

# UNICEF Photo of the Year 2024

## First Prizes 2024



### **Israel / State of Palestine: Shock, pain and grief have many faces**

They survived the horrors of the Hamas massacre in their kibbutzim on October 7, 2023. They are four, ten and 13 years old, or 17 and taken hostage for 51 days. Their faces, such as that of eight-year-old Stav, are a window into their souls: they show confusion, desolation, and anguish. Israeli photographer Avishag Shaar-Yashuv portrayed them in a hotel that was temporarily used as an emergency shelter by many of the victims of the Hamas attack. As can be seen in Stav's face, Avishag Shaar-Yashuv has hauntingly captured the look of children who see their previous lives lie completely in ruins.

They survived the bombing of residential areas in Gaza by the Israeli air force. They are two, four, five, nine, 13 or 15 years old. They have been dug out from under rubble. They are paralyzed, have lost their eyesight, arms, legs, hands, often their parents and sometimes even their entire family. Their faces show confusion, desolation, and anguish. Palestinian photographer Samar Abu Elouf portrayed these children in a hospital in Qatar, where they were brought to safety. Among them are Dareen, 11, and her brother Kinan, five years old, the only survivors of a family wiped out by an air strike. This picture, reminiscent of old master still life paintings, vividly shows the dignity of children even in the worst emotional distress.

The Jury of the UNICEF Photo of the Year, acutely aware of the very different numbers of victims in Israel and Gaza, did not presume to establish a ranking of suffering. Regardless of who is to blame from whose point of view, two photographers on both sides of the front have contributed equally to painting a universal picture of the fate of children during the war. Their pictures show no blood, but restraint. They are a cautious yet striking portrait of a serious trauma. These haunting images will continue to serve as a warning to us even when the guns hopefully fall silent one day. For the first time in the 25-year history of the UNICEF Photo of the Year, the jury has therefore awarded two first prizes.

Photographers: Avishag Shaar-Yashuv, Israel, and Samar Abu Elouf, State of Palestine (for The New York Times)



First Prize UNICEF Photo of the Year 2024  
© Avishag Shaar-Yashuv, Israel

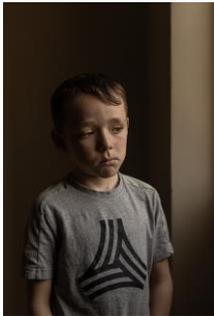


First Prize UNICEF Photo of the Year 2024  
© Samar Abu Elouf, State of Palestine



### **Israel: The trauma of little Stav**

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**Photographer: Avishag Shaar-Yashuv, Israel (for The New York Times)**

### **State of Palestine: The drama of Dareen and Kinan**

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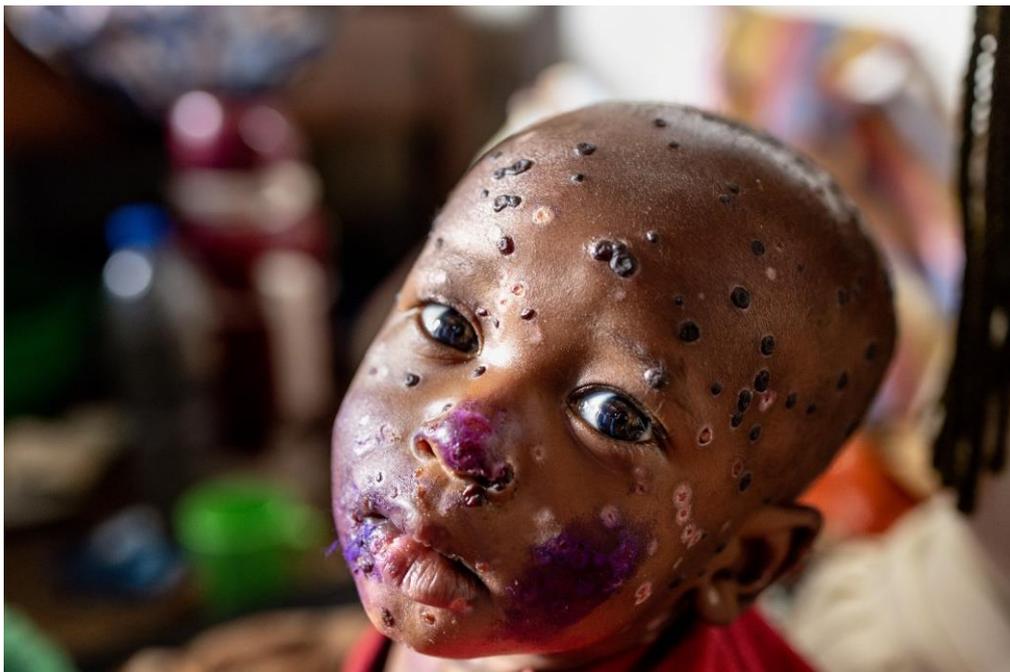
**Photographer: Samar Abu Elouf, State of Palestine (for The New York Times)**

