandan allies in 1998, triggering a military conflict that engulfed most of Central Africa: Uganda, Rwanda, and rebel Congolese groups attacked President Kabila, who was supported by Namibia, Angola, and Zimbabwe. In spite of attempts to reach a ceasefire (through the Lusaka Agreements and a

UN mission), violence continued to devastate the region, especially the Ituri district in Northeastern Congo. In 2002, the Sun City and Pretoria Agreements added to the peace efforts, which also included the formation of a transition government; nonetheless, the conflict continued during much of the decade and expanded to other regions of the country. By 2007, the conflict had exacted a death toll of approximately 5.4 million people. Transitional justice mechanisms include the following: exhumations took place in 1997; Amnesty Laws were established in 1999; a Truth and Reconciliation Commission operated from July 2003 to February 2007. Since 2004, the International Criminal Court has investigated crimes committed in the Ituri region.

25. Haiti

The exile of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986 not only ended almost 30 years of personal dictatorship; it also inaugurated a decade of political instability. In 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide won the election and began his term in 1991, championing a reformist agenda. Less than one year later, another coup shook Haiti and the President was forced into exile. In the following months, violence and chaos engulfed the country, including assassinations, disappearances, and torture; as a consequences, dozens of thousands of citizens fled the country and thousands more were relocated within Haiti. In 1994, a US military intervention reinstalled President Aristide. Amnesty Laws were implemented in 1993. A Truth and Justice Commission operated between 1994 and 1996, and international missions of forensic experts collaborated with the Commission. However, few trials were held afterwards.

26. Indonesia

Indonesia was ruled by General Soeharto from 1965 to 1998. His regime was marked by rampant corruption, crony capitalism, and violent repression, including atrocities in Timor-Leste, Aceh, and Papua. Once Soeharto's regime ended, the country established a Human Rights Court to deal with those accused of atrocity crimes. There have been a number of initiatives by the authorities and the National Human Rights Commission to investigate human rights abuses committed at different stages in the conflict. A Truth and

Reconciliation Commission was set up in 2004, as were Amnesty Laws, but in 2006, the Constitutional Court annulled both the Amnesty Laws and the Truth Commission.

27. Timor

The *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente* declared independence for Timor in 1975. Weeks later, the Indonesian Army invaded the country. Soeharto's government imposed a program of repression of dissidence and rebellion. Between 100,000 and 300,000 Timorese died in the following two decades as a result of the conflict. When the Soeharto regime ended, the new Indonesian government agreed to the New York Agreement, which mandated a referendum on the political status of Timor Leste in 1999. The Timorese population overwhelmingly supported independence, and Jakarta ceded the administration of the country. However, the vote triggered violence from Indonesia security forces, resulting in 1,400 deaths. Some Amnesty Laws have been issued since 2001, and between 2002 and 2005, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation investigated atrocities perpetrated between 1974 and 1999. In 2001, forensic investigations took place under the auspices of the United Nations Serious Crimes Investigation Unit.

28. Paraguay

When General Alfredo Stroessner orchestrated a military coup to topple President Federico Chávez in 1954, the country had already experienced decades of political instability and authoritarian regime. The new dictator consolidated his grip over the country with the support of the Armed Forces. He stayed in power for 34 years. Stroessner resorted to tactics of repression and violations of human rights, perpetrated by the state forces. Almost 20,000 people were victims of illegal detention, 20,000 more suffered from torture, and more than 300 disappeared. Exhumations took place in 1999 and 2007, and a Truth and Justice Commission was established between 2004 and 2008.

29. Rwanda

The roots of the genocide in Rwanda originated in the ethnic cleavages between Hutus and Tutsis, existing even before the colonial period. With independence, between 1959 and

1961, the historical tensions turned into violence, causing thousands of people, most of them Tutsis, to flee to neighboring countries (Zaire, Tanzania, Burundi, and Uganda). In 1988, the refugees created the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a mostly Tutsi organization; it launched a large military invasion of Rwanda in 1990. The death of the Rwandan and Burundian Presidents in 1994 caused a huge wave of violence, during which more than one million people died. The most relevant mechanisms of transitional justice have been exhumations in 1994 and trials in 1997.

