

# T'ECH TALES YOUTH

## Defending Internet Freedom in Bangladesh and Malaysia



### About the Film Collection

Tech Tales Youth 2 expands the digital rights movement in Asia-Pacific through compelling visual storytelling, building on the success of Tech Tales: Films about Digital Rights in the Asia-Pacific and Tech Tales Youth Philippines and Thailand. This new edition focuses on Malaysia and Bangladesh, where emerging filmmakers create powerful short films that address pressing digital rights challenges in their local contexts.

The films from Bangladesh explore the intersection of digital rights and social justice: from the impact of internet shutdowns on disabled workers and digital labor, to privacy violations during political unrest, to how digital harassment and online extremism affect the trans community. Meanwhile, the Malaysian films delve into critical issues of online safety and social cohesion: examining online grooming and exploitation of teenagers, the manipulation of social media regulations following cyberbullying-related deaths, and how digital disinformation fuels racial and religious tensions in multicultural communities.

Beyond serving as informative tools, these films contribute to growing the digital rights movement by bringing new allies into the space and creating compelling advocacy materials that can be used in film festivals, community screenings, and grassroots campaigns.

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**BLACK KITE**

A FILM BY TAOSIN ZAFAR

"THE BLACK KITE" STARRING AHMED SHAKI MUSHFIQUR RAHMAN SAFWAN KABIR EDITOR TAOSIN ZAFAR ART DIRECTOR FAHMİN ADNAN  
 DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SHAKIB HOSSAIN VFX ARIAN HOSSAIN SPECIAL EFFECTS WASEE CHOWDHURY COLORIST RAHUL RAY  
 SOUND RECORDIST MD. AZIZUL HAKIM PRODUCTION MANAGER SHAZID SHAMS FIRST AD TAHSEEN MD MUHIN SECOND AD SADMAN KABIR  
 PROJECT MANAGER AND IMPACT PRODUCER KING CATOY EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ENGAGEMEDIA WRITTEN BY TAOSIN ZAFAR

WHEN CONNECTIONS BREAK . THE DOMINOES FALL



During an internet blackout in Bangladesh, a freelancer struggles to navigate life as his work and connections are cut off, showing the impact of a world forced to pause.



Director  
**Taosin Zafar**

Country  
**Bangladesh**

Genre  
**Short fiction**

Running time  
**11:34 min**

Digital Rights Issues  
**Internet Shutdown &  
Digital Labour**





## Synopsis

During the July 2024 protests in Bangladesh, Arif, a gig worker who relies on crutches, struggles to cope with a sudden internet and power blackout imposed by the government. His work is in jeopardy, and tensions rise when his colleague Rakib blames the outage for losing an important project, money Rakib urgently needs for his mother's hospital bills.

At home, Arif's son, Neon, grows restless, stuck without school or internet. As the protests continue, Arif is haunted by strange dreams that reflect the turmoil around him. In a world filled with uncertainty, Arif and those close to him face challenges that test their resilience and hope.



## Director's Statement

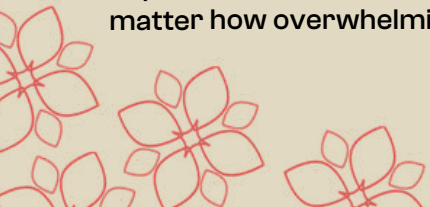
As a filmmaker, I feel deeply connected to the events that unfolded during Bangladesh's national crisis in 2024. The Black Kite is inspired by those challenging times, particularly the uncertainty and pain many of us experienced during the July Movement. I lived through those days, witnessing how the breakdown of systems caused both personal struggles and collective despair.

The film's protagonist, Arif, mirrors this struggle. He's not just grappling with the loss of internet and electricity; he's also weighed down by a deep sense of hopelessness. His crutches symbolize how the country itself felt stuck—unable to move forward due to forces beyond its control. The breakdown in communication and Rakib's injury reflect the emotional toll on everyone, as lives were disrupted in ways both big and small.

