AMAZON STUDIOS & PARTICIPANT MEDIA PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH AC FILMS

AN AI WEIWEI PRODUCTION

H U M A N F L O W

A FILM BY AI WEIWEI

140 minutes

Official Selection

2017 Venice Film Festival – World Premiere

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FINAL PRESS NOTES

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***Synopsis***

Over 65 million people around the world have been forced from their homes to escape famine, climate change and war in the greatest human displacement since World War II. Human Flow, an epic film journey led by the internationally renowned artist Ai Weiwei, gives a powerful visual expression to this massive human migration. The documentary elucidates both the staggering scale of the refugee crisis and its profoundly personal human impact.

Captured over the course of an eventful year in 23 countries, the film follows a chain of urgent human stories that stretches across the globe in countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, France, Greece, Germany, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, and Turkey. Human Flow is a witness to its subjects and their desperate search for safety, shelter and justice: from teeming refugee camps to perilous ocean crossings to barbed-wire borders; from dislocation and disillusionment to courage, endurance and adaptation; from the haunting lure of lives left behind to the unknown potential of the future. Human Flow comes at a crucial time when tolerance, compassion and trust are needed more than ever. This visceral work of cinema is a testament to the unassailable human spirit and poses one of the questions that will define this century: Will our global society emerge from fear, isolation, and self-interest and choose a path of openness, freedom, and respect for humanity?

Amazon Studios and Participant Media present, in association with AC Films, Human Flow, a film directed by Ai Weiwei. Human Flow is produced by Ai Weiwei, Chin-Chin Yap and Heino Deckert and executive produced by Andrew Cohen of AC Films with Jeff Skoll and Diane Weyermann of Participant Media.

 ***“I want the right of life,***

***of the leopard at the spring, of the seed splitting open --***

***I want the right of the first man.”***

-- Nazim Hikmet, Turkish Poet (1902-1963)

***This Crisis is Our Crisis***

*Imagine this:* When danger comes, you and your family jettison your lives in mid-sentence, leaving behind a bombed-out home and repression at your heels. You pour all your precious savings into a passage of weeks or months—over mountains, across deserts—to jump into a flimsy rubber raft, daring to defy the ocean’s perils, chasing an unwritten future. Or you wait in suspense, journey blocked, at a closed border, in an improvised camp, fighting to never allow the barbed wire to pierce your hope. Perhaps you escape catastrophe, only to deliver yourself to a city you’ve never even imagined, to new streets crackling with fears and furies that make no sense, and even still, you are driven by the most basic human optimism, to live your life no matter what it takes.

These are not fictional situations. These are the real human faces—each lined and luminous with stories of love and courage and the urgent battle for survival—of a planet on the move, a planet in the midst of a human emergency. Much has been said in the past few years by politicians and pundits about the millions of refugees fleeing war, hunger and persecution. Yet, as debates rage about who and how many, security versus responsibility, putting up walls or building bridges, the vital truth of real people with real dreams and real needs caught in a labyrinth of uncertainty can get lost. The very word “refugee” can distance, can lull us into forgetting this major story of our times is not about statistics or abstract masses but about beating hearts, about lives-in-process, a stream of individual stories full of color, ecstasies and sorrows no different from our own.

That’s why artist Ai Weiwei foregrounds the humanity of refugees—their quest for the things we all want: safety, shelter, peace, the opportunity to be who you are—in his powerful new work of cinema: *Human Flow*. Ai, at once celebrated, persecuted and famed for an outlaw spirit that speaks directly to a world of inequality and injustice, here pushes back against the worldwide tide of fear with a defiant act of gentleness. His whole career has been about resisting borders of all kinds, about unifying art and activism. And now, with *Human Flow*, he again stretches art’s definition to include trying to change the social fabric to which his work responds.

Ai has said the crisis before us is not only the staggering number of refugees with nowhere to go right now but the temptation to turn away in a time that asks something of each of us. So he set out on a journey of his own—a simple yet epic journey to share in the daily lives of people fleeing turmoil in every corner of the planet. The result is a cinematic experience grand in scale but deeply intimate in feel. It is a fluid intermixing of poetry with hard facts, laughter with adversity, the stark with the staggeringly beautiful. Moving across 23 countries, Ai creates an immersion that invites the most personal exploration, one that allows each viewer to consider what it’s like to live life at its most vulnerable—and to ponder what we owe to one another.

Says Ai: “As an artist, I always believe in humanity and I see this crisis as my crisis. I see those people coming down to the boats as my family. They could be my children, could be my parents, could be my brothers. I don’t see myself as any different from them. We may speak totally different languages and have totally different belief systems but I understand them. Like me, they are also afraid of the cold and don’t like standing in the rain or being hungry. Like me, they need a sense of security.”

He continues: “As a human being, I believe any crisis or hardship that happens to another human being should be as if it is happening to us. If we don’t have that kind of trust in each other, we are deeply in trouble. Then we will experience walls and division and misleading by politicians that will make for a future in the shadows.”

Ultimately, over 200 crewmembers joined the worldwide effort to make *Human Flow*. Together, they turned the massive production into a variegated celebration of human dignity and a plea for protecting those whose everyday dreams, loves and freedoms have been trampled by tyranny, war and deprivation.

Ai has forged many large-scale art installations before. He has also directed several documentary films in China. But this project for the first time merges the sweeping planetary scope of his art with his concentrated directorial style—humanistic, rigorously questioning, rife with emotional charge—in a new way. It also merges many forms and sources of information into one—using text in counterpoise to images in counterpoise to facts in counterpoise to the pure, visceral sensations of human elation or anxiety or memory—a mix that serves as a reminder of the complexity we don’t see when we *just* read a news story or *just* look at a photograph.

Observes executive producer Andrew Cohen: “*Human Flow* is a continuation of Weiwei’s life-long work —his search for truth and understanding in any system and in any culture. Throughout his career he has interpreted the absurdity, contradictions and beauty of humanity into art that offers us fresh perspectives on our own lives. In *Human Flow* he takes us on a journey with refugees—and finds a way to offer dignity, hope and humor during a harrowing odyssey. Compassionate and empathetic, like all his work, *Human Flow* can also be seen as audacious in its breakthrough style, provocative in the way it gives voice to those without a voice, and confrontational in its wake-up call. You don’t watch this film, you experience it.”

That experience becomes a reminder that only the good fortune of being born in a peaceful country stands between the viewers and the refugees we meet on the journey. The refugees’ peril has resulted not from their actions but from arbitrary accidents of geography – and the pact the audience has with them is knowing, under other circumstances, we would be in their shoes.

Editor Niels Pagh Andersen (known for his work on the award-winning *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence)*, who cut the film with Ai in his Berlin studio, notes that the film offers a perspective charged with the primacy of life and family: “A film like this could easily become too sentimental, which is wrong. We wanted to avoid victimizing the refugees in the film. Weiwei and I felt we had to get beyond any kind of pity or fear and see them as our fellow human beings. Film works best through identification—when you’re able to crawl inside another’s skin to see their journeys, their battles. In this case, we enter a fight for a life without war, without hunger, without threats. But Weiwei also lifts us up, and allows us to see this human flow in larger historical and global perspective and in so doing the film asks us: what kind of world do we want? That’s extremely inspiring.”

 For executive producer Diane Weyermann, executive vice president of documentary films at Participant, the film opens doors within—which she hopes will pry open more external doors for those seeking safety. “The film is so cinematic and when you see it with an audience there’s a feeling of being connected both to one another and to the people on screen. You feel like *you* are the one marching through the mud or waiting in a camp. It’s striking and incredibly moving. And then you have Weiwei who is a relentless force of nature. He cares so much about this story and the people he meets along the way, and you feel that strongly as you watch. He reminds us that in this crisis, we have to look, we have to feel, we have to not accept the status quo and we have to change it.”

 Producer Heino Deckert notes: “This is the biggest subject of our times. The reasons for this human flow have been building but now we see it all very clearly in front of us with more people on the move and more people dying trying to get to safety. This is not a topic you can turn away from. Even if you try to turn away, it will still be there and we’ll have to deal with it. You can’t stop it by building border walls, because people will keep coming when their survival is at stake. It’s important to think about what you yourself would do in their position. Really, we have an obligation to think in that way and to try to solve the issues at the root of it all. With this film, Weiwei presents refugees not as a ‘problem’ but as fellow human beings looking for a chance to survive.”

