

# Forensic Architecture

MS1

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# A forensic architect is to a building as a pathologist is to a human body



As conflicts worldwide predominantly occur within urban areas, and thus most civilian casualties occur within buildings, there is a growing need to use buildings as evidence of violence and crime

# The evolution of *forensis* to forensics disengages politics

*Forensis* is Latin for “pertaining to the forum” and is the origin of the term forensics. The Roman forum to which forensics pertained was a multidimensional space of politics, law, and economy, but the word has since undergone a strong linguistic drift: the forum gradually came to refer exclusively to the court of law, and forensics to the use of medicine and science within it.<sup>1</sup> This telescoping of the term meant that a critical dimension of the practice of forensics was lost in the process of its modernization—namely its potential as a political practice.

# The continuous perpetration of violence depends on its very negation



Qu'ils reposent en révolte, Sylvain George, 2010  
Ayesha Hameed, The Destruction of Fingerprints

**Forensics:** method in which the state monitors its population

**Counter-forensics:** destruction of police forensics; in which citizens are committed to monitoring the state

# **Forensic architecture is a collaborative effort amongst all disciplines in order to uncover human rights violations**

Because these conflicts occur in urban areas, the media and data available are dense (though researchers/journalists/investigators are often barred from entering these areas)

Besides scientists and lawyers, it is necessary to have architects, artists, videographers, etc to decode the media stream

