

See
the
Story

See the Story explores the role of photojournalism and documentary photography in society through the lens of the **World Press Photo Foundation** and its activities.

The publication delves into the winning stories displayed in our annual exhibition and website, providing information and insights about how visual stories are made and the important questions they raise.

Finally, *See the Story* aims to spark discussions about contemporary issues through the work of the World Press Photo Contest winners.

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Introducing World Press Photo

Our mission

World Press Photo is an independent non-profit organization that champions the power of photojournalism and documentary photography to deepen understanding, promote dialog, and inspire action.

Why is this important?

Visual stories exist because photojournalists continue to document the world, even in the most challenging circumstances.

Photojournalism plays a crucial role in democratic societies. The hundreds of images we see every day help us understand what's happening around the world and make informed decisions.

With the advent of artificial intelligence on the one hand, and shrinking newsrooms on the other, it is more important than ever to have access to visual stories that we can trust, and to learn to recognize accurate and verified information.

Our activities



© Jerome Brouillet

Contest

Recognizing the best photojournalism and documentary photography of the past year.

Did you know?

3,778 photographers from 29 countries entered 59,320 images into the contest in 2025. An independent jury awarded 42 photographers from 29 countries.



© Maarten Nauw

Exhibitions

Showcasing stories that make people stop, feel, think, and act to a worldwide audience.

Did you know?

Next to the World Press Photo exhibition, we organize thematic exhibitions from our archive, exploring issues such as the climate crisis, celebrating community, and migration. [See thematic exhibitions.](#)



© Laura van Erp

Education

Supporting the next generation of photojournalists and documentary photographers.

Did you know?

For over 30 years, the World Press Photo's Joop Swart Masterclass has trained over 336 photographers from all around the world. [Find out more](#)

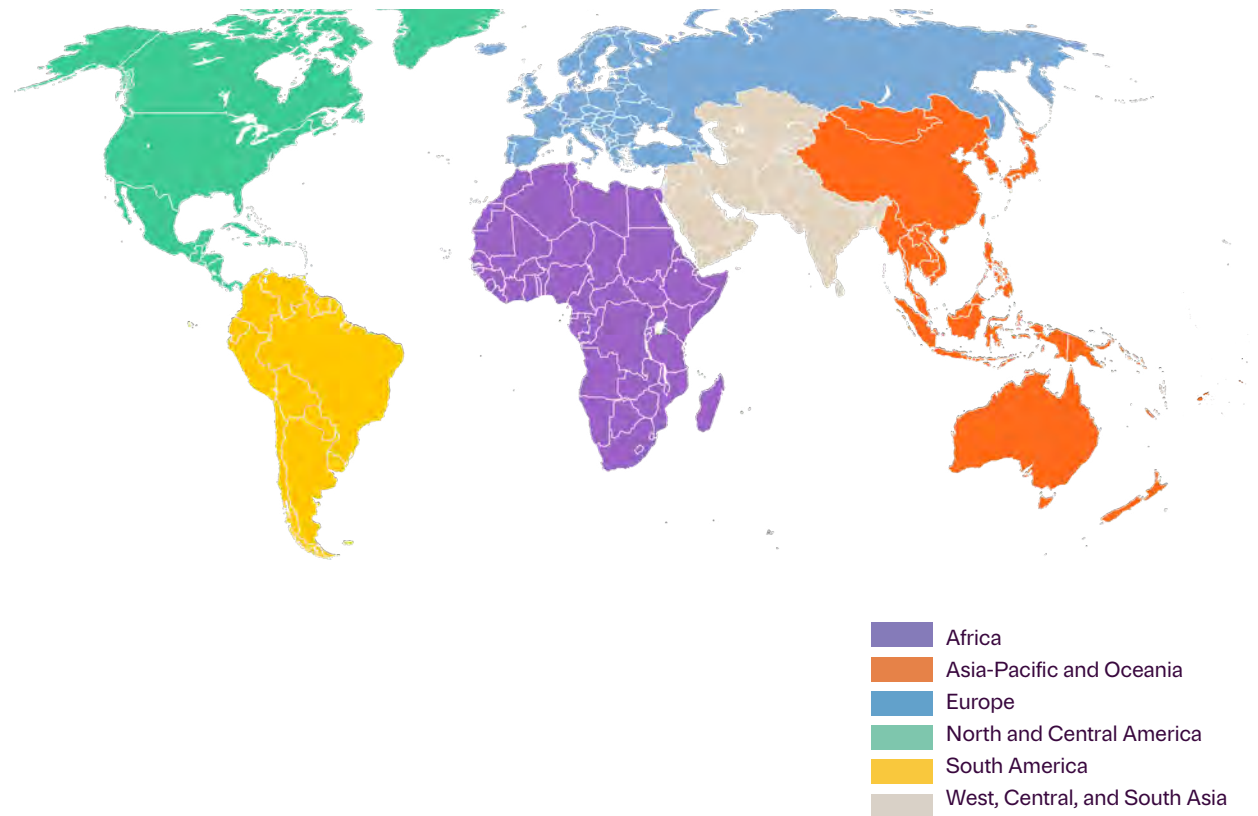
Regional focus

In 2021, to offer a more global and better geographic balance of perspectives, World Press Photo launched a new regional strategy.

Through the regional model, World Press Photo works to strengthen local media by spotlighting work from photographers who are telling stories of people, communities, and places that were historically underrepresented in our contest.

The regional model recognizes work across six regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific and Oceania, Europe, North and Central America, South America, and West, Central, and South Asia.

[See more about our regional model here](#)



How are the World Press Photo Contest winners selected?

1. Submission

Photographers submit the work via an open call launched in December. The contest is free to enter for any professional photographer working in photojournalism and documentary photography.

Images can be entered in three categories:

Singles

Single frame photographs shot in 2024.

Stories

Between 4 and 10 single frame photographs shot in 2023 or 2024. At least four photographs in a story must have been shot in 2024.

Long-Term Projects

Projects on a single theme containing between 24-30 single frame photographs. An entry must contain photographs from at least three different years, and a minimum of six photographs must have been shot in 2024.

2. Independent judging

Entries are judged in the region in which they have been taken, for example a single photograph taken in Canada would be entered into North and Central America in the Singles category.

The entries are judged independently by a regional and a global jury:

Regional jury: Six regional juries first evaluate the entries anonymously in their respective region and bring a shortlist to the global jury.

Global jury: In the final rounds, the global jury decides which of the remaining visual stories are awarded.