Concludes producer Chin-chin Yap: “Weiwei has always been interested in exposing the structures and mechanisms of justice and oppression, whether it is in art, politics or society. His artwork often creates empathy through meticulous documentation of the voiceless, from his Sichuan earthquake works to his recent installation ‘Laundromat’ where refugees’ cast-off belongings were immaculately pressed and given new dignity. With this film, he shows how refugee camps and cities are made up of very personal and human elements. It’s a story about men, women, children, and even a tiger, escaping danger.”

***The Emergency Right Now: A Brief History***

***Refugee: a person with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race,***

***religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion,***

 ***who is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear,***

 ***is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country.***

-- 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

Humans have always been a migratory species to some degree, roaming nearly every inch of the globe, setting up homes wherever we could make a good life, developing proud traditions of hospitality to welcome the visitors we knew would arrive. But more recently, human history has become dominated by a different kind of migration – by men, women and children who have no choice but to leave, sometimes to run, when bombs go off and keep going off, or food is made too scarce to feed a family, or repressive states threaten our very ways of being.

Now it has become one of the great moral tests of our times. In today’s world nearly 66 million people from all walks of life are forcibly displaced due to war, persecution, consequences of climate change and crushing poverty. In 2016, when *Human Flow* was shot, 22 million people – over half of those children – registered as refugees, many crossing borders at alarming risk, not knowing if they might ever be able to return to their countries of origin. They traveled by land and by sea, threatened by illness, starvation, human traffickers, violence, rape, a growing number of closed and militarized borders as well as heightened intolerance. 300,000 refugees and migrants in 2015 and 2016 were children traveling alone, with no adult to guide or comfort them.

These numbers—figures so unfathomable they can seem unreal—pose a profound series of questions to all concerned about humanity. How did we get to this point of so many who are not being cared for? How must the world respond? Who should come to the aid of the stateless? What are the costs of helping—and of not helping? And what creative policies can halt the causes driving so many from their homes?

Forced migrations are not new. Migration was a hallmark of the 20th Century, a century of war, social tumult and shifting maps. The two World Wars displaced staggering numbers of people across Europe and the Soviet Union—which is what first inspired the international community to set forth the principle that those fleeing trauma and persecution have their own inalienable right: the right to seek refuge. In the post-WWII years, more refugees resulted from the tumultuous end of colonialism and the partitioning of India, which pushed millions from their homes in Asia and Africa. In the 1990s, the end of the Cold War, genocide in Rwanda, the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo and the war in Afghanistan again spiked the numbers of those compelled to leave by mounting threats.

Yet, by 2005, global refugee numbers had hit a 26-year low of 8.4 million, increasing confidence in the idea that the flow might be slowing and the world might be able to integrate refugees with less strife. It was a brief respite. The unstable next decade would see increasingly brutal conflicts destroy communities in the Middle East and Africa. Heightened violence in Central America and Myanmar would spark daring exoduses from potential death. And a heartbreakingly high death toll among civilians in the new war in Syria (where 6 in 10 people are today displaced) turned millions of families into refugees. The numbers soared, then soared again, precipitating not only a series of unanticipated border crises but an ever more fearful and volatile atmosphere.

In 2015 more than a million refugees crossed the Aegean Sea Greece, hoping to find safety and protection in Europe. (Another 363,348 migrants arrived by sea in 2016.) Having defied the elements on their passage, they then had to confront a fresh challenge: the extended limbo of finding asylum as rules shifted and borders shut down. As refugee numbers increased, so too did political controversy—and the stigmatization of people who had done nothing more than try to flee to safety. Many NGOs and some countries reacted immediately, committing new resources. Yet others pursued restrictive migration and asylum policies, refusing to uphold the spirit of the United Nation’s 1951 Convention on Refugees. In some regions, religious, racial and national resentments crested. The result of the latter was heightened hardship and fright among those already on the run from war and tragedy.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1998, 11 countries around the world were cut off by border fences and walls. By 2016, some 70 countries had built border fences and walls. These barriers—which cut off routes of escape—have also had the effect of raising the dangers of already risky migrant journeys. Indeed, in 2017, the numbers of refugees dying en route appears to again be on the rise. (In 2016, 7,495 refugees and migrants lost their lives while trying to migrate.)

Recently, routes have been shifting, but the flow shows few signs of abating. In 2016, a deal with Turkey to take back refugees who crossed into Europe by sea slowed the pace of dinghies arriving in Greece—but new, land-based routes are resulting in a higher percentage of deaths as well as fresh controversies. Meanwhile, on top of intractable armed conflicts that still rage, a host of simmering issues—from climate change-induced rising seas and food scarcity to failed states that can’t provide fundamental services—has prompted many to predict a precipitous rise in refugees in the next several decades.

*Human Flow* does not propose a solution. It’s not meant to be a policy-oriented film, though its fertile layers of facts, text, literature and analysis provide the mind much to sift through as one joins the journey to safe harbor. Instead, the intention is that it operates as a spark that, along with other sparks, might help light the flame of rethinking priorities and re-examining our capacity for compassion and creative problem solving.

While there are an infinite number of detailed and local questions that must be addressed when it comes to the refugee crisis, there is one big question at the heart of *Human Flow*: as we confront the stresses of armed conflicts, harsher climate and resource scarcity, will we resist the urge to become less cooperative, less reasonable, less generous … or will we let the power of our shared humanity take the lead in our response?

Says Diane Weyermann: “This is clearly one of the biggest challenges calling out for people from all nations to solve in our lifetimes. We’re all affected by it and I think many of us, seeing how cataclysmic the situation is, agree that the situation right now is unacceptable, inhumane and frankly unsustainable, so we have to figure out how to move forward. At the policy level and the governmental level we need people to open the doors in ways that work. And that is where the power of *Human Flow* lies. Through evocative storytelling, I think it invites a very personal and emotional response from each individual. You have to begin there—with people really seeing that as human beings, we’re all part of this. My hope for the film is that it hits home with audiences the way it hit home with me: shining a fresh light on why solving the refugee crisis matters so much to us all.”

A vital underpinning of *Human Flow* is that the conversations we are having right now must start to be about more than numbers, and do more than push the hot-buttons of cable news debate. Numbers don’t do justice to the people involved, each with their own story, and they don’t stir action.

Points out Andrew Cohen: “*Human Flow* is not didactic or polemical—it doesn’t preach or take sides. Weiwei is not a fancy reporter with an inflated ego, but a life long refugee himself. He has a down-to-earth approach that brings us directly into the experience: we are on the water in the overcrowded boats, in the rain marching with muddied mothers holding bundles and babies, crying with the families burying their dead, laughing and playing with the children who invent games wherever they are. In the end, the film is open-ended and lets us make up our own minds about the situation.”

***Ai Weiwei: Art Always Wins***

***“Neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean,***

***nor by entering into mountain clefts,***

***nowhere in the world is there a place***

***where one may escape from the results of evil deeds.”***

-- The Dhammapada, Buddhist scripture, circa 3rd Century BC

Ai Weiwei’s response to the refugee crisis has been, like his body of work as an artist, spread across multiple media, inventively tangled, open-hearted, deeply personal, politically probing and unafraid of stepping directly into the heat. Even when facing threats to his own person, Ai has always put art first. “Art always wins,” he has said. “Anything can happen to me, but the art will stay.”

*Human Flow* joins other expressions about the refugee crisis in Ai’s work, including the installation “Law of the Journey,” featuring a 200-foot inflatable boat carrying 258 refugee figures; wrapping Berlin’s Konzerthaus in over 3,000 orange life vests recovered from Lesbos; covering his own public sculptures in thermal blankets; recreating the image of Syrian child Aylan Kurdi, who drowned off the coast of Turkey, with his own body; the installation “Laundromat,” in which he filled a New York City gallery with the discarded clothing and personal mementoes left by refugees in an informal camp in Idomeni, Greece; an 8-mile “Walk of Compassion” through London hand-in-hand with the artist Anish Kapoor; and the forthcoming “Good Fences Make Good Neighbors,” in which Ai will install public interventions across New York City.

