

Mongrel Media
Presents

Omar

A film by Hany Abu-Assad

Winner Jury Prize Un Certain Regard Cannes Film Festival
Official Selection Toronto International Film Festival
Official Selection New York Film Festival

Running Time: 98 minutes
Color

Language: Arabic/Hebrew w/ English subtitles

Distribution



1028 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1H6
Tel: 416-516-9775 Fax: 416-516-0651
E-mail: info@mongrelmedia.com
www.mongrelmedia.com

Publicity

Bonne Smith
Star PR
Tel: 416-488-4436
Fax: 416-488-8438
E-mail: starpr@sympatico.ca

SYNOPSIS

Omar is accustomed to dodging surveillance bullets to cross the separation wall to visit his secret love Nadia. But occupied Palestine knows neither simple love nor clear-cut war. On the other side of the wall, the sensitive young baker Omar becomes a freedom fighter who must face painful choices about life and manhood. When Omar is captured after a deadly act of resistance, he falls into a cat-and-mouse game with the military police. Suspicion and betrayal jeopardize his longtime trust with accomplices and childhood friends Amjad and Tarek, Nadia's militant brother. Omar's feelings quickly become as torn apart as the Palestinian landscape. But it's soon evident that everything he does is for his love of Nadia.

CAST

Adam Bakri	Omar
Leem Lubany	Nadia
Waleed F. Zuaiteer	Agent Rami
Samer Bisharat	Amjad
Eyad Hourani	Tarek

(In Order of Appearance)

Mousa Habib Allah	Sewing Shop Manager
Doraid Liddawi	Soldier
Adi Krayim	Soldier #1
Foad Abed-Eihadi	Soldier #2
Essam Abu Abed	Omar's Boss
Anna Maria Hawa	Omar's Sister
Ziad Jarjoura	Omar's Brother
Wafaa Aon	Omar's Mother
Jehad Abu Assal	Omar's Father
May Jabareen	Suit Store Employee
Hadi Abu Sineh	Little Boy at Restaurant
Butros Shaheen	Agent
Elias Abu Hattom	Agent
Marco Matar	Agent
Raed Rashad Jaa'issa	Man in House in Chase
Em Ahmad Assad	Woman in House in Chase
Yousef Sweid	Torturer
Ihab Jadallah	Prisoner in Yard
Baher Agbariya	Prison Guard #1
David Gerson	Prison Guard #2
Yael Lerer	Omar's Lawyer
Donna Hawa	Nadia's Friend
Rasha Nahas	Nadia's Friend
Pauline Bahoth	Nadia's Friend
Marwa Dawood	Nadia's Friend
Najwa Atamneh	Amjad Sister #1
Rawan Faranesh	Amjad Sister #2
Lama Naamneh	Amjad Sister #3
Nisal Mhannah	Amjad Sister #4
Dunia Makhoul	Amjad Sister #5
Eliana Faranesh	Amjad Sister #6
Omaima Sarhan	Amjad Sister #7
Majd Bitar	Tarek's Friend
Jeries Gghrayeb	Agent in Market Chase
Maroon Boulus	Agent in Market Chase
Ibrahim Boulus	Agent in Market Chase
Adel Abu-Lasheen	Agent in Market Chase
Jamal Khalaile	Tarek Guard #1

Rohi Ayadi
Adham Salim
Ali Magdube
Eli Rezik
Avishay Solomon
Laura Hawa
Shetrit Eran
Mohamad Soboh
Mousa Awad
Nael Kanj
Eyas Natour
Eitamar Halpirin
Ela'd Sabaq
Tareq Copty
Walid Abed Elsalam
Ramzi Maqdisi
Mohamad Hassan
Yousef Slieman
Jasmine Seleiman

Hussam
Prisoner #1
Prisoner #2
Prison Guard #3
Prison Guard #4
Nurse
Tracking Device Technician
Tarek Guard #2
Tarek Guard #3
Rami's Agent #1
Rami's Agent #2
Rami's Agent #3
Rami's Agent #4
Tarek's Father
Leader at the Funeral
Muhsen Ali Taha
Old Man Near the Wall
Little Tarek
Baby Girl "Abla"

CREW

Director
Writer
Producer
Producer
Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer

