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NU-Q FACULTY DOCUMENTARY SCREENED AT
AL JAZEERA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Doha, Qatar – December 6, 2015 -- When she set out to make a documentary on the Crimean Tatars' centuries-long fight for their homeland, Northwestern University in Qatar lecturer Christina Paschyn already had a compelling story to tell. Her film - *A Struggle for Home: The Crimean Tatars* - made its festival debut at the Al Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival in Doha, which continues a tradition of films produced by NU-Q faculty, students and alumni being screened at the Al Jazeera and Doha film festivals.

"This film showcases Christina creativity as a filmmaker and story-teller," said Everette E. Dennis, dean and CEO of NU-Q. "She has taken complex historical material and transformed it into a compelling story."

Paschyn's film traces the history of the Crimean Tatars from their time as an independent nation to their brutal deportation at the hands of the Soviets and the recent annexation of the region by Russia.

The Muslim-Turkic minority group had already faced persecution and repression, first from the Russian Empire and then from the Soviet Union. But the 2014 Russian invasion of the Crimea dashed Tatars' hopes of reclaiming their homeland and added another, more immediate chapter to the story and is at the heart of Paschyn's film.

It's a topic near to the heart of Paschyn, a Ukrainian. "I had learned about the Tatars when I was going to Ukrainian school, but it was a very negatively biased portrayal," she says. A class on Islam



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in Eastern Europe during her graduate education gave her the chance to pursue the topic. "I chose to study the Tatars because I'm Ukrainian, and I realized that this is a story that needs to be told."

Paschyn spent a month in Crimea in 2012 shooting footage for the film, and interviewed a wide range of subjects, from a Tatar woman who'd been forcibly displaced in the 1940s to the dissident Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev.

A Struggle for Home also features interviews with Sergey Aksyonov, who in 2012 was a low-level politician in the Russian Unity party. After the Russian invasion and subsequent annexation of Crimea, however, he became Prime Minister of the region.

Since the annexation, Tatars, an ethnic minority in the mostly Russian Crimea, have faced persecution, including the destruction of settlements and the exile of Dzhemilev.

"The majority of Tatars were very fearful of going back to Russia because of the history of persecution and oppression," says Paschyn. "So this is their worst nightmare, that this could happen again. It made my film more relevant, but that's obviously not a good thing in the long run."

Paschyn has a long history of covering a variety of under-reported issues, with recent features on issues such as Qatari women's economic empowerment and the cultural sensitivity in the region about women in media and education policies in the GCC. She emphasizes the importance of photo and video journalism as key media for getting issues out the widest possible audience:

"We live in exciting and fast-paced times and journalism now is all about extending the reach of reporting to ensure information is disseminated to as wide a range of people and as large an audience as possible, whether that is via print, video or social media," she said.

The inclusion of the documentary in the festival is yet another accolade for NU-Q's school of Journalism, which is the only school of its kind in the region, following the recent Pulitzer fellowship for one of its graduates.

Struggle for Home: The Crimean Tartars had its international premiere on November 27. It was also accepted into Docs for Sale at the prestigious International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam.

For more on *A Struggle for Home*, visit astruggleforhome.com

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Qatar Foundation, NU-Q provides a framework through which students explore the world and, ultimately, shape its future through its distinguished schools of [communication](#), [journalism](#), and [liberal arts](#).