



# 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

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## **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
Jerjes 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  
1<sup>st</sup> 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  
2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Camera  
3<sup>rd</sup> Asst. Camera & D.I.T.  
3<sup>rd</sup> 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 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant Director	Ihab Jadallah
3 <sup>rd</sup> 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 Boubllil  
Héctor Robles Fernández  
Jean-Michel Boubllil  
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 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.

### **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 Mousseqa in Shefa-'Amr.

### **LEEM LUBANY (as 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 (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.