



T & C F I L M A G

present



(GOLAKANI KIRKUK)

a film by

Fariborz Kamkari

Switzerland, Italy 2010 / 114 minutes / 35mm / Arabic, Kurdish, Italian

starring

Morjana Alaoui

Ertem Eser

Mohammed Zouaoui

and special appearance of Mohammed Bakri

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

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World Premiere: Film Festival Rome, November 2010

an Italian / Swiss / Iraqi co-production, in collaboration with RAI Cinema, co-produced by RSI, SRG SSR, with the contribution of FILAS/Regione Lazio, Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, University of Rome "La Sapienza", with the support of Ministry of Culture of Iraq, Foreign Affairs of Italy

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A love story set against a background of Iraq in the 1980s. Under Saddam Hussein's brutal regime, Najla, a young doctor from Rome University, must choose between the traditions of her family and her personal ideals and dreams. Love, betrayal and the destiny of the two men who want to marry her are interwoven in her story as she meets her fateful end.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Deep red flowers bloom in an arid field near the town of Kirkuk in Iraq. They seem to be the keepers of a secret, a love story as universal and timeless as it is intimately bound to a place and to a time.

The bond between Najla and Sherko is a profound story of impossible love. Impossible, because it is set during a moment in the history of the Kurdish people at the height of the genocide perpetrated against them by the regime of Saddam Hussein. The young man Sherko is a Kurd. Najla belongs to an influential Arab family that expects her to conform to the traditions and values of her milieu. Yet Najla is independent, she decides and makes her own choices in life. She is a medical doctor just as Sherko, as dedicated to her vocation as to her love for him.

A handsome officer in Saddam's army is also ardently attracted to Najla. He too becomes a tragic figure in this story. In refusing him, Najla condemns the society of aggressors to which she belongs. In taking up the cause of the victims, she must make an ultimate terrible choice.

Based on true lives and events, some of the darker moments of recent history must be evoked. Yet, this is a story of the courage and the power of love. The power that can transform, at least for a time, hatred into compassion, cruelty into self-sacrifice, betrayal into an act of loyalty. And, against the tragic course of history, the courage that can unite a man and a woman forever.

CAST and CREW

<i>Najla</i>	MORJANA ALAOUI
<i>Sherko</i>	ERTEM ESER
<i>Mokhtar</i>	MOHAMMED ZOUAOUI
<i>Sherko 20 years later</i>	MOHAMMED BAKRI
<i>Rim</i>	MARYAM HASSOUNI
<i>Rasheed</i>	ASHRAF HAMDY
<i>Uncle</i>	FALAH FLEYEH
<i>Bayan</i>	SHILAN RAHMANI
<i>Karim</i>	SARKAW GORANY
<i>Hashem</i>	FEHD BENCHEMSI
<i>directed by</i>	FARIBORZ KAMKARI
<i>screenplay</i>	FARIBORZ KAMKARI NASEH KAMKARI
<i>director of photography</i>	MARCO CAROSI
<i>editor</i>	MARCO SPOLETINI
<i>music</i>	ORCHESTRA DI PIAZZA VITTORIO
<i>set designer</i>	MALAKDJAHAN KHAZAI SIMA YAZDANFAR
<i>costumes</i>	MALAKDJAHAN KHAZAI SIMONA MARRA
<i>sound</i>	PATRICK BECKER
<i>sound editor</i>	MARTA BILLINGLSEY
<i>sound design</i>	ALESSANDRO GIACCO
<i>mixer</i>	HANS KUENZI
<i>make-up</i>	RONALD HALDIMANN
<i>hair stylist</i>	SIMONA MARRA
<i>special effects</i>	FERNANDO SABELLI

PRODUCTION NOTES

The film project received MEDIA Development support in 2007 as Single Project, presented by the Italian company FARoutFILMS.

In 2008, financing and coproduction agreements were signed with the Swiss company T&C Film, FILAS/Regione Lazio, Italian company Oskar, Eurimages, RAI Cinema and RSI (Radiotelevisione Svizzera).

Shooting took place in Northern Iraq, in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, from October 3 to December 12, 2009. The film was shot in 35mm, with an international crew and cast.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Located 250 km north of Baghdad, the city of Kirkuk has over 5000 years of History. In South Kurdistan, the city was the battleground of three empires: Assyria, Babylonia, and Media. For generations, Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrians, Jews and Christians lived together in relative peace.

In the early 80s, Saddam Hussein's regime started a systematic 'ethnic cleansing' of the population. They moved hundreds of Iraqi families, close to the Baath party, from Southern Iraq into Kirkuk to replace the local population. Though this was officially a clampdown on Kurdish separatism considered pro-Iranian, Iraqi authorities went on to massacre more than 180,000 civilians.