**This is data visualization in its most activist form:**

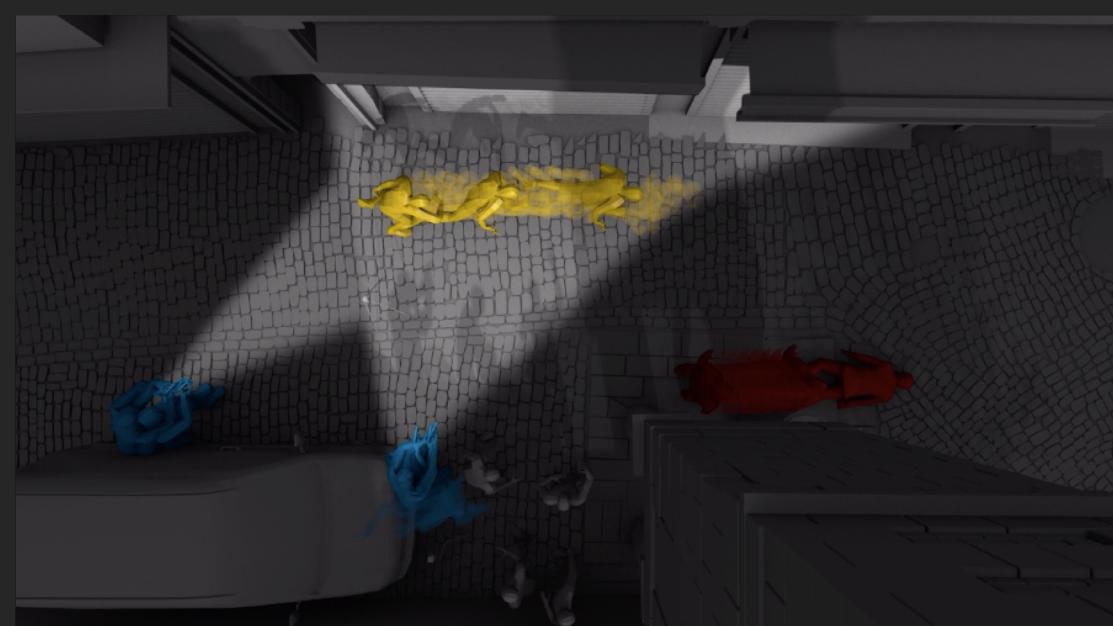
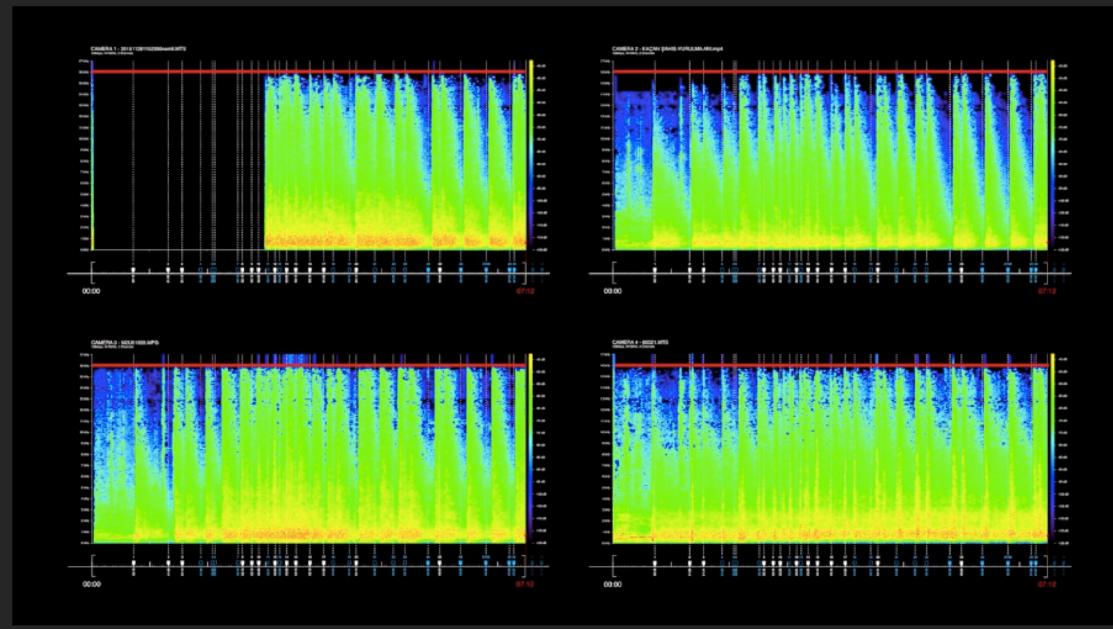
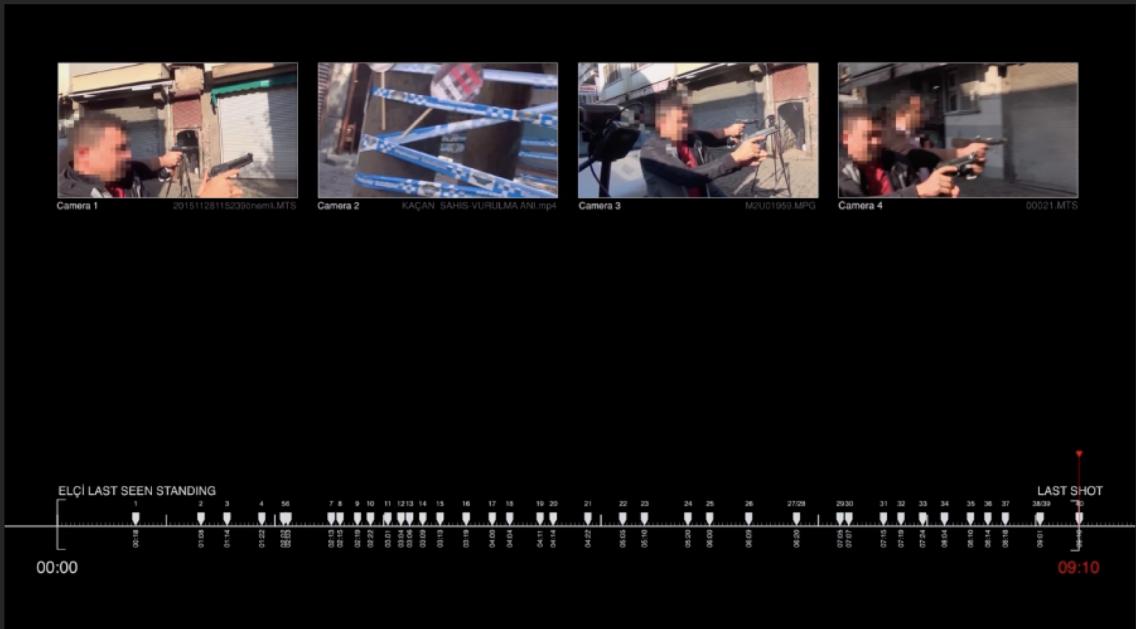
**visualize the stories of the invisible, stories that have been erased by those that are more powerful**

# Case Study: The Killing of Tahir Elçi

**Question:** Who killed Tahir Elçi, a prominent Kurdish human rights lawyer, during a press conference where he advocated for peace between the Turkish government and the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party)?

