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# The Absent Image: Syria and the Assad regime's global PR campaign

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## Résumé

Immediately following Syria's civil uprising of March 2011, the Assad regime launched a global PR campaign that has, since its initiation, attempted to portray Syria's democratic opposition as terrorists worthy of extermination. Formulated out of a diverse series of conspiratorial narratives disseminated by a network of international commentators, academics and journalists of both obscure conspiracy outlets as well as those of considerable repute, this campaign is primarily one of the written and spoken word, and crucially, is one with an absence of evidentiary images.

In contrast to the thousands of hours of raw audio-visual material that has been produced and distributed online by Syrian civil activists since February 2011-alongside footage shot by regime security personnel themselves, evidencing their torture and murder of civilians-Assad's PR campaign has failed to produce the audio-visual material able to back up its conspiratorial allegations. Yet this absence of visual evidence has not prevented the regime's narrative from gaining traction among large swathes of societies around the world.

*The Propagandist*, and *Testimony of a Former Detainee* are two films that deal with the idea of the absent image. As an audio-visual pairing of oppositional and militant film, they question and challenge an audience's perceptions of spoken testimony, narrative and reliability, whilst conceptualising the absenting of images as a tactic of propaganda warfare and as a weapon to be plundered and re-directed.

**Mots-Clés:** Syria, propaganda, absent, image, absent image

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