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fifdh.org

21<sup>st</sup> International Film  
Festival and Forum on  
Human Rights



Press release

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## *An overview of the programme of the 21st edition of the FIFDH*

The Geneva International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights - FIFDH - unveils the programme of its 21st edition which will take place from 10 to 19 March 2023. This edition is an invitation to immerse oneself in the stories of authors, filmmakers, and protagonists, to discover their real or imaginary worlds, during a screening or an encounter. A programme that delves into the burning issues in the local and international news, and invites us to take a closer look at their political, ethical and symbolic stakes.

*«In order to change our world, we must allow ourselves to imagine another.»*

Ali Cherri, guest at the 21st edition of the FIFDH, for L'Orient-Le Jour, 16 May 2022

For this 21<sup>st</sup> edition, the FIFDH proposes an international selection of films offering a wide range of narratives. There will be a special focus on international filmmakers, politically engaged writers and activists from around the world. The Festival will be punctuated with numerous debates, poignant fictions and documentaries, discussions with exceptional personalities and, for the first time, by three events dedicated to young audiences starting at 6 years old.

The 2023 edition of the FIFDH coincides with a symbolic jubilee. «*Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights encourages us to consider these rights at the crossroads of their continuity, breakdowns and developments. The FIFDH Geneva thus addresses with equal focus themes as complementary as humiliation as a tool of oppression, the extension of universal rights to the world of living beings or the ethical pitfalls of the digital age*» says Irène Challand, director of the FIFDH programmes.

## *Prominent and dedicated guests*

Among the two hundred or so guests present, Lebanese director and visual artist **Ali Cherri** (*The Dam*), Canadian-Somali activist and Right Livelihood Award laureate, **Ilwad Elman**, Kurdish singer and women's rights activist **Mutlu Kaya** (*My Name is Happy*), Afghan journalist and documentary filmmaker **Abbas Rezaie** (*Etilaat Roz*), French investigative journalist and author **Garance Le Caisne** (*Les Âmes perdues*), French-Congolese director **Alain Kassandra** (*Colette et Justin*), Kenyan producer and 2020 voting member of the Academy for Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences **Toni Kamau**, French documentary filmmaker **Nicolas Philibert** (*Sur L'Adamant*), feminist journalist and podcast creator **Victoire Tuaille** (*Les Couilles sur la table*) and Swiss photographer **Christian Lutz** (*Citizens*).

## *The pulse of a world under pressure - conflict, environment and migration*

At the heart of one of the world's most volatile areas, and at the deepest level of human emotions, we follow the journalists behind the closed doors of a newsroom during the Taliban takeover with **Abbas Rezaie's** documentary *Etilaat Roz*. **Garance Le Caisne's** *Les Âmes perdues* will plunge the audience into Operation Caesar, which made public the crimes against humanity committed by the Bashar El-Assad regime in Syria. The ensuing debate will shed light on the legal battle waged by the lawyer **Clémence Bectarte** and the film's protagonist, **Obeida Dabbagh**, to get these crimes recognised. The concept of humiliation will be the focus of two debates, the first will aim to define its use in international relations and the second will address its concrete application, as a tool of oppression and domination, in Palestine.

The environment will be at the centre of our programme, with the documentary *Duty of Care: The Climate Trials*, a deep look into the work of **Roger Cox**, the first lawyer to successfully sue a multinational company - Shell - and a government - the Dutch state - for environmental abuse and neglect. Ecology will also be discussed from a decolonial perspective, connecting issues of class, race and gender, in order to move away from a single narrative and highlight the diversity of experiences. Author **Myriam Bahaffou** (*Des paillettes sur le compost*), a decolonial and anti-speciesist ecofeminist activist, will debate with **Vandana Shiva**, leader of global ecofeminism and activist **Cannelle Fourdrinier**.

Migration and forced displacements mark our times. **Manon Loizeau's** *La Vie devant elle* takes the form of the diary of a 14-year-old Afghan young woman, **Elaha Iqbali**, who films herself to tell the story of her exile amidst solitude, mental fatigue and insecurity.

## *Reflections on decolonisation*

Following the independence of many nations and peoples, the post-colonial era has been the subject of much political and sociological reflection and has been highlighted by the emergence of artworks produced by their protagonists. The superb film *Colette et Justin*, by French director of Congolese origin **Alain Kassanda**, will be the focus of a debate on the decolonisation of storytelling, with Kenyan producer **Toni Kamau** and Sri Lankan director **Sanjeewa Pushpakumara**. Decolonisation will also be at the centre of a discussion around the controversial film *H2: The Occupation Lab* by **Idit Avrahami** and **Noam Sheizaf**. Through rare archival footage and interviews, the film shows how the Palestinian city of Hebron was used as a political laboratory for Israel's control methods, and highlights the harmful consequences of colonisation.

