

For Immediate Release

Human Rights Watch International Film Festival Celebrates 20 Years

Program of 32 Films from 17 Countries, Including 26 New York Premieres

**“A film festival that wagers hope against injustice, imagination against apathy.”
–Ariel Dorfman**

Co-presented by The Film Society of Lincoln Center, June 11-25, 2009

(New York, May 13, 2009) – The Human Rights Watch International Film Festival will return to The Film Society of Lincoln Center’s Walter Reade Theater in June for its 20th anniversary with a packed program of films dedicated to raising awareness of human rights issues around the world (<http://www.hrw.org/en/iff/new-york>). The festival, co-presented by Human Rights Watch and The Film Society, will run from June 11 to 25, featuring 21 feature-length films and 11 shorts from 17 countries, including 26 New York premieres.

“When the festival began 20 years ago, it was a rare oasis for people to see compelling and timely human rights films,” said John Biaggi, director of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. “Now that human rights are in the mainstream, these films are not only central to global discussions about rights, but also can effect powerful change.”

For its 20th anniversary program, the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival will host many returning filmmakers. One is the renowned Costa-Gavras, who will make his third visit to the festival to present the June 11 **Benefit Screening** of his latest drama, *[Eden Is West](#)*. The director draws on his early experience of exile to tell this bittersweet tale about an illegal migrant in Europe, whose dream is to reach Paris.

Pamela Yates, who will bring her fourth film to the festival, will be at the June 12 **Opening Night** presentation of *[The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court](#)*, which chronicles the work of the ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, and his team as they face down warlords, rebel leaders, and even heads of state in bringing perpetrators of crimes against humanity to justice.

The pursuit of justice takes a more personal form in *[My Neighbor, My Killer](#)*, an emotional portrait of a tiny Rwandan village as it goes through a remarkable experiment in community-based justice after the cataclysmic violence of the 1994 genocide. The director, Anne Aghion, will receive the festival’s **Nestor Almendros Award** for courage in filmmaking for this final film (and third in the festival) in her series on Rwanda’s Gacaca Tribunals – open-air hearings created by the government for citizens to judge their neighbors who took part in the massacre. The film probes the difficult steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation, asking what it means to have the man who killed your family living next door.

Three more featured documentaries highlight social issues from Africa. Gabriela and Sally Gutierrez Dewar's [Tapologo](#) looks at a group of HIV-positive former sex workers in South Africa who are now home caregivers to others living with HIV. Returning filmmakers Barbara Attie and Janet Goldwater's [Mrs. Goundo's Daughter](#) is the story of a Malian woman's fight for political asylum in the US to protect her baby daughter from the traditional practice of female genital mutilation. Landon Van Soest and Jeremy Levine's [Good Fortune](#) explores, through the intimate portraits of two Kenyans living in poverty, how international efforts to alleviate poverty in Africa may be undermining the very communities they aim to benefit.

Afghanistan is another country in the spotlight at this year's event. Havana Marking's [Afghan Star](#), this year's **Festival Centerpiece**, follows the dramatic stories of four contestants – including two women – as they risk all to become their nation's answer to *American Idol*. Barmak Akram's drama [Kabuli Kid](#) provides an incisive look at daily life in Kabul as it follows the adventures of a taxi driver and the baby he finds abandoned in his cab. Fabrizio Lazzaretti and Paolo Santolini's [Back Home Tomorrow](#) highlights the work of the Italian aid organization Emergency through the stories of a young boy recuperating in a Kabuli hospital after losing his hand in a landmine accident, and a teenager in Sudan who has to undergo a drastic heart operation.

Fabrizio Lazzaretti will also be present for the screening of his Afghanistan-set documentary [Jung: In the Land of the Mujaheddin](#) (2000), part of the festival's 20th anniversary showcase of five past recipients of the Nestor Almendros Award. Other acclaimed films featured are Barbara Sonneborn's [Regret to Inform](#) (1998), Hany Abu-Assad's [Ford Transit](#) (2002), Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman's [Born Into Brothels](#) (2003), and James Longley's [Iraq in Fragments](#) (2006).

The Human Rights Watch International Film Festival will also welcome back a special guest, the Russian activist Garry Kasparov, for a screening of Masha Novikova's [In the Holy Fire of Revolution](#), a look at Vladimir Putin's Russia through a year on the campaign trail with Kasparov, the chess champion turned politician.

Two other festival favorites, Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno – also known as The Yes Men – will be back infiltrating corporate corridors with outrageous political pranks in the **Closing Night** selection, [The Yes Men Fix the World](#).