Hany Abu-Assad
Hany Abu-Assad
Hany Abu-Assad
Waleed F. Zuaiter
David Gerson
Abbas F. "Eddy" Zuaiter
Ahmad F. Zuaiter
Waleed Al-Ghafari
Zahi Khouri
Dr. Farouq A. Zuaiter
Suhail A. Sikhti

Line Producer
Director of Photography
Costume Designer
Editor
Editor
Hair & Make-up
Production Designer
1st Assistant Director
Casting Director

Baher Agbariya
Ehab Assal
Hamada Atallah
Martin Brinkler, A.C.E.
Eyas Salman
Dörte Dobkowitz
Nael Kanj
Enas al-Muthaffar
Juna Suleiman

Focus Puller
Steadicam Operator
2nd Assistant Camera
3rd Asst. Camera & D.I.T.
3rd Asst. Camera-"B" Camera

Eric Sicot
Haim Asias
George Dabas
Riyad Shammass
Samir Zoabi

Boom Operator	Ibrahim Zaher
Gaffer	Ferencz Radnai
Key Grip	Daniel Kaluzhsky
Best Boy Light	Yana Metnic
	Tamir Lempert
Best Boy Grip	Tom Ashuach
	Nadeem Housary
Electrician	Eyas Natour
	Neameh Kazmoz
	Fadi Matar
Additional Technicians	Noam Eizenberg
	Amos Levi
	Avishay Solomon
	Ram Tsizling
	Alexey Antonovsky
	Yoni Evans
2 nd Assistant Director	Ihab Jadallah
3 rd Assistant Director	Jamal Khalaile
Script Supervisor	Eli Rezik
Personal Assistant to Director	May Jabareen
	Ashley Hasz
Production Services Supplied by	Majdal Production Igbariye Company
Production Manager	Laura Hawa
Location Manager	Wajdi Ode
Production Coordinator	Sana Tanous
Camp Manager	Mohammad Abu Hussien
Assistant Production Manager	Samir Zoabi
Production Assistants	Abed Abu Hussien
	Kheer Sliman
	Ammar Badawi
	Tareq Khateeb
	Rizik Siyadii
	Walid Sliman
	Ibrahim Naara
	Kais Khateeb
Production Office Assistant	Ameer Hawary
Truck Drivers	Sameer Abu Lel
	Ammar Abu Lel
Tea Girl	Rasha Nwesor
Tea Boy	Loay Slieman
Set Dresser	Rabia Salfiti
Prop Master	Bashar Hassuneh
Graffiti Master & Props Assistant	Taqi Sbateen
Construction Manager	Ali Alal
Set Construction	Waseem Nwesor

Shadi Shini
Amir Nwesor
Hany Kazmoz
Jeries Nwesor
Wael Sayeg
Jamil Hawary
Khaled Ode
Bilal Ode

Stunt Coordinator
Stunts and Doubles

Hanna Jiryis
Hanna Jiryis
Asad Toameh
Samir Hazan

Extras Coordinator

Doraid Liddawi
Mamdouh Agbariya
Salam Abu Seneh
Hisham Suleiman
Scandar Copti

Extras Coordinator Assistant
Acting Coach

Dialect Coach
Wardrobe

Youni Lucas
Haitham Haddad
Saher Okal

Make-up Artist Assistant
Stills Photographer
SFX and Guns Specialist

Ruba Hamed Diab
Dianah Kamhawi
Pini Klavir & Miki Amram

Nablus Crew

Additional Casting – Ramallah
Assistant Production Manager
Security – al-Fara'ah Camp
Personal Assistant to Director
Art Assistant
Production Assistants

Mahmoud Yaseen
Taher Zuheir Kosa
Thabet Za'Ror
Sama Basim Malhis
Morad Esmail
Karam Sayeh
Amer Zuheir Kosa
Ahmed Qassab
Wafeeq Qassab
Tamer Alshafia'e

Tea Boy

Prison Unit

Production Designer
Art Director
Set Dressers

Yoel Herzberg
Nir Alba
Nikolai Yossifov
Ofir Kiko Sela
Doron Kener
Tal Haber

Set Construction

Amiram Lichter
Avi Bardugo

Scenic Artists

Andrei Chemakov
Hagit Ohayon
Muhammad Nafa
Samir Hawwa

Post Production

Post Production Supervisor
Color Grading
Colorist
DI Supervisor
VFX Artist
3D Artist
Titles
Additional VFX Material
Assistant Editor