## Second Prize 2024

### Democratic Republic of the Congo: A virus on the rise

Formerly known as monkeypox, a rare viral disease known as mpox has been on the rise in parts of Africa for some time. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the worst affected countries with approx. 40,000 suspected cases, more than 8,000 confirmed cases and over 1,000 deaths so far. For the second time since 2022, the WHO has declared the highest alert level for the virus. There have also been confirmed cases of mpox in the USA and Germany. Although there is a vaccine against mpox, the supply is insufficient, especially in poorer countries. Children are particularly at risk. The symptoms include a rash with blisters or sores (ulcers) and pneumonia, brain inflammation, eye infections and even loss of sight. French photographer Pascal Maitre went to the most affected areas and documented the treatment of children at Kavumu Hospital in the Kivu region in eastern Congo. One of them is seven-month-old Japhet, whose blisters are being treated with the antiseptic dye 'Gentian Violet.' His 19-year-old mother Christevi cares for and looks after the little one. The health station where adults are also treated is only sparsely equipped. Nevertheless, it is still better there than the mud floor of their huts or in camps like the one in Busharaga. There, the virus can easily spread among the 16,000 internally displaced people.

**Photographer: Pascal Maitre, France (The VII Foundation, for Paris Match)**



© Pascal Maitre, France (The VII Foundation, for Paris Match)

**Texts: © Peter-Matthias Gaede for UNICEF, December 2024**

### Third Prize 2024

#### France: Life finds a way

According to a WHO study, one in ten children worldwide is born before the 37th week of pregnancy, meaning three weeks prematurely. Every missing week makes their start in life that much more difficult. This is especially true for extremely premature babies who sometimes have to take their first breaths after less than 32 or even 26 weeks of pregnancy, mostly the effect of insufficiently developed lungs and reduced kidney function. Worldwide, death resulting from premature birth is the second most common reason for not reaching the age of five. Even in industrialized nations, there are more and more premature births, which is mainly because mothers are increasingly older at birth. However, medical care for premature babies has made great progress, at least in rich countries. It has even been possible to save a premature baby who was born at just 22 weeks, measuring only 26 centimeters and weighing a mere 245 grams. French photographer Maylis Rolland's photo series shows the wonderful moments at the University Hospital of Rennes, where the fragile lives of tiny babies are stabilized with the help of medical equipment and intensive human care. Like, for example, the moment when tiny Gabin, born after 25 weeks of pregnancy and still wearing a breathing mask, touches the face of his mother Doriane.

**Photographer: Maylis Rolland, France (Agency Hans Lucas)**



© Maylis Rolland, France (Agency Hans Lucas)

## Honorable Mention 2024



### Ethiopia, Malaysia: A voice no longer heard

Ever since he could speak, Milo has talked to his parents and his brother.

