



Press Kit

**War from the Victims'
Perspective**
Photographs by Jean Mohr

An exhibition produced by the Musée de l'Elysée,
Lausanne, and the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Elysée
Lausanne



War from the Victims' Perspective **Photographs by Jean Mohr**

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Press Conference

Thursday 20 June at 11am
Club Suisse de la Presse
Route de Ferney 106,
1202 Genève

Opening of the exhibition

Monday 24 June 2013 at 6pm
Only on invitation

Press Contact

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150 years of Swiss Humanitarian Aid

Switzerland's position is established at the forefront of the international stage – more prominently than its geographical size implies. In the humanitarian field in particular, it played a decisive role in the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the most important beneficiary of the Confederation's humanitarian aid today. Depositary of the Geneva Conventions, it is actively committed to the respect of international humanitarian law. Its active stand in the protection of victims of armed conflicts and in the aid to those of forgotten conflicts is internationally recognised.

Switzerland's place and role can today be further highlighted through photography. This medium contributes to this promotional task as it occupies a prominent position at the crossroad of mass media and artistic creativity. Furthermore, photography is a universal language. It represents a very rich heritage that is today the focus of major efforts by public authorities eager to promote it and make it accessible.

Particularly timely on this, the 150th anniversary of the ICRC and of the First Geneva Convention, the issue of victims of armed conflicts is crucial in the international debate. Swiss photographer Jean Mohr (1925) appears today to be one of those best placed to address this subject. His images are known not only for their graphic qualities but also for their great sensitivity, respecting the victims' dignity.



War from the Victims' Perspective *Photographs by Jean Mohr*

Early on, Jean Mohr sought to understand and explain the drama of civilians trapped in belligerent situations. His reportages are the result of decades of experience, which saw a ICRC and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) delegate transform himself into a full-time photographer, after a spell at an academy of painting.

More than 80 exhibitions worldwide have been dedicated to his work, including two at the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne that holds his collection. In 1978, at Photokina (Frankfurt's major Photography Fair), Jean Mohr was awarded the prize for the photographer who had most consistently served the cause of human rights. He is one of the best representatives of humanist photography, masterfully balancing sensitivity and rigor, emotion and reflection, art and documentary evidence.

The exhibition addresses the issues of victims of conflicts, refugees and communities suffering from war and still under potential threat. It focuses on the emblematic cases of Palestine, Cyprus, and Africa. Other examples illustrate the universal problems of populations directly or indirectly enduring repercussions of war (in Iran, Pakistan, Nicaragua...).

Palestine, its refugee camps, precarious sanitary conditions, and the Gaza stalemate, whilst being the subject of major media attention, is a case worthy of reconsideration. It needs to be regularly re-explained and repositioned in the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict. The case of Cyprus serves as a reminder that the refugee problem still remains an issue for certain members of the European Union. Several hundreds of thousands of people were forced into exile. Africa too needed to be addressed, as the post-colonial conflicts forced millions into displacement. The fragility of these States, outlined as they are by inherited colonial borders, regularly fuels turmoil which leads to humanitarian crises. The refugee problem is present throughout the continent.

Focussing upon these three geographical regions presents the problem of war victims in an historical setting classified by theme: "Portraits of Exile", "The Children's Diaspora", "Temporary Landscapes", and "Life Goes On". These photographs render a face to the casualties and retrace the steps of their displacement, from their settlement in the precariousness of the camps and reception centres to their attempts to adapt to an enduring situation.

After Geneva, the exhibition *War from the Victims' Perspective, Photographs by Jean Mohr* will travel around the world until 2016.



Jean Mohr's Biography

One could say of Jean Mohr that he is simultaneously observer, precise, realist, moderate, calm and reassuring. These qualities allowed him to develop a classical style that is both simple and modest. At a time when certain pathos tends to flood humanitarian reportages, his restraint is all the more noteworthy.

1925

Born in Geneva on September 13. His parents, opponents to Nazism, were granted Swiss citizenship in 1939. Raised and educated in Geneva, he graduated in business studies.

1949-1950

ICRC delegate for the Middle East.

1951

Studied painting at the Académie Julian, Paris, and took up photography in 1952. From 1955, his photographs are published regularly.

1956-1978

Worked for international organizations (ICRC, ILO, JDC, UNHCR, WHO).

1967

A Fortunate Man, first book written with John Berger, the beginning of an ongoing collaboration.

1978

His exhibition *Work and Leisure* (Photokina, Cologne) awarded the prize for the photographer who contributed the most to the cause of human rights.

1985

L'autre mémoire, colour photography exhibition, Musée Rath, Geneva.

1986

After the Last Sky - Palestinian Lives, in collaboration with Edward Said.

1988

First photographer to be awarded the City of Geneva Fine Arts Prize.



1992

Jean Mohr retrospective, Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne.

2003

Exhibition *Side by Side or Face to Face*.

Fifty years of Jean Mohr photography in Israel and Palestine. The exhibition travelled to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Gaza, Geneva, Kiev, Moscow, Luxemburg and London.

1961-2013

More than 80 exhibitions dedicated to his work in Switzerland and worldwide.

The Commitment of a Country and a Museum

Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Switzerland, a State party to and depositary of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, has made of the promotion of international humanitarian law and the protection of victims of armed conflicts one of the pillars of its foreign policy. Upon the 150th anniversary of the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the First Geneva Convention, it has decided to intensify its activities in this field by initiating a broad reflection upon the actual challenges facing humanitarian relief on a planetary scale. Switzerland also seizes this occasion to reaffirm its commitment to concretely improve compliance with international humanitarian law.

Via its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in association with the Musée de l'Elysée, producer of this Jean Mohr travelling exhibition, Switzerland publicly and internationally reasserts its commitment to the cause of victims of armed conflicts.

Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne

The Musée de l'Elysée is one of the world's leading museums entirely dedicated to photography. Since its establishment in 1985, it has improved public understanding of photography through innovative exhibitions, key publications and engaging events.

Recognised as a centre of expertise in the field of conservation and enhancement of visual heritage, it holds a unique collection of more than 100,000 prints and preserves several photographic archives, in particular those of Ella Maillart, Nicolas Bouvier, Marcel Imsand, Charlie Chaplin and René Burri. Through this association with the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, upon the 150th anniversary of the ICRC, the Musée de l'Elysée is making the work of a remarkable photographer widely accessible, bringing forth the role of photography in the societal debate.

By supporting young photographers, offering new perspectives on the masters and confronting photography with other art forms, the Musée de l'Elysée experiments with the image.



The following images are available for the press

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To download the images:

ftp://84.16.80.83/web/press/Jean_Mohr/

User: press

Password: 1006_meI_13



Mozambican refugee at Sunday mass, Lundo installation area, Tanzania, 1968
© UNHCR / J. Mohr



The photographed photographer, Jerusalem, 1979 © Jean Mohr, Musée de l'Elysée



Young Greek refugee, Cyprus, 1976 © Jean Mohr, Musée de l'Elysée



Portrait of a Greek refugee, Larnaca, Cyprus, 1976 © Jean Mohr, Musée de l'Elysée



Palestinian refugees camp, Gaza, 1979 © Jean Mohr, Musée de l'Elysée



Bullet-holes in a façade, Cyprus, 1974 © Jean Mohr, Musée de l'Elysée



Practical Information

Exhibition address

United Nations Office
Building E, 2nd floor, Mezzanine
Entrance Portail de Pregny
Access Door 40

Access to the exhibition may be authorised upon request
+41 (0)22 917 41 43

<http://www.unog.ch/culturalactivities>

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