Dominik Bollen
The Post Republic
Adam Inglis
Tobias Schaarschmidt
Jean-Michel Boubilil
Héctor Robles Fernández
Jean-Michel Boubilil
Eli Rezik
Rima Haj
Natasha Westlake

Sound Post Production

Mixing Stage
Managing Director
Inhouse Producer
Re-Recording Mixer
Re-Recording Assistant
Supervising Sound Editor
Sound Design
ADR Editor
ADR Studio Berlin
ADR Recordist Berlin

ADR Recordist Narareth
ADR Studio Nazareth
Foley Editor
Foley Artist & Studio
Foley Recordist
Add'l Subtitles Arabic/English

The Post Republic
Michael Reuter
Tolke Palm
Matthias Schwab
Markus Wurster
Dominik Schleier
Christian Conrad
Daniel Iribarren
BASISberlin
Moritz Unger
Forian Holzner
Raja Dubayah
Awtar Creative Art Studio
Sabrina Naumann
Peter Roigk
Jörg Klaußner
Nizar Wattad

A ZBROS Production

COMMENTS FROM HANY ABU-ASSAD

ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

For me, real life often provides the most vibrant material for any storyteller and in the case of OMAR this is no exception. While in Ramallah several years ago, I was having tea with a good friend who told me the true story of being approached by a government agent with personal information. At that time, the government agent used this secret in an effort to make my friend collaborate. Upon hearing this, I immediately knew I had to delve into this subject; to explore how such circumstances and actions would effect love, friendship, and trust. After some reflection, I found myself unable to sleep one night and in that moment I pulled out a pad of paper and four hours later I had the exact structure of what OMAR is today.

REFLECTING BELIEVABILITY IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE

When it comes to filmmaking, reality is not as important as believability and in the case of OMAR every scene is both believable and close to reality. It's true, the film has a dramatic structure with coincidences that may appear fictitious, but there is really only one time when the story deviated for dramatic effect. Otherwise I truly believe the whole movie reflects believability, as it is today, in occupied Palestine.

THE ISOLATION WALL

The Isolation Wall has divided Palestinian cities from themselves...divided villages, refugee camps, and creates cantons where Palestinians live. In many places it isn't clear what is and isn't occupied...for instance in Jerusalem both sides are occupied. My intention was to create a virtual Palestinian city where the wall is just randomly crossing the city, village and refugee camp with no differences between the two sides.

JUMPING THE WALL

Jumping over the wall is part of daily life in Palestine. There are even people whose job it is to help others jump over; these people make a living doing this. You have to understand that the isolation wall is not being built as a border between Israel and the West Bank, but is actually being built in a way that separates Palestinians from themselves; sometimes it even divides a Palestinian town into two parts. This is why jumping the wall is a daily occurrence and people do it for a myriad of reasons: work, family, survival, and love is not an exception.

SHOOTING IN PALESTINE

I have not shot a feature in Palestine since PARADISE NOW for various reasons. First, I do not always have something to say about Palestine. Inspiration can

come from many places. Second, I worked for a while developing a variety of projects and this took all of my energy at the time.

Shooting OMAR took one week in Nablus, six weeks in Nazareth, and one week in Bisan. There was no opposition to us shooting anywhere; we managed to get permission for all of the places, even the wall. For the wall, we had permission to climb up to a certain height and then, for the moments at the top, we used a fake wall on a set in Nazareth.

Shooting in the West Bank has become easier since there has been a greater presence of Palestinian police authority. With this said, shooting is still difficult and rife with problems, but this is filmmaking everywhere. When I started OMAR, I wanted to make a film using only a Palestinian crew. This meant that some of the heads of departments were doing that job for the first time in their careers and this created some issues with organization and process. Regardless, we clearly overcame what obstacles there were and everyone is thrilled with the success and the fact that we premiered the film as part of Un Certain Regard at Cannes.

LOVE STORIES

There are only two types of love stories, the tragic and the comedic. In every love story I know, there will always be two obstacles - the inner obstacle and the outer obstacle. In most of the tragic love stories, the lovers appear to overcome their outer obstacle but are unable to overcome their inner obstacle, which is the true trust of one another. On the other side, in a romantic comedy, the lovers overcome both obstacles and end up together. Unfortunately, the reality of love is often more tragic than that of a romantic comedy. For my story, Omar actually believes in ideal love and believes in the possibility of a romantic comedy type of ending - this is why the film is doubly tragic.