 For Ai, there can be no line drawn between art and the struggles we see all around us in our intensely connected global world. “Very often art plays different roles than directly being involved with issues or concerned with the current political situation. But maybe I’m not that kind of artist,” he says.

“I’m very concerned about the current situation and I feel the human condition has to be part of aesthetic judgment. Art has to be involved with the moral and philosophical and intellectual conversation. If you call yourself an artist, this is your responsibility,” Ai says. “Your job as an artist is expression, so it is equally important to express your concern about humanity and your values. If I have to define art, art is something that has no form, no shape, nor any kind of restrictions. Art is a way to fight for inner freedom. It is also the fighting itself. Art is not just something you hang on the wall or decorate your house with—art is directly related to understanding who we are, what kind of world we live in and what kind of dreams we have.”

Ai Weiwei may be the most famous Chinese artist working today, but he began life as a displaced person himself, which became entwined with his view of a world that demands action on every level of the imagination. He was born in China to two writers amid the upheaval and persecutions of the Cultural Revolution. Ai’s father was a lauded poet but also a political prisoner even and even though released, the entire family was exiled to a remote village of Xinjiang in the Gobi desert, where they lived in severely austere conditions. With almost no chance for formal education, Ai largely educated himself by reading encyclopedias.

Says Cohen: “Weiwei knows what it’s like to be displaced in his own land. He knows the hardships of homelessness and of a desert life. His back-story combined with his inquisitive mind and a gifted creative force lies behind his empathetic approach.”

In 1976, when Ai was 19, his family was finally allowed to return from exile. Soon after, Ai enrolled in the Beijing Film Academy. Burning with ideas, he became a founding member of the Stars Group, an underground movement to transform the Chinese art scene from tedious, state-mandated works to free, fearless individual expressions of a more electrifying and honest kind. Even amid a rapidly changing art scene, Ai became renown as one of its boldest provocateurs, chafing against authorities from multiple angles.

In the early 1980s, Ai moved to New York to study at the Parsons School of Design, eventually dropping out to ply his living in a very organic New York way: as a street artist, photographer and blackjack player. When his father became ill, Ai returned to China, where he once again became a prominent figure in the Beijing art scene. He explored every format, from furniture and architecture to films, photographs, paintings, writing, performance pieces and installations, as well as becoming a pioneer of the fledgling territory of the internet and social media. But no matter the form, he always pushed its outlines, interrogating a post-post-modern world full of imagery, celebrity, censorship, surveillance, oppression, rebellion, struggle and longing for freedom.

Even as Ai’s global reputation grew, he was increasingly watched and harassed as a troublemaker by Chinese authorities. He was beaten by police, put under house arrest, relentlessly surveilled and in 2011, Ai was thrown in jail without plausible charges for 81 days as well as fined the Chinese equivalent of 1.85 million dollars. As all this went down, Ai’s dissent and documenting of his treatment became an art performance on its own.

Ai has since relocated to Berlin—the same country that in 2015 became an epicenter of the refugee crisis, briefly opening its doors without compunction. For Ai, there was no question as to whether he would engage with this moment that brought human need into such stark conflict with the forces of intolerance. He had to respond creatively and freely to those who were not given the chance for either.

Making films as one strand of his life of art is also not new to Ai. In China, he directed *Disturbing the Peace* and *One Recluse*, socially critical films probing the justice system. In *So Sorry*, he documented his investigations into students who died in the Sichuan earthquake due to corruption and shoddy construction, as well as the extreme government surveillance his investigations spurred. He also documented the creation of *Ordos 100*, in which he and the Swiss architectural firm of Herzog & de Meuron invited 100 different architects from 27 countries to design and build homes in Inner Mongolia. Most recently, in *Ai Weiwei’s Appeal* *¥15,220.910.50,* Ai took account of his own journey through the Chinese court system after being pursued for unfounded tax evasion charges. Ai is perhaps best known in the U.S. for starring in a documentary about his art and activism—the Sundance Special Jury Prize winner, *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*, directed by Alison Klayman.

Though *Human Flow* is Ai’s largest film production to date, as in all of his films he uses a raw, continuous verité shooting style, a democratic eye towards everyday justice for ordinary people and appears as himself. The latter can have a grounding effect, with Ai’s presence becoming a conduit for the viewer to enter worlds that are discomfiting, stark, emotional. “Film is one of the expressions that makes it easiest to communicate and can reach a broader audience,” says Ai. As for what he believes film can accomplish, he says simply: “I have a very positive feeling that as humans we can convince each other to make the right decisions.”

**Ai On Why He Made *Human Flow*:**

There are many ways I can talk about *Human Flow*. First, I can talk about my personal experience. Soon after I was born my father was exiled as an anti-Communist. So our whole family was sent to a very remote area. We had to give up everything and of course my father was mistreated as an enemy of the state. My whole youth I grew up seeing the worst kinds of treatment of a human being, discrimination and hardship.

Second, because I’ve come to live in Europe, I was eager to understand what is really happening with the refugee situation here. So I started going to Lesbos to see the island where the refugees were arriving. It was a very personal experience to see them all coming from the boats—children, women and elderly people. I could see in their faces an expression of uncertainty. They were scared and had no idea what they might find in this new land. That, even more, made me want to know more about who these people are, and why they have risked their lives coming to a place they don’t understand and where nobody understands them. I had so many questions.

So this curiosity led me to set up a very large research team to study the history of the refugees and their current condition. Besides the Syria War, refugees have been created by the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, the Israel-Palestinian conflicts, several African conflicts, the persecution of minority groups in Myanmar and violence in Central America. I wanted to visit all the locations around the world where refugees are arriving—first for my own understanding but also at the same time to record on film all that we found. This was really a very big learning experience, learning about human history, geopolitics as well as about environmental and social change.

**Ai On The Filming Conditions:**

I could not really imagine at the beginning we would have over 200 crewmembers working in so many locations. Most of the time I was with them. Some of the time I was forbidden from being at the location. The shooting conditions could be very difficult and very dangerous but most of all it was emotionally very hard to accept.

**Ai On The Persistence of Optimism:**

Day by day, there were endless stories. But what most impressed me was the determination of the refugees. There’s very little complaining even with nobody taking care of them, with no clear future or knowing what will come next. Their treatment to me is very, very inhuman. In the camps, you may get a sandwich but you have to wait in line for 2 hours. In many cases there’s no electricity so the night comes very early and it’s very cold. There is rain and mud and no sewage system. Life is extremely harsh but the people are very determined to escape and they keep the belief that the West can provide them a moment of peace, and provide their children with an education for their future.

**Ai On The Documentary Form**:

People often say documentary is about reality. The documentary is related to what we see and experience in real life but it is not *exactly* reality because it compresses time. So when you are watching *Human Flow*, you are only spending a little over 2 hours—but what you do not feel is the way the experiences of refugees become unbearable because of the length of time. So a film can never fully tell that truth and that truth is unbearable.

**Ai on How Art is Changing:**

The definition of art has been changing dramatically over the last 100 years. There has been endless movement and the seeking of new possibilities, especially now that we live in a world of globalization, in which old structures are being replaced and the internet and social media are liberating art from old forms. We’re very lucky to have all these possibilities. But also artists have a responsibility to keep changing because society is changing so fast—and the old forms can’t really cope—so artists need to have a greater sensibility for all that is going on in the world and the human struggle.

**Ai On the Responsibility of the International Community**:

Today, I feel as an individual I must make an effort to make people more conscious that refugees are not different from us in any way. They are not terrorists and to portray them as terrorists is really terroristic thinking. They are just human beings and their pain, their joy, their sense of safety and sense of justice is no different from any of ours. Internationally, we have many different kinds of system but all the different powers should have one goal in common: to protect humanity. I think when politicians forget about essential values and human rights, they just continue making more crises. It is time for the international community to put the refugee agenda on the table and start having a very broad discussion about how to address it.

