



Presents

REHEARSALS FOR A REVOLUTION

A film by Pegah Ahangarani
95 mins, Czech Republic, Spain, 2026
Language: Persian, with English Subtitles

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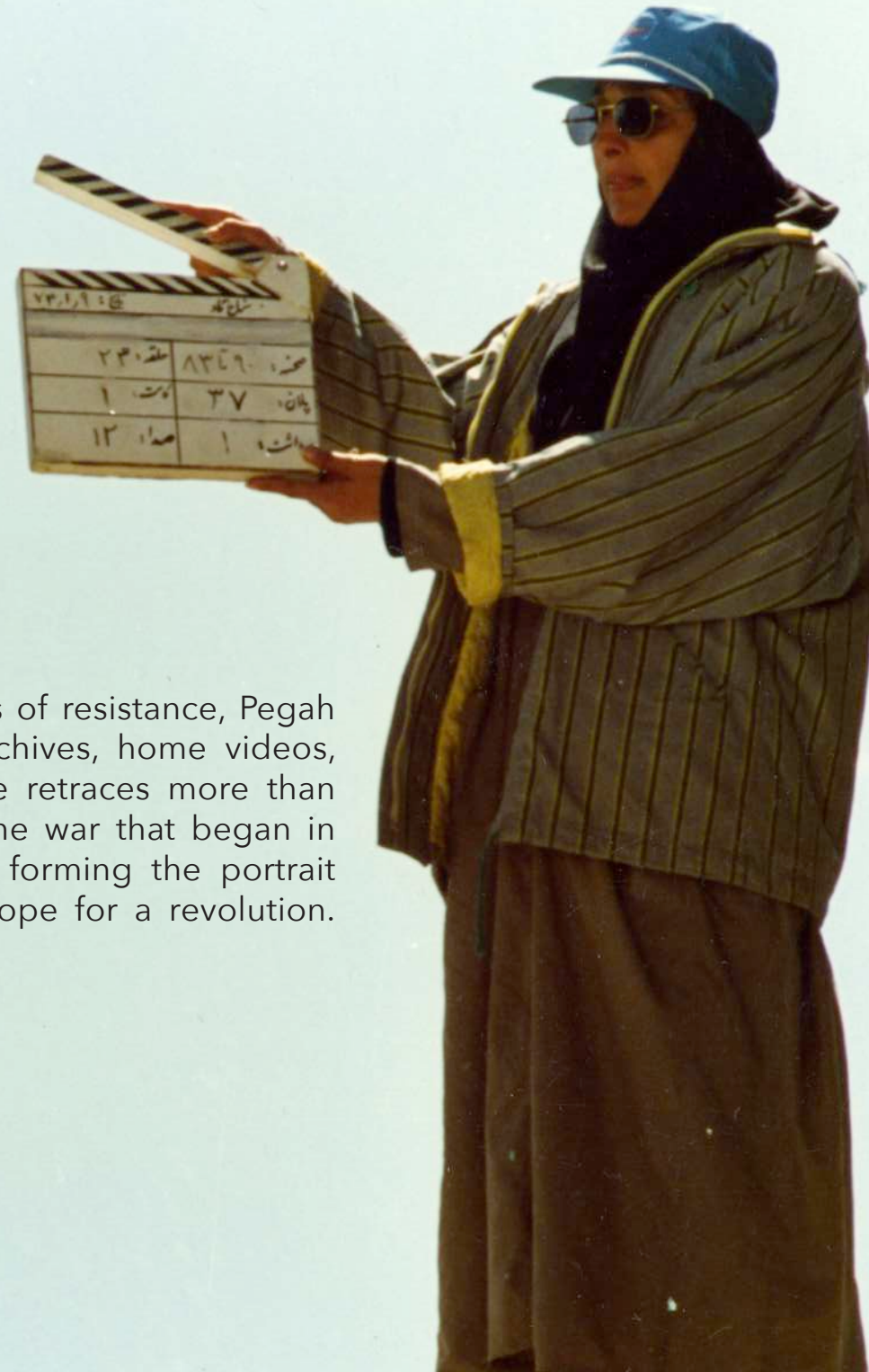
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SYNOPSIS

Through five portraits of relatives and mentors, five expressions of resistance, Pegah Ahangarani sketches her life story. Drawing from personal archives, home videos, street protests footage, newspapers, and recorded voices, she retraces more than 40 years of Iran's history. From the early days of 1979, until the war that began in 2026, she pieces together intimate and collective memories, forming the portrait of a country shaped by political repression and in constant hope for a revolution.



