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## Preface

At the fifth TERRE DES FEMMES Filmfestival „Women’s Worlds“ we wanted to shed a light on the human rights of women in Afghanistan. Worrying appeals from women’s organizations reach us that indicate a worsening of their situation even compared to the Taliban era. Especially the absence of public security makes many women withdraw again from the public space. Our choice of focus on the Afghan region was also motivated by the alarming rise of “honor crimes”, against which TERRE DES FEMMES initiated a campaign in 2004.

We have focussed on the human rights of women not only through film screenings, but also through conversations with activists like Parwin D. and Zakia H. from Afghanistan, with project referee Collin Schubert from TERRE DES FEMMES, with politicians such as the Afghan Human Rights Commissioner Dr. Sima Samar, and with exceptional film directors.

The following questions were discussed: How has the situation of women in Afghanistan changed since the downfall of the Taliban? What are the most important obstacles for guaranteeing the rights of women in Afghanistan? What is necessary to accomplish this guarantee? How can filmmaking and working with films contribute to this task? What are the experiences filmmakers have had pursuing this goal?

Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who is along with Kiarostami the famous founder of the New Iranian Cinema, has made several films about women’s rights, like „Gabbeh“ or „Kandahar“; his wife Marziyeh Meshkini has directed „The day I became a woman“ and „Stray Dogs“ on the same subject. Mohsen Makhmalbaf and his family are tremendously committed to the Human Rights of the Afghan people, having initiated a foundation for the support of education for Afghani children and promoting the development of Afghani film directors. As for Elke Jonigkeit, she has made 8 films about Afghanistan in 20 years and has co-founded a grass-root women’s organization in Afghanistan together with the leading protagonists of her films. It was especially this aspect of the connection between artistic filmmaking and social and political commitment for women’s rights that were highlighted in the conversations with these film-makers.

Two supplemental interviews with the German-Argentinian film director and professor Jeanine Meerapfel, and with the Tunisian filmmaker Nawfel Saheb-Ettaba, both guests at the 4<sup>th</sup> film festival of TERRE DES FEMMES, round out our discussion. Their deliberations about film language and the contribution of male filmmakers to women’s rights address our central question: how can we defend the human rights of women through films?

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