***Respect: The Making of Human Flow***

***“The seasons are not four.***

***A week is not seven days.***

***A year is more than it is,***

***and less”***

-- Adonis (Syrian poet. B. 1930)

The sprawling journey that became *Human Flow* began spontaneously, before there was any itinerary or plan. In 2015, as Lesbos, Greece became the main European entry point for people fleeing to Europe, Ai Weiwei headed there primarily to see, to feel, to help his brethren. Moved to respond in every creative way, Ai soon set up and staffed a mini art studio on the island, and among other project, he and a small crew began filming. Without preconception, a motion picture of massive scope was under way, reacting in-the-moment to events around them.

The huge scale and even greater unknowns of making the film would eventually merge form into function—with the narrative’s liquid structure mirroring for the audience all the sensations of uncertainty, of indefinite time, of swirling limbo that refugees experience. Ai’s decision to journey to as many countries experiencing refugee crises further sculpted the film. The very size of the production echoed the size of the emergency, and became a presence of its own in the film, a reminder of how interconnected the world now is, no matter if nations or individuals try to isolate themselves.

Says Cohen: “The narrative structure is so unique. At times during the film, the viewer may be disoriented, not know which country or camp he or she is in. Yet this sensation is integral to the film. The colors, climate and food may differ in each camp and community, but the film hones in on the common factors in each person’s experience. In the end, it seems it’s one big worldwide refugee community that makes up this human flow.”

Flexibility and sensitivity were paramount to Ai. Still, with such a titanic amount of filmmaking in store, pulling it off was clearly going to take a focused and devoted team—so he began assembling and collaborating with a highly skilled production group who could create a structure around his artistry. They include producer Chin-chin Yap, who has worked with Ai on numerous art projects since 2002; veteran Berlin-based producer Heino Deckert, who has produced dozens of award-winning documentaries; executive producer Andrew Cohen, who produced Alison Klayman’s acclaimed *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*; and executive producers for Participant, Diane Weyermann and Jeff Skoll.

Recalls Cohen: “In February 2016, I spent 4 or 5 days with Weiwei and Chin-chin observing the dangerous cat-and-mouse game played between human smugglers and the coast guard, visiting refugee camps and graveyards, speaking with locals and refugees, accompanying NGOs guiding rafts to safety and watching Weiwei directing the three camera crews he had down there. I said to Weiwei, I would like to be a producer and he said OK.”

Around that same time Weyermann was attending the Berlin Film Festival when she caught wind of Ai’s unfolding film project. “I met in Berlin with Chin-chin and Andy, while Weiwei was still on Lesbos, and we started talking about the potential for this film to be a powerful way to get this story out to more people,” recalls Weyermann. “I found it very exciting. Of course, there have been endless news broadcasts and magazine articles but having a film by Weiwei was going to be a unique avenue to raising awareness unlike any other. He’s one of our world’s major creative spirits and he has the capacity to reach so many people and especially to reach young people.”

She goes on: “We started putting a production structure and financing in place, but Weiwei started just by starting and we watched as the project took on a huge life of its own. It became even more special when I first met Weiwei. He’s so open and curious about everyone and everything. Much as he is a genius at using social media, he places a very high value on one-one-interaction, and that is a beautiful way of operating in the modern world.”

Ai often uses a team approach to his art and is comfortable with delegating to those whose talent and skill he respects. Much of the early direction emanated from the Berlin Studio, which served as a central hub as hundreds of spokes began springing from the wheel.

Weyermann got a glimpse at the process when she visited Ai’s cavernous, 32,000 square-foot studio in a former East Berlin brewery. “Weiwei has a really dedicated, strong, smart team of researchers who did a lot of the groundwork in Berlin, in this extraordinary, monastery-like space he’s created there,” she says. “I remember coming to Berlin soon after we started production—and the studio had an entire massive ‘control room,’ with every surface lined with photos, maps and charts looking at both the history and the situation on the ground in every country. As daunting as the film was in its scope, the guidance from Weiwei was very simple in its passion. As a visionary, he pulls people in and they want to be part of what he’s doing.”

That Ai always saw the film’s massive scale as no big deal, just what needed to be done in the way he always does things, bolstered the producer’s faith. Says Cohen: “Weiwei is a natural born director in the broadest sense of the word. On a daily basis he directs the creation of his artworks, as well as their installations and exhibitions, in multiple venues worldwide. This is not much different from what a film director does, except Weiwei is used to doing things on an epic scale. "Remarkably, while he directed shoots in 23 countries, he also was directing art projects across the globe."  The fact that he doesn’t sleep much, and has very little social life, helps to fuel his prolific output.”

To bring an overarching guidance to the intricate undertaking, Participant suggested a meeting between Ai and veteran documentary producer Heino Deckert, whose credits include more than 70 award-winning films, including *My Joy* and *Vivan Las Antipodas!* Deckert notes that from the get-go the project was like no other.

“You are working with an artist’s larger vision,” he observes, “so when I asked for a script and a budget, none of that existed, even though they were already shooting. I’ve never had that situation before. But Weiwei had a clear conviction about what he wanted to do and I felt my job was to bring some organization to that vision. We began putting together a team in Berlin just dedicated to the logistics of getting visas and permissions and coordinating the shoots. It was a different process from the usual, so we needed a very strong group of people. But for us here in Europe, it was unbelievable and exciting that he wanted to make his film, and we were very committed to it.”

There was also an urgency to move fast. “There was always on this film a big issue of time, because the subject is happening right now and Weiwei was very clear that he wanted the film to come out as quickly as possible, so that it would have an immediate impact,” Deckert explains.

For all the time pressure and challenges, Deckert found Ai remarkably centered. “Weiwei as an artist is a real humanist—but he’s also a very nice, lovely person when you get to know him. I think in a very cynical world his art is often misunderstood. I found him to be so charming and gentle. He would tell me what he wanted, I would tell him what was actually possible, and he would say OK. He didn’t care really about financial considerations. It was about his vision of the film and his desire to make things happen—and we tried our best to support that.”

As the production followed people to the margins of society, hazards lurked everywhere, but Ai had a knack for slyly, softly easing his way past them. “Of course there was danger in certain locations, but Weiwei is fearless,” says Cohen. “Where some would see peril, he sees only opportunity. He has this warm magnetism, gentle aura and innate empathy where people just want talk to him, to show him what’s really going on with them. We also had very courageous camera and sound men and women, as well as good fixers guiding us on location.”

Throughout, there was the utmost dedication to honoring the refugees, to let their voices take the lead, even in silence. Says Chin-chin Yap: “Many were glad for the attention, but some were indifferent as they understandably felt media attention had not helped their plight. We had difficulty accessing some camps that local authorities thought were unsafe but we managed it in the end. It was important that we go where it was unsafe, so that people can understand how many refugees live their lives in insecure conditions with few protections.”

As production reached its peak of activity, the sheer volume of footage coming in became a weighty issue. Weyermann and Deckert suggested to Ai that he connect with award-winning Scandinavian editor Niels Pagh Andersen, who has edited more than 250 films—and is renown for constructing films about stultifying subjects in ways that are emotional, approachable and starkly beautiful. “One of the big challenges we knew we were going to face was how to handle the amount of footage we were getting,” says Deckert. “That’s why I thought of Niels, who not only has lots of experience but has a way of finding an emotional through-line in very complex stories. Niels was willing to try a lot of things to find the right balance of the film’s elements—the documentary footage, interviews and text. He worked like a sculptor, reducing and reducing the material down to its essence.”

“Niels even moved to Berlin to edit—that’s the kind of spirit that the film inspired,” says Weyermann.

As it happened, Andersen initially told Ai, regretfully, that he was simply too busy to undertake such a mind-bogglingly time-consuming editing process—a process that eventually would involve sifting through more than 1000 hours of footage.

That changed when the two met. “I’d told Heino I had no time do the film, but maybe I could do some consulting,” he recalls. “Then, I went to meet Weiwei for the first time in Berlin—I’d only seen one of his exhibitions and I liked his stuff but I didn’t know him. Right away, I sensed his deep political and personal motivation. This was important. I am a 100% kind of person—and if I am going to give 100%, I need to feel that personal connection. At the beginning, it was about just sitting and drinking tea with Weiwei talking about art and food and politics, connecting and finding the tone. For me there was the question: who is Weiwei as a human being? He had such good sense of humor, and that made it easy for us to get close to one another. We began talking about how to create images different from what we normally see and that interested me.”

