

# Jury Reports – Movies that Matter Festival 2025

## Grand Jury Documentary

**Jury:** Bob Moore, Brian Hill, Justine Nagan

**Winner:** *Facing War* by Tommy Gulliksen

**Special Mentions:** *Mr. Nobody Against Putin* by David Borenstein and Pavel Illyich Talankin, *Flavours of Iraq* by Léonard Cohen

In this time of great global instability, it was an immense privilege to watch this group of films by passionate filmmakers striving to use their work to open eyes, minds, and pathways to dialogue and change. Each film had something important to say about the world we live in. Each film should be widely seen and talked about.

We discussed each film in detail and had a long debate about which one should win the Movies That Matter prize. The winning film gave us a cinematic invitation into the halls of power on the world stage. While the tremendous access granted us entry, the tight cutting, edgy score, and consistent commitment to story kept us engaged in this seminal film about diplomacy and the stakes of personal engagement in the modern geopolitical landscape. We felt this was a perfect film for this particular festival.

Because of the extremely high quality of the films in competition it was difficult for us to select one winner. We decided to give **honourable mentions** to two other films. For capturing and portraying humanity and bravery in the face of horror, we want to recognise ***Mr. Nobody Against Putin* by David Borenstein and Pavel Illyich Talankin**. And for our second honourable mention we chose a film which combined creativity with intimate personal storytelling; that film is ***Flavours of Iraq* by Léonard Cohen**. The jury truly felt that each of these films rose to meet the moment, illustrating in different ways the important roles of perseverance, integrity and resistance in the face of adversity.

But there can only be one winner, and this year the Grand Jury Prize for best documentary goes to ***Facing War* by Tommy Gulliksen**.

## **Grand Jury Fiction**

**Jury:** Mariëtte Rissenbeek, Thomas van Son, Christopher Zalla

**Winner:** *Manas* by Marianna Brennand

**Special Mention:** *Happy Holidays* by Scandar Copti

The Grand Jury Fiction would like to congratulate Movies That Matter for selecting such a powerful program of eight films that take us around the globe, giving us intimate insight into such very different cultures and customs, yet all asking an urgent, central question: what world are we leaving for our children?

First, the Grand Jury extends a **special mention** to a film which skillfully intertwines today's reality with the everyday life of two families. It subtly describes the dilemma between traditional expectations and the wish of the new generation to go its own way. ***Happy Holidays* by Scandar Copti.**

The Grand Jury Fiction Award goes to a film whose great strength lies in the power of the restricted frame. A narrative which slowly unfolds the horror of a shocking truth without throwing it in our face. A cinematography which takes us on a journey and sketches a brutal world in minimalist strokes. The audience is wrapped in lush and claustrophobic images. Things unsaid slowly smother us.

The courage of the young protagonist finally breaks the circle and enables an escape from a never-ending tradition. The extraordinary cast makes this brilliantly told story into a gripping as well as spine-chilling experience.

The Grand Jury Award Fiction goes to ***Manas* by Marianna Brennand**

## **Activist Lens**

**Jury:** Adrian Kawaley-Lathan, Adelheid Roosen, Hasan Oswald, Lianne Llewellyn, Rochus Pronk

**Winner:** *Black Snow* by Alina Simone

**Special Mention:** *Sudan, Remember Us* by Hind Meddeb

Good Evening, my name is Adrian Kawaley-Lathan, and I am representing the Activist Lens jury consisting of myself, Adelheid Roosen, Hasan Oswald, Lianne Llewellyn and Rochus Pronk and we are all honored to be this year's Activist Award jury.

We had the privilege of watching eight powerful films that captured the lives and struggles of brave activists who nonviolently resist entrenched systems of oppression, corruption, colonialism, state intimidation and corporate exploitation. Spanning the globe, the activists in these films displayed patience, restraint, dignity and integrity in the face of persistent threats to their lives, their families and their communities. They act with courage while working through trauma, build community power while mourning their loved ones, and confront injustice head-on while refusing to waver in their fight for what is right. In intimate moments, in terror, in hope and heartbreak, the filmmakers in this program were embedded within these communities, unwaveringly capturing every moment.