TRUST

The main theme of OMAR is trust and how it is very important for human relationships but also very volatile. Trust is the core of love, friendship, and loyalty; it is intangible and can be both very strong but also very fragile at the same time. I am interested in exploring the human experience and for that, trust is the *fata morgana*, it is the superior mirage of the human experience and it is what gives human beings such complex emotions. My desire to unravel the complexities of human emotion is endless and indestructible.

CASTING FRESH YOUNG ACTORS

The four young characters are all played by newcomers and this is their first film. During the casting process, the casting director and I worked tirelessly, searching through many Palestinian actors. When we looked at each of them, the most important things were their believability, their ability to express deep emotions and, when in combination with one another, the creation of a dynamic force. Adam Bakri, who played Omar, is a true discovery. He is not only a great actor,

but he is unbelievably hard working, stopping at nothing to find the core of Omar's character and once filmed he leaps off the screen. Leem Loubany, who played Nadia, is a strong force with a sadness in her eyes that keeps everyone who looks at her intrigued and wanting more. Samer Bisharat, who played Amjad, is the comedian of the group and we incorporated many of the jokes he would tell off screen into his character and into OMAR. Eyad Hourani, who played Tarek, showed me a whole new side of Tarek, someone who could be tough and vulnerable, serious and funny, all at the same time, in the same moment. I am very happy with who we finally found and cast and all of them enriched this film tremendously.

WALEED ZUAITER AS AGENT RAMI

Waleed Zuaiter is the only actor amongst the main cast that has had previous experience in front of the camera. Working with professionals is always interesting and always a challenge because they are the people who ask the toughest questions about their character and their character's motivations. Working with Waleed was like sculpting in marble, he was strong and tough, but the results were glorious.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS

I will never make a film that either solely condemns or defends human beings; I leave that to the courts of justice around the world. The human side of freedom fighters is what intrigues me and, actually, it's the human side of any character that intrigues me, as often what makes us human is also our tragic flaw. Many people or characters appear perfect on the outside, whether a freedom fighter or a lover, but the tragic flaw of people means that this perfection is only a perception, inside these people is imperfection and failure. My job as a filmmaker is to be intrigued by this phenomenon and also to show it in the most honest way, a way that is grey, not black and white.

GIVING VOICE TO THE PALESTINIAN CASE

My focus as a filmmaker is to make interesting and powerful films and my work is an exploration of what makes great stories. For me, great films include characters with specific details whose motivations are both timeless and placeless. If my work happens to create something that effects peoples' understanding of anything, this is a side issue.

It has never been difficult to defend my artistic choices, as every artist in the world must do this; I am not exceptional in this way. At the same time, exploring the human side behind characters that act violently is also not exceptional and is what keeps most storytellers busy. More than anything else, I find that I am praised and/or criticized for giving a voice to the Palestinian case, but this is not artistic commentary nor criticism. It is political commentary and criticism, which is wholly different.

HANY ABU-ASSAD (Director)

Hany Abu-Assad directed the often debated 2006 film PARADISE NOW, which won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film, and was also nominated for the Academy Award in the same category (representing Palestine). The story of two Palestinian men preparing for a suicide attack in Tel Aviv, PARADISE NOW made its world premiere at the Berlin Film Festival, where it won the Blue Angel Award for Best European Film, the Berliner Morgenpost Readers' Prize and the Amnesty International Award for Best Film.

Abu-Assad previously had an international hit with 2002's RANA'S WEDDING, the story of a young Jerusalem woman trying to get married before four o' clock. The film was selected for the Cannes Critics Week and went on to win prizes at Montpellier, Marrakech, Bastia and Cologne.

Abu-Assad's other credits include 2011's English-language THE COURIER, starring Jeffery Dean Morgan, Til Schweiger and Mickey Rourke, and the 2002 documentary, FORD TRANSIT, the portrait of a Ford Transit taxi driver and the resilient inhabitants of Palestinian territories.

