



Embargoed: 18 February 2021

25th Human Rights Watch Film Festival, UK Digital Edition
Emboldened Storytellers Shining a Light on Disruptive Forces

18-26 March 2021

Barbican Cinema On Demand

Tickets on sale 18 February:

<https://ff.hrw.org/london>

<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/cinema-on-demand>

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London, 18 February – The 2021 Human Rights Watch Film Festival celebrates 25 years with a full digital edition available to stream across the UK, in partnership with Barbican Cinema, and generously supported by players of People’s Postcode Lottery.

Featuring 10 powerful and uplifting new documentaries -- each accompanied by a live, online discussion (free and live-captioned in English) with filmmakers, film participants, and Human Rights Watch researchers from around the world -- the festival is presented exclusively on Barbican Cinema On Demand from 18-26 March.

Celebrating campaigners, individuals and journalists who shine a light on disruptive forces, this year’s empowering programme highlights trailblazing women, activists’ resilience and resistance, education as an essential tool for change and a special spotlight on Latin America. With films from Ireland, Germany, Kenya, Philippines, the United States and Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela, eight of this year’s line-up are directed or co-directed by women.

The Opening Night film, ***The 8th*** shows a country forging a new path at a time when reproductive rights are threatened around the world. Shot over a three-year period, co-directors Aideen Kane, Lucy Kennedy and Maeve O’Boyle follow campaigners of Ireland’s

reproductive rights movement Ailbhe Smyth and Andrea Horan, leading up to the historic 2018 referendum. Co-director Lucy Kennedy, film participants Ailbhe Smyth and Andrea Horan and senior researcher in the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch Hillary Margolis, will join the live virtual discussion on Thursday 18 March, 8.30pm.

The Closing Night film strikes an equally determined note from young Black, queer women in the US. *Unapologetic* director Ashley O'Shay introduces Janaé Bonsu and Bella Bahhs, two fierce activist leaders in the US seeking justice for the deaths of two Black Chicagoans at the hands of the police. Their journey illuminates the love underpinning their anger and frustration, and elevates those who are most often leading the way while being denied the spotlight. Director Ashley O'Shay and film participants Bella Bahhs and Janaé Bonsu will join the live virtual discussion on Friday 26 March, 8.30pm.

"I am thrilled that these two important films -- which celebrate inspirational women effecting crucial change in their communities -- are bookending our 25th anniversary festival." **said John Biaggi, director of the Human Rights Watch Film Festival.** *"The full festival programme, which audiences across the UK can enjoy, encapsulates the core work of Human Rights Watch to defend rights and secure justice. I look forward to our expert panellists exploring this and more in our in-depth online discussions throughout the festival."*

To celebrate this 25th edition, audiences also have an opportunity to watch 10 selected festival highlights from previous editions thanks to the continuing partnership with MUBI mubi.com/humanrightswatch.

Laura Chow, head of charities at People's Postcode Lottery: *"I'm really pleased the film festival is able to go ahead online this year -- it's a hugely impactful way of engaging people in some of today's issues. Support from players of People's Postcode Lottery contributes to numerous programmes with many charities alongside Human Rights Watch such as Amnesty International UK, working to protect people wherever human rights are denied. Together these organisations make a real difference in creating a more just world."*

Gali Gold, Head of Cinema, Barbican: *"I am proud that the Barbican is the exclusive London venue partner for Human Rights Watch Film Festival for its 25th edition - and thrilled that we are able to host this year's powerful line-up on Barbican's Cinema On Demand, while our cinemas are still closed. The conviction of the storytellers in the festival's programme is always inspiring to see, and it's wonderful to know that audiences across the UK can join us this year."*

Bobby Allen, Co-Chair, HRW Film Benefit Committee and SVP Production, MUBI: *"Cinema is an incredibly powerful way to educate people on the human rights issues that are impacting the world today. The work the Human Rights Watch Film Festival does is crucial to driving awareness of these issues and MUBI is proud to partner with the festival to bring this important collection of films online and make them available to audiences across the UK"*

All festival films are available to stream throughout the festival dates. Free, live-captioned discussions will take place on Zoom, at times detailed below. Three caption screenings for Deaf or hard of hearing will take place throughout the festival, detailed below. Tickets on-sale 18th February purchased via [Human Rights Watch Film Festival](#) or [Barbican Cinema On Demand](#).

