



Press release - Geneva, March 16, 2024

CLOSING AND AWARDS OF THE 22ND EDITION OF FIFDH

The 22nd edition of the Geneva International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights has drawn to a close with resounding success. The compelling power of imagery, cinema, and dialogue spanning over 10 days has truly captivated the audience. The Festival welcomed over 30'000 festival-goers and hosted more than 250 guests from all walks of life, who shared their insights in front of packed venues and at strategic locations to further their respective causes. The Festival brought together a diverse range of artistic, scientific, political, and activist perspectives, encouraging audiences to consider collective solutions and take meaningful action.

AWARD WINNING FILMS

The Geneva Grand Prize was awarded to Edward Lovelace's ***Name Me Lawand***, a deeply moving narrative portraying the journey of a deaf Kurdish teenager in exile who discovers the power of communication, allowing him to embrace the world around him. The Sergio Vieira de Mello Prize is awarded to Mohamed Jabaly's ***Life is Beautiful***, a Palestinian film showcased during a dedicated event honouring those who portray the narratives of the Palestinian people through documentaries, photography and film.

The Fiction Grand Prize was jointly awarded to the Chechen film ***The Cage is Looking for a Bird*** by Malika Musaeva and the Chilean film ***The Settlers*** by Felipe Gálvez. The OMCT Prize was awarded to Jialing Zhang's film ***Total Trust***, which sheds light on how artificial intelligence is employed as a tool for mass surveillance in China.

*Find the complete list of winners at the bottom of this press release.



HIGHLIGHTS AND IMPACT OF THE FIFDH

"Leave FIFDH screenings empowered with a unique ability: to carry forward the energy and vitality of life. We have a duty to preserve democracy and peace where they already exist. And it is our duty to fight for them where they are being forged." stated Grand Reporter **Maurine Mercier** during the FIFDH opening ceremony.

These words resonate with FIFDH's aim to inspire its audiences to take action and actively advocate for the defense of human rights.

In response to the plea made by Ukrainians, echoed by **Maurine Mercier**, **Dmitry Muratov**, former editor-in-chief of *Novaya Gazeta* and recipient of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize, called for the release of journalists and artists who are political prisoners in Russia in front of a captivated audience.

Dmitry Muratov emphasised that: *"Russian journalists in exile are carrying out their work at a tremendous cost. Although it's impossible to compare this cost to the devastation in Ukraine. We are the most independent media in the world, sustained solely by our readers' contributions, who face risks as significant as ours."*



A poignant moment unfolded as the audience rose in a standing ovation for Palestinian photojournalist **Motaz Azaiza**, who spent four months documenting the war in Gaza. For Motaz, the FIFDH marked his inaugural trip to Europe, adding to the significance of the occasion. As part of its advocacy initiatives, the FIFDH, in collaboration with its partner ISHR, facilitated meetings between Motaz Azaiza and diplomats, diverse UN, and NGO representatives in Geneva. He was notably granted a private audience with **Volker Türk**, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and he shared his firsthand experiences with 60 diplomats from permanent missions in Geneva. Through such endeavors, the FIFDH plays a pivotal role in amplifying the voices of human rights defenders, extending their reach beyond the confines of the Festival stage.

The Festival also provided a rare space for dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli peace activists, featuring an evening of discussion between **Ali Abu Awwad**, a Palestinian peace activist, and **May Pundak**, an Israeli activist and founder of *A land for all*.

"There will be a day after. I have to admit that, with the pictures we are seeing, it is very difficult to imagine any future for Gaza. But to echo Ali, we have no choice. Live together or die together." May Pundak, on the 12th of March on FIFDH's stage.

For the first time, the FIFDH audience was prompted to question and experience firsthand the impact of a documentary on their worldview. The audience was surveyed before and after the screening of **Lisa Gerig's** film *The Hearing (L'Audition)*: 53% of spectators reported that their perception of the asylum process in Switzerland had changed after viewing the film.



WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES

Former Malian minister and writer **Aminata Dramane Traoré** joined journalist and writer **Rokhaya Diallo** on stage for a discussion about the role of women in environmental movements. *"You can try to silence us, as women. But we push back; we embody life (...) We need freedom. The freedom to live, to inhabit our lands, and to reclaim control over production."*

Angela Davis' presence, an icon of the civil rights movement in the United States, was greeted with enthusiasm by the Geneva audience, as well as by Swiss and international media, in a packed venue where excitement filled the air. During a panel discussion on police brutality, Angela Davis engaged in conversation with **Assa Traoré**, a French anti-racist activist, and **Yasser Louati**, a journalist and central figure in **Joseph Paris's** film *The Flag (Le repli)*, discussing the urgent need to rethink our society and confront systemic racism. It was an inspiring exchange about resilience and the ongoing struggle for social justice.

Among the guests at the 22nd edition was former Afghan Minister, now in exile, **Nargis Nehan**, who spoke about the battles that she wages for the rights of Afghan women. The event organised at FIFDH for the world premiere of **Aeyliya Husain** and **Amie Williams'** film *An Unfinished Journey* provided an opportunity to amplify the international campaign *#EndGenderApartheid*, aimed at recognising gender-based apartheid as a crime under international law.

