

Correspondence with the Indian Photo Festival 2026

JERUSALEMITES by Sharon Gabay: selection, removal and cancellation

Six messages, 18 to 22 September 2026, in the order they were sent. Times are Israel time.

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Exported from the mailbox sharongabay2@gmail.com. The text of every message is reproduced as it was sent; quoted copies of earlier messages, logos, social media links, the festival's standard confidentiality footer and the mailing service footer are left out.

1 The selection email · 18 September 2026, 01:46

From Indian Photo Festival <info@indianphotofest.com>
To Sharon Gabay <sharongabay2@gmail.com>
Subject Congratulations! Your Work is Selected for Indian Photo Festival 2026

Indian Photo Festival 2026
Selection & Participation Agreement

Dear Sharon,

Thank you for your submission to the Indian Photo Festival 2026.

We are pleased to inform you that your photo book has been selected for the Photo Book Exhibition at the festival. We appreciate your patience during the review process — this year's jury received a remarkable volume of high-quality submissions, which required additional time for careful selection.

Next Steps

Please send the following promotional materials no later than October 2, 2026:

- Book Cover and Low-resolution digital files of the images (5) from the book, for promotion (2060 px on the longer edge, 150 DPI)
- Updated biography (500 words)
- Artist statement (500 words)
- A current headshot

Please also ship one physical copy of the photo book, at your own cost, to arrive by October 15, 2026, at:

Light Craft Foundation,
507 Gayathri Residency, Manikonda
Hyderabad, Telangana, India – 500089

Shipping Instructions: Where possible, use your country's national postal service with international tracking. On the customs declaration, describe the item as a "Commercial Sample / Artist's Portfolio" — "Author's personal photographic portfolio sample, for temporary exhibition display only at IPF 2026. Not for sale. To be returned to

sender or donated to festival archive." Declared value: the price of this one book only.

Please confirm your acceptance of the terms below by replying to this email on or before September 24, 2026.

Terms & Conditions

Parties. This agreement is made between the Photographer and the Organiser of the Indian Photo Festival, Hyderabad, presented by the Light Craft Foundation ("the Organiser").

Exhibition. The Photographer grants the Organiser permission to exhibit the submitted photo book as part of the Photo Book Exhibition at the Indian Photo Festival, Hyderabad, from November 26, 2026 to January 3, 2027.

Shipping, Customs, and Risk. The Photographer is responsible for shipping the physical book to the Organiser at their own cost, ensuring it arrives by the deadline above, and for any customs duties or charges assessed on entry. Risk of loss or damage in transit to the festival rests with the Photographer; the Organiser will inspect the book on arrival and notify the Photographer promptly of any visible damage. While in the Organiser's custody, the Organiser will take reasonable care of the book but is not liable for loss, theft, or damage arising from circumstances beyond its reasonable control.

Return or Archiving. Following the conclusion of the exhibition, the Photographer must indicate, within 30 days of the exhibition's close, whether they wish to have the book returned at their own cost (including any associated customs charges for re-export or return shipping) or donated to the Indian Photo Festival's permanent photo book archive. Return postage payment must be received within 15 days of the return request, failing which the book will be added to the festival archive by default. If no response is received within the initial 30-day period, the book will likewise be added to the archive.

Archive and Future Use. Books added to the archive may be used by the Organiser for future exhibitions or festival programming, on a non-exclusive basis. The Photographer will be credited appropriately whenever the book is displayed or referenced, and retains the right to exhibit the book independently at any time.

Copyright and Originality. Copyright in the book and its contents remains with the Photographer at all times. The Photographer warrants that they are the sole author of the work, that it is original, and that they have obtained all necessary permissions and rights for its contents. The Photographer agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the Organiser against any claim, loss, or liability arising from a breach of this warranty.

Promotional Use. The Photographer consents to the Organiser reproducing the low-resolution files and book imagery, free of charge, for publicity and promotional purposes, including electronic and print media, exhibition catalogues, and the festival's website, at the Organiser's discretion. The Organiser will make reasonable efforts to preserve the integrity of the work and credit the Photographer appropriately.

Force Majeure. Neither party shall be liable for delay or failure to perform obligations under this agreement due to circumstances beyond its reasonable control, including natural disasters, government restrictions, customs delays, or public health emergencies.