30. Iraq

Widespread human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, were recurrent features of the Iraqi political system with the takeover of the country by Saddam Hussein in 1979. He lasted in power for 35 years. More than 300,000 individuals are still missing from this period, even though forensic experts have worked in Iraq since 2004.

31. Kuwait

Iraq launched a full-scale invasion of its Kuwait in 1990. The Iraqi invaders took control of government offices and the economic infrastructure; they severely restricted freedom of speech and association and repressed rebel groups. Iraqi military forces were responsible for summary executions, enforced disappearances, and torture of hundreds of Kuwaiti nationals. Nearly 10,000 suffered from extra judicial detentions or were disappeared during the Iraqi occupation. Amnesty laws were written and exhumations took place in 1991.

32. Philippines

Ferdinand Marcos ruled over the Philippines as dictator between 1965 and 1986. He repressed rebel groups and dissident organizations (more than 60,000 extra-judicial arrests and numerous executions), ordered disappearances (nearly 600 during his government), and restricted civil liberties. The assassination of Benigno Aquino, the leader of the opposition, triggered large-scale protests and social unrest, forcing the President to resign and flee. At least 600 persons disappeared during the Marcos regime, but cases of enforced disappearances also occurred during subsequent governments. Amnesties were issued in

1987, and international forensic organizations have collaborated with local human rights organizations since 2000.

33. Libya

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi seized power in Libya as the leader of the military clique that overthrew King Idris in 1969. The Colonel was known for the human rights abuses perpetrated during the four decades of his rule. Amnesty Laws were passed on 2012. Since 2012, international forensic experts have collaborated with the local government to locate the whereabouts of the disappeared, but there are still 10,000 persons missing in Libya.

34. Bosnia

By the beginning of the 1990s, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ceased to exist with the declaration of independence of Slovenia and Croatia. The Serb response to this triggered a military conflict that engulfed the entire region for the following years. As a result of the enormous number of human rights violations, the United Nations implemented a peacekeeping effort to stabilize the Balkans. In 1992, when Bosnia-Herzegovina announced its intention to leave Yugoslavia, the country entered a short but remarkably severe civil war between Croats, Serbs, and Muslims; 7,000 cases of disappearances are related to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Amnesty Laws were passed in 1996, and exhumations were carried out from 1996 onwards. In 2001, Hague War Crimes Tribunal found General Radislav Krstic guilty of genocide for his role in the massacre of thousands of citizens in Srebrenica.

35. Uganda

Uganda suffered 20 years of civil conflict under Milton Obote I (1962–1971) Idi Amin (1971–1979) and Milton Obote II (1980-85). Over 300,000 people died throughout this period. Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement seized power in 1986. Rebellion in the north, most notably the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), continues to be a severe challenge. Amnesty Laws were passed in 2000 for LRA rebel combatants who abandon the group and renounce involvement in the war. In 2005, the International

Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for five LRA leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

36. Colombia

There were at least three main sources of political violence in Colombia in the second half of the 20th century, all of which led to human rights abuses. First, power struggles between the two largest political parties in the country, the Liberals and the Conservatives, turned into major episodes of chaos and were related to 200,000 deaths between 1948 and 1964. After the 1960s, radicalized Marxist groups joined with peasant armed forces to form leftist guerrilla groups, such as the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC). Second, paramilitary groups, financed by the country's elite, have perpetrated executions, torture, kidnapping, and disappearances. Finally, drug trafficking has been a major challenge for public security in Colombia, as cartel leaders frequently employ violent criminal tactics. Several Amnesty Laws have been passed since 1997. In 2001, the Inter American Court on Human Rights requested the exhumation of human remains as part of a trial proceeding.

