

Abstract Submission by Dr. Hala Georges
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The Pictures of War: The Still Image in Conflict since 1945 conference
Theme: Visual Activism and the Middle East

Contextual & Personal View

The news has been displaying what we already know about the war in Syria and, in fact, any conflict in the Middle East, insofar as it resorts to familiar forms of news reportage. Typically, this can be a stream of constant violent war imagery, which in turn creates a distance between the viewer and the tragedy itself, thus producing a feeling of detachment and indifference - the familiar 'compassion fatigue'.

Being a Syrian artist and researcher living in the UK, and having visited Syria in the time of war, will allow me to demonstrate in this presentation; a counter-point to the mainstream way of representing the Syrian war. This will be by bringing to light photography and moving image examples, which convey hidden histories of the affected Syrian people. Examples of my work will also be brought to discussion to take a personal and domestic view on the everyday Syrian life affected by this drastic disruption and violence. The display and analysis of personal and unique examples will help me argue against the unethical constant use of arbitrary violent imagery every time we talk about war.

In taking a personal and domestic perspective and looking through the eyes of those whom are living the everyday life of the conflict, photography and moving image practice becomes a true way of communicating the unspeakable. While also standing as a resistance symbol in the face of war, by both the image maker and participant. In following this way, we might also succeed in initiating a compassionate response in the viewer and in engaging their sympathy instead of their anger or total dispassion.