

Amnesty International



# 360 SYRIA INFORMATION SHEET

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## VIRTUAL REALITY IN ALEPPO



### Background

AIUK has developed a way of having a more memorable and deeper engagement with the public with the aim of improving ROI for street fundraising. Activists trained by Amnesty have supplied 360 images taken using smartphones and a free app. Those images are then sent to Amnesty from Syria where they are shared with the public using recycled smart phones and cheap virtual reality (VR) headsets.

Overall this project aims to serve Amnesty and our work in 4 main ways:

1. To empower and train activists to gather information and content in innovative ways
2. To enrich our research methods and materials enabling our researchers to carry out more remote research, 360 photos enable them glean a lot of information and evidence of e.g. barrel bombs
3. To provide a new way to 'shine a light' on human rights abuses by raising awareness and educating people about issues and Amnesty's work to prevent them e.g. using VR in schools and via activist groups
4. To grow the Amnesty movement by recruiting more supporters and raising more funds.

Thanks to the Google Cardboard project virtual reality is now accessible and affordable for everyone, to find out more, visit: <https://www.google.com/get/cardboard/>



### How do we want to make people feel?

Using VR we hope to make people feel:

1. **Intrigued** when invited to try VR or by seeing others looking at VR.
2. **Awestruck** by the experience when they look inside.
3. **Captivated** when they start looking around and exploring.
4. **Privileged** to have had this experience of seeing the world in this fresh way.
5. **Informed** about human rights violations.
6. **Outraged** and empathetically moved by what they have learnt from powerful storytelling.
7. **Eager** to find out more about what they can do to help.
8. **Generous** to reciprocate their experience by donating.

### How to take 360 photos

We do have 360 photos from Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta available for Amnesty to use in all countries. However, you may wish to take your own photos to use in the headsets, for example you might want to photograph an inspiring/shocking/enlightening Amnesty moment, such as a mass demonstration or something related to one of your local campaigns, perhaps an indigenous community to highlight some human rights challenges they face.

If you have an Android phone you can select 'Photosphere' on the standard camera app. iPhone users need to download a free app called 'Photo Sphere Camera'.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/photo-sphere-camera/id904418768?mt=8>

More info on how to take great 360 photosphere image at the following links:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VIPIDuSYuhHyeumdW3bCyO9eFvuHBvLrZyVneDaeVFQ/edit>

Youtube tutorial here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPs3eliWRaw>

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Tips for taking powerful photosphere images:

- Ensure the scene is well lit
- Ensure there are multiple points of interest all around to encourage the viewer to explore their surroundings.
- Position yourself in the most interesting central location, usually in the middle of the action.
- Try to have objectives of interest higher, lower, close and far to encourage people to really look all around, up and down as well as to present a sense of depth and distance.
- Pivot around the lens of the camera, not around your head or body
- Having people in the shot is a great way to humanise the story and provide context. But be aware that if people are too close or if they are moving, you may have stitching errors, where you lose part of someone's body.
- Make sure you know the details and the story behind the image and can tell a moving story about the image.

### **How to display 360 photos**

Viewing the images is simple, you just need to download the free Google Cardboard app:

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.samples.apps.cardboarddemo&hl=en\\_GB](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.samples.apps.cardboarddemo&hl=en_GB)

The app only recognises images with the prefix 'pano\_', this prefix is given automatically to any images taken using the photosphere option on Android phones or using the photosphere app. So be aware of this if you're downloading or sharing images and you change the file name.

### **Tech you need on the street**

Consider ethical manufacturing and company policies when you purchase equipment to be used by Amnesty. Although it's unlikely you'll find an ethically produced smartphone which works with the Google Cardboard app, this shouldn't stop you testing VR. AIUK is using refurbished Google Nexus 5 phones bought online. The following phones are fully compatible with the cardboard app (there are others):

- Google Nexus 4 and 5
- Motorola Moto X\*
- Samsung Galaxy S4, S5 and S6
- Samsung Galaxy Nexus

After testing several different models, AIUK is currently using these VR headsets, purchased at a discount:

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/SMARTPHONE-ColorCross-VR-Experience-PRO/dp/B00VWVY0HU/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=electronics&ie=UTF8&qid=1449138006&sr=1-1&keywords=leap+virtual+reality](http://www.amazon.co.uk/SMARTPHONE-ColorCross-VR-Experience-PRO/dp/B00VWVY0HU/ref=sr_1_1?s=electronics&ie=UTF8&qid=1449138006&sr=1-1&keywords=leap+virtual+reality)

There are many other viewers available online, test a few and find one that provides a quality and immersive experience.

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Note pros and cons of the Immerse VR Headset (link above):

### Pros

- Robust and solid build
- Plastic doesn't collect/show grease or grime easily and is easy to clean
- Smartphone is locked away out of sight safely inside
- Good quality lenses which can be adjusted for width and focal distance
- Comfortable foam padding for face
- Plastic loop on top for lanyard for ease of carrying on street
- The headset uses a clamp rather than suction pads to hold the phone in place and the clamp does not press on any of the phone's buttons.

