



The world can be a better place to live

THE 1st AUTUMN HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

Co-presented by Afghanistan Cinema Club and Bassa Films

October 1-6 at the French Institute of Afghanistan, Cinema Park and United Nations HQ in Kabul and Balkh University Hall in Mazar-e-Sharif

Extraordinary program of 50 Films from 18 Countries—including 32 Afghan Films Premieres

Kabul, September 26, 2011 – The first Autumn Human Rights Film Festival opens in Kabul with an extraordinary selection of documentaries, feature, short and animation films from all over the world that will inform, spark debate, amaze, provoke, delight, disturb and inspire.

For 6 days in October, AHRFF provides an opportunity for international and Afghan filmmakers to showcase their work at Kabul's most exciting festival, access a unique Human Rights film market in this region and attend informative seminars and workshops.

A co-presentation of the Afghanistan Cinema Club and Bassa Films, the 1st Autumn Human Rights Film Festival will run from October 1 to 7 in four venues in Kabul - the French Institute of Afghanistan, the Cinema Park, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan Headquarter, and at the University Hall in Mazar-e-Sharif.

50 out of more than 200 entries of the best human rights films from 18 countries (USA, France, Swiss, India, Egypt, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Sweden, Canada, Liberia and the UK) including 32 from Afghanistan were selected for the competition and will be screened. The selection committee was a combination of national and international filmmakers and human rights activists. Seven of the films were directed by Afghan women filmmakers.

Afghans filmmakers from Herat, Jalalabad and other regions will be on hand after the screenings to discuss their films with the audience. Question and Answer (Q&As) sessions discussing the topics addressed by the films will follow each screening. These panels will include either the film's producer or director, or an expert on the subject matter. *"These Q&A sessions are very essential as we continue the momentum as a forum for the discussion of human rights problems and potential solutions,"* said Malek Shafi'i, Autumn Human Rights Film Festival Founder and Executive Director.

The 1st AHRFF program is organized around three themes: the struggle against discrimination, injustice and violence.

"Many of the selected films demonstrate the power of traditional and new media to influence filmmaking and impact human rights. The filmmakers are increasing their impact through the use of the art of filmmaking as a dialogue and peace tool, but most importantly, to bring human rights stories to a broader audience and to the real Afghan context," said Malek.

The festival will also connect Afghanistan current situation to other human rights stories from other parts of the world and is the only cinematographic stage to help Afghan filmmakers showcase their talent and expertise to Afghans filmgoers.

The Executive Director also added that *"our festival is the first and only festival in this region that will feature films from all of over the world, but mostly from Afghanistan that go beyond the typical stories to deliver harsh truths, stunning, striking and inspiring stories that portray the human dignity but that raise voices and enlighten Afghan audiences to the plight of nations, and the dignity and courage of individuals in our world."*

The AHRF is a platform to share the works of filmmakers and artists who have unfortunately been marginalized by authority. It will present stories of lives affected by war, discrimination and injustice. These stories are of people who have resisted oppression and fought against violence to create a more humane world.

“There are about 33 human rights films festivals around the world, however, none of them are in the Middle East or Central Asian countries which are gravely affected by human rights dilemmas. There was an attempt at a human rights film festival in Bahrain but the recent revolutions in that country and other Arab nations brought it to a grinding halt.” Added Malek.

Considering all these facts, the Afghanistan Cinema Club found that a human rights film festival matches Afghan experimental cinema and from another perspective, it matches the social, political and cultural situation of this particular geographic region. The fact is, the origin of Afghan cinema is based on human rights and an open and critical film festival is a most suitable arena for Afghan cinema.

The film festival will launch on October 1 with an Opening ceremony at the French Institute for Afghanistan featuring the Afghan premiere of Iranian director Jaffar Panahi’s last short film *The Accordion (2010)*, a story that follows two young street musicians, who have their accordion stolen from them. A keen supporter of opposition movements, Panahi was arrested in March 2010 and sentenced to six years of imprisonment along with Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof in December 2010. The two were also banned from shooting movies and writing scripts for twenty years, as well as leaving the country or getting in contact with local or international media. The film is part of a long feature project supported by the UN, gathering seven international directors around Article 18 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thoughts, conscience and religion”.

The main program will begin on October 2, with the premiere of **I want horse not wife**, the story of a 10 year-old Zal who wants to have a horse instead of a wife and *Joined for Life*, an inspiring documentary film about 11 years-old conjoined twins Abby and Brittany Hensel. Another highlight is the animation *Shelter*, about a homeless child who lives under a tree and becomes the friend of a bird before the war begins to change their lives forever. Other Afghan premieres are the films *Addicted in Afghanistan*, an intimate and uncompromising documentary portrayal of the day to day struggles of a new generation of children addicted to heroin and the fiction film *An Apple from Paradise* that follows one father’s search for his son, who is a student at a religious school in Kabul. The festival will close on October 6 with another Afghan premiere of *Light in the Cave*, a moving film by Sayed Suleiman Amanzad and his own account of his survival against Taliban brutality in Bamyan in 1999. He was four years-old when Taliban over ran his village and starts killing people.

The documentary *Sergio*, a tribute to the visionary work of the dashing 55 year-old Brazilian UN diplomat and humanitarian of the highest order killed in Iraq, considered by some a cross between James Bond and Bobby Kennedy will premiere in Afghanistan as part of the non-competitive selection.

These are only a few of the many shorts, documentaries and feature films you may enjoy. We enthusiastically welcome your attendance and urge your involvement.

We look forward to your presence at our 1st Autumn Human Rights Film Festival!

Where would a festival be without its Seminars and Workshops?

This coming week, the festival will have a 5 day workshop and seminars, one of AHRF’s best platforms for filmmakers to promote their expertise and skills in the art of filmmaking within the human rights context. These workshops will be offered by a talented team of well-known filmmakers from different countries to share their knowledge and experience with the young generation of filmmakers. Workshops not only are bound to impress, but to educate both the most experienced film professionals in Afghanistan to the newly initiated.

Registration is open to every university student and film professional. For registration and more information about the workshops, you can email to workshop@ahrfestival.org or register *in-person* in BASA Films office on Silo road, Third Street, Kabul. There is limited space for participants; people who register late may miss this opportunity.

Festival goes beyond the borders: AHRF film screening in Bangalore

AHRF is a film festival for human rights, so it is not limited only to one country. AHRF would like to thank Jaaga for helping us take the festival out of Afghanistan and introduce the young cinema of this war torn country to other nations. Jaaga has agreed to screen a selection of Afghan films in their space in Bangalore, India.

We are now in the process of signing an agreement with the Afghan filmmakers for their permission to screen their films in Bangalore. This will help other nations to see Afghanistan's reality differently than what they see on news. On the other hand, it will help Afghan filmmakers showcase their talent and expertise to the world.

CONTACTS:

Autumn Human Rights Film Festival -1 Edition

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General Information

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SCREENINGS VENUES

All films are screened at the French Institute for Afghanistan, Cinema Park, United Nations Compound in Kabul and University of Balkh in Mazar-e-Sharif.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Experience the festival on the go with AHRFF's official website: visit www.ahrfestival.org from your mobile to check your favorite events, browse the film schedule, invite friends to screenings, view trailers and listen to interviews with filmmakers.

FOLLOW US ON:

Facebook group page at:

On Twitter at:

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