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The Images of War

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By Glen Segell

Although the pen is mightier than the sword; it is the picture that tells a thousand words. It is the images of war and not stories that have a significant impact on the public and on decision makers. Words cannot describe the gross violations against humanity nor detail for history what images can. Images need no translation from language to language nor can their message be lost in translation. Academics, think-tanks and government agencies do not rely solely on the written accounts of eyewitnesses be they journalists or citizen internet bloggers. The world reacts when they see the irrefutable images of innocent citizens killed when calling for democracy on the squares of Egypt or those convulsing from chemical warfare attacks in their homes in the suburbs of Damascus.

It was professional war photographers and cameramen who brought the horror and the romanticism of war into the homes of the average American during the Vietnam War, through the medium of television. Today, with the Internet and digital cameras anyone can do the same from any conflict to anyone else globally. However the professional cameramen and photographers are still essential for decision makers and their advisors must rely on reputable and authenticated sources. The professional cameramen and photographers pursue the images because they have a passion for quality journalism and a dedication to ensure that stories that fade from written headlines are kept in sharp focus. Tragedy knows no bounds when one of these is killed; for the world ceases to see the plight of the victims of war when their mortal eyes are shut.

The documentation and revelation of every conflict no matter its size, be it small or a genocide, relies on images, as we the Jewish nation know having Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Kill those who provide the images of war, and the war will never be known now or in the annals of history. Recently Mick Deane a cameraman for British

broadcaster Sky News and Habiba Ahmed Abd Elaziz of The Gulf News were killed by Egyptian security forces; and even more were wounded. They may not be the only ones as Egypt and Syria slide into anarchy. They will be remembered and sorely missed as their professional images gave strategic insight.

Many war cameramen and photographers enter the profession to tell the story, as it is, to reveal the plight of those in strife yet the task is not easy. My own mentor Dimitri Manalotis told me in my earliest days of war photography in South Africa in the early 1980's that in taking the photo and in telling the story there is a moral and ethical dilemma; and this inspired my successful pursuit of a Licentiate of the Royal Photographic Society. War photographers are often first on the scene seeking to be at the heart of the battle, yet armed only with a camera. In telling the story however they also feel helpless. Around them are medics, security personnel, and others doing essential tasks. It can be agonisingly painful for photographers and cameramen when they run to file the image as a scoop often without attending to the wounded around them. Some accuse them of insensitivity, yet without them the violence would spiral even further. In their defence they are the eyes that bring the world to enact justice in times of crises to alleviate further suffering.

The history of photography has been linked to war and the notable professionals stand side by side with the events that they have recorded. The efforts of Mick and Habiba in Egypt join other famous such as Carol Popp de Szathmari and Roger Fenton during the Crimean War, Felice Beato in the Siege of Delhi and the Second Opium War, Haley Sims and Alexander Gardner in the American Civil-War, Robert Capa in the Spanish Civil War, Joe Rosenthal of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima, Edie Adams in the Vietnam War and Frauke Eigen of the war crimes in Kosovo. Let it be known and not forgotten that the image enables emotions for those who may never experience the reality being described in print; such is the harshness and yet romanticism of war.

In these times of epidemic war and strife in the Middle East, more war journalists, photographers and cameramen are needed in battle, for it is their images that will turn the tide of public awareness and pressure decision makers to initiate and approve UN Security Council Resolutions to intervene. Mick and Habiba have not died in vain doing the job they treasured; for they have opened the gates of

consciousness. It is the brutal images of war from Egypt and Syria that are essential to galvanise the world from hypocrisy and inactivity to prevent the slaughter of the innocent. It is also the images of Israeli humanity and kindness that are needed to highlight that Israel is unique and apart from its neighbours.

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