FIFDH also brought attention to frequently overlooked injustices, such as the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the political situation in Belarus, legal gaps concerning working conditions at sea, and the implications of artificial intelligence development. Committed to addressing various systemic discriminations, FIFDH hosted an event on the sexual rights of people with disabilities, featuring a discussion with Brazilian filmmaker **Daniel Gonçalves**, jury member and filmmaker **Ella Glendining**, and disability rights activists **Elisa Rojas** and **Elena Pont**, moderated by journalist **Malick Reinhard**.



PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMME: 6TH EDITION OF IMPACT DAYS

The professional programme of FIFDH, Impact Days, has become an essential hub for impact cinema on an international scale. Over 200 participants from 42 countries gathered for conferences, workshops, and meetings organized over three days. Impact Days provides filmmakers with the opportunity to expand their networks and forge collaborations with key players in the international ecosystem. Through case studies and discussions with notable speakers, the teams of the 16 selected projects were able to develop campaigns aimed at advancing the causes addressed in their films. The winners of the professional programme can be found in the awards section of this press release.



FIFDH EXTENDS BEYOND ITS 10-DAY FESTIVAL

The 22nd edition of the FIFDH carries on until Sunday evening with a closing event crafted as a call to action: ***Re-enchanting hope facing global challenge***. Additionally, the award-winning films will be screened again on Sunday afternoon at the Cinémas du Grütli.

Many of the films selected for the Festival will also be available in theaters across French-speaking Switzerland: including ***Il reste encore demain*** by Paola Cortellesi, ***Goodbye Julia*** by Mohamed Kordofani, ***Green Border*** by Agnieszka Holland, as well as ***Augure*** by artist and director Balaji, ***The Hearing (L'Audition)*** by Lisa Gerig, and many more. Various screenings will also be organised by the Festival's cultural mediation team throughout the year in the Canton of Geneva, starting with March 20th with the film ***We Will Not Fade Away*** by Alisa Kovalenko in the municipality of Plan-les-Ouates.

It's also noteworthy that, thanks to FIFDH's new digital platform, accessible to all, audiences now have the opportunity to view all of the festival's forums, which will be available for replay on the ***Resources and Media*** section of the fifdh.org website.

The 23rd edition of the FIFDH will take place from March 7 to 16, 2025.

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2024 AWARDS

The award-winning films will be screened on Sunday, March 17, at the Cinémas du Grütli. For itineraries and information, visit fifdh.org.

CREATIVE DOCUMENTARY SECTION

The International Creative Documentary Jury comprises Alain Kassanda, Ella Glendining, Mariana Lorenzo (also known as Maremoto), Chadi Aoun, and Abdul Aziz Muhamat.

Geneva Grand Prix

CHF 10,000 OFFERED BY THE CITY OF GENEVA

Name Me Lawand by Edward Lovelace

"From a disability politics perspective, this film is progressive and powerful. The character of Lawand becomes politicized, embracing his deafness as integral to his identity rather than a barrier to overcome. Through immersive filmmaking and intricate sound design, we are pulled into the intimate odyssey of a young boy navigating childhood trauma and displacement, all while striving to find his place in today's difficult world. A tribute to all the children out there, facing the incredible."

The Gilda Vieira de Mello Prize, in honor of her son Sergio Vieira de Mello

CHF 5,000 OFFERED BY THE BARBARA HENDRICKS FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Awarded by the International Jury

Life is Beautiful by Mohamed Jabaly

"Gaza as depicted in Life is Beautiful no longer exists."

Its streets, squares and the faces that populate filmmaker Mohamed Jabaly's memories have been eradicated in the ongoing genocide in Palestine. What we are left with are the images that tell of the past, already under Israeli occupation.

The violence of the borders, but also the solidarity and determination of an individual to lead a dignified existence. Cinema becomes the compass of an odyssey that takes us all to Gaza."

The Youth Jury Prize - Documentary

CHF 1,000 OFFERED BY PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL (PBI)

The jury is comprised of Alba Amos, Audrey Bado, Xochitl Bechade, Lucia Choffat, Tristan Engel, and Vincent Schmocker.

Photophobia by Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík

"A film distinguished by its refined and poetic aesthetic. It tactfully balances subtlety, delicacy, and humor, yet remains poignant in its portrayal of the harsh realities of war. The film illuminates a broader humanitarian issue that

extends beyond the political landscape of the conflict in Ukraine, focusing on the story of Nikita, a child trapped along with numerous others in the depths of a subway station mere kilometers from the front lines."

FICTION SECTION

Fiction Grand Prize

CHF 10,000 OFFERED BY THE HÉLÈNE AND VICTOR BARBOUR FOUNDATION

The International Jury, represented by Sepideh Farsi, Meenakshi Shedde, Flavia Zanon, and Thierry Oppikofer.

Two debut films, tied for first place, stood out for the virtuosity of their cinematic approach.

