Alisa Kovalenko to receive $200,000 from Rinat Akhmetov for 'Traces' Oscar campaign

KYIV, UKRAINE, September 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- By decision of Rinat Akhmetov, director Alisa Kovalenko will receive a scholarship of $200,000 (UAH 9 million) for the international Oscar campaign for the documentary film “Traces”. On September 16, 2026, Ukraine selected the film as its national submission for the 99th Academy Awards in the Best International Feature Film category. The support will help present “Traces” to the international film community at the next stages of the Oscar race.



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“Rinat Akhmetov’s decision to support Alisa Kovalenko and her film with a scholarship is personal and by no means accidental. Earlier, the Museum of Civilian Voices had already agreed on a strategic partnership with the film’s team, as “Traces” is in line with its philosophy. It is a film about people who, after extraordinarily difficult ordeals, find the strength to carry on living and speak about what they have experienced in their own words. The Rinat Akhmetov Foundation has become the first charitable foundation in Ukraine to support the Oscar campaign of a Ukrainian film,” said Nataliia Yemchenko, Chair of the Supervisory Board of the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation.

The documentary film “Traces”, directed by Alisa Kovalenko and co-directed by Marysia Nikitiuk, tells the stories of Ukrainian women who experienced violence and torture during russian aggression. The women featured in the film refuse to call themselves victims. Through their stories, the film speaks about human resilience, solidarity, mutual support and hope.

One of the film's central subjects is Iryna Dovhan from Donetsk, a former captive whose story became known around the world thanks to The New York Times. Today, she helps other women and documents their testimonies in the de-occupied territories of Ukraine. Alisa Kovalenko herself is a member of SEMA Ukraine and is involved in human rights advocacy. In 2019, she became the first woman in Ukraine to speak publicly about the sexual violence she had experienced in connection with the war.


Director Alisa Kovalenko

"Having our documentary film "Traces" selected to represent Ukraine at the 99th Academy Awards is an incredible honour and responsibility. But above all, it is a platform that will amplify the voices of women who have refused to remain silent about what they have experienced and draw the world's attention to the crimes and torture committed by russian occupiers,"says Alisa Kovalenko.

The world premiere of "Traces" took place at the 2026 Berlin International Film Festival in the Panorama Dokumente section, where the film received the Audience Award. The film later won the documentary competition at the Movies That Matter human rights film festival in The Hague. This victory also opened up the possibility for "Traces" to be considered in another Academy Awards category – Best Documentary Feature Film. The film also received two awards at Millennium Docs Against Gravity and was named among the top 20 audience favourites at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto. The Ukrainian premiere took place at Docudays UA.

The next stage of the Oscar selection process is the announcement of the 15 films that will make the shortlist for the Best International Feature Film category. The shortlist will be announced on December 15, 2026. The five nominees will be announced on January 21, 2027, while the 99th Academy Awards ceremony will take place on March 14, 2027.

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