### Cons

- No NFC magnet control – not really an issue if only using one image as recommended.

### Content from Syria

You can either download the images from Alepo at this link:

<https://goo.gl/photos/4k6gUAMvynMSAnvT7>

Latest images from Eastern Ghouta: <https://goo.gl/photos/aUsgze86Av8oCgco6>

Or send a Google email address to [reuben.steains@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:reuben.steains@amnesty.org.uk) and he can share images with you to be viewed in rotational spherical mode.

The best image in our opinion is this one: <https://goo.gl/photos/SuQoV5D88YDEVXma6> (click on image to view in 360 mode).

Image depicts a residential district in Aleppo called Ash Sha'ar which was targeted by Syrian government barrel bombs. Here's more info:

- All the buildings, except for the Mosque are residential buildings – nobody lives in them now, the buildings are clearly not safe.
- This was once a bustling and vibrant community of mostly 'working class' hard working people
- There was once an estimated 250,000 families living in Ash Sha'ar, the number of families that remain are in their 100s
- This area was targeted by the regime with barrel bombs because of its strategic importance. Barrel bombs were used to cause maximum trauma and civilian terror
- Before the bombing you may hear the sound of birds overhead, children laughing and playing on their way to school, small business owners setting up their stalls, now all you hear is the sound of distant gunfire, bombs and the odd motorcycle. There is no birdsong, there are few children here.
- One of the team who took these photos lost his father in a barrel bomb strike, he was there to pull out the remains of his father – instead of picking up a gun in revenge, he chose to pick up a camera and to make sure the world sees these images. It's our duty to show these images and to tell their stories.

AIUK has built this website featuring mixed media collected by Syrian activists, feel free to use it for private sites or high dwell-time. Use [www.360syria.com](http://www.360syria.com)

### Tips for using VR for fundraising, campaigning and educating

#### General

- Get one or two VR viewers in the office asap so that you can try it out and build up excitement, this will give you a chance to start thinking about how you will use it with the public.
- Think about events, festivals, private sites etc
- Ask if people suffer from vertigo or epilepsy before using the viewer
- Stand road side of them so that they don't step into traffic when looking into the viewer
- If anyone tries to steal the viewer by force, let them take it. Safety should not be compromised for the cost of a 2<sup>nd</sup> hand smartphone
- Make sure everyone using the VR headset is well prepped on the Syria campaign and the use of the VR tech
- Test the kit before passing to a member of the public
- Have a plan for who is going to look after the phone and ensure that one person is accountable for looking after each phone and headset, they need to be charged every day and kept clean
- Number each headset and phone (including the unique IMEI code) and keep a record of who is looking after it.

#### Phones

- You don't need sim cards.
- We've set up a dummy Amnesty Google login to download apps & photos, but there's no bank details or other personal details on the phone
- Turn off auto screen brightness and keep the screen on medium/high brightness for best results.
- Turn off auto sleep
- There is no need to use a screen protector – some have a darkening effect on the screen
- Regularly clean screens
- Only use one strong image and get to know that image very well
- Make sure you have powerful stories to bring the image to life. What was it like before the bombing? How did people live? How have people been affected? What sounds were there before? What sounds are there now? Tell a story of one person's struggle? The story of the person who took the photo?
- Keep phone on flight mode to save battery
- Put phone on standby/screen off to save battery when not in use – this will also avoid the screens getting hot
- Keep the phone free of other software/apps/photos so that it is only used for work purposes and the memory and processor are not clogged up with other apps/files etc
- Recharge battery in-between shifts and consider the use of portable chargers
- You can set up a spreadsheet to record who as a phone + headset, but suggest that it could be simple with headings like: name, address, phone number, no. of headsets, date given headsets, date returning headsets if relevant, Phone IMEI code, notes, any feedback (this will help us learn and evolve). The EMEI code is a unique identifying number to each phone, more info here: <http://www.wikihow.com/Find-the-IMEI-or-MEID-Number-on-a-Mobile-Phone>

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### Headsets

- Making sure eye lenses are set at correct distance apart from each other and distance from phone to avoid blur. If these are wrongly set or unequal, it can be a dissatisfying blurry experience. **The images should be crystal clear and not blurry in any way.**
- Keep the lenses and the inside of the viewer clean and dust free
- Make sure the spring clamp doesn't press on buttons - if this has been an issue, we can trial different headsets or try phone covers/casing
- AIUK uses the below branding for the front of the headsets

### Launching

Think about what stunts and what additional presence you can do to help launch VR for street fundraising, campaigning and education. The more buzz you can create the better.

### Uses for VR

Experiment and try using it for major donors, activists, local groups, student groups, schools, journalists, direct mail appeals, supporter stewardship etc.

