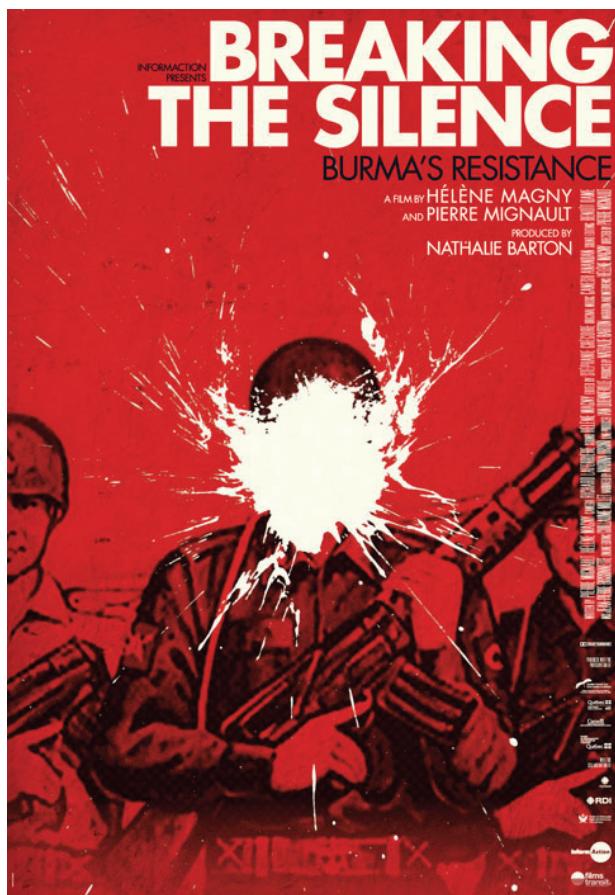




presents

A Film by Hélène Magny and Pierre Mignault
Produced by Nathalie Barton



This shock documentary takes us secretly behind the lines in Burma, in the company of displaced populations fleeing the military dictatorship, and deep into the heart of the underground resistance in exile.

PRESS KIT

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Breaking the Silence

Burma's Resistance

A Film by Hélène Magny and Pierre Mignault
Produced by Nathalie Barton

Short Synopsis

After the unrest that was carried to the world by street-shot cell phone images, the Burmese dictatorship pledged 'free' elections in 2010. Undercover, Quebec filmmakers Pierre Mignault and Hélène Magny clandestinely were able to enter one of Burma's most dangerous zones, penetrating into the heart of the Karen Nation, where civil war has been waging for 60 years. In this dangerous region very few foreigners have dared to venture, they meet displaced people hiding in the jungle in order to resist forced relocation by the military regime. *Breaking the Silence: Burma's Resistance* demonstrates the strength of the Burmese people's resistance and takes us deep into the country, disclosing the secret networks of militants fighting along the Thai border.

Detailed Synopsis

« We secretly cross the border into Burma, possibly spied on by soldiers... who will shoot on sight... We're going to rendezvous with persecuted people fleeing the clandestine genocide perpetrated with total impunity by the Burmese military dictatorship against the country's ethnic minorities.

In *Breaking the Silence: Burma's Resistance*, Pierre Mignault and Hélène Magny secretly enter one of Burma's most dangerous zones, penetrating to the very heart of the Karen Nation, where civil war has been waging for 60 years. Accompanied by an escort of Karen rebels, they penetrate the jungle in search of displaced people who have fled rape and assassination, and are hiding in the interior in order to resist forced relocation and slavery at the hands of the military regime.

For over 20 years, an extreme humanitarian crisis has reigned in Burma. Protected by an army of 400,000 men - huge for a nation with no external enemies - Burma's military government has been waging war on its own people for decades. This film reveals the extent to which the Burmese people are prepared to fight to regain their freedom and institute democracy. We travel to the country's interior to meet peasants, as well as clandestine networks living in exile in Thailand, where determined political and human rights activists are working to combat one of the world's most bloody military dictatorships.

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Context

The refusal by Burma's generals to open their borders to humanitarian aid, following the tragic Nargis hurricane in May 2008, revealed to the world this government's barbarity and deep contempt for its people. Despite their widespread manifestation of revolt, the Burmese people were hardly surprised by the regime's hard line stance. Ever since the 1962 coup that installed the military dictatorship in power, the population hasn't led a normal existence. For twenty years now, human rights have vastly deteriorated in the country, to the extent that today, the Burmese people are living an unprecedented humanitarian crisis at the hands of a junta who goal is to crush any attempt at freedom.

In 1988, 3000 people were massacred on the streets in broad daylight, during peaceful demonstrations to protest the country's conditions of endemic poverty. Two years later, after the junta's resounding electoral defeat, the army forcefully detained and imprisoned Aung San Suu Kyi, whose democratic victory had been supported by 88% of Burmese voters. Ever since, the noose has tightened around the general population, and ethnic minorities in particular, some of whom are still waging civil war against the army, and who are victims of severe extortion.

Most of the country is off-limits to foreigners. The military junta has much to conceal, particularly the 'genocide' it wages against ethnic minorities in the east. Villages have been ransacked and burned, women systematically raped, and populations forcefully relocated in army- controlled work-camps. Still, hundreds of thousands have chosen to resist, and have fled to live hidden in the jungle rather than to submit to the army's tyranny. These villagers are supported by militants living in exile, who have regrouped in clandestine resistance networks to fight the Burmese regime. The people of Burma, both inside and outside the country, are united in their struggle to put an end to the brutal dictatorship.