Outside his family, however, he turned totally silent. At the age of six, he was diagnosed with selective mutism, a presumably genetically caused, anxiety-related loss of speech in all situations outside the safety of the family. While he was cheerful and talkative at home, Milo suddenly became unable to utter a word every time he met other people. It is estimated that around one percent of all children are affected by selective mutism. Shocked and shaken by the diagnosis, Milo's mother, Canadian photographer Patricia Krivanek, thought about how she could build bridges for her son and help him open up. She gave Milo a simple Instax camera as a novel way to show his emotions and express himself visually. At the same time, she also took his pictures and asked him to write down his thoughts. She calls this photo project 'Between the Silence,' as they navigate the path "between the light and the dark, the joy and despair, the sound and the silence." It genuinely helped Milo get rid of a fear that often accompanies affected children well into their school years. Krivanek describes the project as "therapeutic practice for both me and my son," she 'armed' Milo with the camera to combat his anxiety and understand him better.

### Photographer: Patricia Krivanek, Canada



© Patricia Krivanek, Canada

## Honorable Mention 2024

### France, Nepal: The screen generation

For some time now, science and medicine have also been dealing with the omnipresent smartphone, coveted even by small children. And rightly so. There is largely consensus about its negative effects on the psyche, social and communication skills as well as on the ability to learn. Some neuroscientists are already talking about 'digital dementia,' while others advocate banning cell phones at least at primary school age to focus on analog, namely direct human contact. French photographer Jérôme Gence did a little research on this: Children and young people in France spend three hours a day staring at their cell phones, on which they receive over 230 messages every day. 50 percent of French families even use their cell phones during meals together. Even the WHO warns against putting smartphones in the hands of children under the age of three, as this can lead to sleep disorders. However, only 13 percent of parents heed the recommendation. And cellphone mania has now even spread to countries like Nepal. Jérôme has captured moments of this addiction in his photo series 'The screen generation.'

**Photographer: Jérôme Gence, France (Panos Pictures)**



© Jérôme Gence, France (Panos Pictures)

**Texts: © Peter-Matthias Gaede for UNICEF, December 2024**

## Honorable Mention 2024

### State of Palestine: This is not their war

Adults started the war – only they can finish it. Until they do so one day, even the most innocent suffer: the children. And in Gaza, their suffering is especially brutal. The UN Human Rights Office verified more than 8,100 deaths between November 2023 and the end of August 2024. According to its numbers, 70 percent of them were women and minors, most between five and nine years old, followed by children between 10 and 14 years. Thousands are believed to be buried under the rubble of bombed residential buildings or in mass graves. Countless children have been injured and mutilated in the war. Palestinian photographer Saher Alghorra has captured the horrors of war in heartbreaking images: children fleeing on dusty roads, reduced to mere skeletons; bleeding on the tiled floor of a hospital, standing in line for food or drinking water; saying goodbye to their dead parents, or lying on the deathbed themselves. In some of his pictures, however, Alghorra also documents how children have the power to teach us hope, even amid chaos and horror.

**Photographer: Saher Alghorra, State of Palestine (ZUMA Press)**



© Saher Alghorra, State of Palestine (ZUMA Press)

**Texts: © Peter-Matthias Gaede for UNICEF, December 2024**

## Honorable Mention 2024

### Israel: Yael – stronger than the terror

When Hamas fighters invaded Israel on October 7, 2023 and murdered more than 1,200 people, they also attacked the Golan family home in Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Elai Hogeg and her husband Ariel tried to hide there with their one-and-a-half-year-old daughter Yael; all in vain, because they, too, were not spared. The terrorists set fire to a room and threw an open butane gas cylinder into the fire, which quickly spread to the entire house. With serious skin injuries, the couple and their toddler escaped from a window, fled on foot and were finally picked up by a car and driven to a helicopter landing pad. In a clinic in Tel Aviv, all three were placed in a medically-induced coma: the girl, whose skin is 30 percent covered in burns, for eight days; her father, even more seriously injured, for ten. And her mother, who suffered the worst injuries, was there for 53 days. Israeli photographer Ziv Koren documented the family's struggle for survival in painful detail: the time in hospital when grandparents had to look after little Yael because her parents were unable to. And then the time when the family gradually overcame their physical trauma – until the moment when they returned to their completely destroyed house for the first time and found little more than a picture from happier days. It is the story of a healing that is far from a happy ending: one of how people somehow survived, but nothing more.

