



ICFR Policy Plan 2020 - 2022

Artistic freedom is not a privilege – it is a human right. **HELEN MIRREN**

Ambassadors of ICFR

JAFAR PANAHI

The unconditional support of filmmakers is the best support a filmmaker at risk can get. If there could be an institution representing all the world's famous and respected filmmakers, they could then at any time, support actively and efficiently any filmmaker in danger."

Jafar Panahi, filmmaker, Iran, November 2019

HELEN MIRREN

"Artistic freedom is not a privilege—it is a human right. Standing in solidarity with our filmmaking colleagues and friends around the world, being deprived of their creative freedom, has to be our honourable duty. Those who dare to risk their professional career and personal life for democracy and truth deserve our full respect and support. I therefore very much welcome the foundation of an International Coalition of Filmmakers at Risk as initiated by the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, the International Film Festival Rotterdam and the European Film Academy in Berlin. Joining forces is exactly the right thing to do in a world where fundamental human rights are more and more threatened."

Helen Mirren, actor, UK, November 2019

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The impact that the film community has in the world today is much higher than that of any other professional community. The voice of prominent film artists and organizations is capable of forcing the most notorious regimes to listen and to calculate their moves. We have frequently seen how authoritarian regimes changed their course of action towards a filmmaker as they feel the pressure of film community. In some cases, the film community saved the life of a filmmaker altogether... as it did for me when I was detained in my homecountry of Syria, in 2012... ICFR is about organizing this massive power and putting it at the service of those colleagues who need it the most.

Orwa Nyrabia, Artistic Director of IDFA and Chair of ICFR's board, December 2020

Part 1: about ICFR / basic principles ICFR

1.1 Introduction

Filmmakers, writers and artists are especially high-risk candidates for censorship, intimidation, imprisonment, persecution and, in extreme cases, death. Tragically, we have just learned of the death of Shady Habash, the filmmaker who had been imprisoned without trial in Egypt for more than two years. Habash's last letter from prison read: "Prison doesn't kill, loneliness does. I need your support not to die."

The International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk (ICFR) is a body that will advocate for film professionals who have been imprisoned, face prosecution or censorship for their work and views. Across the world, there are directors, producers, actors, screenwriters and other film professionals who are persecuted because of their work, for its content and what it addresses, conveys or triggers—and for their artistic expression. We need to address this. If their personal safety is at risk, we need to help them. We know from our many conversations with film associations, institutions, festivals and individual filmmakers that the Coalition can count on their support already. And we need your support, as well.

Mike Downey, chairman of EFA and board member of ICFR

1.2 Mission

The mission of the International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk is to advocate and show solidarity with filmmakers who are at risk and in danger. The Coalition will take a strong stand against cases of persecution or threats to the personal security or freedom of these filmmakers as a result of their work, and it will defend their right to continue their work by mobilizing the international film community.

“Risk” is defined in the most acute sense of the word: responding only to the most acute and critical cases in which there is an immediate threat to the personal safety of the filmmaker.

“Filmmakers” are defined as those who are directly involved in the creative process of a film: directors, producers, scriptwriters, actors and heads of department only.

1.3 Vision

In a world in which civil society has shrunk and institutions are under pressure, individual filmmakers are increasingly struggling to make their voices heard. Film has the power to build bridges between cultures, nations and communities, and has the power to shed light on history, and to correct narratives rather than manipulate them. In today's world, injustice is reaching unprecedented levels and the creativity of filmmakers is one of the most influential tools through which contemporary societies find their way and defend their rights. Especially in countries where freedom is undermined, human rights are violated and censorship prevails, independent storytelling takes on an even more crucial role and meaning. Stories about what freedom means, what heroism is, what is worth striving for and what really matters. And stories about what sacrifices must be made. What makes a society a society are the stories it tells about itself. That is why protecting creative freedom is of great importance. Critical, artistic and independent films promote democratic values and help build fairer

societies. But as a result of various developments over the years, we are increasingly witnessing a growing number of filmmakers being threatened, arrested, imprisoned and even murdered in order to silence them. In these critical situations, the international film community must make a difference by showing solidarity in supporting campaigns for the freedom of these filmmakers or by putting pressure on authorities for their immediate release.

