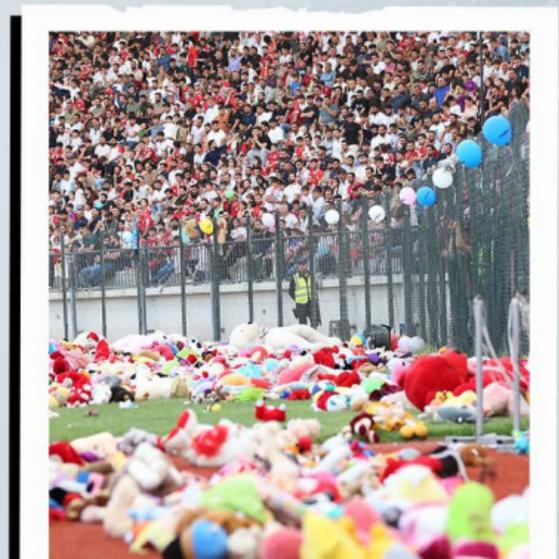




Winning the FIFA Best Fan Award

| A Campaign by AVA Sports for Zakho SC



OVERVIEW

In May 2025, supporters of Zakho Sports Club captured international attention during a match by throwing thousands of stuffed toys onto the pitch. The toys were collected and donated to children suffering from illnesses – an act of humanitarian solidarity that led to their nomination for FIFA’s “The Best” Fan Award 2025.



Following the nomination, AVA Sports – the sports division of AVA Media – designed and executed a campaign to mobilize votes locally and globally.



THE CHALLENGE

The road to victory was far from easy. AVA Sports campaign had to overcome significant challenges



1. Digital Literacy & Voting Access

Voting system required online participation & introducing a large audience to the system



3. International Visibility

Elevating a regional club's visibility to a global audience required strategic storytelling and amplification.



2. Global Competition

Competing against two global fan bases.



4. Fragmented Audience Geography

Connecting audiences across regions, cities, and diaspora communities through coordinated national mobilization.





STRATEGY & APPROACH

AVA Sports designed and executed a holistic, multi-level strategy that transformed a sports voting process into a national engagement movement.

1 Leadership & High-Level Endorsements

The social media voting challenge received high-level support. H.E. Masrour Barzani, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, publicly cast his vote and shared his participation online, inspiring nationwide engagement.



2 Digital & Social Media Engagement



- Step-by-step instructional content for online voting



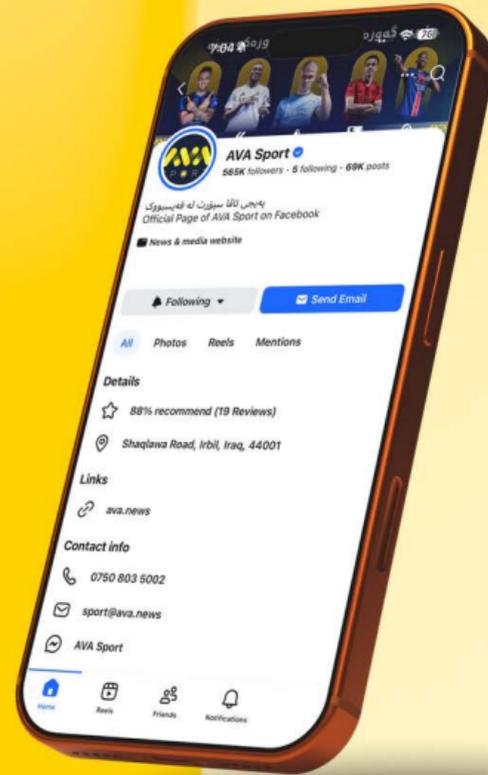
- High-frequency posting across platforms



- Integration of influencers and public figures



- Creation of campaign-specific music and cultural content



3 Community Mobilization & On-Ground Activities



- Voting support tents were opened in multiple cities
- Reporters conducted field visits in all cities across Iraq and KRI
- Zakho SC fans were hosted in AVA studios
- Incentives such as iPhones and prizes were offered to voters
- Restaurants partnered in the challenge, offering free meals to voters

4 Media Production & Cultural Amplification



- Dedicated television programs and special segments
- Field reportages across cities
- Interviews with artists, business leaders, and politicians



ENGAGEMENT & REACH

The campaign mobilized unprecedented levels of engagement across multiple platforms.



1.2
billion



345
million



289
million



33
million



8
million

THE BEST

COMMUNITY IMPACT & OUTCOMES



Winner – FIFA The Best Fan Award 2025

In December 2025, FIFA officially announced Zakho SC fans as the winners of the FIFA “The Best” Fan Award – marking a historic global recognition for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Beyond the trophy, the campaign generated broader impact:

- Global recognition for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
- Strengthened unity across regions and communities
- Diaspora engagement and reconnection
- Elevated Iraqi and Kurdish sports identity internationally
- Expanded visibility of Zakho SC on the global football stage



WHAT MADE THIS INNOVATIVE

The initiative redefined sports engagement in the region through:

- Turning a digital voting process into a civic mobilization movement
- Converting national pride into measurable global victory
- Integrating political, cultural, commercial, and community actors into a unified strategy
- Blending online and offline mobilization at scale
- Gamifying participation through challenges and incentives

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Shorty Awards 2026 Entry

Local Campaign Category

