

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Groundbreaking Short-Film Festival Prepares for Judging

***Women's Voices from the Muslim World: A Short-Film Festival* closes submission period, opens for judging, and looks forward to its Los Angeles Premier**

New York, NY January 7, 2011—Nearly one year ago, an idea was conceived: To create an on-line platform from which filmmakers and citizen journalists could speak directly to an international audience about women's rights in the Muslim world. The ensuing collection of films would contribute to filling the void in information left by traditional media, news and art sources. "We have come so far as an organization since January 2010. It's truly an incredible feeling to see it all come together," remarks WVN Executive Director Catinca Tabacaru.

The Festival is the only one of its kind and it's causing a stir in both the media and the political spheres. Not only is the Festival giving voice to women who are traditionally censored or ignored, but it's debunking the myth of the woman in the Muslim world as the victim and replacing her with a more nuanced and honest image – the heroine of her society.

Over 200 films were submitted from 40 countries. The Festival has selected 98 short films for competition in four categories: Documentary, Fiction, Experimental and Student. All films in competition can be viewed online at [www.WomensVoicesNow.org/watch](http://www.WomensVoicesNow.org/watch). "You can learn more about a country and its women from watching our short films than you can learn from hours of reading and research elsewhere," says Director of Festival Operations Cassandra Schaffa.

WVN's esteemed panel of judges is currently judging the selections. The panel includes Cyrus Nowrasteh (director of *The Stoning of Soraya M.*), Roxana Saberi (author of *Between Two World: My Life and Captivity in Iran*), and Rebecca Richman Cohen (director of *WAR DON DON*). For a complete list of Judges and their bios, visit [www.WomensVoicesNow.org/films](http://www.WomensVoicesNow.org/films).

In the run-up to the Festival, WVN is holding a campaign through Kickstarter to bring the winning filmmakers to the Festival in Los Angeles, March 17-19, 2011. The goal is to raise US\$18,000 by January 25, 2011. "Our Festival is only made possible by the brilliant filmmakers who have shared their talent," says Director of Funding Miriam Wakim. "It is important to take action and donate to this social movement." The presence of the filmmakers at the Festival will allow them to connect with and inspire one another, give further insight into their films and stories, and make the Festival a more intimate and educational experience.

To donate to the Kickstarter Campaign, visit <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/womensvoicesnow/womens-voices-from-the-muslim-world-a-short-film-f>.

For more information about WVN and the Festival and to watch films, visit

[www.WomensVoicesNow.org](http://www.WomensVoicesNow.org).

About: Women's Voices Now's mission is to empower women and give voice to the struggle for civil, economic, and political rights. WVN creates platforms from which women of all faiths and backgrounds may speak directly to each other and to an international audience. *Women's Voices from the Muslim World: A Short-Film Festival* is WVN's response to a clear developing interest in the area of women's rights in Muslim-majority countries and a need to open and elevate an already complex and nuanced dialogue that reveals countless conflicts between religion and politics, tradition and modernity, and written versus practiced civil norms. The medium of film, specifically short-film available on the Internet, allows for the broadest possible reach into even the most remote areas of the world.

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