



Run Time: 90 Minutes
Language: Armenian & English w/ English Subtitles

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SYNOPSIS

On Easter 2018, a man put on a backpack and went live on Facebook to announce that he was beginning a walk across Armenia. His mission: to inspire a velvet revolution – and topple the corrupt regime that enjoys absolute power in his post-soviet nation. With total access to all key players, I AM NOT ALONE tells the miraculous true story of what happens in the next 40 days.

Garin Hovannisian's gripping documentary deftly follows the efforts led by journalist, politician, and activist Nikol Pashinyan to prevent the election of the country's president, Serzh Sargsyan, as the new prime minister – a move that would essentially put Sargsyan in control of Armenia for life, making him a de facto dictator.

The movement begins hopelessly, with Nikol and just a handful of supporters – including a stray dog – setting out on a 14-day march from one side of the country to the capital Yerevan. As they clash against the regime, there are many moments when their efforts seem doomed to fail, like every democratic movement in Armenia before them. But this time something is different. Step by step, the marchers begin to capture the hearts and minds of the Armenian public. Within a few weeks, the country erupts in a spectacular revolution, as millions of citizens take to the streets, disperse across their neighborhoods, and stage some of the most creative, powerful, and surprising acts of civil disobedience in modern history.

This incredible political drama presents an emotional and inspiring roadmap for how a true democratic movement can achieve profound change against all odds. It is packed with rich and memorable characters, plot twists, and a true hero's journey.

FESTIVALS / AWARDS

Toronto International Film Festival

Official Selection

People's Choice Documentary Award, first runner-up

Doc NYC

Official Selection

AFI Fest

Official Selection

Palm Springs International Film Festival

Official Selection

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

On Easter 2018 a man put on a backpack and went live on Facebook in an ancient town of Armenia. He said that he and a dozen activists would walk for 14 days across the country. Once in the capital, they would lead a movement to topple the all-powerful regime that ruled the land.

This was a fairytale.

For the past 25 years, we had tried everything to bring down the regime: electoral campaigns, civic movements, violent uprisings. But nothing ever worked. Elections were rigged. Protests were violently shut down. As the country's rulers grew rich and powerful, the people lived in poverty. Millions left Armenia. They knew nothing would change.

That was the reality.

But the border between reality and fairytale had always been vague in Armenia. That is where the great Armenian stories had always taken place.

By every metric of reality, the man on Facebook Live had no chance. He and his followers were condemned to fail. The reports and polls and election results were clear about that.

But for those of us who lived on the other side of the border, we knew something else was happening. As the revolutionaries walked and spread their message across the country, they were singing a song over and over again: "I am not alone, not alone, not alone."

And a stray dog joined them as they walked.

There was the sense, for those who wanted to notice, that the fairytale was becoming stronger than the reality. We were headed for the great confrontation.

That is why we filmed I AM NOT ALONE.

Garin Hovannisian

ABOUT THE CREW

GARIN HOVANNISIAN - WRITER / DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

Garin Hovannisian has been an active participant in Armenia's struggle for freedom, and has written about it for *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, and in his memoir *Family of Shadows*. He is the co-writer/director of the feature film *1915* (2015), a psychological mystery set 100 years after the Armenian Genocide, and praised by the *Los Angeles Times* as a "a high-minded version of *Birdman*...a creative way to do justice to such a monumental topic." He splits his time between Los Angeles and Yerevan, Armenia, where he has founded the arts foundation Creative Armenia. His production company Avalanche Entertainment (est. 2014) has produced *I Am Not Alone* and *1915*, and a variety of forthcoming projects in film and television.

ALEC MOUHIBIAN - PRODUCER

Alec Mouhibian is a writer, filmmaker, and comedian from Los Angeles. With Garin Hovannisian, he co-wrote/directed the feature film *1915* (2015) and co-founded Avalanche Entertainment in 2014. He is also the producer of *Children of War* (2017) and has covered Armenia's struggle for freedom for American magazines since 2012. He is the co-founder of Avalanche Entertainment, through which he is creating a variety of forthcoming projects for film and television, including *Red Curtain*, an anthology series set in the post-Soviet world.

