

THE
TRIALS
OF
SPRING

عواصف الربيع

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Outreach **PEACE IS LOUD**

Film is a co-production of ZAG LINE PICTURES, LLC and INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS), with funding provided by CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (CPB); in association with FORK FILMS, ARTEMIS RISING FOUNDATION and CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY | Shorts are a production of ZAG LINE PICTURES, LLC in association with FORK FILMS, ARTEMIS RISING FOUNDATION and CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY | Major funding provided by 20X50, a group of donors providing key support; NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS; 25X25, a group of donors providing important support; INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS) / CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (CPB); ARTEMIS RISING FOUNDATION; STARRY NIGHT FUND; PIERRE N. HAUSER; SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION and MARY D. FISHER | Supported by INDEPENDENT LENS, CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES; GUCCI TRIBECA DOCUMENTARY FUND; NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION, with the support and encouragement of JANE SAKS; IFP and additional foundations and individuals

ZAG Line Pictures



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BACKGROUND

“ The best predictor of a state’s peacefulness is how well women are treated. According to the World Bank, the larger the gender gap in a country, the greater the likelihood of its involvement in civil or cross-border conflict. ”

– What It Takes: Youth Working for Peace and Equality

Shortly after the Arab Spring ignited a wave of popular uprisings from Tunisia to Egypt, the central role played by women in these national movements became largely invisible within the mainstream press. Despite the unfolding events and uncertainty on the ground, we wanted to support the women on the front lines in their countries and ensure their contributions to democratic reform were not side-lined but instead placed center stage.

Initially, we envisioned a feature-length film weaving together the voices of women who were instrumental in overthrowing repressive and unresponsive regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. To amplify the film’s impact and reach, we also planned to create a series of short films focused on other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region where the demand for political reform had also sparked mass, popular movements. But events on the ground and the dangers posed by filming in volatile war zones led us to scrap our original plan. Just at the moment we were beginning to film, President Mohammed Morsi imposed a nationwide curfew in Egypt, making it impossible to film women from Tunisia, Libya and Egypt in one place, as we had hoped.

Responding to the unfolding situation we immediately began filming in Cairo. We would film in Tunisia a few months later. As we prepared to film in Libya, militias began to control the only road to and from the airport in Benghazi, making it too dangerous for our crew to return. We continually recalibrated our approach to the story in response to the dynamic conditions on the ground. The result became THE TRIALS OF SPRING, a ground-breaking cross-media project with a feature length film from Egypt and six short web-based films featuring women’s stories from Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Egypt and Yemen.



PROJECT SUMMARY & GOALS

In 2011, a series of popular uprisings swept the Arab world—and women were on the frontlines. But as the jubilation of revolution gave way to the fraught and challenging process of governing—and in Libya, Syria and Yemen, the violence and chaos of war—women were largely absent from coverage of these unfolding and dramatic events, at least as reported in the mainstream media.

To spotlight the central role played by women during these tumultuous events, THE TRIALS OF SPRING was created to chronicle the lives of nine women on the front lines during the Arab Spring uprisings and their aftermaths in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. This ambitious project comprises a feature-length documentary, six short films, articles by award-winning *New York Times*' journalists and a robust engagement campaign to inspire dialogue and challenge assumptions about the role women play in the transformation of their societies and the vision they have for a democratic future in the MENA region.

To amplify the impact and reach of THE TRIALS OF SPRING, our engagement partner Peace is Loud devised a multi-tiered campaign aimed at raising awareness about women's struggles for peace, human rights, social justice and freedom in the MENA region and elevating women's voices and presence as leaders and agents for change. Using THE TRIALS OF SPRING as the centerpiece of the effort, specific objectives included: **catalyzing** a discussion about the connection between women's rights and the success of social justice movements; **encouraging** international policymakers to involve women in peacebuilding efforts; and **motivating** media to feature female voices in international conflict coverage.

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

Feature Summary

In the face of a repressive and totalitarian regime that has ruled Egypt with an iron fist, an impassioned young Egyptian woman, Hend Nafea, leaves her home and family to join tens of thousands of her fellow citizens demanding an end to sixty years of military rule. Their demands for democratic reform are met with swift and unrelenting brutality. Caught up in the ensuing chaos, Hend is arrested, beaten and tortured by security forces and later punished and imprisoned by her family who fear the repercussions of their bold and outspoken daughter's political activism. Undeterred, Hend is resolved to make her voice heard and play a role in shaping the future of Egypt. Buoyed by the fierce determination of her fellow citizens who are also fighting to shape their nation's future, Hend Nafea's story mirrors the trajectory of the Arab Spring—from naïve optimism and hope to the harsh realities of challenging the status quo and taking on those in power. In the end, despite crushing setbacks, Hend's story is one of tenacity and resilience that offers hope for democratic reform even in the face of ongoing and seemingly insurmountable repression.



“ I am not a shame.
I am not a scandal.
I am one of the revolutionaries.”

-Hend Nafea

MULTIMEDIA INITIATIVE: THE SHORTS

As a companion to the feature-length film, six original short films were created profiling six defiant women who stand up to injustice and are outspoken advocates for progressive change and individual freedoms in Tunisia, Syria, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Egypt. These short films debuted in April 2015 on *The New York Times* online platform and can also be found at trialspring.com.