One of the most striking moments in the film is Arif's dream. The image of blood-stained rice and falling bullets shows how chaos can seep into even the most ordinary parts of life. It's a reminder of how, during times of crisis, nothing feels safe or untouched by fear.

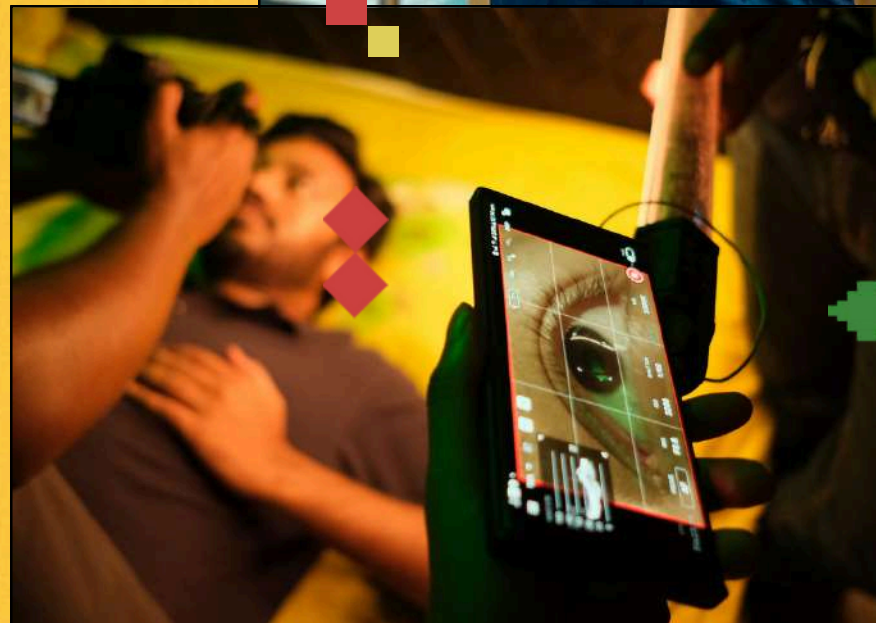
At its core, The Black Kite is a story of resilience. Arif's journey is one of pushing forward, even when the odds seem impossible. Neon, Arif's young son, symbolizes the next generation—filled with potential but waiting for their chance to rise, like the kite that refuses to take flight.

This film is very personal to me because it captures the struggles of 2024 while also holding onto the hope for a better future. Through The Black Kite, I hope viewers will reflect on their own moments of helplessness and see the importance of resilience in overcoming challenges, no matter how overwhelming they seem.





**Taosin Md. Bahadurshah Zafar (24)** is an emerging filmmaker studying Television, Film, and Photography at the University of Dhaka. As a producer at Dhaka University Television and a Peace Fellow with the Films For Peace Foundation, he has gained valuable experience in content creation and impactful storytelling. His documentary ["Banyan - A Silent Witness"](#) won awards at the Liberation Docfest Bangladesh and Peace Film Festival in 2024. Taosin has also directed and edited short films like ["Proloy - A Story of Annihilation"](#) and ["Device"](#), showcasing his talent for emotional depth and narrative pacing. His skills extend to editing and post-production, having worked on projects like "Obyakto" and "Khacha Vangar Golpo". Taosin believes in film's universal power to connect with audiences worldwide. Additionally, as an Undergraduate Research Assistant (URA) at the University of Dhaka, Taosin worked on a project exploring the impact of OTT platforms in Bangladesh, interviewing renowned filmmakers and handling transcription and ethical review processes. His latest paper exploring AI's Role In The Future of Filmmaking was selected for presentation at the 3rd International Conference on Innovation and Transformation for Development (ITD).







# Whisper Of The ink

A Ishtiyak Ahmad Zihad FILM

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER EngageMedia STORY & SCREENPLAY Ishtiyak Ahmad Zihad CAST Shree Avik Chandra Talukdar, Sanjida Akter Sorna, Pial Sarker DOP Samiul Karim Shuptak EDITOR and COLORIST Ishtiyak Ahmad Zihad PAINTING Debashish Chakrabarty CAST AND COSTUME DIRECTOR Mahmudul Rafiq MAKEUP Tanvir Rana ART DIRECTOR Shrobon Joshi



During protests in Dhaka, an artist risks everything to find help for his pregnant wife in labor, facing a government crackdown that tests their love and resilience.



