

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

VANCITY THEATRE, 1181 SEYMOUR STREET, VANCOUVER (CANADA)

2008 PROGRAM – FILMS AND TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

WELCOME

This 13th annual Amnesty International Film Festival coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations document that sets out the rights of human beings.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become the foundational text for many human rights enacted by governments. Unfortunately, it is also a time to lament and take action in response to ways authorities have failed to promote and protect human rights.

The 2008 Amnesty Film Festival reflects this paradox. It offers films celebrating human rights triumphs and champions. It also features films exposing myriad ways governments, corporations, military forces and others violate the rights of individuals and groups.

You are invited to the 2008 Amnesty Film Festival. Peruse this program and select films that will help you understand and prepare for action needed to move the world closer to the one envisioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The 2008 Amnesty Film Festival will screen more than 35 films, our largest selection yet. There are two North American premieres, a dozen Canadian premieres, seven Vancouver premieres.

You are also invited to come to the Vancity theatre during festival hours and look at 30 original artworks, each representing an artist's interpretation of an article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thank you to the many filmmakers who often take great personal and financial risks to bring important human rights stories to the big screen.

We also thank you the audience for supporting cinema with a social conscience. Above all, we hope these films will inspire you to become active in Amnesty International or another organization of choice working to secure human rights for all.

TICKET INFORMATION

Advance tickets and passes may be purchased at **Tickets Tonight** in person and online. Advance ticket sales end at 11 pm on the day preceding the day of the film. Subject to service charge. Admission to Side Program films is \$2 per film, at the door only.

Tickets Tonight Booth

Plaza Level, 200 Burrard Street (at Cordova, in the Tourism Vancouver Tourist Info Centre). Open daily, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Online: www.ticketstonight.ca

Will Call

Tickets and Passes purchased through ticketstonight.ca can be picked up at the Will Call Table at Vancity Theatre on the day of the screening. Only the credit card holder may

pick up the tickets with valid photo ID. Please arrive 30 minutes in advance of your first screening to allow time to pick up your tickets, and please be seated 10 minutes prior to showtime.

Tickets at the door

Tickets and passes also available at the door, subject to availability.

Tickets and passes

General admission **\$9.00**

Matinees, students, seniors, underemployed persons **\$7.00**

Five-show pass **\$35.00** (\$25 for students, seniors, underemployed persons)

Full festival pass **\$100.00** (\$75 for students, seniors, underemployed persons)

Theatre address and accessibility

Vancity Theatre at Vancouver International Film Centre

1181 Seymour Street (at Davie)

Accessible Parking: street parking only / entrance: street level ramp

Seating: two to four spaces for wheelchairs (depending on size)

Washrooms: fully accessible

FESTIVAL NOTES

Amnesty International Film Festival

Program subject to change. The Amnesty International Film Festival presents stories and moving images about human rights. Amnesty International does not necessarily hold the opinions expressed in these films. For information or to submit a film for next year contact Don Wright at dwright@amnesty.ca or 604-294-5160. The Amnesty International Film Festival is a charter member of the *Human Rights Film Network*, a cooperating group of more than 30 human rights film festivals around the world.

www.amnesty.ca/filmfest

MAIN THEATRE

Tickets available at ticketstonight.ca and at the door [M = matinee]

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13

12:30 pm (M)

War Dance

Sean Fine and Andrea Nix / USA / 2006 / 105 min

War Dance tells the story of Uganda's brutal civil war through the eyes of children. For their entire lives, Dominic, Nancy and Rose have lived in a dangerous war zone. As Northern Ugandans, they suffered under the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a guerrilla organization that forced children to butcher their relatives or suffer the same fate themselves. *War Dance* follows their historic journey to the Uganda National Music and Dance Competition. Devastated by the horrors of war, they carry the hopes and dreams of their village as they struggle to become national champions.

