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A window to the Middle East

First titles of the 63rd Krakow Film Festival

**The program of this year's Krakow Film Festival will continue to be worked on until mid-April, but we're ready to show the first titles that are going to compete for the top prizes in the prestigious International Documentary Competition. A harrowing close encounter with ISIS executioners in Syria, the moving story of a young Kurdish woman in Turkey who survived an attempted murder, the turbulent fate of a single house which mirrors Iran's complicated history. And this is just a sneak peek at what awaits us in May/June in cinemas and online.**

“The world is now mainly watching the cruel war in Ukraine. But the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey or the mass protests in Iran make you realise the ease with which we remove entire areas of human tragedy from our sight. And the world remains in turmoil. Fortunately, documentary filmmakers don't turn their heads; they take their cameras into the most intense hot spots on Earth”. – says Krzysztof Gierat, Director of the Krakow Film Festival.

Worldwide, a femicide occurs every 11 seconds. The film *My Name Is Happy* (dir. Nick Read, Ayse Toprak) focuses on the fight against normalising gender-based violence in Turkey. The protagonist, Mutlu Kaya, a TV talent show contestant, miraculously avoids death at the hands of a rejected suitor. However, her sister isn't so lucky. The documentary follows Mutlu and her close family through their tragic experiences and her struggles to recover and return to music.

Awarded at Fipadoc in France, *Silent House* is the debut of Iranian sibling filmmakers. Using extremely rich archival material, Farnaz and Mohammadreza Jourabchian reveal the fascinating family history of three generations – witnessed in silence by the 100-year-old house in Tehran, the site of the famous conference. It is there that the family goes through both happy and tragic moments during Iran's turbulent history from the Islamic Revolution in 1979 to the present day.

The world premiere of the Danish documentary *The Hostage Takers* (dir. Puk Damsgaard, Søren Klovborg) will take place next week at the CPH: DOX festival in Copenhagen. The film will then come to the Krakow Film Festival. The protagonists are ISIS members, brutal prison guards of many Western hostages including US war correspondent James Foley, whose live-streamed decapitation shocked the world. His friend Sean Langan, a British war journalist, once also a victim of kidnapping, tracked down the executioners and recorded a most emotional confrontation that paints a horrifying picture of human nature.

Fifteen recent films from around the world will compete for the Golden and Silver Horns in the International Documentary Competition. Will there also be a Polish film among them? We'll find out in April. By then, the selection team led by Festival Director Krzysztof Gierat and Anita Piotrowska, curator of the documentary section, will have chosen the best candidates from among all the submitted films as well as those having their world premieres take place at prestigious festivals.

The Krakow Film Festival is on the exclusive list of qualifying events for the Oscars in the categories of short film (live action, animated, documentary) and documentary feature, as well a recommending event for the European Film Awards in the same categories.

The Kraków Film Festival is organised with the financial support of the European Union as part of the “Creative Europe” program, the City of Kraków, the Polish Film Institute, and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The co-organiser is the Polish Filmmakers Association, and the main organiser is the Krakow Film Foundation.

**The 63rd Krakow Film Festival will be held in cinemas from 28 May to 4 June and online across Poland on 2–18 June.**