PEGAH AHANGARANI



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Born in Iran in 1984 and currently based in London, Pegah Ahangarani is an award-winning Iranian filmmaker and actress.

She began her acting career at the age of seven in the film *The Singer Cat* by Kambuzia Partovi (1991). Following her first leading role in *The Girl in the Sneakers* by Rasoul Sadrameli (1999), she has appeared in more than 40 films to date.

She expanded her work into documentary filmmaking alongside her acting. Her short documentaries *I Am Trying To Remember* (2021), *My Father* (2023), and *As I Lay Dying* (2025) have been selected in major international festivals including Hot Docs, Busan, the IDA Documentary Awards, Melbourne, among others, and won awards at festivals such as Dokufest, Busan, IDFA, Short Focus London Film Festival. Pegah Ahangarani also directed two TV documentaries: *Child Soldier* (BBC World, 2024) and *Taraneh* (BBC World, 2025).

Rehearsals For A Revolution is her first feature documentary and she is currently developing her next film.

INTERVIEW

with **PEGAH AHANGARANI**

The opening voiceover for *Rehearsals For A Revolution* begins with a Farsi word that has no equivalent in English: “yad”. What does it mean?

It’s true that there’s no real equivalent. In Farsi, the verb “to remember” has an active construction; it always implies a process. When I came to understand that the act of remembering is essential for people who have lived under authoritarian regimes, I envisioned a prologue centered on that notion—which lies at the heart of the film. And that’s where “yad” found its place, as an epigraph to my voiceover.

How did you develop the chapter structure of *Rehearsals For A Revolution*?

I wanted the film to be organized into five parts, each embodying a hero, or at least a figure who was important to me and who had been sacrificed by the dictatorship.

What I didn’t plan at the outset, but what the available material itself demanded, is that each era corresponds to a particular type of image: Super 8 film, newspapers, handheld cameras, YouTube footage, cartoons. I had no images for the third part, but then I remembered that people used to line up outside newsstands back then, when our relationship to events was mediated by the news.

I knew that from episode four when I become directly involved in the events I could no longer remain just a narrator. From that point on, I am no longer passive and decide to pause on my own image. Until then, I only appear in the background.

What also evolves throughout the various parts is your perspective on your country. You present the first characters almost as fictional figures—your father as a war hero, your teacher as a princess.

When I was a child, we'd spend hours in front of the television trying to catch five minutes of a very bad Disney cartoon. We were starved for anything that came from the West. The image of the princess and the hero comes from those childhood memories.

In the second chapter, when I describe a house that seemed Western, with children who looked like little Westerners, I want to convey that very powerful aspiration we felt.



At the start of *Rehearsals For A Revolution*, I'm little Pegah, who sees her father as a hero. Like all the children of my generation, I took pride in the fact that my biological father had fought in the war against Iraq.

I also wanted to show how we, as children of that time, perceived Khomeini, and how the education system had instilled in us the idea that he was the "Father of the Nation." I remember that his image appeared on the first page of all our school textbooks, and there were various poems about him in our literature books. As children, we felt that he was everywhere—his murals covered the city walls, and his presence seemed constant.

I can't easily describe the extent of that mental conditioning that shaped us, but it was important for me to show how that perspective changed: how this dictatorship turned against the very man people once loved, and how that little girl gradually came to see things differently.

When you talk about your "former self", we sense just how much the dictatorship fractured individual identities.

