200 METERS
A FILM BY AMEEN NAYFEH

Palestine, Jordan, Qatar, Italy, Sweden - 2020 - 86 min

Venice Screenings:
Thursday, September 3rd 11h00 Sala Perla Press & Industry Screening
Tuesday, September 8th 17h00 Sala Perla Premiere Screening
Saturday, September 12th 20h00 Cinema Astra Repetition Screening

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[ SYNOPSIS ]

Mustafa and his wife Salwa live 200 meters apart in villages separated by the wall. One day he gets a call every parent dreads: his son has had an accident. Rushing to cross the Israeli checkpoint, Mustafa is denied on a technicality. But a father’s love won’t give up and he will do anything to reach his son. A 200 meter distance becomes a 200 kilometer odyssey, as Mustafa, left with no choice, attempts to smuggle himself to the other side of the wall.
I carry lots of memories that I no longer have access to, or it could be that I fear to dwell back into it. Oppression does alienate you as it denies you your basic rights; especially when you start adapting to it!

A forced separation aches a lot. 200 METERS is my story and the story of thousands of Palestinians, and stories can definitely alter lives. I believe in the power of the cinema and how it touches our lives and magical ways. I need to tell this story.

Images of the wall, checkpoints and soldiers are probably what come to mind when Palestine is mentioned. Although these images are also in this film, the focus will be on what such a separation does to us as human beings. And to shed more light on the invisible barriers and walls that are created as a result to the physical barrier.

Here, in Palestine we got used to adapt to new situations, to do as we’re told and camouflage our feelings. But this should no longer be acceptable. Freedom of movement is a very basic human right that seems to be a fairytale in such a brutal reality. The main character Mustafa has obeyed the rules, endured the humiliation and did as told in order to secure a small chance to be with his family, but when the same rules that alienated his life put his family and fatherhood on stake, will he obey it any longer?
The determination of a father to overcome all obstacles out of love for his family, in an extremely absurd and oppressive situation, is at the core of your movie. How did you first come across the idea of making a movie about Mustafa and his family, and the 200 meters that divide them?

I can say that maybe 99% of Palestinians have to go through a similar journey in overcoming such absurd obstacles in their daily life. You fight your way to small victories in order to achieve simple, basic tasks. The idea of the film and the 200-meter distance came as an accumulation of both personal and collective experiences. I’ve experienced my share of separation as my mother is originally from a Palestinian village on the other side of the wall. The village was my “Neverland” growing up. But after the wall was built, we were cut off from the rest of our family, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and childhood friends. I have lots of bad memories at checkpoints like everyone else. I can go on forever about the tragedies this situation of apartheid has created. Of course, our reality is much more complicated than we portray in the film since we need to simplify it to be able to tell the story.

Almost 13 years ago, I was hanging out with one of my friends. His rooftop overlooks the wall and a Palestinian town on the other side. This friend – who happened to be a construction worker in Israel – started telling us that; “Before the wall, I used to light a cigarette and I’d be home before it was finished. It’s a mere 200 meters away! Going to work now is like traveling around the Cape of Good Hope.”

This irrational situation has affected thousands of families. Many didn’t have the energy to adapt. Others fought their way hoping that the situation would eventually change. But despite this, the story I chose to tell was of the triumph of love.

In your film you seamlessly combine elements from different genres, from family story over social drama to road movie and thriller elements. How did you develop this approach to filmmaking?

I believe I was really influenced by my professor Mr. Dewi Griffiths, who always emphasized the importance of genre. I actually started developing the script in film school back in 2010. I first pitched it as a road movie, where it was warmly received. Making a genre film was an early goal, but I did not want to make a melodrama. It took me some time and a couple writing workshops to develop the film from a straight road movie with no elements of social drama to a story that’s not only functional but also has emotion, and to weave the various story elements together into the quest of the main character. I believe this was the best approach to tell this story.
The first short film I wrote was both a western and a road movie. I am still at the beginning of my career and exploring style. But I am a fan of genre films and yet I also appreciate social dramas, as they touch me the most.

