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News Release

RESILIENCE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT COMES TO LIFE AT THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TORONTO HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH FILM FESTIVAL

Stories of citizen journalism, staying true to one's identity, and overcoming unimaginable adversity comprise this inspiring programme

April 18 – 25 at TIFF Bell Lightbox

TORONTO – The 15th annual Human Rights Watch Film Festival, co-presented by TIFF® and Human Rights Watch, will feature a diverse lineup celebrating the power individuals can hold in complex social and political situations. The festival is an opportunity for both organizations to come together to recognize the essential role that compelling storytelling plays in helping shine a light on important issues, from citizen journalism in West Africa to the difference spoken-word can make in the Arab world. Of the seven exceptional features that make up this year's edition, **five** were directed by women.

The film festival will run from **April 18 to 25, 2018** at TIFF Bell Lightbox. Most screenings will be accompanied by exciting discussions with filmmakers, Human Rights Watch researchers, or subject-matter experts to spark conversations around the challenging issues featured in the films.

"In the current political context, we are elated to have such an empowering lineup for the festival's 15th edition," said TIFF Artistic Director Cameron Bailey. "We hope that audiences will find the exceptional resilience of the subjects featured in the films re-energizing and inspiring, a reminder that individuals can — and do — make a difference."

"Our festival is a wonderful way to understand the world we live in, with its problems and with its heroes who never cease exposing abuses wherever they may occur," said Helga Stephenson, chair of the Toronto Human Rights Watch Film Festival. "It is a celebration of the human spirit, and of the ties that bind us around the globe. From Africa to the Middle East, from Eastern Europe to the LGBTQ+ world, this festival will inform you, shock you, and inspire you to become an active citizen as you meet some of the most extraordinary ordinary people who battle for human rights everywhere."

Some of the highlights in the concise yet impactful lineup include: the North American Premiere of Stefanie Brockhaus and Andreas Wolff's ***The Poetess***, which follows Saudi poet Hissa Hilal as she puts her safety on the line and uses her wit and lyricism during a high-profile televised competition; Daniel McCabe's ***This is Congo***, a look at the difficult political state of affairs in the African nation through the eyes of four resilient citizens; Rina Castelnovo and Tamir Elterman's ***Muhi – Generally Temporary***, which documents the situation of a young Palestinian boy and his grandfather who live in immigration limbo at an Israeli hospital; and Mila Turajlic's ***The Other Side of Everything***, winner of the 2017 IDFA Award for Best Feature-Length Documentary.

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

TIFF Bell Lightbox, Reitman Square, 350 King Street West, Toronto ON Canada M5V 3X5 416-599-TIFF / 1-888-599-8433

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Opening the festival is Brandon and Skyler Gross' *On My Way Out: The Secret Life of Nani and Popi*, a charming portrait of the directors' grandparents at a crucial point in their 65-year-long marriage. The film will be introduced by Executive Director Barry Avrich, and will be followed by a panel discussion with speakers from the LGBTQ+ community. The festival's Opening Night Reception & Screening will also feature a tribute to Salah Bachir, Canadian philanthropist and President of Cineplex Media.

Complete film lineup listed below. Visit tiff.net/humanrightswatch for additional guest information leading up to the festival.

OPENING NIGHT

On My Way Out: The Secret Life of Nani and Popi

dir. Brandon Gross, Skyler Gross | Canada 2017 | PG

In this portrait of the directors' grandparents, both of them remarkably resilient Holocaust survivors, Roman (Popi) reveals a secret to his wife, Ruth (Nani), that will put their seemingly invincible 65-year union to the test. *On My Way Out* connects with the core values that make us human beings: the need and desire to love and be loved.

Introduced by Executive Producer Barry Avrich, followed by a panel from the LGBTQ+ community.

Wednesday, April 18, 8 p.m.

Muhi – Generally Temporary

dir. Rina Castelnovo, Tamir Elterman | Germany, Israel 2017 | 14A

Due to a life-threatening immune disorder, Muhi, a young boy from Gaza, and his doting grandfather have been trapped in immigration limbo at an Israeli hospital for over eight years. Through their story, *Muhi – Generally Temporary* lays out the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in human terms, documenting the impact these paradoxical circumstances have on individual lives.

Introduced by Iain Levine, deputy executive director, program, Human Rights Watch.

Thursday April 19, 6:30 p.m.

What Will People Say

dir. Iram Haq | Norway, Germany, Sweden 2017 | 14A

Nisha's double life — obedient to her traditional Pakistani upbringing at home, typical Norwegian teenager to her friends — comes crashing down when her concerned parents kidnap her and send her to Pakistan. *What Will People Say* is an empathetic story of family, community, and culture.

Friday, April 20, 6:30 p.m.

This is Congo

dir. Daniel McCabe | USA, Congo 2017 | 14A

Over the last two decades, the Democratic Republic of Congo has experienced more than five million conflict-related deaths, multiple changes of government, and the wholesale impoverishment of its people. Through four profoundly resilient characters, *This is Congo* provides an immersive and unfiltered look at this lush, mineral-rich country that is home to Africa's longest-running conflict.

Introduced by director Daniel McCabe, followed by Q&A discussion.

Saturday, April 21, 6:30 p.m.

The Other Side of Everything

dir. Mila Turajlic | Serbia, France, Qatar 2017 | 14A

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A locked door inside a Belgrade apartment has kept one family separated from their past for over 70 years. *In The Other Side of Everything*, what begins as the chronicle of a family in Serbia turns into a searing portrait of an activist in times of great turmoil, questioning the responsibility of each generation to fight for their future.

Introduced by Emma Daly, communications director, Human Rights Watch.

Sunday, April 22, 3:30 p.m.

The Poetess

dir. Stefanie Brockhaus, Andreas Wolff | Germany, United Arab Emirates 2017 | 14A

Saudi poet Hissa Hilal made international headlines as the first woman to reach the finals of the Arab world's biggest televised poetry competition, *Million's Poet*. *The Poetess* is the inspiring story of a woman risking her personal safety to seize an extraordinary opportunity to use her wit and lyricism to critique patriarchal society and religious extremism.

Introduced by Nisha Varia, advocacy director, Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch.

Tuesday, April 24, 6:30 p.m.

CLOSING NIGHT

Silas

dir. Anjali Nayar, Hawa Essuman | Canada, South Africa, Kenya 2017 | PG

When the rights to one-third of Liberia's land are signed away to multinational corporations, activist Silas Siakor and a network of dedicated citizen reporters respond with swift action. A celebration of the power individuals can hold in fighting political corruption, *Silas* documents their battle for accountability, their land and their future.

Wednesday April 25, 6:30 p.m.

Tickets for the Human Rights Watch Film Festival go on sale **today** for TIFF Members and **March 7** for the public. Regular film-screening tickets are \$14 each. Purchase tickets online at 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, Human Rights Watch can be contacted directly at 416.322.8448 or 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

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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

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 more information, contact Daniela Ponce, at dponce@tiff.net, the Communications Department at 416.934.3200 or email proffice@tiff.net.

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