37. Cyprus

Between 1963 and 1974, Cyprus saw severe conflict between Turkish Cypriot communities and Greek Cypriot communities. In 1974, a coup d'état launched by members of the Greek Armed Forces triggered a Turkish intervention, which led to gross violations of human rights and ethnic cleansing. Approximately 1,500 Greek Cypriots and 500 Turkish Cypriots disappeared as a result of the conflict. Amnesty Laws were passed in 1974, and the United Nations established a bilateral Committee on Missing Persons in 1981. Although the Committee remained a dead letter for several decades, it resumed its activities in 2006. Since then more than half of the 2,000 missing have been exhumed, most identified, helping thousands of families to start the mourning process.

38. Iran

In 1979, the unrest and discontent that had formed during the two previous years against Mohammed Reza Pahlevi turned into a social revolution that toppled the monarchy. Saddam Hussein had just seized control of the Iraqi state and saw the turmoil in neighboring Iran as an opportunity to invade the country. During the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, hundreds of persons went missing. In 2008, a Tripartite Committee (Iran, Iraq and the International Committee of the Red Cross) was established to address the issue of the missing.

39. Zimbabwe

From 1970 to 1987, thousands of persons in Zimbabwe were killed or disappeared as a result of two political conflicts: a civil war between the people and the white settler Rhodesian government and internal conflict following liberation. In 1999, exhumations took place, led by international forensic experts. In 2000, an Amnesty Law was passed.

40. Afghanistan

Between 1978 and 1991, Afghanistan successively suffered from military coups, a Marxist-Leninist government, foreign intervention, and guerrilla resistance. This left an opening for the expansion of Islamic extremist groups. One of them, the Taliban, took over and controlled the country until 2001; its radical regime was characterized by repression and systematic violations of basic human rights. In 2007, a bill was passed that gave blanket amnesty for the violations committed during the conflicts.

41. Azerbaijan

The collapse of the Soviet Union paved the way for Heidar Aliyev to seize power in 1993; he governed an authoritarian system until his death in 2003. The political system developed under his rule was characterized by rampant corruption and widespread repression of political dissidence, with state security forces playing a key role. In 1988, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (between Azerbaijan and neighboring Armenia) started and became one of the longest and most intense in the post-Soviet space. In 1997, Parliament passed a bill granting amnesty to perpetrators of crimes in the war against Armenian-backed forces.

42. Myanmar

Between 1962 and 2011, various military leaders governed the country. Forced displacement, summary executions, torture, forced disappearances, the use of child soldiers, forced labour and the illegal detention of political dissidents were perpetrated during this period.

43. Equatorial Guinea

In 1968, the Spanish government, led by Francisco Franco, granted independence to the colonies of Rio Muni and Fernando Po, which together formed Equatorial Guinea. Francisco Macias Nguema won the first elections of the new country in that year. During the next decade, his authoritarian regime perpetrated enormous numbers of human rights violations as a key element in the consolidation of his rule over the country, including extra-judicial execution of political dissidence, widespread illegal arrests, violence against the Catholic Church, and attacks on minority ethnic groups. In 1979, Teodoro Obiang Nguema orchestrated a military coup that ousted his uncle; Obiang has occupied the Presidency of Equatorial Guinea since then under another highly repressive political regime. Amnesty Laws were established in 1972 and 1992.

44. India

Since 1975, there have been at least three main sociopolitical dynamics related to human rights abuses in India, including enforced disappearances. First, the Naxalites, a Maoist-inspired guerrilla group in West Bengal, developed a vast geographic corridor running through 13 of the Indian states. The Naxalites are noted for their use of torture, execution, and disappearances. Second, Muslim insurgent groups rebelled against the New Delhi government to promote the union of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan in 1990, fueling a nasty armed conflict in which both the Indian security forces and the rebels were responsible for severe human rights abuses. Finally, the conflict between the central Indian state and the Sikh population in Punjab has caused human rights violations since independence. Several Amnesty Laws have been established since 1972.

45. Nicaragua

In 1909, the American government initiated an intervention to topple the government of José Santos Zelaya, and President Herbert Hoover installed Anastasio Somoza as the new leader of the country in 1933. The new authoritarian regime was characterized by corruption and human rights abuses. In 1979, anti-Somoza guerrilla forces, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), launched a revolt against the military and took over. The American government funded a civil war to stop the Sandinista government from consolidating. The civil war lasted more than a decade, with at least 60,000 people killed. Several Amnesty Laws were implemented between 1960 and 1993.

