

BEYOND THE FRONTLINES: TALES OF RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE FROM PALESTINE

A movie by Alexandra Dols

113 min - France - 2017

**RELEASE IN FRANCE ON
NOVEMBER 8TH, 2017**

WITH THE ORIGINAL TITLE:

***DERRIERE LES FRONTS :
RESISTANCES ET RESILIENCES
EN PALESTINE***

« Dr. Samah Jabr is a wise and thoughtful woman. She reflects on the subtle, devastating effect on Palestinian people of years of brutal occupation. Alexandra Dols' film shares her insights with us, generous, humane and deeply disturbing. Please see this film. »

Ken Loach

Press

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Production

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Embark on a journey across Palestine alongside Palestinian psychiatrist Dr. Samah Jabr and discover the resistance and resilience of a people affected by the invisible wounds of war and occupation.

SYNOPSIS

Beyond the Frontlines takes us on a journey both within our own minds and on the roads of Palestine, led by Palestinian psychiatrist and writer Dr. Samah Jabr.

An heiress to anticolonial psychiatrist Dr. Frantz Fanon, she exposes the psychological strategies of the Israeli occupation and their consequences, and the ways in which Palestinians have learned to cope.

In this multi-voiced movie, interviews and columns are intertwined together with poetic escapes suggesting the invisible dimension of Palestinian streets and landscapes.

From this fragmented Palestine, women and men holding multiple identities share their stories of resistance and resilience. For everyday colonization does not only involve occupying land, homes, the sky or water. It does not seek to impose its rule through weapons only; it molds the minds as well, beyond the frontlines...

PRODUCTION NOTE

Palestine is facing a critical moment in its history. This is a time when, more than ever, cinema must play its role, i.e. gather people around a filmic experience so they can share, learn, feel and finally find the means to act.

This necessity coincides with our desire to begin and broadcast our film, and the Palestinian perspective it embraces, internationally. This would be an opportunity to make the work and thought of Dr. Samah Jabr better known. The main character of our movie, this Palestinian psychiatrist and writer is an heiress to Dr. Frantz Fanon. She seeks to decolonize the minds and the field of psychiatry at the same time.

After a successful release in French movie theaters, and winning the Sunbird Award for Best Documentary Film at the "Days of Cinema" Film Festival in Palestine, we are currently looking for distributors, networks and overall support for international broadcasting.

The Hybrid Pulse Association

It was founded in 2005 by Selma Zghidi and Alexandra Dols. We aim at assisting women with the process of writing, directing and broadcasting their audiovisual productions on the one hand, and designing visual literacy workshops on the other hand.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. SAMAH JABR

Dr. Jabr, what motivated you in participating in Alexandra Dols' movie?

The invitation of A. Dols to participate in her film came about at a difficult time, I had been a prolific writer between 1998-2007, then experienced a few years of stagnation in my productivity as a writer as the risks of that habit outweighed its benefits for a certain time. Alexandra contacted me in 2011 explaining her interest in my writing and wanting to interview me, using some of the pieces I wrote earlier as the basis for her film. Her invitation, on one hand, provoked a deep feeling of mourning in me, as I imagined at that time that I would not write anymore.

On the other hand, her invitation injected me with hope and enthusiasm; I relapsed to my old addiction, the habit of quieting my noisy mind by organising my thoughts and feelings in a text. I thought that including my stories in a French movie with the potential of international distribution could be meaningful to many others around the world who live with similar oppression, political or social, imposed by unequal power relations. After a year of deliberation and careful calculation of risk, the balance tilted towards a yes. I wrote back to her saying that I would be on board for her project.

Among the patients you see, would your diagnosis be that those who suffer the deeper psycho-psychological damages are the more passive regarding the occupation or, on the contrary, those who actively resist it? And is there a causal link there?



According to my observations and impressions of Palestinian people who participate in mature activism and planned acts of resistance to the occupation, that is, not the impulsive accidental actions of adolescents and children. I notice the following : such people are usually self confident, sincere, altruistic, and brave.

They possess the intelligence and the sensitivity to feel the pain caused by oppression. Because of their characteristics, they see the occupation as the illness, not their reaction to it.

