
Palestinian elders share memories of the year they became refugees.

I REMEMBER 1948

أتذكر ١٩٤٨



digital betacam, 24mins

Director: Fadia Abboud • Producer: Sohail Dahdal
Arabic and English language with Arabic/English subtitles

Personal memories of the tumultuous days of Al Nakba, 'the catastrophe',
May 15th 1948, when 750,000 Palestinians were
expelled from their homes.

'If I live one thousand years, you think I will forget that?'

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Where should the birds fly after the last sky
Mahmoud Darwish

Synopsis

In Australia's first bilingual Arabic/English film, four elders give eye-witness accounts of the tumultuous days of Al Nakba, the catastrophe, May 15th, 1948, and its aftermath. As children and young adults, they and their families were among 750,000 Palestinians fleeing for their lives, as Zionist terror gangs began seizing villages to enlarge the recently created State of Israel.

The stories told by these speakers are poignant, unexpected and sometimes surprising, expressing not only the tragedies but also the small miracles which occur in a human catastrophe of such dimensions. Prevented from returning to their homes, the speakers lived as refugees, eventually making their way to Australia. Their continued longing to see their homeland eloquently expresses the feelings of the dispossessed everywhere, and gives this film a universal dimension.

Directed by young Arab experimental filmmaker, Fadia Abboud, *I Remember 1948* is stylistically innovative while maintaining a simple, direct form of address. Its abstract backgrounds gently evoke mood and place, as does the powerful music for oud, cello, violin and percussion of Joseph Tawadros.

"I still have the greatest desire to go back to Palestine, to the place where I was born and have a handful of dirt in my hand just to say that I am back,,,, I still feel that I belong to that land."

-- Dr, Mahmoud Hourani,

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Festival Screenings:

- Sydney Film Festival
- Sydney Arab Film Festival
- Flickerfest International Short Film Festival
- Chicago Palestine Film Festival
- UNHCR Refugee Film Festival
- Washington, D.C., Palestine Centre Screenings
- Brisbane International Film Festival

The project was funded by the Young Filmmakers Fund of the New South Wales Film and Television Office with additional assistance from Film Australia, SWITCH Multimedia Digital Arts Access Centre, The SEARCH Foundation and Visualeyes

The elders who speak in this film are drawn from an archive of 13 filmed interviews of Palestinian Australians who recall their experiences of 1948.

BACKGROUND

Director's Statement

Each year, May 15th marks successive anniversaries of Palestinian exile....35 years, 45 years, 55 years. As the tides of politics and borders change, decade by decade, one unchanging and haunting reality continues to exist for the people of Palestine. For half a century this reality has been whispering, shouting and crying a lament that says, "I once had a home, it was taken from me and I will always carry with me the desire to return to my home".

The intensity of this lament is manifested in the continuing struggle with dispossession, originating in 1948 and the events that took place during that time.

On May 15th, 1948, some 750,000 men, women, and children became exiles, living in refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries. To Palestinians, this event is known as *Al Nakba*, The Catastrophe. It is the very core of the conflict between Israel, Palestine and their Arab neighbours. Under repeated UN resolutions and international law, Palestinians have, and have always had, the right to return to their homes. Yet, Israel has refused to acknowledge this right and the international community has failed to enforce it.

Today, despite minor concessions, the dispossession continues. Israel continues to occupy Palestinian territory, confiscate land, destroy homes and olive groves, build illegal settlements and bring in thousands of settlers, all in violation of international law and UN resolutions.

Currently, more than 4 million Palestinian refugees are forbidden by the Israeli State from entering Palestine, including Palestinian-controlled territories. Including the additional one million Palestinians who are refugees on their own land, there is now a total of five million refugees.

If you travel to any part of the world, no matter how obscure, you will find Palestinians living there in exile. Their diaspora is inhaled and exhaled with hopeful regret. They survive, live, laugh and dream in a thousand places other than their own home. Within the Occupied Territories, their story is strangely similar to that of their refugee brothers and sisters. There we find people who live away from their villages in worse than third-world conditions, cut off from their families and from the place where they were born. They are unable to move freely, unable to speak freely and are denied the most basic of human rights and services. That is why they too carry the haunting desire of return – although they still live in Palestine, everything has changed and it has changed for the worst.

Only by understanding the depth and the nature of this dispossession is it possible to understand what is happening in Palestine and the Middle East today. ***I Remember 1948*** brings to viewers some of the history, the memories and the feelings which motivate Palestinians everywhere.

CREATIVE TEAM



Fadia Kisrwani Abboud (director, co-editor) is a video editor and visual artist whose work includes short experimental videos as well as exhibition pieces. She studied Media Arts Production at the University of Technology, Sydney.

In 2002, Fadia produced and screened five pieces of work for the multi-media exhibition "Jirrin Journey", funded by the Australia Council for the Sydney Powerhouse Museum

Arab Heritage Project. Fadia, who works in media at the Information and Cultural Exchange, Parramatta, has organised the Silent Cells Youth Film Festival, facilitating young people's video workshops as well as young women's workshops to make a video for the performance "R.E.S.P.E.C.T." (2001), Young Women's Safety in the Street project for the Bankstown and Parramatta PCYC.

Currently convenor of the Sydney Arab Film Festival, Fadia has also organised the annual Arab Carnivale for the Australian Arabic Communities Council, and worked with the Community Relations Commission Hotline.

Fadia has recently been a script consultant for a new multi-cultural drama series to be produced for SBS Television.

Joseph Tawadros (composer) emigrated to Australia at the age of 3 from Egypt, bringing with him his family's distinguished musical traditions. He began performing at the age of 12 and since then has toured Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere, both as a solo artist and with other instrumentalists. His debut album 'Storyteller' (ABC Classics, 2004) was nominated for an ARIA award for Best World Music album.

Sohail Dahdal (producer), a filmmaker and new media artist, has, over the past 15 years, been pushing the boundaries of new media to as many platforms as possible. Sohail has been the interactive producer/director for the award-winning online documentary *Long Journey, Young Lives* on child refugees - www.abc.net.au/longjourney, and the SBS TV and online documentary *Swapping Lives on Islam and the West* from a youth perspective - www.sbs.com.au/swappinglives

Martha Ansara (executive producer/marketing) is a peace activist and experienced documentary maker.