



PERSBERICHT  
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## **Movies that Matter Festival presents *A Matter of ACT*, a series of documentaries about human rights defenders**

**International film and debate festival, 25-31 March 2010, The Hague**

This year's edition of the Movies that Matter Festival pays a tribute to special human rights defenders in ten documentaries that are part of the main program *A Matter of ACT*. These activists, who will be present at the festival as guests of honour, play a crucial role in defending human rights worldwide, nearly always putting their own lives on the line. The program section *A Matter of ACT*, sponsored by Amnesty International, has been expanded thanks to a special contribution from the 'Nationale Postcode Loterij'. The Movies that Matter Festival will take place from 25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 at Filmhuis Den Haag and Theater aan het Spui in The Hague, city of peace and justice.

Each year, Amnesty International awards a Golden Butterfly for the most imposing and inspiring human rights defender or organization, and a Golden Butterfly for the best *A Matter of ACT* documentary. The nominees are:

**Author and activist Somaly Mam (1970)** grew up in the slums of Cambodia and was sold to a brothel when she was twelve years old. After having been raped and abused for ten years she managed to escape with the help of a development-aid worker. Somaly has never forgotten the girls that were left behind and until today, she defends the interests of children working in the sex industry. The documentary *Red Light* by Guy Jacobson tells the story of kidnapped children that are sold to brothels and Somaly's efforts to fight this phenomenon.

**The International Solidarity Movement (ISM)** is a non-violent Palestinian movement that speaks out, on behalf of the Palestinian population, against Israel's occupation, and sheds light on human rights violations and the violence perpetrated by the Israeli army. In the documentary *To Shoot an Elephant* Alberto Arce shows what happened when the Israeli authorities closed off the Gaza Strip from the outside world for two months.

**Lawyer, human rights activist and former prisoner of conscience Shadi Sadr (1974)** is an expert in the field of women's rights in Iran. She was director of a counselling centre, which has meanwhile been closed by the government, and introduced a web site demanding equal rights for women. The Iranian authorities arrested her on several occasions. In November 2009, she received the Human Rights Defenders Tulip from the Dutch government. *Women in Shroud* by Farid Haerinejad exposes the discriminatory legal system in Iran through interviews with Shadi Sadr and convicted women.

**Lawyer Mandira Sharma (1972)** leads an investigation on behalf of the victims of the Nepalese civil war, which killed more than 13,000 people. Both the government and the Maoist rebels committed human rights violations during this war. Mandira was the first female lawyer to assist the victims. The

film ***The Sari Soldiers*** by Julie Bridghem follows six women that tried to flee the civil war and how Mandira Sharma helped them.

**Film makers Gustav Hofer & Luca Ragazzi** made a film about discrimination against homosexuals in Italy. When in 2006 the Italian government introduces a bill to reinforce the Legal status of gay couples, this stirs a wave of homophobia. In their ironic documentary ***Suddenly, Last Winter*** Gustav en Luca try to find out what caused this nation-wide panic, and discover an aspect of Italy they did not know yet.

**Activist and former prisoner of conscience Rebiya Kadeer (1947)** once was a successful and esteemed businesswoman, until she refused to deny her husband's criticism of China. He already lived in the United States at the time and defended the cause of the Uigur minority. Rebiya lost her status and was finally convicted to eight years in prison for transmitting newspaper articles to the US. The film ***The 10 Conditions of Love*** by Jeff Daniels zooms in on Rebiya's life and how she stands up to the oppression of the Uigur minority.

**Cuban journalist, poet and former prisoner of conscience Raúl Rivero (1945)** was among a group of 75 dissidents that were arrested during the Black Spring in 2003. Raúl was sentenced to twenty years in prison for criticizing the government and their plea for democracy. He was released in 2004 under international pressure. The documentary ***Women in White*** by Gry Winther deals with the group of women of the same name that successfully called for the release of those detained. *The Women in White* symbolizes the hope of Cuba's opposition for human rights and freedom of expression.

**Film maker and former prisoner of conscience Ngawang Choephel (1966)** grew up as a Tibetan exile in India. His films and music focus on safeguarding the Tibetan culture. He disappeared back in 1995 after travelling to his home country to do research. A year later his family was told that Ngawang had been sentenced to eighteen years in prison for espionage. Ngawang was released after six years. The documentary ***Tibet in Song*** is a tribute to traditional Tibetan folk music and traces fifty years of cultural repression in Chinese-controlled Tibet.

**Americans Mike and Andy as 'The Yes Men'** pretend to be envoys of different organizations and are invited as guest speakers to lectures and conferences, where they announce ludicrous policy changes or plans. For example, they argue in favour of the return of slavery at a WTO conference. Their statements get wide media coverage. What's more, people attending The Yes Men's public appearances are hardly astonished by what they hear, which makes the documentary ***The Yes Men Fix the World*** by Dan Ollman, Sarah Price and Chris Smith entertaining and shocking at the same time.

**Nassera Dutour is spokeswoman for the Collective of the Families of the Disappeared in Algeria.** Thousands of people disappeared during the civil war in Algeria, and the army's involvement has long been a taboo. Ever since 1997, the year in which Nassera's own son disappeared, she tries to break the silence that surrounds the disappearances, by organizing seminars and discussion forums as well as providing counselling to organizations and the families of those disappeared. ***Chanson pour Amine*** shows how Nassera and other families of victims have been campaigning for years to discover the truth about what happened to their loved ones.

The Movies that Matter Festival offers a varied programme of more than forty-five human rights movies, documentaries and "in-depth" sessions, and serves as a meeting place where the audience can exchange views with film makers, human rights activists and politicians from all over the world. Besides film screenings, debates, talk shows with international guests, expositions and music performances will be featured.

The full festival program will be published in a supplement to Dutch newspaper *Trouw* on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2010, and on [www.moviesthatmatterfestival.nl](http://www.moviesthatmatterfestival.nl).

The Movies that Matter festival is an initiative of the Dutch section of Amnesty International.

The festival's partners include Amnesty International, Stichting DOEN, Hivos-NCDO Cultuurfonds, the city of the Hague and the Dutch Ministry of Justice. Broadcaster VARA and newspaper Trouw act as media sponsors.

[www.moviesthatmatterfestival.nl](http://www.moviesthatmatterfestival.nl)

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Unless stated otherwise, *A Matter of ACT* documentaries are screened in the Filmhuis Den Haag – Spui 191 2511 BN DEN HAAG.