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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17th, 2018

No Human Is Illegal

A personal encounter with refugees indefinitely detained on the Greek island of Lesvos as the European Commission determines their fate.

NEW YORK, NY, July 17, 2018 / -- NY Writer/director Richard C. Ledes is releasing his feature documentary **No Human Is Illegal** on YouTube. Completed in 2018, **No Human Is Illegal** is about the people variously referred to as "refugees" or "irregular migrants" who are currently detained indefinitely on the Greek island of Lesvos. The refugee camps of Lesvos represent one of the darkest and most seminal political historical events of the start of the 21st century: the founding of a zone of exclusion within the Eurozone. As Ledes writes in his director's statement available on the film's Website, "By chance, when I and my small crew arrived on the island in April of 2016, it was just after Europe had radically revised its policy towards the people arriving on the island from Turkey in overcrowded boats controlled by smugglers. The European Council had just published its new policy, beginning: 'All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey.'" Because of this timing, the documentary Ledes had thought he was going to make about the arrival of refugees became one about the indefinite detention of these same people. Before leaving for Lesvos from New York, Ledes had decided to make this documentary because he felt the history of the island offered him a unique opportunity to do so. Lesvos previously experienced an unprecedented wave of refugees arriving from Turkey in the 1920s when ethnically Greek refugees left Turkey either because of massacres being carried out against minority populations or because of the treaty of Lausanne that required an exchange of their respective religious minorities between Turkey and Greece. The parents of the father of the filmmaker were among the Greek refugees that departed from Turkey at this time although his relatives departed for the United States. Most of the inhabitants of Lesvos today are themselves descended from this earlier generation of refugees from Turkey. To this personal connection Ledes adds to his reasons for starting out on this film two prominent connections of the island to ancient Greece. The earliest of these is the island's renown as the birthplace of Sappho in the 7th century B.C. and the later one, over two hundred years later, the importance given to the island in The History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides. Ledes makes use of all three of these connections while interviewing the film's three constituent groups: refugees, residents of the island and volunteers. The film is shot in stunning CinemaScope by Italian cinematographer Valentina Caniglia. As Ledes states in connection to their decision to shoot in CinemaScope, "we wanted to give the people 'space,' both literally and figuratively, to tell their personal stories. Valentina's beautiful work in CinemaScope brings out the tragic contrast between the beauty of the island and the situation of these people seeking safety for themselves and for their families." The film also contains an extraordinary jazz score created for the film by composers François and Louis Moutin and played by the Moutin Factory Quintet.

Richard Ledes is a New York City filmmaker. In 2004 his feature fiction film A Hole In One was nominated for Best Narrative Feature at the Tribeca Film Festival. In 2008 his feature fiction film The Caller won Best NY Narrative Feature at the Tribeca Film Festival and in 2012 his feature fiction film Fred Won't Move Out was nominated for Best North American Independent Film at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. **No Human Is Illegal** is his first feature documentary.

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