46. North Korea

Three years after the capitulation of the Japanese Empire in 1945, the Korean Peninsula was divided into two separate countries: in the north, the Soviet-occupied territory became the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, remaining under the influence of Moscow. The regime quickly turned into a dictatorial system, with countless human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions, torture, execution, prison camps, forced labor, and forced disappearances. Citizens from South Korea, Japan, and other states have disappeared at the hands of North Korean security forces.

47. Thailand

The main source of political instability has been the lack of strong institutions and the constant alternation between short periods of democratically elected governments and military rule. State security forces have been accused of perpetrating severe human rights violations, including extra-judicial arrests and executions, and the state has placed certain limitations on other basic human rights, such as freedom of press and speech. The poor governance of various regions of the country is related to two other human rights challenges: human trafficking and drug illegal trade. In addition, Muslim separatists in Thailand's southern provinces have been involved in acts of violence that have triggered counter-responses from the state security forces; in 2004, for example, 84 Muslim

protesters died. In 2010, political violence began between the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship and state security forces. The protests led to the killing of 92 people. A Truth for Reconciliation Commission was quickly established to clarify what happened.

48. Laos

After the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the Pathet Lao political-military movement seized power in Laos, forcing the abdication of the King and leading to the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; the Communist Party (Lao People's Revolutionary Party) has led an authoritarian political regime since then. The bad human rights record of the Laotian government includes extra-judicial detentions and executions, limitations on the freedom of speech and expression, and the torture of dissidents. Some high profile opposition leaders have been abducted.

49. Georgia

The collapse of the Communist regime in 1991 revealed a number of latent political conflicts within the former Soviet space. In 1992, one of these turned into a war between the Georgian central government and a separatist movement in Abkhazia, with the former heavily supported by the Russian Federation. Even though the most intense military stage of the war ended with a cease-fire agreement in 1993, the underlying tensions between Georgia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia have intermittently led to violence since then. Human rights violations have been committed by the state security forces on both sides, including civilian targets of military action, illegal detentions, and enforced disappearances. Over 2,000 families are still without news of relatives who went missing in past conflicts. The International Committee of the Red Cross has worked with families of missing people since 1992 and collaborated in the exhumation of graves in 2012. Amnesty Laws were passed in 1992 and 2000.

50. Somalia

In 1960, the former British and Italian colonies in Eastern Africa united to create the Somali Republic, led by a democratic political regime. However, nine years later, General

Mohammed Siad Barre orchestrated a coup against President Abdirashid Ali Shimarke and established an autocratic regime that lasted 21 years. Barre used repression to consolidate his grip over Somalia. In 1991, the United Somali Congress led a movement that overthrew Barre, but political instability and insecurity increased, with the virtual collapse of the Somali state. The protracted armed conflict continues to leave civilians displaced, killed, or disappeared. Al-Shabaab, an Islamist armed group, perpetrates atrocities in the zones it controls and targets civilians via deadly attacks in government-controlled areas. In this context, state security forces and African Union troops are responsible for human rights violations.

51. China

The fall of the Qing Empire in 1911 and the proclamation of the Chinese Republic set the stage for a long and complex civil war. The conflict ended in 1949 when the Communist militias defeated the Chinese Nationalist Party and established the People's Republic of China on October 1 of that year. Under the personal rule of Mao Zedong, the Communist Party embarked on an ambitious program to transform Chinese society, with disastrous social and economic failures (such as the Great Leap Forward in 1958-1961 and the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1974). As in many communist regimes, such policies involved pervasive human rights violations, including torture of dissidents, curtailment of personal freedoms, and forced labor. The death of Mao in 1976 catalyzed crucial reforms that underpin the current economic success of China; nonetheless, human rights violations are still prevalent, especially against political dissidents (Liu Xiaobo), separatist movements in Xinjiang and Tibet, religious sects (Falun Gong), and liberal-democratic movements. Particularly important in this latter respect was the crackdown on students by state security forces in 1989.

