

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARCHIVES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Buenos Aires, 14 - 16 March 2018

### WORKSHOPS



### Conclusions

---

The workshops at the **International Conference on Archives and Human Rights: An Agenda to Strengthen Democracy** were conceived as a *space for dialogue and exchange to reflect on the approach to, treatment and use of archives containing information about serious human rights violations*. We tried to encourage free-flowing and diverse dialogues, which were enriched by the differing backgrounds, languages or contexts of work of the participants. This promoted good exchanges and idea-sharing sessions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of the total participants, 60 were from Latin America, 3 from North America, 2 from Africa, 9 from Europe and 2 from Asia. Most of them were archivists and historians (28 and 19 respectively), although it was also attended by 6 health professionals, 3 anthropologists, 7 researchers, 7 lawyers and 7 members of international organizations/NGOs. More than 60% of the conference participants were women.

The conclusions below were drawn from the summaries and presentations made by the participants, the contributions of the facilitators and the questionnaires that were filled in by the working groups during the one and a half days of discussions.

The following summary of the discussions and debates held during the conference provides a general overview of the exchanges and does not convey every point of view expressed. The table below gives a condensed account of the contributions of each working group. It depicts the topics discussed, problems identified and good practices/ways forward identified.

The main goal of the conference was to provide this space for knowledge exchange. The articulation of the collective space created during the conference with other initiatives, the follow-up on and deepening of the main themes, the use of the space which shares common problems, will be part of the work and will of the people and organizations in the field of archives and human rights.

Workshop	Topics discussed in the working groups	Problems identified	Good practices/ways forward
<b>Uses of human rights archives</b>	Training / instruction of professionals / role of the archivist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is little training on archival practice, both for archivists dealing with archives containing information about human rights violations and for human rights organizations dealing with those archives.</li> <li>- Lack of training within civil society organizations on the subject of processing and managing archives.</li> <li>- Lack of trainings and specific tools for human rights archives.</li> <li>- The role of archivists lacks recognition in society and by the state.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government staff should be trained and updated on issues concerning archives, its treatment and document management.</li> <li>- Professional trainings and updates should be given to those responsible for archives in civil society organizations.</li> <li>- Specific trainings, academic updates, knowledge of the subject and historical context of documentation production needed.</li> <li>- Need to strengthen the recognition of the archival profession and archival institutions.</li> <li>- Promote academic undergraduate education, where it does not exist yet.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to archives related to human rights violations is often arbitrary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archivist as mediator between the user and the document: he/she needs to interpret without censoring or selecting parts.</li> <li>- Use existing documents, guidelines etc., such as               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the <a href="#">Universal Declaration on Archives</a> (UDA), created by the International Council on Archives (ICA).</li> <li>- the <a href="#">Code of Ethics of the International Council on Archives</a>,</li> <li>- the values underlying the <a href="#">ICA/UNESCO Universal Declaration on Archives</a>,</li> <li>- the <a href="#">ICA Principles of Access to Archives</a> and</li> <li>- the <a href="#">ICA Working Document on Basic Principles on the Role of Archivists and Records Managers in Support of Human Rights</a>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence (of human rights violations) cannot be found due to lack of communication and knowledge about other professions/techniques and linking them to archives and documentation.</li> <li>- Lack of professional associations and/or organizations that are functioning properly and working professionally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further dialogue and creation of communication between archivists, researchers and jurists/lawyers.</li> <li>- Create networks and promote discussions related to archival work in general and to human rights archives in particular.</li> </ul>

	<p>General use of human rights related archives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of knowledge within the broader public that different archives and documentary collections exist, and of the way to approach and take advantage of those archival documents for different purposes.</li> <li>- Underutilization of the archives, devaluation.</li> <li>- Lack of awareness about the need to preserve archives for future generations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do exhibitions in which the archival documents are used.</li> <li>- Create practical guides on how to use archives.</li> <li>- Publicize as much information as possible regarding the access guidelines, current legislation etc. on web pages or other media, which institutions and organizations have at their disposal.</li> <li>- Make known the existence of archives and, especially the importance of preserving and using archives to exercise citizens' rights.</li> <li>- Consider different types of users: lawyers, researchers, professors, students, journalists, etc.; and develop guides and tools that are accessible and/or targeted to a specific user.</li> <li>- Raise awareness about the preservation and protection of archives for future use.</li> </ul>
	<p>Pedagogical uses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little contact of teachers, students and training institutions with archives.</li> <li>- Little use of archives for pedagogical purposes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of an "educational box" (with important documents, different archives and different forms of documentation).</li> <li>- "Translate" difficult archives jargon into easy understandable speech.</li> <li>- Get students interested in the archives.</li> </ul>
	<p>Legal uses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little weight of archives in judicial investigations; there is no awareness of the importance of archives by the judicial power.</li> <li>- Lawyers tend to not know the archives in which they investigate well enough.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote dialogue between lawyers/jurists who handle cases and those working in the archives.</li> <li>- Create protocols for safeguarding the original documentation for the judiciary.</li> <li>- Incorporate specific archival policies for the documentation produced and gathered by the judiciary in the investigation of crimes against humanity.</li> <li>- Create interdisciplinary research teams to collect information for a specific use.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems of sending original documents to the judiciary.</li> <li>- Information is not shared for different cases within the judiciary.</li> <li>- The same document is often repeatedly requested for the same case.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Know the background that lead to the production of the documentation.</li> <li>- Centralize information for the same historical and judicial processes.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When the use of archive files takes collections apart, the documents lose their context; it is detrimental to its use in other legal cases (principle of the original order).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain the provenance/original order of the documents.</li> <li>- Generate greater archival awareness in the judicial field.</li> </ul>

