

# Press Release

## Directorate of Communication

Ref: 325a09

Tel. +33 3 88 41 25 60

Fax +33 3 88 41 39 11

Internet: [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

e-mail: [pressunit@coe.int](mailto:pressunit@coe.int)



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## Marco Bechis and "Birdwatchers" win the FACE prize at the Istanbul Film Festival – Jury Special Prize goes to Nandita Das for "Firaaq"

Strasbourg, 18.04.2009 – Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, presented the third Film Award of the Council of Europe (FACE) to Marco Bechis, during the closing ceremony of the 28<sup>th</sup> international film festival in Istanbul.

"In today's expanding world, respect for native populations and minorities is essential" the jury of the festival's human rights section said. "By conveying this important message in a very well constructed story, « Birdwatchers » describes the complexities of a changing society" (in *Mato Grosso do Sul, to the mid-west of Brazil, the farmers lead a wealthy and leisurely existence. They have huge fields and tourists come in hordes for birdwatching. The Guarani-Kaiowa, the indigenous people, legitimate owners of the lands, grow uneasy. Two suicides trigger a rebellion...*). "It should inspire other film-makers to address human rights issues by telling original and compelling stories" the jury concluded.

Jury members also decided to reward Nandita Das with a Special Jury Prize, for her film "Firaaq" which "courageously deals with the highly sensitive theme of religious intolerance and sectarian strife: showing its terrible consequences, 'Firaaq' also conveys a message of hope and demonstrates that people can make choices."

This year, ten films were entered in the human rights section (\*).

The prize awarded to Marco Bechis consists of a bronze sculpture and a cash prize of 10 000 euros, partly financed by Eurimages, the Council of Europe's fund for the co-production, distribution and exhibition of European cinematographic works.

The decision to create the FACE award reflects the Council of Europe's commitment to both cinema and cultural diversity, and is recognition of the contribution that the world of cinema can make in developing human rights worldwide.

The FACE award is an annual collaboration between the Council of Europe and the International Istanbul Film Festival.

(\*) Further information is available at [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int) or [www.iksv.org/film](http://www.iksv.org/film)

### Contact in Istanbul:

Can FISEK, Council of Europe Press Division

Mobile: +33 (0)6 75 65 03 41 e-mail: [can.fisek@coe.int](mailto:can.fisek@coe.int)

To receive our press releases by e-mail, contact: [Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int](mailto:Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int)

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