Syria: BRIDES OF PEACE

Sisters **Kinda and Lubna Zaour** stage a protest during the early days of Syria's revolution dressed as brides—a symbol of peace and love—in Damascus' main souk. Though their protest lasts only 20 minutes and is supported by bystanders, security forces arrest the women and take them to the notorious Palestine Road prison where they are beaten and denied all rights for more than two months. As Syria descends into sectarian war, the family is forced into exile along with millions of other refugees. Yet despite their disillusionment, Kinda and Lubna retain their fierce independence as they defy their families and tradition by marrying outside of their sect.

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Bahrain: OUR OATH

Nada Dhaif, a Bahraini dental surgeon and mother of two children, volunteered as a medic treating injured protesters. In a targeted attack against medical personnel, Nada was taken from her home in the middle of the night, arrested, tortured and, eventually, sentenced to fifteen years in prison. Her crime: honoring her oath as a doctor to treat the wounded. Following an international outcry, Nada and most of the other medics in custody were released and, ultimately, acquitted. Transformed by her experience, Nada launched and now runs an organization called BRAVO, working to treat victims of torture, and considers herself a full-fledged activist.



Egypt: LIFE'S SENTENCE

On December 17, 2011, **Hend Nafea**, a fiercely independent young woman, joined the tens of thousands of her fellow citizens demanding political change on the streets of Cairo. Three years later, she was sentenced to life in prison for her participation in the uprising. In this piece—filmed a day after the sentencing, when emotions are still raw—Hend provides a first-person account of the commitment she maintains to be on the front lines of change and chart the course of her life with eyes wide open having experienced the horrors at the hands of Egypt's notoriously brutal police.



Libya: WAKE UP, BENGHAZI!

From the first protests in Benghazi until the fall of Muammar Gaddafi, **Salwa Bugaighis**, a prominent human rights activist, lawyer and champion of women's rights, worked tirelessly to overthrow Gaddafi's repressive regime. Following the end of the dictatorship, Salwa became a leader of the country's first transitional council. As the situation descended into chaos and hope for democracy faded, many Libyans were forced to flee, fearing for their safety and that of their families. Despite the risk to her own personal safety, Salwa refused to leave her nation at this

critical moment in its history. On June 25, 2014, shortly after voting in Libya's first free parliamentary elections, Salwa was shot to death by unknown militants, marking Libya's first female political assassination. Yet, her spirit lives on among a new generation of Libyan youth including Salwa's thirteen-year-old niece, Nada, who vows to carry on the struggle inspired by her aunt's example.



Tunisia: KEEPING THE PROMISE

In the mining region of Gafsa, **Ghazala Mhamdi**, a veteran anti-government activist, decides to run for election and launches her bid for a seat in Tunisia's Parliament. Five years earlier in this mining region, riots broke out after security forces killed four demonstrators during a sit-in protesting corrupt hiring practices. Ghazala was beaten and intimidated for documenting the violence during the protests and on subsequent occasions. The film follows her unfolding campaign as she makes her case to the women and men in her community. Though ultimately Ghazala

does not win the election, the film shows her transformation from activist to politician from the riots to Election Day, and in the process challenge the image of Muslim women as disempowered and silent that is often presented in mainstream media, especially in the West.



Yemen: WHEN IS THE TIME?

In Yemen—notorious for its treatment of women—the early success of the Yemeni uprising offered a faint glimmer of hope to women like **Belquis Al Lahabi**. As a leading voice in Sanaa's Change Square, Belquis was at the center of an uprising that ended the twenty-two year reign of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Led by Belquis and others, women fought for and won a thirty-percent representation for women on the committee drafting the country's post-revolution constitution. Belquis was among those given a seat which allowed her a platform to continue the fight for

laws to end child-marriage and in support of women's economic rights. Yet despite these gains, the status of women in Yemen remains a hard-fought struggle, especially in the face of a rising tide of vi-