1.4 Strategy: Joining forces, streamlining responses

While other cultural or community organizations may exist to help their peers, the film industry seems to lack such a lobbying network that would channel fragmented but genuine expressions of support. In that sense, the ICFR is a new and unique concept. The ICFR believes in the power of joining forces in a more streamlined expression of solidarity between filmmakers worldwide. In responding to incoming cases of filmmakers at risk, the ICFR aims to bring the film community together as much as possible as a united voice for impactful action. By joining forces and exchanging knowledge, we can achieve significant reach. The creation of the ICFR is a unique opportunity to strengthen our common impact for the greater good and the protection of filmmakers at risk by creating a process, a mechanism with the right tools, to harness the power of the global film community.

1.5 Activities

To advocate for and to act in solidarity with filmmakers at risk, ICFR's focus will revolve around four areas of activities:

a. Advocacy: campaigning for filmmakers at risk by mobilizing the international film community or by seeking public support through means of diplomacy. In all its advocacy efforts, the ICFR only acts with informed consent of the filmmakers at risk or their representatives.

- *Campaigning* can involve publishing press releases and/or seeking media exposure in international newspapers and trade magazines; mobilizing international film festivals, academies, platforms, network organizations or prominent film professionals to support a case; or setting up petitions or advocacy actions on social media.
- *Diplomacy efforts* could include actively involving relevant Ministries of Foreign Affairs, local embassies and/or connecting to the Special UN Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression.

As each case is unique, the response of the ICFR strongly depends on the specific needs of the filmmaker in distress and the context of the threat. Depending on the case, the ICFR can sometimes take the lead in campaigning for a persecuted filmmaker or can support the advocacy efforts led by others. In some cases, public campaigning can be most effective, whereas in others a more silent diplomacy effort is required. Some cases demand a combination of these different efforts.

In addition, we have also experienced and learned when assessing cases brought before us that in some instances, opting for no intervention in any sort of way is preferable for the safety of the filmmaker. In these situations, we opt for discreet monitoring. Indeed, there are cases in which external intervention may increase risks of the personal safety of the filmmaker or hinder their chances to be released when in detention, for instance

b. Emergency funding: providing small grants of maximum €1,500 for immediate emergency response actions to filmmakers in critical situations. The guidelines for the ICFR Emergency Fund are still being developed and will be announced in the course of 2021.

c. Accessing the support system: connecting filmmakers in peril to international support networks active in the fields of human rights, culture and legal assistance.

d. Monitoring and observatory: On a mid-term perspective, the Coalition shall also develop competences for serving as an observatory for the situation of filmmakers at risk, taking into account the necessity of acting on a preventive level in the future.

Being a new organization, the ICFR will continue to fine-tune its activities in the course of 2020 and 2021 and learn from each case brought before us.

1.6 Founding partners

The ICFR was officially launched during the 77th edition of the Venice International Film Festival. The Coalition is a collaboration between three founding partners:

- **International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR):** With nearly 330,000 admissions and over 2,400 film professionals attending (over 320 of whom are filmmakers), IFFR is one of the largest audience- and industry-driven film festivals in the world. IFFR will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2021.
- **International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA):** IDFA is the largest and most important documentary film festival in the world. It has grown consistently over the course of its 33-year history, annually attracting over 300,000 visits and welcoming over 3,000 professional documentary guests to the festival.
- **European Film Academy (EFA):** Founded in 1989, the EFA unites 3,800 European film professionals with the common aim of promoting European film culture. Throughout the year, the EFA initiates and participates in a series of activities dealing with film politics as well as economic, artistic, and training aspects. These activities culminate in the annual presentation of the European Film Awards.

Although these three partners will spearhead the initiative, the Coalition actively welcomes other partners, representing film institutions in different parts of the world, to join (see section 2.2).

Part 2: ICFR in action

2.1 Filmmakers at risk worldwide

According to Freemuse's STATE OF ARTISTIC FREEDOM 2020 REPORT, there have been **107 documented** cases of film censorship in **31 countries**. This trend should be put in perspective in the larger frame of acts of censorship across all art forms, which amount to **352** in **73 countries**. Thus, acts of censorship against film seem to occupy roughly **two fifths** of this global number that includes all art forms.