**How was the collaboration with Ali Suliman, one of the most iconic Palestinian actors? At what point did he get involved in the film? Did you have him in mind when writing the role of Mustafa?**

He was in mind since the inception of the screenplay – the first draft, really. I first met him in person a year ahead of production and he was very interested and supportive. We started working together two months before the shoot, where we went through the tiniest details of Mustafa’s world. A reassuring experience that I had prior to 200 Meters was that I had edited a short film that he starred in. So I was able to get first-hand information from my friend (who was also a first time director) on working with Ali.

Besides that, I didn’t know much about Ali other than his great acting. I was always asking myself how the hell am I going to direct such a talent? He has worked with such top-notch directors! But it turned out that working with him was a real blessing. He was very generous with his ideas and solutions. At one point he also helped with casting. He is more than a world-class actor. The support and trust he gave me - in addition to his support to any first-time actor in the film - shows the kind of person he is.

**Mustafa meets a very diverse group of travelers, from Palestine and beyond, during his odyssey. Can you tell us how you developed this ensemble of characters?**

The script went through a long period of development where the ensemble changed many times. The only constant characters were Mustafa and Kifah – the young men going to the wedding of his cousin. I wanted to keep the journey and the characters as authentic as possible. Credibility was a key issue for me. All characters are either people I knew, met, or had heard about.

But it didn’t mesh together until I had a cohesive structure for the screenplay. Only then was I able to see the dramatic potential of these characters and their relationship with Mustafa and his experience. The characters came to life to create a balance within our absurd realities. There is something truly arbitrary about the way we experience apartheid and separation. And yet the experience is both plausible and true, which is where a lot of the irony and humor came from, as well.

It was such a great memory when I started casting and started to see my characters as real people. It was an absolutely exhilarating experience.
A documentary filmmaker plays an important role in Mustafa's journey. How much did you conceive her character as a comment on perceptions of Palestinian reality from the outside?

The idea of having a foreign character started when I was looking for a way to pass information to the audience but without spoon-feeding them complex details. It would be natural for a foreigner to ask about certain issues, but it would be unnatural for Palestinians to explain the situation to each other. But I also didn't want this character to function only as an exposition tool to help a foreign audience navigate the story.

When I decided to create the character of Anne, the German filmmaker, I based it on a real story. But as I was reworking the script and her character, I realized that many layers made her into a crucial element in this story. There's a particular trust-mistrust dichotomy of how her group dynamic keeps changing based on what we know about her background, regardless of who she is as a person.

Do you see yourself as part of a group of Palestinian filmmakers, or what are your references as an artist?

I do identify as a Palestinian filmmaker and it is an honor to be affiliated with this group of hard-working individuals who took it upon themselves to reach out to the world. We are facing many challenges as independent Palestinian filmmakers. After all, we are working in a country with no filmmaking infrastructure.

Personally I am influenced by my countryman Hani Abu-Asad, but also by filmmakers such as Asghar Farhadi or the Dardenne Brothers. My ambition is to tell good, inspiring stories from our region, not only from Palestine.
[ BIOGRAPHY - AMEEN NAYFEH ]


[FILMOGRAPHY - AMEEN NAYFEH ]

The Crossing | 2018 | Drama Short

Interference | 2017 | Drama Short

Suspended Time | 2014 | Documentary, Drama, Video art
The Palestinian star Ali Suliman is a son of a family who were exiled from their village of Safouruya in the Galilee during the Nakba of 1948. Ali was Born in Nazareth in 1977. After graduating from acting school in 2000 he started his career in the theater where he played a variety of different and complex roles including classical dramatic and comedy. In 2004 there was a qualitative shift in his career when he played the main role in Palestinian film PARADISE NOW, directed by Hany Abu-Assad, which was nominated an Academy Award and winner of a Golden Globe in 2005. Since then, his career is international, participating in numerous big productions in Hollywood, Europe and the Arab world.