For the honorable Mention the jury was captivated by this film's raw and poetic portrayal of a youth culture that has been largely unseen in a conflict that remains underreported worldwide. Presenting a joyful, uplifting and hopeful tapestry of nonviolent resistance through artistic expression, the film places audiences in the streets of Khartoum, where activists risk their lives for the dream of citizen-led government. A personal and deeply emotive film, the filmmaker captures the raw confidence, dreams and sorrow of a generation fighting for change. This jury awards the **special mention to *Sudan, Remember Us* by Hind Meddeb.**

The Activist Lens Award goes to a film that demonstrates what is possible when placed in impossible circumstances - to be brave, to stand with their community, and to confront their own government despite great personal risk. The activist in our winning film takes the initiative to become a self-made journalist, to relentlessly gather evidence to expose corruption that endangers the health and lives of her children and her community in Siberia. Natalia Zubkova survives slander, lies and death threats yet remains undaunted in her relentless pursuit of truth. The filmmaker dynamically captures both the intimate family life and personal struggles of Natalia while giving context to lesser-known economic, social, political and environmental crises in Russia. This jury is pleased to give the Activist Lens Award to ***Black Snow* by Alina Simone.**

## Justice Frame

**Jury:** Dávid Mikulán, Olga Kavran, Mijke de Jong

**Winner:** *Kamay* by Ilyas Yourish and Shahrokh Bikaran

**Special Mentions:** *Antidote* by James Jones, *The Bibi Files* by Alexis Bloom

Good evening everyone.

I don't know if every jury this year faced the same challenge, but we found our task to be incredibly difficult. How to choose among such great films.

The Justice Frame competition included documentaries and feature films that capture extreme suffering and injustice from all corners of the globe. From the broken promises and horrific crimes in West Papua to the struggles of women in Afghanistan and Iran. From the corruption and devastation in Israel and Palestine to the mystical journey through the very real horrors of Colombia's civil war. From the depravity of American family separation policies to the criminality of Putin's authoritarian rule. And amidst all this, we also saw a story of hope—such as the Swedish Dialogue Police's efforts to prevent injustice.

This is why, in addition to this year's winner, of which I will speak in a minute, we are compelled to recognize two films which shine a light on the brutal reality of unchecked power. They both show us men who will stop at nothing to attain and retain such power.

And while both also show us that there are people who will speak truth to power no matter what, one also reveals the terrible sacrifices of heroes who in their quest for justice, have risked everything, including their lives. Given the devastating impact men like Netanyahu, Putin and others have on our world, we need films like this, both as a warning and as inspiration to act.

The first of our **Special Mentions** goes to ***Antidote*, directed by James Jones**. With painful clarity, this film documents the courage and ultimate sacrifices of investigative journalist Christo Grozev, along with politicians Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny, and many others—some of whom have paid the ultimate price for confronting Vladimir Putin and his murderous regime.

Our second **Special Mention** goes to ***The Bibi Files*, directed by Alexis Bloom**. This gripping documentary provides a fascinating insight into the personality, family, and inner circle of a man whose desperate attempts to evade responsibility have led to death and destruction on an unprecedented scale.

Congratulations!

(And now, the winner.)

In the amazing selection of films we saw, one film stood out for its ability to transport us to a hitherto perhaps unfamiliar world through contemplative, poetic storytelling and poignant cinematography. With powerful observation, it draws us into the daily life and

struggles of a family engaged in what seems like a futile fight for justice. In doing so, this important film brings us into the reality of life of many people we often only see as 'migrants' or 'refugees' as if either of these terms subsumes the entirety of their existence. And it reveals a universal truth—that this could be any family, any one of us. The devastating fate of a young Hazara woman by the name of Zahra holds up a mirror reflecting the broader realities of discrimination, suffering, and the fight against injustice. It also serves as a reminder that, since the Taliban's return to power, the reality for Afghanistan's women has only grown much more dire.

And so, the winner of this year's **Justice Frame Award** is *Kamay*, directed by **Ilyas Yourish and Shahrokh Bikaran**. Congratulations!

We are deeply moved by these stories, and we hope that audiences around the world will see these essential films.

Congratulations to all the filmmakers, and thank you all for being part of this important celebration of the fight for justice through cinema.

