'Forbidden Voices' wins WACC-SIGNIS Human Rights Award

The WACC-SIGNIS Human Rights Award for 2012 has been given to the documentary film "Forbidden Voices," directed by Barbara Miller, according to an announcement from the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC).

The award is given to documentaries that seek to throw light on a question of human rights reflecting the values and priorities of WACC and SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication.

The film profiles three courageous female bloggers - Yoani Sánchez in Cuba, Zeng Jinyan in China and Farnaz Seifi in Iran - who are putting their lives at risk to challenge state monopolies on information.

"Forbidden Voices" accompanies them on their dangerous journeys and explores their use of social media to denounce and combat violations of human rights and freedom of speech in their countries.

Generación Y, a blog by Havana-based Sánchez, quickly became very popular after its April 2007 launch. Given an award by the Spanish daily El País in 2008, it takes a critical look at the everyday economic and social problems that Cubans face. Sánchez is subject to strict government censorship and smear campaigns and has even been physically attacked.

Despite the Chinese government's censorship and repressive methods, Zeng has been using her blog and Twitter feed since 2006 to describe her life, including the imprisonment of her human rights activist husband Hu Jia, who has defended AIDS patients and the environment.

When Hu was arrested, Zeng and her baby were placed under house arrest, with guards stationed around their home. She continued to write about the fight for basic freedoms in China.

Censored and threatened in Iran, Seifi, a women's rights campaigner, had to flee abroad and now lives in Germany. She and other Iranian women's rights activists are an example of how the Internet can be used to influence governments.

She is a member of Change for Equality, a website launched in September 2006 by a group of about 20 Iranian women to advocate changes to laws that discriminate against women.

"Forbidden Voices" has been endorsed by Reporters Without Borders.

The WACC-SIGNIS Human Rights Award in 2011 went to "Verdades verdaderas," directed by Nicolás Gil Lavedra, about Argentina's Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and based on the life of Estela de Carlotto.
In 2010 the award went to *The Garden at the End of the World*, directed by Australian film-maker Gary Caganoff, about rebuilding Afghanistan.

- See more at: http://waccglobal.org/articles/forbidden-voices-wins-wacc-signis-human-rights-award#sthash.x7tyeo9g.dpuf