

*“Saturday’s launch of Irene Angelico and Abbey Neidik’s new documentary, First to Stand: The Cases and Causes of Irwin Cotler at the Cinéma du Musée was a beautifully orchestrated and emotionally charged event. Playing to an enthusiastic full house, the captivating, fast-paced movie tracks former Justice Minister Cotler’s battles in defence of people who have been victimized for fighting against repressive regimes. The stories captured in the doc were amplified by the presence of three of the featured participants: Irwin Cotler, human rights champion; Shaparak Shajarizadeh, an Iranian woman tortured and sentenced for protests that spearheaded the current movement for women’s rights, and Ensaf Haidar the wife and voice of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi who was sentenced to ten years in prison and 1000 lashes for advocating freedom of speech. The film, the filmmakers, the responses by Cotler and these courageous women, who all handled questions with modest brilliance, drew several standing ovations.”*

— Maurie Alioff, film journalist/critic.