

**POWERFUL DOC FOLLOWING RENOWNED INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
LAWYER AND FORMER UN PROSECUTOR PAYAM AKHAVAN, IN SEARCH OF A
BETTER WORLD, PREMIERES SUNDAY ON *documentary* CHANNEL**

**Based on the bestselling book and CBC Massey Lectures, IN SEARCH OF A
BETTER WORLD follows recently appointed Special Adviser to the International
Criminal Court, Payam Akhavan, as he speaks truth to power and gives a voice to
the millions of victims of horrific atrocities in our world today.**

**IN SEARCH OF A BETTER WORLD is produced by WestWind Pictures and Adobe
Films in association with *documentary* Channel.**

For additional info visit:

<https://www.cbc.ca/documentarychannel/docs/in-search-of-a-better-world>

For additional photography and to share this release socially use:

<https://www.betterworldfilm.com>

For Immediate Release

Toronto, Canada, September 29, 2021 - WestWind Releasing and Adobe Productions announced today the premiere of *documentary* Channel's Original feature length documentary, IN SEARCH OF A BETTER WORLD, airing Sunday, October 3 at 9pm ET/PT (repeats Friday, October 15 at 9 p.m. ET/PT) on *documentary* Channel. Based on the bestselling book, *In Search of a Better World: A Human Rights Odyssey* (House of Anansi Press, 2017) and the popular [CBC Massey Lectures](#), the film is the remarkable life story of world-renowned human rights lawyer Payam Akhavan and his struggle for justice on behalf of survivors of genocide. Filmed from inside the world's largest refugee camp in Bangladesh, where Rohingya victims who have fled persecution in neighbouring Myanmar live in appalling conditions, the documentary gives a voice to the voiceless, humanizing the victims and seeking justice for them as they recount horrific stories to Akhavan— stories that are too often ignored.

Having encountered the grim realities of contemporary genocide throughout his life and career, Akhavan argues that deceptive utopias, political cynicism, and public apathy have given rise to the major human rights abuses of our times: from the

religious persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís that shaped his personal life, to the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and the genocides in Rwanda and Myramar, that have shaped his profession as a lawyer.

Akhavan was born in Iran and exiled to Canada in his childhood because of the violent persecution of the Bahá'í religious community to which his family belonged. His human rights odyssey began in earnest as an immigrant teenager living in Toronto, when he learned that his sixteen-year old contemporary Mona Mahmudnizhad had been hanged for writing a high-school essay demanding her freedom of religious belief. This was a turning point in young Akhavan's life, when he decided to become a fighter, vowing to Mona to struggle for justice as his only path for redemption. This mission is clear throughout the timely, essential, and inspiring documentary.

Despite the difficult subject matter, the documentary inspires hope with the universal message of empathy, engagement, and transformation. As Akhavan points out, "It's about our place in history. Today, our inextricable interdependence is no longer a naïve ideal; it is an inescapable fact and our survival depends on it. Our failure to embrace the oneness of humankind is causing the crises and despair afflicting us. From the Covid-19 pandemic, to climate change, to poverty, violence, and mass migration, we witness the consequences of divisive ideologies; the catastrophic toll of indifference to injustice."

Mary Darling, the documentary's co-director, claims "There is a real need to get these stories out to the world right now in a way that's not just a news story. Covid has clearly shown how connected our world is and why no one can sit idly by. It's not about feel-good activism, it's about wise leadership and grassroots movements to achieve lasting social change. And it's about shining a light on both the atrocities and the stories of hope in a way that this film does."

According to Akhavan, "By bearing witness, by hearing the stories of survivors, by holding tyrants accountable, we can begin to reimagine the world. In the struggle of survivors for justice, we witness the astonishing resilience of the human spirit; our capacity to heal even in the face of radical evil and to arise in service to humanity. If we can connect with the suffering of others on a deep level, it will become blindingly

obvious that there are a myriad ways in which we can contribute to human betterment, whether in our own backyard or halfway across the world.”

Akhavan has recently been [appointed Special Adviser](#) on Genocide to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

About Payam Akhavan:

Professor Payam Akhavan, Phd (Harvard) is a Senior Fellow of Massey College, University of Toronto, Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, Special Advisor on Genocide to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, and former Legal Advisor, Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague (1994-2000). He has also served with the UN in Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Guatemala, and Timor Leste. He was previously Full Professor at McGill University Faculty of Law in Montreal and Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, with other appointments at Yale Law School, European University Institute, Oxford University, Université Paris Nanterre, and Sciences Po École de Droit. He has published extensively on international criminal law and in 2017, he delivered the [CBC Massey Lectures, In Search of a Better World: A Human Rights Odyssey](#). His human rights work has been featured in *The New York Times*, BBC *HARDtalk*, CBC Radio *Ideas*, *Maclean's*, and other media.

Professor Akhavan is a member of the New York State Bar and the Law Society of Ontario and recipient of its 2021 Human Rights Award. He has appeared as counsel before the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights, the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Supreme Court of the United States. He also serves as Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Global Affairs of Canada, is Senior Fellow and Canadian Co-Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, and Co-Founder of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre.

About WestWind Pictures:

WestWind Pictures is an independent production and distribution company. In its almost 30 year history, the company has produced over 650 hours of content, which airs on networks all over the world, including the internationally renowned series

Little Mosque on the Prairie. With a history of bringing diversity in all forms to the screen, WestWind is currently developing and producing documentary, scripted and children's series.

ABOUT *documentary* CHANNEL:

[documentary Channel](#) is Canada's home for original feature-length documentaries, devoted to showing the best in homegrown and international titles. This premium digital channel, which is majority owned by CBC, commissions Canadian feature-length documentary films each year that play around the world at festivals and on international broadcasters.

Social Media tag:

#insearchofabetterworld

-30-

For Media Inquires:

Rebecca Herr

LeFace Entertainment

rebecca@lefaceentertainment.com