	Disclosure of archival information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The archives tend not to disclose information.</li> <li>- The archives do not attract public interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand that the State promotes archives with dissemination policies.</li> <li>- Use new technologies and new forms of communication for the dissemination of archival material.</li> <li>- Publicize unknown facts through pedagogical dissemination of photographic documents.</li> <li>- Disseminate documents through art (plays, documentaries, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Access and accessibility to human rights archives</b>	Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems to identify the content of documents when their original order or provenance has not been respected.</li> <li>- Documents are often not well preserved, which hinders physical access.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the organization of archives to facilitate the dissemination of the material.</li> <li>- Promote interdisciplinary work to adequately describe the documents.</li> <li>- Promote good descriptions of documents within its context and documentary series.</li> </ul>
	Restrictions / Data protection vs. access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dichotomy between broad access and sensitive data protection.</li> <li>- Lack of laws or regulations on access to information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guarantee free access to information to any person; except for documents with sensitive information that could affect third parties, resp. the persons who have given the information, the source of the document, witnesses, victims.</li> <li>- Guarantee unrestricted access to victims and their relatives.</li> <li>- Find a balance between access and restriction.</li> <li>- Promote dialogue with state agencies that have a say in access and restriction.</li> <li>- Request the agencies that are in charge of applying the law of protection of personal data that they transfer responsibility to the user regarding the use and disclosure of the information (instead of document sanitization).</li> <li>- "Anonymization" is a good practice for small quantities of files.</li> <li>- Compare your own experiences to those of other countries in relation to access laws. It is important to know the advantages and disadvantages of different systems (for example, the data protection laws in the US are broader and allow more access; the new <a href="#">EU regulations</a> will be very strict).</li> <li>- Be very clear about restrictions for state security reasons and for the purpose of data/witness/victim protection (see <a href="#">Tshwane Principles</a>).</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restricted access even for human rights organizations.</li> <li>- In general, security forces are agents restricting access to archives.</li> <li>- Access to encrypted documentation is difficult.</li> <li>- Access to archives of security forces is limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carry out research on the producers of the documentation.</li> <li>- Familiarize with the archival logic and the terminology of the relevant security forces.</li> <li>- Understand the operational logic of the relevant institution.</li> <li>- In the search for documentation, it is important to differentiate the</li> </ul>

			different descriptive guides of access to those funds.
	Expanding access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General lack of knowledge about the existence of archives and documentary collections.</li> <li>- Lack of financing/sustainability of public policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depending on different users archive institutions should use different strategies of dissemination: legal professionals, the general public, students, researchers, etc. Everything from inventories and descriptive tools to institutional videos should be disseminated.</li> <li>- Incorporate standardized user-friendly finding aids into the archives institutional websites.</li> </ul>
	Descriptive tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large volumes of documentation must be described.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generate professional descriptive tools and finding aids.</li> <li>- Produce comprehensive indexes.</li> <li>- Go back and have another look at your archival descriptions as they often do not contain all the necessary details. A second, critical look can improve them.</li> <li>- Use approved and often used tools (for example, the ICA-AToM (Open Source Archival Description Software) that can be used by different users/institutions.</li> <li>- Plan descriptions consistent with the volumes of the documents that have to be processed and the resources available.</li> </ul>
	Ownership/custody/management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult to access the archives of the judiciary: there are no regulations, they are not complied with or access is arbitrary.</li> <li>- Often access depends on the person/individual in charge of the archive.</li> <li>- If there are no regulations, the people working with archives do not have tools to facilitate access.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generate access permissions, particularly in large organizations.</li> <li>- Civilian groups that are trained as intermediaries are important when working with security forces or justice archives (e.g. <a href="#">National Security Archive</a> in the US).</li> <li>- Disseminate good practices in the judiciary.</li> </ul>
	Public policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Absence of regulatory frameworks and/or archival policies that specify documentary processing mechanisms.</li> <li>- Emerging institutions linked to the surveying of archives that are not sustained over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preserve the work done and ensure the sustainability of the institutions.</li> <li>- Promote and disseminate the products produced by these institutions.</li> <li>- Promote spaces of intermediation between the justice system and the access to archives.</li> </ul>
<b>Security of archives at risk</b>	Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vulnerability of archives and risks to them, even in democratic frameworks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create public tools (descriptions, inventories) to preserve progress made in the event that the preservation of the files is at risk.</li> </ul>
	Shelter/Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are different problems in different contexts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the commitment of international organizations to the preservation of copies of human rights archives. An important initiative is ongoing at the moment: An ad-hoc <a href="#">Working Group</a> of experts with the</li> </ul>