Director  
**Ishtiyak Ahmad Zihad**

Country  
**Bangladesh**

Genre  
**Short fiction**

Running time  
**12:00 min**

Digital Rights Issues  
**Internet Shutdown, Online  
Freedom of Expression &  
Digital Privacy**



## Synopsis

Shot in stark black-and-white cinematography, "Whispers of the Ink" follows Rashed, a fearless artist who creates protest cartoons and paintings on social media and city walls during the recent student protests. His pregnant wife, Runa, though yearning to join the movement, remains confined at home. When Runa goes into labor during a nationwide crisis where no ambulance services are available, Rashed desperately ventures out despite the curfew to find help.

At a security checkpoint, Rashed faces aggressive questioning and is forced to unlock his phone. The officers discover his protest paintings, and social media activity, leading to his immediate arrest. Left alone in labor, Runa accidentally knocks over Rashed's ink, spilling it across his painting—a poignant symbol of how resistance, like ink, spreads uncontrollably despite attempts to contain it. As a result, the fate of Rashed and Runa hangs in the balance.





## Director's Statement

As the director of "Whispers of the Ink," my vision was to create a cinematic experience that transcends individual stories and becomes a larger commentary on the power of art and resistance in the face of political oppression. Set against the backdrop of the July 2024 student protests in Bangladesh, this film is deeply rooted in the real-life struggles of a nation caught in the grips of a repressive government, one that silences its people through violence, censorship, and fear.

At the core of the film is the relationship between Rashed, a cartoonist who channels the pain and frustration of the people into his art as a form of resistance, and his wife Runa. Through them, I wanted to explore the profound sacrifices made by those who stand up for what is right.

Runa represents the unsung heroes—the wives, mothers, and loved ones who endure fear and uncertainty as they wait for their loved ones to return from the streets. The use of ink, both literally in Rashed's artwork and metaphorically in the chaotic moments of the protests, became a recurring motif. Ink is a tool of expression that can be wiped away or hidden, just as the violence of the protests is concealed by the government's media blackout. Yet, there is always the possibility of ink returning to the page—new art, new voices, new stories emerging from the ashes of suppression.

What drew me to tell this story is the resilience of the human spirit. Even in the face of unimaginable brutality and oppression, people find ways to resist, to speak, and to fight for their right to be heard.



