

**CURRENT AFFAIRS**

# TURBULENT TIMES: A WORLD IN CONFLICT

12 x 30 (ENG, GER)

**The most pressing geopolitical and social conflicts shaping our world today.**

From power struggles in the South China Sea to the resilience of teens in war zones, this series provides an in-depth look at the human stories behind the headlines. Each episode highlights different regions and issues, including drug wars in Colombia, the fight for democracy in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the civilian resistance in Ukraine. This series sheds light on the complexities of global conflicts and the enduring spirit of those affected.

Original Title: Turbulent Times: A World in Conflict  
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Produced by: NZZ



### **1. Navigating Troubled Waters – Power Politics in the South China Sea**

The South China Sea is a hub of world trade, strategically important and full of resources. How nations can use parts of it is regulated by the Law of the Sea. But China ignores this. In Manila, capital of the Philippines, former chief justice Antonio Carpio has been following developments for a decade and is convinced: “China is insane.” With its power politics, the country is violating modern international maritime law. This is dangerous, he says, and the international community cannot accept it. A documentary about people who experience the geopolitical conflict between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea on a daily basis.

### **2. Ukrainian Heroes: Stories of Civilian Resistance and Resilience**

Putin's troops bombard the city of Kherson on a daily basis. We accompany civilians who, despite the occupation, have refused to be driven out of their homeland and are resisting Russian aggression in their own way. Olexandr Kniga, one of the most renowned and respected theater directors in Ukraine, has poets and singers perform in the air-raid shelter of his theater. Alina Dozenko, the director of the Art Museum, and curator Hannah Skripka tricked the Russians in order to save their art treasure. Vladimir Sagayak, the director of a children's home, saved 46 orphans from being deported to Russia. His daughter Katarina Fateyeva and grandson Maxim use piano lessons and music to distract themselves from the war and the daily bombardment.

### **3. Deadly Harvest – Colombia's Cocaine Crisis**

In Catatumbo, Colombia's largest coca-growing area, hundreds of thousands of people make a living from cultivating the plant from which cocaine is produced. But for the past year and a half, local farmers have been unable to find buyers for their coca paste. Production has therefore stopped in many places. Harvesters are being laid off, depriving them of their livelihood. The region is under the control of the ELN and Farc guerrilla groups. The police can hardly leave their stations, as they quickly become the target of attacks. The law of the strongest rules. This documentary gives a rare insight into this dangerous region: from coca harvesting to cocaine production in laboratories hidden in the forest to former Farc fighters who are now hunted as dropouts by the armed groups themselves. Those who suffer most in this war for land, power, money and influence are the people from the civilian population who suffer under the brutal rule of the guerrillas.

#### **4. Dancing Through Darkness: Teen Resilience in War**

From the first days of the war to the siege, the liberation of the city, and the challenges of life afterward - accompany a group of young people in the city of Chernihiv in north-eastern Ukraine. The graduating classes of the local school are preparing for the end of their school days, full of anticipation for the big prom and the transition to adult life. Then war breaks out. But the young people keep their dream of the graduation ceremony and the long-awaited prom alive. Amid destruction and siege, the young people find solace in the idea of being able to catch up on their dance. After the siege, they turn their dream into reality and finally dance their graduation dance. Ukrainian filmmakers Liudmyla Batalova and Sasho Brama tell a touching story of young people's strength and determination in the darkest times and of their dreams and hopes for a peaceful future.

#### **5. Finland – Next-Door to Dangerous Russia**

From the first days of the war to the siege, the liberation of the city, and the challenges of life afterward - accompany a group of young people in the city of Chernihiv in north-eastern Ukraine. The graduating classes of the local school are preparing for the end of their school days, full of anticipation for the big prom and the transition to adult life. Then war breaks out. But the young people keep their dream of the graduation ceremony and the long-awaited prom alive. Amid destruction and siege, the young people find solace in the idea of being able to catch up on their dance. After the siege, they turn their dream into reality and finally dance their graduation dance. Ukrainian filmmakers Liudmyla Batalova and Sasho Brama tell a touching story of young people's strength and determination in the darkest times and of their dreams and hopes for a peaceful future.