			<p>participation of representatives of sending and hosting institutions, governmental and non-governmental, including <a href="#">UNESCO</a> and the <a href="#">International Council on Archives (ICA)</a>, developed the Guiding Principles on Safe Haven for Archives at Risk in order to address these issues and to provide a normative basis for cooperation on safe havens for archives at risk (see <a href="http://archivesproject.swisspeace.ch/news/current-singleview/article/draft-guiding-principles-for-safe-havens-for-archives-at-risk/">http://archivesproject.swisspeace.ch/news/current-singleview/article/draft-guiding-principles-for-safe-havens-for-archives-at-risk/</a>).</p>
	Copies and access	- Access problems to copies and/or originals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create common protocols for data access.</li> <li>- It is necessary to have clear guidelines in a protection agreement (See: <a href="http://archivesproject.swisspeace.ch/news/current-singleview/article/draft-guiding-principles-for-safe-havens-for-archives-at-risk/">http://archivesproject.swisspeace.ch/news/current-singleview/article/draft-guiding-principles-for-safe-havens-for-archives-at-risk/</a>).</li> <li>- A mirror backup is suggested when files are replicated for security reasons.</li> </ul>
		- Risk of falsification of digital information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Control the security of the digitized information.</li> <li>- Create chains of custody for both physical and electronic documents.</li> <li>- Good security copies and digital preservation are necessary.</li> <li>- Always bear in mind that digital copies do NOT replace the paper version.</li> <li>- Create standardized tools for digitization.</li> <li>- Share generally agreed upon access protocols.</li> <li>- Establish clear guidelines on the confidentiality of information for everyone that is part of the documentation process.</li> <li>- Train archivists in new technologies.</li> </ul>
<b>New challenges</b>	Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is much information but it is not systematized and it is scattered.</li> <li>- Excess of information.</li> <li>- Difficulty in determining the authenticity of digital information.</li> <li>- Lack of knowledge of the field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archivists must work closely with computer specialists or develop new capacities (e.g. developing new profession of digital archivists).</li> <li>- Create maps, information systems and surveys on archives and documentary collections with information on serious human rights violations.</li> <li>- Establish common guidelines for digitization. Do not digitize documents without describing them since it duplicates the workload and can cause confusion.</li> <li>- Work hard on the authentication of digital documentation.</li> <li>- Possibility of virtually linking physically dispersed information.</li> <li>- Work with metadata that allow better accessibility and linkage of information.</li> <li>- Digital signage (for example, using QR codes) to identify archives linked to</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>past human rights violations.</li> <li>- Technology can be used as a resource to explore information.</li> <li>- Use out of the box thinking.</li> </ul>
	Archives and identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Look at the stories behind the events. E.g. How do peasant communities or local groups appropriate themselves?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transmission of knowledge to affected communities.</li> <li>- Include access to this information across public education.</li> </ul>
	Archives and memories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The "memory archives" may only pretend to have original documentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with the management of memory archives.</li> <li>- Providing digital copies instead of the physical originals is important in order to protect the latter from dispersion and the alteration of the original archival circle.</li> <li>- Define concepts and the scope of memory archives and clearly define their subject area.</li> </ul>
	New perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of human rights and gender perspectives in archive management.</li> <li>- Insufficient inclusion of the perspective of indigenous people.</li> <li>- Work with indigenous movements, communities or peasant sectors. How to share knowledge?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pay attention to collections about women or different social actors whose rights are violated. Do not "create" archives but select a specific approach to their treatment.</li> <li>- Provide support to local communities if needed. Understand their own archive logic and contribute to its dissemination.</li> <li>- State agencies should contribute to the dissemination of such community archives.</li> <li>- New platforms to share information and facilitate access (e.g. collaborative description platforms).</li> </ul>
	Coordination with actors/producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems of "ownership" and legitimacy of the archives.</li> <li>- Lack of linkage between different actors and institutional regulations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create an international network of archives related to human rights.</li> <li>- Promote the construction of networks between organizations that work on strengthening archives: setup, organization, protection.</li> <li>- Consider the contribution of the archives for the safeguarding of the public memory and the guarantee of non-recurrence.</li> <li>- Create international financing networks. It is necessary that these projects are associated with traditional state institutions.</li> </ul>