### Media

AIUK was first to market with this idea in the UK and the marketing and fundraising media were very interested to report on it. Hopefully it'll be the same story in your country. See here for the two AIUK press releases. Please follow this messaging where appropriate.

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/virtual-reality-aleppo-street-fundraising-campaign-launched>

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/first-use-virtual-reality-fundraising-hit-members-public>

**Note: Please make sure you give strong credit to our activist media partners who took the images in Syria, they should be credited as per the UK press releases as: Lamba Media Productions**

Some media coverage in the UK:

<http://www.brandrepublic.com/article/1350193/watch-amnesty-uses-vr-headsets-transform-london-aleppo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVSicMd5zi8>

[http://www.civilsociety.co.uk/fundraising/news/content/19693/amnesty\\_trials\\_virtual\\_reality\\_headsets\\_for\\_street\\_fundraisers](http://www.civilsociety.co.uk/fundraising/news/content/19693/amnesty_trials_virtual_reality_headsets_for_street_fundraisers)

<http://www.marketingmagazine.co.uk/article/1348346/amnesty-uses-virtual-reality-headsets-bring-war-torn-syria-public>

<http://www.augmentedrealitytrends.com/virtual-reality/amnesty-international.html>

### Appendix 1

#### Case for Support for Syria and Barrel bombing in Aleppo

Some useful films on Syria to watch:

<http://youtu.be/UNw-ikgLhS8>

<http://youtu.be/RBQ-loHfimQ>

[http://youtu.be/R\\_iYQIMw0r0](http://youtu.be/R_iYQIMw0r0)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/05/syria-forces-war-crime-barrel-bombs-aleppo-amnesty-report>

<http://youtu.be/UNw-ikgLhS8>

#### Problem

**Most severe human rights and humanitarian crisis in the world.**

**Over 200,000 people have been killed. Mainly civilians.**

"We have run out of words to fully explain the brutality, violence and callous disregard for human life which is a hallmark of this crisis"

- Valerie Amos, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

**100s of 1000s struggling to survive in besieged cities that have run out of food, water and medicines.**

"Marwan was on the operating table when the lights blinked and fizzed out. The nurse pulled her mobile phone from her pocket – generating the only light in the pitch-black basement. Others followed suit, producing just enough light to allow me to finish repairing his broken little body"

- Dr Hassan, operating in Aleppo, Syria

**11 million people have been displaced. Most living in refugee camps.**

#### Barrel bombing in Aleppo

Barrel bombs are oil barrels, fuel tanks or gas cylinders packed with explosives, fuel and metal fragments designed to kill and maim in an indiscriminate fashion. The deadly munitions have been dropped by government force helicopters on schools, hospitals, mosques and crowded markets, and the besieged city of Aleppo has been particularly heavily hit. Many of Aleppo's beleaguered residents have sought safety by moving into basements or underground bunkers.

Barrel bombs killed more than 3,000 civilians in the Aleppo region alone last year, and over 11,000 in Syria as a whole since 2012. Last month local activists recorded at least 85 barrel bomb attacks in Aleppo city, killing at least 110 civilians. The Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has denied that his forces have used barrel bombs, despite mounting evidence to the contrary. Therefore, the 360 images of barrel bomb strikes help to serve as evidence of their use – These are images that Assad does not want you to see.

#### Solution

- We are documenting and reporting Human Rights abuses by all sides, so that perpetrators (whoever they are) can be held to account, including perpetrators of crimes against humanity.
- Just released '*Death everywhere: war crimes and human rights abuses in Aleppo*' report documenting the devastation and bloodshed caused by barrel bombs. It's been getting a lot of press coverage and contains evidence proving they are being used by government forces.

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- We are training activists to be media activists and human rights investigators documenting barrel bomb attacks. We are also helping them to organise themselves and set up networks. These activists are helping to protect people and save lives within Syria. Developing this kind of peaceful activism is a very important area of work which provides hope in what can sometimes be seen as a hopeless situation.
- We are building international pressure on the Syrian government and all armed opposition groups to stop endangering civilians. WE CAN SAVE LIVES.
- As part of a coalition of 140 organisations (#withSyria) we have been lobbying the UN for unfettered access to humanitarian aid. As a result convoys are getting through now but nowhere near is enough aid being delivered.

### **Time to act**

In February last year, the UN called for an end to attacks on civilians, and more humanitarian aid for the millions in need. Since then, over 15,000 civilians have been killed, many of them children. Access to relief has not improved and humanitarian funding has fallen compared to the needs.

This must change. Our governments must do more to end the suffering of the Syrian people.

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<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/05/syria-forces-war-crime-barrel-bombs-aleppo-amnesty-report>

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### Online tutorials for Amnesty Trainers, Speakers and Teachers

Office Mix Module – **360 Syria VR Headset** Online Module.

[Part One](#) – [Part Two](#) – [Part Three](#)

Office Mix Module – **360Syria.com** - Online Module.

[Part One](#) – [Part Two](#) – [Part Three](#)