

**AN OPEN LETTER FROM CONCERNED FILM-MAKERS, WRITERS
AND MEDIA WORKERS AROUND THE WORLD**

TO:

Mr. Mohamed Apandi Ali
Attorney General
Attorney General's Chambers
No 45, Persiaran Perdana
Precint 4,
62100 Putrajaya, Malaysia

Mr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi,
Minister of Home Affairs,
Ministry of Home Affairs,
Blok D1 & D2, Kompleks D,
Federal Government Administrative Centre,
62546 Putrajaya, Malaysia.

Mr. Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak,
Prime Minister of Malaysia,
Prime Minister's Office Malaysia,
Main Block, Perdana Putra Building,
Federal Government Administrative Centre,
62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia.

Your Excellencies

On Monday 14th December, Lena Hendry, a human rights defender in Malaysia, will go on trial in a landmark case for media freedom. Lena faces a maximum sentence of three years in jail and/or a maximum fine of 30,000 Malaysian Ringgit (£4700/\$7000) under Malaysia's Film Censorship law of 2002 which states that it is illegal for anyone to possess, distribute or show a film which has not been approved by the country's censorship board.

It effectively makes any film – or even publicity about any film – illegal if it does not have prior approval from the censorship authorities. It is so all-encompassing that technically Malaysian citizens could go to jail if they don't submit their wedding video or family holiday video to the board.

But the reality is that the law is being used for political censorship. And that is what appears to lie behind the arrest of Lena.

On the 3rd of July 2013 the Malaysian human rights organization Pusat KOMAS screened *No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka* - an award-winning documentary film about human rights abuses at the end of Sri Lanka's civil war - to an invited

audience of 150 people in Kuala Lumpur. The group went ahead with the screening despite pressure from the Sri Lankan government whose forces were accused in the film of responsibility for war crimes.

As the screening got under way it was raided by 30 officials from the Malaysian Home Ministry, the Police and Immigration Officials. Three organizers were arrested and Lena was subsequently charged. An attempt by Lena's legal team to have the case struck out on the grounds that it was unconstitutional and a denial of freedom of speech was rejected. The court ruled that "Freedom of Expression is not absolute and mechanisms are needed to regulate it". After exhausting all avenues up to Federal Court level, the trial is now set for next week.

The use of this draconian law to attack and prevent freedom of speech is disturbing and unacceptable and is in danger of bringing Malaysia into international disrepute.

The film which Lena is charged with showing, *No Fire Zone*, is now widely and internationally acknowledged to have played a key role in telling the world about the terrible war crimes committed at the end of the war in Sri Lanka. It also helped convince delegates to the UN Human Rights Council to launch a major inquiry into the events which saw tens of thousands of innocent Tamil civilians slaughtered in the space of a few weeks – most killed by government shelling.

The Sri Lankan government which ordered that shelling – and which tried to stop this screening – has now been replaced by popular vote of the Sri Lankan people. Many of its leading members are now facing investigation for war crimes and corruption. History has vindicated the film, yet still Lena faces jail for showing it.

That is why we, the undersigned - film-makers, journalists and media workers from around the world – are today calling for all the charges against Lena Hendry to be dropped immediately and for the government of Malaysia to repeal this unacceptable law before it is used again to stifle free speech.