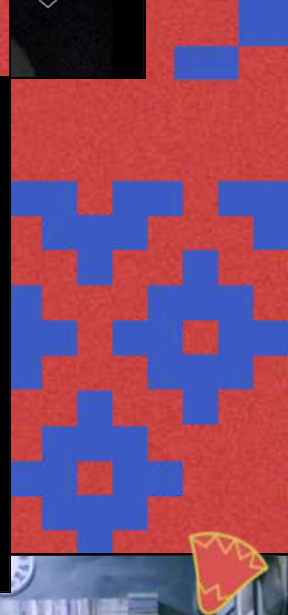
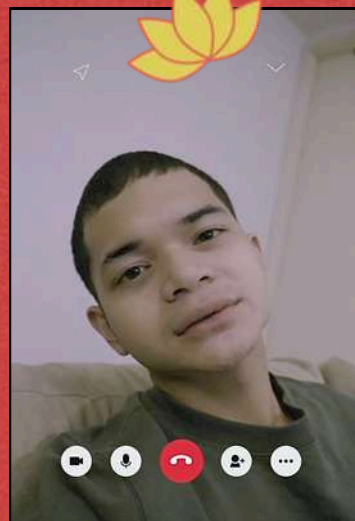
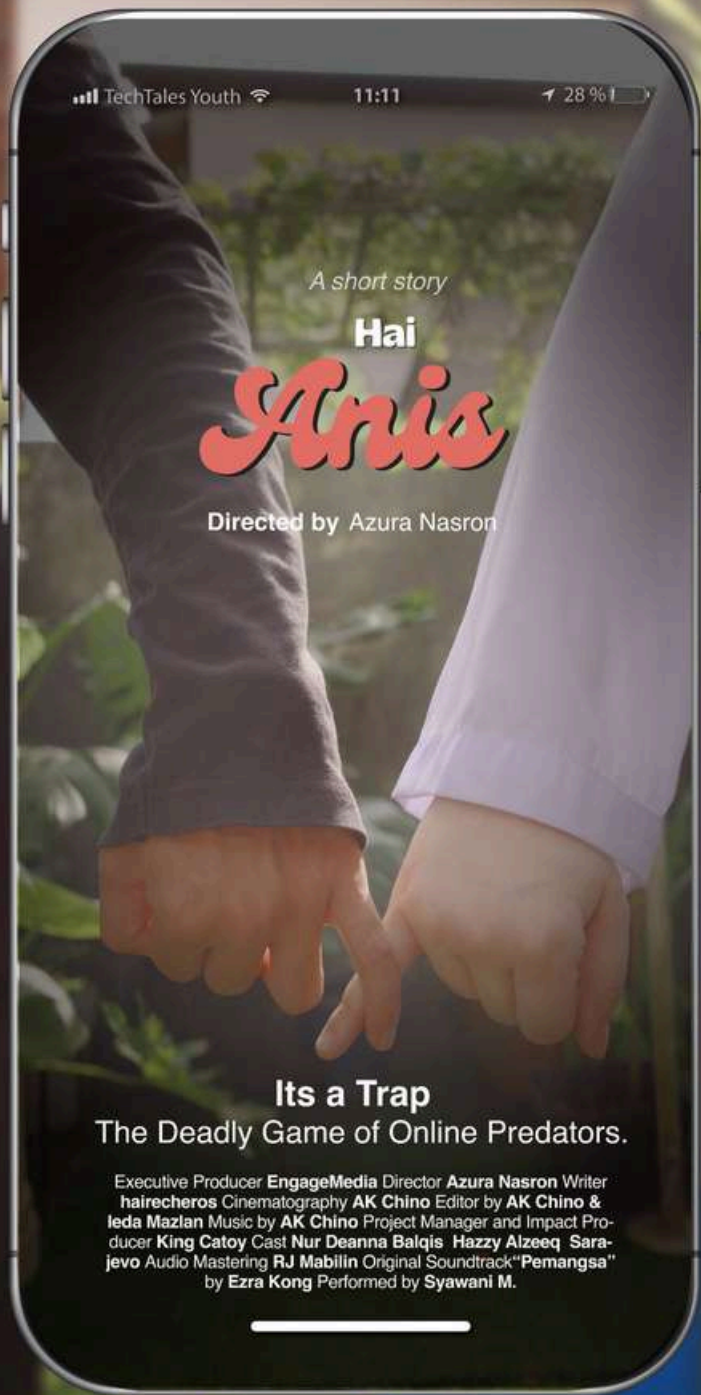




**Ishtiyak Ahmad Zihad (24)**, a young filmmaker from Bangladesh, recently completed his studies in Film and Media Studies at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University. He began his creative journey with the experimental short film "God Gift" in 2019. He has explored various narratives in short films, including "Chaya Moricher Bone" (2021), a one-take short inspired by Bangladesh's liberation war. Ishtiyak has directed several independent shorts that have gained recognition at film festivals worldwide. His film "Run Away" particularly stood out, earning six awards at festivals in Bangladesh, India, the USA, and England, with the UK Film Review praising it as "beautifully tragic." Ishtiyak recently completed his first feature-length film, titled "The Blind Girl and An Elephant" (2025).







A Malaysian teenager finds apparent love through TikTok and WhatsApp, only to discover that an adult predator's digital affection masks a calculated campaign of control and threats.