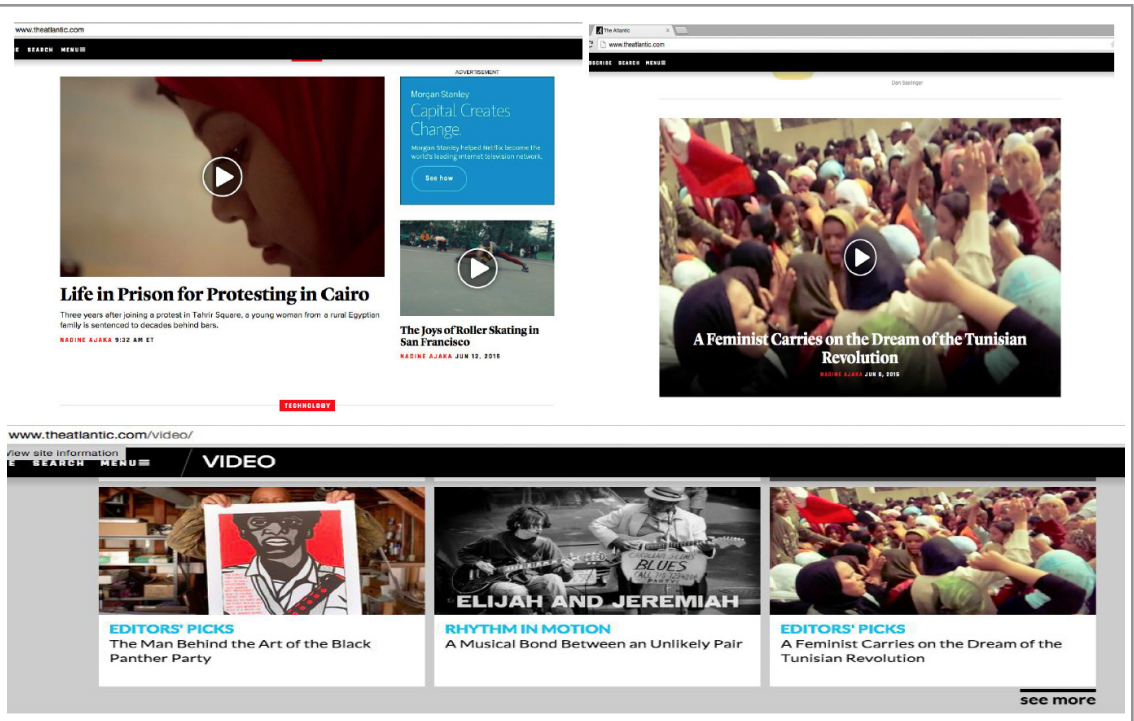
PROJECT LAUNCH

On June 7, 2015 THE TRIALS OF SPRING launched as a special event on *The New York Times* homepage, which receives over 57 million unique visitors each month. Six shorts were released in six days, culminating with the sold-out World Premiere of the feature documentary at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival in New York. The six shorts were accompanied by original articles, written by acclaimed *New York Times* journalists David Kirkpatrick, Carlotta Gall, Kareem Fahim, and Anne Barnard. These reporters provided country-specific context for each film, and used the individual stories to discuss women's larger roles in the Arab Spring.

Dozens of additional festival screenings followed across the world, with the film's release receiving coverage in many prestigious U.S. and international media outlets, including *Al-Arabiya*, *The Atlantic*, *Public Radio International* and *GPS with Fareed Zakaria*. In addition to the short films' exclusive premiere on *The New York Times*, the stories were picked up by outlets including *MSNBC*, *WNYC*, *De Correspondent* (Netherlands), *Tages Anzeiger*, and *Syria Deeply*.

Concurrent with the launch, the films screened at high-level convenings from the United Nations to the Clinton Global Initiative, where THE TRIALS OF SPRING Commitment to Action was featured during their 2015 Plenary session, "Unleashing Women's Economic Opportunities". These events were the starting point of an ongoing outreach campaign that has brought the stories of Arab women's rights activists to 250 international classrooms and communities, including government and military settings.

▶ THE TRIALS OF SPRING shorts, featured on *The Atlantic*



AWARDS

Feature

Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival

Winner
Jury Award, Best Feature

Traverse City Film Festival

Winner
Founder's Prize Special Award

Bar Harbor Film Festival

Winner
Best Documentary Feature

Social Impact Media (SIMA) Awards

Winner
Jury Prize for Transparency, Documentary Feature

One World Film Festival, Brussels

Special Mention
Jury Prize

Shorts

New Media Film Festival

BAHRAIN: OUR OATH
Winner
Best Socially Responsible Content

Hollyweb Festival

LIBYA: WAKE UP, BENGHAZI!
Winner
2016 Best Documentary/Nonfiction



PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

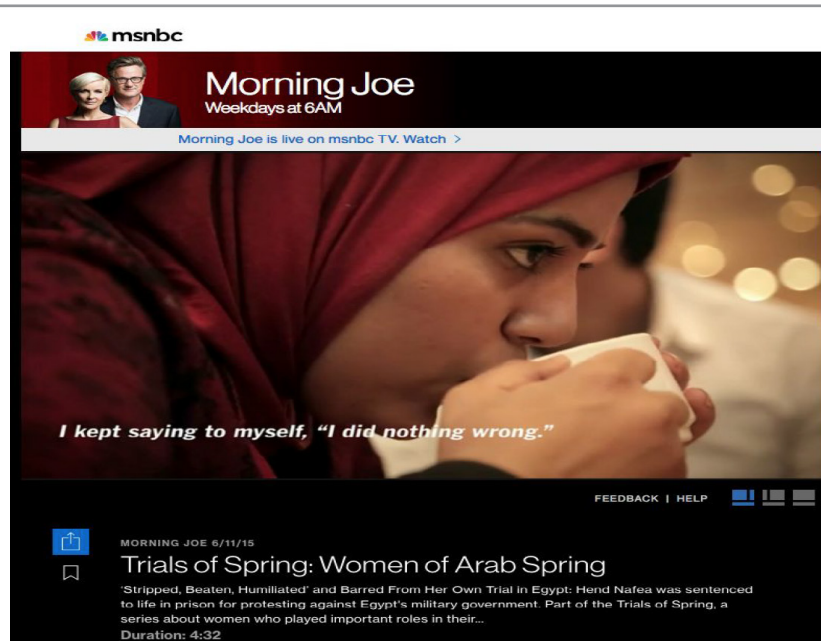
“ [Director Gini] Reticker chronicles Nafea’s trials without losing sight of the big picture. She both observes the outrages committed against democracy protesters in general and shows how women in particular suffered—enduring a mob of groping hands and more horrific kinds of sexual assault. Groping, we’re reminded, is something men are rarely held accountable for even under the best circumstances, one of many reasons these women are so persistent in their quest for rights that apply to all Egyptian citizens. ”

– John DeFore, *THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER*

“ Amid the backdrop of countless stories about the oppression of women in the Middle East and North Africa, however, Nafea insists her story is about the strength of Egyptian women. ‘The most prominent thing about the movie is how it portrays how strong women are, and the fact that they’re willing to sacrifice so much, and that they’re willing to stay and fight as they face violation,’ she said. ‘That’s the most important thing for me.’ ”

