

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Hajer Naili
+1-646-707-1058
hajer.naili@thesoufancenter.org

**AS THE WORLD GRAPPLES WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, A NEW PROJECT
WILL SHED LIGHT ON UNTOLD STORIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

With support from Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Soufan Center, Truepic, and renowned journalist James Blake launch a new initiative showcasing local news stories about the humanitarian and security effects of COVID-19 in conflict settings across the Middle East, using image verification technology to counter disinformation surrounding the pandemic.

(New York, NY - June 11, 2020) The Soufan Center (TSC), in partnership with journalist and security expert James Blake and the image verification platform [Truepic](#), is launching a new initiative to document the humanitarian, societal, and security effects of COVID-19 in countries across the Middle East and North Africa. The initiative, funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York, will support local reporting from the region.

The new project, *Through the Eyes of Crisis: People on the Frontlines of Conflict during COVID-19*, will highlight local news stories and document on-the-ground realities against the backdrop of the pandemic. The new project will cover several themes, including:

- The expansion of emergency powers and restrictions by governments, especially authoritarian regimes, in response to COVID-19.
- The use of disinformation campaigns by state and non-state actors, including violent extremist groups, to reinforce their narrative and bolster support.
- The dangers of human trafficking, forced labor, and modern-day slavery in vulnerable communities.
- The risk of renewed protests and instability across the region, including tensions between displaced and host communities, as unemployment and poverty rise.

“Beyond the public health crisis, this pandemic has become a crisis of information. The Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the critical need for accurate and evidence-based information to shape informed responses, counter mis- and dis- information, and possibly save lives,” said Emerita Torres, Director of Policy Research and Programs at The Soufan Center. “While many countries have focused on responding to the pandemic within their own borders, we fear that communities living in conflict-stricken areas will be left to fend for themselves. We are already seeing the United States stepping back and abandoning its historic role as a world leader, including coordinating humanitarian responses globally.”

“In a time of mass disinformation and volatility, verified information will be critical to save lives, improve humanitarian access and ensure the public and decision-makers have accurate information to ensure humanitarian needs are met. This innovative partnership will provide a platform to empower citizen journalists reporting in conflict and fragile states,” said James Blake, journalist and analyst.

The project, *Through the Eyes of Crisis: People on the Frontlines of Conflict during COVID-19* aims to counter disinformation by delivering verified and fact-checked information and imagery through the Truepic image verification platform. It also seeks to provide a platform for the untold stories in the MENA region and bring these perspectives to national and international audiences with full confidence in their veracity.

“Image verification through Controlled Capture technology helps bridge the trust gap to give people a trusted voice no matter where they are located. We are honored to help play a role in this important initiative,” said Mounir Ibrahim, VP Strategic Initiatives, Truepic.

ABOUT THE SOUFAN CENTER (TSC)

Based in New York, [The Soufan Center](#) is a non-partisan strategy center dedicated to serving as a resource and forum for research, analysis and strategic dialogue related to global security issues and emergent threats.

ABOUT TRUEPIC

[Truepic](#) is the leading photo and video verification platform. In a world where seeing is not always believing, Truepic enables partners to make better decisions, using better images. Truepic’s patented camera technology acts as a notary for digital photos verifying data integrity, chain of custody, and authenticity at the point of capture. Truepic works with leading organizations across a wide array of industries, having collected verified photos and videos in over 150 countries to date.

ABOUT JAMES BLAKE

James is a journalist and analyst who has worked on humanitarian and international security issues for more than a decade. He has reported on humanitarian crises in conflict states and reported on issues which have led to policy changes, new humanitarian responses and helped expose the suffering of some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

Follow us [@TheSoufanCenter](#) and visit <http://thesoufancenter.org/>

###