

World Press Photo of the Year Awarded to Samar Abu Elouf

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by Jonas Cuénin(<https://www.blind-magazine.com/author/jonas-cuenin/>)

In a year marked by global conflict, climate catastrophe, and mass migration, the 2025 World Press Photo of the Year serves as a searing reminder of the human cost of war. The award, given to Samar Abu Elouf for her deeply intimate portrait *Mahmoud Ajjour, Aged Nine*, places a child's trauma at the center of our collective conscience. Selected from over 59,000 entries, her photograph is not only a work of journalistic excellence, but a moral document — haunting, quiet, and devastating.

The award winners were announced today by the World Press Photo Foundation. The other finalists for the photo of the year award included John Moore, a senior staff photographer for Getty Images and a Pulitzer Prize winner for Breaking News Photography in 2005, and Musuk Nolte, a Peruvian photographer recipient of the Magnum Foundation's Emergency Fund grant in 2017.

An image to bear witness

The 2025 World Press Photo of the Year was awarded to *Mahmoud Ajjour, Aged Nine*, by Palestinian photographer Samar Abu Elouf, produced for *The New York Times*. The image shows a young boy, Mahmoud, recovering from injuries sustained during an Israeli airstrike on Gaza City in March 2024. He was evacuated to Qatar for medical treatment, where the photograph was taken in June of that year.



<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/001-world-press-photo-of-the-year-samar-abu-elouf-for-the-new-york-times.jpg>

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

According to reports, Mahmoud was injured while fleeing an Israeli assault with his family. He turned back to encourage others to keep moving when an explosion tore through the group. One of his arms was severed, and the other was badly mutilated. After undergoing surgery and initial rehabilitation, Mahmoud began to adapt to his condition, using his feet to play games on his phone, open doors, and write. He now relies on assistance for most daily activities, including dressing and eating.

The photograph, which captures Mahmoud during his recovery, highlights the personal and long-term impacts of the war in Gaza. It also reflects the broader humanitarian crisis in the region, where access to medical care has been severely limited. According to the World Health

Organization, by March 2025, only 21 of Gaza's 36 hospitals remained even partially functional. More than 7,000 people had been medically evacuated from Gaza by that time, while over 11,000 others were still waiting to leave.

Qatar, which has prioritized the development of its healthcare infrastructure, was one of the key countries facilitating medical evacuations. Abu Elouf, who was herself evacuated from Gaza in late 2023, lives in the same apartment complex as Mahmoud and his family in Doha. Her familiarity with the people she photographs adds depth to the image and context to the story it tells.

Speaking about the emotional impact of Mahmoud's injuries, Abu Elouf recalled a conversation with his mother: "One of the most difficult things Mahmoud's mother explained to me was how when Mahmoud first came to the realization that his arms were amputated, the first sentence he said to her was, 'How will I be able to hug you?'"

The World Press Photo jury, which selected the image from among regional winners across six continents, cited its strong composition and human focus. The global jury described the portrait as "contemplative," noting that it raised questions about the boy's future and the wider experience of civilians affected by war. The jury also referenced the dangers faced by journalists in Gaza and the continuing limitations on access for international media.

The image was chosen for its ability to communicate the realities of conflict without relying on graphic violence. It stands out for its restraint, intimacy, and the clarity with which it documents the physical and psychological consequences of warfare. According to the UN's Relief and Works Agency, Gaza had the highest number of child amputees per capita in the world by the end of 2024.

Mahmoud's story, while individual, is representative of the broader impact of the conflict on children and families. The photograph presents this impact in specific, human terms, contributing to public understanding of the ongoing situation in Gaza. It also underscores the role of photojournalism in documenting these events, often under difficult and dangerous conditions.

Lucy Conticello, Director of Photography for *M Le magazine*, *Le Monde* and 2025 Contest global jury chair, said about this year's winners: "When the global jury got down to selecting the different contenders for Photo of the Year we started with a wide selection from each of the six regions. Three topics emerged from that pool that define the 2025 World Press Photo edition: conflict, migration, and climate change. Another way of seeing them is as stories of resilience, family, and community."

Finalists: narratives of migration and climate

Two powerful finalists were selected alongside the winning photograph, each illustrating pressing global issues with nuanced storytelling.

***Night Crossing* by John Moore, United States**



<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/002-world-press-photo-of-the-year-finalist-online-john-moore-getty-images.jpg>

Night Crossing © John Moore, United States, Getty Images

This image captures a tender moment between Chinese migrants warming themselves after crossing into California during a rainstorm. It visualizes the surge in Chinese migration, fueled by China's economic uncertainty, restrictive visa policies, and suppression of freedoms.

“In the United States now, certainly amongst the immigrant community... there is a real sense of fear because people don't know what's going to happen one day to the next,” Moore said. His photograph, with its almost cinematic composition, bridges statistics and humanity, portraying not just hardship, but resilience.

Droughts in the Amazon by Musuk Nolte, Peru/Mexico



<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/003-world-press-photo-of-the-year-finalist-online-musuk-nolte-panos-pictures-bertha-foundation.jpg>

Droughts in the Amazon © Musuk Nolte, Peru/Mexico, Panos Pictures, Bertha Foundation

A mother waits in a drought-stricken Amazon village as her son carries food across a dry riverbed. Once navigable by boat, the Solimões River now lies cracked and exposed. The drought, the worst on record in over 120 years, has left communities stranded and ecosystems disrupted.

“Photographing this crisis made the global interconnectedness of ecosystems more evident,” said Nolte. “Sometimes we think that these events do not affect us, but in the medium and long term they have an impact.”

Celebrating regional excellence

The contest, now in its 68th year, adopted a regional model in 2021 to elevate local voices. In 2025, 42 winners from 30 countries were selected across six regions, covering stories through Singles, Stories, and Long-Term Projects.

Africa

The Elephant Whisperers of Livingstone (Tommy Trenchard, UK) highlights conservation efforts in Zambia.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/015-africa-stories-tommy-trenchard-panos-pictures-for-npr.jpg>

The Elephant Whisperers of Livingstone © Tommy Trenchard, United Kingdom, Panos Pictures, for NPR

Women's Bodies as Battlefields (Cinzia Canneri, Italy) documents gender-based violence in conflict zones.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/019-africa-long-term-projects-cinzia-canneri-association-camille-lepage.jpg>

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

Life Won't Stop (Mosab Abushama, Sudan) is a striking single image from war-torn Sudan.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/005-africa-singles-mosab-abushama.jpg>

Life Won't Stop © Mosab Abushama, Sudan

Asia-Pacific and Oceania

A Nation In Conflict (Ye Aung Thu, Myanmar) depicts civil unrest in Myanmar.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/039-asia-pacific-and-oceania-stories-ye-aung-thu.jpg>

A Nation In Conflict © Ye Aung Thu, Myanmar

Four Storms, 12 Days (Noel Celis, Philippines) follows families through climate-induced disasters.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/037-asia-pacific-and-oceania-stories-noel-celis-associated-press.jpg>

Four Storms, 12 Days © Noel Celis, the Philippines, Associated Press

Te Urewera (Tatsiana Chypsanava, Belarus) portrays New Zealand's indigenous relationship with land.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/047-asia-pacific-and-oceania-long-term-projects-tatsiana-chypsanava-pulitzer-center-new-zealand-geographic.jpg>

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

Europe

Democracy Dies in Darkness (Rafael Heygster, Germany) tackles authoritarianism in Eastern Europe.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/064-europe-stories-rafael-heygster-for-der-spiegel.jpg>

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

It Smells of Smoke at Home (Aliona Kardash, Russia/Germany) reflects on war displacement.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/067-europe-long-term-projects-aliona-kardash-docks-collective-for-stern-magazine.jpg>

It Smells of Smoke at Home © Aliona Kardash, Russia/Germany, DOCKS Collective, for Stern Magazine

Underground Field Hospital (Nanna Heitmann, Germany) captures frontline healthcare in Ukraine.

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

North and Central America

Crisis in Haiti (Clarens Siffroy, Haiti) examines the political and humanitarian breakdown.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/087-north-and-central-america-stories-clarens-siffroy-agence-france-presse.jpg>

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

A Town Derailed (Rebecca Kiger, U.S.) portrays life after a train derailment in Ohio.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/081-north-and-central-america-stories-rebecca-kiger-center-for-contemporary-documentation-time.jpg>

A Town Derailed © Rebecca Kiger, U.S.A., Center for Contemporary Documentation, TIME

Attempted Assassination of Donald Trump (Jabin Botsford, U.S.) is a chilling snapshot of American political volatility.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/073-north-and-central-america-singles-jabin-botsford-for-the-washington-post.jpg>

Attempted Assassination of Donald Trump © Jabin Botsford, U.S.A., for The Washington Post

South America

Brazil's Worst-Ever Floods (Amanda M. Perobelli) shows cities underwater due to historic floods.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/099-south-america-stories-amanda-m.-perobelli-reuters-2.jpg>

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

Paths of Desperate Hope (Federico Ríos, Colombia) tracks migrants from South America to the U.S.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/111-south-america-long-term-projects-federico-rios-2.jpg>

Paths of Desperate Hope © Federico Ríos, Colombia

The Last Hope (Gabriela Oráa, Venezuela) shares the anguish of families seeking refuge.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/098-south-america-singles-gabriela-oraa-reuters.jpg>

The Last Hope © Gabriela Orúa, Venezuela, Reuters

West, Central, and South Asia

Gaza Under Israeli Attack (Ali Jadallah, Palestine) lays bare the devastation in the region.

Jonas Cuénin

Jonas Cuénin works as managing director at Blind and has previously been working as editor-in-chief at the magazines *L'Œil de la Photographie* and *Camera*.
<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/123-west-central-and-south-asia-stories-ali-jadallah-anadolu-agency.jpg>

Gaza Under Israeli Attack © Ali Jadallah, Palestine, Anadolu Agency

No Woman's Land (Kiana Hayeri, Iran/Canada) narrates women's survival in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

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(<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/127-west-central-and-south-asia-stories-kiana-hayeri-fondation-carmignac.jpg>)

No Woman's Land © Kiana Hayeri, Iran/Canada, Fondation Carmignac

Drone Attacks in Beirut (Murat Şengül, Turkey) captures the chaos from increasing regional militarization.

<https://www.blind-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/119-west-central-and-south-asia-singles-murat-sengul-anadolu-agency.jpg>

Drone Attacks in Beirut © Murat Şengül, Turkey, Anadolu Agency

A traveling exhibition

The awarded works will feature in the World Press Photo Exhibition 2025, debuting on April 18 at De Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, before traveling to over 80 cities in 30 countries, engaging more than 3 million people worldwide. In May, winners will also gather in Amsterdam for *The Stories That Matter* — a program of talks, workshops, and award ceremonies.

The foundation, formed in 1955, continues its mission to champion visual journalism, stating: “We create space for reflection in times of urgency, while upholding standards of accuracy, authenticity, visual excellence, and diverse perspectives.”

At its best, photojournalism doesn’t just document events — it elevates individual moments into timeless symbols. In *Mahmoud Ajjour, Aged Nine*, we see not just a child scarred by war, but a story that demands attention, compassion, and change. Alongside the many voices lifted through this year’s winners, the 2025 World Press Photo Contest is a vital reminder that images still have the power to move the world.

More information on [World Press Photo’s website](https://www.worldpressphoto.org/) (<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/>).