Governing Law. This agreement is governed by the laws of India, and any disputes arising from it shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the courts in Hyderabad, Telangana.

Acceptance. Acceptance of this agreement shall be indicated by a reply email from the Photographer confirming agreement to the above terms, including their full name and date.

We would be honoured if you could join us for the festival opening on Thursday, November 26, at 5:30 PM, at the State Art Gallery, Hyderabad.

For any clarifications, feel free to reach us on WhatsApp at +91 984-955-8107.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Best Regards,

Rohit Reddy | Program Coordinator

Phone: +91 984-955-8107

Indian Photo Festival - Hyderabad

#507, 3-2-64/120, Manikonda | Hyderabad, India - 500089

2 The cancellation email · 18 September 2026, 20:39

From Indian Photo Fest <info@indianphotofest.com>
To Sharon Gabay <sharongabay2@gmail.com>
Subject Re: Congratulations! Your Work is Selected for Indian Photo Festival 2026

Dear Sharon,

Thank you for participating in the 12th edition of the Indian Photo Festival and for sharing your work with us.

We regret to inform you that, following a subsequent review of the circumstances surrounding this year's exhibition, we have decided not to include your photobook in the final exhibition at IPF 2026.

We understand that this decision comes after your work had been selected, and we regret any disappointment or inconvenience this may cause.

Following the selection, certain concerns were brought to the festival's attention regarding the inclusion and after careful consideration of these concerns and the broader context in which the festival operates, we have decided that it would not be appropriate to proceed with the exhibition in this edition.

We would like to emphasize that this decision is separate from the artistic evaluation of your work and is not a reflection of its artistic merit. We respect your practice and appreciate the time and effort involved in participating in the festival.

We sincerely thank you for your understanding and wish you continued success with your work and future engagements.

Best Regards,

Rohit Reddy

Indian Photo Festival - Hyderabad
#507, 3-2-64/120, Manikonda | Hyderabad, India - 500089

3 Sharon Gabay's six questions · 19 September 2026, 07:48

From Sharon Gabay <sharongabay2@gmail.com>
To Indian Photo Fest <info@indianphotofest.com>
Subject Re: Congratulations! Your Work is Selected for Indian Photo Festival 2026

Dear Rohit,

I acknowledge receipt of your message. I am deeply concerned by the decision and by the explanation provided.

My photobook, *Jerusalemites*, was selected through the festival's stated selection process and was publicly listed under the PhotoBook Exhibitions section as Sharon Gabay / Israel. I then received a formal Selection & Participation Agreement instructing me to confirm participation, submit promotional materials, and send a physical copy of the book for exhibition.

Your message now states that, after the artistic selection, "certain concerns" were raised regarding my inclusion and that, in view of a "broader context," the festival has decided not to proceed. You also explicitly state that this decision is unrelated to the artistic merit of my work.

Please provide a clear and specific written explanation of:

What concerns were raised regarding my inclusion;

Who raised those concerns and when;

What specific "broader context" the festival relied upon;

Whether the decision is connected, directly or indirectly, to my nationality, Israeli identity, the subject of my book, or external political pressure;

Which person or body made the final decision to reverse the selection;

Whether this reversal is consistent with the festival's published Open Call, selection criteria, and equal-opportunity commitments.

The festival's Open Call stated that eligible submissions were assessed on artistic merit, originality, coherence, visual quality, storytelling, conceptual strength, and potential impact. My book was selected through that process. Removing it after selection for unspecified non-artistic reasons is a serious matter.

I request a substantive written response. Until I receive one, I ask that the festival preserve all records and communications relating to the selection, public listing, subsequent removal, and decision concerning my photobook.

Kind regards,
Sharon Gabay

4 The festival's acknowledgement · 20 September 2026, 05:40

From Indian Photo Fest <info@indianphotofest.com>
To Sharon Gabay <sharongabay2@gmail.com>
Subject Re: Congratulations! Your Work is Selected for Indian Photo Festival 2026

Dear Sharon,

Thank you for your email and for outlining your concerns and questions.

We acknowledge receipt of your message. We are reviewing the points you have raised and will respond in writing.

We appreciate your patience while this review is completed and will be back in touch shortly.

