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RUDE AS FUCK, He didn't die as
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is a human and he died and he
had a god damn name and family

You're a monster for allowing
your image to be sold and
broadcasted you have no heart

U are the number one bullshit bro

VIRAL

A person is lying on a hospital bed, completely encased in clear plastic wrap. The person is positioned horizontally across the bed, which is covered with a white sheet. The room is dimly lit, with a large window in the background showing a dark blue night sky. To the left of the window, there is a black monitor mounted on the wall. To the right, there are some yellow sticky notes on the wall and a medical device with a coiled cable. The overall atmosphere is somber and clinical.

A Modern Crisis in Truth

JOSHUA IRWANDI IN COLLABORATION WITH GEERT VAN KESTEREN

One photo of COVID-19 by Joshua Irwandi sparked millions of reactions on social media.

A rare phenomenon as the position of photojournalism in a post-truth era comes under duress.

What happens when an image goes VIRAL?

▲ The body of a suspected COVID-19 victim lies in an Indonesian hospital. After the patient died, nurses wrapped the body in layers of plastic and applied disinfectant to prevent the spread of the virus.

Photograph by Joshua Irwandi.



National Geographic Magazine cover story, August 2020
















► In 2020, young Indonesian photojournalist Joshua Irwandi covered the COVID-19 pandemic in his home country, documenting the medical force fighting the crisis in Indonesia. Originally published by *National Geographic*, his image of a suspected COVID-19 victim wrapped in plastic went viral on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter – all major social media platforms.
























After reaching approximately 80 million people worldwide, as of now 'The Human Cost of COVID-19' is probably the most iconic, shared, and discussed photograph of the corona pandemic in 2020. The image galvanised a discussion on social media platforms, with approximately three million people responded directly by 'liking', sharing, reposting, or commenting. A truthful image provoked not only sympathy but also violent reactions and disinformation.


This **one** photograph stands as an example for the complex dilemmas independent journalism is facing right now.

The project – in the form of a photobook and a multimedia–cum–virtual reality installation – shows one image with the thousands of comments received through social media. The project aims to confront public audience and media professionals with the consequences of this rare phenomenon, a living proof of how social media contribute to the ethical dilemmas off and online journalism encounter, and how this abrupt transformation puts our profession – as watchdog of democracy – at great risk.




 <p>affanizer I suspect this photo is just an installation art for photography purpose. Maybe not real dead people.</p> <p>4w 1 like Reply</p>	 <p>fairtloughrosaleen While others are backlashing against this photo. I what them to look at the loneliness of this picture. This is the reality of dying of covid, suspected of or otherwise. Whether it is you or one of your family members cos you didn't take it seriously. Talk to the nurses, they will tell you the truth.</p> <p>4w Reply</p>	<p>U are the number one bullshit bro</p> <p>just because you are an international media photographer you can contact the body directly, whereas the family itself is strictly forbidden to see the body of his own family</p> <p>Or is this just fabricated to win the Nobel trophy ?</p> <p>Suppose you are the same as a cnn reporter when interviewing Osama Bin Laden</p> <p>This is the real number one bullshit sir</p>
 <p>sofiahriskeia Reading these comments made grateful for the gift of knowledge that I have 🙏</p> <p>4w 9 likes Reply</p>	 <p>hobo.tony First i though it is some BDSM fetish dude</p> <p>4w Reply</p>	 <p>j.r025 Propaganda geographic</p> <p>15w Reply</p>
 <p>brittneyhammel @natgeo STOP POSTING THIS STUFF ⚠️ who is this person? Does his family know you posted this image? Did anyone get to say goodbye to him? Probably not! It's fucking insensitive to post this without consent and HE WASN'T just a "suspected COVID-19 victim in an Indonesian hospital" he has a fucking name and the world deserves to know it so we can say his name and pray for his family. LIKE MANY OTHERS who have lost friends and family to the virus, this will trigger them and you're only allowing others to post IGNORANT content like that, I am appalled at people thinking posts like this are okay, in any way shape or form! WHAT THE FUCK @natgeochannel @natgeoyourshot @natgeointhefield @natgeoadventure DO BE LIKE THIS</p> <p>2s Reply</p>	 <p>hortjennas What does it mean to say suspected COVID 19 patient? You mean they didn't even confirm the causes of death</p> <p>4w Reply</p>	 <p>demonfatherof3 We are still waiting for Trump to get infected with covid 19. Then he will learn that covid 19 is no joke.</p> <p>15w Reply</p>
 <p>l_leonard How could you get a permission to shoot a picture while the family couldn't?</p> <p>4w Reply</p>	 <p>scie_ncegid You look and think "you could be in his place"</p> <p>4w 3 likes Reply</p>	 <p>danish_g Can the human body shed Covid when dead? 🤔 You're just asking for zombies taping bodies up like that...</p> <p>15w Reply</p>
 <p>jm.phillips Wow...this photo should help people realize that we are in a serious time. No kidding. Do your part to stop the spread of this virus. God be with us. 🙏</p> <p>4w 4 likes Reply</p>	 <p>agungkape Yet in indonesia. This photo was mocked. Categorized as lies and threatening by people who get medical degree and scientist from google search in 5 days.</p> <p>4w Reply</p>	
	 <p>rmcampbelljr Maybe you could share some pictures of all the survivors?? Or does that not fit your agenda as well???</p> <p>4w Reply</p>	
	 <p>angieseaa Modern day mummy, there's an errieness here</p> <p>4w Reply</p>	