Every Iranian I know can pinpoint the moment they felt that rupture. For my father, it may have come in the 1980s; for Davoud's parents, in the 1990s. For some, it must have been during Woman Life Freedom.

I held on to a kind of naivety, a hope that there was something worth salvaging from this regime, before I finally broke from it. For me, the first turning point may have been the day I saw the first bodies in the streets during the 2009 movement.

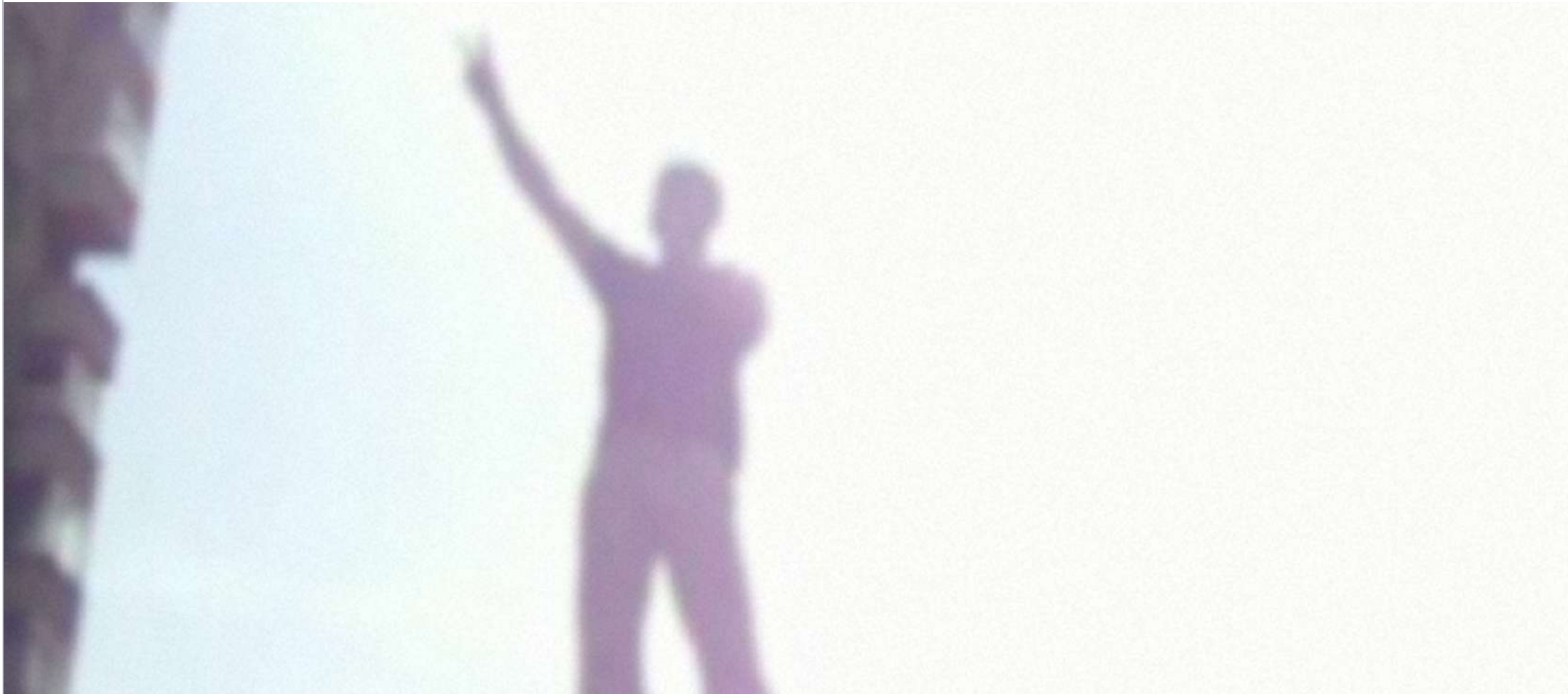
How did you find and edit the archive footage?

