

REPORTERS SANS FRONTIÈRES

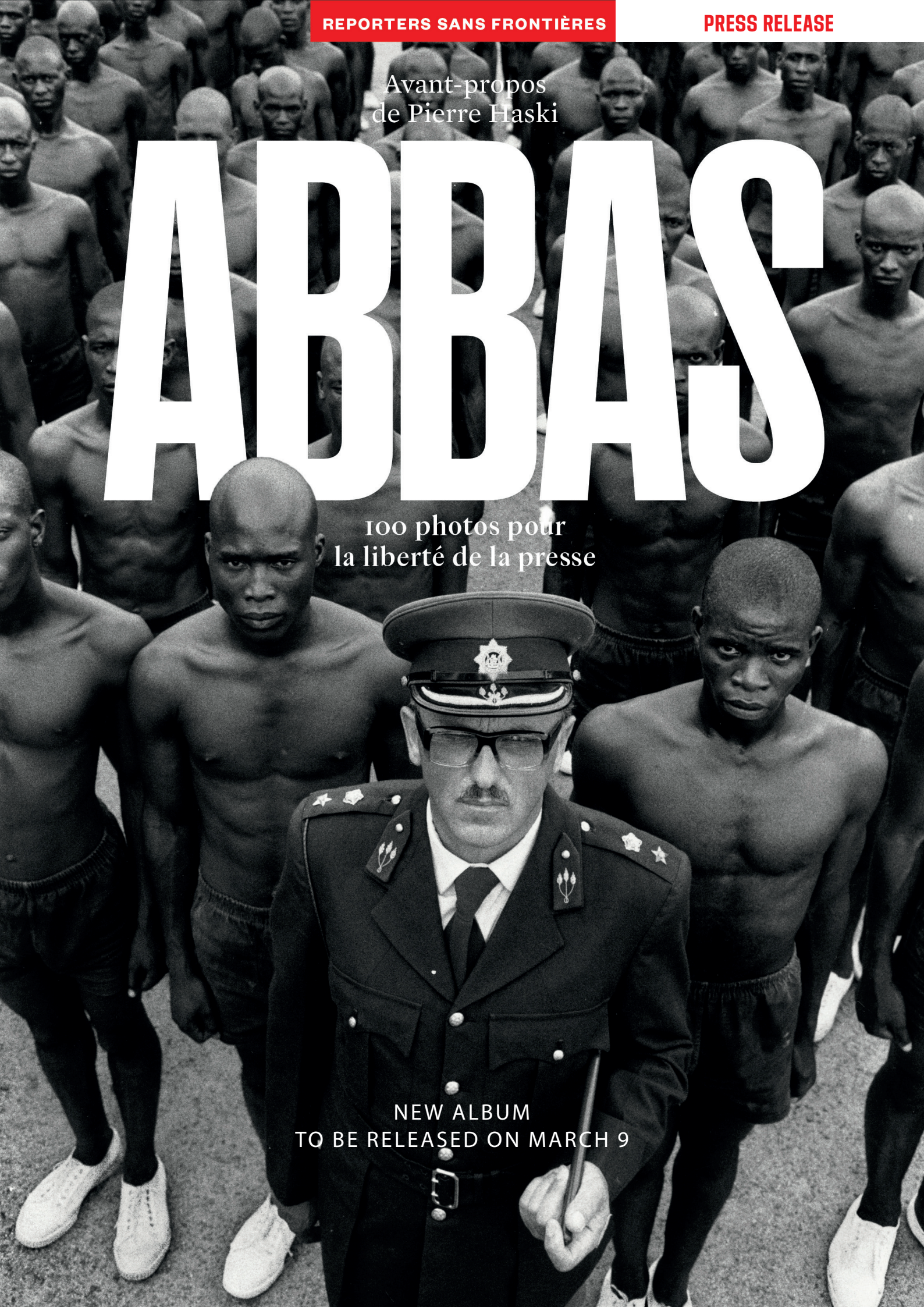
PRESS RELEASE

Avant-propos
de Pierre Haski

ABBAS

100 photos pour
la liberté de la presse

NEW ALBUM
TO BE RELEASED ON MARCH 9





Cairo, Egypt. October 1, 1970. A family mourns the death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser.
© Fonds Abbas Photos/Magnum Photos

