



IWM LONDON
PRESS RELEASE

New exhibition brings visitors face-to-face with the people behind the headlines, as IWM explores 100 years of refugee experiences

From the First World War to the present day, countless lives have been affected by conflict, resulting in ordinary people having to make extraordinary decisions – should they stay or go? This is the focus of *Refugees: Forced to Flee* (2 April – 29 November 2020), a major new exhibition at IWM London.

Refugees: Forced to Flee is rooted in cutting-edge research, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), that explores the decisions and consequences faced by those whose worlds have been turned upside down by war over the past 100 years. Combining new research and real-life experiences with over 80 photographs, oral histories, documents and objects – many of which will be displayed for the first time – the exhibition will question why conflict forces people to leave once safe places.

Challenging perceptions by putting people's experiences at the centre of the exhibition, *Refugees: Forced to Flee* will explore why people flee their homes and take certain items with them; how they make their journeys and find safety; and the challenges that can be experienced when re-settling. Stories from the First World War, Second World War and its aftermath, 1990s Bosnia and present-day Afghanistan will be compared to expose the similarities encountered by those who leave, move and re-settle. Whether making physical journeys or facing bureaucratic barriers, the exhibition will demonstrate that regardless of time or place, the impact of conflict is the same – the catastrophic upheaval of ordinary lives.

From the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany and experiences of Kindertransport, to life in the Calais Jungle and Mediterranean crossings, exhibition highlights include: the diary of Eugene-Marie Bosteels, who described how he and his family were treated as they travelled as refugees in 1914 from Belgium to England; a six-point star badge marked with the word 'Jude' belonging to Emmanuel Seinfeld, who survived the war and whose daughter came to Britain on the Kindertransport; newly digitised images of United Nations peacekeeping missions during the Bosnian War; an animation following the difficult journey made by Habib Rezaie, an unaccompanied child asylum seeker who travelled from Afghanistan to the UK; newly commissioned contemporary artworks by London-based artists Shorsh Saleh, Grace Schwindt and Indrė Šerpytytė; seven new UK research projects; and information, including propaganda material. The exhibition will also highlight the UK's response to refugee crises throughout history.

Simon Offord, Curator of Second World War and Mid 20th Century at IWM, says: "*The world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record, but with media attention less prevalent than it was in 2015, now more than ever it's important for IWM to bring 100 years of refugee voices and experiences back to the forefront.*"

Professor Andrew Thompson, AHRC Executive Chair, says: "*More than ever we need the insights and perspectives of our researchers to navigate the great global and contemporary social challenges of our times. Academic research has a vital role to play in providing new and challenging thinking around refugee crises, past and present. UKRI funds high quality research on a broad spectrum of issues related to forced displacement and we are pleased to see some of this research featured in the exhibition. The impact of*

refugee crises and forced displacement is above all a human story and we hope that bringing research into the heart of this exhibition helps raise awareness of the comparability of historic and contemporary contexts surrounding these complex issues, as well as shedding light on the lived experience of those separated from their families and displaced from their homes."

Refugees: Forced to Flee is part of *Refugees*, a free season of exhibitions, artistic commissions and immersive events taking place across IWM London and IWM North in 2020. Highlights include a new commission from world-renowned artist Ai Weiwei called *History of Bombs* (2 April – 29 November 2020) and a major new exhibition at IWM North, *Aid Workers: Ethics Under Fire* (15 May 2020 – 10 January 2021).

Ends

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Notes to editors

Refugees: Forced to Flee

2 April – 29 November 2020

Press View: 31 March 2020

Part of IWM's free *Refugees* season

#IWMRefugees

Refugees

Refugees is a free season of major exhibitions, new artistic commissions and immersive events taking place across both IWM London and IWM North in 2020. Unlocking the personal stories of people who have been forced to flee their homes and those who work to support them, *Refugees* will give visitors the space to consider their own responses to similar experiences and dilemmas. Season highlights include *Refugees: Forced to Flee* at IWM London (2 April – 29 November 2020), created in partnership with AHRC and ESRC, *History of Bombs* by Ai Weiwei at IWM London (2 April – 29 November 2020) and *Aid Workers: Ethics Under Fire* at IWM North (15 May 2020 – 10 January 2021).

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 the [First World War Galleries](#) and iconic Atrium; visit our [Holocaust Exhibition](#); discover stories of bravery in [The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes](#) or take in our latest major temporary exhibitions.

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.org.uk / @I_W_M / www.facebook.com/iwm.london

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 2.5 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**.

UK Research and Innovation

UK Research and Innovation works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish. We aim to maximise the contribution of each of our component parts, working individually and collectively. We work with our many partners to benefit everyone through knowledge, talent and ideas. UK Research and Innovation is also delivering specific aspects of the UK government's no deal planning for EU Exit. To keep up to date please visit our [dedicated pages](#). Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £7 billion, UK Research and Innovation brings together the seven research councils, Innovate UK and Research England.



The Arts and Humanities Research Council

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which is part of UK Research and Innovation, funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more. The quality and range of research supported by AHRC not only provides social and cultural benefits and contributes to the economic success of the UK but also to the culture and welfare of societies around the globe. ahrc.ukri.org.

The Economic and Social Research Council

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK government. For more information visit ukri.org. The ESRC is the UK's largest funder of research on the social and economic questions facing us today. It supports the development and training of the UK's future social scientists and also funds major studies that provide the infrastructure for research. ESRC-funded research informs policy-makers and practitioners and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective.