Independent & Freelance Photojournalist Award 2026

Category: Photography
Deadline: October 1, 2026
Website: graphiccompetitions.com

The Independent & Freelance Photojournalist Award (IFPA) 2026 is part of Xposure, the Sharjah-based international platform for photography, filmmaking and visual storytelling organised by the Sharjah Government Media Bureau. The award is dedicated to recognising excellence in independent visual reporting and the role of photojournalism in documenting important global realities.

The competition covers three categories: Spot News, Environment, and Solutions. Entrants may submit one 12-image photo essay per category, with submissions encouraged to address urgent, underreported or impactful global issues while maintaining the accuracy, integrity and impartiality expected of professional photojournalism.

Entries are assessed on factors including news value, impact, consistency, relevance and visual storytelling. For independent visual reporters, IFPA provides a focused opportunity to present a cohesive journalistic essay within an international photography and visual storytelling programme that places particular emphasis on truthful and responsible reporting.

There is no entry fee.

Eligibility

Open to freelance photojournalists aged 18 or over of any nationality who are not in full-time employment by a media outlet and who hold a valid recognised national or international press card, or can provide evidence of published journalistic work plus a supporting reference from a recognised media bureau; photographs must be original, taken within the past 24 months, form a 12-image essay, not reuse an essay previously submitted in the same form, contain no AI-generated imagery, and must not materially alter the reality of the scene.

Prize

Each of the three categories—Spot News, Environment, and Solutions—has one Category Winner receiving USD 5,000, exhibition of the winning essay at Xposure, and finalist recognition. Each category also has one Category Runner Up, who receives an official certificate and a dedicated online presentation of the awarded essay.