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100 Photos for Press Freedom by Abbas

The collection of *RSF Albums for press freedom* pays tribute to the greatest photographers of the 20th century. After Robert Capa, Don McCullin, Raymond Depardon and many others, we now pay tribute to Abbas (1944-2018), the Iranian photographer who said he “*wrote with light*.” On the front line in Iran, South Africa, Biafra, Northern Ireland or Afghanistan, he who joked that “*Even when I photograph chaos, I try to order it*”, also bore witness for several decades to the relationship between humanity and the heavens. His death in 2018 bereaved the world of photography of one of its greatest storytellers. For the first time, his black and white images are brought together in a single album.



Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, 2013. ©© Fonds Abbas Photos/Magnum Photos

“It was one of his aspirations, and it is sad that we are not realising it until it is too late. It was a ten year old project, which we had talked about shortly before his death in 2018. He had arrived in a café in the Place du Palais-Royal in Paris with a complete portfolio, as if time was running out, as if it was necessary to publish in an obvious and urgent manner. For our part, we were convinced that we had time. Counting on time is a terrible mistake, and one that is paid for in cash. Abbas is no more, and if this is a book about him, it is a book without him.”

— **Christophe Deloire, Secretary-General of Reporters Without Borders**

As an Iranian who emigrated to Algeria and then to France, Abbas began his career at the end of the 1960s by reporting on political and social conflicts. In Tehran, in 1978, when the revolutionary movement began, he covered both the demonstrations for and against the autocratic power of the Shah. Personally and permanently revolted by the perversion of the Iranian revolution by religious extremists, Abbas strove until the end of his life to document the complex relationship between people, spirituality and the gods. Initially with monotheistic religions, but then also by searching among animists and shamans, even to followers of vodou in Haiti. He died in 2018 at the age of 74; but Abbas, an Iranian photographer of the world, kept his mind and eyes wide open all his life.

“This album is a tribute to a great humanist photographer, to a free man.”

— **Pierre Haski, close to Abbas since their encounter in South Africa in 1978, journalist and president of Reporters Without Borders.**



Tehran, Iran, 11 February 1979. A mullah in a sedan car on the day of the victory of the Islamic revolution.
© Fonds Abbas Photos/Magnum Photos

My work as a photographer is a thought process that comes to life in action and leads to meditation. Spontaneity – the suspended moment – occurs during the action, in the viewfinder. It is preceded by thinking about the subject and followed by meditation on the result, and it is there, in that exhilarating but fleeting moment, that the true writing of a photographer begins, in the sequencing of the images. To do it well, you have to think as a writer. But isn't photography all about "writing with light"? With one difference: the writer possesses his words while the photographer is possessed by his images, by the limits of reality that he or she must transcend in order not to become their prisoner.
— Abbas, ***The Suspended Moment***

The portfolio of a hundred pages, divided into four chapters illustrating each facet of Abbas's career (Chaos, Iran, Gods, Vision) opens with a foreword by **Pierre Haski**, President of RSF. It is illustrated by other previously unpublished texts: the «suspended moment» written by **Abbas** himself; a memorable meet-up with the colonel of apartheid he immortalized, by **Hamish Crooks**; a fraternal homage by **Ian Berry**; the vibrant testimonial to Iran by **Shirin Ebadi**, and a moving tribute by **Melisa Teo**.

With previously unpublished contributions by:
Ian Berry, photographer
Shirin Ebadi, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003
Hamish Crooks, son of Abbas
Melisa Teo, photographer and wife of Abbas
and a preface by **Pierre Haski**, journalist, and president of RSF

And also:
– A tribute to three defenders of press freedom: **Narges Mohammadi**, **Lina Attalah** and **Galina Arapova**.
– An uncompromising portrait of **Paul Biya**, president of Cameroon and predator of press freedom..
– A behind-the-scenes look at **Slidstvo.info** in Ukraine.

