

SYNOPSIS

Ali and Merdad, two young Iranian men, try to bring their cousins, Asy (7) and Arman (5), from Iran to Turkey in order to join their parents in Austria. Waiting for the visa in Ankara, they share their life with other refugees: a couple and their son desperate to prove to the authorities that they are victims of a political persecution, a Persian teacher and a young Kurd who fight their miserable situation with a big sense of humour. A film based on true stories about a group of refugees trying desperately to reach the holy land of freedom.

2008 - AUSTRIAN / FRENCH - 35MM - COLOR - 1.85 - SRD - 1H50

www.ForAMomentFreedom.com

CAST

Ali Navid AKHAVAN • Merdad Pourya MAHYARI • Kian Kamran RAD Hassan Payam MADJLESSI • Lale Behi DJANATI-ATAI • Azy Erika BOZORGI Arman Sina SABA • Abbas Said OVEISSI • Manu Fares FARES • Jasmin Ezgi ASAROGLU • Mother Toufan MANOUTCHERI • Grand mother Soussan AZARIN Mr. Pifko Johannes SILBERSCHNEIDER • Father Michael NIAVARANI

CREW

Written and directed by Arash T. RIAHI • Producer Veit HEIDUSCHKA, Michael KATZ (Wega Film), Margaret MENEGOZ (Les Films du Losange) Director of Photography Michi RIEBL AAC • Editor Karina Ressler • Sound Mohsan NASIRI • Music KARUAN • Production Designer Christoph KANTER • Costume Designer Monika BUTTINGER • Production Manager Ulrike LÄSSER • Executive Producer Michael KATZ • International Sales LES FILMS DU LOSANGE

ARASH T. RIAHI

Born in 1972 in Iran, he is living in Austria since 1982. He studied film and the Arts and worked between 1995 and 2002 as a freelance for Austrian public television (ORF). He founded in 1997 the film and media production company Golden Girls Filmproduktion (www.goldengirls.at). The cinema documentary "The Souvenirs of Mr. X" (www.HerrX.com) was his first long documentary. Multi award winning "Exile Family Movie" (www.exilefamilymovie.at) is the second one. "For a moment, freedom" marks his fiction film debut.

► 2006 Exile Family Movie FIPRESCI & Golden Dove Award Leipzig Filmfestival/ Max Ophls Prize, Silver Hugo Award for best documentary Chicago International Film Festival 2004 The souvenirs of Mr. X - Silver Plaque Award for the best documentary at the Chicago International Film Festival 2003 Honorable mention of the Carl Mayer Screenplay Prize for the screenplay of For a moment, freedom and invitation to the Sundance Lab/USA

INTERNATIONAL SALES / LES FILMS DU LOSANGE
Agathe VALENTIN / Lise ZIPCI

a.valentin@filmsdulosange.fr / Cell: +33 6 89 85 96 95
l.zipci@filmsdulosange.fr / Cell: +33 6 84 21 74 53



برای یک لحظه آزادی

FOR A MOMENT FREEDOM

OVERCOME YOUR NIGHTMARES TO REACH YOUR DREAMS

A FILM BY
ARASH T. RIAHI
(EXILE FAMILY MOVIE)

MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL
FIRST FILMS WORLD COMPETITION

ZURICH FILM FESTIVAL
INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

PUSAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
WORLD CINEMA SECTION





INTERVIEW WITH ARASH T. RIAHI

► How did you first come up with the subject matter of the film?

I was born in Iran and fled my homeland when I was 9 years old with my parents, hoping to be accepted as political refugees in Europe. My siblings were at that time too small to come with us. They joined us more than a year later thanks to my cousin and a friend of ours. So one of the stories in the film is very close to me. All the other stories are also based on true incidents of close friends or on stories that I've researched over the last few years. But the topic of this film was and will always be a big part of my life.

■ How much did your last documentary inspire your feature film *FOR A MOMENT FREEDOM*?

My documentary *Exile Family Movie* was about the life of my family over the last 15 years in Europe and the USA. Unlike what I'd done before, I wanted to make a film taking place in between different worlds and not in the countries the refugees have fled or want to reach.

■ What are the chances of a family to cross the border and not get caught? How much does it cost in general?

The chances are quite high, otherwise there wouldn't be so many illegal people in Europe. When we were in Turkey to do research 2 years ago, our Kurdish guide asked us if we wanted to go to one of the places where you could see people crossing the border to Turkey! I'm not sure about the cost but I think it's somewhere between 5,000 and 20,000 Euros.