 _al.faqih_ World Hoax Organization 🔥 4w 1 like Reply	 kvlkar Life in plastic, it's fantastic 4w Reply	 kimmyhope93 Imagine having a cheeky nap in room 5 on nightshift and waking up in this 😂 @lizlombs @esthergram8 @claire_pounsett 15w 2 likes Reply
 dimastridharma Kalo jurnalisnya masih hidup selama beberapa minggu ke depan, fix ini cuma bisnis 4w 1 like Reply	 m.sleegs Probably died from motorcycle crash. 4w Reply	 danieltalmera This is absolutely scam 15w 1 like Reply
 insert_name_here_hahalolz Died with a boner? 4w Reply	 honestkylie11 I'm unfollowing you. I've had enough of the manipulation and lies. We are experiencing a PLANDEMIC not a PANDEMIC. Wake up people. 4w 1 like Reply	 infinity.explorers FALSE INFORMATION 15w Reply
 zahrashla @mhmdrzspn i think it's because he is a photographer, sometimes they have to take a photo with a dangerous condition to show to the world how is it look like, and i think he tried to warn us with that photo. 23m 7 likes Reply	 tashakate_baker Thank you for sharing and showing the reality. 2d 📌 Pinned 1.413 likes Reply — Hide replies	 maarthia reminds me of tomb raider movie 15w 1 like Reply
 xinggg_owo mummies 4w Reply	 jrksid @tashakate_baker sudah saya coba sejak berbulan bulan lalu dan TIDAK ADA RS yg mau ijinan saya ketemu pasien tanpa APD. Cek IG saya. Ada buktinya. Saya sudah siap mati demi ini. Apa MEREKA siap RAHASIA DAPURNYA kebongkar? 11h 32 likes Reply	 ugan_oning Hoax 15w 1 like Reply
 tofandwi look at all the karens in the comment section 🙄💋🙄 4w 747 likes Reply	 jrksid @tak.tahu too OK 11h 3 likes Reply	 sicker590 Plandemic 15w Reply
 emily.kate.wilson Lies lies lies 15w Reply	 honcho254 🤡🤡🤡🤡🤡🤡🤡🤡🤡🤡 15w Reply	 mtemmoo wow beautiful model, a picture that can be laughed at by Indonesian people 😂 16w Reply
 wistitawe07 Can someone explain to me wth is going on here??? 16w Reply		 vseidutnaxyi I feel bad for doctors in Kazakhstan, where they have no means to help the sick and where people have to lay in the hallway, both men and women together. The government issued some little help around 90 euros during quarantine and not to all citizens. Shame on Kazakhstan government! 🔥 15w Reply

 **iamgilangpradhanas** Thank u for being that,, thank u for make this Drama!!!! @joshirwandi did u know so many peoples to be here?? Are u superman or batman???


