



100 YEARS

Imperial War Museums presents *Syria: A Conflict Explored*, the first season in new *Conflict Now* strand launched for IWM's centenary year

The Imperial War Museum (IWM) was established in 1917 to reflect and record the ongoing conflict happening at the time - the First World War. One hundred years later IWM remains as relevant today as it was in 1917, responding to the world in which we all live and reflecting the experiences of people who are experiencing conflict *now*.

From April 2017, IWM will explore evolving issues across the world as a result of conflict through the new *Conflict Now* strand, launched to coincide with the museums' centenary. *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.

The first season is *Syria: A Conflict Explored* (27 April – 3 September 2017), a series of exhibitions and events reflecting upon the ongoing Syria conflict. As part of this season, 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 IWM and 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. The season will also present a series of associated events, including an artist residency by creative collective Anagram. The residency will explore information and misinformation relating to the Syria conflict through data collection, interrogation and storytelling interventions with the public.

Gill Webber, Executive Director of Content and Programmes, IWM, 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
27 April– 3 September 2017
IWM London
Free Admission

Syria: Story of a Conflict will present an intimate display at IWM London exploring the origins, escalations and impact of the Syria conflict. The display, co-curated by IWM and Christopher Phillips, Senior Lecturer 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 about 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, almost 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. Almost eleven million Syrians have been forced from their homes, fleeing the fighting or other hardships caused by war. With the 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 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 Senior Lecturer at Queen Mary, University of London and Associate Fellow at Chatham House.

Sergey Ponomarev: A Lens on Syria

27 April– 3 September 2017

IWM London

Free Admission

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*.

Public Programme

27 April– 3 September 2017

IWM London

As part of the wider season *Syria: A Conflict Explored*, IWM London will present a public programme that will further explore the complexity and shifting nature of the Syria conflict.

From May until August 2017, award-winning creative collective Anagram will take up residency at IWM London to explore subjects such as information and misinformation regarding the Syria conflict. Through inviting the visiting public to become actively involved in decoding our facts and fictions, Anagram will explore how it is that we come to understand what is actually happening in the world around us today.

Throughout the season, IWM will host a series of associated debates, tours and encounters which question our understanding of the Syria conflict; invite personal stories and different perspectives; discuss the role of art and media in representing conflict; and reflect the changing nature of the situation in Syria and how we perceive it.

#SyriaExplored

#IWM100YEARS #IWMSTORIES

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

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-london/syria-a-conflict-explored>

For further press information and interview requests please contact:

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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.

T: 020 7416 5000

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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*).



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.