– Kia Makarechi, *VANITY FAIR*

▶
THE TRIALS
OF SPRING,
featured on
Morning Joe



- *'THE TRIALS OF SPRING': Film Review* (The Hollywood Reporter, 7/21/2015)
- *Jim Fouratt's Reel Deal: Movies That Matter* (WestView News, 7/2015)
- *When Women Human-Rights Activists Are In Danger, It's Women Who Come to Their Rescue* (Vanity Fair, 7/13/2015)
- *'THE TRIALS OF SPRING'* (The Atlantic, 7/13/2015)
- *Heroines of The Arab Spring* (Tages Anzeiger, 7/10/2015)
- *These Women do not need to be saved, they need to be heard* (Qanatara.de, 7/8/2015)
- *'THE TRIALS OF SPRING' Shows the Struggles of Egyptian Women Protesters* (Bitch Magazine, 6/25/2015)
- *New Doc Follows Women During Arab Spring* (Morning Joe, MSNBC, 6/11/2015)
- *Human Rights Watch FF 2015 Women Directors: Meet Gini Reticker - 'THE TRIALS OF SPRING'* (IndieWire, 6/10/2015)
- *'Stripped, Beaten, Humiliated' and Barred From Her Own Trial in Egypt* (The New York Times, 6/7/2015)
- *'THE TRIALS OF SPRING' Doc to Bow on New York Times Website* (Variety, 6/6/2015)
- *'THE TRIALS OF SPRING' Documentary Project Amplifies the Voices of Women in The Arab Spring* (The Huffington Post, 6/4/2015)

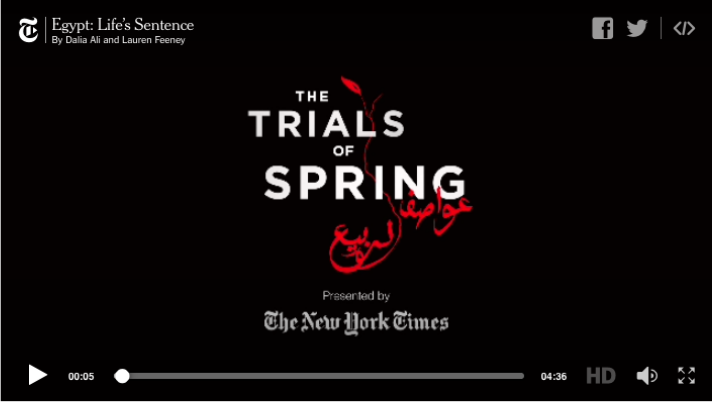
SEARCH The New York Times 9 of 10 articles read

MIDDLE EAST

'Stripped, Beaten, Humiliated' and Barred From Her Own Trial in Egypt

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK JUNE 7, 2015 f t e ↻

Egypt: Life's Sentence
By Dalia Ali and Lauren Feeney f t <>



Hend Nafea was sentenced to life in prison for protesting against Egypt's military government. In this piece — filmed a day after the sentencing — she maintains her innocence. By Dalia Ali and Lauren Feeney on June 7, 2015. Watch in Times Video >

◀

THE TRIALS
OF SPRING,
featured on
The New York Times



TUNISIA: KEEPING THE PROMISE

Even before the revolution, Ghazala Mhamdi was leading the fight for jobs, freedom and human rights against the corrupt regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali Ben Ali. Tunisia is now a fledgling democracy, and Ghazala, the veteran anti-government activist, is running for parliament.



TUNISIA

[Continue Reading](#)

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

TrialsOfSpring.com offers extensive educational content, lesson plans, screening toolkits, discussion guides and additional resources and suggestions for getting involved with THE TRIALS OF SPRING community to advance women's rights in the MENA Region.

The project provided powerful resources for our partner organizations and allies to use in their own social media engagement. Here are just a few of the organizations that made good use of our multimedia resources: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Equality Now, UN Women, Chime for Change, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace, World YWCA, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Association for Women in Development (AWID) and the Alliance for Peacebuilding. We found an online community eager to spread the word about the films via **#DoWomensVoicesMatter?**

Our bilingual social media strategist engaged with online audiences in both Arabic and English, allowing us to more effectively reach the communities represented in the films. As of August 2016, we have tracked a high level of online engagement:

- Ad views: **2.79 million**
- Average Google search position: **1.4**
- Twitter impressions: **532,445**
- Twitter profile visits: **15,981**
- Facebook page likes: **5770**
- Website sessions: **50,921**
- Website users: **39,537**
- Website page views: **96,471**
- Total plays on Media Player: **71,283**

After the launch of the project we continued to deliver original reporting and stories to our online community. For example, we produced 20 short video interviews featuring women participants at the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) Summit in Turkey, talking about their efforts to combat extremism and militarism in their respective countries. These interviews offer more examples of women’s leadership in the region, and were featured on our social media feeds (they also screened as “intros” during several TRIALS OF SPRING events, including The National Press Club, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and at the Hague during the WILPF Centenary).

Filmmakers Abigail Disney and Gini Reticker also authored an op-ed on the power of women to bring peace, which appeared in *Women in the World/The New York Times*. They highlighted the critical efforts of women like slain Libyan human rights activist Salwa Bugaighis, who was profiled in the Libyan short film, WAKE UP, BENGHAZI!. Bugaighis’ niece, 14-year-old Nada El Majri, also wrote a moving essay for *Medium* about living as a refugee in the shadow of her aunt’s legacy, which has been viewed thousands of times.