They take a healthy stand against the occupation : they resist. Resistance often brings enormous retaliation against them and their families, so that if they survive their own imprisonment, torture and lengthy exclusion from life, they are still vulnerable to being broken by the feeling of guilt experienced through the retaliation against their families. Some are broken at that point, demonstrating a lesson of intimidation to anyone considering involvement of resistance.

The cowardly, corrupt, selfish traitors survive, and are likely to be beneficiaries of the occupation. This is not a uniquely Palestinian story; this is how colonialism systematically damages the best of the colonized, leaving behind the residue of humanity. This is why human beings in post-colonial nations are usually left with a damaged sense of self, value system, and identity.

The way you practice psychiatry gives a political dimension to psychological repair. Is your objective to further legitimize this form of care?

As a psychiatrist I understand the deliberate psychological damage happening to Palestinian individuals and community due to our politically determined social reality. And I know that the response to that is not simply to give people a diagnostic code and psychotropic medication for all « problematic » behaviour, but to defend human rights and promote justice. This is an ethical and professional stand that has no political agenda, but it is the right thing to do for the wellbeing of the people.

In the eyes of some psychiatrists, a boy who throws a stone at invading soldiers might have a conduct or oppositional defiant disorder, a man who picks oranges from his confiscated land might be called a psychopath, a Palestinian woman crying and shouting in reaction to the demolishing of her home might be called hysterical, and a young man provoked by soldiers to clash with them is always suicidal, if not a terrorist.

It is so easy to find a diagnosis to any politically unapproved behaviour. And the label is usually applied by the powerful. Such a diagnostic approach, failing to take the context into consideration, is short sighted at best. It is cowardly because it attempts to «treat» the individual and not the pathogenic context. Just as I wouldn't medicate a battered woman so that she would better tolerate the abuse, I wouldn't admit a socially or politically «controversial» man to a psychiatric hospital because of his «socially embarrassing» behavior.

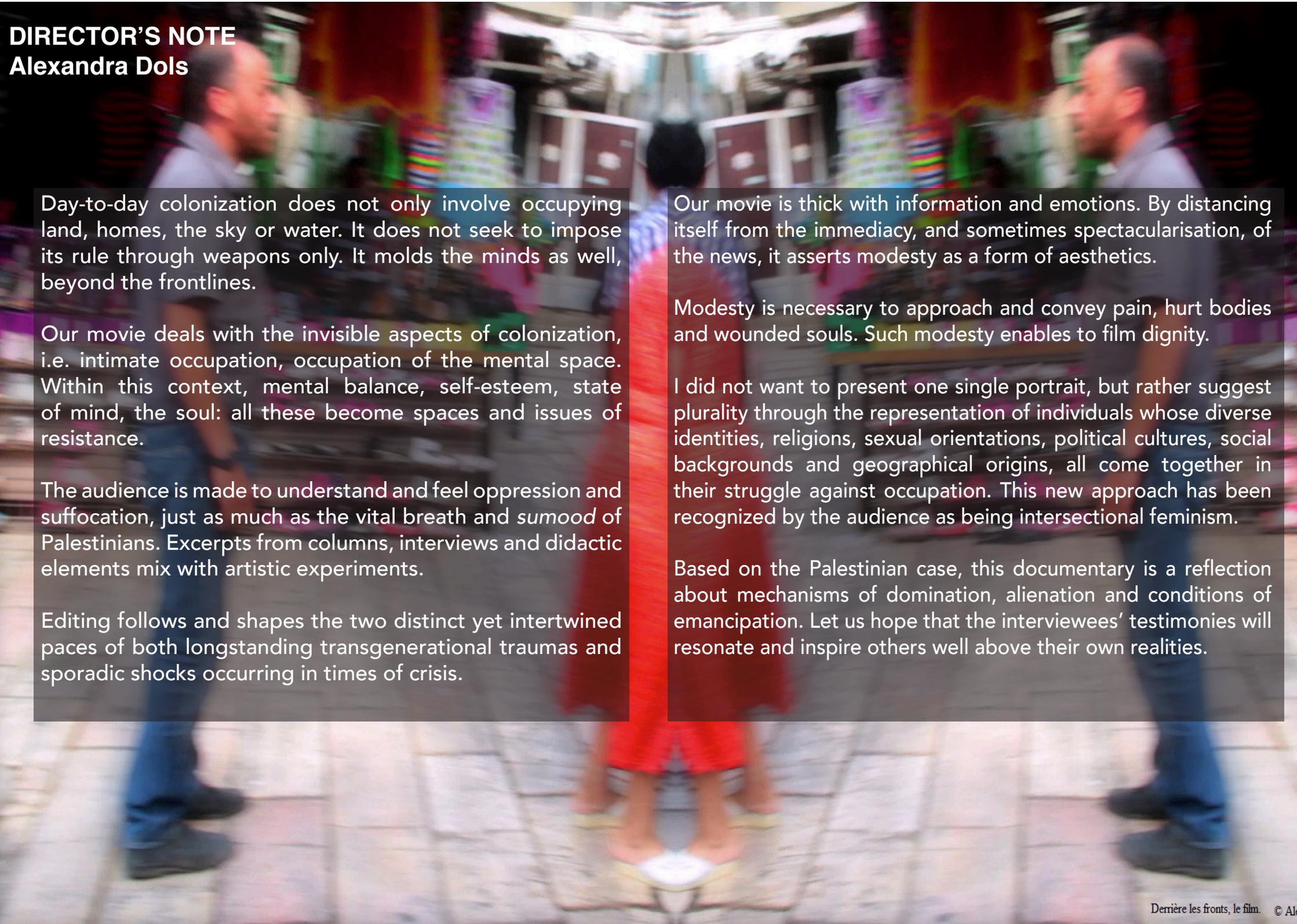
Just as I have the responsibility to inform the authorities about an adult molesting a child before I would treat the child, I feel I have the responsibility to make known the ill deeds of the occupation as well as to provide a therapeutic accompaniment to those who are on a journey to recover from injustice. This therapeutic stand is absolutely consonant with my professional and ethical responsibility.