Director  
**Azura Nasron**

Genre  
**Short fiction**

Digital Rights Issues  
**Online Grooming**

Country  
**Malaysia**

Running time  
**9:05 min**





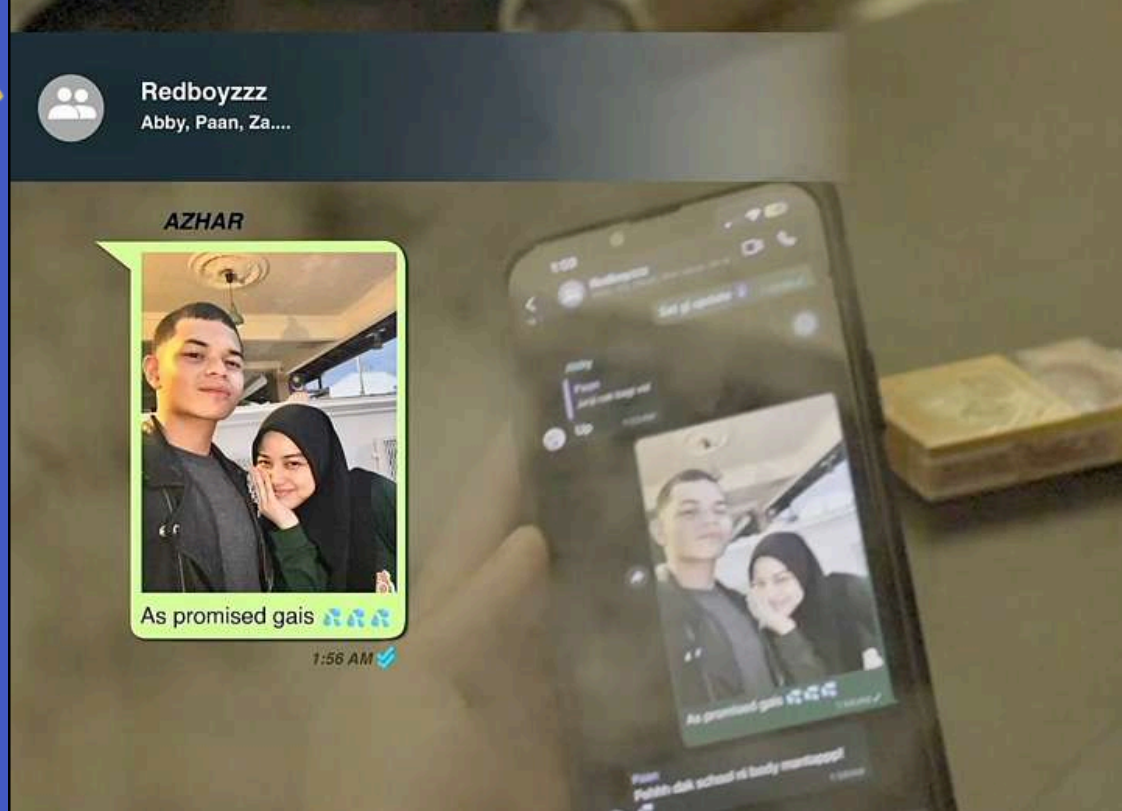
## Synopsis

Hai Anis follows the story of a teenage schoolgirl who becomes entangled in the dangerous web of online grooming. Anis, who feels isolated and has no friends at school, receives attention from Azhar, an older man who makes her feel safe and happy, despite her older sister Kak Long's warnings, Anis continues to find comfort in Azhar's kind words, late night video calls, and secret meetings.

As their relationship progresses, Azhar's manipulative behavior intensifies. He convinces Anis to share her social media passwords under the pretense of protecting her and secretly takes intimate photos during their meetings. When Anis begins to question, Azhar's controlling and obsessive side becomes apparent: He repeatedly insists that they will marry and demands that Anis obey him.

The story reaches a tense climax when Anis, after a moment of reconciliation with Kak Long, receives a threatening message from Azhar through Kak Long's phone. He demands to Kak Long that Anis must marry him, warning that he will expose their private photos if she refuses.

"Hai Anis" is a powerful and chilling depiction of how online predators manipulate and exploit vulnerable young people. It highlights the growing dangers of social media and serves as a cautionary tale about the risks of digital exploitation.