Before going to the global jury, the entries go through a manipulation check by independent forensic experts.

[See 2025 Contest jury](#)



© Frank van Beek, ANP

The developments and history of photography

70 years of World Press Photo

2025 marks the 70th Anniversary of World Press Photo. The first contest took place in 1955, when members of the Dutch photojournalists' union (Nederlandse Vereniging van Fotojournalisten, NVF) had the idea of turning a national competition – the Zilveren Camera – into an international one.

That first year, 42 photographers from 11 countries submitted just over 300 photographs for judging. The contest has grown significantly in 70 years: in 2025, 3,778 photographers from 141 countries submitted 59,320 photos.

Since 1955, World Press Photo has been building an archive of photos, publications, posters, educational materials, and much more. World Press Photo is now embarking on new projects and activities to make the archive more accessible for curators, researchers, and audiences.

Over the next two years, World Press Photo will create a new, easily searchable database to ensure that the archive can be explored and used. The archive will be enriched by a research project to revisit the history of the World Press Photo collections, adding further information and context.

We are very grateful to Dioraphte Foundation and Stichting Democratie en Media for supporting our work to open up the World Press Photo archive.



First World Press Photo of the Year, awarded to Mogens von Haven in 1955.
© Mogens von Haven

Did you know?

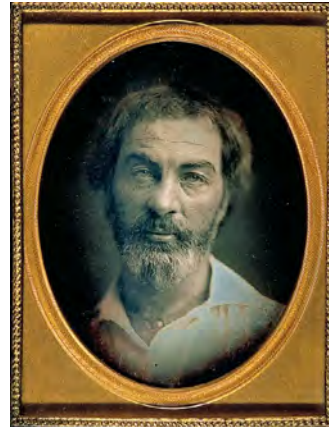
The World Press Photo Archive has:

- 10,000 physical photographic objects (prints, slides, and negatives)
- 10.7 meters of printed materials
- 20,000 winning photos, with that number growing every year

How has photography changed? (1)

1820s - 1850s

The oldest surviving photograph was made by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1826 or 1827. His colleague Louis Daguerre made pictures on a sheet of copper coated with a thin layer of silver. Photography is said to have been invented in 1839 when the “daguerreotype” was introduced.



Daguerreotype portrait of Walt Whitman.
© New York Public Library

The first book illustrated with photographs was “The Pencil of Nature”, published in 1844-1846, by the English inventor William Henry Fox Talbot, using pictures made with salted paper prints from his calotype negatives. Each of these early techniques used a camera that was large, heavy, and difficult to move. They made a single image on a sheet of paper or metal which could not be copied.



Oldest surviving photograph, taken in 1826 or 1827.
© Joseph Nicéphore Niépce

1880s - 1900s

Photography became popular when the American George Eastman developed celluloid film and sold his first “Kodak” camera in 1888. The Eastman Kodak company introduced the box-shaped “Brownie” camera in 1900. It was easily portable, and its low price and ease of use made photography something everyone could do. These cameras used rolls of film that made negatives from which paper prints were then produced.

1930s

Professional photography was transformed by the introduction of compact cameras in the 1930s, like the Leica. Using 35mm film and with interchangeable lenses, they allowed the photographer to move easily and get close to the scene they wanted to record.



The first Kodak camera, invented by George Eastman, was placed on the market in 1888.

How has photography changed? (2)

2000s

Photography's biggest change came with the shift to digital photography, which captures images in digital memory. Since the early 2000s digital cameras have dominated the market. Digital cameras do not record images through negatives; they capture data via sensors, and that data is then transformed into a picture through photo editing software. This has enabled pictures to be more easily made, published, and shared.



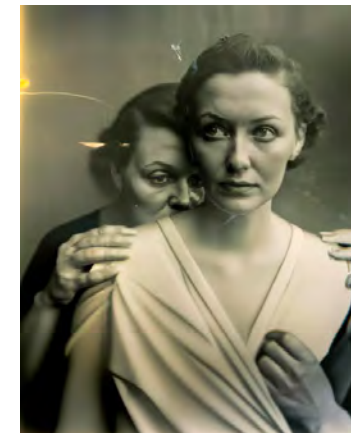
Steven J. Sasson, inventor of the first digital camera.
© David Duphrey, Associated Press

Our Present Time

Nowadays, the majority of us have a camera in our pocket, and millions of images are shared on social media every day, making image creation and dissemination more accessible than ever. Photography is no longer limited to professionals, nor is the distribution of images managed by traditional media gatekeepers. Due to the digital revolution and increased global connectivity, we are now experiencing an unprecedented level of hyper-exposure to information and images. Additionally, images generated by artificial intelligence are bringing a new degree of complexity, blurring the lines between fact and fiction and raising many ethical concerns.



This photo awarded in the 2025 World Press Photo was taken with a mobile phone camera. © Mosab Abushama



Boris Eldagsen submitted an artificial-intelligence-generated image to a photography contest to start a discussion about the use of AI in photography.
© Boris Eldagsen

What are the risks of hyper-exposure to images and information?

1. Misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation

Today's endless flow of images and information comes with risks, facilitating the dissemination of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation, which in turn can affect our perception of reality, influence opinions, and endanger democracies. But what do these terms mean, and how do they shape our media landscape?

Misinformation

Unreliable or inaccurate information shared without the intent to harm (e.g., misunderstanding a fact and spreading it because we believe it to be true).

Disinformation

Unreliable and inaccurate information intentionally created to harm and create polarization. For example, fake news (false stories about individuals or groups) and deep fakes (AI-altered videos or images that deceive people into believing something is real).

Malinformation

Intentional sharing of accurate information with the purpose of causing harm. Unlike misinformation or disinformation, which involve false information, malinformation involves truth but is used in a harmful way (e.g. spreading someone's private or sensitive information publicly to damage their reputation or well-being).

What are the consequences of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation?

Truth-default

Due to an abundance of images and information both accurate and inaccurate, people do not have time to fact-check everything they read and consequently, they can take for granted that everything they read is reliable and accurate.

Deception-default

Because of the hyper exposure to information and images, people can start losing trust in everything they read and see – even if what they read might be accurate and reliable.

Questions

Can you find an example of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation?

How do they influence your perception of reality and influence your opinion?

What can people do to identify them?

Further reading on misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation

Read how [World Press Photo Contest winner Jonas Bendiksen explains the many layers of intrigue that went into the creation of his book about misinformation in the contemporary media landscape](#)

What are the risks of hyper-exposure to images and information?