In my opinion, any mental health professional who uses the excuse of impartiality or neutrality to stay «apolitical» is actually biased and helps promote dependency and obedience to power.

Having said that, as a Palestinian woman and outside my clinical role, I use, among other things, my knowledge and experience in mental health as a tool of resistance, to better understand and to explain how the occupation attempts to destroy our collective will and identity and value systems as a society, and to theorize about how we can best survive and live creatively in spite of these attempts.

Interview realized by Samantha Lavergnolle in September, 2017.

The entire interview is available online on the site of the movie:
<http://derrierelesfrontslefilm.fr/>



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Alexandra Dols

Day-to-day colonization does not only involve occupying land, homes, the sky or water. It does not seek to impose its rule through weapons only. It molds the minds as well, beyond the frontlines.

Our movie deals with the invisible aspects of colonization, i.e. intimate occupation, occupation of the mental space. Within this context, mental balance, self-esteem, state of mind, the soul: all these become spaces and issues of resistance.

The audience is made to understand and feel oppression and suffocation, just as much as the vital breath and *sumood* of Palestinians. Excerpts from columns, interviews and didactic elements mix with artistic experiments.

Editing follows and shapes the two distinct yet intertwined paces of both longstanding transgenerational traumas and sporadic shocks occurring in times of crisis.

Our movie is thick with information and emotions. By distancing itself from the immediacy, and sometimes spectacularisation, of the news, it asserts modesty as a form of aesthetics.

Modesty is necessary to approach and convey pain, hurt bodies and wounded souls. Such modesty enables to film dignity.

I did not want to present one single portrait, but rather suggest plurality through the representation of individuals whose diverse identities, religions, sexual orientations, political cultures, social backgrounds and geographical origins, all come together in their struggle against occupation. This new approach has been recognized by the audience as being intersectional feminism.

Based on the Palestinian case, this documentary is a reflection about mechanisms of domination, alienation and conditions of emancipation. Let us hope that the interviewees' testimonies will resonate and inspire others well above their own realities.

