

Press release



**The Human Rights Watch Film Festival Presents 10 Award-Winning Films
in the London Edition, 16-26 March 2023**

Presented in Partnership with Barbican Cinema

[Festival Trailer](#)

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

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London, 9 February 2023 – The Human Rights Watch Film Festival, now in its 27th year in London, presents a line-up of 10 award-winning, international documentary films in partnership with Barbican Cinema, and generously supported by players of People’s Postcode Lottery.

The festival programme, presented in person at the Barbican from 16-24 March, includes in-depth Q&As and panel discussions with filmmakers, film participants, activists and Human Rights Watch researchers following all screenings. The films will also be available to catch up digitally across the UK and Ireland on the festival website from 20-26 March.



Delikado directed by Karl Malakunus

This year's edition covers a broad range of themes and topics, but it is the determination and courage of individuals to stand up for their freedom and rights that shines through. **John Biaggi, director Human Rights Watch Film Festival** said: *"We are very happy to present our full programme of 10 powerful, important films and conversations in person at the Barbican. This year our programme spotlights the risks taken by land defenders, the legacy and continuation of colonialism, the fight for people to make their own decisions about their bodies and actions, structural discrimination, and the impact of war on people's day-to-day lives. It's also important to both the festival and the Barbican that our programme is accessible to all, and we're delighted that the majority of our programme will audio-described and presented with captions for attendees who are D/Deaf and hard of hearing."*

Laura Chow, head of charities at People's Postcode Lottery said: *"Human Rights Watch Film Festival inspires us to celebrate the courage of individuals who stand up for their freedom and rights. Players of People's Postcode Lottery have raised over £1 billion to support good causes and charities across Great Britain. This includes Human Rights Watch work in supporting marginalised voices, giving them a platform to tell their stories, raise awareness on key human rights issues, and encouraging justice and equality."*

Jonathan Gleneadie, acting head of cinema, Barbican said: *"We are proud to once again host the Human Rights Watch Film Festival and this selection of compelling and significant films highlighting the resolve of so many brave individuals in the face of discrimination and oppression. It is notable that we are able to work closely with the festival to ensure that the majority of screenings and conversations are accessible to all, including two screenings of 'I Didn't See You There' in a relaxed environment for the first time with the festival. We look forward to welcoming festival filmmakers, participants and all audiences to our cinemas for in-depth and inspiring screenings conversations with human rights experts."*

The festival opens with the timely film ***Delikado*** (London Premiere) which follows three environmental defenders who are risking their lives to stop corporations and governments seeking to steal the increasingly valuable natural resources of their home, Palawan, an island in the Philippines. With its rich biodiversity and natural beauty, Palawan is one of Asia's most visited tourist destinations, but for a small network of environmental crusaders, it is more akin to a battlefield. The battles fought by these climate activists are shared by allies worldwide – but the abusive regime of former President Rodrigo Duterte adds urgency to this deepening human rights crisis. The filmmaker and journalist Karl Malakunas, who has been based in Asia for two decades, will attend the festival.

The ongoing reverberations of colonialism take centre stage in two festival titles.

The festival's Closing Night film ***Theatre of Violence*** (UK Premiere) raises complex questions about new forms of colonialism and definitions of justice in the landmark International Criminal Court trial of Daniel Ongwen. A former Ugandan child soldier, Ongwen was just 9 years old when he was abducted - as were an estimated more than 20,000 other children - by Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army. Intimidated and indoctrinated, he quickly learned to kill or be killed. In the unfolding debate his defence lawyer, Krispus Ayena, grapples with questions of accountability when someone is both victim and perpetrator, and the underlying issue of what justice looks like when being conducted in an international court, far away from key cultural and historical context. The filmmaker Lukasz Konopa will attend the festival.

In his debut documentary ***No U-Turn*** (London Premiere) the celebrated filmmaker Ike Nnaebue takes viewers on a journey with fellow Nigerian citizens leaving their country, traveling north through Africa and beyond, in search of work and the opportunity to build a future in Europe, despite the known and unknown challenges lying ahead. As he retraces his own stalled journey,

made over 20 years ago, this self-reflective travelogue is overlaid with a powerful poetic commentary and insight into the impact of a colonial past, to unpack the deep longing of an entire generation in search of opportunities.

Body autonomy and personal autonomy, and the impact on mental and physical well-being is the focus of four films in this year's programme.

Written and directed by a former Olympian, Phyllis Ellis, **Category: Woman** (European Premiere) focuses on four women athletes from the Global South who are targeted and forced out of competition by regulations imposed by World Athletics, stirring relentless debates on their "legitimacy" as athletes and as women. Using women's naturally varying androgen levels to evaluate their performance advantages, the sporting institution creates new rules, declaring that certain female athletes must medically alter their healthy bodies to compete in their sport. The film exposes an industry that puts women's lives at risk, and raises issues of racism, sexism, and the right to determine another person's biological sex.

