



Between Anger and Tenderness: Cinema to Rethink the World

Programme Announcement for the 23rd Edition of the FIFDH

Geneva, 13th February 2025 – From 7th to 16th March, the 23rd edition of the FIFDH calls on us to re-examine our political systems and forge community in the face of the rise of far right movements as well as the threat they pose to fundamental rights. The Festival seeks to bring people together around collective approaches that foster action. This edition features many inspiring guests, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate **Oleksandra Matviichuk**, activist **Paul Watson**, author **Douglas Kennedy**, journalist **Salomé Saqué**, surgeon **Ghassan Abu Sittah** and actress **Ángela Molina** (*Cosmos*, by **Germinal Roaux**).

Over the course of ten days, the FIFDH highlights the power of cinema to transform dominant narratives and imagine new futures. Through 162 events, this 23rd edition brings together over 260 personalities and filmmakers committed to defending human rights. “The guests at this edition encourage us to rethink the collective, to place care and solidarity at the centre of our relationships and to refuse to give in to astonishment in the face of deadly conflicts, declining freedoms and disregard for international law,” say FIFDH co-editorial directors Laura Longobardi and Laila Alonso Huarte.

The rise of extremism: a global threat to our freedoms

From the United States to Europe, radicalised political parties have gained ground on the world stage, unified by a common rhetoric that threatens our fundamental freedoms. Several films and Forums explore this phenomenon, including ***The Last Republican*** by Steve Pink, which follows politician **Adam Kinzinger**, at the forefront of denouncing Donald Trump's responsibility for the 2021 Capitol attack. Shown in its European Premiere, the film introduces the Forum *Where are the United States headed?* featuring author **Douglas Kennedy**.

Exacerbated by social media, these shifts manifest in increasingly alarming hate speech. Two debates delve into this issue, preceded by the screenings of ***Hacking Hate*** by Simon Klose and ***Undercover: Exposing the Far Right*** by Havana Marking. Two investigations into Europe's hidden far right currents: the first film

examines highly organised, large-scale online action, while the second infiltrates British neo-fascist circles, laying bare the unfiltered views of its key figures.

Stories from a Middle East under pressure

The devastating conflicts in the Middle East, redrawing regional geopolitical balances, are examined through a cross-cutting lens, with the screening of ***A State of Passion*** by Carol Mansour and Muna Khalidi, in its International Premiere. The film follows British-Palestinian surgeon **Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah**, operating under bombardment in Gaza, as well as his advocacy efforts with institutions and the media. He will appear in a Spotlight alongside OHCHR Special Rapporteur **Francesca Albanese**. Meanwhile, audiences can discover ***The Bibi Files*** by **Alexis Bloom**, shortlisted for the 2025 Oscars, which probes the corruption dynamics and the personal interests of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in prolonging the conflict in Gaza.

Civil society's struggles and resilience

Grappling with its own profound crises, Lebanon is the focus of the Forum ***Lebanese resilience put to the test***, featuring, among others, Franco-Lebanese writer and photographer **Sabyl Ghoussoub** (Prix Goncourt des lycéens 2022). The discussion will be preceded by the documentary ***To Close Your Eyes and See Fire***, by Nicola von Leffern and Jakob Carl Sauer.

In the Spotlight ***Sudan: civil society ignored in a forgotten war***, linked to the film ***Khartoum*** –produced and directed by a collective of Sudanese filmmakers, also selected for the Berlinale–, the spotlight focuses on one of today's biggest humanitarian disasters, neglected by both media and international politics.

Switzerland in the hot Seat: the future of humanitarian law

International cooperation is under increasing pressure and facing major budget cuts. Switzerland finds itself at the heart of discussions, as such political decisions risk having a lasting impact on vulnerable populations, on international Geneva and on the image of a country that has long defended its neutrality through its humanitarian commitment. These issues are at the heart of the debate ***UNRWA called into question: is Humanitarian Law dead?*** featuring, among others, UNRWA Commissioner-General **Philippe Lazzarini** and former Swiss Ambassador to Israel **Jean-Daniel Ruch**. The Forum will be preceded by ***UNRWA, 75 ans d'une histoire provisoire*** by Lyana Saleh and Nicolas Wadimoff, shown in its World Premiere.

Feminist struggles on the front lines

In light of the global rollback of women's rights and gender minorities, the FIFDH honours those who demand and fight for their rights. In the Fiction Competition, three feature films presented in Swiss Premieres highlight stories from around the world. ***Manas*** (Giornate degli Autori Venezia, Director's Award) by Marianna Brennand transports us to the Amazon; ***Sugar Island*** by Johanné Gómez Terrero takes place in the Dominican Republic; and ***Norah*** (Special Mention Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2024) by Tawik Alzaidi is set in Saudi Arabia. These films follow women determined to forge their own paths in a patriarchal world that aims to confine them.

Three discussions take the exploration further. Echoing the global impact of the Mazan trial, the Forum *Gender-based violence: ending silence and shame* –featuring journalist **Giulia Foïs**— sheds light on the shame that still too often weighs heavily on survivors. The Swiss Premiere of ***Writing Hawa*** precedes the Spotlight *The unwavering strength of Afghan women*, with director **Najiba Noori** and her mother, **Hawa Noori**, in attendance. Finally, gender discrimination in sports is addressed in the Forum *Sport as a mirror of social norms*, with sprinter **Halba Diouf** and boxer **Maho Bah-Villemagne**.

From anger to care: seeking solutions in a world in crisis

Lastly, the 23rd edition highlights one crucial idea: transforming outrage and anger into solidarity and kindness in the face of political, environmental, and institutional upheaval. ***The Tender Revolution***, directed by **Annelie Boroş**, explores the lives of four people striving for social change and invites us to adopt a “tender revolution”. Meanwhile, ***Queer Camp*** by **Chris Westendorp** and **Lucas van der Rhee** follows 65 young people in a summer camp dedicated to queer youth, a space of self-love and communal compassion that celebrates diversity and acceptance –films that underscore the importance of both personal and collective well-being.

International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights (FIFDH)

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