- Oscar nominee for Best Documentary Feature, 2008
- Gold Audience Choice Award, 2007 AI Film Festival (Vancouver)

- Audience Award and Best Documentary, 2007 Aspen Filmfest
- Documentary Directing Prize, Sundance Film Festival

3:00 pm (M)

The Doctor, the Depleted Uranium and the Dying Children

Frieder Wagner and Valentin Thurn / Germany / 2004 / 53 min

Depleted uranium shells penetrate steel like a knife slices butter. When they explode, radioactive nano-particles disperse silently through the atmosphere, resulting in a serious threat to most forms of life. This film follows Professor Guenther and colleagues as they explore radioactive contamination in Iraq where it is 30,000 times higher than natural radiation levels elsewhere. Their work raises critical questions about damaging (but mostly invisible) pollution and shows links between militarism, environmental degradation and health crises for citizens. *Vancouver premiere.*

- European Television Prize, 2004 International Environmental Film Festival

4:15 pm (M)

My Daughter The Terrorist

Beate Arnestad / Norway / 2007 / 60 min

Suicide bombers are widely thought to be poor and male. This film, however, introduces us to two young women, Dharsika and Puhachudar, who are prepared to strap American-made Claymore mines to their bodies and detonate them. This would result in certain death for themselves and destruction of everything within 100 feet. As well as showing the technology of destruction, the film explores why well-educated women set for careers in law or medicine would become suicide bombers. *Canadian premiere.*

- Best International Feature-length Doc, 2007 Message to Man (St. Petersburg)
- Special mention, 2007 DOCNZ, New Zealand

7:00 pm

Stolen Sisters

Antonio Hrynychuk / Canada / 2007 / 43 min

Stolen Sisters is a haunting perspective on grief experienced by relatives and friends searching for missing Aboriginal family members. This film takes viewers over rolling Saskatchewan farmland, into small towns on Vancouver Island, and onto the streets of Vancouver's downtown eastside. The story follows a single family, their community and their heartbreaking search. As search techniques become more spirited and determined, the film exposes structural racism and raises important questions about police training and operations. *Canadian theatrical premiere.*

- Critics Choice, 2007 Globe and Mail
- Jury Prize, 2007 Saskatchewan Motion Picture Association Awards

8:45 pm

No End In Sight

Charles Ferguson / USA / 2007 / 102 min

The first film of its kind to chronicle the reasons behind Iraq's descent into anarchy, *No End In Sight* is a lucid, jaw-dropping, insider's tale of wholesale incompetence, recklessness and venality. It is a candid retelling of the events following the fall of Baghdad in 2003 by high ranking officials such as former Deputy Secretary of State

Richard Armitage, Ambassador Barbara Bodine, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, former Chief of Staff to Colin Powell, and General Jay Garner, as well as Iraqi civilians, American soldiers, and prominent analysts. *No End In Sight* examines the manner in which the principal errors of U.S. policy largely created the insurgency and chaos that engulf Iraq today.

- Oscar nominee for Best Documentary Feature, 2007
- Special Documentary Jury Prize, Sundance Film Festival, 2007
- Best Documentary, National Society of Film Critics

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14

12:30 pm (M)

A World Without Water

Brian Woods / UK / 2006 / 78min

This film investigates the future of water, and paints a disturbing picture of a world running out of the most basic of life's essentials. The struggle for water and battle for its ownership is explored through compelling stories of families in Bolivia, Detroit, Dar Es Salaam, and Rajasthan. The film explores conflicts concerning the future of water and shows how even those living in the relatively water-rich UK hold the survival of the planet in their hands.

