

PRESS RELEASE:

THE 28TH JI.HLAVA HAS BEEN KICKED OFF BY MS. PRESIDENT. *ONLY IF THE BABY CRIES...* WON THE BEST SHORT DOCUMENTARY

Prague, October 26, 2024

The Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival has started and presented its first awards! The 28th edition of the festival was opened by *Ms. President* directed by Marek Šulík. The award for best short films went to an Indian film about a village of deaf-mute people *Only If the Baby Cries...* The prize for the best documentary book was awarded to the anthology *If I am to Die, Let it Be a Story* of several Palestinian women living in the Czech Republic or Czechs with Palestinian roots. The Respekt magazine award was accorded to Darja Stomatová and Ján Schrürger from Czech Television for their reportage *A Bridge Between Lives*, capturing the evacuation of people from war-torn Ukraine. The APA Award for an outstanding contribution to producers accorded by the Czech Producers' Association was received by Zuzana Mistríková from Slovakia.

The 28th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival has kicked off. This year, Ji.hlava offers 340 titles and for the first time will be held for full 10 days – until November 3. „We are interested in the full range of topics that documentary filmmakers can uncover. Let's not be isolated islands, but instead show interest in the world around us and empathy toward others,“ said Marek Hovorka, the festival director during the Opening Ceremony.

This year's Ji.hlava Film Festival opened with the time-lapse documentary *Ms. President* by director Marek Šulík, which captures five years of Zuzana Čaputová's term as the President of Slovakia. The film crew filmed her in situations where other cameras were not allowed. "I believe that the story told by the film can offer cathartic value for many people frustrated by the dramatic transformation of political culture and questioning whether decency still matters," says director Marek Šulík. The film will have more screenings in Ji.hlava: October 26 at 7:00 PM, DKO II Cinema; October 31 at 1:30 PM, Dukla – Edison Cinema; November 1 at 10:00 AM, DKO I Cinema; and November 2 at 5:00 PM, Máj Třešť Cinema. After the festival, the film will be distributed in Slovakia and the Czech Republic by Aerofilms.

This year's Ji.hlava Documentary Festival has awarded its first prizes. The best film in the Short Joy section is the Indian film *Only if the Baby Cries...* by director Shadab Farooq. The film, which tells the story of the village of Dhadkai at the foothills of the Himalayas, where mostly deaf-mute children are born, was chosen by viewers through voting on DAFilms. All competition films, including the winner, can be viewed for free on dafilms.cz until November 3. The winning film will receive distribution and promotion on the DAFilms platform at a value of 3,000 EUR.

This year, for the fourth time, Ji.hlava awarded the **Best Documentary Book**. A five-member jury honored the publication *If I Am to Die, Let It Be a Story* (Utopia Libri, 2024). Through family stories of several Palestinian women living in the Czech Republic and Czechs with Palestinian roots, the anthology provides context on the nature of the occupation. The expert jury included journalist Linda Bartošová, publicist Magdalena Dušková, documentarian Štěpán Pech, writer and translator Markéta Hejkalová, and audio documentarian Brit Jensen.

The **Respekt Award** for the most outstanding audiovisual reportage went to war correspondent Darja Stomatová and cinematographer Ján Schrüger for their report *A Bridge Between Lives*, produced for Czech Television, which documents the evacuation of residents from war-devastated Ukraine. *“The Russian aggression in Ukraine has forced millions to flee from threatened and devastated homes. Darja Stomatová managed, without pathos and in an almost intimate setting, to capture the tragedy of evacuating people from Russian-threatened areas in Ukraine. The stories of those resisting departure and those assisting with the evacuation are simple yet powerfully document the weight and resilience of life near the war front. The images captured by Stomatová’s team may tell us more about the war than harsh footage from the frontline,”* stated the jury, composed of editors from Respekt Weekly.

The APA World Excellence Award for an outstanding contribution to producers was also announced, and Slovak producer Zuzana Mistríková received the honor.

The 28th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place on October 25–November 3, 2024. More information at www.ji-hlava.com and on the festival’s [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) profiles.

To request press accreditations, please do so [here](#).

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