In addition, **105** acts of artistic freedom violations against filmmakers and their works have been registered. In **62%** of cases, violators were government authorities. Censorship of filmmakers seems to be the most frequent means of violation (73 cases), persecution comes second (ten cases), imprisonment is ranked third (eight cases), threat and harassment comes next (seven cases), and prosecution (four cases) and detention (two cases) come last. Comparatively, these 105 registered acts of artistic freedom violations against filmmakers constitute about approximately **one third** of **327** cases of violations across all art forms.

While politics seem to shape the main rationales for violations in film with 38%, indecency (13%), religion (12%), LGBT (11%) and conflict (9%) constitute the other reasons.

Regionally, the highest rates of censorship of filmmakers are concentrated in the Asia & Pacific region with 33% of cases—the top countries being China, India and Malaysia. Interestingly, Europe and the Middle East & North Africa come next with 23% cases respectively. North and South America come last with 16% of cases documented.

These regional figures reported by Freemuse corroborate tendencies observed by the ICFR through cases that were put before the founding members throughout 2020. Indeed, out of the 13 cases discussed throughout 2020, three were from Asia & Pacific (China, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea), nine from the MENA region (Iran, Egypt, Sudan) and one case from Europe (Russia).

What do these figures tell us? That filmmakers among artists form a particular target group on the front line of freedom violations.

Moreover, these figures reflect *documented* cases only. The ICFR believes that its very existence may be crucial for silent struggling voices whose cases are unknown and who would need support. While it is at the moment difficult to foresee these potential cases in numbers, time and outreach efforts will inform as to which extent our organisation is central in helping cases of undocumented filmmakers at risk worldwide (see section 2.6).

2.2 Strategic partners

ICFR is a network organization. In order to effectively coordinate the response to filmmakers in need, strategic partners are essential. The Coalition will closely collaborate with an international network of strategic partners who will be consulted in the case of emergency requests and/or asked for help in assessing cases or taking further action:

International film networks

The newly established coalition has been in touch with potential partners from the international film community since the start. During the last quarter of 2020 and throughout 2021, outreach will be made to organizations that have a direct stake in this project. Some of them like the Federation of European Film Directors (FERA), Movies that Matter Foundation, the Institute of Documentary Film

(IDF) or Beirut DC have already solicited us, and further discussions will take place to formalize partnerships.

Affiliated organizations

Affiliated organizations such as PEN International, PEN's Artists at Risk Connection, the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) and Freemuse have already been of great support in the discussions and think tanks that led to the formation of the Coalition, offering their precious feedback based on knowledge and experience in the field. The ICFR will progressively expand on this momentum and seek to consolidate partnerships with these affiliated organizations in the course of 2021. This will be achieved through signing MOUs that will define areas of cooperation and exchange of knowledge and information.

International human rights networks

Areas of cooperation have already been suggested by human rights organizations such as Front Line Defenders, from reactive work in relation to specific cases of individuals at risk to exchanging expertise and supporting each other's work. The ICFR will explore possibilities to also establish more systematic collaborations with international human rights networks as the organization grows. There is much to learn from institutions that have accumulated decades of expertise in the field of advocacy and lobbying such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Ambassadors

Throughout the conversations and working sessions that have led to the creation of the ICFR, personalities such as internationally renowned film directors or famous actors have expressed their willingness to endorse our mission and act as ambassadors, to voice and support advocacy campaigns in favour of filmmakers at risk, when requested. Two highly respected ambassadors are the English actor Dame Helen Mirren and the Iranian director Jafar Panahi.

2.3 Organization

The ICFR was formally registered as a Dutch *stichting*—a non-profit foundation—in June 2020 and has its seat in the Netherlands. In line with the Dutch (cultural) governance codes, the board of *Stichting ICFR* consists of two representatives of the three founding partners:

- *Chair*: Orwa Nyrabia, Artistic Director of IDFA
- *Secretary*: Cees van 't Hullenaar, Managing Director of IDFA
- *Treasurer*: Marjan van der Haar, Managing Director of IFFR
- Vanja Kaludjeric, Artistic Director of IFFR
- Matthijs Wouter Knol, Executive Director of the EFA
- Mike Downey, Chairman of the EFA

The operational staff will initially consist of a Coordinator and supporting staff from the three founding institutions. EFA will provide staff and expertise in the field of communication, press and publicity; IFFR in the field of research and case assessment; IDFA will provide fundraising and financial/administrative support.

