
Japan's #MeToo documentary faces backlash, delayed release



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Japan's Oscar-nominated documentary *Black Box Diaries*, directed by journalist Shiori Ito, has sparked controversy and remains unreleased in its home country. The film, which revisits Ito's personal battle for justice after alleging sexual assault against a prominent journalist, has drawn both critical acclaim and legal disputes.

Ito became a key figure in Japan's #MeToo movement after publicly accusing Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a former Washington bureau chief for a Japanese media firm, of rape. Although a criminal case was not pursued due to lack of evidence, she later won a civil lawsuit against him. Black Box Diaries captures her emotional and legal struggle, featuring over 400 hours of footage, including CCTV clips showing an intoxicated Ito being taken into a hotel.

However, her former legal team claims she misused sensitive materials, including CCTV footage and recordings of a police whistleblower and a taxi driver—both allegedly identifiable without consent. Attorney Yoko Nishihiro argued that making such evidence public could hinder future sexual assault cases by discouraging cooperation.

Ito maintains that using these materials was necessary to expose alleged cover-ups and serve the public interest. Acknowledging concerns, she has agreed to re-edit the documentary to obscure identities before its eventual screening.

While no official reason has been given for the film's absence from Japanese cinemas, legal complexities and societal sensitivities may be contributing factors. Ito believes Japan is still reluctant to confront issues of sexual violence openly, underscoring the broader challenges faced by the country's #MeToo movement.