52. Syria

The *Baath* Party established an authoritarian political system in 1963; this has been controlled by the Al-Asad family since 1970. The repression of political dissidence and minorities and the use of executions, torture, and disappearances by the state security forces

are dominant characteristics of the Al-Asad regime. In the context of the Arab Spring, the extra-judicial arrest of dissidents in 2011 marked the beginning of intense demonstrations against the Assad regime; the military response of the Syrian government triggered an ongoing civil war, noted for its rampant and severe human rights abuses. In Syria's conflict, more than 200,000 individuals have been killed and 7.6 million are internally displaced.

53. Cuba

After successive political, diplomatic, and military interventions (including an occupation between 1906 and 1909), the American government installed Fulgencio Batista as ruler of Cuba in 1933. In 1953, Fidel Castro and a guerrilla rebel group started a military and social movement that eventually toppled the Batista dictatorship in January 1959. The regime that followed, led by Castro himself through the Communist Party of Cuba, had frequent recourse to arbitrary arrests of dissidents and actively curtailed freedom of speech.

54. Venezuela

At the end of the 1980s, an economic crisis linked to a dependence on oil revenues motivated economic liberal reforms in Venezuela. The subsequent decrease in energy subsidies triggered social unrest in Caracas. The government repressed protestors in an episode known as the "Caracazo" in 1989. After a failed coup in 1992, Hugo Chávez was elected President in December 1998. Under the rule of President Chavez and now Nicolas Maduro, the government has resorted to violations of human rights to consolidate its power, including extra-judicial incarceration and the intimidation of and violence against journalists and members of the opposition.

55. Turkey

In 1923, the Republican People's Party, first under the direction of Atatürk and after his death in 1938, under President İsmet İnönü, established an authoritarian, hegemonic party, and secular regime in Turkey. In 1950, the opposition Democratic Party won the election. For the next 40 years, the military played a key role in elections (with successive coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997). Since 2002, Turkey has been ruled by the Islamist-based

Justice and Development Party. The human rights record is mixed: while certain liberties have been consolidated, there are still challenges in such areas as freedom of the press, discussion and speech, the repression of dissidence, lack of due process, and judicial bias. To cite one of the more serious examples, the ongoing conflict between Turkish security forces and the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party has resulted in serious human rights violations.

56. Yemen

Yemen has a protracted history of human rights abuses and political violence lasting throughout the 20th century and going on in the 21st. In 1990, the Yemen Arab Republic (North) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South) merged to create the Republic of Yemen. In 2011, President Saleh, accused of leading an autocratic and corrupt political regime, was deposed and replaced by former Vice-President Abed Rabbo Mansour al-Hadi. Serious violations of human rights, including the killing of unarmed demonstrators, took place during the uprising. The situation in the country has deteriorated since 2014 when Houthi insurgents captured the capital and forced al-Hadi into exile. The intervention of international actors, especially Saudi Arabia (who launched a military operation in Yemen), Iran, and the United States, has compounded the complexity of the civil war.

57. Guinea

The country gained independence from France in October 1958. Ahmed Sékou Touré became the first President and ruled as an autocrat until his death in 1984; in that year, Colonel Lansaná Conté seized power; after a protracted illness, he died in 2008. A military junta succeeded him as the main ruler of the country, amidst social turmoil and demonstrations. The government responded with a massacre perpetrated by the Presidential Guard (Red Berets) on September 28, 2009; at least 150 people died. In 2010, Guinean citizens elected a President in the first free and meaningful election in the country's history.

58. Sri-Lanka

Sri Lanka's protracted civil war led to much human suffering, including assassinations, abductions, and torture, among other crimes. The main cause of the conflict can be traced to ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority—who are concentrated in the north and east of the island. In 1983, the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam, a separatist insurgent group working towards an independent Tamil state in eastern Sri Lanka, initiated a series of attacks against government forces, triggering the civil war. In 2002, the government and Tamil Tiger rebels signed a Norwegian-mediated ceasefire. However, violence continued until 2009 when the Sri Lankan government officially declared the defeat of the LTEE. In 2011, the United Nations noted that both sides in the Sri Lankan civil war had committed atrocities against civilians.