As a person with a disability navigating the world from a wheelchair, the filmmaker Reid Davenport is often either the subject of unwanted gaze — gawked at by strangers — or paradoxically left invisible, ignored, or dismissed by society. In **I Didn't See You There**, Davenport sets out to make a film about how he sees the world without having to be seen himself, capturing indelible images informed by his disability. This is a personal, political, and unflinching account — offering a perspective and stylistic approach rarely seen in film. **I Didn't See You There** will have two relaxed screenings at the festival, which are open to all audience members.

With candor, humour and courage, a group of African-Canadian women challenge cultural taboos, and build a road to individual and collective healing in **Koromouso, Big Sister** (European Premiere). Working with co-director Jim Donovan, Habibata Ouarme combines her own experience of female genital mutilation (FGM) with personal accounts from some of her friends, to begin a journey of personal discovery, with discussions on the importance of female pleasure and the complexity of the female anatomy, while working to shed long-held feelings of shame and loneliness. While finding strength and joy in their own frank and intimate conversations together, Habibata and her friends continue to advocate for wider access to restorative surgery and facilitate community conversations in Canada and worldwide.

Seven Winters in Tehran (UK Premiere), directed by Steffi Niederzoll, unpacks the case of Reyhaneh Jabbari, a young Iranian woman who became a symbol of resistance and women's rights worldwide. In 2007, Reyhaneh, 19, is sentenced to death in Iran for the murder of a man who tried to rape her. Using secretly recorded videos provided by her family, their testimony, and the beautiful, lyrical letters she wrote from prison, voiced by *Holy Spider* actress Zar Amir Ebrahimi, **Seven Winters in Tehran** opens a window into the many ways women are oppressed and silenced in Iran, and the immense risks taken by those who defend and support them.

Structural discrimination is the focus of two films in the programme.

If The Streets Were On Fire introduces BikeStormz, a movement of young cyclists that attempts to offer a safe and welcoming space for youth in London. Starting as a protest against violent crime with the slogan "knives down, bikes up," BikeStormz, founded by a social activist, Mac Ferrari-Guy, has grown into a movement and safe space for young people around London to freely express themselves. The filmmaker Alice Russell beautifully captures groups of young people as they glide through the city, doing wheelies, tricks, and acrobatics and cheering each other on as they travel through the postcode-neutral space of central London. Yet as they come together and find liberation through cycling, they are threatened with arrest and accused of anti-social behaviour.

Co-presented with BFI Flare: London LGBTQIA+ Film Festival, Marek Kozakiewicz's *Silent Love* (UK Premiere) is a coming-of-age and a coming-out story about embracing new roles and redefining old ones. Aga, 35, is legally adopting her teenage brother, Milosz, after their mother's death – a process that probes into her life choices. However, there's something she can't share in their conservative Polish village: her long-term relationship with her girlfriend, Maja. Aga has always hidden her relationship from friends and family, and must continue to hide it from the social workers for fear of losing her case for Milosz. *Silent Love* delicately captures this trio's discreet struggle as they begin to live as a family, against the prejudices of an ultra-conservative and viscerally homophobic society.

The impact of war on the day-to-day lives of citizens of a small town in Ukraine is profiled in *When Spring Came to Bucha* (UK Premiere), which poignantly captures how a small community continues with life amid trauma and loss, while war rages on close by. After a month of intense fighting, the Russian army withdrew, leaving the town destroyed in its wake. Yet in the midst of suffering, a young couple gets married, and life must go on. This heart-rending yet empowering documentary tells stories of loss, hope, and resistance, as the spring flowers of Bucha begin to bloom.

As always, the festival strives to prioritise space for identities, viewpoints, forms of expertise and experiences either silenced or marginalised in the film industry, news, and media. The festival is also committed to expanding opportunities for audience members to enjoy the events together, and is working to create features that more people can access, including people who are blind or have visual disabilities, and those who are D/deaf or hard of hearing. The majority of the festival films this year will be audio described and play with captions, with live-transcription for the conversations to follow. [See the website for accessibility specifications for each film in the line-up.](#)

Details about the screenings and discussions can be found at <https://ff.hrw.org/london>

Festival Programme:

Opening Night

[Delikado](#)

Philippines, Hong Kong, Australia, USA, UK / 2021 / Karl Malakunas / 94m

London Premiere

In English and Tagalog with English subtitles. This film is captioned and audio-described; the discussion panel following the film will be live-captioned.

Barbican Cinema 1, Thursday, 16 March, 6.10pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

In *Delikado*, three environmental defenders are tested as never before in their battle to save their home, Palawan, an island in the Philippines, from the illegal destruction of its forests, fisheries, and mountains.

"Delikado is an important and powerful film. The tension is palpable throughout... but so is the incredible courage of the environmental defenders portrayed."