Festival Programme:

Opening Night

The 8th

Ireland/U.S.A. / 2020 / Aideen Kane, Lucy Kennedy, Maeve O'Boyle / 94m / Captioned in English for audiences who are Deaf or hard of hearing / English dialogue

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming 18-26 March, Barbican Cinema On Demand

Free, Live Digital Discussion, Thursday 18 March, 8.30pm

Capturing a crucial moment in women's rights, this is the story of how Ireland overturned one of the world's most restrictive laws on abortion. The film follows veteran campaigner Ailbhe Smyth and self-described glitter-activist Andrea Horan as they chart a bold strategy of grassroots activism to engineer the impossible and carry a traditionally conservative and religious electorate over the line to extend rights to women seeking an abortion. An urgent narrative, a cautionary tale and a roadmap for progressive reforms in a modern era where authoritarianism is on the rise, *The 8th* shows a country forging a new path at a time when reproductive rights are threatened around the world.

"It's actually about more than what you're voting on - while we're voting on reproductive health care, it's also about the value we're giving women in Irish society, saying we do value them and we do trust them." Andrea Horan, film participant *The 8th*

Closing Night:

Unapologetic

U.S.A. / 2020 / Ashley O'Shay / 86m

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming 18-26 March, Barbican Cinema On Demand

Live Digital Discussion: Friday 26 March, 8.30pm

This is a profound and necessary story ripe for a country, and indeed a global reckoning, with racial injustice.

After two Black Chicagoans, Rekia Boyd and Laquan McDonald, are killed at the hands of the police, the Movement for Black Lives demands justice and organises to challenge an administration complicit in violence against its residents. *Unapologetic* introduces Janaé Bonsu and Bella Bahhs, two fierce activist leaders whose upbringing and experiences have shaped their view of what liberation could and should look like, as they urge for an expansive view of

public safety that does not depend on the police. This invigorating documentary illuminates the love underpinning the anger and frustration that comes with being Black, queer women in the US, and elevates those who are most often leading the way while being denied the spotlight.

“If Black, queer, feminist people are not free, nobody else is going to be free” Kush Thompson, film participant, *Unapologetic*

“The organisers’ activism is not a choice, but an integral and immediate part of their lives. The visions of the communities they are building and their creation of an abolitionist programme of safety without policing is illuminating.” John Raphling, senior researcher, US Program, Human Rights Watch

In another standout title, *Belly of the Beast* reveals a shameful and ongoing legacy of eugenics and reproductive injustice in the US prison system.

Belly of The Beast

U.S.A / 2020 / Erika Cohn / 82m / Captioned in English for audiences who are Deaf or hard of hearing / English Dialogue

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming 18-26 March, Barbican Cinema On Demand

Live digital discussion: Friday 19 March, 8.30pm

When two brave women find a pattern of illegal involuntary sterilisations in California’s women’s prisons, they launch a battle against the system.

With a growing team of women inside prison working with formerly incarcerated colleagues on the outside, they uncover a series of state-wide crimes - from dangerously inadequate health care to sexual assault to coercive sterilisations - primarily targeting Black, Latinx and Indigenous. Captured over seven years, this shocking and emboldening legal drama is a damning account of a shameful and ongoing legacy of eugenics and reproductive injustice in the United States, featuring a group of extraordinary women determined to ensure it ends here and now.

“I have the power to change lives with the awareness of what happened to me.” Kelli Dillon, film participant, *Belly of the Beast*

Strength of resistance is highlighted in two films demanding press freedom in *A Thousand Cuts* and LGBTQ rights in *I Am Samuel*, co-presented by Human Rights Watch Film Festival and BFI Flare.

A Thousand Cuts

U.S.A. / 2020 / Ramona S. Diaz / 98m / partially subtitled in English

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming 18-26 March, Barbican Cinema On Demand

Live digital discussion: Saturday 20 March, 2pm

Nowhere is the erosion of democracy and the power of social media in politics more evident than in the Philippines.