Selected Awards
Best Actor at Alexandria International Film Festival 2016
Best Actor at Carthage International Film Festival 2012
Best Actor at Dubai International Film Festival 2011
Special Award at Anonimal Film Festival Romania 2009

Selected Filmography
Zinzana | 2015 | directed by Majid Al Ansari
Dancing Arabs | 2014 | directed by Eran Riklis
Lone Survivor | 2013 | directed by Peter Berg | produced by Universal Studios
Flying Home | 2014 | directed by Dominique Deruddere
Everywhere But Here | 2013 | directed by Michal Zilberman
Zaytoun | 2012 | directed by Eran Riklis
Cruel Summer | 2012 | directed by Kanye West
The Attack | 2012 | directed by Ziad Doueiri
Mars at Sunrise | 2012 | directed by Jessica Habie
Inheritance | 2012 | directed by Hiam Abbass
Do Not Forget Me Istanbul | 2011 | Omnibus, various directors
The Last Friday | 2011 | directed by Yahya Alabdallah
The Time that Remains | 2009 | directed by Elia Suleiman
Body of Lies | 2008 | directed by Ridley Scott | produced by Warner Bros Studios
Lemon Tree | 2008 | directed by Eran Riklis
The Prince of Venice | 2008 | directed by Yaa Boaa Aning
The Kingdom | 2007 | directed by Peter Berg | produced by Universal Studios
The Syrian Bride | 2004 | directed by Eran Riklis
Paradise Now | 2005 | directed by Hany Abu-Assad | Winner Golden Globe 2005, Academy Award nominated, Winner Amnesty International Award, AGICOA’S Blue Angle Award for Best European film and Reader Jury Award at Berlinale 2005
Chronicle of a Disappearance | 1996 | directed by Elia Suleiman
The Barbeque People | 2003 | directed by Yossi Madmoni, David Ofek

**Selected TV**
The Looming Tower | 2018 | Hulu
Jack Ryan | 2018 | Amazon Prime
The State | 2017 | Channel 4
The Promise | 2010 - 2011 | Channel 4
Homeland | 2011 | Showtime
The Battle on Jerusalem | 1999

**Selected Theater**
I Am Yusuf and This Is My Brother by Amir Nizar Zuabi | 2009 | Young Vic Theater London
The Sneeze by Anton Chekhov | 2007
Forget Herostratos by Gregore Goren | 2007
The Storm by William Shakespeare | 2005
Salome by Oscar Wilde | 2005
The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams | 2004
The Can Opener by Victor Lanoux | 2003
A View from the Bridge by Arthur Miller | 2010
Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett | 2002
Nathan the Wise by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing | 2000 | Germany
The Mission by Heiner Müller | 2002
May Odeh was born in Birzeit-Palestine. She is a director and producer best known for “Maradon’s Legs” 2019, “Gaza by Her” (2017), “The crossing” (2017), “Drawing for Better dreams” (2015), “Diaries” (2011), “Searching for Napoleon” (2006) and, “Unknown Soldiers” (2014), ROSHMIA “2014”, Izriqaq “2013”. She is the founder of ODEH FILMS; a production company aiming to produce and distribute creative documentary and fiction films. May has Master's Degree in film and production from Lillehammer University in Norway. Odeh’s curates and organizes various film programs including Red Carpet Film Festival, and Mobile Cinema - which is aiming to tour around villages and communities in area C to screen entertainment films for families and kids. She has been recently working in a variety of Art project research including film, photography, cooking and writing.

[PRODUCTION COMPANY - ODEH FILMS ]


ODEH FILMS is currently in post-production for “The Forgotten”, a feature documentary by Ghada Terawi.