Access to archival material was different in each episode. For example, in episodes one and two we relied mostly on family archives.

In episode four, however, we used a combination of YouTube footage from the 2009 movement and a large amount of personal archive shot by someone who had filmed those days, which I obtained through an intermediary.

In many scenes, it was the archive itself that told us the story, and in fact we were writing the narrative by looking at the archival material. The film's structure often worked in a way where we had a written idea for a section and then searched for the appropriate archive to match it, but in many cases it was also the archive that generated the idea for the story.

However, we never treated archival material as merely a visual or decorative tool.



You reference the experimental filmmaker Jonas Mekas in the film—the title of his *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* appears on your computer screen. There’s a melancholy in his self-narrative and his experience of exile that suffuses his cinema and can also be felt in *Rehearsals For A Revolution*.

Jonas Mekas is a major influence on my work. I love his freedom of tone, the way he breaks free from the conventions of narrative, the way his images drift. That deeply personal and original approach to creating a narrative reassured me, nourished me, and became both a touchstone and an inspiration. I wanted to pay tribute to him.

The way the film is structured suggests that Iran’s history is a succession of misfortunes, repeating in a never-ending cycle.

In Iran we have had many uprisings that may have ended in failure.

Of course, many of these movements have also achieved tangible results. I’m not only talking about the last forty years—centuries have passed with Iran caught in this back-and-forth between struggle and hope. But the important point is that, despite all the violence the state has used in each movement, people still return to the streets and do not give up hope.

What matters is this persistence—these people who refuse to lose hope and keep coming back to the streets again and again.

You revisit the dismissal of your literature professor and the shame you felt at the time. It's a striking notion—that dictatorships need the shame of their own people to assert themselves.

Guilt is everywhere in our history. Even in raising my own child, I still find myself regularly feeling guilty about everything. If someone is mistreated, if your mother suffers, you feel responsible. What's striking is how deeply that persists.

Today, the Islamic Republic has massacred thousands, a war is being waged, and if you look at social media, Iranians are all busy blaming each other: *"It's your fault there was a Revolution, that there were massacres, that the United States attacked."* Instead of recognizing that we're all victims and meeting that with empathy, we remain locked in accusation—offloading onto others the guilt we all carry.

I was tempted to leave the timeline blank for the fifth part. And it wasn't an affectation—I genuinely felt there was literally nothing that could be shown. We had no news from Iran at the time, and talking about the past felt meaningless given what was happening in my own country at that moment—a country I'd left years earlier for England. The solution was to make that contradiction felt: two worlds so utterly opposed.

There's a title card at the end of each chapter that summarizes the situation from a detached, almost external perspective.

