

Archives of Conflict (online, 10–11 Dec 26)

De Montfort University, Leicester, United Kingdom, Dec 10–11, 2026

Deadline: Sep 30, 2026

Ana Catarina Pinho

Archives of Conflict.

Photography between Vernacular and Institutional Practices.

International Conference.

Photography has long played a central role in the mediation of war and political violence, shaping how conflicts are documented and remembered across different historical and geopolitical contexts. Yet war photography exceeds the framework of documentary representation, emerging within broader institutional, technological, and archival systems that shape the visibility of conflict. Photography does far more than merely document warfare, it actively participates in the production, mediation, and circulation of conflict itself. As such, war photography emerges may emerge within broader state-sponsored structures through which conflict is visually organized and disseminated (Oldfield, 2019). In this sense, the history of warfare is inseparable from the history of its modes of perception and representation (Virilio, 1984). Images of conflict therefore operate not merely as records of violence, but as components of visual and archival regimes that determine what becomes visible, preserved, legitimized, or forgotten (Folliard, 2020).

State agencies, military organizations, humanitarian institutions, press networks, museums, archives, and digital platforms all participate in the construction of visual regimes that shape public understandings of warfare, political violence, and historical memory. At the same time, vernacular and non-institutional photographic practices often complicate or contest official narratives, foregrounding alternative forms of witnessing grounded in lived experience, displacement, survival, and resistance, and activism. As Allan Sekula (2003) suggests, archives must also be read “from below,” from the perspective of those displaced, silenced, or rendered invisible by dominant structures of power.

In contemporary media environments, where smartphones, satellite technologies, social media platforms, automated systems, and artificial intelligence increasingly structure the production and circulation of images, the boundaries between documentation, surveillance, testimony, propaganda, and evidence have become progressively unstable. At the same time, the archive’s transition into digital environments has introduced new questions regarding algorithmic visibility, machine-based search, and the limitations of online finding aids, generating new forms of archival silence and opacity (Ernst, 2002; Fowler, 2017). As recent scholarship has argued, contemporary warfare increasingly overlaps with processes of datafication through which everyday life becomes continuously recorded across networked and constantly reconfigurable archival systems. Under condi-

tions of digitization, archives themselves become technologies through which warfare is extended, mediated, and operationalized, reaching deeply into intimate spaces and quotidian forms of experience (Agostinho et al., 2020).

This conference seeks to examine the visual and archival systems through which conflict is produced, mediated, circulated, and remembered across institutional and vernacular contexts. Bringing together perspectives from photography studies, visual culture, media studies, art history, archival studies, history, anthropology, and related disciplines, the conference aims to foster interdisciplinary discussions on the political, historical, material, and affective dimensions of conflict imagery. It welcomes contributions addressing the production, circulation, preservation, contestation, and reappropriation of photographs across institutional and vernacular contexts, as well as artistic, curatorial, and critical practices that engaging with the visual cultures and archival afterlives of war and political violence. Interdisciplinary and practice-based approaches are particularly encouraged.

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers addressing, but not limited to, the following lines of inquiry:

- Archival images of conflict: Circulation, mediation, and the politics of the image
- Institutional practices: image-making, visibility, and visual labour
- Vernacular practices: photography, witnessing, and counter-memory
- Archival practices: memory, afterlives, and critical appropriations

Submit your proposal

Please submit your proposal via email to anapinho@fcsh.unl.pt with the subject line: 'Archives of Conflict: abstract proposal'.

Include a title and abstract (300 words), along with a short biographical note (100 words), by 30 Sept 2026.

Selected papers will be considered for publication following the conference.

Organizing Committee

Dr Ana Catarina Pinho, IHA-NOVA University of Lisbon

Professor Gil Pasternak, PHRC, De Montfort University

<https://archivesofconflict.weebly.com/>

Reference:

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/53594>>.