2. Desensitization

In recent years, much of the narrative around photojournalism has centered on the darker and more harrowing aspects of life – stories of conflict, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises – which means most of us are constantly exposed to these images. Continuous exposure to negative news can lead to desensitization.

More people are turning away from news, describing it as depressing, relentless and boring, a global study by Oxford University's Reuters Institute suggests. According to the report, almost four in 10 (39%) people worldwide said they sometimes or often actively avoid the news, compared with 29% in 2017.

Moreover, the constant circulation of negative images also risks normalizing and perpetuating a dehumanizing representation of communities at stake, especially when they are in vulnerable situations.

Questions

How do you personally cope with the relentless cycle of negative news?

Do you try to limit your exposure to negative news? Why or why not?

How can individuals actively resist becoming desensitized to tragic or distressing events?

How does World Press Photo ensure authenticity?

1. Forensic analysis: detecting manipulation

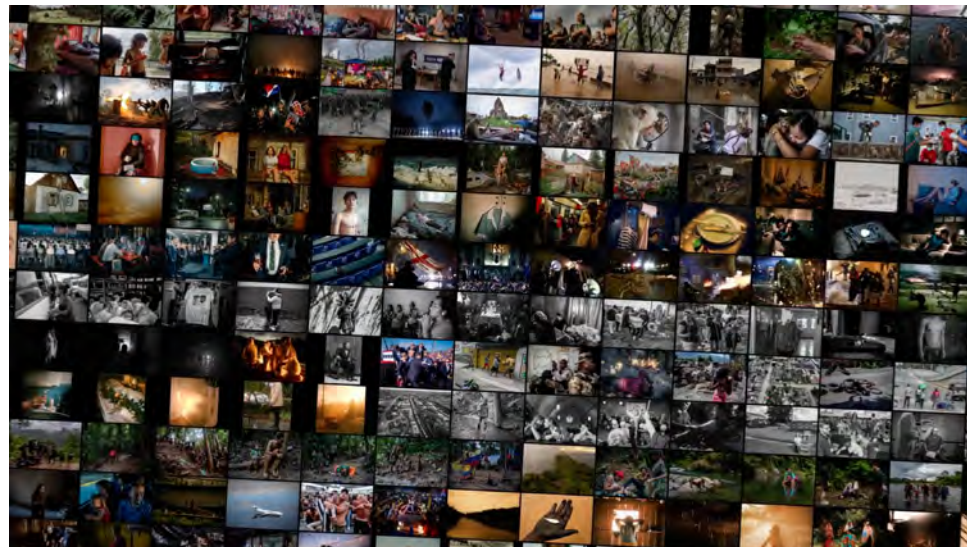
To ensure accuracy and trust in visual storytelling, every image awarded in the World Press Photo Contest undergoes a rigorous verification and fact-checking process.

2. Fact-checking

Once the winners are chosen, a research team fact-checks the captions to verify the context in which each image or story was produced, distributed, and/or published. By verifying every winning image, we make sure that you can trust what you see. We believe that today, even more than ever, credibility in journalism matters.

This video takes you through the journey of a photograph submitted to our contest, from the moment the shutter clicks to the final forensic analysis that confirms its authenticity.

(Click on the image to be directed to the video)



Questions

How can you verify if the information you see or hear online is accurate?

What role do social media platforms play in controlling or combating the spread of false information?

How can we balance the right to free speech with the need to prevent harmful misinformation and disinformation?

What kind of manipulation do you consider acceptable and what should not be allowed in photojournalism and documentary photography?

Do you agree?

"Images tell people how to think. If images are distorted or manipulated, and used for propaganda, especially to perpetuate injustice, this is a massive problem."

Gulshan Khan, photographer

How do photographers challenge desensitization?

A good example of a photo story challenging desensitization towards migration is the long-term project *The Two Walls* by Alejandro Cegarra, which was awarded in the 2024 Contest.

Migration is often depicted in the news by showing people on the run, as a group, rather than individuals with their own personal stories. Drawing from his personal experience of migrating from Venezuela to Mexico in 2017, photographer Alejandro Cegarra has spent over six years documenting migrants trying to reach the United States through Mexico. He spends time with them and manages to sensitively capture intimate moments they encounter, like this couple that fell in love on their journey. Through his photography, Cegarra aims to foster greater understanding, empathy, and solidarity for the migrants trying to reach the United States.

[See more about this project](#)



© Alejandro Cegarra

Questions

To what topics other do you think society has become desensitized?

How can individuals actively resist becoming desensitized to tragic or distressing events?

Photography and the age of AI

Why is it important to discuss AI in relation to photography?

Fred Ritchin, author of *The Synthetic Eye: Photography Transformed in the Age of AI*, explores the rise of generated images:

“Now, without even the use of a camera, artificial intelligence systems can simulate photographs in response to text prompts, depicting people and places that never existed. One can make realistic-looking images that seem to show the losing side of a war as if that side had won, of Winston Churchill taking a selfie before cellphone cameras were invented, or of Adam and Eve holding an apple in the Garden of Eden.

Some of these synthetic images can be thoughtful, even revelatory, helping to broaden perspectives and amplify possibilities. Others threaten to distort and undermine the visual media that we depend upon to understand contemporary events while causing the public to be suspicious of the actual photographs that they resemble. And these systems are trained, usually without permission, on the billions of photographs that are already online, an ethical and legal conundrum that has yet to be resolved.”

Photography vs AI generated images

AI-generated images are not photographs and cannot be considered real. World Press Photo prohibits the use of AI images in its contest – both generative fill and fully generated images.

Photography captures and records reality through light, allowing us to trace objects and subjects at the time and space of the photograph.

AI-image generators such as Dall-E and Midjourney create images through prompts, which can be any words or short text related to the image you want. AI-generated images mimic and feed off existing photographs without being photographs.

AI-image generators raise two main concerns for photojournalism:

Copyright and ownership

These AI systems rely on massive datasets collected from existing images, many of which are owned by creators. The AI gathers and resuses elements from these images without explicit permission, raising ethical and legal concerns about intellectual property and unauthorized use.

Bias and stereotyping

AI-generated images often reflect societal biases. For example, when using the prompt "photojournalist," the result might default to a stereotypical image of a white male with a camera in a war zone, ignoring the diversity and breadth of photojournalists worldwide.

Questions

Why do you think it is important to have a human behind the camera?

Do you think AI can be an alternative means to tell visual stories?

Do you think AI-generated images threaten the practice of photojournalism? Why/why not?