The Al Anfal programme (from a verse in the Koran that authorizes the extermination of infidels) used chemical weapons against Kurdish Iraqi civilians. The largest mass extermination operation was directed by one of Saddam Hussein's cousins, Ali Hassan al Majid (known as "Chemical Ali"). A decree signed by al-Majid, dated June 3 1987, stated: "It is within the Armed Forces' jurisdiction to kill any human being or animal in the prohibited zones." The Human Rights Watch reported 2000 villages destroyed. The worst incident was on the 16th and 17th of March 1988 in the city of Halabja, when over 5000 civilians died in an aerial chemical bombardment.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, thousands of displaced Kurds and Turkmen returned to Kirkuk. In November 2007, an important referendum on federalism was scheduled in Kirkuk province. This was to reorganize the region and re-establish harmony among the country's diverse groups. They had co-existed for thousands of years before Saddam Hussein. Nevertheless, this still remains postponed.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Based on a true story, this is a film about impossible love: the love between Najla and Sherko, yet also the young man Mokhtar's attraction for Najla, which proves equally as fatal. A story of sacrifice and pain, of jealousy and betrayal, all bound to the theme of individual responsibility in the face of a mass tragedy.

It was extremely important to me that a woman be the character to lead the story and control the relationship between the two men. I wanted to tell a story of a Middle Eastern woman who is independent, who decides and makes her own choices in life, a woman who is not passive, a person who refuses to follow the rules laid down for her by society. I encountered many women like this in real life in the Middle East, where I grew up and lived. Yet, the media, even cinema, have never really recognised their importance. These extraordinary women have been ignored, not only by their own societies, but also by the world.

The protagonist of the film is a young Arab woman who rejects the social milieu of aggressors to which she belongs. She chooses to take up the cause of the victims, sacrificing herself, paying with her own life for the wrongs of her social class. A moment in the history of the Kurdish people forms the backdrop of this story, a history that has also been ignored by cinema, and just generally. The story of the genocide perpetrated in Iraq by Saddam Hussein against ethnic minorities, particularly against the Kurds. This issue is by no means a thing of the past. It is still a danger – the systematic persecution of specific minorities – that has not been completely vanquished. It continues to be repeated, risking to explode into even more terrible forms, in other contexts. I wanted to treat one of these episodes, one that has never been made into a film, hoping that perhaps it could be an antidote to the blind recurrence of this type of logic. I believe that all genocide, all persecution, should become part of the collective memory. It could make us attentive to the return of certain typical circumstances that can trigger it. And cinema can be a very effective tool for the generating of collective memory.

I love stories. Stories are a way of communicating, and can also become a form of denunciation without losing the fascination and appeal for the viewer, reader, listener. Every narration has its unique style. This story, told for the first time in a film, demanded a certain stylistic simplicity to render all of its power. It was also absolutely necessary to shoot the film at the locations where, a few years before, these events actually took place. The faces of all the actors, as well as the local nonprofessionals who participated in the film, reflect countless unwritten pages. The places, quality of light, atmospheres express the dynamics and magnitude of the events. They formed the natural set upon which we could graft our work. Another important stylistic aspect for me as director was the delicate rapport between the screenplay and the directing. I hoped to give to the story and the screenplay a Western, dramatic, treatment. Drama – as a dialectical contrast of the view and the vision of the events being recounted – is not part of the Eastern literary or cinematic traditions.

The latter is more strongly influenced by an organic view, by a vision that is relatively unfragmented. It smooths over contradictions instead of going astride them. While directing this film, I tried to include the expressive poetic simplicity of Eastern tradition. What interested me was to try to render a Westernstyle narrative plot through Eastern-style primary tonalities.

A film industry was inexistent in Iraq, where the film was shot. This was a risk that the producers and I decided to take, however, since we were so strongly convinced that shooting there would bring so much more to the film. We had to take everything and everyone with us. We were met with tremendous enthusiasm and involvement there, in the peoples' awareness of the work that we were doing and their desire to learn from it. This was the first international production that had been organized in Iraq and Kurdistan. We also decided to involve the local entities, to coproduce with them, call upon their resources, as we continued to seek to create truth in the elements of our story. During the experience we also encountered opposition, forces that seemed to want to block the making of the film, with this concept, in Kurdistan, in Iraq. I often got the very strong impression that cinema, as an organized mirror of a situation, was considered undesirable, or that it was a threat and that it could elicit very strong resistance.