Thanks,

Rohit Reddy

5 Sharon Gabay's reply · 20 September 2026, 07:23

From Sharon Gabay <sharongabay2@gmail.com>
To Indian Photo Fest <info@indianphotofest.com>
Subject Re: Congratulations! Your Work is Selected for Indian Photo Festival 2026

Dear Rohit,

Thank you for your message. I ask that you forward the following to the festival's management and those who made the decision.

In my view, the cancellation of JERUSALEMITES' participation under the documented circumstances is a grave error that calls into question the integrity of the selection process and the festival's commitment to its published values.

My book was selected for the exhibition, an official selection notice with participation guidelines was sent to me, and my name was published on the website as "Sharon Gabay / Israel". Shortly after, my name alone was removed from the photobook list, while all other names on that list remained. In your cancellation email, you explicitly separated the decision from the artistic evaluation, citing unspecified "concerns regarding inclusion" and a "broader context".

JERUSALEMITES is a trilingual book in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. It is the result of 15 years of documentary photography, capturing the human diversity of Jerusalem. Cancelling its exhibition under these circumstances raises a fundamental question about your stated promise to provide a platform for "diverse voices" and to "connect viewers across cultures".

For clarity, this email seeks a full explanation of the festival's decision and the circumstances surrounding it. It is not a request to reinstate my book in the exhibition.

I expect you to explicitly present your reasoning and answer the questions sent to you:

1. What were the specific concerns?
2. Who raised them and when?
3. What is the "broader context"?
4. Who made the cancellation decision?
5. How does this decision align with the Open Call guidelines and the published criteria?
6. Did my Israeli nationality or external political pressure play a role, directly or indirectly, in this decision? If not, what exactly changed between the selection of my book and the cancellation of its participation?

Full documentation has been retained, including the selection notice, the website versions before and after the removal, and our correspondence. The implications of this decision go far beyond a single book. It raises serious questions about the consistency between the festival's published values and its conduct.

Acknowledging receipt and promising to be in touch "shortly" does not answer these questions. I require a substantive and complete response to all six questions by September 22, 2026, at 12:00 noon, Israel time, as well as confirmation that all relevant documents and correspondence are being preserved as requested.

Sincerely,
Sharon Gabay

6 The festival's formal written response · 22 September 2026, 08:31

From Indian Photo Fest <info@indianphotofest.com>
To Sharon Gabay <sharongabay2@gmail.com>
Subject Re: Response to Your Correspondence

Hi Sharon,

Please find below the response:

We write on behalf of the Indian Photo Festival, Hyderabad, presented by the Light Craft Foundation ("the Festival" / "the Organiser"), in reply to your emails of 18 September 2026.

This letter is the Festival's written response to the questions in your email sent on 18 September 2026. It should be read with our email of 18 September 2026 at 20:39 and with the Open Call and the selection email already sent to you. It sets out the Festival's position. It is not an admission of any claim, breach, or liability. It does not create any new obligation. Nothing in this letter is an offer to reinstate the photobook in the IPF 2026 exhibition.

1. Please note that in our reply the relevant documents are:

- (a) the Festival's published Open Call for the 12th edition, including the submission guidelines, the photobook submission terms, the selection process, and the Terms & Conditions.
- (b) the email sent to you on 18 September 2026 at 01:46 titled "Congratulations! Your Work is Selected for Indian Photo Festival 2026," which enclosed a Selection & Participation Agreement and asked you to confirm acceptance by reply on or before 24 September 2026
- (c) your email of 18 September 2026 at 15:35
- (d) the Festival's email of 18 September 2026 at 20:39
- (e) your email of 18 September 2026 at 23:48

The Open Call invited submissions from anywhere in the world. It stated that there was no thematic restriction and no entry fee. It stated that eligible work would be assessed on artistic merit, originality, coherence, visual quality, storytelling, conceptual strength, and potential impact. It also stated that the Festival reserves the right to amend or modify the Open Call, submission guidelines, exhibition format, schedule, jury, venues, dates, or any other aspect of the Festival without prior notice.

The selection email of 18 September 2026 informed you that your photobook had been selected for the Photo Book Exhibition. It set out next steps and terms. It stated that acceptance of those terms would be indicated by a reply email from you confirming agreement, with your full name and date, on or before 24 September 2026. It also stated that the agreement would be governed by the laws of India and that disputes would be subject to the jurisdiction of the courts in Hyderabad, Telangana. As at the time of our email of 18 September 2026 at 20:39, the Festival had not received that accepting reply. The Festival's position is that the participation terms had not been concluded.