- Special Prize, Monte Carlo Television Festival

3:00 pm (M)

Crossing the Dust

Shawkat Amin Korki / Iraqi Kurdistan and France/ 2006 / 73 min

This drama is set in 2003 Iraq during the fall of Saddam. Kurdish soldiers Rashid and Azad are celebrating the toppling of Saddam's statue in Baghdad, before being ordered to take food to their comrades. On the way, they come across an Iraqi boy called Saddam, disoriented and crying at the side of the road. While Azad treats the boy kindly, Rashid is hostile. But when tragedy descends, Rashid faces some very tough decisions. Although the plot concerns two men and a boy, the dilemmas faced by Rashid raise universal questions about what it means to be human in an inhuman world. *Canadian premiere.*

4:30 pm

View from a Grain of Sand

Meena Nanji / USA / 2006 / 82 min

Shot over a three year period in Pakistan and Afghanistan, a female doctor, teacher and social activist tell how their lives were affected by war and regime change in Afghanistan. Despite immense loss, these women have endured. With courage, conviction and hope they continue to work on improving the lives of people around them.

- Silver Conch Award, 2008 Mumbai International Film Festival
- Best Documentary, 2007 Canada International Film Festival

7:00 pm

Fire under the snow

Makoto Sasa / Japan and USA / 2008 / 75 min

Palden Gyatso, a Buddhist monk since childhood, was arrested by the Chinese Communist Army in 1959. He spent 33 years in prison for the “crime” of demonstrating peacefully. He was starved and tortured, and watched as friends and family were displaced, jailed or killed under Chinese occupation. Despite this, Gyatso’s spirit remained intact and, in a life that speaks to us all, he still actively campaigns for human rights. This joint Japanese and US co-production explores an extraordinary life. At the same time it raises critical questions about human security, civil liberties, cultural expression, and Chinese notions of “modernization.” *Canadian premiere.*

9:00 pm

Screamers

Carla Garapedian / UK / 2006/7 / 95 min

This gripping documentary traces the history of genocide – from the Ottoman Empire to the 21st century, through the holocaust, Cambodian killing fields, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. Grammy award-winning rock band, *System of a Down*, lend their music to this critically acclaimed tour movie. This heavy metal rock band raises awareness about the politics of genocide. *Screamers* is a powerful documentary with a message: “Never Again.” *Vancouver premiere.*

- Audience Award, American Film Institute Film Festival
- AI Audience Choice Award, 2007 Montreal Human Rights Film Festival
- Golden Apricot Panorama Award, Yerevan International Film Festival (Armenia)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15

11:00 am (M)

The Unwinking Gaze

Joshua Dugdale / UK / 2008 / 70 min

Tibetans are typically required to steer an uneasy course between celebrating their own culture and often bizarre Chinese notions of “modernization.” This film shows the daily struggle of the Dalai Lama as he strikes a balance between Buddhism and the realpolitik needed to placate China. The director takes you into the working world of the Dalai Lama who tries to maintain peace while confronting brutality.

12:15 pm (M)

Mexiphobia

Nevie Owens / USA / 2008 / 53 min

Borders are often associated with drug-running and people fleeing to a better life. However, rather than focusing on these negative border cliches, this film explores the way historic notions of community are eroded by the 21st century preoccupation with security. For generations, people on both sides of the Rio Grande river at Boquillas, Santa Elena, and Paso Lajitas built vibrant community but depended on tourists. When the border tightened, a sense of community and a flourishing tourism industry was replaced by a damaging sense of siege. *Canadian premiere.*

- 2005 Texas Filmmakers Production Fund

1:45 pm

The Forest for the Trees (M)

Bernadine Mellis / USA / 2006 / 57 min

This film tells the story of the US government's attempt to stop EarthFirst's Redwood Summer action by bombing a car carrying environmentalists, and then arresting them as terrorists for the bombing. The charges were later dropped, so Earthfirst leader Judi Bari sued the government to clear her name. The film follows the court case that set the record straight and in doing so, exposes the FBI tendency to suppress dissent by violent means, and the equally long history of those who have resisted.