- A major name in 20th century photography
- The first monograph devoted to his work
- Previously unpublished texts and a preface by Pierre Haski
- A good buy at 12.50 euros
- All of the profits go to the NGO

Abbas

All about the photographer

Pierre Haski, close to Abbas, journalist and president of Reporters Without Borders

Abbas, an open eye

Abbas was a discreet but constant presence at the Annual General Meetings of Reporters Without Borders. He was keen on attending them, he told me, because the freedom to inform, to tell, to show the world, seemed to him all the more precious because he had so often seen it flouted and stamped down. Starting, of course, with the revolution in his own country of origin, Iran, first in an uprising against a harsh dictatorship, soon to be replaced by an equally relentless form of oppression. Contributing to RSF and traveling to vote at our General Assemblies was his way of defending his own freedom as a photographer and as a human being. This album is therefore a tribute to a great humanist photographer, to a free man.

Hamish Crooks, son of Abbas
The Colonel

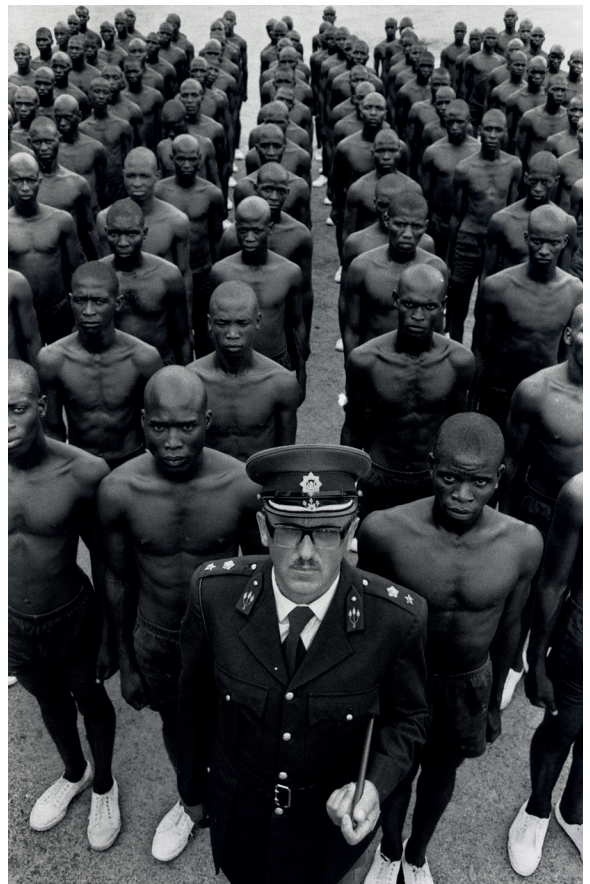
The photo is one of the most enduring images of the 20th century, summarizing the injustices, contradictions and realities of that bloody era. On the front page of magazines around the world, it helped raise public awareness of the racist, murderous ideology of the South African government.

Ian Berry, photographe, friend of Abbas
An absolute perfectionist

One of the lessons I learned from Abbas was his absolute perfectionism: as soon as he returned from an assignment, he meticulously selected, edited and captioned his photos.

Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize 2003
Women, Life, Freedom

Browsing through the pages of the section with Abbas' photographs of his home country, you get a better understanding of why the people of Iran turned away from autocratic power to embrace the revolution. And how the same people, who voted massively in favour of the new regime, now want to abolish it, by rising up again, forty-three years later. With as their motto, the will, and the wish that can already be seen in Abbas's photographs: Women, Life, and Freedom.



Hamanskraal, South Africa, 1978. Colonel S.J. Malan, head of the Black Police Academy, with his students.
© Fonds Abbas Photos/Magnum Photos

Melisa Teo, wife of Abbas and photographer
Shadow and Light

Despite all that he had accomplished, he remained modest and discreet: "When you have a vocation, you don't need ambition. Isn't the essence of photography in the act of taking pictures?" Abbas showed me by example the meaning of magnanimitas – greatness of the soul devoted to the common good through mastery of the self – not to be confused with its paronymic, narcissistic alter ego, magnitudo animi – a passion for greatness, heroic fury and a desire to impose one's being. His photos and stories have changed lives and inspired many. While some preached spirituality, he practised it.