## Director's Statement

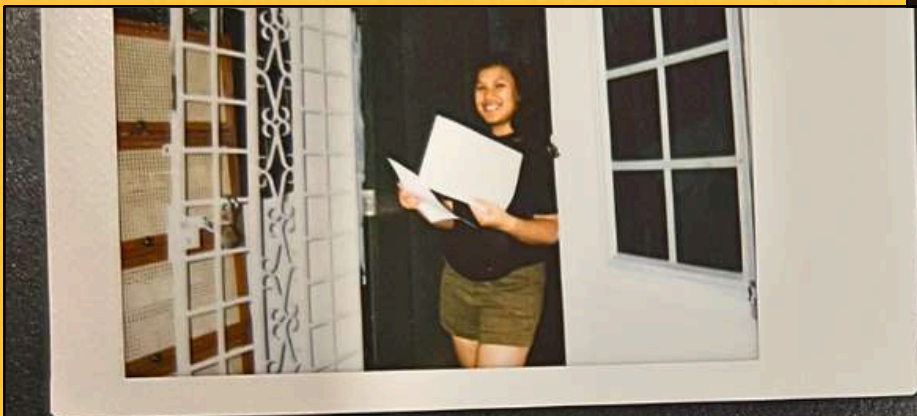
In this film I delve into the critical issue of online safety, grooming, and sexual education issues, highlighting how predators often seek out vulnerable young girls, pretending to offer them safety and understanding. Through Anis's journey, the film uncovers the manipulative tactics used by such individuals to gain trust and exert control, showing how these dangers in the digital world can extend into real life. This story underscores the importance of digital rights, consent, and awareness of the hidden threats lurking online. By exploring the intersection of Anis's online and offline experiences, I aim to spark conversations about the responsibilities of families, communities, and society to protect and empower young people navigating an increasingly connected world.





**Azura Nasron (28)** is a social justice advocate specializing in human rights. She holds a Political Science degree and is pursuing a Master's in Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Malaya. As Programme Manager at SUARAM, she oversees initiatives to repeal draconian laws and promote human rights in Malaysia. Azura is also a Partner at Legal Dignity, advocating for marginalized communities.

As a founding member of Rekod Media, she works to normalize political discourse through documentaries, podcasts, and events. Azura's commitment to academic freedom and contributions to publications like Jurnal Sang Pemula demonstrate her dedication to creating a more equitable society and combating oppressive policies.





A FILM BY INTAN SAKINAH

# BALANG TERANG

A JAR OF LIGHT



starring

Megat al-Qawi • Alya Maryana • Iris Lo • Nico Lai

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER EngageMedia CO-PRODUCER Syasya Syahirah WRITTEN BY Intan Sakinah • Dexter Lee  
PRODUCTION MANAGER Hazirah Shahrin DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Aqello PRODUCTION DESIGNER Yasmin Sany  
ART DIRECTOR Gan Zi Xuan GAFFER Naim Hafizi PRODUCTION SOUND CREW Rebecca Khoo • Rex Lee  
EDITOR Intan Sakinah COLOURIST Loo Yuan Ling GRAPHIC DESIGNER Faris Naim

WITH SUPPORT FROM



POSTER DESIGN BY  
ric



After being deceived by a prevalent online disinformation involving a Chinese business owner, a Malay-Muslim eatery owner and his daughter become entangled in the same web of prejudice when they take in the businessman's cyberbullied daughter.

Director  
**Intan Sakinah**

Genre  
**Short fiction**

Digital Rights Issues  
**Online  
disinformation  
& Digital  
discrimination**

Country  
**Malaysia**

Running time  
**15:00 min**



## Synopsis

Rahim, a Malay-Muslim restaurant owner, falls for a circulating message in his community's WhatsApp group regarding Lim, a Malaysian Chinese business owner who sells ingredients for cooking. His teenage daughter Hanis, however, questions the authenticity of the message, which was sent by a respectable figure among the community.