Still, Andersen had to make a large decision about how to proceed. Ai told Andersen: “I’m a man of fast decisions—you have 48 hours to make up your mind.” Andersen took the leap and never looked back. “I jumped in without seeing a single frame, but I knew then we had a common humanistic and moral approach. We both agreed that this could not be a film about refugees’ tragedy. It is instead about their quest for transformation.”

Moving to Berlin and settling into Ai’s studio, Andersen began working with a team that included 2 additional senior editors and 4 junior editors who together began pouring through the reams of film coming their way, rife with imagery that spanned from the everyday tasks of life that go on even in a refugee camp to the otherworldly realms of bombed-out Mosul. Throughout there was also the quiet, absorptive presence of Ai.

“We had all these different kinds of material,” Andersen notes. “There’s the camp material, the interview material, the question of how we see Weiwei and how much or how little. This is a story you could tell in 10 minutes if you wanted, but for refugees it is about months and years, so we were always asking how do we give a different experience.”

The balance was not only about interweaving all the film’s elements but squaring the light and dark in the narrative. “We started with the idea that when the refugees arrive in Lesbos, it’s not just an arrival but a victory. It’s a celebratory moment. But then we come upon the closed borders, the rain and the hardness and we go deeper into their emotional struggles. Great care was taken to hold back from too much hardship because you could easily use up all the energy and this is the opposite of what we wanted. We wanted the audience to enter these situations with curiosity and feeling instead of watching with dispassion. Weiwei creates the space for us to put ourselves in the refugees’ positions, to ask: what is it like to be ‘locked in’ or ‘locked out’ in so many different ways?”

A large part of the edit was stitching the raw refugee experiences together with many threads, encompassing expert views, hard news and strands of ancient poetry. “It was very important for Weiwei to have many points of view, so there was constant layering, not just with the interviews but also layering in the text element. We were constantly searching for the right balance. First we had too much walking, then we had too many experts, and by chipping away, slowly you build the film. It was a process but Weiwei thinks in terms of process,” Andersen observes. “He has a fantastic creative intuition but he is also guided by a method.”

For Deckert, the film’s interweaving of text, faces, ideas, facts, emotions, landscapes and human bonds reflects the breadth of Ai’s distinct way of seeing the world. “Ai works in ways that are more like a visual artist than a typical film director,” he notes. “He is encyclopedic in his approach, collecting history, facts, stories, poetry. He likes to collect as much as he can and the idea is that later you carve out of all that you collect what you want.”

Says Weyermann of the film’s interlaced structure: “It’s layers upon layers and layers and it goes deeper and deeper and by the time you come to the end of the film it seems that works some kind of alchemy on you. You feel yourself being part of it as opposed to gazing at the ‘other’ from afar. I think the film’s structure creates a very powerful humanizing effect. You have moments of every kind in the film: moments that are touching, that are haunting, that are playful, and that are starkly beautiful.”

Yap concurs that the counterpoints of fact, poetry and imagery are all necessary. “I believe the scale of the crisis as it is right now can only be fully depicted and understood through statistics and facts. But the quotes from great poets, philosophers and thinkers show that struggles for freedom have occurred throughout history and are inherent to every human being,” she says.

Cohen goes on: “Weiwei not only brings in text but unites two seemingly disparate types of text – news and poetry. The metaphysical world can perhaps help our minds and hearts to process these events beyond the hard, cold facts. It offers an alternative to the conditioning and close-mindedness of the mainstream media that serves to desensitize viewers. As there is no narration in the film, text offers an alternate kind of voice.”

By the time the film was completed, all the disparate sections felt inseparably one-of-a-piece. “What I’m most proud of is that I feel this is a piece where you can’t take away any one element apart and have the same film – the entire epic has an overall logic that takes you an on intellectual, moral and emotional trip,” Andersen says.

 Cohen notes that the film is also one-of-a-piece with the entirety of Ai’s oeuvre. The influence of one of Ai’s favorite artists, Marcel Duchamp—the pioneering 20th century conceptual artist who believed that art should not merely tantalize the eyes but also fire up the mind—is felt throughout the film.

“I think you see Duchamp’s influence in the many ‘readymade’ objects and artifacts the camera focuses on throughout the film: the makeshift phone-charging station with masses of phones connected, or the grave yard of life vests, the empty rafts and tires—all ready-mades of the refugee crisis,” points out Cohen. “Animals are also a recurring theme in Weiwei’s work and in the film you have the refugee cat; the irony of the caged Palestinian tiger who is given first class travel to freedom; the caged birds, the vultures and seagulls.”

 For many, a favorite moment in the film is a simple but unforgettable crystallization: as the camera pans down a line of refugees, one holds up a sign that says it all in one word: “respect.”

“That one moment hits so deeply,” says Weyermann. “I think everybody who sees it will also think of their own family experiences—for example, my grandparents were immigrants, like so many in the United States—and you start to think of the refugee crisis in a more personal way.”

Adds Deckert: “In that moment, you see one human face that is so very fragile, so heartbreaking and yet so recognizably human. It is what the film is about. The first step is to see refugees as human beings and the second step is to say, we can deal with this, we can handle this situation together because we must.”

 All who undertook the expansive journey with Ai were changed by it. Says Cohen: “I will never forget the first boatful of refugees I saw: death and destruction and trauma were written all over faces and posture. They had literally left it all behind, except their phones and the clothes on their skinny bodies, worn out from crossing mountains and deserts, and soaked from the Mediterranean. After making this film, I have no fear of opening any borders to any of the refugees, as long as there is a plan for integration—not alienation—from the host nation. Closed doors are closed minds.”

 But though the film offers hope it is also a warning that much more needs to be done. Says Yap: “Right now I don’t think it is clear that world leaders are doing enough to avert an even worse situation in the future. There are also too many popular misconceptions about refugees that continue to frustrate clear long-term policies and planning. The ‘right of life’ is to lead a free and peaceful life in a just society, but this can only be achieved through constant struggle against oppression and self-interest.”

In the end, all agree that the final layer of making *Human Flow* lies with the audience—in the out-going rush of their unique and cumulative responses to what they see and feel. Concludes Andersen: “It’s up to the audience to finish this film, to take it all in and to connect through their own experiences. That was always the most important thing to Weiwei: to give audiences the space to explore this *Human Flow* in a way they have not felt it before.”

# # # # #

***Overview of Countries Visited In Human Flow***

***“Our shouting is louder than our actions,***

***Our swords are taller than us,***

***This is our tragedy.”***

 --Nizar Qabbani, Syrian Poet (1923-1988)

**Afghanistan**: With a country that has experienced the protracted violence of war and an unstable state for decades, Afghans are the second largest refugee group after Syrians. However, in 2016, Pakistan started forcibly returning several hundred thousand Afghan refugees to their country of origin, despite a continuing lack of security or basic services, resulting in many becoming internally displaced persons or trying to leave again.

**Bangladesh**: The South Asian country of Bangladesh as of 2016 hosted 232,974 Rohingya Muslim refugees, escaping persecution and military crackdowns in Buddhist-majority Myanmar. Though one of the least publicized refugee crises in the world right now, many Rohingya have been stranded in impoverished Bangladeshi camps without the ability to leave or right to work, barely subsisting in severe conditions.

**France**: At the height of the 2015-2016 refugee influx to Europe, the seaside French city of Calais became home to a makeshift camp of as many as 10,000 people known locally as “The Jungle” for its squalid conditions. Set up on a former landfill, many residents were unaccompanied minors, and the camp suffered from an alarming lack of sanitary facilities and food supplies. Near the end of 2016, the camp was officially cleared and demolished with some refugees sent to processing centers—but new camps have sprung up nearby and many refugees living in Calais have ended up on the streets of Paris.

**Gaza**: The Gaza strip is home to 1.3 million stateless Palestinian refugees, including 576,000 living in camps which have some of the highest population density of anywhere in the world. Due to the Israeli blockade on Gaza—which has restricted both movement and trade since 2007—the people living there are essentially “locked-in,” with more than 80% of refugees dependent on humanitarian aid to survive.

**Germany**: In 2015, Germany voluntarily took in more asylum seekers than any other European nation (48% of all accepted asylum seekers in Europe), becoming a symbol of the so-called “open door policy.” That policy has since been pared back and an increase in right-wing attacks on refugees has made refugee safety in the country more tenuous.