Do you think AI-generated images should be excluded from photography contests?

For further reading

Writing with Light

Writing with Light is a movement advocating for authenticity and credibility in visual journalism and documentary photography in the age of AI. [See statement of principles](#)

Making visual stories

How are visual stories made?

Idea and development

Once the idea for a visual story has been set, which can be either commissioned or the initiative of the photographer, the photographic process develops.

In some cases, a photojournalist is assigned to cover a specific event. Jabin Botsford was assigned by The Washington Post to photograph a Trump rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Here he captured the moment of the attempted assassination of Donald Trump.

Other times, photographers embark on personal projects, seeking funding through grants and awards to bring their vision to life. An example is *Paths of Desperate Hope* by Federico Rios, a long-term documentary project exploring migration that the photographer has committed to for years.

Selection

The photographs are later selected to be published. This is known as editing and is usually done by photo editors, curators, or photo book designers; often in collaboration with the photographer.

Choosing the right images is crucial, as different image selections can tell different stories. Several factors influence this decision, including available space, the medium where it will be published, the target audience, and the message the photographer aims to convey.

Publication

Nowadays, visual stories appear across a wide range of platforms, including magazines, newspapers, social media, websites, exhibitions, photobooks, and even WhatsApp. Photographs can also be entered into contests such as the World Press Photo Contest.

Why are captions important in photojournalism?

Next to the photographs, photojournalist and documentary photographers also provide captions for their images to give context about their stories.

Captions should be accurate and answer the five basic questions of good journalism (who, what, where, when, why). This shows that the photographer has done their due diligence to gather the most important information, such as the names and ages of the people photographed, and anything else that was happening that can't be seen in the photograph. For example, if the photographer influenced the scene in any way, or gave directions to a subject to pose in any way for a portrait, this must be disclosed.

In the context of World Press Photo, where images are seen by millions of people who might not have an understanding of the issues being reported, we also provide a story description that shows the basic context and significance of the project.



Questions

Do you usually read captions first, or look at the photograph?

Look at the photograph below and read the caption. How does the text shape your understanding of it?

In your opinion, what is the most important information that should appear in captions? Why?

María Camila, Luisa, and Noraisi Birry stand by the grave of their sister Yadira, while wearing the paruma shawls Yadira left behind. Yadira Birry (16) took her own life with a paruma on 7 April 2023.

The Emberá Dobida are a nomadic indigenous people of Colombia who historically have inhabited an area around the Bojayá River. Many Emberá have migrated to Bogotá, fleeing conflict among Colombia's paramilitary forces and searching for safety and opportunity. In the capital, they face discrimination and marginalization, living in overcrowded and unsafe conditions. Suicides in the Emberá community have sharply increased, from 15 cases between 2015 and 2020 to 67 suicides and over 400 attempts by 2024, according to the Church of Bellavista in Bojayá. This project follows the lives of Emberá women impacted by the crisis, bringing attention and empathy to a harsh reality. © Santiago Mesa

The power of framing

Framing

Before pressing the shutter, the photographer frames the image, deciding what to include and what to exclude. By focusing on a specific detail, cropping out elements, or changing the angle, the photographer defines our perspective, sometimes changing the story in radical ways. As writer Susan Sontag reminds us, “To photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude.” Knowing how framing works can help us question what might be missing from an image.

The many frames of Tank Man

The photograph of a demonstrator confronting a line of People's Liberation Army tanks on Chang'an Avenue, Beijing, during protests for democratic reform on Tiananmen Square, on 5 June 1989, was captured by many photographers. Each of them chose a different frame, but some photos are more well known and circulated than others.



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)

Questions

In this example, how might a wider or tighter crop change the meaning of the photo?

What might be missing from the photo, and how can we understand what is not shown?

Why do you think some frames become iconic while others remain less known?

How do different photographers' choices in framing affect the way we interpret an event?

Can framing be considered a form of bias or manipulation? Why or why not?

From top to bottom:

(1) A man stands in front of a convoy of tanks on the Avenue of Eternal Peace in Beijing in this photo by Arthur Tsang for Reuters.

(2) Made available for the first time by the AP on 4 June 2009, the 'Tank Man' is here pictured in the background. Credit: Terril Jones, Associated Press.

(3) In this other photograph by Arthur Tsang for Reuters, the long line of tanks is seen.

(4) This photo by Charlie Cole was awarded in the 1990 World Press Photo Contest and published in Newsweek.

Ethics of photography

Photography ethics matters

Images influence our perception of the world. By creating and sharing images, we actively shape how others interpret reality. This carries significant responsibility.

Fulfilling this responsibility requires that photojournalists navigate complex ethical challenges thoughtfully, making informed decisions, and recognizing how context impacts ethical considerations.

Entrants to the World Press Photo Contest must adhere to ethical guidelines that ensure fair representation, dignity, and respect for the people and stories they document. This includes avoiding staged or misleading imagery, obtaining informed consent from the people photographed, protecting vulnerable individuals, maintaining independence,

prioritizing safety, avoiding stereotypes, and ensuring accuracy and transparency in captions and storytelling.

Some key concepts that appear in the World Press Photo Contest code of ethics are:

Informed consent

Ensuring individuals are fully aware of how their images will be used and distributed. Consent is usually handled through consent forms and conversations with the individuals photographed. It should be negotiated throughout the years, especially when dealing with vulnerable communities, and when the intended use of the photographs changes.

For example, informing individuals that the work is going to be entered to the World Press Photo Contest.

Staging

When a scene is deliberately arranged or subjects are directed before a photo is taken. While staging isn't always misleading, it's important to be upfront about it and disclose when a scene has been staged.

Accuracy

Ensuring that images and captions are truthful and not misleading and presenting an accurate and comprehensive representation of individuals and/or groups

Transparency

Photographers should remain unbiased and disclose any external influences.

Harmful stereotypes

Avoiding the reinforcement of stereotypes and being mindful of potential misrepresentation in images.

Questions

Why is informed consent crucial, especially when photographing vulnerable individuals or children?

Why is it important for photographers to present an accurate and comprehensive representation of the people they document?

What steps can photojournalists take to ensure their work does not unintentionally cause harm to the people they document?

Why is transparency in the photographic process important, and how can photographers maintain accountability?

How do photographers address ethics in their practice ?

Every photographer will have their own code of ethics and every story will have its own ethical dilemmas – there is no right or wrong. Here, we summarize how some photographers navigate these dilemmas.