When elected president in 2016, Rodrigo Duterte promised violence with a declared “war on drugs.” We join the prominent journalist Maria Ressa and her publication *Rappler* as they investigate thousands of government-sanctioned murders of primarily poor people accused of using or selling drugs. To suppress reporting on his mounting abuses, Duterte unleashes a powerful disinformation campaign on social media, targeting journalists with arrests, and violent threats. In this searing film, we follow Ressa and her fearless team as they risk their own freedom in defence of truth and democracy.

"*A Thousand Cuts* is both a chilling tale of a leader's gross misuse of power, and an uplifting story about courageous journalism and how it can inspire people to action." Carlos H. Conde, senior researcher, Asia Division, Human Rights Watch

I am Samuel

Kenya/Canada/U.K./U.S.A / 2020 / Peter Murimi / 70min / subtitled in English

Co-presented by Human Rights Watch Film Festival (18-26 March) streaming on Barbican Cinema On Demand and BFI Flare London LGBTQ+ Film Festival (17-28 March) streaming on BFI Player.

Live digital discussion: Saturday 20 March, 8.30pm

Samuel, a gay Kenyan man, balances duty to his family with his love for his partner, Alex, in a country where their love is criminalised.

Samuel grew up on a farm in the Kenyan countryside, where tradition is valued above all else. He moves to Nairobi in search of a new life, where he finds belonging in a community of fellow queer men where he meets and falls in love with Alex. Their love thrives even though Kenyan laws criminalize anyone who identifies as LGBTQ, and together they face threats of violence and rejection. Samuel's father, a preacher at the local church, doesn't understand why his son is not yet married and Samuel must navigate the very real risk that being truthful to who he is may cost him his family's acceptance.

"I can't really be myself. It's like they're seeing just half of who I am." Alex, film participant, *I Am Samuel*

The festival's spotlight on Latin America highlights three urgent stories: in *Mujer de Soldado* marginalised women bring to trial the members of the Peruvian army who decades prior had

raped and abused them with impunity; in *A La Calle* Venezuelans undertake extraordinary efforts to reclaim their crisis-ridden country from the dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro; and in *Bajo Fuego* abandoned farmers in a coca-growing region of Colombia are forced to organise and fight for a living, despite the high hopes and rhetoric of the country's Peace Agreement of 2016.

Mujer de Soldado (Soldier's Woman)

Peru / 2020 / Patricia Wiese Risso / 83min / subtitled in English

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming 18-26 March, Barbican Cinema On Demand

Live digital discussion: Thursday 25 March, 8.30pm

Magda Surichaqui Cóndor was a teenager when soldiers arrived in her small Peruvian village in 1984. Sent to root out members of the Shining Path, soldiers of the Peruvian army used their sweeping powers to rape and humiliate local women, leaving them shunned by their own communities, often with children in tow. Three decades later, Magda has joined a number of other women in bringing charges against their abusers. With stunning cinematography and respectful intimacy, Patricia Wiese Risso accompanies Magda and her friends as they reminisce over their youth and their lives since, whilst they sit and chew coca leaves, peeling potatoes and spinning wool. *Mujer de Soldado* is a deeply moving picture of female solidarity that finally provides space for the dignity of these women's experiences that has long been denied.

"*Mujer de Soldado* centres the stories of the women who have been silenced for a long time and who continue to be marginalised within their communities and in Peru as a whole." Jose Miguel Vivanco, director, Americas Division, Human Rights Watch

A La Calle (To the Street)

U.S.A. / 2020 / Nelson G. Navarrete, Maxx Caicedo / 111m / partially subtitled in English

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming 18-26 March, Barbican Cinema On Demand

Live digital discussion: Tuesday 23 March, 8.30pm

A La Calle is a first-hand account of the extraordinary efforts of Venezuelans to reclaim their democracy from the dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro.

Maduro's policies have plunged the country into a political, economic, and humanitarian crisis. Working with a network of clandestine camera crews, the filmmakers spent three years with key figures, including opposition leader Leopoldo López, grassroots activist Nixon Leal and everyday citizens willing to share their experiences. *A La Calle* captures the remarkable courage of the Venezuelan people as they unite to restore liberty, fundamental rights, and the rule of law - all while facing the more immediate struggle for survival amid severe food, water and medical shortages.