WOMEN IN THE WORLD ZIPLINE • NEW YORK SUMMIT • EVENTS GET THE LATEST NEWS & UPDATES

Op-Ed

When it comes to “networks of death,” women don’t need saving — they are our saviors







Women have a history of brokering peace where men have failed

BY ABIGAIL DISNEY AND GINI RETICKER 09.08.15

PHOTO CREDIT: SHAWN BALDWIN

THE TRIALS OF SPRING, featured on *The New York Times*

Social Media Highlights

<p> equalitynow @equalitynow</p> <p>Amazing video by @TrialsOfSpring on #JusticeForSalwa: player.mediastorm.com/embed/e5571f85... Please continue to Take Action: equalitynow.org/take_action/ju...</p> <p>RETWEETS: 5 FAVORITE: 1</p> <p>9:51 AM - 17 Jun 2015</p>	<p> Breakthrough @breakthrough</p> <p>WATCH: 6 #Arab women battling #injustice from the streets to the courtroom trialspring.com @TrialsOfSpring @peaceiscloud @mediastorm</p> <p>RETWEETS: 2 FAVORITES: 4</p> <p>4:35 PM - 18 Jun 2015</p>
<p> Arianna Huffington @ariannahuff</p> <p>"The Trials Of Spring" documentary project amplifies the voices of women in the #ArabSpring huff.to/1KeNjIQ #WhatsWorking</p> <p>The WorldPost</p>  <p>Poignant New Documentary Adds Much-Needed Female Voices To The Arab... A new multimedia documentary project is spotlighting the vital roles of women in the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. "The Trials of Spring," is a series of six shorts, a feature film and news</p> <p>RETWEETS: 39 FAVORITES: 33</p> <p>6:27 AM - 5 Jun 2015</p>	<p> Hanan Salah @HananMSalah</p> <p>"her death marked a turning point from bad to worse for Libya" @ddknyt @TrialsOfSpring nytimes.com/2015/06/08/wor...</p>  <p>RETWEETS: 56 FAVORITES: 31</p> <p>11:33 PM - 7 Jun 2015</p>

OUTREACH CAMPAIGN ACHIEVEMENTS

Screenings and Partnerships

To inform how the feature film and short films could best be utilized as an outreach tool, Peace is Loud held focus group conversations and “brain-trusts” with women activists from the MENA region, including a large convening in Şile, Turkey as part of the International Civil Society Action Network’s Third Annual Forum on Women’s Rights, Peace and Security. ICAN invited us to the Forum to present early cuts of the films to 60 of their members, representing 13 countries in the region.

The feedback was consistent: women participants felt the films were some of the best and most accurate depictions of what they had experienced during and after the uprisings. They felt the films could best be utilized as an educational tool to shed light on their struggles as human rights activists. We therefore devised strategies to use the films not only inside the region, but outside of the region, too.



International Civil
Society Action Net-
work’s Third Annual
Forum on Women’s
Rights



OUTREACH CAMPAIGN ACHIEVEMENTS, cont'd

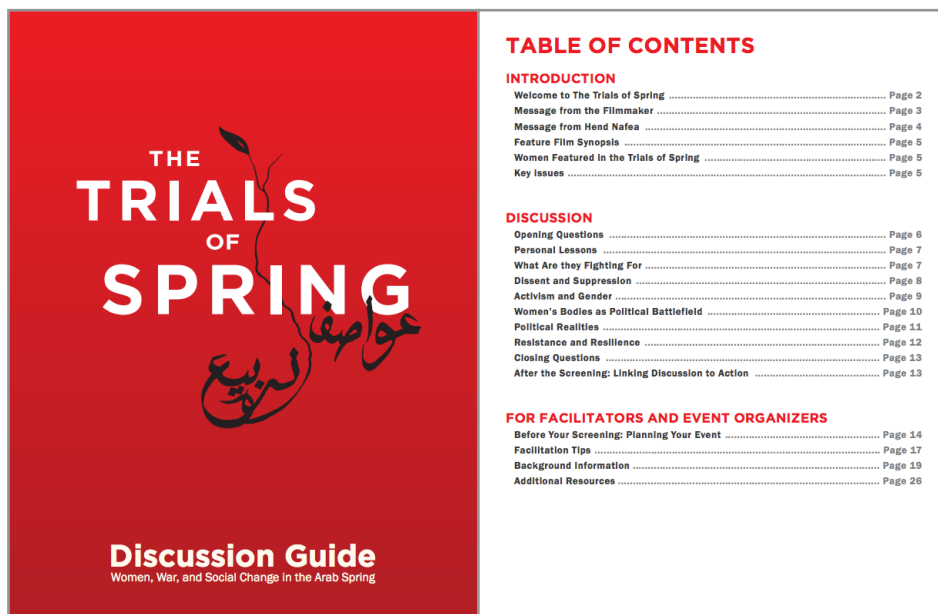
In the United States, and internationally, the most important outcome of THE TRIALS OF SPRING has been the ability to raise public awareness about women's roles in the Arab uprisings, to spark dialogue about the connections between women's rights and the success of social movements for peace, security and justice, and to serve as a resource for international policymakers and other stakeholders.

Our primary campaign tactic has been organizing community, campus and grassroots screening events, and we have thus far worked with **180 partner organizations in 30 countries** to hold **250 screenings** and discussions with schools and universities, legislative groups, civil, religious, arts and military organizations. These audiences are typically not reached by traditional distribution platforms and these types of screenings ensure that these stories engage motivated individuals who are positioned to be change-makers in their communities, and stakeholders who are in decision-making positions in the peace and security field.

Director Gini Reticker and
Hend Nafea (via skype)
speak at a screening at the
University of Denver



To help facilitate productive dialogue following every screening event, all partners receive a comprehensive discussion guide, created by Heba Morayef (former Director of Human Rights Watch, Egypt) and Faith Rogow (Media Literacy Education Strategist). The guide includes historical background information, questions for discussion (by theme/subject), suggested actions, additional reading and facilitation tips.