16w 1 like Reply

 **catsarethetits** So many melts on this post it's hilarious 😂😂😂 HURDUR FEARMONGERING HURRRR get a grip you absolute weapons 😂 enjoy dying 😂


4w Reply

 **pruba7.officials** Man this is soooo deeeep 🤔


34m Reply

 **_deannaruth** Back to being mummies. Sounds fun


15w Reply

 **malenartist** "The body"... Awareness?! Dude, you need some basic human awareness. This corona virus is turning into a marketing campaign. This is not art neighter journalism. If you want to show appreciation to the medical staff, then show the smile of someone who survived the virus.... I can't believe someone could ever take a photo of a dead man. Have you ever lost someone you love? Do you know the pain? Shame. Such a bad taste.


15w Reply

 **alyona_timofeeva784** What a lode of BS 🤔😂


15w Reply

 **tanjungarriwe** Its Fake! 🤔🤔🤔

15w 1 like Reply


 **mshafiqirfan** Ayy i think this is my frieds cousins mothers grandma's friends father ya i thinks its him

15w 1 like Reply


 **mickeyirish70** CDC says this is NOT a pandemic anymore

15w Reply


— Hide replies

 **tp333_** @mickeyirish70 this is untrue. They're saying we MAY be approaching that point, but nowhere on the internet does it say it's no longer classified as a pandemic. Do some research before spreading misinformation please.


15w Reply

 **mickeyirish70** @mickeyirish70 🤔🤔


14w Reply

 **laurahausmanns** Honestly I don't believe it anymore..it only created mass hysteria..and on top of it this Pandemic is being use by Philippine government to have stupid policies to control us and come up with ridiculous laws that doesn't even make sense. I really wish all this would be over. 🤔🤔

15w Reply

 **tyler_forristall_** Ya let's rap some people like a burrito

15w Reply

 **paul___.g** If I died in a hospital I wouldn't want to be treated like a burrito.


15w Reply

In regards to your photo. You're RUDE AS FUCK, He didn't die as a suspected covid 19 patient he is a human and he died and he had a god damn name and family


You're a monster for allowing your image to be sold and broadcasted you have no heart

Would you like to be plastic wrapped right after you died and posted to the internet with no name ??


You wouldn't because you don't think about others you only thought about yourself and there's no place for people like you after you do perish and I hope you take down your images

 **sanelaaldilawi** As a health care worker, I am openly asking you @natgeo what kind of message are you sending? Why would a body of a suspected COVID19 patient be wrapped and disinfected like this? Corona is not an airborne infection.. Unless there is something going on beneath all the lies you've been telling us.. This just doesn't male sense.. I wonder who is funding you

15w Reply

 **callme_mega13** Oh no, chernobyl episode 3 🤔

16w Reply

 **_senjamalam** U fucking man

16w Reply

SOCIAL MEDIA: THE NEW WATCHDOG OF DEMOCRACY?

BY GEERT VAN KESTEREN

Joshua Irwandi's photo of a suspected COVID-19 victim wrapped in plastic – resembling a mummy – comes with ethical challenges and thus a lot of responsibility. Professional photojournalists such as Irwandi have an adequate body of training and knowledge and are committed to the code of ethics to maintain their autonomy from governmental and commercial interventions, the cornerstone of journalism as a watchdog of democracy. Where the photographer used to be accountable to the editors (in this case National Geographic), nowadays through social media he is demanded to provide an explanation to the wider public.