Dr. Samah Jabr

“Our history haunts our future”

May 15th, 2018



A French colleague once asked me, “Why are the Palestinians stuck in the Nakba? (...) Why don’t they leave it all behind, and look to the future?” The answer is that the Nakba is not only an historical trauma but an accumulative affliction that continues to harm Palestinian identity, both collectively and individually; the Nakba is an ongoing injury that has never been bandaged or healed.

The Nakba is a contemporary insult renewed with every Palestinian who is humiliated, arrested, and killed. (...) On the contrary, commemoration of the Nakba is necessary in order to understand the present and to redress the injury of the past. A collective trauma requires a collective healing through popular narrative, rituals, and symbolic representation, as well as restorative justice.

“But the Palestinians who approach the fence in Gaza must be suicidal!” proclaims my colleague (...).

There is a difference between the psychological profile of a person who attempts suicide because of personal problems and the person who undergoes self-sacrifice in the context of social struggle. The suicidal person is hopeless and desperate, withdrawing from others pessimistically or fearing to be a burden upon them.

Suicidal actions are often egocentric because the individual’s spark of life has lost its meaning in interpersonal terms. In contrast, the self-sacrificing person—even on the pathway to death—may be full of hope, indeed perhaps too much so. The act of self-sacrifice often involves an altruistic dedication to others and an eagerness to improve their future chances.

ALEXANDRA DOLS DIRECTOR



Alexandra Dols is an author, director and producer. She cofounded Hybrid Pulse and within it, coproduced and directed several short and two feature documentaries, MOUDJAHIDATE (2008, 75') and BEYOND THE FRONTLINES (2017, 113').

A contributor to French website Le cinéma est politique [Movies are politics], she has also been teaching visual literacy in a self-defense perspective in working-class neighborhoods since 2009. Issues of power and image are a core component of her transdisciplinary work. In 2017, she co-published Dr. Samah Jabr's first book, with French publishing house PMN Editions.

FILMOGRAPHY

- o HOMO_LESBO_TRANS_PHOBIA at work and in unions - 15 min - under development
- o BEYOND THE FRONTLINES: TALES OF RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE FROM PALESTINE - 113 min - 2017
On the psychological consequences of the Israeli occupation and the Palestinians' resistance and resilience
National release in France on November 2017
- o WOMEN IN PALESTINE with Dr. Samah Jabr - 11 min - 2015
- o QUI SEME LA HAGRA [*They who Sow the Hagra*] - 15 min - 2014
On victims of police crimes' families in France
- o MOUDJAHIDATE - 75 min - 2008
On women activism for the Algerian independence within the National Liberation Front / <http://www.moudjahidate.com/>
- o LA TETE DE MA MERE - Work of fiction - 10min - 2002
On how one feels about one's parents' sexuality

DR. SAMAH JABR



Dr. Samah Jabr is a Palestinian psychiatrist, psychotherapist and writer.

She graduated from Al Quds University (Jerusalem), Pierre-et-Marie-Curie University and Diderot University (Paris), and the Israeli Institute of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. She addresses the individual and collective psychological damage of the Israeli occupation.

Born in East-Jerusalem, Dr. Samah Jabr works in various cities of the West Bank. She was Head of the Ramallah Community Mental Health Centre and is now Chair of the Mental Health Unit at the Ministry of Health. As a clinician, she holds a private practice as well, and also works as a medical trainer and advisor for local and international NGOs.

She has been writing since the late 1990s, and has testified to the Palestinian daily experience in numerous articles and lectures. Alongside the documentary, her eponymous book *Derrière les fronts : chroniques d'une psychiatre psychothérapeute palestinienne sous occupation* [Beyond the Frontlines: Columns from a Palestinian Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist under Occupation] was published by PMN Editions (Paris, 2018). <http://www.pmneditons.com>

In 2018, she has launched a petition with the UK-Palestine Mental Health Network, protesting the decision by the Board of the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy to hold its 2019 international conference in Tel Aviv. https://secure.everyaction.com/hllcCM7s106Wu9RFAS0D_A2

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF:



Dr. Abaher El-Sakka is a native from Gaza, holds a PhD in Sociology and currently chairs the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Birzeit University.



