



100 YEARS

IWM NORTH
PRESS RELEASE

IWM North presents a season of exhibitions and events on the Syria conflict

From 16 February until 28 May 2018, IWM North will present *Syria: A Conflict Explored*, a season of exhibitions and events reflecting on the ongoing Syria conflict.

Part of IWM's Conflict Now programme, the season will include *Syria: Story of a Conflict*, an intimate display exploring the origins, escalations and impact of the Syria conflict, which has been co-curated by IWM and Christopher Phillips, Reader of International Relations of the Middle East at Queen Mary University.

This exhibition will sit alongside *Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria*, an extensive series of photographs addressing the consequences of the Syria conflict by award-winning Russian documentary photographer Sergey Ponomarev.

The season will also present a series of associated events, including an artist residency by creative collective Anagram, exploring information and misinformation relating to the Syria conflict. A series of Conflict Cafés, giving visitors the chance to talk with those who have experienced the conflict firsthand, will also take place.

Gill Webber, IWM Executive Director of Content and Programmes, said: 'The situation in Syria is complex, live and evolving and we know that viewpoints may change in 2 years, 2 months, 2 days or 2 hours. We want to help our visitors cut through the complexity and enable a deeper understanding of the causes, course and consequences of what is happening in Syria today. *Syria: A Conflict Explored* reflects a multitude of perspectives and positions and also questions and challenges the information we have available - right here and right now.'

***Syria: A Conflict Explored* season includes:**

Syria: Story of a Conflict

16 February until 28 May 2018

IWM North

Free Admission

Syria: Story of a Conflict will present an intimate display exploring the origins, escalations and impact of the Syria conflict. The display, co-curated by IWM and Christopher Phillips, Reader of International Relations of the Middle East at Queen Mary University, will include a selection of objects which explore the narrative of the conflict alongside an installation film helping to explain the story of the conflict.

The ongoing Syria conflict, which began in 2011, has already lasted longer than the Second World War. As a result of the conflict, nearly half a million people have been killed, more than eleven million – half the pre-war population – have been forced from their homes and a country lies in ruins. This is more than a civil war between Syrians as foreign involvement, whether from other countries or non-state militants like ISIS, has turned Syria into a battleground for wider rivalries.

A 'war of narratives' pushed by different players can make accurate information difficult to ascertain, while simplified explanations in the media further obscure the picture. The exhibition will seek to provide a balanced and objective introduction to Syria's complex conflict, and endeavours to explain how a country, once known for its relative stability, has been shattered by war.

Syria: Story of a Conflict will be divided into three main sections. The first will present the narrative of the conflict through a small selection of representative objects. These objects, some of which have recently derived from Syria, point to the tragic and complex nature of the conflict. The subsequent section of the exhibition will present a new installation film, produced by Liminal in collaboration with IWM, which tells the story of the Syria conflict. The final section of the exhibition will present the personal stories of Syrians from all walks of life who have been impacted by the conflict. More than eleven million Syrians have been forced from their homes, fleeing the fighting or other hardships caused by war. With a focus on the military and political aspects of the crisis, the human stories are often lost. The personal stories presented in the exhibition include those from Syrian refugees now residing in both Europe and Syria's neighbouring countries, civilians who have remained in Syria as well as internally displaced people.

Christopher Phillips is co-curator of Syria: Story of a Conflict and author of The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the New Middle East (London: Yale university Press, 2016). He is Reader at Queen Mary, University of London and Associate Fellow at Chatham House.

Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria

16 February until 28 May 2018

IWM North

Free Admission

IWM North will stage *Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria*, an exhibition of photographs by award-winning Russian documentary photographer Sergey Ponomarev. The exhibition, comprising of a mix of 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 in the North of England 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, in shaping international understanding of the Syria conflict. The exhibition will be presented in two sections, *Assad's Syria* and *The Exodus*.

Conflict Café: Conversations about Syria

Saturday 17 February & Saturday 5 May 2018

IWM North

Free, drop in

What do you want to know about Syria? What is daily life like? Why and when do you make the decision to leave? How does it feel to be a foreign journalist or an aid worker?

This is a unique opportunity to join citizens and journalists who have experienced the Syria conflict on the ground for a conversation; to hear their personal stories and to ask questions.

To launch *Syria: A Conflict Explored* at IWM North, a range of people now living in the North West and beyond, some of whom have fled Syria and others who have worked there, will share their stories of life in the country before and during the conflict in our pop-up Conflict Café.

I Swear to Tell the Truth

15 March – 27 May 2018

IWM North

£6 / £4 concessions

If Vietnam was the first conflict on television, Syria is the first on YouTube. The number of minutes uploaded exceeds the number of real-time minutes which have passed since the conflict began on 15 March 2011. Every day, this number rises as the vicious conflict creeps onward, but does the quantity of material available mean we understand what is happening on the ground any better?

The award-winning creative collective Anagram invite visitors to IWM North to actively and intimately think about how to make sense of what we hear from Syria. Taking evidence from specific events during the battle of Aleppo in late 2016, this experience asks: is confusion a weapon being used to stop the international community from acting; who controls the fog of war?

From exposing the algorithms of media moguls to grappling with our cloudy internal prejudice, *I Swear to Tell the Truth* is a thought-provoking experience inviting you to inspect how social and information networks have affected your perception of the world we live in, and your place in it.

Created by Anagram and commissioned by Imperial War Museums.

Ends

Syria: A Conflict Explored

IWM North, 16 February until 28 May 2018

Press View: 15 February 2018

Free admission

iwm.org.uk/Syria

[#SyriaExplored](https://twitter.com/SyriaExplored)

For further press information and interview requests please contact:

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IWM North

The multi award winning IWM North brings the national collection to northern audiences. Designed by world-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind to represent a globe shattered by conflict, the iconic building, innovative and dynamic exhibitions, use of digital media through hourly Big Picture Shows and public events explore how war shapes lives and inspires and encourages debate.

Open Daily: 10am – 5pm. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. (Closed 24 – 26 December). Free Admission.

IWM North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ (close to MediaCityUK Metrolink and Junction 9 of the M60).

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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.org.uk / @IWMNorth / www.facebook.com/iwm.north

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*).



100 YEARS

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