**Photographer: Ziv Koren, Israel (Polaris Images)**



© Ziv Koren, Israel (Polaris Images)

**Texts: © Peter-Matthias Gaede for UNICEF, December 2024**

## Honorable Mention 2024

### Nigeria: Dancing into self-confidence

Proud dancers can not only be found on the polished floors of ballet schools in big cities but also in places where the average monthly income is around 200 euros. In Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, there are also girls and boys who practice elegant pirouettes and defy gravity in graceful leaps. There, around 20 girls and boys aged between 10 and 22 have gathered under the guidance of their ballet teacher, Daniel Ajala, to become a classical dance ensemble. They practice outdoors, in a yard protected by barbed wire on uneven and bumpy ground, exposed to blistering heat and torrential rains alike, and surrounded by chickens. Ajala, a graduate of Lagos State University, launched his 'Leap of Dance Academy' in Nigeria's capital with five children from the neighborhood. They come from a district that has electricity only for a few hours a day, inhabited by poor families where dancing in a ballet was a distant luxury. And yet the idea of creating new perspectives for children through dance caught on. Daniel is not the only one who is convinced that dancing helps the children to "stand up, speak up, and defend themselves!"

**Photographer: Vincent Boisot, France (Riva Press)**



© Vincent Boisot, France (Riva Press)

**Texts: © Peter-Matthias Gaede for UNICEF, December 2024**

## Honorable Mention 2024

### Zambia, Argentina: Childhood without parents

The United Nations estimates there are around 140 million of them worldwide. Perhaps their number is even higher. However, no reliable information on the number of orphans exists, as many countries lack reliable statistics on those children who bear the stigma of abandonment. It is not always just the loss of a father or mother or both that makes children half or full orphans, as was the case for a while in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly due to the HIV epidemic. Broken families with neglect, violence, abuse, poverty or simply a lack of attention also turn children into outcasts, into lost ones. For his photo series, Italian photographer Valerio Bispuri repeatedly visited orphanages in Africa and Latin America, first in Kenya, then for longer periods in Zambia and in his second home country of Argentina. He was the first photo reporter to visit the 'Home of Happiness' in Zambia's capital Lusaka. This institution was founded a few years ago for orphans with severe physical and mental disabilities. His pictures also show two orphanages in Buenos Aires. In both countries, he additionally portrayed street children who are completely homeless. Bispuri deliberately works beyond the 24/7 news cycle. He is more concerned with the 'invisible ones' – the unnoticed and forgotten – who live as if they were never born.

**Photographer: Valerio Bispuri, Italy**



© Valerio Bispuri, Italy

**Texts: © Peter-Matthias Gaede for UNICEF, December 2024**

## Honorable Mention 2024

### Sudan: The forgotten tragedy

Far from the headlines, one of the greatest humanitarian disasters of our time is unfolding in Sudan. More than eight million people in the East African country are believed to be fleeing from the front lines of a conflict that has been raging since 2023. The lives of around 730,000 children are in immediate danger due to severe malnutrition. The warring parties deliberately use hunger as a weapon by plundering farms, stealing animals, and controlling vital water sources. They are destroying schools and health posts, recruiting children as soldiers, and committing sexual violence against women and girls. Irish photographer Ivor Prickett wants to draw international attention to this drama by documenting the misery, malnutrition, displacement, and despair in Sudan. Despite all the difficulties, UNICEF is working hard to deliver medicines, medical equipment, clean water, and other relief supplies, as well as special therapeutic food for the exhausted children of this war-ravaged country. UNICEF's teams are on site despite all the dangers.

**Photographer: Ivor Prickett, Ireland (Panos Pictures, for The New York Times)**



© Ivor Prickett, Ireland (Panos Pictures, for The New York Times)

**Texts: © Peter-Matthias Gaede for UNICEF, December 2024**