- Luciana Tellez-Chavez, researcher, Environment and Human Rights Division, Human Rights Watch

Closing night

[Theatre of Violence](#)

Denmark / 2023 / Lukasz Konopa and Emil Langballe / 90m

UK Premiere

English, Swahili and Luo with English subtitles.

Barbican Cinema 1, Friday, 24 March, 6pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

Dominic Ongwen is the first former child soldier prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). *Theatre of Violence* follows Ongwen's lawyer and his team as they investigate, build a defence strategy, and try to answer the central question: how do we define "justice" when the perpetrator is also a victim?

"Visually, it's beautiful. The issues are presented in a very nuanced way, which is rare for Western-made productions about the LRA war and the conflict in Uganda - centering Acholi voices, juxtaposing Ongwen's trial with what is happening in Uganda today, and posing important questions about the relevance of the ICC."

- Oryem Nyeko, Uganda and Tanzania researcher, Human Rights Watch

Category: Woman

Canada / 2022 / Phyllis Ellis / 76m

European Premiere

English, Hindi, Swahili with English subtitles. This film is captioned and audio-described ; the discussion panel following the film will be live-captioned.

Barbican Cinema 3, Friday, 17 March, 6.30pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

Sport has a long and problematic history of policing women athletes' bodies. *Category: Woman* focuses on four women athletes from the Global South who are required to undergo medical intervention to compete in their sport, despite being in perfect health, and explores what happens when sexism and racism collide.

"I was inspired and deeply affected by this story far beyond that of a filmmaker. I had experienced many challenges as an Olympian and as a woman in high performance sport, but I may have collapsed under the pressure these phenomenal athletes have endured. The devastation to their bodies, and their lives, but equally arresting was their passion and joy for sport, the dedication to their communities, families, and country."

- Phyllis Ellis, director, *Category: Woman*

"*Category: Woman* delicately portrays the athletes featured in it on their own terms. Given the incredible complexity of accessing the athletes for interviews, it is unlikely a film like this will come around for another decade at least."

- Kyle Knight, Senior Researcher, Health and LGBT Rights, Human Rights Watch

No U-Turn

France / Nigeria / South Africa / 2022 / Ike Nnaebue / 94m

Igbo, French, Bambara, Pidgin, English, with English Subtitles. This film is captioned and audio-described; the discussion panel following the film will be live-captioned.

Barbican Cinema 3, Saturday, 18 March, 4.15pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

No U-Turn, by the celebrated Nigerian director Ike Nnaebue, takes viewers on a journey with Nigerian citizens leaving their country, traveling north through Africa and beyond in search of work and opportunity to build a future, despite the known and unknown challenges lying ahead.

“Why is it unrealistic to dream of comfortable life in a continent of abundant resources?”
- Ike Nnaebue, director, *No U-Turn*

“*No U-Turn* is a strong documentary that provides answers to questions around the motivations for migrating and experiences on the journey.”
- Anietie Ewang, researcher, Africa Division, Human Rights Watch

Special Mention, Best Documentary, Berlinale 2022
Winner, Best Documentary, African Movie Academy Awards 2022

[When Spring Came to Bucha](#)

Germany, Ukraine / 2022 / Mila Teshaieva, Marcus Lenz / 64m
UK Premiere

Ukrainian Russian with English Subtitles. This film is captioned and audio-described; the discussion panel following the film will be live-captioned.

Barbican Cinema 3, Saturday, 18 March, 6.45pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

In March 2022, Russian troops withdraw from a small town in the Kyiv region, and Ukrainian citizens emerge from their homes to clean their streets, rebuild, and face a new day while grieving about all that’s been lost. This film poignantly captures how a small community continues with life amid trauma and loss, while war rages on close by.

[I Didn't See You There](#)

USA / 2022/ Reid Davenport / 76m

English. This film is captioned and audio-described; the discussion panel following the film will be live-captioned. The Audio Description is provided by the narrator.

Barbican Cinema 3, Sunday, 19 March, 3.45pm and Friday, 24 March 12 noon. Both events are [Relaxed Screenings](#) and will be followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

When a circus tent is put up outside his apartment, the filmmaker Reid Davenport, a wheelchair user, reflects on the corrosive legacy of the “freak show” and the paradoxical spectacle and invisibility of disability.

“*I Didn't See You There* is fantastic and captivating – it’s precisely the disability-led perspectives that challenge our way of understanding norms, societies and filmmaking!”
- Jonas Bull, assistant researcher, Disability Rights, Human Rights Watch

“I see film after film exploring disability in a clichéd, misguided way. Rarely am I able to relate to stories about disability on screen. I wanted to be able to portray my perspective in a way that would be difficult to fetishize or romanticize. So instead of turning the camera on myself, I turned it outward. Doing so allowed me to capture the devastation of a stranger’s gaze, the emptiness of being ignored, the physical weight of doors, and the beauty I am privy to as a wheelchair-user and

person with spasticity. In many ways, this film is an invitation to see through my eyes.”
- Reid Davenport, director, *I Didn't See You There*

U.S. Documentary Directing Award, Sundance Film Festival 2022

[If the Streets Were on Fire](#)

UK / 2022 / Alice Russell / 71m

English.