**Greece**: Due to its geographic location in the Aegean Sea, between the Middle East and Europe, Greece and especially the legendary island of Lesbos, became a way-station for millions of refugees in 2015-16. As of 2017, UNHCR reports 14, 011 refugees in Greece and 4, 3979 on the island of Lesbos. Most are unable to return, yet unable to find asylum.

**Hungary**: Hungary had a draconian response to the increase of refugees arriving in Europe—shutting down transportation and imposing heavily guarded borders that stopped those seeking safety in their tracks. The result has been the haunting specter of razor-wired border camps on the Hungarian border that have been condemned by human rights groups—with many of those who have managed to escape into Hungary being detained by police.

**Iraq**: Iraq is both a creator of refugees and a host to refugees. Following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, massive civilian casualties led to more than millions of Iraqis being displaced. As of 2017, there are 257,476 Iraqi refugees hosted in the region. Despite continuing internal conflicts, Iraq has taken in 277,000 refugees, mostly from Syria.

**Israel:** Israel and Egypt have blockaded Gaza since 2007, cutting off more than 1 million refugees from the basic necessities of life. Israel has allowed more than 2,600 Syrian refugees to come into the country for emergency medical care but has no formal program for accepting adult refugees from Syria, with which it is officially at war. The nation has one of the lowest rates of offering asylum in the Western world.

**Italy**: In 2015, 153,436 crossed the Mediterranean Sea from sub-Saharan Africa and Libya to arrive in Italy. In 2016 another 181,436 made the same treacherous crossing. It is one of the deadliest routes to Europe, with more than 4,576 lives lost in 2016, and the numbers are not slowing.

**Jordan**: After the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967, Jordan became home to more than 2 million Palestinian refugees. Palestinians remain the largest refugee population in the world, with 5 million eligible to receive aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Sharing a border with Syria, which was closed in 2016, this small nation already experiencing a shortage of water also hosts the world’s largest Syrian refugee camp, Zaatari, which is now the 4th largest city in Jordan.

**Kenya:** Kenya is home to Dadaab, one of the world’s largest refugee camps, currently hosting more than 245,000 refugees from Somalia, Eritrea and South Sudan who have fled from civil wars, droughts and extreme economic deprivation. In 2011, due to the drought in Eastern Africa, the number of refugees at Dadaab soared to almost half a million.

**Lebanon**: Syrian refugees, who poured across the border when civil war broke out, now make up about a quarter of Lebanon’s population. The country has also been hosting Palestinian refugees since 1948, with about 450,000 Palestinians living in 12 camps with extremely limited resources.

**Macedonia**: Another coastal arrival point for many refugees, Macedonia also experienced a sharp rise in refugees in 2015 and 2016. In 2016, the nation precipitously sealed its border with Greece, closing off the so-called “Balkan Route” by which many refugees attempted to travel into Western Europe. Thousands were trapped in makeshift camps.

**Malaysia**: Many of the Rohingya people escaping persecution from Myanmar seek refuge in Malaysia, which in 2017 hosts about 60,000 Rohingya who have filed for asylum. Malaysia is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees, however, so there are no official laws there to protect them.

**Mexico**: About 500,000 people seeking safety cross the Mexico border each year, with many trying to reach the U.S. Amid the Trump administration’s crackdown on immigrants and refugees, as well as plans to build a border wall, Central Americans fleeing ongoing violence and gang persecution are increasingly turning to Mexico for asylum. Asylum applications in Mexico are estimated to reach 20,000 this year, double the number from 2016, which had also increased 60% from the previous year. Mexico granted refugee status to 1 in 3 applicants in 2016.

**Pakistan**: Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan has hosted up to 3 million Afghan refugees. However, in the summer of 2016, Pakistan announced it would begin a mass forced return of Afghan refugees, many of whom have no safe place to go. Since then, more than 600,000 Afghans have been deported, one of the largest mass exoduses of modern times, some to settlement camps lacking in resources. More than 2 million documented and undocumented Afghan refugees still remain in Pakistan.

**Serbia**: Serbia, a non-EU nation that borders Hungary, has become another nexus for refugees, especially in 2017. Following the EU’s deal with Turkey, which reduced the number of refugees arriving by boat, more are traveling by the “Balkan Route,” which means traversing Serbia. In the beginning of 2017, there were an estimated 150 refugees entering Serbia every day, at least half of them unaccompanied minors. Serbia does not grant asylum and many refugees there have become essentially trapped in camps with unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

**Sweden**: Sweden currently accepts more refugees per capita than any other nation in the developed world, with the majority coming from Syria, followed by Africa, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Still, it is not easy to get asylum in Sweden. 191,000 people have applied for asylum in the last 2 years, but 60,000 to 80,000 of those are expected to be rejected.

**Switzerland**: With many closed borders in the Balkans, African refugees trying to get to Germany from their arrival point in Italy now often cross through landlocked Switzerland. Most refugees in Switzerland are escaping from human rights abuses in the Horn of Africa. While Switzerland champions a fair and efficient asylum process, there have been reports of thousands of asylum-seekers being pushed back into Italy, and controversy remains over refugee acceptance in Swiss society.

**Thailand**: For several decades, Thailand has been a destination for refugees fleeing violence, oppression and extreme economic circumstances in Myanmar. Refugee camps on the Thai border also, according the UN, hosts approximately 102,251 tribal people, 80% of whom are Karen, a persecuted ethnic minority. In 2015, thousands of Rohingya refugees set sail for Thailand en route to Malaysia. Thailand is not a signatory of the UN Convention on Refugees so there is no law conferring to them any basic rights. Rohingya refugees in Thailand have been at high risk of human trafficking.

**Turkey**: 30 million Kurdish people live in a region known as Kurdistan that straddles the nations of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. In 2015, a military crackdown by Turkish military and intense fighting in the Southwest of Turkey displaced an estimated 500,000 Kurds, with some attempting to flee to Greece. Turkey also hosts more than 2.5 million Syrian refugees. In March 2016, Turkey and the European Union struck a deal to stop the refugee flow to Europe. The EU could now return refugees to Turkey in exchange for promising 6 billion Euros in aid and visa-free travel to Europe to Turkish citizens.

**United States**: About 3 million refugees have been resettled in the United States since Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980. However, that policy has recently been subjected to a U-turn, with the Trump administration calling for a halt of the refugee program, a travel ban from 6 Muslim nations, increased deportations and a multi-billion dollar wall along the Mexico border. In 2014, the United States had its own refugee crisis when tens of thousands of women and unaccompanied children began trying to escape a virtual war zone in Central America’s “Northern Triangle”—El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. At that time, the United States put in place a program to allow children from the Northern Triangle to apply for asylum from within their home countries, before making the sometimes deadly journey northward. Today, that program has been put on hold. With increasing numbers turned away or detained at the border, fewer are risking the long trek, but that also has had consequences. Now many must choose between staying where their lives are threatened daily or finding new and more hazardous routes to another country, all while the root causes of the crisis go unaddressed.

**Human Flow*—A Call to Action***

Participant Media — a leading media company dedicated to entertainment that inspires and compels social change — is teaming up with such organizations as the International Rescue Committee, Kiva and Help Refugees to execute a global campaign aimed at raising awareness and providing meaningful “on-the-ground” assistance for the global refugee community. Tied to the release of *Human Flow*, the partnership will drive home the power of storytelling as a method of enacting social change.