#### **6. Bone Collectors: Searching for Justice in the Philippines' Drug War**

Up to 30,000 people have fallen victim to former President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs in the Philippines. A Filipino priest is exhuming the bodies of this drug war, hoping to secure evidence for possible trials against Filipino police officers and the government at the International Criminal Court.

#### **7. Afghanistan 2021: The Return of the Taliban**

Relive the takeover of the Taliban through the eyes of Afghanistan's citizens. In the weeks leading up to the Taliban takeover, the imminent collapse of the Afghan government was becoming more and more evident. What did this mean for Afghanistan's citizens? We followed Afghans during the last days before the Taliban regained power. They tell us about their dreams, fears and hopes and show us how they experience these last days.

#### **8. Fighting ISIS**

In 2017, the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq has officially ended. But the terrorist organisation has never disappeared. The film follows Iraq's special unit CTS, which is engaged in daily combat operations against the ISIS, into remote desert areas. At the same time, the film takes a comprehensive look at the complex political situation in Iraq. The country is facing a dangerous crossroads. While the ISIS is regrouping in the underground, the state is under economic pressure due to the oil crisis - ideal conditions for the militant group to recruit new followers.

### **9. La Bestia – By Death Train to the USA**

"La Bestia": the dangerous goods train that migrants jump on to get from the south of Mexico to the U.S. border. Most of them come from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and cannot afford a bus ticket or a smuggler. Travelling by train is the fastest way for them to reach the USA, but also the most dangerous. Many people fall off the train, land on the tracks, are run over, mutilated and robbed or raped by criminal gangs. Nevertheless, people make their way to a hopefully better life in the USA.

### **10. Storming the Capitol – Police Under Threat**

During the Storming of the Capitol, three police officers were badly injured. Now their stories are being told. On January 6, 2021, a mob stormed the Capitol and the world wondered how this could happen. A team of online researchers, the police and relatives of three police officers that were badly injured set out on a search for clues. One of the police officers took his own life just days after the violent protests. They encounter explosive details and within the footage of thousands of videos, the team finds traces of the specific Trump supporters who attacked the police officers. Finding out what exactly happened that day is a relief for the police officers and their families. But not all scars heal.

### **11. Hong Kong and Taiwan: The Struggle for Democracy**

While Taiwan is one of the most democratic societies in all of Asia, China wants to reunite Taiwan with the mainland. Taiwan's 23 million citizens live in one of the most democratic societies in all of Asia. In Beijing's eyes, however, Taiwan is a province that has broken off and must be reunited with the mainland – at whatever the cost. But the Taiwanese do not want to lose their democratic achievements or their core values. In the elections on January 11th, 2020, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen scored a clear victory. Her strict stance supporting Hong Kong's freedom helped her win, as she is a strong proponent for democracy

### **12. Reporting from the Battlefield – The Vital Role of Local Support**

The untold story of Ukrainian fixers: risking everything to help journalists report from the frontlines of war. Kate Rusetska and Kostia Karnoza, two Ukrainians from the besieged city of Dnipro, take on a crucial role as fixers, aiding the surge of international journalists reporting on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Kate, an art curator, and Kostia, a former soldier, navigate the dangerous frontlines, researching stories, driving to conflict zones, and translating interviews with war-traumatized civilians. Their work highlights the indispensable contributions of Ukrainian fixers—former pilots, truck drivers, journalists, and artists—who use their local expertise to support war correspondents. This documentary offers a personal look into their lives, the hardships they face, and the emotional toll of constantly witnessing the suffering of their fellow citizens. As the war grinds on, they fear that global interest in Ukraine will fade, a loss that Kostia believes could mark the beginning of Ukraine's defeat.