Barbican Cinema 3, Sunday, March 19, 6.15 pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

BikeStormz, a movement of young cyclists, attempts to offer a safe and welcoming space. However, new forms of conflict arise when police and “concerned citizens” threaten arrest for their very existence.

“*If the Streets Were on Fire* affirms the importance of communities taking local action and provides a candid critique on how police and government often poorly respond to positive youth-led initiatives.”

- Bede Sheppard, deputy director, Children’s Rights, Human Rights Watch

“BikeStormz are legendary, powerful, inspirational. They’ve inspired me. They’ve inspired many people.”

- Stormzy, musician

[Silent Love](#)

Poland, Germany / 2022 / Marek Kozakiewicz / 72m

UK Premiere

Polish with English Subtitles. This film is captioned and audio-described; the discussion panel following the film will be live-captioned.

Barbican Cinema 3, Tuesday, 21 March, 6.30pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

Silent Love is a coming-of-age and a coming-out story. Aga, 35, is legally adopting her teenage brother, Milosz, after their mother’s death – a process that invites intense probing into her lifestyle. However, there’s something she can’t share in their conservative Polish village: her long-term relationship with her girlfriend, Maja.

“This is such a beautiful film -- subtle, understated and emotionally attuned.”

- Graeme Reid, director, LGBT Rights, Human Rights Watch

[Seven Winters in Tehran](#)

Germany, France / 2023 / Steffi Niederzoll / 97m

UK Premiere

Farsi with English Subtitles.

Barbican Cinema 3, Wednesday, 22 March, 6.10pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

In 2007, Reyhaneh Jabbari, 19, is sentenced to death in Iran for the murder of a man who tried to

rape her. The efforts her family and supporters undertake open a window into the mass oppression and silencing of women in Iran, and the risks taken by those who defend and support them.

“*Seven Winters in Tehran* shows very clearly the patriarchy and injustices experienced by women in Iran, as well as how laws protect the honor of men.”

- Regina Tames, deputy director, Women’s Rights, Human Rights Watch

Official Selection, Berlinale 2023

[Koromouso, Big Sister](#)

Canada / 2023 / Habibata Ouarme, Jim Donovan / 75m

European Premiere

French and English, with English subtitles. This film is captioned and audio-described; the discussion panel following the film will be live-captioned.

Barbican Cinema 3, Thursday, 23 March, 6.30pm, followed by a Q&A. Also streaming across the UK + Ireland from 20-26 March, online audiences can watch the film at their own pace.

Canada-based co-directors Habibata Ouarme and Jim Donovan capture personal stories and deep moments of support in a small community of women from West Africa, who are confronting social norms and embracing the inherent power in pleasure and love for their own bodies.

“This film brings more than an education on a harmful traditional practice that’s still practiced in parts of West Africa – it captures the stories of solidarity among these irrepressible, strong African women.”

- Mausi Segun, director, Africa Division, Human Rights Watch

Tickets go on sale to Barbican members on Wed 15 Feb, and to the public on Thu 16 Feb 2023.

Barbican In-cinema prices:

£12 – individual ticket price

£9.60 – Barbican Member

£9 – Barbican Corporate Member

£5 - Young Barbican/Barbican staff/City of London staff

Digital festival tickets:

£6 / €6 – Individual ticket

£4.80 / €4.80 – Individual ticket for Barbican/HRW Members (with use of code)

£4 / €4 – Young Barbican Members / Students (with use of code)

£4.50 / €4.50 – Barbican Corporate Members (with use of code)

£50 / €50 – Digital festival pass with access to all 10 films

£40 / €40 – Digital festival pass with access to all 10 films – Barbican/HRW Member price (with use of code)

Pay what you can:

A limited number of tickets will be set aside for each in-person screening as “Pay what you can.”

Offering audience members to pay the following price: £15/£12 (Suggested) / £9 / £6 / £3 (other discounts do not apply)

Free digital tickets: Free online tickets are available to members of the public for whom cost of a ticket would be inaccessible, by emailing filmticket@hrw.org. (Limited free tickets available, first come first served.)

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

Anna Dean: anna@sarahharveypublicity.co.uk

For downloadable images and press kits, please visit:

<https://ff.hrw.org/press-room>

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.

For festival updates, sign up for our mailing list at hrw.org/filmconnect

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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 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.

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over a million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 700 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, public spaces, a library, the Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court, and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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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.