The Cage is Looking for a Bird by Malika Musaeva

"The film portrays women in a subtle yet powerful manner, depicting intergenerational dialogue as a potential catalyst for profound social change."

&

The Settlers by Felipe Gálvez

"A film which impressed the jury with its formal mastery in service of an uncompromising narrative, prompting us to reflect on our relationship with the world and history."

Young Jury Prize - Fiction

CHF 1,000 OFFERED BY THE EDUKI FOUNDATION

The jury is composed of Tala Benhattat, Juliette Hvala, Luise Lackner, Léa Noirjean, Alessia Pierdomenico and Mathieu Sormani from Collège de Candolle.

Green Border by Agnieszka Holland

Released in theaters on March 27, 2024

"For its realism and aestheticism, often disconcerting given the atrocity on display, this film moved us as much as it revolted us. In the age of social networking, ideas polarize and dialogue breaks down. Distant realities struggle to hold our attention for more than a few days. So, as a reminder that Amina, Bashir, their children and so many others exist, we award our Prize to Agnieszka Holland's Green Border."

FOCUS COMPETITION

The OMCT Prize

CHF 5'000 OFFERED BY THE WORLD ORGANISATION AGAINST TORTURE - OMCT given to a filmmaker whose work exemplifies their dedication to human rights, to support the development of their upcoming film project.

Total Trust by Jialing Zhang

"Unveiling what appears to be a real-life Orwellian 1984 scenario, the documentary vividly portrays the persecution of Chinese human rights defenders and exposes the use of cutting-edge state surveillance technology tools to tightly control the lives of millions of people. This disconcerting image of rising authoritarianism prompts an important question: "Is a future controlled by technology, where we

are no longer free to exercise our rights, a real risk for us all?" The prohibition of torture is what allows individuals to shape their personality and views, and establish their dignity, which is the very essence of being human."

IMPACT DAYS SECTION

Storyboard Impact Strategy Award

CHF 10,000 OFFERED BY STORYBOARD COLLECTIVE'S IMPACT FUND

This award aims at strengthening impact media production capabilities through strategic partnerships and direct grants.

Hakuchu Munayta by Augusto Zegarra

"The film serves as a poignant recognition of a diverse community united by a shared language — and an inspiring rallying cry to embrace and celebrate this language and community." - Patricia Finneran, The StoryBoard Collective

Sublimages Impact Award

Translation and subtitling of a film from the selection, graciously provided by Sublimages, aimed at reaching an identified target audience as part of its impact strategy.

Brotherhood of Weeping Men by Helena de Castro

"Given its originality and relevance, along with its captivating approach, translating it into Spanish could have a profound impact in Latin America." Manuel Soubies, CEO of Sublimages

Impact Africa: Community Screening Grant

PROVISION OF A SOLAR-POWERED PROJECTOR WITH TRAINING AND A GRANT OF CHF 5,000, OFFERED BY THE STORYBOARD COLLECTIVE'S AND SUNSHINE CINEMA

The Battle for Laikipia by Daphné Matziaraki & Peter Murimi

Producer: Toni Kamau
Impact Producer: Elsie Kariuki

"We need many stories to address the legacy of colonialism, and now also the impact of climate change. To this end, we are pleased to announce an additional Impact Africa grant for community screenings. This is a multifaceted story that challenges assumptions and calls for collective solutions."

CULTURAL ACTIONS SECTION

Artopie Award Prize

The Artopie jury is composed of young teenagers from various HUG units.

It's Always Been Me by Julie Bezerra Madsen

"The tales of Max and Bastian deeply resonated with us. Their exploration of gender identity struck a chord. We were especially drawn to the film's engaging rhythm and its open-minded approach."

Champ-Dollon Men's Jury Prize

Un jour ça ira by Stan & Edouard Zambeaux

"I've learned to travel light, I'm a serial mover — Where are my roots?" We each discovered this film with our differences, skin color, backgrounds, and yet, sharing the same values. Respect, mutual aid, empathy, courage, hope, the strength to continue despite obstacles, love of a mother, of a son, love for others. No matter where people come from, under the same roof, we all move forward in the same direction. Let's open our eyes, today as well as tomorrow, one day it will be fine."

Champ-Dollon Women's Jury Prize

A Northern Soul by Sean McAllister

"This film motivated us, it told us not to give up. No matter the challenges we face or will face. We don't give up. Keep on helping the children, so they can imagine a better future. With this jury workshop, even the birds in the cages were able to spread their wings and travel. So we thank you from the bottom of our hearts, from the echoes of our world."

La Brenaz Jury Prize

Un jour ça ira by Stan & Edouard Zambeaux

"We were deeply moved by 'Un jour ça ira' by Stan and Edouard Zambeaux. This film, brimming with emotions and love, transcends the mere theme of immigration; it delves deeper. It sheds light on a myriad of challenges that provoke introspection and reflection. We commend the courage and resilience of those striving for a better life. In the words of Djibi, 'She's my princess, she's my mother, the weight of the suitcases contrasting with the lightness of my life'."