Visit the *Human Flow* Action Center (<http://www.humanflow.com/action/>), where you can learn how to provide resettled refugee families with the items they need to start their new life; get up-to-date alerts regarding refugees in the U.S. and how you can help them; and/or support migrant entrepreneurs by providing mirco-loans for their businesses.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **HUMAN FLOW’S INTERVIEWEES****(In Order Of Appearance)** |   |   |
| **Muhammed Hassan** | **Ron Ott** |  | **Dr. Amir Khalil** |   |   |
| **Israa Abboud** |  | **Anonymous Woman** | **Wella Kouyou** |   |   |
| **Israa Abboud's Mother** | **Dr. Cem Terzi** |  | **Marin Din Kajdomcaj** |   |
| **Salam Kamal Aldeen** | **Muhammad Ibrahim and Family** | **Maya Ameratunga** |   |
| **Hamza Khawalda and Family** | **Ismatollah Sediqi** | **Ahmad Shuja** |   |   |
| **Boris Cheshirkov** | **Tanya Chapuisat** | **Pascal C. Thirion**  |   |
| **Rafik Ismail** |  | **Maha Yahya** |  | **Maria Kipp** |   |   |
| **Peter Bouckaert** | **Walid Joumblatt** | **Yamama al-Awaad** |   |
| **Filippo Grandi** |  | **Fadi Abou Akleh** | **Amir from Sudan** |   |
| **Rami Abu Sondos** | **Hagai El-Ad** |  | **Ioannis Mouzalas** |   |
| **Princess Dana Firas of Jordan** | **Asmaa al-Bahiyya** | **Abbas Ali Sabhan** |   |
| **Dr. Hanan Ashrawi** | **Eman al-Masina** | **Sarah Giles** |   |   |
| **Marisa P. Elham and Family** | **Hiba Abed** |  | **Orlando "Max" Avis** |   |
| **Anonymous Man** | **Haneen Khalid** |  | **Jens Pagotto** |   |   |
| **Rozhan Hossin and Family** | **Muna Khalid Karraz** | **Gabriela Soraya Vazquez** |   |
| **Abdullah Mahmoud** | **Hind Nahid** |  | **Porfirio Hernández Peréz** |   |
| **Haydar and Mercan** | **Nida Muhammad** | **Senaida Mancías Nuñez** |   |
| **Sukriye Cetin** |  | **Rania Khaleel Awad al-Mutamid** | **Benjamín Zacarias Hernández Mancías** |
| **Ahmad Dandl** |  | **Samah Nabeel** |  | **Dr. Kemal Kirişci** |   |
| **Abood Okaab** |  | **Abeer Khalid** |  | **Mohammad Fares** |   |

**ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**Ai Weiwei (Director/Producer)** is renowned for making strong aesthetic statements that resonate with timely phenomena across today’s geopolitical world. From architecture to installations, social media to documentaries, Ai uses a wide range of mediums as expressions of new ways for his audiences to examine society and its values. Recent exhibitions include: *Ai Weiwei: Trace at Hirshhorn* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C., *Maybe, Maybe Not* at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, *Law of the* Journey at the National Gallery in Prague, *Ai Weiwei. Libero* at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, *#SafePassage* at Foam in Amsterdam, *translocation - transformation* at 21er Haus in Vienna, and *Ai Weiwei* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

Ai was born in Beijing in 1957 and currently resides and works in both Beijing and Berlin. Ai is the current Einstein Visiting Professor at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), and he is the recipient of the 2015 Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International and the 2012 Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation.Ai has made numerous documentaries about social and political issues that have won major film festival awards, including *Disturbing the Peace*, *One Recluse*, *So Sorry*, *Ordos 100* and *Ai Weiwei’s Appeal* *¥15,220.910.50,*

**Chin-chin Yap (Producer)** is a Berlin-based writer and producer with a background in art and law. She was formerly a Specialist in Contemporary Art at Phillips de Pury and Company, the New York and London-based contemporary art and design auction house. She writes the “Case Study” column for *ArtAsiaPacific* magazine on art, law and economics, and is working with Executive Producer Andrew Cohen on the upcoming documentary *Ximei’s House*. She has a B.A. from Columbia University and a J.D. from Georgetown Law School.

**Heino Deckert (Producer)** has studied law in Berlin and was a student at the German Film and TV Academy Berlin (DFFB). Upon graduating in 1991 he founded the production company, Ma.ja.de. Filmproduktions GmbH.

Deckert meanwhile produced more than 100 award-winning documentaries for Ma.ja.de. Filmproduktion. His coproduction *Rabbit á la Berlin* by Bartek Konopka was nominated for an Academy Award® in 2010. He produced *Vivan Las Antipodas* by Victor Kossakowsky, which was the opening film of the Venice Film Festival in 2011. In 2013 *Song From the Forest* by Michael Obert won the main award of the International Amsterdam Film Festival (IDFA). Currently, Deckert is producing the new film directed by Victor Kossakowsky (working title *Aquarela*) with the support of Participant Media.

The catalogue of his sales company Deckert Distribution includes titles such as the Emmy Award winner *Miners Shot Down* (2015) and *No Burqars Behind Bars* (2014) and *The 3 Rooms of Melancholia*, as well as most of the documentaries of Sergej Loznitsa.

In 2005, Deckert founded Ma.ja.de. Fiction and produced his first fiction film with documentary filmmakers Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth. The film, *Khadak,* premiered in Venice 2006 and won the Lion of the Future. This was followed by Brosens and Woodworth’s *Altiplano*, which premiered in Cannes 2009. The first fiction film project from the documentary filmmaker Sergej Loznitsa *My Joy* had its premiere in the Cannes Competition 2010. The film was shortlisted for the European Film Awards and received major awards at several international festivals. Loznitsa’s second fiction film, *In the Fog*, was also produced by Deckert and had its premiere in the competition in Cannes 2012, winning the Fipresci Award for Best Film in the main competition. In 2016, Deckert co-produced the children`s film *Hotel Große L*. In 2017 he will produce the fiction film *Adam & Evelyn*, from first-time director Andreas Goldstein and the new film from Loznitsa, *Donbass.*

**Andrew Cohen (Executive Producer)** is an independent filmmaker and journalist. With Gaylen Ross he produced and co-wrote his first film in 1996: the award-winning *Dealers Among Dealers*and later the critically acclaimed *Killing Kasztner: The Jew who Dealt with the Nazis*.  More recently he executive produced the multi award-winning films*Ai Weiwei:Never Sorry,* *The World Before Her* and

As a film director and print journalist, Cohen directed and wrote for *ArtAsiaPacific* a series of short films and articles on China’s leading contemporary artists. He is currently in postproduction on his first feature length film as director: *Beijing Spring,*the story of the first Democracy movement and protest march calling for freedom of expression in the 1970’s Post-Mao China.  Other films he directed and in post production are *Talking Tacheles*, the infamous Berlin art house in the immediate aftermath of the falling of the Berlin Wall; *Ximei's House,* theAIDS villages in Xincai, China; *The Village Gate*: New York City’s iconic venue of jazz, popular music, comedy and theatre.

As executive vice president of documentary films, **Diane Weyermann (Producer)** is responsible for the documentary feature film slate of Participant Media, a company dedicated to entertainment that inspires and compels social change.

Participant’s documentary projects include Jon Shenk and Bonni Cohen’s *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth To Power*; Morgan Neville’s *The Music Of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma And The Silk Road Ensemble*, Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Look Of Silence*, Marc Silver’s *3 1/2 Minutes, Ten Bullets*, Robert Gordon and Morgan Neville’s *Best Of Enemies*, Davis Guggenheim’s *He Named Me Malala*and Bernardo Ruiz’s *Kingdom Of Shadows*. Previous releases include the Oscar®-winning *Citizenfour*, the Oscar®-winning *An Inconvenient Truth*, Emmy®-winning *Food, Inc*., the Emmy®-nominated *The Great Invisible, Chicago 10, Pressure Cooker* and *Page One: Inside The New York Times*, as well as *Merchants Of Doubt, The Unknown Known, The Internet’s Own Boy, Ivory Tower, A Place At The Table, State 194, Last Call At The Oasis, Waiting For “Superman,” Countdown To Zero, Climate Of Change, Standard Operating Procedure, Jimmy Carter From Plains*and *Darfur Now*.

Prior to joining Participant in 2005, Weyermann was the director of the Sundance Institute’s Documentary Film Program. During her tenure at Sundance, she was responsible for the Sundance Documentary Fund, a program supporting documentary films dealing with contemporary human rights, social justice, civil liberties, and freedom of expression from around the world. She launched two annual documentary film labs, focusing on the creative process – one dealing with editing and storytelling, and the other with music. Weyermann’s work in the documentary field extends many years prior to Sundance.

For seven years, Weyermann was the director of the Open Society Institute New York’s arts and culture program. In addition to her work with contemporary art centers and culture programs in the Soros Foundation network, she launched the Soros Documentary Fund (which later became the Sundance Documentary Fund) in 1996.