Abu-Assad was born in Nazareth, Palestine, in 1961. After having studied and worked as an airplane engineer in the Netherlands for several years, Abu-Assad entered the world of cinema as a producer. He produced the 1994 feature film CURFEW, directed by Rashid Masharawi. In 1998, Abu-Assad directed his first feature, THE FOURTEENTH CHICK, from a script by writer Arnon Grunberg.

FEATURE FILMOGRAPHY

2013 OMAR
2011 THE COURIER
2005 PARADISE NOW
2002 FORD TRANSIT (documentary)
2002 RANA'S WEDDING
2000 NAZARETH 2000 (documentary)
1998 THE 14TH CHICK

ADAM BAKRI (as Omar)

Adam Bakri makes his feature film debut in OMAR. A day after graduating from New York's Lee Strasberg Institute, Adam sent an audition tape to director Hany Abu-Assad, and was thrilled to be on the set of OMAR the following month. During his two-year acting program, he participated in several theater productions. Before moving to New York, Adam attended Tel Aviv University where he double majored in English Literature and Theater Arts. During that time he did a number of short films. Adam was born in 1988 in Yafa, Israel.

EYAD HOURANI (as Tarek)

Eyad Hourani makes his feature film debut in OMAR. Eyad has acted in several productions of the inspirational Freedom Theatre in Jenin Refugee Camp, including "While Waiting," "Animal Farm," "Alice in Wonderland" and "Men in the Sun." He also played in Ramallah's Ashtar Theater production "Jasmin House" and Shakespeare's "Richard II" in London's Globe Theater Festival. Eyad started acting at the age of 14 with Hebron's "Days For Theater" Foundation. In addition to studying Theater Arts Education at the Freedom Theater, he did his acting training in cooperation with the Arab-American University and also participated in several international workshops, including Vienna (National Theatre) and New York (Public Theater). Born in 1988, Eyad currently tours Palestinian hospitals with Clown Doctor Acts, and works as a drama coach for various theaters of Palestine. Eyad has also directed a short film C THE C, which was shown at festivals in Dubai and Sarajevo.

SAMER BISHARAT (as Amjad)

OMAR is 16-year-old Samer Bisharat's feature film debut. He is a student at St. Joseph High School. He has participated in several short films since he was seven years old, recently in Sari Bisharat's TURMOS for Jerusalem's Sam Spiegel film school. Born in Nazareth in 1996, Samer is also an oud musician, and he studied music at Bait Al Mousseeqa in Shefa-'Amr.

LEEM LUBANY (as Nadia)

Sixteen-year-old Leem Lubany makes her screen debut in OMAR. The talented Harduf high school student recently added acting to her passion for singing and dancing. Born in Nazareth, Leem started ballet at a very young age, then turned to singing at 13. She is also an avid photographer and looks forward to exhibiting her work one day.

WALEED F. ZUAITER (as Agent Rami)

Over the past 15 years, Palestinian-American actor Waleed F. Zuaiter's film and television career progressed from the attention he received from his fine stage work. In film, Waleed had standout roles in Grant Heslov's THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS, alongside George Clooney and Ewan McGregor, and Michael Patrick King's SEX AND THE CITY 2. Other feature credits include Simon West's THUNDER RUN and Amin Matalqa's THE UNITED.

On the small screen, Waleed's garnered much attention for his portrayal of Sgt. Brody's torturer in "Homeland." Among his many TV credits: "The Good Wife," "Political Animals," "Law & Order: Criminal Intent," "Blue Bloods" and the Emmy-winning mini-series "House of Saddam."

Waleed's prestigious theater credits include the Public Theatre's production of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* (adapted by Tony Kushner and starring also Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline), Eliam Kraiem's *Sixteen Wounded* (BROADWAY), David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Ensemble Performance), George Packer's *Betrayed*, Ilan Hatsor's *Masked*, Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*, Victoria Brittain & Gillian Slovo's *Guantanamo: Honor Bound To Defend Freedom*, and David Greig's *The American Pilot*.

The youngest of three brothers, Waleed was born in Sacramento, California, but grew up in Kuwait. He moved back to the US to attend George Washington University where he received a degree in Philosophy and Theatre. He currently resides in Los Angeles with his wife and two children.

In addition to playing the role of Agent Rami, Waleed also produced OMAR with his two brothers and their new independent production company, ZBROS.