



PRESS RELEASE
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Movies that Matter Festival stages *A Matter of ACT* Night, in the presence of Princess Mabel and human rights activists

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

On Saturday 27 March, Movies that Matter Festival stages a special *A Matter of ACT* Night in Theater aan het Spui in the Hague. Prior to the screening of *Tibet in Song* ten physically present human rights defenders will be honoured, and Sandra Lutchman, director of Amnesty Nederland, will present the first copy of the *A Matter of ACT 2010* book to Princess Mabel of Orange. *A Matter of ACT* is the Movies that Matter Festival's main programme that consists of ten documentaries about prominent activists. This year's protagonists include Somaly Mam, Shadi Sadr, The Yes Men and Cuban Laura Pollán-Toledo (Damas de Blancas). The work of human rights defenders, who very often put their lives on the line, is of crucial importance for the worldwide protection of human rights. Amnesty International's programme component *A Matter of ACT* has been expanded this year thanks to additional funding made available by the 'Nationale Postcode Loterij'. The Movies that Matter Festival will take place from 25 to 31 March in Filmhuis Den Haag en Theater aan het Spui in the Hague, city of peace and justice.

Princess Mabel, director of The Elders

Since 1 July 2008 Princess Mabel serves as CEO of The Elders, an international council of world leaders that was set up by Nelson Mandela in 2007. The council strives for a safer 'Global Village' and the improvement of the global human rights situation. Its members include Desmond Tutu, Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter, Aung San Suu Kyi and Muhammad Yunus.

A Matter of ACT awards two Amnesty International prizes: a Golden Butterfly for the most imposing and inspiring activist or organization, and a second Golden Butterfly for the best documentary. A jury composed of **Ruud Lubbers (president)**, **Thekla Reuten** and **Sandra Lutchman** will elect the winner.

The nominees are:

- **Author and activist Somaly Mam (1970)** will open the 2010 Movies that Matter Festival. TIME Magazine ranked her among the hundred most influential people on earth, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and featured as CNN Heroe. Mam grew up in a Cambodian slum and was sold to a brothel when she was twelve years old. At the age of 22 she managed to escape with the help of a development worker. Until today, Somaly has tried to improve living conditions for the victims of the sex industry. The documentary *Red Light* by **Guy Jacobson** sheds light on Somaly's important work.
- **Activist and former prisoner of conscience Rebiya Kadeer (1947)** was once a successful and respected businesswoman in China, until she refused to dissociate herself from criticism voiced by her husband, who then already lived in the United States and campaigned for Uigurs. Rebiya lost her status and was finally sentenced to eight years in prison for secretly

sending newspaper articles to the US. The film **10 Conditions of Love** by **Jeff Daniels** tells the story of Rebiya's life and her fight against the oppression of the Uigur community.

- **Laura Pollán-Toledo's** house in the centre of Havana serves as the meetingplace of the Damas de Blanco, that brings together wives and daughters of the 75 dissidents that were arrested in Cuba in 2003. One of them, Orlando Zapato, recently died following a hunger strike. The Damas de Blanco made headlines when thirty of their female members were arrested after a demonstration. Just like the other 'Ladies in White' **Laura Pollán-Toledo** faces intimidation by the authorities as well as threats and calumny by local community members. The documentary **Women in White** by Gry Winther paints a picture of the Damas de Blanco, who embody the struggle for human rights and freedom of expression by Cuba's opposition. The Damas de Blanco successfully campaigned for the release of some of the 75 detained men.
- **Lawyer, activist and former prisoner conscience Shadi Sadr (1974)** is an expert in the field of women's rights in Iran. She was in charge of a counselling centre for women, that has meanwhile been closed by the Iranian government, and developed an action-oriented web site that calls for 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** contains interviews with convicted women and with Sadr herself to shed light on discriminatory justice in Iran.
- Pretending to be envoys of different organizations, **American natives Mike Bonanno and Andy Bichlbaum ('The Yes Men')** attend lectures and conferences as guest speakers. Here, they announce foolish policy changes and plans. For instance, they reveal on the BBC news that victims of the gas leak in Bhopal will be fully compensated by Dow Chemicals. Their documentary **The Yes Men Fix the World** is both amusing and shocking. On Saturday 27 March at midday, Mike Bonanno will give a masterclass in Theater aan het Spui, during which he will develop a 'The Yes Men' action for Amnesty International.
- **Filmmaker, musician and former prisoner of conscience Ngawang Choephel (1966)** from Tibet grew up in exile in China. His films and music call for safeguarding the Tibetan culture. He was arrested in 1995 when travelling to his homeland. A year later his relatives were told that Ngawang had been sentenced to eighteen years in prison for espionage. Following an international campaign for his release Ngawang was released after six years. **Tibet in Song** is a tribute to traditional Tibetan folk music and reveals the cultural repression of the past 50 years.
- **Filmmakers Gustav Hofer & Luca Ragazzi** made a film about discrimination of gays in Italy. In 2006 the Italian government introduces a bill to give gay couples more rights, stirring a wave of homophobia. In their humorous documentary **Suddenly, Last Winter** Gustav and Luca try to find out what caused the panic and discover an aspect of Italy they did not know yet.
- **The International Solidarity Movement (ISM)** is a peaceful Palestinian movement that stands up to Israeli occupation. The organization speaks out on behalf of the Palestinian population and reveals the human rights violations and violence perpetrated by the Israeli army. **Alberto Arce's** documentary **To Shoot an Elephant** shows what happened when the Israeli authorities closed off the Gaza Strip from the outside world for two months.
- **Lawyer Mandira Sharma (1972)** acts on behalf of the victims of the Nepalese civil war, that killed over 13,000 people. Both the government and the Maoist insurgents were responsible for human rights violations during this conflict. Mandira was the first female lawyer to assist the victims. The film **Sari Soldiers** by **Julie Bridghem** is about six women that tried to flee the civil war and the help they received from Mandira Sharma.
- **Activist 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 Nasser 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 features seventy human rights movies and documentaries, the screening of which is intertwined with a wide-ranging programme of debates, talk shows with international guests, expositions and music performances. Go to www.movieshatmatterfestival.nl for more information.

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

www.movieshatmatterfestival.nl

END OF PRESS RELEASE

Filmmakers and activists are available for interviews. Names highlighted in bold will attend the festival. For more information, requests for interviews and trailers, please contact Amnesty / Yvette Hoogerwerf, y.hoogerwerf@amnesty.nl or +31 (0)6-49423703. Filmhuis Den Haag – Spui 191 2511 BN DEN HAAG.