 **Jeff Skoll (Executive Producer)** is an entrepreneur devoted to creating a sustainable world of peace and prosperity. Over the course of nearly two decades, Skoll has created an innovative portfolio of philanthropic and commercial enterprises, each a distinctive catalyst for changing the issues that most affect the survival and thriving of humanity – including climate change. This portfolio includes the Skoll Foundation, Participant Media, Skoll Global Threats Fund, Capricorn Investment Group, and new ventures – all coordinated under the Jeff Skoll Group umbrella.

Skoll’s entrepreneurial approach is unique: driving large-scale, permanent social impact by investing in a range of efforts that integrate powerful stories, data, capital markets, technology, partnerships, and organized learning networks. Operating independently from one another yet deeply connected through shared mission, Skoll’s organizations galvanize public will, policy, and mobilize critical resources that accelerate the pace and depth of change.

Inspired by the belief that a story well told can change the world, Jeff founded Participant Media in 2004. Participant Media is the world's leading entertainment company focused on social impact. Participant has produced more than 80 full length narrative and documentary films. These films collectively have garnered 50 Academy Award® nominations and 11 wins, including Best Picture award for *Spotlight*.

Companion campaigns run by Participant have shaped consumer’s beliefs and actions, and in some cases have been instrumental in changing national and international policies working hand-in-hand with non-profit partners.

As the first full time employee and President of eBay, Skoll experienced firsthand the power of combining entrepreneurship, technology, and trust in people. His work today embodies those critical lessons learned from eBay. All of Skoll’s organizations rely on the premise that people are basically good, and that if good people are given the opportunity to do the right thing, they will.

**Niels Pagh Andersen (Editor)** has worked as a film editor since 1979 and has cut more than 250 films of widely different categories.

Among his best known films are the Academy Award®-nominated documentaries *The Act of Killing* and *The Look Of Silence* directed by Joshua Oppenhaimer; Nils Gaup’s epic action-adventure *Pathfinder*, which garnered a Best Foreign Film Oscar® nomination; Jan Troell’s drama *Everlasting Moments* which received a Golden Globe nomination; the Emmy-nominated Prostitution Behind the Veil; Pirjo Honkasalo’s exploration of the Chechen conflict *3 Rooms of Melancholia* and the Disney production *Shipwrecked.*

Andersen has lectured and taught at film schools and universities around the world and is a Professor in Editing at The Norwegian Film School.

In 2005 he won the prestigious lifetime achievement award, *The Roos Prize*, The Danish Film Institute’s grand documentary prize for outstanding efforts in documentary filmmaking.

For **Karsten Fundal (Composer)** no single style of music is preferable to another; he is interested in the fundamental concept of music which can result in almost anything in stylistic terms. The crucial point for him is for the composer to remain true to his ideas.

Fundal was born in 1966 in Valby, Denmark, and studied composition with Hans Abrahamsen, Ib Nørholm, Per Nørgård and Karl Aage Rasmussen. He went on to study for two years in Holland with Louis Andriessen. A meeting with Nigel Osborne and most significantly with Morton Feldman  at Dartington in 1986 had a great impact on Fundal’s compositional development.

His main works include mostly chamber music and orchestra pieces, among them the break-through “Ballad “(1988) and the classicist piano concerto “Liquid Motion” (1993). Among larger works are the concert for percussion, “Ritornelli in contrario” (1997), the grand orchestral pieces “Hush” (2003-2004) and “Entropia”(1997-2001) – the latter a portrayal of the creation of the universe – and the orchestral installation “Liquid Rooms” (2013).

Besides his works for the concert hall, Fundal has written and arranged music for several Danish and international movies, for instance *Flame and Citron*, and he has collaborated with leading Danish pop artists.

He received the Wilhelm Hansen Composer Award in 1994 and the Prize of the Danish Composers’Society in 1995.

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| Ahmad Dandl | Samah Nabeel |   | Dr. Kemal Kirişci |   |
| Abood Okaab | Abeer Khalid |   | Mohammad Fares |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |
| REFUGEE CAMPS |
| AFGHANISTAN |   |   | IRAQ |   |
| Charahi Qambar Camp, Kabul  |   |   | al-Amiriyah Fallujah Camp, Anbar  |   |
|   |   |   | al-Khalidiyah Camp, Anbar  |   |
| BANGLADESH |   |   | Darashakran Camp, Erbil |   |
| Kutupalong Camp, Cox’s Bazar |   |   | Debaga Camp, Erbil |   |
| Kutupalong Makeshift Camp, Cox’s Bazar |   |   | Ein Kawa Camp, Erbil |  |
| Nayapara Camp, Cox’s Bazar |   |   | Habbaniyah Camp, Anbar  |  |
|   |   |   | Khazir Camp, Mosul |  |
| FRANCE |   |   | Shariya Camp, Dahuk |  |
| Grande-Synthe Camp, Dunkirk |   |   | Silo al-Hajjaj Reception Center, Salah al-Din |  |
| Jungle of Calais Makeshift Camp, Calais |   |   | Tariq Camp, Fallujah |   |
| Stalingrad Makeshift Camp, Paris |   |   |   |  |
|   |   |   | JORDAN |  |
| GERMANY |   |   | Azraq Camp, Azraq |   |
| Containerdorf Köpenick, Berlin |   |   | Hadalat Camp, "The Berm" |   |
| Notunterkunft An der Urania, Berlin |   |   | Zaatari Camp, Mafraq |  |
| Notunterkunft Flughafen Tempelhof, Berlin |   |   |   |  |
| Notunterkunft Osloer Straße, Berlin |   |   | KENYA |   |
| Notunterkunft Waidmannslust, Berlin |   |   | Ifo Camp, Dadaab, Garissa County |   |
|   |   |   | Ifo 2 Camp, Dadaab, Garissa County |   |
| GREECE |   |   |   |   |
| Corinth Pre-removal Detention Centre, Corinth |   |   | LEBANON |   |
| Eleonas Camp, Athens |   |   | al-Telyani Makeshift Camp, Beka’a Valley |   |
| Kara Tepe Camp, Lesvos |   |   | Arsal Camp, Arsal |  |
| Idomeni Makeshift Camp, Idomeni |   |   | Dahlamiye 067 Makeshift Camp, Riyaq |   |
| Lagkadikia Camp, Thessaloniki |   |   | Ein al-Hilweh Camp, Sidon |   |
| Moria Camp, Lesvos |   |   | Shatila Camp, Beirut |   |
| Oreokastro Camp, Thessaloniki |   |   |   |   |
| Petra Olympou Camp, Mount Olympus |   |   | MACEDONIA |   |
| Pikpa Camp, Lesvos |   |   | Vinojug Reception Center, Gevgelija |   |
| Polikastro Makeshift Camp, Polikastro |   |   |   |   |
| Port Piraeus Makeshift Camp, Athens |   |   | PALESTINE |   |
| Sindos-Karamanli Camp, Thessaloniki |   |   | Aida Camp, West Bank |  |
| Skala Sikamineas Camp, Lesvos |   |   | Dheisheh Camp, West Bank |  |
| Softex Camp, Thessaloniki |   |   | Jabalia Camp, Gaza Strip |  |
|   |   |   | Nuseirat Camp, Gaza Strip |  |
| HUNGARY |   |   |   |  |
| Bicske Camp, Bicske |   |   | THAILAND |  |
|   |   |   | Mae La Oon Camp, Sob Moei |  |
| ITALY |   |   | Umpiem Mai Camp, Phop Phra |   |
| Centro di Accoglienza Immigrati, Messina |   |   |   |  |
| Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo, Lampedusa |   |   | TURKEY |  |
| Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo di Mineo, Sicily |   |   | Fidanlik Camp, Diyarbakir |  |
|   |   |   | Nizip Camp, Gaziantep |  |
|   |   |   | Torbali Makeshift Camp, Izmir |  |
|   |   |   |   |  |
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| Lewis Allen | Huang Wenguang |   | Julien Roby |  |
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| Nadav Bigelman | Jason Francis Linggod |   | Samia Saouma |  |
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| B'Tselem | Kayany Foundation |   | Birte Carolin Sebastian |  |
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| Mariana Herrera |   |   |   |   |
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| Gamra Hussain |   |   |   |  |
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