



**The Human Rights Watch Film Festival
Presents Full Lineup of Cinematic Works in
Second Digital Edition Available Across the U.S., May 19-27, 2021**

Co-presented by Film at Lincoln Center and IFC Center



In the Same Breath, Photo: Courtesy of HBO

New York, April 15, 2021 — The Human Rights Watch Film Festival, now in its 32nd year, will present its second full digital edition of groundbreaking new films, available nationwide in the U.S. from May 19 through 27, 2021. The film festival will feature in-depth online discussions with filmmakers, film participants and Human Rights Watch researchers and advocates.

As the world continues to grapple with the realities of isolation amid a global pandemic, relationships with neighbors and local communities have become increasingly important. This year's films take a closer look at just how strong these bonds can be.

“This year’s program resonates especially throughout this time of Covid-19, as we become increasingly aware that the advancement of human rights is deeply dependent on the health and unity of families and communities,” said **John Biaggi, Director of the Human Rights Watch Film Festival**. “This powerful and vibrant cultural theme spotlights the crucial importance of community bonds in realizing a more just and caring society.”

The Human Rights Watch Film Festival continues to collaborate closely with its long-time cinema venue partners Film at Lincoln Center and IFC Center for the online 2021 edition of the festival. The festival plans to return to Film at Lincoln Center and IFC Center in 2022 and beyond.

The full 2021 lineup is as follows:

200 Meters, Ameen Nayfeh, Palestine/Jordan/Qatar/Italy/Sweden

A Once and Future Peace, Eric Daniel Metzgar, USA

Apart, Jennifer Redfearn, USA

Bajo Fuego (Under Siege), Sjoerd Van Grootheest, Irene Vélez-Torres, Colombia

Daughter Of A Lost Bird, Brooke Pepion Swaney, USA (Closing Night)

Forget Me Not, Olivier Bernier, USA (Opening Night)

In The Same Breath, Nanfu Wang, USA/China

The Return: Life After ISIS, Alba Sotorra Clua, Spain / UK

Tacheles – The Heart of the Matter, Jana Matthes & Andrea Schramm, Germany

Unapologetic, Ashley O’Shay, USA

Tickets will be available for sale beginning April 16. Audience members will be able to reserve and purchase individual film screening tickets by title, or a festival pass that will provide access to all 10 films. Access to films will be available to all individual ticket and festival pass holders to watch at their own pace during the film festival dates of May 19 through May 27.

To purchase tickets and to access program updates, please visit

<https://www.hrwfilmfestivalstream.org/>

Each film has a limited number of tickets available, as would be the case for in-person cinema events, and advance ticket purchase is suggested. Ticket prices are: \$9 individual ticket (public), \$8 individual ticket for members of Film at Lincoln Center, Human Rights Watch Film Festival and IFC Center members, or \$70 for a festival pass.

Audiences also have the opportunity to join live online Q&A sessions free for every title with the filmmakers, Human Rights Watch experts and special guests. For details please visit: <https://www.hrwfilmfestivalstream.org/>

Members of the media may request advanced press screeners by contacting:

Julia Pacetti / Cordelia Sklansky / Austin Schiano, Verdant Communications, julia@jmpverdant.com, cordelia@jmpverdant.com, austin@jmpverdant.com.

Download film stills here: [HRWFF Media Downloads](#)



Forget Me Not, Photo: Courtesy of Rota6 Films

“Film at Lincoln Center is proud to continue its longstanding partnership with the Human Rights Watch Film Festival, which shows us once again that cinema can be a powerful agent of change,” said **Dennis Lim, Director of Programming for Film at Lincoln Center** and the **New York Film Festival**. “That this second virtual edition is accessible to communities nationwide makes it all the more impactful.”

John Vanco, Senior Vice President and General Manager of IFC Center, adds, “IFC Center is proud to continue our long-running partnership with the Human Rights Watch Film Festival. For many years, the festival has brought our audiences important films about some of the world’s most urgent issues, and we’re very happy to be working with them again on another great lineup.”

