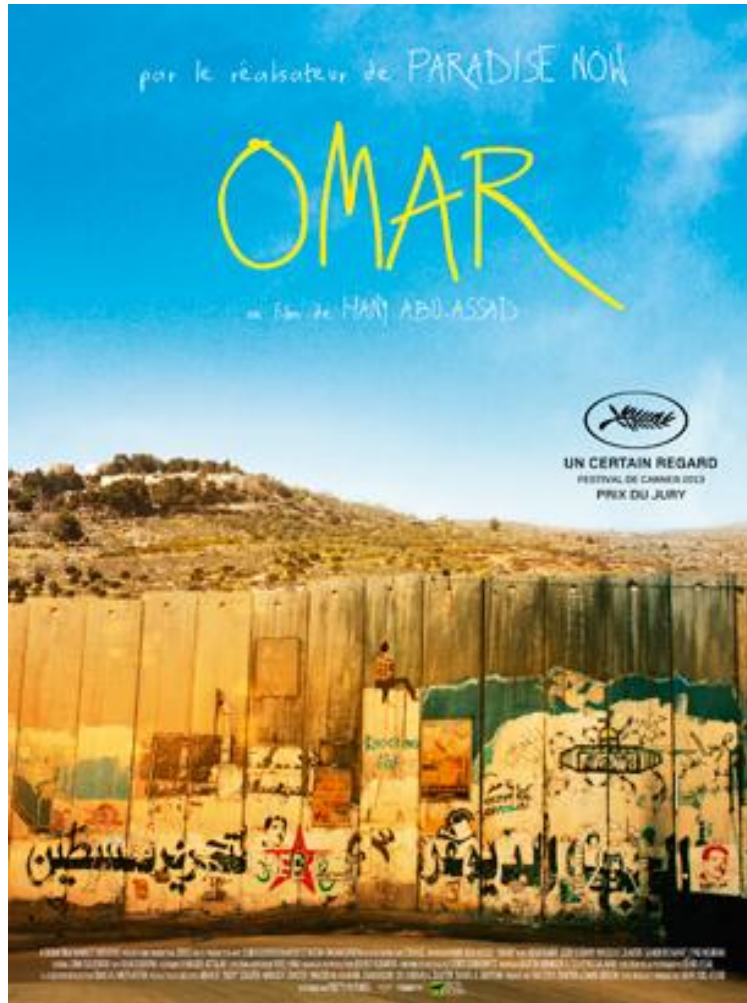


OMAR

EEN FILM VAN

HANY ABU-ASSAD



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WWW.WILDBUNCH.NL

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OMAR – HANY ABU-ASSAD

PROJECT SUMMARY

EEN PRODUCTIE VAN	ZBROS
IN SAMENWERKING MET	DUBAI ENTERTAINMENT, MEDIA ORGANISATION ENJAAZ A DUBAI FILM MARKET INITIATIVE
LAND VAN HERKOMST	PALESTINA
TAAL	ARABISCH, HEBREEUWS
LENGTE	96 MINUTEN
GENRE	THRILLER, DRAMA
FILMMAKER	HANY ABU-ASSAD
HOOFDROLLEN	ADAM BAKRI, LEEM LUBANY, WALEED F. ZUAITER, EYAD HOURANI SAMER BISHARAT
RELEASEDATUM	21 NOVEMBER 2013
FESTIVALS / AWARDS	CANNES FILM FESTIVAL – WINNAAR JURYPRIJS UN CERTAIN REGARD TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL – OFFICIËLE SELECTIE

KIJKWIJZER



SYNOPSIS

Omar is gewend om de bewakers van de scheidingsmuur tussen Israël en Palestina te ontwijken om zo aan de andere kant van de muur zijn geheime liefde Nadja en jeugdvrienden Tarek en Amjad op te zoeken. Wanneer zijn vrienden een verzetsdaad plannen tegen het Israëlische leger, loopt de situatie uit de hand en wordt Omar gearresteerd. Hij komt terecht in een kat-en-muisspel met de militaire politie en het wordt duidelijk dat hij voor zijn vrijlating een hoge prijs zal moeten betalen. Zal Omar er in slagen om zijn vrienden, grote liefde en overtuiging trouw te blijven?

OMAR is de eerste film die volledig uit Palestina komt en is geregisseerd door de Nederlands-Palestijnse regisseur Hany Abu-Assad (Paradise Now).

CAST

OMAR	ADAM BAKRI
NADJA	LEEM LUBANY
AGENT RAMI	WALEED F. ZUAITER
AMJAD	SAMER BISHARAT
TAREK	EYAD HOURANI

CREW

WRITTEN, DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY	HANY ABU-ASSAD
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	EHAB ASSAL
CO-EDITORS	MARTIN BRINKLER A.C.E. EYAS SALMAN
PRODUCTION DESIGN	NAEL KANJ
SOUND	HAMADA A.ALAH
CASTING	JUNA SULIEMAN
KEY HAIR & MAKEUP	DORTE DOBKOWITZ
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	ABBAS F. "EDDY" ZUAITER AHMAD F. ZUAITER WALEED AL-GHAFARI DR. FAROUQ A. ZUAITER SUHAIL A. SIKHTIAN
PRODUCED BY	WALEED F. ZUAITER & DAVID GERSON

OMAR – HANY ABU-ASSAD

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – 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 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 are premiering the film as part of Un Certain Regard at Cannes.

OMAR – HANY ABU-ASSAD

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 Nadja, 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.

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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.



OMAR – HANY ABU-ASSAD

ABOUT 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 Englishlanguage *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 14Th Chick*, from a script by writer Arnon Grunberg.

FEATURE FILMOGRAPHY

2013	<i>Omar</i>
2011	<i>The Courier</i>
2005	<i>Paradise Now</i>
2002	<i>Ford Transit</i> (Documentary)
2002	<i>Rana's Wedding</i>
2000	<i>Nazareth 2000</i> (Documentary)
1998	<i>The 14Th Chick</i>



OMAR – HANY ABU-ASSAD

ADAM BAKRI – 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.

SAMER BISHARAT – 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 Mouseeqa in Shefa-'Amr.

EYAD HOURANI – 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 is 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.

LEEM LUBANY – Nadja

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 – 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 Brindain & 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.