Released Feature Films:
- Maradonas Legs a short film by Firas Khoury, 2019.
- “Gaza By Her”, short film for Rosa Luxemburg Association, produced and co-directed, Won the Bronze Tanit at JCC 2017
- “Forbidden Sky” by May Odeh, produced by AL Jazeera Documentary Channel, 2015
- “Roshmia” by Salim Abu Jabal, Co-Producer May Odeh, Feature Documentary, won the Al Jazeera Best Documentary 2015, best Audience Award at Karama Human Rights Film Festival, Jury Prize at Algeria International Film Festival, Al Kompis Freedom Award at Malmo Arab Film Festival, best documentary at Rome Medfilm Festival, Won the Grand Prize at Tettauen International Film Festival 2015 & Best Jury Prize in Dubai International Film Festival 2014
- “Izriqaq” by Rama Mari, Short Fiction, Palestine, Norway, Qatar, 2013 - Won the Sunbird Award at Days of cinema 2016
- “Diaries”, Feature Documentary, 2011
CAST (in order of appearance)

Mustafa            Ali Suliman
Salwa              Lana Zreik
Nabeela            Samia Bakri
Majd               Tawfeeq Nayfeh
Zeina              Maryam Nayfeh
Noura              Salma Nayfeh
Abu Sami           Ghassan Abbas
Nader              Nabil Al Raai
Saleh              Ghassan Ashqar
Rami               Mahmoud Abu Eita
Anne               Anna Unterberger
Kifah              Motaz Malhees
Old Israeli Man    Amer Khalil
GMC Driver         Dia Harb
Permits Office Clerk Mahmoud Nayfeh
Israeli Female Soldier Hanin Tarabeh
Waleed             Ahmad Tobasi
Khaled             Omar Hattab
Ahmad              Alaa Abu Saa
Gavi               Douraid Liddawe
Elad               Ghantus Wael
Israeli Male Officer Mohammad Younis
Israeli Soldier    Mohammad Abu Barjas
Yaser              Kifah Quzmar
Mahmoud            Faisal Abu Al Heija
Soldier            Afif Qawasmi
Israeli Female Soldier Rebecca Telhami
CREW

Written and directed by Ameen Nayfeh

Produced by May Odeh
Co Producers Metafora Production
Franseco Melzi
Marco Colombo
FILM I SKÅNE
Julia Gebauer

Director of Photography Elin Kirschfink
Sound Design Sylvain Bellemare
Original Music Faraj Suliman
Production Designer Bashar Hassuneh
Costume Designer Fairouz Nastas
Editing Kamal El Mallakh
Sound Raja Dubayah
1st Director Assistance Alex Koryakin
2nd Director Assistance Dima Sharif
Extra Coordinator Alaa Abu Saa
Production Manager Moumen Nayfeh
Production Coordinator Maria Qwasmi
Ramallah Shoot
Production Manager Sophia Harb
Set Manager Natalie Hodali
Gaffer Iéa renaudet
Key Grip Ahmed Zaouï
Best Boy Mutaz Ayayd
Amjad Wahdan
Omar aby Amer

1st Camera Assistant Ashraf Dowani
2nd Camera Assistant Ibrahim Hanthal
DIT Fadi Salman
Continuity Salam Hamdan
Art Director Assistant Sami Zarour
Construction Thabet Samara
Props Master Ali ALDeek
Boom Operator Ibrahim Zaher
Makeup Artist Fairuz Nastast
Costume Assistant  Haneen Zawahrah  Wafa Azzeh
Additional Costume
Design Assistant  Mohamed froukh
Additional Director Assistance  Mustafa Staiti
Hair  Saed Jarrad
Production Assistants  Ahmed Bazz  Sameh Al Idrisi
                          OSAID  Malek Al Sayed  Abu Shadi
                          Ismat Quzmar
AMEER ZABANEH
Mohamad Natour
Ibrahim
Shees
Mousa Khalil
Abdul Merhi
Still Photographer  Alaa Aliabdallah - Reghash
Translator  Arda Aghazarian