Bobby Allen, Co-Chair, Human Rights Watch Film Benefit Committee and SVP Production, MUBI, states, “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 U.S.”

To celebrate this latest edition, audiences also have an opportunity to watch select festival highlights from previous editions thanks to the continuing partnership with MUBI: <https://mubi.com/promos/hrwff>

All festival films are available to stream throughout the festival dates. All films will have

free, live-captioned Zoom discussions at times detailed below. Seven out of the 10 films offer Closed Captioning (CC) in English for audiences who are Deaf or hard of hearing, detailed below. Tickets go on-sale April 16 on the [Film Festival's streaming platform](#).

Human Rights Watch is committed to hosting accessible, inclusive events. Anyone who is experiencing any accessibility issues with renting a film or joining the Zoom events may contact festivalinfo@hrw.org at least 24 hours prior to the event, and Human Rights Watch will do its best to provide assistance.

The 10 films in this year's festival present a message of being stronger together, from the tireless support of parents fighting for their child's education in New York to the cyclical nature of incarceration affecting families in the United States, the struggles of marginalized farmers in Colombia and the misinformation campaigns of Chinese and U.S. leadership that seek to tear people apart. The festival is proud to share films that mirror the challenges of this difficult moment in history, celebrating representation and perspective. This year's lineup reinforces the understanding that without inclusivity, there will be no progress.

The opening night film ***Forget Me Not*** is an intimate documentary that follows the film's director, Olivier Bernier, his wife Hilda and their three-year-old son Emilio as they navigate New York City's public school system, notorious for segregating children with disabilities, and fight for Emilio's placement in integrated classes to create a more inclusive education system for all. The closing night film, ***Daughter of a Lost Bird***, follows new mother Kendra Mylnechuk Potter on her personal journey as she discovers her Native identity after being raised by her adopted white family since she was a baby.

In ***200 Meters***, the right to family unity is paramount in this stirring drama about a family split by the separation wall between the West Bank and Israel. After his son is injured, Mustafa embarks upon a perilous journey to cross the border illegally to rejoin them. In ***Tacheles—The Heart of the Matter***, a painful confrontation with history opens up old family wounds, in which 21 year old Yaar asks: What does the Holocaust have to do with me?

The U.S. criminal legal system is an ongoing source of human rights violations, a system that continues to perpetuate racial oppression, injustice and abuse. Three films this year offer a cinematic triptych on the state of criminal justice and highlight alternatives to incarceration, lifting up the stories of those tirelessly fighting for change and equality. ***Apart*** shares the stories of incarcerated mothers and their families, showing the importance of rehabilitation assistance in addressing intergenerational trauma caused by the criminal justice system. ***Unapologetic*** follows two fierce pioneers as they spearhead a civil rights movement in Chicago fighting for liberation and a public safety system that does not depend on police. ***A Once and Future Peace*** shares an inspiring new restorative justice program working with youth in Seattle based on Indigenous peace-making circles.

Following her critically acclaimed film *One Child Nation*, director Nanfu Wang's ***In The Same Breath*** intimately explores the parallel misinformation campaigns led by U.S.

and Chinese leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic, weaving a revelatory picture of mass cover-ups and highlighting the strength and resilience of healthcare workers, activists and family members who work tirelessly to spread truth.

In ***Bajo Fuego (Under Siege)***, we are exposed to the impact of the global “war on drugs,” looking closely at the current situation in Colombia, following the 2016 peace deal, in which the government ordered farmers in the coca-growing region to destroy their coca crops. These under-resourced farmers must mobilize to protect their livelihoods, while also dealing with the threat of emerging armed groups. ***The Return: Life After ISIS*** is the gripping tale of the young women who left their homes in the U.S. and UK as teenagers to join the Islamic State and are now held as ISIS suspects in northeast Syria. Confronted by hostile journalists and governments these women seek to understand their truth and heal from their trauma with the help of Kurdish women’s rights activists.