To advise on incoming cases, the Board will appoint a Taskforce. The Taskforce will consist of two representatives of each of the partner organizations, in addition to key experts from the international film community and the field of human rights. All decisions concerning possible action are taken by the Board. Currently, the Coordinator works closely with the Board Members until the Taskforce is appointed in the course of 2021.

In addition, a network of advisors is being set up from different parts of the world with different expertise that can be called upon in individual cases.

2.4 Funding

The Coalition was initially established based on a low-budget approach, equally provided by the three founding partners: EFA, IDFA and IFFR. For the initial period starting in July 2020, following the formal registration of the *Stichting*, the budget was estimated at €30,000. This kick-off budget will allow the Coalition to support the costs of the website creation, the hiring of the Coordinator for an initial period of five months, and other current expenses through to early 2021.

Further to its launch at the Venice International Film Festival in September 2020, the newly established Coalition was approached by several foundations and organizations that expressed their strong interest in supporting its action. The Coalition is currently working on a funding strategy that will approach various potential funders and stakeholders in different capacities. There is a focus on a wide mix of financing instruments—from government funding to approaching private and public funds, and from sponsors to private donations. For the next two years, we will carefully focus on two or three financial partners per year for between €15,000 and €25,000 per partner. The income from sponsorship and fundraising should increase from €40,000 in 2021 to €80,000 in 2022.

An important aspect of the financing strategy is collaboration with strategic partners or donors. The ICFR would like to establish strategic partnerships with peer institutions from the film community who could also participate as (small) contributors to its global budget in order to create a grassroots approach where these partners would become stakeholders in the project. Partners can join at different (financial) levels: €500, €1,000, €2,000 and €5,000. This income from donations should slowly grow from €30,000 (22 donors) in 2021 to €40,000 (29 donors) in 2022.

2.5 Finances

In the 2021-2024 period, the ICFR's budget is expected to grow progressively as the organization develops and consolidates itself. Our current estimation anticipates an approximate increase from the current amount of €30,000 to €95,000 for 2021, €132,700 for 2022, €155,200 in 2023, and €172,700 in 2024 (see prospective budget 2020-2024 attached).

It is mainly the (core) activities that increase from €37,000 to €85,000. The overhead increases mainly because the number of FTEs is augmented for both the coordinator and the support staff who can be involved during busy periods. In addition, much of the support work in the areas of communication, finance and fundraising is done by employees of the three partners.

2.6 Communication

The ICFR has roughly a three-pronged strategy for marketing and communication. First of all, during the first phase of the creation of a new organization, communication is focused on positioning the Coalition among organizations and professionals forming the film industry and affiliated organizations working in the field. This involves disseminating our mission and vision, as described in this policy plan, and includes the presentation of our identity specifically with the goal of ensuring that filmmakers at risk around the world become aware of our initiative.

Second, communication promotes the Coalition's activities among the same group in order to establish streamlined practices in the community. These efforts are all geared towards the specific target group of filmmakers at risk to get acquainted with how to reach out to us and what to expect.

Third—and ultimately what matters most—communication consists of campaigning. When a filmmaker is in danger, the ICFR starts an international publicity campaign to alert the world to this injustice. Communication then takes place via the strategic partners and the international press with the aim of putting pressure on governments. What can strengthen the communication message is that it is supported by prestigious institutes and appealing persons from the international film world.

Only time and experience for a nascent organization such as the Coalition will help us fine-tune and expand our communication strategy, which will be re-assessed at the end of 2021.

Publicity and media outlets

ICFR's primary means of communication throughout the year will be its website, currently under construction. Once this project is launched, the interface will include information on how to reach out to the Coalition for case assessments of filmmakers at risk, how to become a partner or how to support our action.

The means of communication of the three partners are also of great importance, in particular the websites and social media of EFA, IFFR and IDFA.

Within the foreseeable future, strategic partners will also deploy their media and resources to propagate the message of the ICFR and to campaign. That is the strength of a network organization!

Finally, free publicity in the international (film) press plays a major role in communication. The cases advocated by the ICFR in recent months have been picked up in the international film press without exception. This shows that the communication message of the ICFR is of great importance.