When Lim's daughter May seeks temporary refuge at their home, Rahim learns how the disinformation campaign has led to cyberbullying of May at school. As he begins to empathize with Lim's situation as a fellow father, Rahim himself becomes a target of false rumors about alleged business dealings with Lim. Troubled by the situation, May decides to return home. In the final scene, Lim comes to the restaurant to pick up May. Despite the earlier tension, Hanis joins her father in bidding farewell to her friend. May expresses her heartfelt gratitude to Rahim before leaving.







## Director's Statement

There is a critical issue that has not been adequately addressed: a potentially harmful racial division occurring on social media. While unresolved racial tension exists in Malaysia, the digital aspect is often overlooked. This problem is more pronounced with the sensitive 3R sentiment (Religion, Race, Royalty).

I would like to explore the spread of interracial disinformation in my film. For instance, there are viral posts urging Malay Muslims to boycott non-Muslim companies, and accusations that local non-Bumiputera products are non-halal, claiming their packaging is designed to deceive buyers into thinking they are Muslim-made.

As a Malay Muslim, I frequently encounter these posts, including in my family's group chat. I believe this is a serious problem that requires intervention. As a youth filmmaker, I feel it is crucial for those of my generation to intervene and raise awareness about these issues and contribute to shaping a better Malaysia.





**Intan Sakinah (23)**, from Penang, Malaysia, is a passionate storyteller and musician. She pursued a cinematic arts degree at Multimedia University, where she developed her filmmaking skills. Her first feature-length documentary, "Face-to-Phase," was featured by Cult Creative in 2021, and two of her films were screened at Rantai Art Festival in 2023. Intan's work focuses on people's stories, local cultures, and interpersonal relationships in Southeast Asia. Growing up with an autistic brother, she is also a strong advocate for autism awareness. Her diverse interests, from fantasy writing to gamelan composition, inform her unique creative perspective and storytelling approach.





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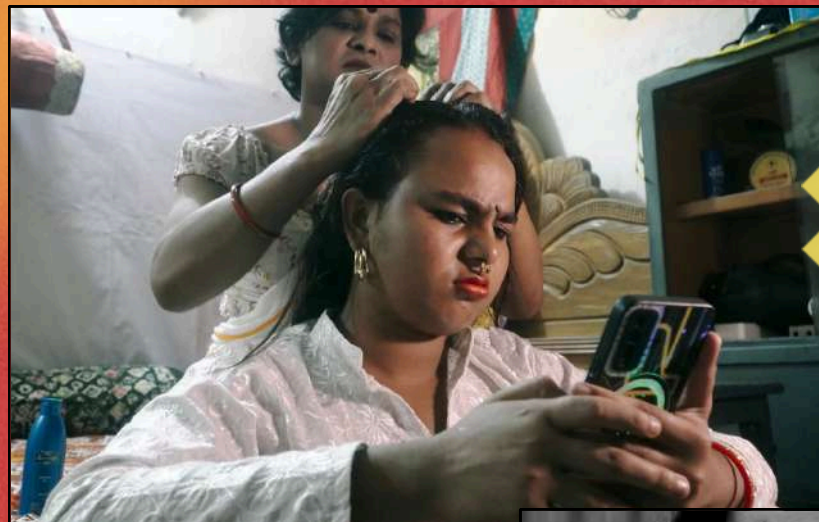
TECH  
TALES  
YOUTH

DIRECTOR & WRITER **LAMEA TANJIN TANHA**

# ECHOES OF EXILE

নির্সমানেত্র প্রবিশ্বসি

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER EngageMedia | PROJECT MANAGER & IMPACT  
PRODUCER King Catoy | EDITOR & CINEMATOGRAPHER Azmain Ishmam |  
MUSIC COMPOSER Esmam La Crowned | ANIMATOR Bijita and Tuba | CAST  
Nishi Hijra, Babuni Hijra | ADVISORS Rezwan Islam, Saiyeed Shahjada Al Kareem



A tale of two members of the traditional hijra community. Their lives are thrown into chaos as online extremism forces them into exile, showing the harsh realities they face and their incredible strength of resistance.