About the Films

200 Meters

Ameen Nayfeh, Palestine/Jordan/Qatar/Italy/Sweden, 2020, 96 minutes, Arabic, Hebrew, English. This film is fully subtitled in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Sunday, May 23, 2pm (EDT)

U.S. Digital Festival Premiere

Mustafa and his wife Salwa are from two Palestinian West Bank villages only 200 meters apart but split by Israel’s separation wall. Mustafa lives on the Palestinian-controlled side of the wall, and Salwa and their children on the Israeli side. One day Mustafa gets the call every parent dreads: his son has been in an accident and is in the hospital. Mustafa will do anything to reach him, and after being denied access through the checkpoint on a technicality, he embarks upon a journey to cross the border illegally. The 200-meter distance soon becomes a 200-kilometer odyssey. Palestinian director Ameen Nayfeh’s debut drama shows the life-threatening struggles of daily life under occupation in an urgent story of resistance, dignity, family and hope.

“*200 Meters* illustrates how sweeping Israeli movement restrictions separate families, disrupt daily life and otherwise violate the basic rights of Palestinians in the occupied territory.” — Khulood Badawi, Israel and Palestine consultant, Human Rights Watch

Winner, Audience Award, Giornate degli Autori, Venice International Film Festival 2020

A Once and Future Peace

Eric Daniel Metzgar, USA, 2021, 95 minutes, English, Spanish. Closed-captioning available in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Sunday May 23, 8:30pm (EDT)

World Digital Festival Premiere

In Seattle, communities are working to break the cycle of incarceration. A promising new restorative justice program based on Indigenous peace-making circles aims to bring healing to families and communities while reforming the justice system. Using beautifully

crafted animation, the film follows “Andy,” a teenager facing felony charges, and his family as they work through the program shepherded by Saroeum, a former gang leader. As they look at the status of the broken justice system - prosecutors, judges, and those running the program ask: how much is our society willing to invest to truly change the trajectory of our communities for the better?

“When a young person comes into court, their attorney rightfully says ‘Don’t talk, I’ll do all the talking for you.’ When you come into a peace-making circle and this talking stick is in the hands of a 16-year-old boy, and all of the adults and everyone else in the room is leaning in to hear what he has to say, that’s a powerful moment.” — Daniel T. Satterberg, film participant, *A Once and Future Peace*

Apart

Jennifer Redfearn, USA, 2020, 85 minutes, English. Closed-captioning available in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Thursday, May 20, 8:30pm (EDT)

In a midwestern U.S. state caught between the opioid epidemic and rising incarceration of women, three unforgettable mothers — Tomika, Lydia, and Amanda — prepare to rejoin their families after years of separation. With the number of women in the US prison system increasing at double the rate of men, mothers are now the fastest-growing population in the criminal justice system. With the help of a unique re-entry program run by Malika, an advocate formerly incarcerated in the same prison, the women lean on each other to find the tools and resiliency needed to rebuild their lives and relationships with their children. In *Apart*, viewers bear witness to how familial love and courage combat the intergenerational trauma caused by the war on drugs.

“Breaking that cycle of addiction is what I think about every single day. I want Tyler [my son] to know that he doesn’t have to live how I lived, and my mom lived, and all of his aunts and uncles live. I want him to know that there is a world outside of that.” — Amanda, film participant, *Apart*

Bajo Fuego (Under Siege)

Sjoerd Van Grootheest, Irene Vélez-Torres, Colombia, 2020, 85 minutes, Spanish. Closed-captioning available in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Saturday, May 22, 8:30pm (EDT)

U.S. Digital Festival Premiere

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, film participant, *Bajo Fuego*

Official Selection, HotDocs 2021

Daughter Of A Lost Bird — Closing Night

Brooke Pepion Swaney, USA, 2021, 66 minutes, English. Closed-captioning available in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Wednesday, May 26, 8:30pm (EDT)

U.S. Digital Festival Premiere

Kendra Mylnechuk Potter was adopted into a white family and raised with no knowledge of her Native parentage. Serving as both investigator and witness, this beautifully personal film documents Kendra on her journey as a new mother to discover her Native identity. Upon finding her birth mother April, who is also a Native adoptee, Kendra returns to her Lummi homelands in Washington State, and uncovers a wealth of emotional and spiritual beauty and pain. The film also serves an entry point into a more complicated national issue — intentional government actions to erase an entire culture, including the 1958 Indian Adoption Project, which removed Native children from their families and placed them in white homes in an effort to “kill the Indian and save the man.” This poignant story provides living proof that history is not only the past, but the present too.