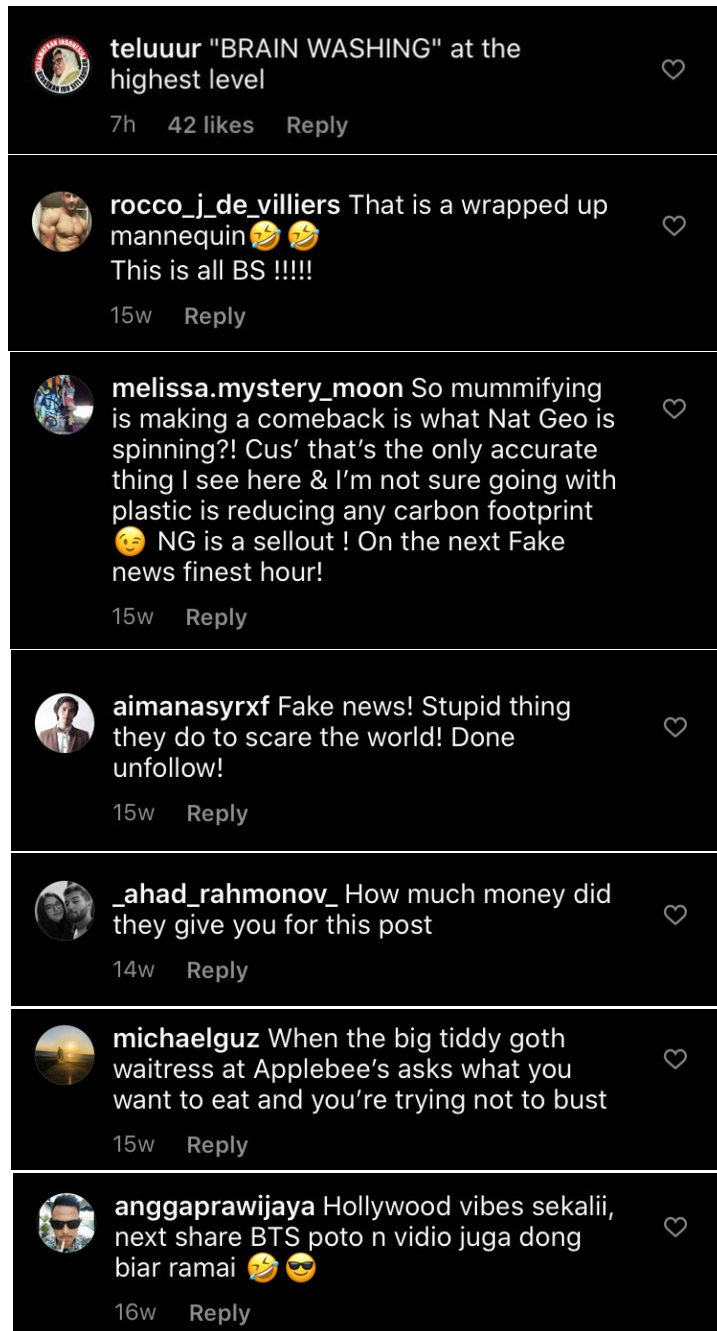
However, the audience is unfamiliar with the moral and ethical codes of photojournalism – especially in a hospital, which differs per country. Their opinion is based on each of their culture, beliefs or education, but also on the information provided by journalistic institutions within the mix of influencers, gossips, misinformation, fake news, or simply erroneous remarks provided by citizens, trolls, activists, secret services, governments, e-commercial activities, and/or under fake identities.

The role of journalism as a watchdog to hold public officials accountable has been shifted to social media platforms, where anyone can be a watchdog to scrutinize the mismanagement and misbehavior of all in power, journalists included.* Here, anyone can publish anything with virtual impunity; moreover, the publisher can choose to remain anonymous. But practicing freedom of expression in the absence of responsibility resulted in endangering the overall functions and roles of journalism in society as a social institution responsible for providing accurate, fair, honest, objective, and comprehensive account of daily events.

Independent journalism faces complex moral dilemmas now that social media is indispensable for media publications. The result is that the information brought by journalism is ignored or mistrusted and censored, and the journalist or the medium he represents is personally pilloried and muted. As such, not only governments and state leaders are able to cower behind it and avoid being held accountable in the first place, but also it can be weaponized to steer opinions and gain political advantage. That is precisely what happened in Indonesia and other countries struggling with COVID-19, leaving over a million dead in less than a year.