59. Pakistan

In 1947, the Muslim state of Pakistan was created when it was partitioned from India at the end of British rule. This was not a peaceful change: thousands of people died in communal violence. Since then, the Armed Forces have participated actively in the political process. Three members of the Army took power between 1958 and 1999: Ayub Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, and Pervez Musharraf. In addition, five elected governments were ousted with the support of the armed forces. Assassinations and the exile of high-profile leaders are other characteristics of the political development of Pakistan. In spite of relatively free elections, the role of the Armed Forces remains extremely visible, especially in the context of the War on Terror, which has deepened instability in the country. As a result of military operations, civil rights have been abused, including torture and forced displacement.

60. Burundi

Since its independence in 1962, the country has had repressive military governments and seen violent clashes between Hutus and Tutsis. Ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis turned into violence by the late 1980s; in the following civil war, more than 300,000 Burundian citizens were killed. An Amnesty Law was issued in 1992, and peace negotiations began in 1998. The final cease-fire was signed in 2000.

61. Eritrea

Serious human rights violations in Eritrea, including enforced disappearances, occurred in the context of the protracted battle for independence from Ethiopia, between 1962 and 1993. From 1998 to 2000, border tensions erupted in a major international war between the two countries, during which 70,000 people died. On the domestic front, the government has practiced systematic human rights violations, including forced labor, arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances.

62. Morocco

In 2004, King Mohammed VI of Morocco decreed the creation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission to investigate the human rights abuses perpetrated during the country's recent past. In particular, the organization was tasked with addressing the illegal detentions, executions, torture, and enforced disappearances between 1956 and 1999, most of which occurred under the rule of his father, King Hassan II.

63. Russia

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union revealed severe underlying tensions between Moscow and a few regions aiming to achieve more autonomy. The two Chechen wars, during which hundreds of people were killed, tortured, or abducted, were perhaps the clearest examples of such conflicts. Tensions resumed again in 1999 just a few months after the accession of Vladimir Putin to power as Prime Minister. The aim of the Russian military mission was to eradicate the terrorist organizations based in Chechnya; the war, which ended later in 2000, resulted in massive civil suffering, including civilian targets of military operations, torture, and abductions.

64. Vietnam

In 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, initiating the First Indochina War, which lasted until 1954 when the French Army was defeated at Dien Bien Phu. The Geneva Peace Talks did not mitigate geopolitical tensions in the region, however, and Vietnam was split into two countries: North and South. In

1957, a communist uprising began in the South, and in 1964, the United States deployed its military in the region. The US military suffered one of the worst defeats in its history as it was unable to stop the advance of the combined communist forces of North Vietnam and the Vietcong. In 1975, the capture of Saigon marked the end of the conflict. Since then, the communist party has maintained a monopoly on power. Freedom of speech, press, and association are restricted; human rights activists and journalists are intimidated or illegally detained. Torture is a common tactic of security forces.

65. Mexico

The authoritarian regime established in 1929 by the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) began to crack in October 1968, when state security forces crushed a peaceful student demonstration on the eve of the Olympic Games in Mexico City, causing dozens of deaths and disappearances. The erosion of social stability and a protracted economic crisis in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s altered the balance of cooptation and repression that sustained the political system for decades, and human rights abuses became prevalent; particularly relevant in this respect was the “Dirty War” against leftist guerrillas and dissident political groups, as it led to hundreds of forced disappearances in the 1970s and 1980s. Severe human rights abuses of indigenous communities were rampant in the 1990s, including massacres in Acteal and Aguas Blancas, as well as the Zapatista movement in 1994. In 2000, the PRI lost the presidential election for the first time in more than 70 years. The new government established a Special Prosecutor’s Office (SPO) to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during the PRI era, but members of the previous authoritarian regime blocked the SPO’s investigations. In 2006, the government launched a war on drugs. Since then, thousands of Mexicans have been killed or are missing.