“I identified as white. This strange confusion of white guilt, and native anger. Where does it sit in me? And how do I sit with both of those things?” — Kendra Mylnechuk Potter, film participant, *Daughter of a Lost Bird*

“This story we have been telling for seven years can't be wrapped up in a neat bow, because it's such a complex experience to be Native in this country. And sometimes painful, but also beautiful, and powerful, and a million other things.” — Brooke Pepion Swaney, director, *Daughter of a Lost Bird*

Official Selection, HotDocs 2021

Forget Me Not — Opening Night

Olivier Bernier, USA, 2021, 100 minutes, English. Closed-captioning available in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Wednesday, May 19, 8:30pm (EDT)

World Digital Festival Premiere

As 3-year-old Emilio is ready to start school, his family finds itself cornered in the United States' most segregated education system — New York City public schools. Fighting for their son's right to an inclusive education — where Emilio and other children with disabilities would be taught alongside their classmates without disabilities — film director Olivier and his wife Hilda investigate the personal stories of students and their parents in the US. With children with disabilities worldwide less likely to attend school, these experiences expose just a handful of the widespread injustices currently taking place in

the educational system and beyond for children with disabilities. *Forget Me Not* reveals a path to a more inclusive society that starts with welcoming diversity in the classroom.

“As a director, this is not only a story I will be telling — this is a story I am living. When I was a child, I didn’t go to an inclusive school. I was never exposed to anyone with intellectual disabilities, and I was ill-prepared for my own son’s arrival. I want to use this opportunity to make sure this never happens to anyone again.” — Olivier Bernier, director, *Forget Me Not*

“What we’re talking about here is the society we want to have in the future in which people with disabilities are welcome. And inclusion is the beginning of that.” — Thomas Hehir, film participant, *Forget Me Not*

In The Same Breath

Nanfu Wang, USA/China, 2021, 95 minutes, English, Mandarin. Closed-captioning available in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Monday, May 24, 8:30pm (EDT)

In The Same Breath, directed by Nanfu Wang (*One Child Nation*), explores the parallel campaigns of misinformation waged by the Chinese and U.S. leadership and their devastating impact on millions of lives since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. In a deeply personal approach, Wang, who was born in China and now lives in the United States, shares emotional first-hand accounts and startling, on-the-ground footage captured by camerapersons in China and the U.S. as she weaves a revelatory picture of mass cover-ups and dishonesty while also highlighting the strength and resilience of the healthcare workers, activists, and family members who risked everything to communicate the truth. An HBO Documentary Film

“We all think of ourselves as capable of separating truth from falsehood. But how can we make that distinction, when misinformation comes from the people we are supposed to trust?” — Nanfu Wang, director, *In The Same Breath*

“It’s really about the ‘same breath’ drawn by people across China and the U.S.—breath that isn’t valued by political leaders, who lie to them and abandon them, the failures of democracy and the costs of authoritarianism.” — Sophie Richardson, China director, Asia Division, Human Rights Watch

Winner, Audience Award, Festival Favorites, SXSW 2021

Official Selection, Sundance Film Festival 2021

The Return: Life After ISIS

Alba Sotorra Clua, Spain/UK, 2021, 90 minutes, English. Fully subtitled in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Thursday, May 20, 5pm (EDT)

Hoda Muthana and Shamima Begum made world headlines after leaving their homes in the U.S. and UK as teenagers to join the extremist group Islamic State, also known as ISIS. *The Return: Life After ISIS* is a unique portrait of a group of Western women who pledged

their lives to ISIS, but now want to return home to restart their lives. While facing hostile journalists and governments who have left them de-facto stateless, the women confront their truths and try to heal from their trauma in a locked camp in northeast Syria, with the help of Kurdish women's rights activists. With its rare access to Roj camp, this film is a sensitive portrayal of just a few of the 63,000 women and children held, in dire conditions with no due process, as ISIS suspects and family members in northeast Syria by a Kurdish-led armed group.