Abbas the all-seeing eye



Vietnam, 1973 © Fonds Abbas Photos/Magnum Photos

Abbas Attar was born on **29 March 1944** in Khash in Iran. He spent his childhood in Algeria before emigrating to France.

Between 1970 and 1978, his reports on political and social conflicts such as in Biafra, Vietnam, Chile and South Africa were published in major international magazines.

In 1978, he returned to his home country to cover the Islamic revolution. After an exile of seventeen years, he returned there in 1997 and in 2002 published *Iran Diary*, a critical look at the history of his country.

In the early 1980's, Abbas travelled through Mexico. His photos resulted in *Return to Mexico, Journeys beyond the Mask*.

Between 1987 and 1994, he became interested in the resurgence of Islam in North Africa. His book

Allah O Akbar: A Journey Through Militant Islam strived to make the internal tensions that agitate Muslim society visible.

In the 1990's, he travelled through Christendom and published *Faces of Christianity*. At the outset of the 21st century, he became interested in animism and pondered about the return of the irrational in a world profoundly transformed by science and technology. This resulted in the publication of *Sur la Route des Esprits*.

Until the end of his life, Abbas worked on the dynamics of religions, vectors of culture and civilization more than of faith, sometimes replacing political ideologies. **In 2016**, Abbas published his last book *Gods I've Seen*.



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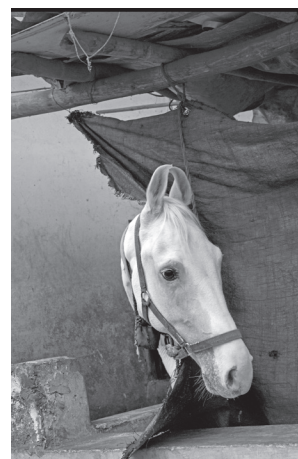
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1 Pristina, Kosovo, 1999. A Kosovar boy smokes amidst the ruins caused by NATO bombing, which forced the Serbian regime of Slobodan Milosevic to evacuate the province.

2 My Tho region, South Vietnam, 1972. A South Vietnamese army soldier leans on an American car.

3 Tehran, Iran, 11 February 1980. During celebrations for the first anniversary of the Islamic revolution, a young man fainted in the dense crowd.

4 Tehran, Iran, June 2001. A chic café.

5 Cairo, Egypt. 1 October 1970. A family mourns the death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

6 Tehran, Iran, 11 February 1979. A mullah in a sedan car on the day of the victory of the Islamic revolution.

7 Jerusalem, Israel, 2016. The Hasidic Belz sect celebrates Purim with a tish, a symbolic portion of bread and fish, in a large stadium-like hall under their synagogue.

8 Ipoh region, Malaysia, 1987. Schoolchildren of the Sufi sect al-Arqam.

9 Mexico City, Mexico, 1 November 1984. A little girl plays with skulls as part of the Day of the Dead ritual.

10 Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, 2013.

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Founded in 1985, Reporters Without Borders works for freedom, independence and pluralism in journalism all around the world. Given consultative status by the UN and UNESCO, the organisation based in Paris has 12 offices worldwide and correspondents in 130 countries. It actively supports journalists in practice and in the field, thanks to mobilization campaigns, legal and material support, physical safety systems and tools (bullet-proof vests, helmets, practical guides and insurance) and digital protection (digital security workshops). The NGO has become a key discussion partner for governments and international institutions and each year publishes the World Press Freedom Index, now a benchmark. The sale of RSF albums is a vital resource for the organisation (30% of its annual budget). With the support of its partners (France Messagerie, le SNDP, Culture Presse, Maison de la Presse and Mag Presse network, Mediakiosk, Promap, Relay, Interforum, la Fnac, and all of the outlets that distribute the album free of charge), profits from sales of the albums are donated in full to the association.