Spending time with the individuals photographed

Photographer Anastasia Taylor-Lind has been travelling to Ukraine for a number of years, where she documents the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the civilian population in the eastern region of Donbas. Working as an outsider, her approach to this series is cautious and gentle: *“For me the best solution is to spend more time, create genuine connections with people without making pictures, be interested in people’s lives and intervene in their lives without making pictures and instead by helping in their daily life.”*



From the *Frontlines*, 2018-2024. © Anastasia Taylor-Lind

Protecting identity

Photographers can deliberately decide to hide the identity of the people they photograph, to protect their safety and prevent any possible negative repercussions on their lives.

The photographs in [this story by Carlos Barrera](#) depict Salvadorian people who, following a surge in gang violence in March 2022, were suspected of being part of local gangs or affiliated with them. Identifying them could mean further prosecution or stigmatization. To prevent this, the photographer found creative ways to hide their identity.



Alba (28) was arrested by National Civil Police without evidence or a warrant. In prison, she was abused and tortured. © Carlos Barrera, NPR, El Faro

Not taking the picture

To respect and protect the experiences of survivors of ISIS attacks, photographer Newsha Tavakolian decided that taking no pictures at all was a compelling means to witness their stories.

Instead, she wrote [*A Thousand Words for a Picture that I Never Took*](#), reflecting on the idea that, sometimes, not taking a picture can be the most powerful way to honor and preserve the dignity of the people photographed, especially when dealing with vulnerable communities.

Confronting visual tropes: *What have we done?*

What is a visual trope?

Visual tropes are symbols that are often used in photography to convey human conditions and narratives. They carry a strong meaning independent of their context, space, and time frame, and for this reason, they have also become conventional representations and stereotypes of specific human conditions.

Some visual tropes found in the media and in our archive include, for example, photographs of weeping women (reinforcing the stereotype that women are overly emotional); men depicted as figures of action and authority (perpetuating notions of male dominance); and an overwhelming focus

on suffering in the African continent (suggesting a false narrative of constant crisis).

Visual tropes in the World Press Photo Archive

As 2025 marks the 70th anniversary of World Press Photo, it's a moment for reflection on the journey that began in 1955.

The anniversary year of 2025 provides us with the opportunity to examine how the winners of the past 70 years have shaped the public's understanding of the world. These photographs and their accompanying stories have been powerful vehicles for change, helping to raise awareness of critical global issues. Yet, as we delve deeper

into the archive, we also have to confront the unintended consequences of our choices – such as the visual tropes that may have been perpetuated or the voices that may have been underrepresented.

Reflecting on these issues, World Press Photo has created a special exhibition called *What Have We Done?* curated by Cristina de Middel. This exhibition is an invitation to rethink not just how photojournalism has evolved but how we, as viewers and citizens, should be learning to read images with a sharper and more critical eye.

We are especially grateful to Open Society Foundations for supporting this project and helping us share our rich archive with worldwide audiences.



© Don McCullin, 1964 Contest



© Henry Benson, 1985 Contest



© James Nachtwey, 1995 Contest

Countering visual tropes



A photograph of Nadia (20), embroidered by her and her cousin Mariam (19), in Al-Tarfa village, South Sinai, Egypt. © Rehab Eldalil

*The Longing of the Stranger
Whose Path Has Been Broken*
by Rehab Eldalil shows that collaborative visual storytelling can be a means of countering visual tropes of Indigenous communities. The project, made with members of the

Jebeliya community, reflects on what it means to be Bedouin in contemporary times. As an Indigenous community, Bedouins have been perceived in the media as isolated from, and a threat to, modern society. Stories of Bedouin women, who were prohibited from being seen by men without consent up until the 1990s, were consistently taken out of context and their images were used without their permission.

Challenging this stereotype in the project, portraits of women from the community, printed on fabric, were embroidered by the women themselves, contributing to and taking control of their own representation. While the female participants collaborated through embroidery, the men from the community contributed with handwritten poetry.

By allowing her collaborators to interact with the photographs, edit them, or simply be active in the photographic process, Rehab Eldalil gives them the opportunity and power to accurately represent and speak for their experience and identity.



نُحْنُ الْعَرَبُ أَهْلُ الْبُحْرَيْنِ وَالْبُحْرَيْنِ
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A poem by Seliman Abdel Rahman in St. Catherine, South Sinai, Egypt. © Rehab Eldalil

Questions

How do stereotypes shape societal expectations of the people photographed?

What elements in these photograph can you identify that might challenge traditional visual stereotypes of Indigenous communities?

What role do you think visual storytelling plays in resisting stereotypical portrayals of marginalized communities?

Visual thinking: 2025 winners' stories

Picturing conflict

Picturing conflict

Conflicts do not only take place on frontlines and in war zones. Due to their complexity, documenting conflict can adopt different perspectives and focus on various moments and experiences. Photographers may choose to document the victims, the perpetrators, or those caught in between in their daily lives. Some may even forgo photographing people altogether, instead focusing on objects or landscapes. While some photographers cover war as it unfolds, others document its aftermath and long-term effects on people. These photographs awarded in the 2025 World Press Photo Contest showcase different approaches and visual strategies for portraying conflict and its aftermath (*click on the photos to view them in full screen*):



From *Women's Bodies as Battlefields*
© Cinzia Canneri, Association Camille Lepage



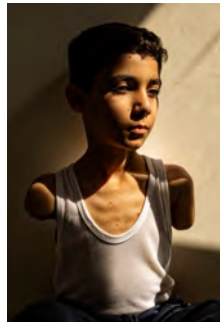
Life Won't Stop © Mosab Abushama



Underground Field Hospital © Nanna Heitmann,
Magnum Photos, for *The New York Times*



From *Gaza Under Israeli Attack* © Ali Jadallah, Anadolu
Agency



Mahmoud Ajjour, Aged Nine © Samar Abu Elouf,
for *The New York Times*



From *It Smells of Smoke at Home* © Aliona Kardash,
DOCKS Collective, for *Stern Magazine*



Drone Attacks in Beirut © Murat Şengül, Anadolu
Agency

Questions

Can you identify at what moment the photographs were taken (during the conflict or after it)?

What information do you get from each of them? How do you arrive at that information?

Which images connect with you the most, and why?

Do we need to see graphic imagery to understand what is happening in the world?

Graphic imagery plays a significant role in exposing injustice, but it must be presented with respect and proper context. At times, such images serve as photographic evidence of the horrors of war and can be used to document war crimes.