- Grand Prize, Green Film Festival in Seoul
- Best Documentary, Tiburon Film Festival
- Audience Award for Best Documentary Short, Santa Cruz Film Festival

3:15 pm (double bill) (M)

Ya Shadad

Karen Shayo / Israel / 2007 / 25 min

This film exposes the emotional and physical predicament of a Palestinian family trapped by the Israeli security barrier (wall) on the West Bank. The Amar family home is surrounded by fences and locked gates. As their world shrinks, options disappear, and physical and psychological escape routes wither, their predicament becomes a meditation on the Palestinian people on a whole. This film shows how humiliation pervades daily life on the West Bank and helps explain why desperate people fight back. *Canadian premiere.*

- Artistic Vision Award – 2008 Big Sky Festival

Bridge Over the Wadi

Tomer Heymann and Barak Heymann / Israel / 2006 / 55 min

The Wadi Ara School in Israel is the third school in the "Hand-in-Hand" program – a project designed to educate Jewish and Muslim Israeli children together in schools jointly run by Arabs and Israelis. Parents on both sides courageously set about to raise their children in understanding, however uneasy it may be. In the end, the schoolchildren triumph – while parents and teachers continue to have immense difficulty overcoming old hatreds and prejudice.

5:30 pm

USA VS Al-Arian

Line Halvorsen / Norway / 2007 / 99 min

This is an intimate portrait of a Palestinian-American family in their attempt to fight terrorism charges. In February 2003, university professor and pro-Palestinian activist Sami Al-Arian was arrested in Tampa, Florida on charges of supporting terrorism. For two-and-a-half years he was held in solitary confinement, denied basic privileges and given only limited access to attorneys. In this real-life nightmare, a man is deprived of his rights and prosecuted for his beliefs, not his actions. *Vancouver premiere.*

- Audience Award, 2007 Tromsø International Film Festival
- Best Film, 2007 New Orleans Human Rights Film Festival
- Grand Prize, 2007 Norwegian Documentary Film Festival

7:15 pm

The War on Democracy

John Pilger / UK / 2007 / 94 min

This film questions the US notion of “spreading democracy”. An award-winning journalist, John Pilger suggests the US is conducting a war *on* (or against) democracy. True popular democracy is now more likely to be found among the poorest of Latin America whose grassroots movements are thriving despite US-backed suppression. John Pilger interviews President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and US officials who ran Latin American wars in the 1980s. In the end, this is a hopeful film because Pilger shows ordinary people are capable of extraordinary actions.

9:15 pm

Standard Operating Procedure

Errol Morris / USA / 2008 / 118 min

Photographs taken by soldiers in Abu Ghraib prison changed the war in Iraq, triggered a political crisis in Washington and challenged the US image of itself. Yet, a mystery remains. Did the notorious Abu Ghraib photographs constitute evidence of systematic abuse by the American military? Or the aberrant behavior of a few bad apples? This film is built on a worrying premise – that Abu Ghraib was business-as-usual. Those were standard operating procedures. If so, how did American values become so compromised?

- 2008 Silver Berlin Bear – Jury Grand Prix

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16

11:00 am (M)

Forbidden future

Gard A. Andreassen / Norway / 2007 / 52 min

Young Iranian musicians and artists usually have to hide. This film introduces the band Scourge, music student Sanam, and a controversial painter named Shahram, all of whom, by violating strict religious codes risk being flogged or put to death. In fact, while the film is being shot Shahram attracted official attention and comes close to being sentenced to death. By following these three, the film-maker exposes constraints on artistic expression and human rights abuse in Iran. Fundamentalists are not about to be overthrown by rock music or painting but this film demonstrates that resistance is possible. *Vancouver premiere.*

- Best European Documentary Feature, 2008 European Independent Film Festival, France:

12:15 pm (M)

Los Caidos (The Fallen)

Rudy Joffroy / Mexico / 2008 / 85 min

While 63 miners lie buried in rubble at the Pasta de Conchos coal mine, Mexican authorities and media perform a complicated fandango of disinformation and cover-up. This film explores the historic 2006-2007 conflict between Mexican authorities and ordinary citizens and exposes how the Vicente Fox administration and corporate allies dealt with vocal unions and union leaders. While focussed on the particularities of a Mexican mining disaster, the film raises troubling questions about how corporate and political alliances work against ordinary citizens fighting for worker’s rights.