Mgr Theodosios de Sebastia (born Atallah Hanna) has been the head of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem since 2005.

Sheikh Khodr Adnan was a political prisoner. He led a successful 55-day hunger strike to protest against administrative detention in Israeli prisons.



Deema Zalloum lives in Shu'afat, an East-Jerusalem neighborhood. She managed to prevent three Israelis from kidnapping her son.



Ghadir Shafie is co-Director of Aswat (Arabic for "voices"), a feminist and queer Palestinian women's group. An activist against pinkwashing, she is also engaged in the international Boycott Disinvestment and Sanction (BDS) Campaign.



Rula Abu Diho was a political prisoner and is a member of Addameer, an NGO supporting Palestinian political prisoners.

INTERVIEW – Dr. Samah Jabr : « La résistance en Palestine est aussi une résilience »

#OccupationPalestine

La psychiatre palestinienne Samah Jabr, dont le travail est l'objet de Derrière les fronts, prix du meilleur documentaire au Festival palestinien Days of Cinema, explique à MEE l'impact de l'occupation sur la psyché palestinienne et les réponses thérapeutiques qu'elle tente d'apporter



Cinéma. Devenir en Palestine le sujet de son histoire

DOMINIQUE WIDEMANN
MERCREDI, 8 NOVEMBRE 2017

Dépansions, anxiétés, intériorisations des infériorités, les maux palestiniens se décomptent au miroir sinistre de la volonté de l'occupant.



Photo: Alexandra Dols ©

Parcours tourmenté en Palestine occupée en quête des maux et des remèdes à la colonisation des esprits. Tel-Aviv. Février 2016. Un séminaire de psychothérapie se propose d'appréhender les dimensions politiques en thérapie. Un témoignage expert est délivré par le Dr Samah Jabr, psychiatre et psychothérapeute palestinienne. Elle est également l'auteure de nombreuses chroniques qui ont inspiré la réalisatrice Alexandra Dols, comme un souffle qui incite à passer les frontières et franchir les seuils. De l'Algérie, où, en 2007, Alexandra Dols terminait un film sur l'engagement des femmes algériennes dans la lutte pour l'indépendance, des liens s'étirent vers la Palestine occupée. C'est la découverte partagée des effets pathogènes de la colonisation. Le grand psychiatre anticolonialiste Frantz Fanon en fait état dans des ouvrages essentiels. Prélève et portée à l'écran, l'une des multiples citations possibles de son œuvre parle de tous temps et territoires : « Ce n'est pas parce qu'il s'est découvert une culture propre que l'Indochinois s'est révolté. C'est parce qu'il ne pouvait "tout simplement" pas respirer. » En écho à ces asphyxies résonne la société palestinienne filmée sur plusieurs années et dans des conditions précaires par Alexandra Dols. Des diagnostics psycho-politiques exposés et illustrés, nous ne ferons pas le tour en quelques paragraphes. Témoignages, séquences pédagogiques sur la situation palestinienne, images d'actualité saisies sur le vif des oppressions et exactions israéliennes, la structure finale du film est agencée par les chroniques du Dr Samah Jabr au prisme du réel en mouvement. Dépansions, anxiétés, intériorisations des infériorités, les maux palestiniens se décomptent au miroir sinistre de la volonté de l'occupant vouée à la disparition sans et face des Palestiniens. Dans la dilapidation des ruines et de la désintégration inéluctable des corps,



« Derrière les fronts... » : une plongée dans la psyché des Palestiniens

Le documentaire d'Alexandra Dols explore avec précision les pathologies liées à l'occupation israélienne et la psychologie des comportements.
LE MONDE | 08.11.2017 à 08h42 | Par Isabelle Regnier



« Derrière les fronts, résistances et résiliences en Palestine », documentaire français d'Alexandra Dols.

