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**NEWS RELEASE**

## POWERFUL, PASSIONATE AND PROVOCATIVE STORIES PACK TIFF'S HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH FILM FESTIVAL LINEUP Featuring works from Syria, Canada, Egypt, Afghanistan and more

March 29 to April 6 at TIFF Bell Lightbox

**TORONTO** — TIFF® and Human Rights Watch co-present Toronto's 14th annual **Human Rights Watch Film Festival**, with a poignant eight-film lineup that galvanizes an impassioned call for social change through extraordinary stories of struggle, survival and hope. Showcasing brave cinematic works at the forefront of the human rights movement, the festival presents documentary feature films from **Afghanistan, Canada, China, Egypt, France, the United States, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Syria, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.**

Running from **March 29 to April 6** at TIFF Bell Lightbox, the festival kicks off with an opening night fundraising reception followed by a screening of ***A Syrian Love Story*** — a documentary that dives into the refugee experience through the telling of a love story between a Palestinian freedom fighter and a Syrian revolutionary who met as political prisoners — and closes with Nick de Pencier's ***Black Code***, which follows cyber stewards who travel the world to expose unprecedented levels of global digital espionage. Additional highlights include the Toronto premiere of ***Tickling Giants***, which follows a popular television show host who has been dubbed "The Egyptian Jon Stewart," and Alanis Obomsawin's ***We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice***, an epic documentary chronicle of a legal battle waged against the injustices inflicted on Indigenous children in Canada.

"Our current state of world affairs serves as a call to action, urging us all to collectively rise up against human rights violations afflicting our neighbours and fellow citizens around the globe," said Helga Stephenson, Chair of the Toronto Human Rights Watch Film Festival. "We no longer live in a world where we can plead ignorance, and for those seeking the truth, our festival offers empowering and personal glimpses into the world of survivors whose commitment to the fight inspires us to care, and reminds us that now is the time to act. This is a festival of incredible characters and a festival of resilience and hope."

"Recounting stories of corporate corruption, digital activism, freedom of speech, the refugee experience, gender rights, marriage equality and so much more, the Human Rights Watch Film Festival invites audiences to participate in the vital dialogue that surrounds these issues that demand social change," added Magali Simard, Senior Programmer, TIFF. "This lineup of timely, powerful and cinematically engaging films shines a light on the pressing stories and issues around the world that urgently need our attention."

Complete film lineup listed below. All screenings are accompanied by introductions or discussions by filmmakers, Human Rights Watch researchers, or subject-matter experts. Visit [tiff.net/humanrightswatch](http://tiff.net/humanrightswatch) for additional guest information leading up to the festival.

### **Opening Night Film**

#### **[A Syrian Love Story](#)**

dir. Sean McAllister | UK/France/Lebanon/Syria 2015 | 76 min. | 14A

*International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam 2015*

Comrades and lovers Amer and Raghda met in a Syrian prison cell 15 years ago. When director Sean McAllister first meets their family in 2009, Raghda is back in prison, leaving Amer to look after their four boys alone; but as the Arab Spring sweeps the region, the family's fate shifts irrevocably. Filmed over five years, the film charts their incredible odyssey to political freedom. For Raghda and Amer, it is a journey of hope, dreams and despair: for the revolution, their homeland and each other. **Wednesday, March 29 at 8 p.m.**

TIFF is a charitable organization with a mission to transform the way people see the world, through film.



### [Complicit](#)

dirs. Heather White and Lynn Zhang

China/Hong Kong/USA/Netherlands 2017 | 88 min. | PG | North American Premiere

A courageous factory worker struggling with leukemia helps a group of young Chinese workers who have also been poisoned while making our favourite cell phones and electronic gadgets. Filmed over four years, this lushly photographed film takes the audience on an 8,000-mile journey to the world's electronics factory floors and the neighbourhoods and hospitals surrounding the world's largest electronics supplier, Foxconn. *Complicit* reveals the human costs of global outsourcing while highlighting the choices made by a group of inspired activists seeking change. **Thursday, March 30 at 6:30 p.m.**

### [Nowhere to Hide](#)

dir. Zardasht Ahmed | Norway/Sweden 2016 | 86 min. | 14A | Canadian Premiere

*International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam 2016*

*Nowhere to Hide* follows male nurse Nori Sharif through five years of dramatic change, providing unique access into one of the world's most dangerous and inaccessible areas: the "triangle of death" in central Iraq. Initially filming stories of survivors as American and Coalition troops retreat from Iraq in 2011, conflicts continue with Iraqi militias, and the population flees accompanied by most of the hospital staff; Nori is one of the few who remains. When ISIS advances on Jalawla in 2014 and takes over the city, he too must flee with his family at a moment's notice, and turns the camera on himself.

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### [Fantassút / Rain on the Borders](#)

dir. Federica Foglia | Canada 2016 | 16 min. | 14A

Over 11,000 refugees from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other countries lived for months in dismal conditions hoping for the borders to open, and to continue their journey through the Balkan route.