## *Swiss cinema - turning towards the outside world*

Swiss cinema will also have a prominent place at this 21<sup>st</sup> edition with the presence of a rising generation of new filmmakers. **Carmen Jacquier**, winner of the director's prize at the Marrakech International Film Festival (FIFM), will present her film *Foudre*. **Simon David** will take us to the *zone à défendre* located on the *colline du Mormont* with his film *Zadwegers*. And what would Swiss cinema be without the eyes of filmmakers who put their diverse cultural backgrounds to work in their art? **Gabriel Tejedor** will present the world premiere of his documentary *Naitre Svetlana Staline* on the exceptional fate of Joseph Stalin's only daughter. Director **Fisnik Maxville's** *The Land Within*, winner of the Best First Film Award at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival 2022 (PÖFF26), is a spellbinding fiction film that reopens the wounds of the conflict in Kosovo.

## *Technology and human rights*

It is easier to believe than to think, to confirm one's opinions than to question them. A dangerous tendency, especially when the use of new technologies amplifies our cognitive biases. This thought process will be pursued with the writer and essayist **Giuliano Da Empoli**, author of *Le Mage du Kremlin*, a novel that was shortlisted for the Prix Goncourt and winner of the Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie Française.

New technologies also threaten our data security and open the door to its illegal use. In 2021, a consortium of journalists denounced the use of a spyware program, Pegasus, used by 65 States, to spy on thousands of human rights' defenders, journalists and political activists. The world premiere of **Anne Poiret's** *Pegasus, un espion dans votre poche* examines this scandalous case. French journalist **Laurent Richard** of the *Forbidden Stories* network and Catalan journalist and activist **Txell Bonet**, a victim of this software, will debate the issue on stage at the FIFDH.

## *Universal issues: incest, rights of trans\* children, feminicide*

Despite being deemed a universal taboo, incest is systematically practised to the point of being a defining feature of human societies, as anthropologist **Dorothee Dussy**, author of the major work *Le berceau des dominations*, explains. She will be in conversation with **Iris Brey** and **Juliet Drouar**, co-authors of *The Culture of Incest*, and Scottish human rights activist **Matthew McVarish**.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the best interests of the child, the right to live, survive and develop. Do trans and non-binary young people have the same access to these rights in their transition journeys? **Denise Medico**, psychologist at the Centre for Research on Trans Children in Quebec, will discuss this question with young French model **Jacob-Elijah**, activist **Passita Gonzales** of Synergie Trans Benin, and lawyer Deekshitha Ganesan, in a panel session moderated by author and journalist **Tal Madesta**.

According to the UN, a woman is killed by her spouse or ex-partner every eleven minutes. We will welcome French historian **Christelle Taraud** and Argentinean-Brazilian anthropologist **Rita Laura Segato** to dissect the worldwide mechanics of these crimes around the world. Several films also address, from different perspectives, the violent excesses of patriarchal society: *Look What You Made Me Do* by **Coco Schrijber**, *My Name is Happy* by **Nick Read** and *Ayse Toprak*, *A Room of My Own* by **Ioseb «Soso» Bliadze** and *Lobo e Cão* by **Claudia Varejão**.

## *Films and workshops for the younger audience*

For the first time, the FIFDH is going to meet the youngest members of the audience and accompany them in the discovery of themes that are sometimes difficult to address. The animated film *Dounia et la princesse d'Alep* by Marya Zarif et André Kadi, presented in partnership with the **Cinemas du Grütli**, tells the story of the exile of a six-year-old girl and her family. The theme of child labour is tackled in *Iqbal - L'enfant qui n'avait pas peur* by Michel Fuzellier et Babak Payami as part of a programme set up by the **Lanterne Magique**. Finally, the animated film *Interdit aux chiens et aux Italiens* by Alain Ughetto, which won the Jury Prize at the Annecy Festival, tells the story of thousands of Italians who left their homeland to settle in France, Switzerland and Belgium at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## *Industry programme - Impact Days*

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the FIFDH's industry programme continues to grow with an increasing number of participating NGOs, media outlets, foundations and philanthropists. They will meet and exchange with the teams of the 16 selected documentary projects in Geneva on **13 and 14 March**. The goal? To create synergies, develop impact campaigns and maximise the outreach of the films, their protagonists and their stories. Three of these documentaries are selected for the Festival and are included in the competitions. Many of the films selected by the Impact Days have been taken up by UN agencies, for instance to raise awareness of issues related to the migration of unaccompanied minors (*Shadow Game*), others have had their world premiere at international festivals such as TIFF (*Lift Like a Girl*) and have won awards at Sundance (*Softie*). The full Impact Days programme can be found on the [fifdh.org](http://fifdh.org) website.

## *The Voies Libres podcast returns for a second season*

War, migration, the weight of tradition and patriarchy, the environmental crisis, post-colonialism, all of these are subjects which need to be told. How do human rights and their defence permeate the language of film? In this podcast, *Voies Libres* explores the link between cinema and activism with six guest filmmakers from the 21st edition of the FIFDH. Interviews by Laura Cazador. Coproduced by Geneva Vision RTS & FIFDH

## *The programme in figures*

- 36 films : 7 world premieres, 1 international, 1 European, 22 Swiss and 5 regional premieres
- 21 debates, 10 of which will be broadcast live on our digital channels
- 220 international guests
- 23 events, with round-tables, meetings, special screenings and exhibitions
- 13 educational sessions for classes of secondary I and II
- 3 sessions for families and young audiences from 6 years old.

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