We hope VIRAL will be an example that can push forward a social movement that demands change and promotes a renewed point of view on journalism. The key challenge is how to minimize or erode the corrupt side of social media platforms. In this modern crisis of truth, visual journalism is in need for a more hopeful perspective.

* Basyouni Ibrahim Hamada (October 31st 2018). Social Media: A Turning Point into Global Journalism Identity and Ethics, Social Media and Journalism - Trends, Connections, Implications, Ján Višňovský and Jana Radošinská, IntechOpen, DOI: 10.5772/intechopen.80255. Available from: <https://www.intechopen.com/books/social-media-and-journalism-trends-connections-implications/social-media-a-turning-point-into-global-journalism-identity-and-ethics>



VIRAL is a multimedia–cum–virtual reality presentation and a photobook to support a manifesto in which Irwandi and his collaborator Van Kesteren express their concern about how the reality of photojournalism has changed abruptly in recent times.

► The **traveling exhibition** across photography festivals and museums in Europe, America, Asia and Africa puts on display the primal essence when a journalistic image ‘goes viral’.

► It shows the iconic photograph ‘The Human Cost of COVID-19’ as a stand-alone image where a **QR-code**, placed next to the image, will invite viewers to react and comment on the image upon viewing.

► The main installation is the yet-to-be-named ‘**Hall of Comments**’, in which the audience is surrounded by larger than life screen panels. The screens will project all reactions when Irwandi’s photograph went viral, creating a **virtual reality of becoming viral**, exactly as Irwandi witnessed and experienced.

► **Siri**, the virtual assistant from Apple, will [read the existing comments](#) out loud through speakers installed around the panels.

► On the way out, the viewer can purchase the **VIRAL photo book**, as an opportunity to relive and contemplate the experience at the installation.



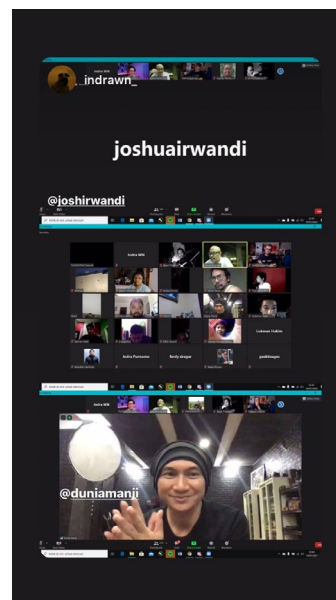
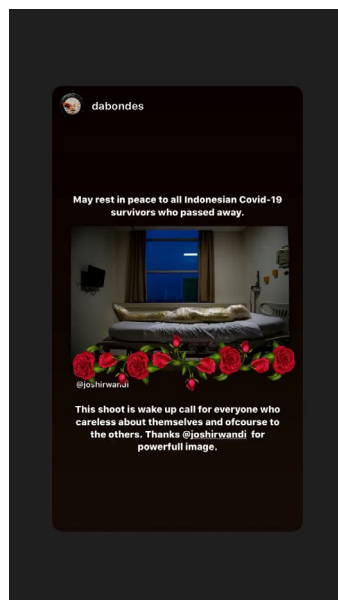
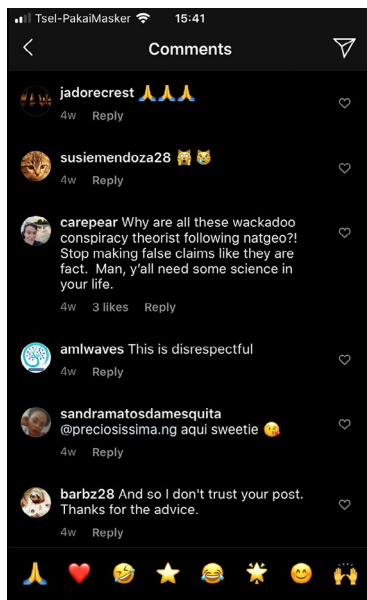


VIRAL is a unique photobook that features only one image.

