



Camera Justitia Award 2022 – Jury speech

Ladies and gentleman, friends of the Movies that Matter festival,

It is an honour to address you on this special evening, and it was my privilege to be the chair of the expert jury of the Camera Justitia competition. We have seen 8 films, 4 of them documentaries and 4 feature films. So even though the form was different, the carefully selected films shown in the Camera Justitia competition all shed a light on people who one way or another stand up against human rights violations and fight for justice.

Just the other day I read the translation by the well-known author and historian Timothy Snyder of a Ukrainian poem by Volodymyr Dibrova called “Dark Matter”. This poem contains phrases which perfectly fit this festival:

Do you see?

(...)

It is what it is, look out.

Toxic, not to be touched, not yet named. And that's our problem.

What is unnamed escapes unpunished.

(...)

Search. To name is to know.

As we all experience during this festival, film is a powerful advocacy tool to promote the debate of human rights & social issues. All 8 films in this competition

are very suitable to make the viewers reflect on what is going on and on what is necessary to *change* matters.

It is not a coincidence that this festival is held in The Hague, the international city of peace and justice where several international courts are located. So yes the country that features in the winning film is known here, as The Gambia filed a case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) alleging that the crimes against the Rohingya violate the Genocide Convention. And since the military coup of 1 February 2021, now exactly 437 days ago, we are witness of the fact that the cycle of violence, terror and persecution in Myanmar has not been broken yet. The same Myanmar military that was responsible for the gross human rights violations against the Rohingya people now is also responsible for the brutal crackdown on the prodemocracy protesters.

Since the coup, security forces have killed at least 1.700 people and detained more than 13.000. Over 500,000 people have been internally displaced, and the junta is deliberately blocking aid to populations in need, as a form of collective punishment.

This is the backdrop for the film that the jury unanimously chose as the winner:

Myanmar Diaries.

Myanmar Diaries is an incredibly beautiful film, in an innovative hybrid form, part documentary, part fiction, part animation. The lens is the eye of the human being.

Myanmar Diaries is a testimony of how filmmakers in a closed country are able to collaborate with international producers. The topic is urgent, the filmmakers are brave and had to work under difficult conditions, but the anonymous Myanmar film collective succeeded in finding creative ways to tell their kaleidoscopic stories with very modest means due to the circumstances. All the short films showed cinematic craft and are artistically strong in their own right. But through the quality of the editing and the almost suffocating storytelling, the various diary entries with different types of footage were welded together into a wonderful work of art

The graphic and violent images of the crackdown on protesters filmed either from the street or from within a house behind a window and were juxtaposed to poetic images of people loving and caring. We see the citizens of Myanmar, but no faces, no prototypical heroes. All these images will stick in one's memory. And the sounds

will haunt you, the banging in protest of the pots and pans, the desperate cries of the father lamenting his son, the furious grandmother next to the army trucks coming down on the young soldiers or the howls of the child imploring the military not to take away its mother.

In the last part of the film, we see a woman walking through the jungle and whispering: *Can you hear our suffering, can you hear our prayers, can you hear us?*

We have heard you and we have seen you. Thinking back to the poem I mentioned earlier: the violence and the terror has been named and may not escape unpunished. This truly moving film is a cinematic experience of unparalleled beauty and deserves the widest audience possible, as matters in Myanmar have to change.

Therefore, the award will go to: ***Myanmar Diaries* by the Myanmar Film Collective.**