Other program highlights include [Look Into My Eyes](#), Naftaly Gliksberg's provocative investigation into anti-Semitism in the world today; Aida Begic's [Snow](#), a moving drama of life in a post-war Bosnian village; Jawad Metni's [Remnants of a War](#), which charts the efforts of Lebanese citizens to remove thousands of undetonated cluster bombs; and two exceptional films on environmental themes – Joe Berlinger's [Crude](#), a dramatic look at the legal battle between environmental activists and Chevron over the oil company's practices in Ecuador, and Franny Armstrong's futuristic docudrama [The Age of Stupid](#), a call to action on climate change starring Pete Postlethwaite.

The festival will also present the second edition of [Youth Producing Change](#). Adobe Youth Voices, the global initiative of the Adobe Foundation, is the founding presenter of this special program of 10 short films created by youth from across the globe. Armed with digital cameras and their own boundless creativity, these young people turn the lens on their own lives and share their visions of change. Many of the teenage filmmakers – from Seattle to Mozambique – will make the trip to New York to present their work.

In conjunction with this year's film program, the photo exhibit [Long Story Bit by Bit: Liberia Retold](#) will be featured in the Frieda and Roy Furman Gallery at the Walter Reade Theater. Tim Hetherington's photographs, from his recently published book of the same name, explore the dynamics of power, international complicity, and the search for justice in recent Liberian history.

Tickets and Directions

All films will be screened at the Walter Reade Theater at The Film Society of Lincoln Center 165 West 65th Street, upper level (between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave.).

Single screening tickets for the 2009 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival are \$11 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and \$7 for Film Society members, students (w/ID), and children (6-12, accompanied by an adult). They are available at both the Walter Reade Theater box office (cash only) and online at www.filmlinc.com. HRWIFF Series Pass (\$40 public/\$30 Film Society member) admits one person to five titles in the festival. It is available only at the Walter Reade Theater box office. Additional information is available online at www.filmlinc.com and <http://www.hrw.org/iff/>, or by calling (212) 875-5600.

To download the full program with detailed synopses and a calendar of screenings, please visit:

- Festival program: <http://www.hrwgraphics.com/filmfestival/download/programNY2009.pdf> (color PDF)
- Schedule at a glance: <http://www.hrw.org/en/iff-calendar/nyc/2009/06/all>

The following filmmakers will attend screenings of their films:

- Havana Marking, *Afghan Star* (June 20-28)
- Fabrizio Lazzaretti and Paolo Santolini, *Back Home Tomorrow* (June 18-22)
- Ross Kauffman, *Born Into Brothels* (based in NY, TBC)
- Joe Berlinger, *Crude* (based in NY)
- Costa-Gavras and Michèle Ray-Gavras, *Eden Is West* (June 6-13)
- Landon Van Soest and Jeremy Levine, *Good Fortune* (based in NY)
- Film subject Garry Kasparov, *In the Holy Fire of Revolution* (June 15)
- Naftaly Gliksberg, *Look Into My Eyes* (June 19-24)
- Barbara Attie and Janet Goldwater, *Mrs. Goundo's Daughter* (June 21-24)
- Anne Aghion, *My Neighbor, My Killer* (based in NY)

- Pamela Yates, Peter Kinoy and Paco de Onís, *The Reckoning* (based in NY)
- Barbara Sonneborn, *Regret to Inform* (TBC)
- Jawad Metni, *Remnants of a War* (based in NY)
- Sally Gutierrez Dewar, *Tapologo* (June 22-26)
- Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, *The Yes Men Fix the World* (based in NY)
- Youth Producing Change filmmakers of *I Live in Mozambique*, *Thoughts in a Hijab*, *Noè's Story*, *Aquafinito*, *It's Not About Sex*, and *In My Shoes* (various dates)
- Tim Hetherington, photographer, *Long Story Bit by Bit: Liberia Retold* (based in NY)

Press Screenings:

All screenings will take place at **11:00 a.m.** at the Walter Reade Theater.

RSVP to: susan@norget.com, or pkim@filmlinc.com, or (212) 431-0090

- **Tuesday, May 26** – *The Reckoning* (95m)
- **Wednesday, May 27** – *Afghan Star* (87m)
- **Thursday, May 28** – *Look Into My Eyes* (80m)
- **Friday, May 29** – *My Neighbor, My Killer* (80m)

For additional screening information and downloadable images, please visit the online press offices at:

- Human Rights Watch International Film Festival: <http://www.hrw.org/iff>
- The Film Society of Lincoln Center: www.filmlinc.com/press (password: press)

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