“Each passing day and each test makes us understand that we have the inner strength and perseverance to get to that day of change.” Lilian Tintori, film participant, *A La Calle*

Bajo Fuego (Under Siege)

Colombia / 2020 / Sjoerd Van Grootheest (Director) Irene Vélez-Torres (Co-Director) / 85m / subtitled in English

Captioned in English for audiences who are Deaf or hard of hearing / Spanish dialogue

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming on Barbican Cinema On Demand 18-26 March

Live digital discussion: Sunday 21 March, 8.30pm

In November 2016, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the office of President Juan Manuel Santos signed the Colombian peace deal.

Many hoped this would mark an end to 52 years of armed conflict. For farmers in the coca-growing region of Cauca however, this “peace” has proven to be short-lived. *Bajo Fuego* follows “cocaleros” as they mobilize to protect their livelihoods after the government instructs them to destroy their crops as part of the “war on drugs.” As new armed groups arise, the promised peace turns out to be an illusion for these farmers whose lives are threatened and who are displaced from their homes. *Bajo Fuego* exposes the lived reality behind the politics, that has left many Colombians in a continued state of war.

“What was signed were just agreements, they did not sign peace. We still have to build peace.” Farmer and film participant, *Bajo Fuego*

Education as an essential tool for change is explored in two key titles. From the filmmakers of multi-award-winning *The Corporation*, this “unfortunately necessary sequel” details efforts by corporations to re-brand as “socially conscious” and celebrates the activists pursuing real change. In *The Lesson* filmmaker Elena Horn considers the importance of quality education to avoid repeating historical wrongs. Schools and colleges can request tickets to *The Lesson* free on demand for their students. A limited number of tickets are available.

The New Corporation: The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel

Canada / 2020 / Joel Bakan, Jennifer Abbott / 106m

Fully subtitled in English version available.

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming on Barbican Cinema On Demand 18-26 March

Live, digital discussion: Sunday 21 March, 5pm

The timely sequel to the multi-award-winning *The Corporation* (2003) sets its sights on the sly rebranding of corporations as socially conscious entities – on a mission to convince the public they want to use their power to better the world. In sharp contrast, we witness recent

groundswells of resistance as people take action worldwide in pursuit of justice and the planet's future, creating hope that current world events might yet offer a catalyst for change. From the climate crisis and spiralling inequality, the rise of the ultra-right and racial injustice, the film unpacks the devastating power of corporations to achieve profit at any cost versus the individuals and movements determined to secure a more sustainable future for us all.

"There is a new spirit out there saying: 500 years of colonialism is enough. 200 years of corporate rule is enough." Vandana Shiva, scholar and environmentalist and film participant, *The New Corporation: The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel*

The Lesson

Germany / 2020 / Elena Horn / 60m / partially subtitled in English

UK Digital Premiere

Streaming on Barbican Cinema On Demand 18-26 March

Live, digital discussion: Wednesday, March 24, 8.30pm

Schools and colleges can request tickets to the film *The Lesson* free on demand for their students. A limited number of tickets available. To book please contact creative.learning@barbican.org.uk

It is often said that those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it.

At the age of 14 every school child in Germany is taught about the atrocities that occurred under Nazi rule. Filmmaker Elena Horn returns to her small hometown in rural Germany to follow four children as they first learn about the Holocaust. From their study of the topic in history class, to their school trip to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, each of the children grapple differently with the gravity of their findings. Filmed over five years, the film offers a window into deeply rooted social and political attitudes in Germany amid a resurgence of the far-right and violent xenophobia. The collective memory of a nation's history highlights the essential role of education to avoid repeating historical wrongs.

"My entire adolescence I struggled with the question: what would I have done? When times get harder, it's easy to tell ourselves that the bad things we do are a necessity of human nature. But if we have learned one lesson, it's that we always have a choice." Elena Horn, director, *The Lesson*

Festival Discussions Schedule:

Thursday, March 18 – Opening Night:

8:30pm – *The 8th*

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/8th?city=London>

Friday, March 19:

8:30pm – *Belly of the Beast*

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/belly-beast?city=London>

Saturday, March 20:

2pm – *A Thousand Cuts*

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/thousand-cuts?city=London>

8:30pm – *I Am Samuel*

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/i-am-samuel?city=London>

Sunday, March 21:

5pm – *The New Corporation (The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel)*

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/new-corporation-unfortunately-necessary-sequel?city=London>

8:30pm – *Bajo Fuego* (Under Siege)

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/bajo-fuego?city=London>

Tuesday, March 23:

8:30pm – *A La Calle* (To The Street)

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/la-calle-1?city=London>

Wednesday, March 24:

8:30pm – *The Lesson*

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/lesson?city=London>

Thursday, March 25:

8:30pm – *Mujer de Soldado* (Soldier's Woman)

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/mujer-de-soldado-soldiers-woman?city=London>

Friday, March 26 – Closing Night:

8:30pm – *Unapologetic*

Register via <https://ff.hrw.org/film/unapologetic?city=London>

Tickets go on sale to the general public on 18 February 2021.

