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Ukraine's Oscar candidate "Traces" (Ukrainian: ?????) begins US tour with support from the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation



Traces is a documentary by director Alisa Kovalenko and co-director Marysia Nikitiuk. It is Ukraine's official candidate for Best International Feature Film at the 99th Academy Awards. The film tells the stories of Ukrainian women who survived sexual violence and torture during Russia's war. After screenings in Paris, Berlin and Kyiv and two international awards in October, it begins a US tour at the end of the month, supported by the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation.

What is Traces about?

Traces is about Ukrainian women who survived sexual violence and torture during Russia's war against Ukraine and who refuse to stay silent. They seek justice, support other survivors and use their own voices as a form of resistance. Ukraine selected Traces as its national Oscar candidate on 16 September 2026. The film was produced by 2Brave Productions in Ukraine, with Polish co-producer Message Film.

How is the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation helping?

The Rinat Akhmetov Foundation supports the film's Oscar campaign and its wider social impact campaign. To strengthen the film's international presence, the Foundation gave director Alisa Kovalenko a grant of UAH 9 million ($200,000). The aim is to draw global attention to war crimes against Ukrainian women and to the importance of justice for survivors.

Where has Traces been shown so far?

From 12 to 16 October, Ms Kovalenko and Iryna Dovhan, the main protagonist of the film, attended screenings and press meetings in Paris for invited guests and members of the Academy. French philosopher, documentary filmmaker and war reporter Bernard-Henri Lévy attended one of the screenings.

The film was also shown at the Ukrainian Film Festival Berlin, which was founded in 2020 to promote Ukrainian cinema in Germany. The film's festival journey began in Berlin in February 2026. At the same time, Traces was screened at Kyiv Critics' Week in the Ukraine–Switzerland focus programme. Swiss film critics selected it, and it was the only documentary in the section.

What awards has the film won?

In October, Traces won two awards at international film festivals. At the Bergen International Film Festival in Norway, it received the Checkpoints Award, the

festival's official human rights award, presented with the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights. The award recognised the film's compassionate and cinematic portrait of survival, community and resistance.

The film also won the main prize at the Unlimited Hope Film Festival in Bochum, Germany, as the best feature-length documentary. Traces is also shortlisted for the European Film Awards. Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has said that "documentary film can be an extraordinarily powerful tool in the fight for justice".

What happens next for Traces?

At the end of October, Traces begins a tour of the United States, with festival screenings and private screenings. These screenings will give American audiences the chance to hear the stories of Ukrainian women who are fighting for justice and supporting other survivors.