A DOCUMENTARY FILM

A Light in the *Black*

What does it mean to love a place that belongs to everyone?

DIRECTED BY	LIA KOMAKHIDZE
PRODUCED BY	LIA KOMAKHIDZE · GRAHAM PATTERSON
SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR	GRAHAM PATTERSON
ORIGIN	GEORGIA · 2026
LANGUAGES	ENGLISH · GEORGIAN

LOGLINE

A Georgian filmmaker returns to the Black Sea coast, a place deeply connected to her memories, to understand its changing environment. What begins as a personal inquiry unfolds into encounters with scientists, environmentalists, and coastal communities confronting environmental challenges and the realities of a shared sea divided by borders.

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Synopsis

THE STORY

Returning to the Black Sea coast, a place deeply connected to her memories, Georgian filmmaker Lia Komakhidze looks to understand a sea she has known since her childhood. What starts as a personal journey gradually unfolds into encounters with people whose lives remain closely tied to the Black Sea and its uncertain future.

Traveling alongside marine scientist Graham Patterson and meeting with divers, fishers, scientists, and coastal residents, Lia begins to understand a sea under pressure from many directions at once: ecological, economic, and political. The film also reveals something less visible: across these borders, people are already working to understand and protect the sea, oftentimes despite limited resources.

As the journey expands beyond Georgia to the International Union for Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi, local experiences connect to wider conversations about conservation, conflict, and transboundary cooperation, including with renowned marine biologist and Mission Blue founder Sylvia Earle.

Through reflection and observation, the film asks whether a sea shared by nations divided by politics, history, and conflict can still teach them something about what they have in common.

Director's Statement

> *What does it mean to love a place that belongs to everyone?*

The Black Sea has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. I spent many summers there, first as a child, later with friends, and then with my own children. It is where I learned how to swim. It is where I had moments of feeling very close to nature without even thinking about it.

As I grew older, I began to feel a stronger need to connect with the sea in a different way. Not only as a place of memory or rest, but as something alive, something I wanted to understand more deeply. This film became part of that search.

While working on it, my relationship with the sea changed. I discovered a world I had never really seen before: underwater life, fragile ecosystems, people trying to protect them, and the complicated reality surrounding the Black Sea itself. The more I learned, the more connected I felt.

A Light in the Black is a reflection of this journey, of returning to a familiar place and seeing it differently for the first time.

– Lia Komakhidze

Why the Black Sea

The Black Sea receives massive freshwater input from major European rivers, including the Danube, Dnieper, and Dniester, and is connected to the high-salinity Mediterranean through the narrow Bosporus Strait. The result is a distinct dual-layer structure: a lighter, oxygenated surface layer sitting atop a dense, saline deep layer that has remained largely isolated for thousands of years.

Because the lower ninety percent of the Black Sea's deep-water volume is incompatible with most life, what remains is compressed into a narrow upper band. Even so, historically that band supported extraordinary biodiversity. Dolphin populations in the Black Sea were once among the largest documented anywhere, with massive pods described by ancient Greek and Roman writers and depicted in the art and coinage of Black Sea colonies going back millennia.

The narrowness of the habitable zone heightens the sea's vulnerability to everything else compounding against it: eutrophication from agricultural and urban runoff, invasive species introductions, overfishing, and coastal development.

Politically, the six bordering nations (Georgia, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and Bulgaria) span NATO and non-NATO states, EU and non-EU members, and a region whose relationships are marked by historic frictions and active war. The result is a body of water where the environmental challenges must be confronted actively, but where they can only be managed together.

COASTAL NATIONS

Bulgaria · Georgia · Romania · Russia · Turkey · Ukraine

ANOXIC BELOW

150 METERS

Lower depths contain no oxygen and cannot support most marine life.

COASTAL NATIONS

6

Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, across NATO/non-NATO and EU/non-EU lines.

DRAINAGE BASIN

20+ COUNTRIES

Pollutants from across Europe accumulate via the Danube, Dnieper, and Don.

SURFACE AREA

436k KM²

A semi-enclosed basin with limited circulation, and a sink for the continent.

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The Team

FILMMAKERS

DIRECTOR · PRODUCER · EDITOR

Lia Komakhidze

Lia Komakhidze is a Georgian filmmaker based in New York. After years of working in video editing and television, she began developing her own filmmaking practice through documentary storytelling. Her first feature documentary was completed in the United States. *A Light in the Black* is her second documentary project and reflects her interest in environmental themes and humanity's connection to nature and the ocean.

CO-PRODUCER · SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR

Graham Patterson

Marine scientist and public policy expert with dual master's degrees, Graham is the founder of REEF Scuba, a 501(c)(3) ocean conservation nonprofit with UN consultative status. His background bridging marine ecology, environmental governance, and international advocacy provides the film's scientific foundation while situating the Black Sea's crisis within its broader transboundary context.

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Specs & Credits

TECHNICAL

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

RUNTIME	Approx. 25 minutes
EXPECTED COMPLETION	2026
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Georgia
SHOOTING FORMAT	4K Digital
ASPECT RATIO	16:9
LANGUAGES	English, Georgian
SUBTITLES	English (Closed Captions Available)

CREDITS

DIRECTED BY	Lia Komakhidze
PRODUCED BY	Lia Komakhidze Graham Patterson
EDITED BY	Lia Komakhidze
SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR	Graham Patterson

Funding & Contact

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