It is worth acknowledging that aside from the powerful message expressed through graphic imagery, we must also recognize its limitations and ethical considerations, such as the toll it can have on mental health, resulting in distress and trauma for the maker of the images, the people photographed and their loved ones, and the people who see them.



From *Gaza Under Israeli Attack* © Ali Jadallah, Anadolu Agency

Gaza Under Israeli Attack
Ali Jadallah

Since the start of the war in Gaza, local photographers like Ali Jadallah have been the only witnesses, tirelessly documenting every day despite losing their own families and colleagues along the way. While the photographs might be difficult to watch, they serve as a powerful record of the immense human cost, the destruction endured by civilians, and the scale of violence experienced daily by Gazans.



Underground Field Hospital © Nanna Heitmann, Magnum Photos, for *The New York Times*

Underground Field Hospital
Nanna Heitmann

Reporting from the war in Ukraine have served as a record and evidence of the conflict. This photo shows a Ukrainian soldier conscripted to fight for the Russian-backed separatist "republic" of Luhansk in eastern Ukraine. The photograph carries complex symbolic weight, raising questions about nationality and political divides. Though graphic, it depicts a moment of care and vulnerability, revealing the human side of the war.

Questions

Do you think we need to see graphic imagery to understand what is happening in the world? Why or why not?

What issues need to be considered before graphic content is published?

Does the choice of publication platform - for example, The New York Times, Instagram, or an exhibition - change how graphic photographs are seen?

What would be the effect of never showing or seeing difficult imagery?

What can photographs of daily life tell about conflict?

Because of the way the media cycle works, some news remain underreported after the conflict is extended through time. Many of the photographs in the World Press Photo Contest show daily life amid conflict.

Life Won't Stop Mosab Abushama

The war in Sudan has caused widespread destruction, displacing millions of people and triggering one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. And yet, as the conflict escalates, life continues as many seek normality in the chaos. In this photograph by Mosab Abushama, the presence of a gun in an otherwise quiet scene sparks curiosity and draws the viewer deeper into the scene. Taken at a wedding, the portrait subverts expectations and challenges assumptions, offering a thought-provoking glimpse into cultural practices shaped by a backdrop of war.



Life Won't Stop © Mosab Abushama



From *It Smells of Smoke at Home* © Aliona Kardash, DOCKS Collective, for Stern Magazine

It Smells of Smoke at Home Aliona Kardash

Russia's de facto ban on critical media and suppression of anti-war protests has created an alternative reality with its own take on what Russia calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine instead of a full-scale invasion. In this story, Aliona Kardash, Russian-born, but now resident in Germany, reflects on the loss of home, and on love for people who believe in a different version of reality. Making a return visit to her hometown, Aliona tries to capture how war transforms our daily lives, and to sustain the belief that personal bonds are stronger than the forces that tear us apart.

The 2025 World Press Photo Contest jury found this long-term project to be a deeply personal insight into the fractures within Russian society since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, revealing complexities often overlooked when viewing Russia as a monolith.

Questions

Why do you think it is important to record daily life during conflict?

What visual elements stand out to you from these photographs, and how do these elements help convey the sense of daily life amidst conflict?

In both stories, how does the photographer's choice of moment (such as capturing a quiet moment during a wedding) communicate the emotional complexities of daily life in times of war?

What can objects reveal about war?

Women's Bodies as Battlefields Cinzia Canneri

In 2017, Cinzia Canneri began documenting the experiences of Eritrean women fleeing Eritrea's repressive government. Since the outbreak of war in the Tigray region of Northern Ethiopia in 2020, her scope has expanded to include the stories of Tigrayan women fleeing from armed invasion. Both groups have been the targets of systematic sexual violence – rape, shooting, torture – that, due to social stigma, limited health facilities, and journalistic access, remains insufficiently reported by news media.

The objects in this photograph belong to women who were raped inside the Martyr's Memorial Monument Museum after it was turned into a

detention center Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF). The choice to photograph them may represent a visual strategy that reflects on the idea that, regardless of how silent these objects may be,

they witness the atrocities and metaphorically give voice to the silence of the women who were raped and tortured.



From *Women's Bodies as Battlefields* © Cinzia Canneri, Association Camille Lepage

Questions

What emotional or symbolic meanings can be derived from the objects in the image?

How do the objects in the photograph act as witnesses to an event, and what might they reveal about the untold stories or silences in the conflict?

Can you think of other stories in the exhibition where objects act as symbols carrying important information about the story?

How can photojournalism
create impact?

Creating public engagement with the climate crisis

Visual media is vital to connect the climate crisis with audiences, but not all environmental imagery is equally effective in doing this.

The non-profit organization Climate Visuals has proposed seven principles for effective images that lead to public engagement:

1. Show 'real people'
2. Tell new stories
3. Show climate causes at scale
4. Climate impacts are emotionally powerful
5. Understand your audience
6. Show local (but serious) climate impacts
7. Be very careful with protest imagery

Creating public engagement with the climate crisis

Many photographers have documented the effects of climate change in the awarded images of the World Press Photo Contest (*click on the photos to view them in full screen*):



Brazil's Worst-Ever Floods © Amanda M. Perobelli, Reuters



From Droughts in the Amazon © Musuk Nolte, Panos Pictures, Bertha Foundation



Aircraft on Flooded Tarmac © Anselmo Cunha, Agence France-Presse



Four Storms, Ten Days © Noel Celis, Associated Press



The Lake Has Fallen Silent © Aubin Mukoni

Questions

Can you identify how many of the Climate Visuals principles apply to these images?

Which images, in your opinion, create more engagement, and why?

Do you think photography can positively impact the protection of the environment?

Advocating for LGBTQI+ rights

Positive representation matters. According to Action for Children, seeing themselves authentically represented in the media helps LGBTQ+ children and young people validate their experiences, fostering a society in which they feel comfortable being their true selves.



Mother Moves, House Approves © Temiloluwa Johnson, Nigeria

Mother Moves, House Approves
Temiloluwa Johnson

Members of the LGBTQI+ community in Nigeria face legal prosecution, widespread social discrimination, and physical violence. Held in a secret location, “Heavenly Bodies: Notes on Fola Francis” was the third edition of the Pride celebration in Lagos ballroom, one of the largest drag ballroom events in Nigeria. The 2024 series was named after the late Fola Francis, a trans icon, activist, and the first openly transgender person to walk the runway during Lagos Fashion Week. As this photograph shows, despite all the risks, the event was an electrifying experience, providing a vibrant space for the celebration of love and free self-expression.

Questions

Do you agree with the statement that positive representation matters?