■ You point to the brutality of the political police that stops the bus at the beginning of the film. Can you tell me more about it?

The "Pasdaran" a.k.a. "Revolutionary Guards" are charged with guarding the Revolution itself. Having this responsibility gives them a lot of leeway in controlling, torturing and even killing suspects.

■ The opening scene is a pan shot that shows people being executed by the military. This sets the tone for the whole film...

This and the following scene with the children and the smuggler which is lighter and funnier. For me the juxtaposition of tragic and humorous elements is extremely important. I regard humour as the best survival technique, and if you don't keep at least a minimum of your sense of humour when you are in such extreme situations, you are bound to be destroyed. After all, there isn't a great deal more you can hold on to.

■ When they get to Ankara, the political refugees in the film survive in dire conditions... Were you particularly aiming at Turkey or at any country hosting illegal immigrants?

Actually it's not about Turkey, it could be any other country. I wanted to make a universal film about people trying to find a better life elsewhere, either for political or for humanistic reasons. I think anyone should have the right to live wherever they think is best for them.

■ You also denounce the collusion between the Turkish government and the Iranian secret services...

Yes, it's a fact that the secret services of these countries work together. I was told so on my research journeys in Turkey. And when we started shooting the film in the Turkish city Erzurum, the Iranian consulate tried to cancel our shooting permit. Fortunately our production company was able to convince the mayor of the city that it would benefit his city if he let us shoot there. And with the European University Olympics coming up in Erzurum in 2011, the mayor decided to be on our side to show the West that a big project could be made in his city!

■ The UN seems to be powerless and remains passive most of the time. Do you think that they could do more or that they are totally dependent on Europe's immigration policy?

I think the UN is not powerless, though they are not as strong as they should be. They help a lot of people, like they helped us when we were in Turkey. But in the end they are as strong as the governments let them be. These governments come up with more and more regulations and laws against refugees - and the UN cannot possibly ignore these laws.

■ At some point, one of the kids wonders why people need documents to meet their parents. Although it's put very simply, it seems to be one of the key issues of the film and of today's society...

Unfortunately bureaucracy is seen as the solution for most of the problems in our society. And when a refugee jumps out of the window and kills himself because he doesn't want to be sent back to his country, we should reconsider the concept of bureaucracy. How desperate must someone be to do such a thing?



■ In one heartbreaking scene, one character goes so far as to set fire to himself in front of the UN headquarters. Do you believe that the Iranian regime drives people to such desperate moves?

One of the refugees who plays a small role in the film was waiting in line when someone set himself on fire some years ago. The Iranian regime not only drives people to these extremes, but they kill a lot of people outside Iran. The cynical thing is - most European countries let the killers run free, only Germany condemned Iran for unleashing state terror in the "Mykonos Judgment" (1992).

■ The film features a variety of very different characters that share one goal: leave Iran and find refuge in Europe. How did you manage to make them so endearing? How did you go about the writing of the script?

It was a very long writing process that started in 2000. I did some research journeys to Turkey in order to see what had changed over the last years. I made a lot of interviews with refugees and NGOs and I attended some scriptwriting workshops like Equinoxe or the Sundance Lab. All of this helped me find the right balance of tragedy and humour that is essential for a dramatic topic about life.

■ How did you pick the main actors? Are any of them non-professional actors?

We spent over a year and a half casting the film, in Berlin and then in Stockholm, later in London, Paris, Vienna, and then in Leipzig and Frankfurt. Things were made harder by the requirements we had: we wanted Persian actors who spoke Farsi without any accent, some of them had to be in their early 20s, and of course above all they had to be good actors. On top of that, the people had to be prepared to work on a film that criticises the regime. That automatically excluded anyone who wanted to go back to

Iran. In the end we had a mix of professional and first-time actors. Some of the actors changed their names for security reasons. The most difficult thing was to direct them so that you don't notice their differences in backgrounds.

■ Did you do any rehearsals? Did you tell them about your personal experience?

We did some rehearsals but not too much. We talked a lot about the motivation of the characters and the interesting thing was that all of the actors felt very close to the subject matter of the film. Some were refugees themselves or the children of immigrants. The film was already a part of our lives and we all saw it as a manifesto of resistance and a tribute to the millions of refugees around the world.

■ Where did you shoot most of the film? Did you shoot mostly in Turkey?

We shot one month in Ankara, 2 weeks in the eastern Turkish mountains of Erzurum, 2 weeks in a studio in Vienna and one day in Berlin. ■

INTERVIEW BY FRANCK GARBARZ

