Nomination for the Cavling Prize 2026 – Kampen om Grønlands undergrund

Nominees: Sofie Synnøve Herschend, Ole Jakobsen and Joachim Kattrup, Danwatch

I nominate Sofie Synnøve Herschend, Ole Jakobsen and Joachim Kattrup for their sustained investigation into Greenland's mining and fossil fuel licences, the financial and political interests behind them, and what they mean for the people who live here. Their work has focused particularly on fossil fuels, with Greenland Energy Company's proposed oil project in Nunap Qeqqa (Jameson Land) at its centre.

I am the director of *The Act of Killing*, *The Look of Silence* and *The End*, Professor of Film at the University of Westminster, and a director at Final Cut for Real. I live half the year in Ittoqqortoormiit, an Inuit hunting community in East Greenland and one of the world's most isolated places. The proposed drilling sites lie on the community's hunting grounds, and I have seen first-hand what this reporting means to my neighbours.

Their reporting is extraordinary for the clarity with which they connect an intimate local story to a mounting geopolitical crisis. They listen to hunters explain their fears for their livelihoods and investigate the decisions in distant boardrooms and government offices that could determine their future and Greenland's. They make the financial and political connections understandable while keeping this vulnerable community, its distinctive way of life and the people who must live with the consequences at the centre of the story.

Their repeated visits to Ittoqqortoormiit meant they were the only reporting team present to document the project, including when Greenland Energy CEO Robert Price arrived without notifying Greenland's government, offering money and jobs to buy the town's goodwill.

Their earlier interviews had helped residents understand the executives' connections to Trump, the licence history and the project's local and geopolitical consequences. When my neighbours challenged Price, he failed to answer their questions and grew furious, revealing his attitude towards the people whose support he sought. Meticulous follow-up investigations into extraordinarily high salaries for hunters and private gifts have exposed the company's efforts to buy support and bypass Greenland's democratic processes.

On a two-day boat trip, Sofie and Ole travelled to the proposed drilling sites. Carrying a rifle for protection against polar bears, they hiked across the tundra to confront geologists at work. They suspected—and later proved—that the fieldwork had begun illegally, just two days after the company received a strong warning for landing equipment without permission—an explosive revelation that became a global news story.

Through these visits, the team built trust with hunters, community leaders and residents. They listened to my neighbours' hopes and fears and helped them understand a project about which they had received almost no information. They also maintained access to government officials and company leaders.

Across thirty articles and accompanying filmed reports since March, the team has investigated ownership, financing, investor disclosures and failures to scrutinise foreign investors. They have documented unauthorised landings and fieldwork, exposed contradictions between statements to investors and residents, and examined questionable efforts to secure Greenlandic goodwill.

They have mapped a proposed takeover involving thirteen licences, showing how the company's ambitions extend across Greenland and far beyond oil. They have traced connections to Trump's inner circle and the US defence industry, including Trump's Golden Dome missile defence programme. Their reporting on licence ownership prompted a minister to acknowledge the need for earlier investor screening.

By pressing the authorities on environmental and social requirements, they established that the autumn 2026 drilling promised by executives could not be completed lawfully. Three days after publication, the government formally ruled out drilling that winter. Their scrutiny helped ensure that Greenland's environmental and natural resource laws were upheld. Pushing ahead regardless would have defied Greenland's laws and its right to control its own resources, at a time when its sovereignty was already under direct threat.

Their reporting has become a key source for coverage by *The New York Times, The Guardian*, the *Financial Times, The Rachel Maddow Show* and *CNN*, as well as *TV* 2 and *DR*.

My neighbours and I have followed their work with deep admiration. It has helped our community in Ittoqqortoormiit ask informed questions, challenge powerful interests and insist on being heard. I can hardly imagine more deserving recipients of the Cavling Prize.

— Joshua Oppenheimer