



100 YEARS

PRESS RELEASE

Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria

27 April– 3 September 2017

IWM London

Free Admission

As part of IWM's wider season ***Syria: A Conflict Explored***, IWM London will stage ***Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria***, the first UK exhibition of photographs by award-winning Russian documentary photographer Sergey Ponomarev. The exhibition, comprising colour prints and digital media, will explore the human consequences of the Syria conflict and its connection to the European refugee crisis of 2015.

Sergey Ponomarev (b 1980) was drawn to journalism from an early age and found the visual language of photography offered more opportunities for story-telling than the written word. After working in Russia for Associated Press, Ponomarev embarked on a freelance international career in 2012. He has won many international awards, including the Pulitzer Prize (2016), the World Press Photo Award (2017), and the Robert Capa Gold Medal Award (2017) for his work on the European refugee crisis. Ponomarev's photographs, created with minimal equipment, prioritise the consequences of conflict. His artistic use of colour and composition highlight important, easily overlooked details, helping his audience to distinguish between propaganda and the facts.

Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria will feature more than 60 photographs, a number of which will go on public display for the first time, selected from two award-winning bodies of work by Ponomarev. It will consider the role of factors such as official access controls which shape international understanding of the Syria conflict. Displayed across four rooms, the exhibition will be presented in two sections, *Assad's Syria* and *The Exodus*.

Assad's Syria will feature 24 colour photographs displayed as large digital prints in three rooms from Ponomarev's photo-essay, *Assad's Syria* (2013-2014). Ponomarev was one of very few photographers allowed access to the Government-controlled areas of Syria in 2013-2014. His photographs delve beneath the surface of events to ask what life was really like for people living in these areas.

The Exodus, the final section of the exhibition, will feature a digital installation comprising more than 40 photographs taken by Ponomarev at the height of the European refugee crisis for the New York Times between 2015 and 2016. *The Exodus* reflects the determination, endurance and suffering of the men, women and children from Syria and elsewhere who sought asylum and a better life in Europe in 2015-2016.

Talking about *The Exodus* **Sergey Ponomarev** said: *'There were many hard moments: children crying, wanting to eat or sleep or go to the toilet. Women carrying heavy things and understanding nothing; men exhausted because of the travel and pressure and uncertainty.'*

Ponomarev first visited Syria as a tourist in 2009, which inspired a lasting fascination with the country. He went on to document the human consequences of the Syria conflict during a series of visits to government-controlled areas between 2013 and 2014. In July 2015, he turned his attention to the plight of the many Syrian refugees forced to seek refuge in other countries. Between July 2015 and March 2016, Ponomarev was a member of a New York Times team of reporters who documented the experience of asylum seekers in Europe. He continues to document the experience of refugees in 2017.

About Syria: A Conflict Explored

Syria: A Conflict Explored presents a season of exhibitions and events reflecting upon the ongoing conflict in Syria. From 27 April until 3 September, IWM London will stage **Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria**, the first UK exhibition of photographs addressing the consequences of the Syria conflict by award-winning Russian documentary photographer Sergey Ponomarev. This exhibition will sit alongside **Syria: Story of a Conflict** an intimate display co-curated by Christopher Phillips, Senior Lecturer of International Relations of the Middle East at Queen Mary University, exploring the origins, escalations and impact of the Syria conflict. *Syria: A Conflict Explored* will also present a series of associated events throughout the season, including an artist residency and collaborations with award-winning creative collective **Anagram** and interventions exploring subjects such as information and misinformation.

About Conflict Now

Syria: A Conflict Explored will be the first season in IWM's new *Conflict Now* strand, launched to coincide with the museums' centenary. IWM will explore evolving issues across the world as a result of conflict. *Conflict Now* features opinions of individuals who have seen, experienced and worked in areas of conflict – including artists, photographers, refugees, citizen journalists and war correspondents along with exhibitions and events developed by IWM and partner organisations.

#SyriaExplored

#IWM100YEARS #IWMSTORIES

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<https://www.facebook.com/iwm.london/>

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Ends

IWM London

IWM London tells the stories of those whose lives have been shaped by war through the depth, breadth and impact of our Galleries, displays and events. Explore what life was like at home during the Second World War in *A Family in Wartime*; delve into the world of espionage in *Secret War*; visit our award-winning *Holocaust Exhibition*; discover stories of bravery in *The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes*; see work by some of Britain's most significant 20th Century artists in our [art galleries](#) or take in our latest major temporary exhibitions. Our family learning sessions and events encourage debate and challenge people's perceptions of war.

Open Daily: 10am – 6pm. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. (Closed 24 - 26 December). Free Admission
IWM London, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ.

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IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) **tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.**

Our unique Collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches which attract over 2 million visitors each year are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch that recently transformed with new, permanent and free First World War Galleries alongside new displays across the iconic Atrium to mark the Centenary of the First World War; **IWM North**, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; **IWM Duxford**, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; **Churchill War Rooms**, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser **HMS Belfast**.

IWM Centenary

2017 marks Imperial War Museums (IWM) centenary. IWM was established while the First World War was still being fought. Since its establishment people have entrusted IWM with their stories of war from 1917 to the present day, in the knowledge it will continue to share these stories with future generations. IWM will commemorate its 100 years through a centenary of stories from its rich collections across its five branches (IWM London, IWM North, IWM Duxford, Churchill War Rooms and HMS *Belfast*).



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First World War Centenary

2014 - 2018 marks the centenary of the First World War, a landmark anniversary for Britain and the world. IWM is marking the centenary by leading a vibrant, four year programme of cultural activities across the world. For more information visit www.1914.org