**Friday, March 31 at 6:30 p.m.**

### [Tickling Giants](#)

dir. Sara Taksler | Egypt 2016 | 111 min. | 14A | Toronto Premiere

In the midst of the Egyptian Arab Spring, Bassem Youssef makes a decision that's every mother's worst nightmare: he leaves his job as a heart surgeon to become a full-time comedian. Dubbed "The Egyptian Jon Stewart," Bassem creates the most-viewed television program in the Middle East: he has 30 million viewers per episode, compared to *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart's* 2 million. In a country where free speech is not settled law, Bassem comes up with creative ways to non-violently challenge abuses of power. He endures physical threats, protests and legal action, all because of jokes. No unicorns or falafel were harmed in the making of this film.

**Saturday, April 1 at 6:30 p.m.**

Introduction and Q&A by filmmaker Sara Taksler.

### [We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice](#)

dir. Alanis Obomsawin | Canada 2016 | 163 min. | PG

*Toronto International Film Festival 2016*

In 2007, the Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations filed a landmark discrimination complaint against Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada. They argued that child and family welfare services provided to First Nations children on reserves and in Yukon were underfunded and inferior to services offered to other Canadian children. Veteran director Alanis Obomsawin's *We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice* documents this epic court challenge, giving voice to the tenacious childcare workers at its epicenter. **Sunday, April 2 at 2 p.m.**

Introduction and Q&A by filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin.

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### [Girl Unbound: The War to be Her](#)

dir. Erin Heidenreich | Afghanistan 2016 | 80 min. | PG

*Toronto International Film Festival 2016*

In Waziristan, “one of the most dangerous places on earth,” Maria Toorpakai defies the Taliban by disguising herself as a boy so she can play sports freely. But when she becomes a rising star, her true identity is revealed, bringing death threats on her and her family. Undeterred, they continue to fight for their freedom. **Tuesday, April 4 at 6:30 p.m.**

### [No Dress Code Required](#)

dir. Cristina Herrera Borquez | Mexico 2016 | 92 min. | PG | Canadian Premiere

*International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam 2016*

Victor and Fernando are stylists in Mexicali, Mexico who are the go-to professionals for the city’s socialites. To their customers, they were a lovely couple — until they decided to legally marry. Losing the support of customers and friends and confronting a backlash of criticism, through their fight they woke up members of Mexicali’s society to fight homophobia and inequality.

**Wednesday, April 5 at 6 p.m.**

Introduction by Kyle Knight, Researcher, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program, Human Rights Watch.

### **Closing Night Film**

#### [Black Code](#)

dir. Nick de Pencier | Canada 2015 | 90 min.

*Toronto International Film Festival 2016*

Based on the book by Prof. Ron Deibert, *Black Code* is the story of how the internet is being controlled and manipulated by governments in order to censor and monitor their citizens. As they battle for control of cyberspace, ideas of citizenship, privacy and democracy are challenged to the core. **Thursday, April 6 at 6:30 p.m.**

Introduction and Q&A by filmmaker Nicholas De Pencier, with guest speaker Prof. Ron Deibert.

Tickets for the Human Rights Watch Film Festival are on sale **today** for TIFF Members and **March 1** for the public. Regular film screening tickets are \$14 each. Purchase tickets online at [tiff.net/humanrightswatch](http://tiff.net/humanrightswatch), by phone from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET daily at 416.599.TIFF or 1.888.599.8433, or visit the Steve & Rashmi Gupta Box Office in person from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET daily at TIFF Bell Lightbox, Reitman Square, 350 King Street West. TIFF prefers Visa.

For more information on the opening night fundraising reception or to purchase tickets for the event, contact Human Rights Watch at 416.322.8448 or [thornta@hrw.org](mailto:thornta@hrw.org). Single tickets are \$250, which includes the reception and entrance to the screening.

#### **Social Media:**

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#### **About TIFF**

TIFF is a charitable cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world through film. An international leader in film culture, TIFF projects include the annual Toronto International Film Festival in September; TIFF Bell Lightbox, which features five cinemas, major exhibitions, and learning and entertainment facilities; and innovative national distribution program Film Circuit. The organization generates an annual economic impact of \$189 million CAD. TIFF Bell Lightbox is generously supported by contributors including Founding Sponsor Bell, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the City of Toronto, the Reitman family (Ivan Reitman, Agi Mandel and Susan Michaels), The Daniels Corporation and RBC. For more information, visit [tiff.net](http://tiff.net).

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### **About Human Rights Watch**

Human Rights Watch is one of the world's leading independent organizations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights. By focusing international attention where human rights are violated, we give voice to the oppressed and hold oppressors accountable for their crimes. Our rigorous, objective investigations and strategic, targeted advocacy build intense pressure for action and raise the cost of human rights abuse. For over 30 years, Human Rights Watch has worked tenaciously to lay the legal and moral groundwork for deep-rooted change and has fought to bring greater justice and security to people around the world.

**TIFF is generously supported by Lead Sponsor Bell, Major Sponsors RBC, L'Oréal Paris and Visa, and Major Supporters the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the City of Toronto.**

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For images visit the media site at [tiff.net/press](http://tiff.net/press).

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