"When you are brainwashed, you don't realize it until you snap out of it. I took everything too fast, and too deep." — Hoda Muthana, film participant, *The Return: Life After ISIS*

"This film cuts through the stereotypes about Western women who joined ISIS and makes a compelling case for bringing them home. In the process, it reveals an unusual sisterhood between these women and a Kurdish social worker who helps them even though ISIS sought to destroy her community." — Letta Tayler, associate director, Crisis and Conflict Division, Human Rights Watch

Nominee, Grand Jury Award, SXSW 2021

Tacheles – The Heart of the Matter

Jana Matthes & Andrea Schramm, Germany, 2020, 104 minutes, German, Hebrew, English

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Saturday, May 22, 2pm (EDT)

North American Digital Festival Premiere

Three generations removed from the Holocaust, Yaar is a young Jewish Berliner desperate to leave the past behind him. Along with his friend Marcel, they develop a computer game set in 1940s Germany featuring a young Jewish girl based on Yaar's grandmother Rina, and an SS officer inspired by Marcel's ancestor, in which Jews can defend themselves and Nazis can act humanely. Yaar's father is shocked, and the work opens up old family wounds. Thus begins a painful confrontation with history that will forever change Yaar's relationships with his father and his friend: the grandchildren of victims and perpetrators. As the game ceases to be a game, *Tacheles – The Heart of the Matter* explores with growing self-awareness how trauma of survivors is inherited, and asks the burning question from the perspective of a 21-year-old: what does the Holocaust have to do with me?

"*Tacheles* is a very important film. It shows how crimes and injustice can ruin the lives not merely of the survivors but also of the following generations decades after they took place." — Wenzel Michalski, Germany director, Human Rights Watch

Unapologetic

Ashley O'Shay, USA, 2020, 86 minutes, English. Closed-captioning available in English.

Live online Q&A with filmmaker and guests on Friday, May 21, 8:30pm (EDT)

This is a profound and necessary story ripe for a countrywide, and indeed a worldwide, reckoning with racial injustice. After two Black Chicagoans, Rekia Boyd and Laquan

McDonald, are killed by police, the Movement for Black Lives demands justice and organizes to challenge an administration complicit in violence against its residents. *Unapologetic* introduces Janaé and Bella, two fierce activist leaders whose upbringing and experiences have shaped their view of what liberation could and should look like, as they urge an expansive view of public safety that does not depend on police. This invigorating documentary illuminates the love underpinning the anger and frustration that comes with being Black, queer women in the United States, 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, film participant, *Unapologetic*

Schedule of Live Q&As:

Wednesday, May 19 – Opening Night

Forget Me Not

8:30pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_L76q1wcORhO3r42mp9uYrA

Thursday, May 20:

The Return: Life after ISIS

5pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_y3C7oGD8StipoXj5oA6Mjg

Apart

8:30pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_opt-wGVKTIeyrqde7UcEew

Friday, May 21:

Unapologetic

8:30pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_p_jbK-H4QdyNBRA79BuXXA

Saturday, May 22:

Tacheles-The Heart of the Matter

2pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xGubbHaeSSmkFOdrePuKeQ

Bajo Fuego

8:30pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rEsTkScORVWmfqzaVqeOPQ

Sunday, May 23:

200 Meters

2pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JOSLDdN5Qk-c6zofxkn2uQ

A Once and Future Peace

8:30pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RL5MOubrTm2VZyc-DH2JoA

Monday, May 24:

In The Same Breath

8:30pm (EDT)

Register: https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_6JgWcJthTLS6BvH3x8JF7Q

Wednesday, May 26 – Closing Night:

Daughter Of A Lost Bird

8:30pm (EDT)

Register:

https://hrworg.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZV6y4Nn8TSqYKrAemmSDRA