



### **Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center Salutes Toronto International Film Festival; Shocked by Israel Film Boycotts**

**September 3, 2009 (Toronto) – Last week, Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) commended the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) for highlighting Tel Aviv’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary through a series of screenings. FSWC encouraged TIFF not to relent to artists and academics that are boycotting the festival.**

**According to TIFF, the ten featured “films that comprise this year’s inaugural programme present the complex currents running through Tel Aviv today. The panorama promises to offer a revealing look at this diverse metropolis that is celebrating its 100th birthday in 2009.”**

**As an organization that produces feature film documentaries, FSWC objects to the use of such an important international festival in staging a propaganda campaign to delegitimize Israel and promote hate and intolerance.**

**Rabbi Marvin Hier, Dean and Founder of Simon Wiesenthal Center, and two-time Academy Award winner (and member of the Academy) said, “given that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and is open to scrutiny unlike its neighbours, it’s a shame that the likes of Naomi Klein, John Greyson and others are protesting the positive branding of Tel Aviv. If only all the other cities in the Middle East could demonstrate the cultural diversity, tolerance and respect for all religions in Tel Aviv, we would be a lot closer to peace.”**

**Avi Benlolo, President and CEO of FSWC said, “The festival is to be saluted for including Tel Aviv and for not relenting to pressure from people and groups who wish to stifle creativity and misrepresent the State of Israel. I would encourage our members to attend the festival as a show of support.”**

**In a statement, TIFF Co-Director Cameron Bailey said, “There was no pressure from any outside source. Contrary to rumours or mistaken media reports, this focus is a product only of TIFF’s programming decisions. We value that independence and would never compromise it.”**

#### **About Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies**

**Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies is a Canadian human rights organization dedicated to fostering tolerance and understanding through community involvement, educational outreach and social action. The Center currently has over 25,000 members across Canada, and confronts important contemporary issues including racism, antisemitism, terrorism and genocide. Visit [www.fswc.ca](http://www.fswc.ca) for more information.**

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**DIRECT ACTION**

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