

**28 January 2025**

**To: Ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko**

**CC: Kateryna Argyrou, Andrew Mencinsky, Anton Bogdanovych, Screen Australia, Screen NSW, Ritz Cinemas, Dendy Cinemas**

**RE: Response to Concerns Regarding *Russians at War***

Dear Ambassador Myroshnychenko,

Thank you for sharing your concerns regarding the inclusion of the Canadian-French co-production *Russians at War* in Antenna's 2025 program. Since 2014, our programming selections have consistently stood against Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, and we have collaborated with the Ukrainian community over the years in this effort. We completely respect your views and understand the concerns you've raised, which is why we feel it's important to clarify our rationale.

**Why Antenna Selected *Russians at War***

*Russians at War* offers a perspective on the war that, while challenging, our programming team believes is important. By portraying the experiences and voices of Russian soldiers, it sheds light on the internal contradictions, disillusionment, and sense of purposelessness within the ranks of the aggressor. Our team sees it as an existential critique of the war, exposing the mechanisms that sustain it and indirectly reinforcing the urgency of ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Antenna is aware of the accusation that the film is Russian propaganda. We are open to constructive dialogue and take concerns about misinformation seriously. However, we have conducted thorough research into the director's background, reviewed detailed information about her past work, and examined multiple sources in which she explains how she gained access. Based on this, we have concluded that the film was made independently, with no clear evidence of Russian involvement.

We also understand the critique that the film may evoke empathy for Russian soldiers while failing to provide critical context about Russia's role as the aggressor and its war crimes. This was a concern we seriously considered during the selection process. However, given that Ukrainian voices are strongly represented in our program and that Western audiences have access to multiple perspectives, we ultimately felt the film's merits outweighed its limitations and decided to include it.

We acknowledge that you may not share our confidence in this decision or our perspective and that your concerns may still feel unresolved. With that in mind, we would like to propose a few ideas that might help bridge the gap.

**Contextualising the Screening**

To ensure the audience is fully aware of the broader context, Antenna will read a clear and unequivocal statement before the screening along the following lines:

*Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the illegal annexation of its territories, the Russian army has committed more than 140,000 confirmed cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has launched an investigation into Russia on charges of genocide. The following film was shot in an extreme situation, and as a result, only provides insight into certain details of reality. It is a work that does not offer a comprehensive or balanced view of the broader conflict but illustrates the perspective of one filmmaker on the front line with their camera. WARNING: In the absence of contextual knowledge, this may convey false information! Please consider supporting Ukraine in its struggle by donating at the following address (xxxx).*

### **A Space for Your Voice**

In addition to the statement, we would like to invite representatives of the Ukrainian community to participate in a discussion after the screening, either as a talk or panel. This will provide an opportunity to engage the audience and ensure that the Ukrainian perspective is clearly represented for those who attend the screening of *Russians at War*.

This will also address a concern recently expressed by Anton Bogdanovych to our Director, Dudi Rokach—namely, that potential empathy for Russian soldiers could lead to reduced support for the war effort and, consequently, a decrease in military aid to Ukraine. Having a Ukrainian representative explain the complex reasoning behind why Australian support to Ukraine remains crucial—despite the shared sentiment that we all want the war to end—could help address this concern.

### **Moving Forward**

We are deeply committed to supporting and amplifying the voices of the Ukrainian community, ensuring your concerns are not only heard but acted upon. However, I want to be upfront that we cannot withdraw a film solely because it is controversial. As there is no clear and verifiable evidence of deception or misinformation, we believe it is more productive to focus our efforts on meaningful collaboration rather than a prolonged debate over its inclusion.

While we understand that this may not be the resolution you were hoping for, please know that we stand firmly in solidarity with you. We see this as an opportunity to work together constructively to ensure that the Ukrainian perspective is not only represented but given even greater prominence.

We welcome any additional ideas and are eager to collaborate with you to determine the most effective approach in a way that is respectful and sensitive to all.

Best regards,



Kirk Marcolina  
Chair, Antenna Documentary Film Festival