2:15 pm (double bill) (M)

KM.207, By The Road Side

Gregory Lassalle / Guatemala-France / 2007 / 42 min

At km 207 on the road to the Pacific in Guatemala, a group of peasant farmers are fighting for justice for their colleague Hector Reyes, who was kidnapped and likely murdered in 2003 by his Spanish employer. This film illustrates peasant farmer resistance against the power of large landowners and the complicit State. Getting justice for Hector Reyes is linked to broader questions concerning corporate and political elites and the capacity of ordinary people to resist. *North American premiere.*

Memories of a Dreamer: The Journey of a Political Prisoner

Allison Larrea / Canada / 2007 / 51 min

This film is a firsthand account of hardship suffered by a political prisoner of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Thirty years after the 1973 coup, Félix Mora relives shocking details of human rights abuse and escape from the dictatorship. Archival footage, dramatization, and personal narrative are brought together to show the challenges of living in exile in Italy and Canada. Although terror and injustice are overcome by courage and determination, the Chilean exile never fully escapes the horror of the CIA-assisted overthrow of the democratically-elected Allende government.

4:25 pm

A Promise To The Dead

Peter Raymont / Canada / 2007 / 91 min

Acclaimed documentarian Peter Raymont follows celebrated writer Ariel Dorfman during an emotionally-charged return visit to Chile. Personal and political, the film boasts startling archival footage and heartbreaking contemporary sequences as Dorfman deals with the past. The writer still garners enormous respect in Chile. But, as he and the film crew visit familiar but eerie sites, no amount of local support can erase painful recollections from the past. Pinochet escaped without ever having to face his accusers in court. Dorfman and other survivors of Chile's dictatorship struggle with their memories and grieve for lost relatives, friends and neighbours.

- Nominated for three Gemini awards

6:45 pm

Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma

Patrick Reed / Canada / 2007 / 88 min

Triage is the ultimate humanitarian nightmare. Racing against time with limited resources, relief workers are forced to make split-second decisions. Who gets treatment, food, a place to live? Who is left to die? This film follows Dr. James Orbinski on journeys to lands and people whose life-and-death struggles marked him forever. As *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) President, Orbinski accepted the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize on their behalf. He was a field doctor during the Somali famine and the Rwandan genocide. The film crew accompanied the doctor to Somalia and Rwanda, visits genocide sites and highlights dilemmas confronted by humanitarian organizations and workers.

9:00 pm

Announcement of 2008 Audience Choice Awards

War Dance (2007 Gold Audience Award Winner)

Sean Fine and Andrea Nix / USA / 2006 / 105 min

War Dance tells the story of Uganda's brutal civil war through the eyes of children. For their entire lives, Dominic, Nancy and Rose have lived in a dangerous war zone. As Northern Ugandans, they suffered under the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a guerrilla organization that forced children to butcher their relatives or suffer the same fate themselves. *War Dance* follows their historic journey to the Uganda National Music and Dance Competition. Devastated by the horrors of war, they carry the hopes and dreams of their village as they struggle to become national champions.