Standard: £10

Members: £8

Corporate Members: £7.50

Young Barbican: £4

Festival passes (enables access to all 10 films throughout the Festival dates)

Standard: £75

Members: £60

To Purchase Tickets online: <https://ff.hrw.org/london> / <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/cinema-on-demand>

For media wanting to cover the festival and request interviews, review copies, or press tickets (limited availability) contact:

Sarah Harvey Publicity:

Sarah Harvey: sarah@sarahharveypublicity.co.uk

Oli Gots: oli@sarahharveypublicity.co.uk

For synopses and information about live, digital Q&A discussions and panels, please visit:

<http://ff.hrw.org/london>

For downloadable images and press kits, please visit:

<http://ff.hrw.org/press>

Please note that this page includes titles playing in all editions of the Human Rights Watch Film Festivals across various cities but not all films are playing in all cities.

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#HRWFFLDN

Human Rights Watch

How We Work

For more than 40 years, Human Rights Watch has defended people at risk of abuse. We practice a powerful, proven methodology: investigate abuses scrupulously, expose the facts widely, and relentlessly press those in power for change that respects rights.

Investigate

We are expert investigators.

Expose

We are effective communicators.

Change

We are determined advocates.

What Our People Do

Front-line investigations by expert researchers lie at the heart of Human Rights Watch's work. Our researchers examine situations in some 100 countries around the world. They function as investigators, journalists, and advocates:

- **Checking and cross-checking facts**

- **Being on the front line**
- **Partnering with local activists and human rights groups**
- **Exposing evidence of abuses**
- **Convincing key decision-makers to act**
- **Providing expertise**
- **Staying the course**

Human Rights Watch Film Festival

Through the *Human Rights Watch Film Festival* we bear witness to human rights violations and create a forum for courageous individuals on both sides of the lens to empower audiences with the knowledge that personal commitment can make a difference. The film festival brings human rights abuses to life through storytelling in a way that challenges each individual to engage and demand justice for all.

People's Postcode Lottery

Thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery for their support of the Human Rights Watch Film Festival. People's Postcode Lottery manages lotteries on behalf of 20 Postcode Trusts. People play with their chosen postcodes for a chance to win cash prizes. A minimum of 32% from each subscription goes directly to charities and good causes in Britain and internationally. Players have raised more than £600 million so far. For further information visit: www.postcode lottery.co.uk

About Barbican Cinema

We connect audiences with a curated programme of international cinema; from celebrated filmmakers to ground-breaking and underheard voices from past and present. Our programme ranges from thematic seasons that respond to today's world, to new releases, Screentalks, cross-artform collaborations, family events, access screenings, cross-artform collaborations and event cinema that presents the performing arts on screen.

Barbican Cinema has been supported by the **Culture Recovery Fund** for Independent Cinemas in England which is administered by the **BFI**, as part of the **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's** £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund supporting arts and cultural organisations in England affected by the impact of COVID-19. #HereForCulture

MUBI

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new one, every single day. Always chosen by us. MUBI is available to watch in 190 countries, and the films we pick are guided by local cultures and cinema. We are the world's biggest community of film lovers, with over 10 million members around the globe. You can stream or download all our movies, anytime. On any screen or device, anywhere. And you'll never see a single ad on MUBI. Ever.

MUBI also produces and theatrically distributes ambitious films by both emerging and world renowned filmmakers, which members can see exclusively on its service.

Subscription plans are £9.99 a month or £71.88 for 12 months. MUBI is available on the web, Roku devices, Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, LG and Samsung Smart TVs, as well as on mobile devices including iPad, iPhone and Android. MUBI has offices in London, New York, Kuala Lumpur, and Mumbai.