Different audiences require different approaches. For U.S. and non-MENA region audiences, we encourage dialogue about women’s participation in civil society in the MENA region and the need for women’s representation and contributions to policy discussions. In the MENA region, we focus on how the films can serve as tools to strengthen the local capacity of civil society, especially organizations led by, and focusing on, women. Research consistently shows that civil society and social movements are one of the primary drivers of social change.

MENA Region & International Screening Highlights

Our partners at Women Living Under Muslim Laws screened the films, in collaboration with London Middle East Institute at SOAS, University of London. The event was chaired by Professor Nadge Al-Ali, Professor in the Center for Gender Studies, and included a panel discussion with three WLUML networkers: Afaf Jabiri (Jordan), Aya Chebbi (Tunisia), and Sahr Mediha Al-Naas (Libya). The women spoke about the experience of women during the revolution: how they were drawn in, how they were affected, and how the state responded. They also discussed the problematics of “The Arabic Spring” as a Western narrative as well as the strides and setbacks that women have faced in Libya since the revolution.

“The event saw a full house, with a Q&A that was filled with comments and queries from inspired activists speaking about their own contexts, brimming with eagerness to talk about feminism, fundamentalism, women on the frontline, and human rights.”

– Women Living Under Muslim Laws

The three panelists in conversation with Nadge Al-Ali, Professor at SOAS and chair for the event



During the **Commission on the Status of Women** (CSW) in 2016, Peace is Loud held a private screening and conversation with 15 Tunisian women entrepreneurs, parliamentarians, activists and lawyers to discuss screening opportunities in Tunisia around the content. The films have also been screened by The World Youth Alliance in Tunisia and the American Corner at AMIDEAST Tunisia.

At the **Youth Assembly at the United Nations**, 400 young people from 30 countries gathered to watch the short films and learn how they could bring the content back to their high school classrooms.

In Canada, the global network **IFEX** screened the films at their general meeting of 95 free expression organizations from across the world.

In Australia, the **Young Women's International League for Peace and Freedom** used a screening of the film to fundraise for their local chapter and to draw attention to UNSCR1325

Global Fund for Women screened the short films at various fundraising events in support of the Fund's programs in the MENA region. Speaking about the current Syrian refugee crisis, the Fund's President and CEO, Musimbi Kanyoro, said, ***"There is little focus on women or on expanded knowledge of where the refugees are coming from. We want people to know the story of women's struggles beyond the refugees who get to Europe. THE TRIALS OF SPRING is the best storytelling piece based on reality."***

We hosted a screening event at The Hague as part of the **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's** (WILPF's) centenary celebration, which brought together over 1,000 international activists. During this event, we screened clips from the project and held a panel discussion with women activists from the MENA region who shared organizing advice with their peers in the audience. Panelists included Amal Basha (Yemen), Azza Kamel (Egypt), Zahr'a Langhi (Libya), Sameena Nazir (Pakistan) and Sanam Anderlini (U.S. & Iran).

United States Screening Highlights

Inspired by a presentation of the THE TRIALS OF SPRING at the U.S. Naval War College, Ambassador Steven McGann who teaches at the Eisenhower School's National Security and Resource Strategy program at the National Defense University shared the films with his students. In response, his students successfully lobbied for a "Women, Peace and Security" course — the first ever at the National Defense University.

Speaking of the value this "Women, Peace and Security" course represents for his students, the next generation of foreign policy leaders, **Ambassador Steven McGann** stated,

“The screening [of THE TRIALS OF SPRING] has been an important part of expanding the Eisenhower School curriculum regarding Women, Peace and Security issues. One key result has been the decision to offer a 12-week elective course this spring on Women, Peace and Security, which will be the first ever for National Defense University.”



Hend at Kroc Institute screening



Panel at CSW 2015 Event

We held a high-profile event around THE TRIALS OF SPRING as part of the **Commission on the Status of Women** (CSW) at the UN in 2015. The event was titled **"On the Frontlines against Extremism and Militarism: Women's Stories from the Middle East, North Africa and Asia."** Co-hosts included The Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN, the Overseas Press Club of America (OPC) and ICAN. The event highlighted film clips from THE TRIALS OF SPRING and several of the video interviews conducted when Peace is Loud was in Turkey for the ICAN summit, followed by a panel featuring Egyptian journalist Rana Allam, Pakistani activist Mossarat Qadeem, ICAN co-founder Sanam Anderlini and THE TRIALS OF SPRING director Gini Reticker. The conversation was moderated by award-winning *New York Times* foreign correspondent Rukmini Callimachi, who led the panelists in discussion around why the voices of women human rights activists are important in international media coverage of extremism and militarism.

The feature film screened for the Arab community of greater Los Angeles at the **Markaz Arts Center**, where co-hosts Muslim Public Affairs Council and Muslims for Progressive Values led a discussion on sexual violence as a political tool in Egypt.

Peace is Loud was invited to present THE TRIALS OF SPRING during the plenary session of the 2015 **Clinton Global Initiative** (CGI) Annual Meeting, where we screened a three-minute featurette that highlights the films' reach and impact.

The short films screened at the **Women Legislators' Lobby** (WiLL) conference where 185 women state legislators discuss national priorities and foreign policy issues. Minnesota and Wisconsin legislators brought the films back to their states for community education and discussion.