2. On 18 September 2026 the Festival sent you the selection email referred to above. On the same date, selected photobook participants were identified on a public list maintained by the Festival. Your name appeared on that list. You wrote at 15:35 the same day to say that you could no longer find your name, and you asked whether the book remained selected, whether the omission was an error, and whether you should proceed with acceptance, promotional materials, and shipment.

Later the same day, after concerns had been raised with the Festival about proceeding with your inclusion in this edition, the Organiser reviewed the position. At 20:39 the Festival wrote to you that it had decided not to include your photobook in the final exhibition at IPF 2026. That email stated that certain concerns had been brought to the Festival's attention regarding the inclusion; that the festival had considered those concerns and the broader context in which the festival operates; that it would not be appropriate to proceed with the exhibition of the book in

this edition; and that the decision was separate from the artistic evaluation of the work and was not a reflection of its artistic merit. That remains the festival's decision and the festival's position.

3. You asked for a clear written explanation of six matters. Each is addressed below.

3.1 After the selection was communicated and after your name appeared on the public list, the Festival was told that your inclusion in this edition was objected to. The objections were directed at proceeding with your participation in the 2026 Photobook Exhibition. They were not presented to the Festival as an artistic critique of the photobook by the jury. The Festival will not reproduce those communications, will not quote them, and will not characterise them beyond what is required to answer you. They were concerns about inclusion in this edition, raised after the announcement. The Festival does not accept that it must publish a dossier of third-party complaints in order to explain an organising decision about the final exhibition.

3.2 Your query as to who raised those concerns, and when. The answer is that the concerns reached the Festival on 18 September 2026, after the selection email had been sent and after the public list was visible. They did not come from the jury as part of the artistic review. They came after the announcement, from persons outside that jury process. The Festival will not name private individuals, will not identify third-party accounts, and will not disclose private messages. Naming people is not necessary to state the Festival's decision. It would also drag private persons into a dispute that is between you and the Organiser. The Festival can and does confirm the timing: 18 September 2026, after the public listing.

3.3 "Broader context" in our email of 18 September 2026 means the conditions in which this edition has to be staged, once the concerns above had been raised.

That includes, without limitation:

the Festival's responsibility for the final shape of the exhibition, as distinct from the jury's artistic shortlisting; the Festival's responsibility to the programme as a whole, and to the practical running of a public exhibition in Hyderabad between 26 November 2026 and 3 January 2027;

the Organiser's ongoing responsibility to assess, at any point before an exhibition opens, whether the final content of that exhibition serves the orderly and effective staging of the programme as a whole; and the Organiser's judgment that proceeding with the exhibition of your photobook in this edition was not appropriate in those conditions.

It does not mean a fresh artistic scoring of the book. It does not mean that the Festival has ruled on the politics of the book, or on your personal views. It means an organising judgment about this edition, taken after the announcement, in the circumstances then existing.

3.4 As to 'external political pressure': after the announcement, objections to your inclusion were put to the Festival. Those objections, and the likely effect of proceeding in the face of them, formed part of what the Organiser considered. The Open Call was open to applicants from any country. Country of residence or nationality was not a published test for selection. The festival does not operate a rule that an artist is ineligible, or later to be removed, because of nationality alone. The jury process, as conducted for this Open Call, assessed submitted work. The festival's position is that the jury did not select or reject work by reference to the artist's name or nationality. The public list identified selected participants in the form then used by the Festival, including name and country where that information had been supplied. That listing format is not, by itself, a decision to include or exclude anyone on nationality grounds.

Please note that the photobook was not removed because the festival conducted a second artistic or thematic review and found the work wanting. Our email of 18 September 2026 said the decision was separate from the artistic evaluation. That statement stands. The festival is not saying that Jerusalemites lacks artistic merit. It is saying that the book will not be shown in this edition. As to "external political pressure": after the announcement, objections to your inclusion were put to the Festival. Those objections, and the likely effect of proceeding in the face of them, formed part of what the Organiser considered. The Festival does not accept a description of its decision as an unlawful act, as a nationality ban, or as a ruling on your identity. It also will not adopt third-party political labels for you or for the book, and it will not argue that politics in correspondence. The accurate position is therefore this.