**Data:** video media, 3D modeling, audio profiles, witness accounts

<https://www.forensic-architecture.org/case/killing-tahir-elci/>



# Case Study: Torture and Detention in Bujumbura, Burundi

**Question:** Is the government of Nkurunziza seizing and reappropriating domestic spaces for the purposes of torture, detention, and extrajudicial killings of civilians?

**Data:** social media, 3D architectural modeling, witness accounts

<https://www.forensic-architecture.org/case/torture-detention-bujumbura-burundi/>



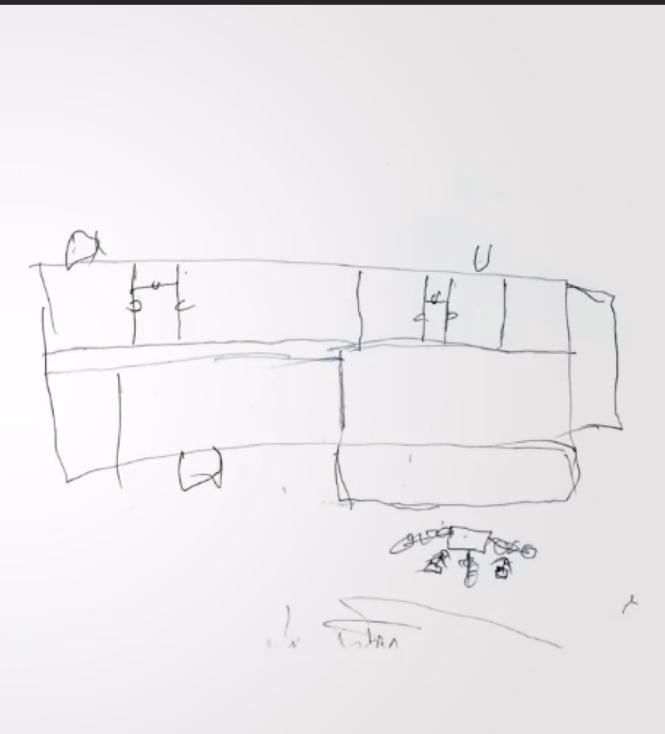
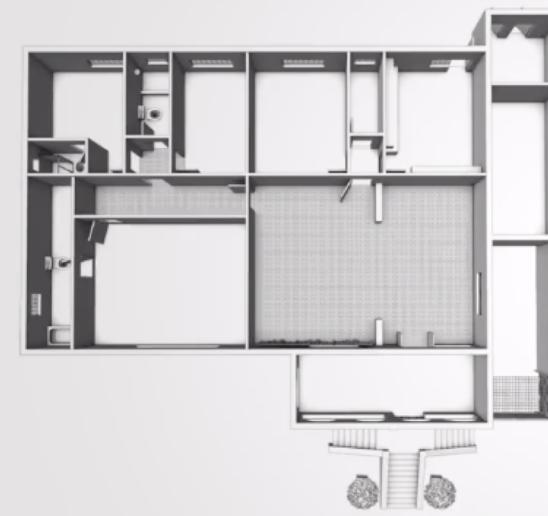
iBurundi  
@iburundi

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ALERT—Blood flowing out of a house suspected to be a clandestine jail used by #Burundi SNR—Kinindo Ave Ntwarante #76

TEODY MAZINA



# Case Study: Standoff in El Junquito

**Question:** Were Óscar Pérez and his rebel group victims of extrajudicial killing by military forces of the Venezuelan government?

**Data:** social media, video media, witness accounts, 3D architectural modeling

<http://eljunquito.forensic-architecture.org/>

# Questions

- In many of their investigations, Forensic Architecture uses publicly available social media to obtain information. Do you think it would be useful (or legal) for social media companies (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) to have their own investigative teams surrounding major disruptive events?
- What responsibility do we have as data miners/manipulators/visualizers to use our skills for the public good? Do we have any civic duty to do so?
- What are other methods in which we can uncover data of events that have been “hidden” or “erased”?
- Forensic Architecture takes on large scale, high risk international cases. How can we use their methodology for issues within the US?
- These types of investigations have the power to effect the lives of many undermined populations. To what extent do these actually lead to change? Is it worth it?