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Directors' note

The nation of Burma is hermetically sealed off, ruled by one of the world's worst dictatorships, along with that of North Korea. For decades, whatever occurs in this country is shrouded in secrecy and censorship, under threat of terror at the hands of informers. Behind this imposed silence lurks a caste of barbaric generals who continue violating the rights of the Burmese people with total impunity.

In 1999, while on our first 'legal' trip to Burma, we traversed the country from North to South to witness, firsthand, the brutal repression of Burmese citizens. Ten years later, we decided to return, this time in secret, to visit forbidden regions of the country where, unbeknownst to the rest of the world, heinous crimes are being committed by the military regime.

It took us months in the field at the Thai border to convince a humanitarian agency to take us to meet displaced people hiding in the Burmese interior to protect themselves against the soldiers' exactions. Since civil war still wages in this forbidden zone, we undertook our perilous clandestine journey to the heart of the Karen State with an escort of Karen rebels. In its attempt to wipe out ethnic minorities, in 2009 the Burmese army tragically tightened its hold on the local population, specifically targeting the Karen people. The forest riddled with land mines serves as refuge for peasants fleeing slavery, forced relocation, rape and murder. Their testimony, which we heard deep in the Burmese jungle, leaves no doubt as to the genocide being directed against them. But we also discovered their steely determination to fight for freedom and democracy. Their struggle is that shared by all Burmese people, both inside the country and those living in exile who form the secret resistance network. We were able to penetrate this underground movement of political and humanitarian activists, despite the anonymity required to insure the security of some of our collaborators. Our film is intended to break the silence enshrouding an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, in order to show how a desperate people manages to summon the courage to resist, in the hope of freeing themselves from the yoke of oppression.

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Québec, Canada, 2010, HD Digital Video, Color, Dolby Stereo, 75 / 52'

Written by	Pierre Mignault and Hélène Magny
Narration and Interviews	Hélène Magny
Directed by	Pierre Mignault
Camera	Richard Laferrière and Pierre Mignault
Sound	Hélène Magny
Edited by	Stéphanie Grégoire
Original Music	Ganesh Anandan
Narrated by	Marina Orsini
Sound Editing	Benoît Dame
Mix	Jean-Pierre Bissonnette
Line Producer	Ian Quenneville
Production	Nathalie Barton

Produced by
InformAction

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Québec
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SODEC
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with the collaboration of
Radio-Canada
&
RDI

Screening debates are organized in partnership with Rights and Democracy

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Authors Biofilmography

For 30 years, **Pierre Mignault** was a career journalist with Radio-Canada, where he worked for different news programs like *Le Téléjournal / Le Point*. As a videographer, he has directed several feature reportages and short documentaries.

Hélène Magny was editor, researcher and interviewer at Radio-Canada for 17 years. For seven months, Hélène Magny directed two United Nations regional Radio Okapi stations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This marked the start of the multi-awarded documentary ***Shock Waves***, released in 2007.

Since 2005, the duo established CINÉDIT Productions, their Montreal-based documentary production company. After ***Le Sentier du Milieu*** and ***Shock Waves***, they directed ***Born To Be Here*** in 2008. ***Breaking the Silence: Burma's Resistance*** is their fourth documentary.

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Production Company

InformAction is one of Canada's leading documentary production companies, specializing in point of view and creative documentaries directed by some of the best filmmakers in Canada. Founded in Montreal in 1971, InformAction produces single documentaries and mini-series on social issues, international affairs, art, world cultures and human rights for Canadian prime-time television (Radio-Canada, CBC, Télé-Québec, Canal D, TV5, Artv, Bravo, Knowledge, History and others) and for theatrical release. Many have won awards and all are distributed internationally. InformAction has done several successful international coproductions with Europe, in particular with La compagnie des taxi-brousse in France, with broadcasters Arte France and France 5.

Latest titles include **Battle of Wills** by Anne Henderson, **Seeking Refuge** by Karen Cho (*Best Direction in a Documentary Program* nominee at the Gemini Awards 2009), **Shock Waves** by Pierre Mignault & Hélène Magny (*CIDA Award for Best Canadian Documentary on International Development* – Hot Docs 2008, *Film Most Likely to Change the World Award* – Detroit Docs 2007), **A Dream for Kabul** by Philippe Baylaucq (*ReelAward for Outstanding Canadian Doc* 2009) and **Afghan Chronicles** by Dominic Morissette, both coproduced with the National Film Board of Canada, **American Fugitive: The Truth about Hassan** by Jean-Daniel Lafond (more than 20 international festivals, including Hot Docs, Marseille, Dubai), **Lifelike** by Tally Abecassis (3 nominations at the Gemini Awards including *Best Science/Nature Documentary* 2006; Vancouver VIFF, Hot Docs, SXSW), **The Magic Touch** by Carlos Ferrand (3 *Gémeaux Awards* 2005, including *Best Cultural Documentary*), **The Genocide in Me** by Araz Artinian (more than 20 festivals, 6 international awards; shown in more than 50 cities in the world), **Visionaries** by Carlos Ferrand (*Best Cinematography* and *Best Overall Sound* at Hot Docs).

InformAction also supports emerging directors (**Sans réserve** by Patrick Pellegrino, *Best Mid-length Documentary Award* 2008 by Québec Critics Association; **La Vie après la shop** and **The Genocide in Me**, both nominated for *Best Social Documentary* at the Gémeaux Awards 2006).

Producers Ian Quenneville and Ian Oliveri joined the company 10 years ago and teamed up with senior producer and co-founder of the company, Nathalie Barton. Nathalie was for many years documentary representative on the board of the Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec, and is now a board member of Femmes du cinéma, de la télévision et des nouveaux médias and Chair of the Documentary Network (l'Observatoire du documentaire).

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