The book was selected on the published artistic criteria. After that selection became public, concerns were raised about inclusion in this edition. The Organiser then decided not to proceed with the exhibition of the book at IPF 2026. The festival does not accept that this amounts to a breach of the Open Call, or to a decision taken on nationality as a published criterion.

3.5 The Festival is presented by the Light Craft Foundation. Responsibility for the final exhibition content of an edition sits with the Organiser. It does not sit with the jury. The jury's role was to review eligible submissions on the published artistic criteria. That artistic selection is not being reopened, and it is not being denied. What was decided on 18 September 2026 was whether the book would form part of the final exhibition of this edition. That is an Organiser decision. The Festival will not reduce that institutional decision to a running commentary about named staff. The decision communicated to you at 20:39 on 18 September 2026 is the decision of the Organiser.

3.6 The Open Call did two different things, and they should not be collapsed into one.

First, it told applicants how eligible work would be assessed. Your photobook was assessed on those artistic criteria. The festival does not withdraw that artistic assessment.

"Second, as Organiser, the Festival retains ongoing curatorial and administrative discretion over the final composition of each edition's exhibitions, consistent with the Open Call's reservation of rights over the Festival's format and programme. That discretion applies until participation terms are concluded, and the Festival's position is that it applies here."

The selection email did not, on the Festival's position, conclude a binding participation contract. It required your written acceptance by 24 September 2026. That acceptance had not been given when the Festival wrote to you at 20:39 on 18 September 2026. Until acceptance in the form required by that email, the Festival's position is that it remained free to decide whether the book would be shown in this edition. The Open Call does not use the phrase "equal opportunity" as a separate legal promise. What it published was an open invitation to applicants from around the world, with no entry fee and no thematic restriction, and with stated artistic tests. The Festival does not accept that those published terms required it to exhibit every selected photobook once a selection email had been sent, or once a name had appeared on a public list. A public list is an announcement. It is not, by itself, a concluded contract, and it does not remove the Organiser's reserved power over the final exhibition. The Festival therefore does not accept that the decision of 18 September 2026 is a breach of the Open Call or of the selection criteria. The artistic criteria were applied at selection. The later decision was an Organiser decision about the final exhibition of this edition, taken under the Open Call as published and in circumstances where the participation terms had not been accepted.

4. Your email of 15:35 on 18 September 2026- You asked three questions:- For completeness:

Jerusalemites is not included in the final Photobook Exhibition at IPF 2026.

The absence of your name from the public list was not a temporary editorial or technical error that the Festival intended to correct by putting the name back.

You should not proceed with acceptance of the participation terms, with promotional materials, or with shipment of a physical copy for this edition.

5. You asked the Festival to preserve records and communications relating to the selection, the public listing, the subsequent removal, and the decision concerning your photobook. The Festival will retain the records it holds in relation to those matters, in the ordinary course of its administration. This letter does not accept that any separate legal duty has already arisen beyond the Festival's ordinary obligation to keep its own files. It does not authorise any third party to demand papers from the Festival. If a competent court or authority later requires production, the Festival will deal with that as required by law.

6. Your question as to what the festival is not doing in this letter:- The Festival is not offering to reopen the artistic jury process. The Festival is not offering to include the book in the IPF 2026 Photobook Exhibition. The Festival is not commenting on your Instagram, your other work, or any third-party campaign. The Festival is not asking you to withdraw any statement you have already made.

The Festival is not waiving any right, limitation, or defence available to it, including as to contract, jurisdiction, or governing law. If the participation terms had been accepted, they would have been governed by the laws of India, with disputes subject to the courts in Hyderabad, Telangana. The Festival's position is that those terms were not

accepted. The Festival does not, by this letter, submit to any other forum or any other law.

7. The Festival's decision stands, and Jerusalemites will not be exhibited at IPF 2026. The Festival believes this letter, together with its email of 18 September 2026, fully sets out its position and considers the matter closed on that basis. The festival's regard for the artistic quality of the work is unchanged, and it wishes you well with the book's future exhibition elsewhere.

Best Regards,

Rohit Reddy | Program Coordinator

Phone: +91-984-955-8107984-955-8107,

Indian Photo Festival - Hyderabad

#507, 3-2-64/120, Manikonda | Hyderabad, India - 500089