ERIC ESRAILIAN - PRODUCER

Eric Esrailian is a physician, Emmy-nominated film producer, entrepreneur, and he is actively involved in philanthropic efforts connecting health, human rights, education, and the arts around the world. He produced *The Promise* by Terry George, starring Oscar Isaac and Christian Bale, which drew unprecedented attention to the Armenian Genocide and led to the creation of The Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA. He also produced the educational companion documentary *Intent to Destroy* with Joe Berlinger – which has been nominated for an Outstanding Historical Documentary Emmy. Esrailian and his partners at Forgotten Man Films recently launched Somm TV – a new streaming service with original series, films, and master classes dedicated to food and wine. UCLA has named him as one of the university's Optimists – among its most notable alumni and faculty dedicated to solving the world's problems.

SERJ TANKIAN - COMPOSER / EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

The Grammy-winning frontman of the band *System of a Down* has long been a musical inspiration to the democratic struggle in Armenia. He is the film's composer and EP, and an interview subject. In addition to five albums with SOAD and five solo albums ranging from metal to jazz to orchestral symphony, Tankian has been composing films since 2015, including titles such as *1915* (2015), *Intent to Destroy* (2017), *Furious: The Legend of Krovat* (2017), and *Spitak* (2018). He is producing a forthcoming rockumentary about his journey as a musical activist, which is also directed by Garin Hovannisian.

BARRY POLTERMANN - EDITOR

Barry Poltermann is the editor of the Sundance Grand Prize-winning documentary *American Movie*, the Sundance Special Jury Prize-winning *The Pool*, and *Jim and Andy: The Great Beyond*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival and was nominated for an Emmy in 2018.

JOE BERLINGER - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Academy Award and eight-time Emmy nominated and Peabody and Emmy-winning filmmaker Joe Berlinger has been a leading voice in nonfiction film and television for two decades. Berlinger's work seeks to create lasting change, often through stories of crime, the potential fallibility of the legal system, and the plight of the wrongfully convicted. Berlinger's films include the landmark documentaries *Brother's Keeper*, the *Paradise Lost Trilogy*, which helped lead to the recent release of the wrongfully-convicted West Memphis Three, and *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, a film that re-defined the rockumentary genre. Berlinger's film *Intent to Destroy* about the Armenian Genocide was recently nominated for an Outstanding Historical Documentary Emmy. His narrative feature about serial killer Ted Bundy, *Extremely Wicked, Incredibly Evil and Vile* was acquired by Netflix after sparking a bidding war at its 2019 Sundance premiere, along with his highly-acclaimed companion docu-series *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes*, which has broken viewership records for the platform worldwide.

DAN BRAUN - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Co-founder of Submarine Entertainment, Dan Braun has executive-produced a slate of award winning docs including *Evil Genius* and *Wild Wild Country*, for which he won an Emmy. Submarine has been involved with the sale of five out of the last eight academy award winning documentaries: *Citizenfour*, *20 Feet from Stardom*, *Man on Wire*, *The Cove* and *Searching for Sugar Man*. With his partners at Submarine and in conjunction with New Comic Co, Braun is also developing the classic horror brands *Creepy & Eerie* across all platforms.

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY SUBJECTS

Nikol Pashinyan (44)

A journalist, activist, and founder of *The Armenian Times*, Nikol first rose to national prominence in Armenia when he rallied mass crowds to protest the rigged results of the country's 2008 presidential election. After his conviction for "inciting public disorder," he went into hiding and eventually turned himself in to serve a 2-year sentence. Upon his release, he continued his activism as an opposition member of parliament. In 2017, his "My Way" Alliance barely cleared the 7% threshold to become the only opposition faction in Armenia's parliament, where the ruling Republican Party enjoyed an absolute majority. On March 31, 2018, Nikol announced on Facebook livestream that he was beginning a cross-country walk to inspire a peaceful revolution that would overthrow Armenia's all-powerful oligarchy before sitting president Serzh Sargsyan could install himself as Prime Minister for life on April 17. Most people, including his own opposition allies, dismissed Nikol's quest as yet another in a long line of hopeless attempts at democratic revolution. Only a handful of friends, his wife Anna, and a stray dog joined Nikol as he "took his step" from one end of the country to the other.

