**Protesting terror: Alternative visual narratives of the ISIS conflict**

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This project explores the genre of protest images or ‘counter-images’ produced by activists within the visual landscape of the ISIS conflict. Like eyewitness footage, these counter-images contradict and destabilise dominant military and political narratives (Mortensen, 2015). They are part of a dynamic struggle between extremists, state institutions, activists, the media and the public over shaping the visual discourse of the ISIS conflict.

Instances of these protest images have become increasingly widespread, and cases include the image produced by Egyptian activist Aliaa Magda Elmahdy and international feminist group FEMEN depicting two naked women defacing the flag of the Islamic State. Similarly last year, a group of activists created the online cartoon ‘The Bigh Daddy Show’ which parodies ISIS propaganda by portraying the terror group as incompetent fools. Created in the wake of the Arab Spring, these kinds of images seek to promote Arab liberalism while simultaneously criticising the actions and ideologies of the Islamic State.

To unpack these alternative visuals, this project draws together theory relating to civic engagement via connective media (e.g. Carpentier, 2011; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Dahlgren, 2013), disruptive media and the potential for mediated images to cause ruptures in dominant public discourses (e.g. Chouliaraki, 2008; Eileraas, 2014) and notions of visibility/invisibility (e.g. Thompson, 2005). This project contributes to knowledge on how activists satirise and undermine extremist narratives, and the way we understand their struggle for control over how this very current conflict is represented.