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Older man with red keffiyeh: Kassar, from Hama fled with his 11 children, crossing into Lebanon. He can't work due to injury, and his wife is the breadwinner now. He sits in the square of a half built university all day, waiting for her to come home. Southern Lebanon 06/17.

## Mixed feelings on Syria show

🕒 June 17, 2017 💬 0

**THOSE OF YOU WHO can get yourselves over to the Saatchi gallery in SW2 will be able to see a compelling set of photos of Syrian refugees taken by photojournalist Edward Jonkler. Is it illuminating art, or patronising bandwagon-jumping?**



The exhibition is a story of contradictions. Many potential visitors will never forget that the Saatchi brothers owned the advertising agency which helped bring in Margaret Thatcher's Government – an austerity government which brought misery to so many people in the UK.

*Man with striped shirt:  
Ahmad, a former farmer, works illegally  
once a fortnight, breaking up hard ground  
with a hoe. His hands are calloused and he  
has been bitten by snakes many times  
while working. Sidon, 06/17.*

Anything with the Saatchi label attached is irrevocably tainted, linked to human misery and the demonization of the poor.

The photos in this exhibition also show human misery – victims of the foreign policy begun by Thatcher and Regan and continued by Blair and Bush. Jonkler's work has been described as a visual record of men who have lost their identity in a patriarchal society that has broken down. Women lose their identity all the time in western society, which is both capitalist and patriarchal – and it is indeed unusual to see the other side. The cause of the emasculation of these men is not clear: are they feeling it is their fault that they have lost their place in society, or are they victims – expendable to a capitalism which has to abandon the patriarchal order so it can make a land grab or crush local opposition to the world order it imposes?

Jonkler displays how the former breadwinners, the heads of their nuclear families, are reduced to broken individuals once they become refugees and their world order is turned on its head. He raises awareness – which is the first step towards finding an answer – without pointing to where that answer may be. The photos are crying out to be displayed alongside, or at least followed by, an exhibition of western world leaders immersed in the luxury which is paid for by the plight of the poor.



*Man in green tunic with daughter:  
Abu Ahmed was a tribal elder from  
southern Syria, with a large herd of  
livestock. Many were killed by shrapnel in  
an air strike, and without his animals he  
fled. He can't find work and his wife is sick.  
Sidon, 06/17.*

*The Lost Men of Syria* is part of a series of exhibitions being organised by The Worldwide Tribe, who are trying to highlight human issues in order to leave a legacy of positive social change. They too want to raise awareness – and then to shift perspectives into a more inclusive and less fear-driven narrative. To dispel fear, however, they will have to move forward and identify the causes of fear and the people who thrive on causing it. Until then, they have taken on the first step forward.

• *The Lost Men of Syria* is on at the Education Room at the Saatchi Gallery, Duke of York's HQ, Kings Road, London SW3 4RY from 19th July until 9th August. The exhibition is open between 10am and 6pm every day. Admission is free.