

This case was prepared by University of Georgia journalism student Brenna Beech for JOUR 5170, Advanced Studies in Journalism, based on sources cited below.

Kevin Carter and his Pulitzer Prize-winning photo

In 1993, Kevin Carter took a controversial photo of a little girl in Sudan slumped over on the ground as a vulture stood behind her. At the time, Carter was working full time for Reuters.

According to The New York Times, Carter covered many political issues especially in South Africa, where he was born in 1960. He put himself on the front line for many violent events to cover “South African political strife, recording images of repression, anti-apartheid protest, and fratricidal violence” (NYT).

After realizing that he needed a break from the happenings of South Africa, he started off on a self-generated assignment covering the Sudanese civil war and famine, which *The New York Times* said that Carter “felt the world was overlooking.” Sudan was in the midst of a bloody civil war of which Kim Murphy of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote in April of 1963, “The emerging dimension of the misery in southern Sudan has prompted U.S. officials to call it the world's "most silent" famine, a looming crisis that rivals the much more publicized starvation in nearby Somalia but that has gone largely undocumented for a year because most access to the region was blocked.” Murphy goes on to include that, at that time, 1.7 million of South Sudan’s population were uprooted from their homes since the beginning of the civil war nine years prior and around 800,000 people were at risk of starvation.

The photo was published in *The New York Times* on March 26, 1993 and later in other African newspapers, becoming what *The Times* calls “a metaphor for Africa’s despair.”

Kevin Carter’s Photo:



- Do you think this photo was important to depicting the reality of what was going on in Sudan?
- Would you, as an editor, have published this photo?
- Would you, as a photojournalist, have taken this picture?
- Would you have wanted to step in?

The New York Times was flooded with a sea of comments and feedback from readers asking about the fate of the child in the photo and wanting to know why Carter insisted on taking the photo over helping her. While contemplating the photo opportunity before him, Carter waited at the scene for about 20 minutes, apparently waiting for the vulture to spread its wings, which it never did. The Times published a comment writing that after taking the picture, "Mr. Carter said she resumed her trek to the feeding center. He chased away the vulture." Afterward, Carter was deeply affected and took some time to reflect by lighting a cigarette, praying, and crying under a tree. Ultimately, her child's fate remains unknown.

- Do you think he made the right decision?
- Do you think he should have intervened?
- What would you have done differently?

In 1994, Carter won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography. The Times wrote, "Kevin always carried around the horror of the work he did," his father, Jimmy Carter, told the South African Press Association tonight.' In July of 1994, Carter was found dead by suicidal carbon monoxide poisoning. His suicide letter mentioned that the horrors that he witnessed covering conflict in South Africa and Sudan haunted his memories.

- Did he deserve a Pulitzer Prize for this photo?
- Would you consider his photography to be courageous?

Sources

- <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/07/29/world/kevin-carter-a-pulitzer-winner-for-sudan-photo-is-dead-at-33.html>
- http://articles.latimes.com/1993-04-10/news/mn-21325_1_southern-sudan
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