A sample list of screening and project partners can be found below and a full list of screening partners can be found on our website at trialsofspring.com/screenings:

- Muslim Youth Movement (Guteng, South Africa)
- American Corner a AMIDEAST Tunisia (Tunis, Tunisia)
- The Global Network of Women Peace-builders (New York, NY)
- U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis, MD)
- Women Living Under Muslim Laws (London, UK)
- University of Denver (Denver, CO)
- Lutheran Church of Bavaria (Neubeuern, Germany)
- Global Fund for Women (San Francisco, CA)
- Muslim Students Association (Vienna, VA)
- The Ministry of Defense (Suriname)
- Nazra for Feminist Studies (Egypt)
- Wallenpaupak Area High School (Hawley, PA)
- The Women's Council of Denmark (Copenhagen, Denmark)
- The Middle East Center at University of Massachusetts (Lowell, MA)
- Amnesty International USA Group 471 (San Diego, CA)
- Young Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Turner, Australia)
- Rainbow Warriors (Middlesboro, KY)
- The Red Elephant Foundation (Chennai, India)
- Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (San Diego, CA)
- Center for Victims of Torture (St. Paul, MN)
- Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (Tbilisi, Georgia)
- National Defense University (Washington, DC)
- The Clinton Global Initiative (New York, NY)
- The Hague (Netherlands)
- The Fletcher School for Law & Diplomacy (Boston, MA)
- Tunisian League for Human Rights (Tunisia)
- Women and Memory Forum (Egypt)


Education

Of the 250 screenings of the THE TRIALS OF SPRING by 180 partner organizations in 30 different countries, nearly 100 of these have been at universities and secondary schools, demonstrating the effectiveness of the stories as educational tools.


We developed lesson plans to introduce students to the history of the Arab uprisings, the MENA region, and the group of women featured in the films whose lives were changed by the uprisings in ways large and small. Through various exercises, each student becomes a resident “expert” on one of six countries, and uses their expertise to examine the goals of war and the links between women’s activism and social change. The students also examine how mainstream media represented women in the MENA region, and compare those representations to what they see in THE TRIALS OF SPRING.

Working with *The New York Times* to launch the TRIALS OF SPRING short films provided a great opportunity for our team to promote our lesson plans on their *Learning Network*, an online tool for educators, which is a high traffic part of their site.


THE TRIALS OF SPRING
featured on *The Learning Network of The New York Times*



Activists for Change: Six Short Films and Teaching Resources on Women’s Roles in the Arab Spring
By THE LEARNING NETWORK JUNE 8, 2015 3:14 PM



Even before the revolution, Ghazala Mhamdi was leading the fight for jobs, freedom and human rights; then the veteran activist ran for Parliament. By Mona Eldaief and Lauren Feeney on June 7, 2015.



“Students commented that the documentary was an excellent resource for ... challenging racist and sexist stereotypes of Arab women. The students reported that they had a better understanding of the Arab Spring, particularly in relation to Arab women ... and that hearing the women’s stories from their own perspectives was very effective.”

– Dr. Nicki Saroca,
Professor, Gender
Studies, Macquarie
University



Screening at New Mexico State University



To distribute the lesson plans we attended The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) Conference, where we presented the content to 3,000+ educators for their use. The project was received enthusiastically, particularly at a session devoted to “Middle East Teaching Tools.” Following the conference, the lesson plans were published in *Al-Masdar*, the premiere online source for Arabic language and Arab culture teaching materials.

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“The screening [of THE TRIALS OF SPRING] has been an important part of expanding the Eisenhower School curriculum regarding Women, Peace and Security issues. The films have been the centerpiece of a monthly film series on WPS with growing attendance since we began in September. One key result has been the decision to offer a 12-week elective course this spring on Women, Peace and Security, which will be the first ever for National Defense University. Most importantly, this has been a student-driven process that has increased awareness of the importance of WPS issues.

”

– Ambassador Steven McGann,
National Defense University



RISK ASSESSMENT

Perhaps the biggest challenge we confronted was attempting to direct and produce a film set in multiple countries in the midst of seismic change and increasing violence. In response, we quickly learned how to be nimble, continually adapting our plans as the situation on the ground changed. Our success required that we secure local crews, develop methods of getting gear in and footage out of places undetected, while constantly evaluating the security risks posed to our subjects due to their willingness to tell their stories, and appear on-camera.

We were also deeply concerned about the subsequent risk to their safety once the film was released and their stories shared with an international audience. Ultimately, we engaged Heba Morayef, former head of Human Rights Watch's Cairo desk, to both review the film before we finalized the edit and to draft a risk assessment in consultation with several leading human rights lawyers in Egypt. Though the film is still in demand and remains in active distribution, we continue to take every precaution to protect our film's subjects. Therefore, every social media post, press release, and screening is considered carefully through a security lens — with the safety of our subjects a top priority.

LESSONS LEARNED

As indicated above, we had to make tough choices and remain extremely agile in the face of a highly dynamic, unpredictable and often dangerous situation. Problem solving and resourcefulness became key in determining how best to achieve our goals for the film, both the feature documentary and the short films, in the face of this unfolding and extremely volatile story. The lessons learned were constant and many as several variables were beyond our control.

In many ways, the most difficult decision we had to make was to abandon our original concept for the feature-length film conceived to weave together the stories of women from Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. In October 2014, after months of planning, filming and editing, we realized that although popular movements in each of those countries successfully brought down their respective brutal regimes (all within a few months), each country was on a very different trajectory. Yet despite their differences, in the end, each country faced a growing confrontation between fundamentalists and the military. The resulting multiple and increasingly complicated narrative threads that emerged, made it clear that our strongest material centered on human rights defender Hend Nafea and her trajectory from a village girl to a fearless activist in Egypt. We therefore decided to make hers the film's main storyline.