Director  
**Lamea Tanjin Tanha**

Country  
**Bangladesh**

Genre  
**Documentary**

Running time  
**14:00 min**

Digital Rights Issues  
**Online Gender-  
Based Violence &  
Freedom of  
Expression**





## Synopsis

Echoes of Exile follows two trans women from different generations: one is an elder in the traditional hijra community of Bangladesh, and the other is a young closeted trans girl targeted by cyber harassment. Though their experiences differ, both are forced into exile, rejected by their families and communities.

The film explores how digital harassment & online extremism impacts their personal lives and reveals the shared struggles of marginalized trans women in a changing world.

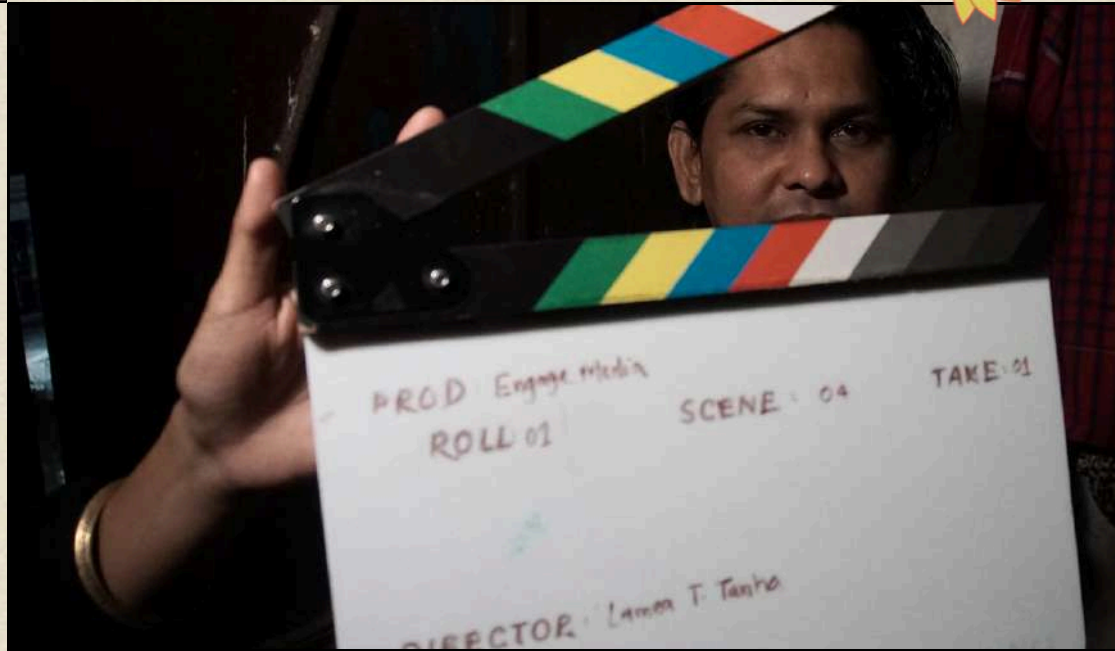






## Director's Statement

Director's Statement Echoes of Exile is a story about two trans women from different walks of life, connected by shared struggles of exile and rejection. I wanted to highlight how both tradition and technology can harm those who are already vulnerable. This film sheds light on the silent battles faced by trans women in a world that doesn't always protect them, especially in places where LGBTQ+ rights are fragile. My hope is to raise awareness of the harmful impact of digital harassment and the strength it takes to survive in such circumstances.





**Lamea Tanjin Tanha (24)** is a Bangladeshi feminist, social entrepreneur, and activist focusing on SOGIESC rights. In 2018, they founded TransEnd, a youth-led non-profit promoting hijra community's rights through diverse campaigns. Their filmmaking journey began with a stop-motion video about intersex individuals, created using basic tools during the pandemic, which gained significant online traction.

Lamea faces challenges like digital authoritarianism and online harassment but remains committed to their cause. Their work has earned them numerous awards, including the Bangladesh Sustainability Excellence Award (2023) and the Diana Award (2021). They're also affiliated with prestigious programs like IVLP and Ashoka Young Changemaker. Lamea envisions a world of compassion, empathy, and sustainability, taking incremental steps toward positive change.

