

# HOME AFTER WAR

A VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE ON THE DEVASTATING  
IMPACT OF IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES IN IRAQ



## THE PROJECT

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“Home after War” is part of the Oculus VR for Good Creators Lab 2017 programme that paired 10 rising filmmakers with 10 nonprofits to champion a variety of social missions while telling their stories in virtual reality. The project by NowHere Media and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) was selected by Oculus VR for Good, to tell a story that throws a spotlight on the threats posed by explosive hazards left behind after armed conflicts cease.

## THE PARTNERS

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The **Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)** is an expert organisation working to reduce the impact of mines, cluster munitions and other explosive hazards, in close partnership with mine action organisations and other human security actors around the world. The Centre supports the ultimate goals of mine action: saving lives, returning land to productive use and promoting development. Based in Geneva, the GICHD employs around 70 staff members from over 20 nations. [www.gichd.org](http://www.gichd.org)

**NowHere Media** is an immersive storytelling studio based in Berlin and specialising in journalism & documentaries. NowHere’s partners include international media outlets, NGOs, businesses and independent organisations such as Oculus VR for Good, Medien Innovationszentrum (Babelsberg), Al Jazeera English, Deutsche Welle, RNW Media, ZDF and more. [www.nowheremedia.net](http://www.nowheremedia.net)

**Oculus** is a team at Facebook that builds virtual reality (VR) hardware and software to let people experience anything, anywhere, with anyone. The Oculus Platform is currently available on three headsets—the PC- powered Oculus Rift, the standalone headset Oculus Go, and the mobile Samsung Gear VR, powered by Oculus. They provide the most immersive VR experiences available, from games and movies, to 3D 360° videos and beyond. [www.oculus.com](http://www.oculus.com)





## THE EXPERIENCE

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“Home after War”, directed by Gayatri Parameswaran, was shot in Fallujah, Iraq, in January 2018. Until recently, the city was under Islamic State (IS) control. The war against IS has ended but the city is still unsafe. There’s one looming fear for returning refugees and displaced persons – booby trapped homes and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the neighbourhoods. Since the end of the war, thousands of civilians have died or been injured by IEDs.

Ahmaied Hamad Khalaf and his family returned home after the fighting subsided. In the experience, the viewers find themselves in Ahmaied’s home, which still shows signs of the damage from the war. They hear Ahmaied speak of his loss and his hopes for his family, country and the world, and learn about what it’s like to fear the home he once loved.

Ahmaied’s story is real. Using photogrammetry, his house was scanned and recreated in a virtual software to give viewers a room scale, interactive experience. At the festival in Venice, the experience is set up within a unique physical installation that recreates part of Ahmaied’s house. It is completed with a display of IEDs and complementary information by the GICHD.

## THE ISSUE AT STAKE

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Improvised explosive devices (IEDs), or booby-traps, are homemade explosive devices, used to kill, injure, damage property or instill terror. Often unexploded or abandoned munitions are modified to construct IEDs. They cover an enormously wide range of possible types, such as improvised landmines – as opposed to factory-made landmines.

The increased use of mines and in particular IEDs in current conflicts is undermining the progress toward the long-held goal of a landmine-free world. They pose specific challenges to protecting civilians during, or in the immediate aftermath of conflict, including emergency humanitarian crises.

2016 was the second year in a row with exceptionally high numbers of people recorded as killed or injured by landmines, and marked the highest number of annual casualties caused by improvised mines.

Most IEDs explode due to the presence of, proximity to, or contact with a person, and are therefore forbidden under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Affected states are required to report on IED contamination and to clear it. Over the last few years, there has been increased discussion in the international arena on appropriate policies, practices, and techniques for addressing IEDs, including improvised mines.





## GICHD'S WORK

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The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) supports national authorities, international and regional organisations and NGOs in over 40 countries to improve the performance and safety in humanitarian demining operations.

IEDs pose new challenges to the humanitarian sector due to their complexity and unpredictability. The GICHD is working to enhance existing guidance related to the survey and clearance of IEDs in a humanitarian context.

The Centre has already started conducting case studies on best practices, especially in the clearance of IEDs from urban areas. This work will continue in 2019 to support the sector's building response to these types of devices.

[www.gichd.org](http://www.gichd.org)



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## PRESS KIT

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[www.homeafterwar.net/contact](http://www.homeafterwar.net/contact)

## TAKE ACTION

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Want to support the GICHD?

[www.gichd.org/help-us/](http://www.gichd.org/help-us/)



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or sign up for our newsletter [www.gichd.org/what-we-do/our-news](http://www.gichd.org/what-we-do/our-news)

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