LESSONS LEARNED, cont'd

For her participation in the 2011 uprisings against former president Hosni Mubarak, Hend had been arrested, tortured, and subsequently sentenced in absentia to 25 years in prison. When we met Hend, she was already on trial. We realized this unfolding drama would provide the film with a solid narrative structure. Hend's story also offered a perfect prism to tell the story of the revolution's evolution by following her story from the time of her arrest by an interim military government to her trial by a weak Islamist government and eventual prosecution by the restored military power.

Focusing on Egypt entailed its own set of challenges. Hend's case was ultimately transferred to Egypt's terrorism circuit. Despite many logistical hurdles, we successfully managed to film with her until December 2014, when the verdict in her case was postponed. In February 2015, Hend, along with 230 co-defendants, was sentenced, in absentia, to life in prison. On the advice of human rights lawyers, we delayed the release of the film until Hend was able to escape Egypt.

We faced yet another major challenge once the film was completed and ready for distribution. Fearing for Hend's safety, we had to be very deliberate in decisions about how and when to release the film and share her story and the tragic events overtaking Egypt with an international audience.



THE TRIALS OF SPRING had its world premiere at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival in June 2015 in New York. Though their selections had largely been made, festival organizers loved the film, saw its importance and gave it major billing. The festival's organizers invited Hend to attend the film's premiere. She was able to use the invitation to secure a U.S. visa and arrived in New York the day before the film premiered to a sold-out crowd.

Soon thereafter, Hend applied for political asylum, took a crash course in English and secured a fellowship at the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington D.C., where she is currently documenting human rights abuses in Egypt under the military regime—with a focus on abuses targeting women. We're convinced that this film provided Hend with the ability to escape a life sentence in prison and continues to provide her with a platform from which to document the continuing human rights abuses in Egypt.

In the end, despite the necessity to rethink our strategy and constantly recalibrate our approach to this complex and ever-changing story, the resulting media comprising the feature-length film and six shorts served the project beyond our wildest imaginings. Our multimedia approach allowed us to access a wide array of distribution channels and tell a broader array of stories than we would have been able to achieve in a single documentary. Perhaps this was the greatest lesson of all, as we learned how effective the internet is in reaching a vast, international and typically younger audience while the feature-length documentary reached a different set of stakeholders via film festivals, community screenings, conferences and national broadcast.

UPCOMING

WOMEN, WAR & PEACE: Part II

Building on the enormous success of the WOMEN, WAR & PEACE series, we are in the process of creating WOMEN WAR & PEACE, Season II. The cornerstone of this new series will be THE TRIALS OF SPRING which WNET, a flagship U.S. public television station with an anticipated audience of over 1.5 million viewers, has licensed for television broadcast in 2017. The series will tell new stories of women who have persevered against great odds to gain a political voice and a seat at the table. In addition to THE TRIALS OF SPRING the series will include PEACEKEEPERS, which follows an all-female, Bangladeshi unit of UN peacekeepers who leave their families and the only world they have known behind for deployment abroad in Haiti; and THE ACCIDENTAL ACTIVISTS, which tells the largely unknown story of Protestant and Catholic women who join forces and find common cause in their desire for peace despite the seemingly insurmountable political divisions at the height of the violent struggle in Northern Ireland known as “The Troubles.”

To maximize the series’ impact and reach, in the months leading up to and then following the national television broadcast, working with Peace is Loud, we will launch a multifaceted, international engagement campaign in collaboration with our 2,000+ WOMEN, WAR & PEACE screening partners in 85 countries—from large, international organizations who advocate for policy reform, to grassroots organizations who work at the community level. We will also develop new partnerships with organizations working on the ground in the countries that are the focus of WOMEN, WAR & PEACE, Season II—Northern Ireland, Bangladesh and Haiti.



In the United States, Peace is Loud will use the new films to build support among students, faculty and administrators at top-tier international relations and national security graduate programs for the establishment of new courses focused on gender analysis where they are not currently offered. We will also work to ensure the films are integrated into training courses for new U.S. Foreign Service appointees prior to their tours of duty.

Strategic Partnerships

At the global level, we will be hosting a series of events at the Association for Women in International Development (AWID)'s 2016 International Forum on Women's Rights and Development, including a screening of THE TRIALS OF SPRING followed by a panel discussion with regional activists. This is a major opportunity, as the AWID conference brings together 2,000 women activists from around the world, making it an ideal forum for reaching grassroots leaders who can use the content as a tool in their own organizing work.

In the coming months, international screenings will continue, beginning with a special invitation for the feature film and six short films to appear at Human Rights Festival in Tunisia, co-hosted by UN Women and the U.S. Department of State.

In the United States, university screenings will continue throughout the fall semester with filmmaker Gini Reticker and the film's subject Hend Nafea traveling to campuses to discuss the ongoing relevance of these stories, five years post-uprising.

Among our proudest accomplishments is the reaction by students and educators that demonstrates most vividly the power of film to change minds and challenge assumptions. Here is just one example sent by Heidi Morrison, Assistant Professor, History at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse:

“ The goal is to educate this small Midwest community about the Arab Spring. There is a general misunderstanding among the students that the women in the Middle East are weak and have no freedoms. Further the misunderstanding exists that Arabs do not know how to have a democracy. This film (and shorts) will educate the community about the strength of the women and also the valiant efforts of the grassroots community in the Middle East to foster a democracy. ”

– University of Wisconsin