**LENA HENDRY PETITION DECEMBER 2015
LIST OF SIGNATORIES**

NAME	SURNAME	DETAILS
David	Abraham	Chief Executive, Channel 4
Brad	Adams	Asia Director, Human Rights Watch
Shahzad	Akbar	Director and Founder, Foundation for Fundamental Rights
Yvette	Alberdingk Thijm	Executive Director, WITNESS
Nurina	Ally	Executive Director, Equal Education Law Centre
Alejandra	Ancheita	Founder and Executive Director, Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales
Baher	Azmy	Legal Director, Center for Constitutional Rights
Joslyn	Barnes	Writer, Screenwriter and Producer
Peter	Bowling	Executive Director, The International working Group
Regan	Brashear	Documentary Filmmaker
Rosan	Breman	Freelance Producer
Dorothy	Byrne	Head of News and Current Affairs, Channel 4
Fred	Carver	Campaign Director, Sri Lanka Campaign
Bernice	Chauly	Poet, Writer and Educator
Elisabeth	Coffman	Associate Professor Film & Digital Media, School of Communication, Loyola University Chicago
Milan	Collin	Founder, Dutch Picture Industry
Brian	Concannon	Executive Director, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti
Brenda	Coughlin	Academy Nominated Producer
Steve	Crawshaw	International Advocacy Director, Amnesty International
Luisa	Dantas	Filmmaker
Matthea	de Jong	International Programme Coordinator, Movies That Matter
Melanie	de Vocht	Project Manager, IDFA Bertha Fund
Peter	Fleury	Independent Documentary Filmmaker
Mark	Freeman	Professor, School of Theatre, Television, and Film, San Diego State University
Meenakshi	Ganguly	South Asia Director, Human Rights Watch and Journalist
Jennifer	Gibson	Human Rights Lawyer, Reprieve
Jodie	Ginsberg	CEO, Index on Censorship
Roger	Graef	Filmmaker and writer
Ronald	Graetz	Secretary General, IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)
Jacco	Groen	Director, Springfilm
Frances	Harrison	Author, Still Counting the Dead
Jean	Hebrail	Composer
Tabitha	Jackson	Director, Sundance Institute Documentary Program
Meena	Kandesamy	Writer and Poet
Alex	Kelly	Director and Producer
Angelquie	Kidjo	Grammy Award Winning Musician
Naomi	Klein	Writer and Campaigner
Linda	Lakhdhir	Legal Advisor, Human Rights Watch and Former Criminal Prosecutor
Yuli	Larrahondo	Corporación Colectivo de Abogados JAR
Kranti	LC	Executive Director, Human Rights Law Network
Lynn	Lee	Documentary Filmmaker
Avi	Lewis	Documentary Filmmaker

Rebecca	Lichtenfeld	Director of Social Impact Media, Bertha Foundation
Janet	Love	National Director, Legal Resources Centre
Andrew	Lowenthal	Director, Engage Media
Cassie	Machado	Artist and Photographer
Callum	Macrae	Nobel Nominated Director, No Fire Zone
Bonita	Meyersfeld	Director, Centre for Applied Legal Studies
Anurhada	Mittal	Founder, Oakland Institute
Rohini	Mohan	Author, Seasons of Trouble
Amir	Muhammad	Filmmaker and Publisher
Hassan	Muthalib	Film Director/Writer
Joanna	Natasegara	Academy Award and BAFTA nominated producer
Joshua	Oppenheimer	Oscar Nominated Director
Pali	Palavathanan	Founder & Creative Director, Templo
Anand	Patwardhan	Documentary Filmmaker
Alex	Pitsra	Director, Alex Pitstra Media
Laura	Poitras	Academy Award Winning Documentary Director and Writer
Harun	Rahman	Filmmaker
Katie	Redford	Co-Founder and Director, EarthRights International
Sparkle	Richards	Grants Manager, Bertha Foundation
Jen	Robinson	Director of Legal Advocacy, Bertha Foundation
Carne	Ross	Founder, Independent Diplomat
Joel	Ruiz Butuyan	President, Center for International Law
Sandra	Schulberg	Film Producer & Adjunct Assistant Professor Columbia University School of the Arts
Johanna	Schwartz	Filmmaker
Jess	Search	CEO, BRITDOC
Beverly	Seckinger	Professor, School of Theatre, Film & Television, University of Arizona
Mike	Seely	Documentary Filmmaker
Iwan	Setiawan	Journalist
William	Sieghart	Founder and Chairman, Forward Thinking
Satya	Sivaraman	Journalist, Writer and Videoworker
Brechtje	Smidt	Owner, Dutch Picture Industry
Raji	Sourani	Founder and Director, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
Olger	Star	Sound Designer, Starkazi
Alex	Sutherland	Executive Producer
Roma	Tearne	Author and Artist
Tej	Thapa	Writer/Researcher, Human Rights Watch Asia
Sophie	Toumazis	Founder and Director, tpr media
Estacio	Valoi	Investigative Journalist
Eric	van de Giessen	Secretariat Human Rights Film Network
Dirk	van der Straaten	Director, Movies That Matter
Femke	van Velzen	Documentary Filmmaker
Orlando	von Einsiedel	Academy Nominated Director
Vanessa	Warheit	Filmmaker, Educator and Activist
Ryan	White	Co-Director, Case Against 8
Leon	Willems	Director, Free Press Unlimited
Stuart	Wilson	Executive Director, Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa
Greg	Wise	Actor and Producer
Elisabeth	Witchel	Journalist, Committee to Protect Journalists
M.I.A.		Musician/Artist
Tan Chui Mui		Filmmaker
Tan Pin Pin		Documentary Filmmaker