The backdrop of the story is Saddam Hussein's brutal regime in Iraq. I chose to tell a story set in Iraq 22 years ago, to try to understand the Iraq of today, and the possible Iraq of tomorrow.

This film, that evokes some of the terrible moments of recent history, is in fact a film of love, wisdom, and the hope of possible reconciliation. In our present times, to discover the power of love it is sometimes necessary to contrast it with some of the harsher sides of existence.

FARIBORZ KAMKARI

DIRECTOR FARIBORZ KAMKARI

Fariborz Kamkari, of Kurdish descent, was born in Iran and lives and works in Italy. He graduated in Film Direction and Dramatic Literature.

In 2002, Kamkari joined into partnership with FAR OUT FILMS. He has written and directed short films, documentaries and two features, has written for television, and is the author of the novel "THE FLOWERS OF KIRKUK".

CINEMA

Features

2010 GOLAKANI KIRKUK (THE FLOWERS OF KIRKUK) (I FIORI DI KIRKUK) Drama.

Written and directed by Fariborz Kamkari.

2005 THE FORBIDDEN CHAPTER - a thriller distributed by Cinequest Distribution.

Written and directed by Fariborz Kamkari.

Selected IN COMPETITION at numerous international festivals including San Sebastian, Stockolm, Cinequest, NatFilm Copenhagen, Brussels BIFFF, Bucharest, Geneva, and also in Uruguay. AWARDED "BEST DIRECTOR" (Brussels Independent Film Festival).

Documentaries

2002 BLACK TAPE, a docu-drama.

Directed by Fariborz Kamkari.

Selected IN COMPETITION at Venice Film Festival, Edinburgh, New Directors New Films (New York), London Kurdish, UCLA Film Archives, Wales One World Film Festival, Gijòn. AWARDED "Top Jury Prize" at Cinequest 2003.

WORK IN PROGRESS

In pre-production

PIZZA E DATTERI, Comedy. Produced with the support of MiBAC.

In development

THE FLYING SHEIKH, Drama. Produced with the support of MEDIA.

AS AUTHOR

THE FLOWERS OF KIRKUK, a novel by Fariborz Kamkari, published by Banda Larga.

CAST

MORJANA ALAOUI (as Naijla)

Actress Morjana Alaoui is a French national of Moroccan origin who is based in Paris. She trained at the Cours Florent and Studio Pygmalion.

FILMOGRAPHY CINEMA

2010 THE ROBDA directed by Hafsia Herzi
2010 THE FLOWERS OF KIRKUK directed by Fariborz Kamkari
2009 THE ROOM / DAS ZIMMER directed by Michael Dreher
2007 MARTYRS directed by Pascal Laugier
2005 MAROCK directed by Laïla Marrakchi

MOHAMMED ZOUAOUI (as Mokhtar)

Actor Mohammed Zouaoui is a Tunisian national who lives in Rome.

FILMOGRAPHY CINEMA

2010 THE FLOWERS OF KIRKUK directed by Fariborz Kamkari, as Mokhtar
2009 IL PADRE È LO STRANIERO directed by Ricky Tognazzi, as Michel
2008 ARRIVANO I MOSTRI directed by E. Oldoini, as Alì
2008 L'ULTIMO PULCINELLA directed by Maurizio Scaparro, as Mohammed

FILMOGRAPHY TELEVISION

2010 HO SPOSATO UNO SBIRRO 2, as Khaled
2009 LA LADRA, as Hafiz
2009 CAPRI 3, as Abdullah
2009 DONNA DETECTIVE as Yousef
2008 LA SQUADRA 9, as Karim,
2007 L'ISPETTORE COLIANDRO directed by Manetti Bros, as Vlad
2007 DON MATTEO 6 directed by E. Marchetti, as Jussef
2007 LIBERI DI GIOCARE directed by F. Micciche', as Mohammed
2006 NASSYRIA directed by M. Soavi, as Kamikaze
2004 POSSO CHIAMARTI AMORE? directed by P. Bianchini, as Bassan

THEATRE

2008 Performance D'AMBRA GRIGIA E CANFORA directed by Raffaele Curi
2008 C'ERA UNA VOLTA by Maurizio Scaparro

ERTEM ESER (as Sherko)

Actor Ertem Eser was born in 1983 in Diyarbakir, Turkey, and lives in Istanbul.

He holds a degree in Business. For the past five years he has worked as a professional model for designers such as Pierre Cardin, Calvin Klein, Harvey Nichols, Roberto Cavalli, as well as other fashion houses. He has studied Turkish, Kurdish, Farsi and English.

The actor made his film debut in **The Flowers of Kirkuk**, as leading actor in the role of Sherko.

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