At approximately 1,000 pages, there are only two main features in the book. The image and the reactions received from a variety of social media platforms.

The reactions consist of thousands of screenshots of comments and posts from every social media platform, and screenshots of news pieces, news videos, video podcasts, students' dissertation studies, a painting or modified graphics inspired by the photograph, to make a **visual typology** stemming from the one main image.

► The book brings forward the pressing questions in journalism. How does one photo spark a strong and violent reaction in such a precarious time? What does it mean for journalism if one of the most foolproof images is deemed untruthful, spreads fear, or a set up? What does going viral reveal?





1. As news corporations use social media, the news materials they release – text, videos, photographs – are out in the open with the rest of hoaxes and misinformation. When **the truth is mixed with lies** and false conclusions, the public would no longer need to subscribe to verified media.

2. Social media are used by media organizations to strengthen engagement among their audience. Yet, the dissemination of images across social media means it is not possible to maintain the objective and neutral context first presented by the publishing media platform. We **lose control of ownership** when the original message is distorted by the public.

3. As images proliferate across social media, immediately the images are available in the pockets of a state's military and intelligence. **The journalist is vulnerable to threats.** The journalist and the media she / he represents must consider self-censorship towards the news they are about to release.

4. **Copyright on social media is a myth.** Every image immediately belongs to social media platforms. There is no protection for photojournalists, yet photojournalists believe social media is one of the ways to show their engagement and get hired. We keep producing for the social media companies for free without us being informed or realizing it.

5. The news team's job would only be paying attention to the next social media update and make it news. It would be **unnecessary to investigate** in the field, since every other news is available within reach of their fingertips.

6. The public remains oblivious and uninformed. Social media companies will continue mining data on their privacy and feeding off recommendations of both truthful and fake news. With AI in control of these social media companies, the only proxy for AI is a like button. Ultimately, **the version of reality the public can accept is the reality they curate for themselves.**



This is an existential threat for journalism, photojournalism, and our democracy.



Forhanna Foundation is a non-profit production house from The Netherlands, founded by the late documentary photographer Willem Poelstra. We co-produce world-class documentary projects that encourage public debate through exhibitions, installations, books, seminars, and films, among others. We invest in these projects and offer intensive support to help artists find their full potential. We strive to enhance visual storytelling by pushing this profession further in a swiftly changing landscape. Forhanna feels **VIRAL** embodies all our concerns and values and will co-produce it with the authors Irwandi and Van Kesteren. Forhanna has an ANBI status. None of the members of the board receives an emolument.

+31 (0)20 636 41 75 • office@forhannafoundation.com • @forhannafoundation



Geert van Kesteren (IJsselstein, b. 1966) is a Dutch photojournalist and filmmaker based in Jaffa, Israel. He worked as a war correspondent for *Newsweek* and *Stern*, among others. His most notable photo books are *Why Mister, Why?* (2004) and *Baghdad Calling* (2008), both focusing on the Iraq War. His works are featured in collections of leading museums, including the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. He was awarded the prestigious Infinity Award at the International Centre of Photography in New York, a World Press Photo Award, and many book-awards. His long-term work (1997-2000) documenting the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa was published in *Newsweek* over 16 pages, and received the 'Zilveren Camera' and 'Photojournalist of the Year' awards.

+972 54 870 0873 • geertvankesteren@mac.com • @gvkesteren



Joshua Irwandi (Jakarta, b. 1991) is an Indonesian photographer based in Jakarta, Indonesia, whose work has appeared in *National Geographic*, *The Guardian*, and *The Times of London*. Irwandi has an M.A. in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography from the University of Arts, London and a B.A. in English Literature from Exeter. His work on COVID-19 was awarded a National Geographic COVID-19 Emergency Fund Grant and the Forhanna Grant for Young Talent. 'The Human Cost of COVID-19' is his debut photograph in the print edition of *National Geographic*.

+62 812 1092 315 • joshua.irwandi@gmail.com • @joshirwandi