L'AVIS DU « MONDE » – À VOIR

En 2010, le cinéaste palestinien Raed Andoni, ancien militant de la cause palestinienne qui paya son engagement d'une longue peine de prison, mettait en scène son aspiration à mener une vie d'individu libre, affranchi des injonctions de la cause de son peuple et des solidarités familiales. Autant dire un scandale national. Autofiction aux accents tragicomiques, Fix Me implantait dans le cinéma palestinien un humour héritier de Woody Allen et d'Avi Mograbi, pour poser, in fine, la question des effets de l'occupation israélienne sur la psyché des Palestiniens. Réalisé par la Française Alexandra Dols, Derrière les fronts, résistances et résiliences en Palestine prend ces questions au pied de la lettre, et avec le plus grand sérieux. Quels types de pathologies fabrique l'occupation ? En quoi la psychologie permet-elle d'éclairer les comportements collectifs ? Guidé par la psychothérapeute palestinienne Samah Jabr, dont la présence, la pensée, le discours, structurent le film de bout en bout, Derrière les fronts... revivifie, en posant ces questions, le genre usé jusqu'à la corde de la chronique de l'occupation de la Palestine. Autour de cette femme, toute une galaxie de personnages – religieux orthodoxe, prof d'université, ex-membre du PFLP passée par la prison, militante lesbienne, mère de famille... – intervient, dont les récits réactivent la puissance d'images qui, à force d'avoir été répétées depuis que dure l'occupation israélienne, avaient fini par devenir des clichés : les bouchons aux check-points, les flots d'hommes et de femmes qui s'y pressent comme du bétail dans des dédales de grilles, les manifestations de rues, les corps ensanglantés...

Politique et intime liés

Au fil des interventions, le film tisse une vaste toile où le politique et l'intime sont inextricablement liés et où la question de l'occupation israélienne résonne avec celle, plus large, de la domination. Le trauma d'une mère qui dit avoir arraché son enfant à un colon qui le brutalisait résonne avec un exposé sur les méthodes de torture de la police israélienne, avec des considérations sur les stratégies politiques visant à diviser les Palestiniens, ou sur l'effet du boycott de Gaza dans les hôpitaux... De quelque endroit qu'ils parlent, quelle que soit leur expérience, les personnages apparaissent tous habités par cette même détermination, rage froide fière que rien, sauf l'obtention d'un réel état de droit et d'une dignité recouvrée, ne pourra apaiser. C'est le « sumud », cet état d'esprit que l'on inculque dès la naissance aux Palestiniens et que renforce quotidiennement leur expérience, qui conduit chacun à placer la cause de son peuple en haut de son agenda. La puissance de cet irredentisme est d'autant plus impressionnante que le film, en intriquant comme il le fait le politique et le psychologique, montre bien où il s'enracine. En attendant, le combat de Raed Andoni pour une vie dégagée des injonctions politiques et familiales semble voué à rester une utopie.



“Beyond the Front Lines”: The Psychology of Occupation

2018 JANUARY-FEBRUARY

RATING: ★★★★★



Photo credit: <https://derrierelesfrontslefilm.fr>

Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, January/February 2018, pp. 49-50

French filmmaker Alexandra Dols' latest film, "Beyond the Front Lines," examines the psychological effects on Palestinians of living under Israeli military occupation for half a century. The subtitled documentary was screened Nov. 18 at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC as part of the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting's FilmFest program.

Dols had recently completed a film on the role of women in the Algerian revolution when she came upon the writings (many of which have appeared in this magazine) of Dr. Samah Jabr, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist who heads the Palestinian Ministry of Health's Mental Health Unit. Dols found Jabr's writings to be "in the tradition of Frantz Fanon," the Martinique-born psychiatrist whose groundbreaking books focused on the "politicization of psychology" in the context of colonialism.

Beyond the Frontlines: Tales of Resistance and Resilience in Palestine

In her capacity as the head of mental health services in the West Bank, Jabr is trying to develop a model of services that corresponds with the resources available

Rebecca Stead

December 17, 2017 at 9:00 am | Published in: Israel, Middle East, Palestine, Review - Films & Documentaries, Reviews

Seamlessly weaving personal anecdotes with detailed analysis of the psychological impact of life in Palestine, **psychiatrist, psychotherapist and prolific writer Dr Samah Jabr** narrates her insights into what resistance and resilience means in the context of the ongoing Palestinian reality.