## Dutch Focus

**Jury:** Eva Križková, Joost van der Valk, Susan Mbogo

**Winner:** *Home Game* by Lidija Zelovic

**Special Mentions:** *The Coriolis Effect* by Petr Lom

It is an honor to stand before you today as we celebrate the transformative power of cinema. Cinema is more than entertainment—it is a canvas where our stories, emotions, and truths take shape, challenging us, inspiring us, and connecting us across borders.

Hello everyone, my name is Susan Mbogo, and I am honored to present the Dutch Focus Jury Award on behalf of my fellow jurors, Joost van der Valk and Eva Križková.

As jurors, we looked beyond filmmaking excellence and a strong commitment to human rights. We were profoundly moved by an audiovisual poem that contemplates life on Earth, where everything is interconnected. This film delivers a truly cinematic experience, painting a hopeful yet urgent portrait of a fragile community—small heroes working together to save their animal companions from the tide of capitalist waste threatening their island and our planet. In this film, birth and demise occur in a single breath, reminding us that even the smallest actions can have profound consequences. A discarded piece of garbage at one end of the world, for instance, could end the life of a young turtle taking its first journey to the ocean.

For its outstanding sound design and breathtaking dramatic moments—capturing a world where no one is at the center—we are delighted to present a **Special Mention** in the Dutch Focus section to ***The Coriolis Effect* by Corinne van Egeraat and Petr Lom.**

For the Dutch Focus award we asked ourselves a deeper question: What makes a Dutch film truly stand out in this year's selection? The films we encountered were diverse, and the questions they posed were complex. But ultimately, we were most captivated by the dynamic and fluid exploration of identity in an ever-evolving, interconnected world—including within the Netherlands itself.

With that in mind, we are proud to award the Dutch Focus Main Prize to a film that embodies this search for identity—one deeply rooted in the experience of becoming Dutch. This film offers a remarkable chronicle of 30 years in one family's life, blending playfulness, dynamism, humor, and an astute reflection of Europe's historical evolution over the past three decades. The **Dutch Focus Main Prize** goes to ***Home Game* by Lidija Zelovic.**

Congratulations to both films, and thank you to all the filmmakers who continue to push the boundaries of storytelling. Your work challenges us, moves us, and reminds us why cinema is such a powerful force.

## Shorts

**Jury:** Jihan El Tahri, Morena Faverin en Cyan Bae

**Winner:** *Man Number 4* by Miranda Pennell

**Special Mentions:** *Pasta Negra* by Jorge Armand

On behalf of the Shorts Jury, I would like to thank the festival team, and of course the filmmakers, for allowing us the privilege to debate and - almost dissect - this amazing selection of inspiring short films. Every film embarked us on a different relevant human journey and each one was a gem in its own special way. It was extremely hard to decide which of the films to compensate, so, we are truly honored that you all trusted us with this serious responsibility.

We could have handed out many more prizes, but we stuck to the rules .... Or tried to, but we couldn't resist one additional special mention.

Let me start with the **Special mention:** The simplicity and dignity of the women who gracefully try to make ends meet by any means possible. The film sheds unnecessary noise and clutter, allowing us to share the daily life and experience of 3 generations holding onto their dignity in silence. ***Pasta Negra* by Jorge Armand** deserves recognition and accolades.

As for the Prize, we unanimously selected a film that took courageous and meaningful artistic risks on multiple levels. The short – very short (Micro) – film demonstrated the power of this genre when the idea, the structure and the implementation is clear and forces the spectator to reflect. The space left for the audience to imagine an image of violence - in a predominantly digital world - took us on a journey well beyond the few minutes of the film. The content of the image, that was gradually revealed, speaks volumes about the reason a festival like Movies that Matter is indispensable to highlight voices that are increasingly muffled, if not silenced. **The Prize for the Short Film Section goes to *Man Number Four* by Mirands Pennell.**

## **Educatie Award**

**Jury:** Annelou Molendijk, RJ van Leenden en Lotte Rutgrink

**Winner:** *King Ridwan* by Sammy Shefa Idris

**Special Mentions:** *Bezorgd* by Ruud Satijn