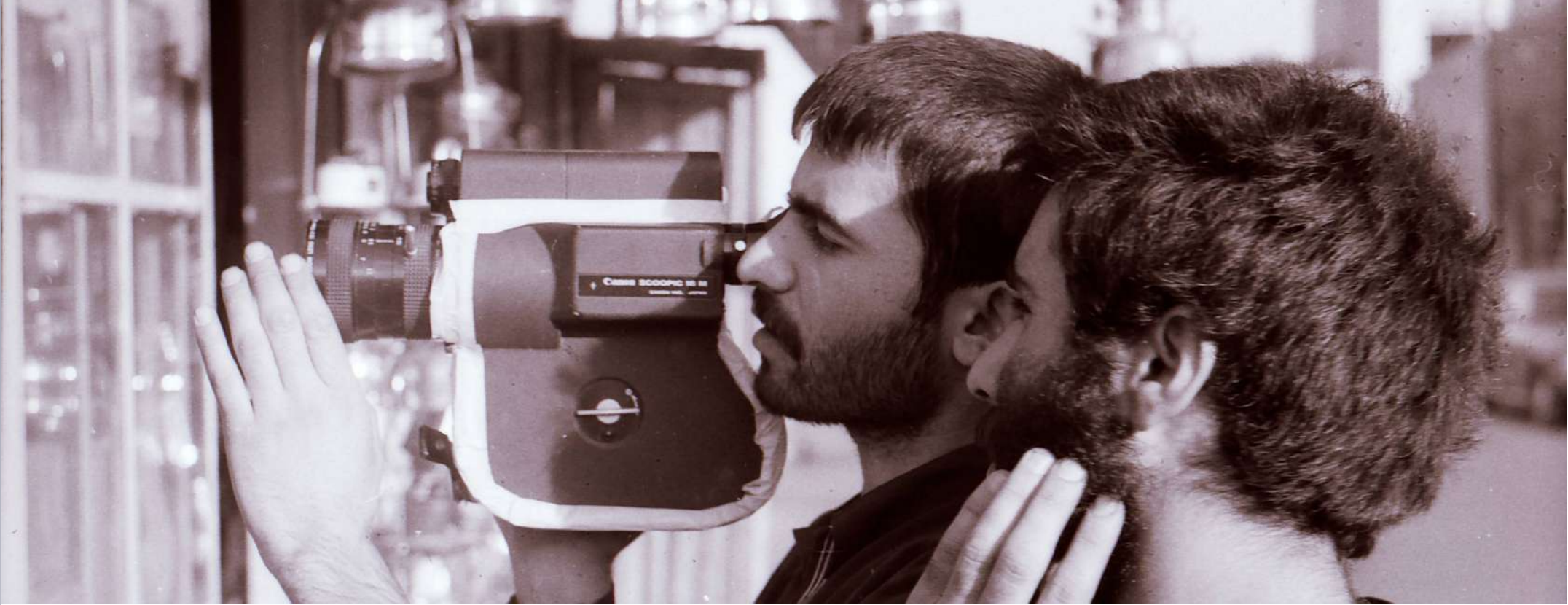
Each chapter tells a story through a character. But at the end, I need to pull back and give a wider picture—to lay out the reality and the scale of it. That's why I end each part with a broader, objective, historical perspective, grounded in figures and documented facts.



Your mother is an extraordinary presence in the film. Watching her direct shoots is truly remarkable.

I had to fight to keep her in the film. She saw two cuts and hated them both. She asked me to remove her entirely—to cut everything that centered on her. I eventually found a middle ground.

Our relationship, like many mother-daughter relationships, is full of complexity and contradiction. At times I admire her greatly, and at other times perhaps not. Like everything else in our lives, our relationship is full of contrasts. But I know that, like many other women in Iran, she has fought hard, lived a difficult life, and made great efforts to bring us to where we are today.



It's striking, for anyone who has never lived under an authoritarian regime, to discover how rich Iranian cinema is—and that it managed to thrive through all those years of suppression.

Iranian cinema is a reflection of its people. I'm constantly in awe of a people who don't break, who refuse to give in. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, every protest movement has been met with bloodshed. The regime has never been ambiguous in its response to demands for change.

And yet, Iranians don't yield. They take a step back and return stronger—more direct and uncompromising in their demand for freedom. Cinema is no exception.

My documentary filmmaker friends have been interrogated and imprisoned, some of them dozens of times. And what do they do? They walk out of prison and make an even more scathing film, an even more damning indictment of the regime that mistreated them. This is a people made of resistance, courage, and resourcefulness. As an Iranian, I am deeply moved and immensely proud to witness that.

CREDITS

Director	Pegah Ahangarani
Writer	Pegah Ahangarani
Co-writers	Ehsan Abdipour , Amir Ahmadi Arian , Arash Ashtiani and Majed Neisi
Sound Design	Neda Mohseni
Music	Anna Andreu
Editor	Arash Ashtiani
Sound mix	Dani Zacarias
Color grading	Hamidreza Fatourehchian
Production	Media Nest (Czech Republic) – Kaveh Farnam Fasten Films (Spain) – Adrià Monés
Co-producers	Parnian Farnam, Pegah Ahangarani and Arash Ashtiani
Executive producers	Enric Bach and Sergi Moreno