40 days later – as half a million demonstrators filled the capital Yerevan's Republic square – Armenia's parliament voted to elect Nikol Pashinyan as its new prime minister. After holding snap parliamentary elections in December 2018, which were hailed as the first free and fair elections in the republic's post-soviet history, Pashinyan's faction won 70% percent of the vote and now hold a ruling majority in Armenia's parliament.

Serzh Sargsyan (65)

In 2008, Interior Minister Serzh Sargsyan became Armenia's third president in an election that civic observers considered to be rigged. His victory was sealed when mass demonstrations against the result were dispersed by government snipers, in a crackdown that killed ten citizens. Sargsyan ruled as president for 10 years, his Republican Party in total control of Parliament, his friendship with Vladimir Putin well known. In 2017, he unilaterally changed the country's constitution to shift powers to the Prime Minister, a post that he vowed not to seek once his two-term limit as president expired. But as a former military commander and head of his country's Chess Federation, Sargsyan always viewed politics in terms of his favorite game, which he knew how to play to perfection. On April 17, 2018, his Republican majority in parliament elected him as Prime Minister – and de facto ruler for life.

Six days later, he resigned. In IANA, he gives his **first public interview** since that momentous decision, walking us through each major move of his career's first defeat. He remains the head of his Republican Party, which in the democratic snap elections of December 2018, failed to reach the 5% threshold to enter parliament.

Valeriy Osipyan (49)

Some people (including Nikol) suspected that Yerevan Police Chief Osipyan was a good guy, even as he ordered police forces to arrest and crack down on protesters every time there was an ill-fated uprising in Armenia. As this revolution kept rising, Osipyan found himself stuck between his deepest beliefs and his orders from on high. This story tracks his heartwarming transformation from the revolution's on-the-ground foe to the people's new chief of police, a role to which he was promoted by new Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan after the revolution.

Anna Hakobyan (41)

Nikol's wife, and partner-in-activism since youth, Anna joined Nikol on his walk despite grave misgivings about what it might portend. When Nikol and his team were abducted by police at the peak of the revolution, it was up to her – and women around the country – to lead the movement to the finish line.

Post-revolution, she continues to be the editor-in-chief of the *Armenian Times*, and refuses to be called Armenia's "first lady," because she doesn't believe women should be numbered.

Chalo

Every revolution needs its symbol. Meet Chalo, the stray dog that joins Nikol at the beginning of his cross-country walk and makes it all the way to his new home in the prime minister's house.

Armen Sarkissian (66)

Sarkissian is a trained physicist who had served as Armenia's ambassador to the UK since 1998. Freshly appointed to the now ceremonial role of president in newly parliamentary Armenia on April 9, 2018, Sarkissian instantly found himself caught between his people and his government. In his interview, he explains how he tried to broker peace behind-the-scenes. After the revolution, he remained in the role of president.

Raffi K. Hovannisian (59)

Armenia's first foreign minister, the American-born Hovannisian was the last major opposition figure to challenge Serzh Sargsyan's power, when he ran against him in the rigged presidential election of 2013. The movement against that election result, called the Hello Revolution, raged for months before ultimately falling short of unseating Sargsyan. As the godfather of post-Soviet Armenia's struggle for democracy, Raffi's interview guides us on how the 2018 "velvet revolution" differed from its precedents.

CREDITS

An Avalanche Entertainment production In association with

Serjical Strike Entertainment

A film by Garin Hovannisian

Director / Writer: Garin Hovannisian

Editor: Barry Poltermann

Cinematography: Vahe Terteryan

Music by: Serj Tankian

Sound Design: Jeremy Grody

Producers: Garin Hovannisian, Alec Mouhibian, Tatevik Manoukyan, Eric Esrailian

Executive Producers: Serj Tankian, Joe Berlinger, Dan Braun, Raffi K. Hovannisian, Suren Ambarchyan, Alen Petrosyan

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Mkhitar Hayrapetyan

Lilit Makunts

Raffi K. Hovannisian

Chalo

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Serj Tankian

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mindbomb films

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San Charoenchai

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Vincent Pedulla

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“My Step” (Armenian)

Courtesy of Hayk Stver

Composed, arranged and performed by Hayk Stver

Lyrics by Nikol Pashinyan

“My Step” (English)

Performed by Serj Tankian and Larisa Hovannisian

Arranged by Serj Tankian

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