In your opinion, do these portrayals of LGBTQI+ communities have an impact?

How are these representations similar to or different from those you usually see in the media?

Mika
Prins de Vos

To shed light on the lack of support the transgender and non-binary community faces when it comes to healthcare accessibility, Prins de Vos documented the story of Mika, who had been waiting for 22 months for a first consultation at a gender clinic. Mika looks right into the camera, willing to show his body and scars. With this portrait, this issue gets a name and a face, helping us to empathize with this struggle.



Mika © Prins de Vos, Queer Gallery.

Portraying the right to a dignified death



From *A Place to Die* © Oliver Farshi

A Place to Die Oliver Farshi

This project explores how some choose to encounter their own death in a unique space: from issues of community and access, caregiving and medical aid, to the intimate process of dying and the tenderness of grieving. While death often happens behind closed doors and in clinical settings, these photographs invite us to look at this inevitable aspect of life from a new perspective. Instead of photographing the sensational and more conventional reality of death and dead bodies, the photographer captures objects, details, gestures, and moments that are part of this life-ending choice. On one hand, these photos serve as documentation of the active caregiving process for terminally ill people; on the other hand, they convey a sense of intimacy, tenderness, and slowness, inviting us to reconsider our position towards death.

Questions

What emotions or reactions do these photographs evoke to you?

Do you think this story helps in understanding those who decide to end their lives? Why or why not?

Which photographs do you think convey this story most effectively, and what visual elements (objects, gestures, composition, etc.) help communicate this message?

How do the photographer's choices (such as focus, framing, and lighting) impact your perception of the right to a dignified death?

"I think many of us could benefit from becoming more intimate with death. This is why I chose to focus on a story about medical aid in dying and the terminally ill people who choose to take control of their own deaths." – Oliver Farshi

Photographing politics

Photographing politics

Politics is often viewed as a broad and abstract concept, but what does it mean to "picture" politics through photography? Is it about photographing politicians speaking at rallies? Or is it about illustrating the real-life impacts of political decisions on individuals and communities? Many people argue that everything is political, even the daily life moments, as they are often shaped by political choices and power structures.

Some photographs awarded in the 2025 Contest help to understand how politics are pictured (*click on the images to see them in full screen*). The visual choices made in these photographs – such as framing, composition, lighting – play an essential role in how they can be interpreted.



Constance Wynn II, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 2025 © Philip Montgomery, for *The New York Times Magazine*



Democracy Dies in Darkness © Rafael Heygster, for *Der Spiegel*



Paths of Desperate Hope © Federico Rios



Night Crossing © John Moore, Getty Images



Attempted Assassination of Donald Trump © Jabin Botsford, for *The Washington Post*

Questions

Do you think it is more important to photograph the politicians or the impact of their policies?

How do the visual elements of these photographs affect your personal reaction to the political events or figures they depict?

What is the significance of the setting or background in these photographs, and how does it enhance the political story being told?

How do politicians build their own representations?

“Democracy Dies in Darkness”

Rafael Heygster

Photographs of politicians at congresses, press conferences, or public events are often meticulously orchestrated, with every detail carefully planned. Politicians have large communication teams that focus on shaping their public image and the messages they wish to convey. Many of these images are designed to project qualities such as closeness, trustworthiness, or strength. This doesn't mean that photographers follow these strategies blindly. On the contrary, many photographers aim to capture moments of spontaneity and deconstruct these political messages.

This is the case of *“Democracy Dies in Darkness”* by Rafael Heygster. This story captures the rise of populism in Germany and the broader shifts in politics towards the far right. The photographer achieves a rarity in political photography – subtly unmasking the carefully crafted image of politicians attempting to conceal their motives. Each image contains an off-kilter element, disrupting the surface and exposing the performative nature of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

Questions

What visual elements in the photographs reveal how the AfD wants to portray themselves to the public? How do these elements help convey their message?

In what ways can photojournalists use visual strategies to document stories like these without reinforcing or glorifying the subjects?

What ethical considerations should they keep in mind while capturing moments of political representation?

From *“Democracy Dies in Darkness”* © Rafael Heygster, for *Der Spiegel*



How can photographers communicate the impact of politics on people's lives?

The news cycle often prioritizes political news, overshadowing the real-world impact their policies have on people's lives. Two photographers awarded in the 2025 World Press Photo Contest have successfully connected these political narratives to personal stories:

Paths of Desperate Hope Federico Ríos

This project documents the perilous journeys of migrants traversing the Darién Gap, a 100-kilometer long stretch of dense jungle connecting Colombia and Panama. This journey is deeply intertwined with US immigration policy. As US immigration laws have become stricter and more enforcement-heavy under various administrations, many migrants have been forced to take dangerous and increasingly hazardous routes to reach the US border, such as the Darién Gap. The photographer follows families on this journey, giving faces to migrants in search of better lives, humanizing their stories.



Paths of Desperate Hope © Federico Ríos



Constance Wynn II, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 2025
© Philip Montgomery, for *The New York Times Magazine*

Constance Wynn II, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 2025. Philip Montgomery

This image captures an anxious moment on the day of the 2024 US presidential election. Constance Wynn has just downloaded Project 2025, a 900-page document released by the conservative Heritage Foundation calling for a sweeping agenda that would radically restructure the federal government and dismantle many civil rights protections. Philip Montgomery spent weeks before and after the election in Luzerne County, where voting patterns shifted from favoring Democrats to Republicans over the past 12 years. He visited homes, gathering spaces, rallies, businesses, and churches to reveal the complexities of the politically significant swing county where an increasing majority embraced Donald Trump.

Questions

What visual elements make these images feel personal?

Can a single image challenge or reinforce political narratives? Why or why not?

How do photographs of people affected by policies influence public opinion on political issues?

Why do some images gain wide-spread media attention while personal stories are often overlooked?

Does it matter who takes
the picture?

Why do we need diverse perspectives?

Photographers can either document the stories unfolding around them within their own communities or work in foreign countries for a brief amount of time. For many years, the “outsider” perspective has been dominant, with the term “parachute photojournalism” coined to describe photographers who enter a country, work on a story, and then leave. In contrast, there has been a growing emphasis on local perspectives, as evidenced by World Press Photo’s regional model. The value of an insider’s perspective, one rooted in lived experience, is becoming increasingly recognized.

Photographer Alexander Joe shared in an interview, “I believe there is value in both insider and outsider coverage. Personally, I think it would be interesting to see multiple perspectives published side by side. You’d capture different angles and ways of seeing the same events. Because the truth is, no one person can see it all; sometimes we take our own way of seeing for granted without realizing it.”