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- Audience Award and Best Documentary, 2007 Aspen Filmfest
- Documentary Directing Prize, Sundance Film Festival

SIDE PROGRAM

Upstairs meeting room, all seats \$2, at the door only

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15

1:00 pm (double bill)

Missing Lives: Disappearances and Impunity in the North Caucasus

WITNESS & Memorial / Russia / 2007 / 14 min

Since 1999, "counter-terrorism operations" conducted by Russian military and security forces in Chechnya have resulted in the disappearance of more than 3,000 people. To this day, nobody has explained where they went, and the "missing-person" problem has spread to neighbouring republics in the North Caucasus. *Canadian premiere.*

Rightful Place

WITNESS & CEMIRIDE / Kenya / 2007 / 16 min

In 1974, the Kenyan government evicted the Endorois community from sacred lands to make way for a game reserve and tourist resort. After decades of inaction and harassment by successive governments, the Endorois take their claims to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. *Canadian premiere.*

2:15 pm

Gloriously Free

Ed Sinclair / Canada / 2004 / 47 min

This film examines Canada's immigration laws and procedures wherein international gays and lesbians can apply for refugee status.

3:30 pm

Human Needs, Human Wants

Amnesty International / USA / 2004 / 30 min

This film highlights some of the ways in which Amnesty International and the broader human rights movement are working to advance economic, social, and cultural rights and make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a reality for people everywhere.

5:45 pm

The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo

Lisa F. Jackson / USA / 2007 / 76 min

This extraordinary film, shot in war zones of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), shows how sexual violence is used as a weapon of war. Tens of thousands of women and girls have been systematically kidnapped, raped, mutilated and tortured by soldiers from foreign militias and the Congolese army.

7:45 pm

Shock Waves

Pierre Mignault / Canada / 2007 / 52 min

In a land with silence secured at gunpoint, Radio Okapi is an eloquent and continuing testimony to the struggle for free expression in the Congo. *Vancouver premiere.*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16

1:00 pm (double bill)

Justice without borders

Amnesty International / USA / 2007 / 35 min

This film explores three global efforts to achieve justice: the campaign to bring former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori to justice, the groundbreaking work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) project on child soldiers, and the campaign to bring former Guatemalan General Efraín Ríos Montt to justice. *Canadian premiere.*

Writing for Abed

Amnesty International / Netherlands / 2004 / 15 min

Meet Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar, a 36-year old human rights defender who spent more than 1-1/2 years in administrative detention, and the AI Netherlands group that wrote letters on his behalf. *Canadian premiere.*

2:30 pm

Strong Coffee: The Story of Café Femenino

Sharon Bates / Canada / 2007 / 48 min

Café Femenino beans are the first grown entirely by women farmers. This uplifting story of hope and determination explores what your coffee purchase means to farmers.

3:35 pm (double bill)

Abstaining from Reality: U.S. Restrictions on HIV Prevention

Daniele Anastasion / USA / 2007 / 9 min

In 2003, the United States announced a commitment to combat HIV/AIDS globally - \$15 billion over five years in 15 'focus' countries, located primarily in Africa. Although unprecedented, this effort is encumbered by an "abstinence-only" approach to prevention.

Freedom from Abuse of Power: Torture and Unlawful Imprisonment

Ross Tuttle / USA / 2007 / 27 min

The impact of US foreign policy and the “war on terror” is explored with firsthand accounts from prisoners of Guantanamo Bay and victims of “extraordinary rendition.”
Vancouver premiere.

5:00 pm

At the death house door

Steve James and Peter Gilbert / USA / 2008 / 98 min

For 15 years, Pastor Carroll Pickett served as the “death house” chaplain in the infamous "Walls" prison in Huntsville, Texas. His journey takes him from favouring the death penalty to actively supporting abolition. *Vancouver premiere.*

7:15 pm

Music Partisans

Miroslaw Dembinski / Poland / 2007 / 53 min

Rock musicians in Belarus express opposition to the Lukashenka regime through their clothes and music. North American premiere.

8:30 pm

By popular demand – a selection repeated from Thursday or Friday night

The Amnesty International Film Festival would like to thank the staff at the Vancity Theatre and Cam Andrews from the CaJe Creative Group for poster, programme, and ad design. **A great big thanks** to festival volunteers and supporters, filmmakers, and audience members who make this festival possible!

Thank you to our supporters and sponsors

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www.amnesty.ca/filmfest