

## **How to disguise a person in a photograph**

There is often a need to conceal the identity of subjects in still images made public by Amnesty International. This is done to avoid potential risks to their security or their individual rights should they be identified.

Currently there is no consistency or policy applied to this practice by those involved in the production and publication processes.

The result is that a variety of methods are used in AI materials to conceal identity with varying results. Some are effective and unobtrusive. Some are effective and obtrusive. Some are ineffective and distracting.

Worryingly, there have been instances where subjects' identities have been concealed in one form of AI publication (say an AI report) but published unconcealed in another form (say video or website).

This document proposes a policy to establish when and how to conceal the identity of a subject. It also suggests practical guidelines on methods.

### **When to conceal**

- When the subject has given permission for publication but asked for their identity to be concealed
- When there is a potential risk to the security or the individual rights of the subject should they be identified.

### **Who decides**

- The appropriate sub-regional or theme team, advised by the person most knowledgeable about the subject and their circumstances decide on the need.
- The team should consult AVR (stills) to decide on the best method to use (please see below).

If concealing the identity severely and adversely effects the content and appearance of the image the team should consider whether it would be better not to use the image, or if a replacement image is possible.

### **HOW TO CONCEAL**

The method used should:

- Effectively prevent the subject from being recognised
- Not distract attention from the content (e.g.; reason for using the image) towards the method of concealment
- Have a minimal visual effect on the overall image or piece of video

### **Procedure**

- The team make a clear decision on the need to conceal, and the desired method.
- The team consult AVR and decide on the best method to use (see below).
- The decision is written up in the form of an instruction (on email will suffice) and the image is adapted.
- The instruction must accompany the image through all stages of the production process (selection, editorial, approvals, design, proofing, reproduction, publication)
- The instruction should be included on the related Photo Archive form.
- The AVR team will ensure that it is included in the terms and conditions of use for the item on Adam.
- The AVR Team will review periodically the images in the AI collection with concealed identities and seek updated information from the teams.

## **GUIDELINES / RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONCEALING IDENTITIES**

To best achieve the policy aims above AVR recommend:

### **Where AI have control over the image(s) creation /capture process**

Use the camera position and creative skill to conceal identity (eg; compose shot to conceal identity; shoot from behind, shoot hands, significant objects, etc. Light the subject to conceal identity; e.g. as silhouette or low light). Please see How to take photographs of **How to take photos of vulnerable or at risk subjects**

### **Where the image(s) already exists**

Manipulate to darken recognisable part of image or blur focus

NOTE: Images bought for AI use from agencies and photographers cannot be manipulated without permission from the owners. Note that some picture agencies do not allow, or have specific restrictions on how their images can be manipulated.

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#### **Example 1.**



Does not effectively conceal identity. Dehumanises subjects. Method is associated with criminality in many media.

#### **Example 2.**



Pixellated to conceal identity without dominating image or content

#### **Example 3.**



Pixellation does not effectively conceal identity (e.g.; try squinting at the picture)

**Example 4.**



Pixellation conceals but dominates the image

**Example 5.**



Faces are blurred, identity is disguised, the image is not dominated by the effect used.

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