Questions

How does the insider perspective differ from the outsider perspective in photojournalism, and why is each valuable?

What are the potential drawbacks of parachute photojournalism? How can local perspectives help mitigate these issues?

Do you think there are stories that should only be told from an insider’s perspective? Why or why not?

Photographing your neighbors

Mahmoud Ajjour, Aged Nine
Samar Abu Elouf

The photograph of this Palestinian boy speaks to the long-term costs of war, the silences that perpetuate violence, and the role of journalism in exposing these realities.

Photographer Samar Abu Elouf was herself evacuated from Gaza in December 2023. She now lives in the same apartment complex as Mahmoud in Doha, where she has documented some of the few badly wounded Gazans who, like Mahmoud, have made it out for treatment.

Without shying away from the bodily impacts of war, the photo approaches conflict and statelessness from a human angle, shedding light on the physical and psychological traumas civilians have been forced to, and will continue to endure through industrial scale killing and warfare.

Her sensitive eye and dignified portrayal of the wounded in the Gaza war are in part due to her closeness to the subject. Mahmoud's story resonates deeply with Samar, who, like him, has also lost loved ones and her daily life in this war.



Questions

How does the photographer's personal connection to the subject shape the way the story is told?

How do visual elements like lighting and framing affect the emotional impact of the image?

Mahmoud Ajjour (9), who was injured during an Israeli attack on Gaza City in March 2024, finds refuge and medical help in Qatar. Doha, Qatar, 28 June 2024. © Samar Abu Elouf, for *The New York Times*

Bridging perspectives in the absence of freedom



From *No Woman's Land* © Kiana Hayeri, Fondation Carmignac

No Woman's Land Kiana Hayeri

The 2024 index ranks Afghanistan near the very bottom, placing it 178th out of 180 countries, with only Syria and Eritrea ranked lower. Since the Taliban's takeover in 2021, news from Afghanistan has become increasingly scarce. In this context, Kiana Hayeri, an Iranian-Canadian who has lived in Afghanistan for over 10 years, has gained unique access to the lives of one of the groups most affected by the Taliban regime: women.

Kiana approached this subject with care and respect: "We played with light, shadows, silhouettes, and fabric to protect their anonymity, rejecting the erasure of their identities imposed by that blue fabric. Whenever possible, we showed the women their portraits, ensuring they had a say in how they were seen. We documented small moments of joy, such as playing in the snow, dancing, putting on makeup, and creating art. In a country that actively denies women their humanity, these moments are acts of resistance."

Questions

How does the photographer's personal connection to the subject shape the way the story is told?

What visual elements does the photographer use to convey both vulnerability and resilience?

How does the photographer's use of light impact the emotional response to the topic?

Why is press freedom
important?

103 journalists were killed in 2024

Even though everyone should have the right to access information, freedom of the press cannot be taken for granted. The organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) defines press freedom as “the ability of journalists as individuals and collectives to select, produce, and disseminate news in the public interest independent of political, economic, legal, and social interference and in the absence of threats to their physical and mental safety.”

In many countries around the globe, there is no freedom of the press. In numerous cases, photojournalists are not allowed to travel to cover events, or if they are present, they do not or cannot accurately report what is happening. If they do, they can face long prison sentences, violence and intimidation.

Moreover, there has been an increase in governments failing at protecting photojournalists, which resulted in a decline of support for media autonomy but also a significant increase in the photojournalists' death toll. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 2024 was the deadliest year on record. At least 103 journalists across 18 countries were killed last year, with 70% killed by Israeli armed forces.

Despite this risk and life threatening conditions, journalists continue to dedicate their lives to capturing news photographs. They persist because they believe it is vital to show the outside world what is truly occurring.



Questions

Take a look at the [RSF World Press Freedom Map Index](#).

What is the press freedom situation in your country?

Can you identify why?

What can you do to support press freedom?

What is it like to work as a photojournalist in Haiti?

Crisis in Haiti
Clarens Siffroy

Haiti (together with Israel) is the world's biggest offender in letting journalists' murderers go unpunished, according to CPJ's 2024 Global Impunity Index, which measures unsolved murders in proportion to a country's population. Lacking financial resources and institutional support, journalists in Haiti are often targeted by gangs and subject to threats, kidnappings, and murders.

Crisis in Haiti, photographed by Clarens Siffroy, a resident of Port-au-Prince, captures the human elements behind the statistics of the ongoing crisis. His documentation is taken under extreme risk. In a country with the highest level of impunity toward the killing of journalists, the photographer's commitment and work are deeply impactful. The edit balances extreme violence with human elements, telling what it is like to work as a photojournalist in Haiti.

Questions

What visual elements in the photographs suggest that this is a dangerous environment?

In what ways does the presence or absence of the photographer's perspective (close-up, wide shot, hidden angles) reflect the risks they are taking?

What choices do you think the photographer made to protect their own safety while still telling the story?

From *Crisis in Haiti* © Clarens Siffroy, Agence France-Presse



Does photojournalism
only focus on negative
news?

Why do we need stories of resilience, hope, and positive change?

News and photojournalism often focuses on the darker and more harrowing aspects of life – stories of conflict, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises. While these stories are crucial and necessary, it is also important to spotlight stories of resilience, hope, and positive change. These stories remind us that even in difficult times, people push forward, communities rebuild, and meaningful change happens. They don't diminish the urgency of global challenges; instead, they offer viewers a sense of agency, showing that engagement matters and transformation is possible.



Gabriel Medina During the Paris 2024 Olympic Games © Jerome Brouillet, Agence France-Presse

Why do we need stories of resilience, hope, and positive change?



Botafogo Fans: Pride and Glory © André Coelho, EFE



Te Urewera – The Living Ancestor of Tūhoe People
© Tatsiana Chypsanava, Pulitzer Center, New Zealand Geographic



Tamale Safalu © Marijn Fiddler



No More Monkey Mania in Thai Town
© Chalinee Thirasupa, Reuters

Questions

Do you think images of resilience and hope can drive change?

How might a single hopeful image change the narrative of an entire news story?

How can photographers ensure that stories of resilience are told without minimizing the challenges people face?

Do you agree?

"Now is not the time to simplify complex realities but rather to make sense of complexity – to acknowledge nuance, multiple perspectives, and the depth of global stories."

Joumana El Zein Khoury, executive director, World Press Photo

Connecting the world to the stories that matter

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