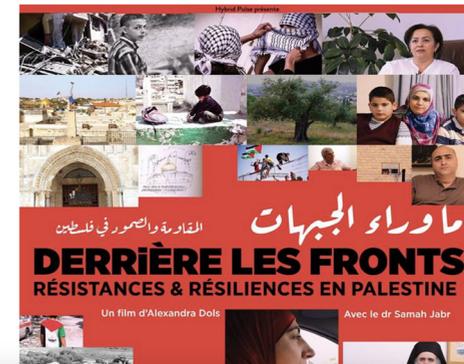
The film begins with Dr Jabr relating the story of how, one day on her way to An-Najah University in Nablus, she was stopped at a checkpoint. The Israeli soldier on duty pointed a gun through the window, directly at her chest, and proceeded to ask for her papers. Dr Jabr explains to the group of women in the meeting that this was by no means the worst experience that a Palestinian could suffer, and as such her threshold of fear is markedly different from that of other people, who are not accustomed to fear being used as a strategic instrument of control in their daily lives. She furthers this line of thought with an observation that although many Palestinians can relate to their Israeli neighbours, colleagues or counterparts at an individual level, the seemingly unending dichotomy of their respective daily realities means that "the more [that] Israelis breathe, the more [that] Palestinians choke."



فكرة

ما وراء الجبهات: المقاومات والصمود في فلسطين

شريط سينمائي للفرنسية ألكسندرا دولس مع أخصائية الطب النفسي الفلسطينية سماح جبر عن إصرار الشعب الفلسطيني الذي لا يمكن ترويضه.



TECHNICAL NOTE

Language - English, Arabic, French

Duration - 113 min - 2017

Nationality - FRANCE

Image - 16/9

Sound - 5.1

Director and screenwriter - Alexandra Dols

D.O.P. - Alexandra Dols

Sound - Charlotte Floersheim and Belanaïc Roubin

Editing - Delphine Piau and Véronique Rosa

Music - Baraka

Interpreter - Ady Seddik



The movie is available in Arabic, French, English and Spanish versions.

For rights and screenings, please contact us – hybridpulse8@yahoo.fr

Producer: Alexandra Dols

With the support of: Le Gueuloir
Production and James Simon

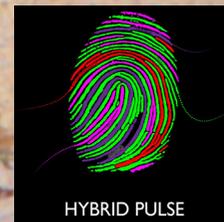
and AFPS Association France Palestine
Solidarité - Femmes en Lutte 93 - Les
Amis de Japyrus - our KissKissBankBank
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National release supported by Union
Juive Française pour la Paix [French
Jewish Union for Peace], Ligue des
Droits de l'Homme [Human Rights
League of France], Union syndicale de
la psychiatrie (Union of psychiatrists),
Politis (Weekly newspaper) and Réseau
Education Populaire [Network for a
Critical and Popular Education]

Facebook: @DerriereLesFrontsLeFilm

YouTube Channel: Hybrid Pulse

derrierelesfrontslefilm.fr



Production: Hybrid Pulse

Alexandra Dols

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PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS, FESTIVAL SELECTIONS AND AWARD

2017: «Days of Cinema» (Palestine)
Sunbird Award for Best Documentary Film

2017: Douarnenez Film Festival (France)
Official selection

2017: Stockholm Independent Film Festival
(Sweden)
Official selection

2017: French Institute in Tunis (Tunisia)
Carte blanche to writer Youssef Seddik

2017: Middle East Studies Association FilmFest
(Washington, USA)
Private screening for MESA members

2017: «Palestine en Vue» (France)
Official selection

2017: «Panorama des cinémas du Maghreb et
du Moyen-Orient» (France)
Official selection

Dr. Samah Jabr about Beyond the Frontlines

« The film is brave because it does not claim to be «balanced» through positioning itself an equal distance from the occupier and the occupied of Palestine. Instead, it sheds light on the Palestinian experience and point of view : experiences and views which are usually silenced, distorted, or vilified by mainstream media. The film does not turn away from people who are labeled «controversial” and thus to be avoided and ignored. This film brings together a diversity of interviewees whose strong voices do not fade into an all-too-common passive submission to power and dominance. The interviewees differ ideologically among themselves yet are united in their striving for liberation. »



