

A FILM BY YARIV MOZER (MY FIRST WAR)

THE INVISIBLE MEN

A SIDE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT THAT YOU WON'T FIND IN THE NEWS
DIRECTED BY/ YARIV MOZER/ SCRIPTWRITERS/ YARIV MOZER AND ADAM ROSNER/ CINEMATOGRAPHY/ SHAHAR REZNIK/
EDITING/ YASMINE NOVAK/ PRODUCERS/ YARIV MOZER, INA FICHMAN, SANDER VERDONK, GERTJAN LANGELAND ADAM ROSNER,
HILA AVIRAM/ PRODUCED BY/ MOZER FILMS (ISRAEL), INTUITIVE PICTURES (CANADA), LEV PICTURES (THE NETHERLANDS)
THE FILM DEVELOPMENT IS SUPPORTED BY/ THE GREEN HOUSE PROGRAM FOR DOCUMENTARIES ON THE THEME OF RACISM &
HUMAN RIGHTS. THE EAVE PROGRAMME FOR EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCERS. THE DRAGON FORUM
INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM WORKSHOPS IN THE MIDDLE OF EUROPE. CO-PRO TEL AVIV INTERNATIONAL CO-PRODUCTION
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<i>Project Title</i>	The Invisible Men
<i>1 liner</i>	An untold side of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: gay Palestinians—Louie, Abdu, and Fares—are hiding in Tel Aviv, and until they escape, they must remain “the invisible men.”
<i>Producer</i>	Yariv Mozer Mozer Films Ltd.
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<i>Director</i>	Yariv Mozer
<i>Writer(s)</i>	Adam Rosner & Yariv Mozer
<i>Language / format / shooting ratio / col/bw / sound / duration</i>	Hebrew, Arabic, English / HD / 16:9 / col / Stereo / 80' (52')
<i>Story based on</i>	Tel Aviv University Human Rights Clinic article, “Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel” by Anat Ben-Dor and Michael Kagan
<i>Genre</i>	Social Documentary
<i>Stage of development</i>	Development/Production
<i>Intended release</i>	Feb. 2012
<i>Country of origin</i>	Israel
<i>Country of shoot</i>	Israel, Palestine, Norway
<i>Estimated production budget (Euro)</i>	372,000 EUR
<i>Co-producers & countries</i>	Ina Fichman, Intuitive Pictures, Canada Sander Verdonk, Lev Pictures, The Netherlands
<i>Broadcast networks:</i>	Ikon- The Netherlands, YES Docu- Israel
<i>Sales agent</i>	Letter of interest from “Match Factory”.
<i>N° days preparation / shooting / post-production</i>	25 Shooting days / 80 Editing shifts
<i>Standard copy delivery date</i>	Dec. 2011

SHORT BACKGROUND

The film "**The Invisible Men**" tells the untold story of persecuted gay Palestinian men who have run away from their families and are now hiding illegally in Tel Aviv.

Their stories will be told through the film's heroes: **Louie**, 32 years old, a gay Palestinian who has been hiding illegally in Tel Aviv for the past 8 years; **Abdu**, 24 years old, exposed as gay in Ramallah, accused of "espionage," tortured by Palestinian security forces. They have both successfully landed asylum in Norway, where they are now; **Fares**, 23, recently escaped to Tel Aviv from the West Bank. His fate remains to be determined. Louie's story will be the main line of the film; Abdu and Fares's stories will support Louie, clarifying and deepening the audience understanding of him.

Much has been said about the plight of homosexuals in the Muslim world, yet those stuck in the ghettos of the West Bank and Gaza suffers all the more. There, rumors about sexual identity travel fast—and rapidly turn threats into serious physical harm: if their families don't find them first, the Palestinian secret service immediately accuses them of cooperating with the Israeli secret service (that does in fact exploit gay Palestinians). For that reason, these men have no choice but to escape illegally to Israel and to its most liberal city, Tel Aviv. But even there they must continue to live double lives. With no address, no passport or bank account, no real friends, no true lovers, Tel Aviv becomes their living prison. To suffocate them further, Israel criminalizes anyone who provides these illegal Palestinians with accommodation, employment, or transportation.

I break the law everyday that I work on this film—but it should not have to be this way. Israel has ratified international treaties that obligate it to protect anyone whose life is at risk. But again, Palestinians don't count. Israel simply deports them back to the Occupied Territories, leaving gay Palestinians with no choice but to seek political asylum in a third country—to forever abandon their identity, culture, and people.

"The Invisible Men" is the first film to reveal this crisis and process.

Official Trailer: <http://vimeo.com/15780785>

Password: mozer / DVD attached.



Louie and his unavoidable scar; he can only visit Jaffa from inside a vehicle.

SYNOPSIS

Early morning. The rundown streets of south Tel Aviv are still empty. Louie, age 32, looks right, then left, then right again. He makes his way onto a side street, scanning the people around him. He approaches a bus stop and waits calmly, always looking down, the scar across his cheek shimmering in the light. He boards the bus and sits down, glancing at the attractive man near him—until a border policeman appears at the front. Louie panics: should he make an exit? No, he can't afford to pay twice. Louie then isolates himself in the back, facing away from the driver, retrieving a Jewish Star from inside his shirt. For now, he's okay. After all, he's been at this for 8 years.

Louie never intended to move to Tel Aviv. Like many other Palestinians in the period after Oslo and before the Second Intifada, he would work in Israel painting homes and return to the West Bank on the weekends. He even used to rent a cheap apartment in Tel Aviv with a friend from Nablus. But for Louie, the city was never just a place to make money. In Israel's liberal cultural capital, Louie found the freedom to express his homosexuality in a physical way that the social mores and laws of Palestinian society do not permit. That freedom was compromised when, during a fight, his roommate secretly sent his father a picture of Louie with another man. The next time Louie saw his father, he was greeted with a knife to the cheek—a punishment for defaming the family's honor, for violating the laws of Islam, a warning of worse to come. Louie was left permanently scarred, permanently deterred from returning home.

And so this man has been hiding illegally in Tel Aviv for so many years, so desperately alone that you can see it in his eyes. Louie always dodges other Palestinians or even Arab Israelis who could inform his family in Nablus—or his relatives in nearby Jaffa—of his whereabouts. Louie further knows that Arabs, regardless of citizenship, automatically consider him a traitor: if he's gay and survived in Israel for so long, he must be collaborating with Israel in exchange for protection. At the same time, Louie cautiously avoids Jewish Israelis. Because he's so utterly vulnerable to the authorities, because he has no bank account, because he has no healthcare, Louie makes an easy target for extortion. And Israelis, Jewish or Arab, have reason to avoid him too: because Louie is a tremendous perceived security threat, to be in contact with him is a crime. He is totally isolated.

Then I met Abdu, age 23. Abdu was exposed as gay in Ramallah, accused of “espionage,” tortured by Palestinian security forces, and hunted down by his family. So he made connections with gay Israelis. With their help, he fled to Tel Aviv, connected with human rights lawyers, the UN Human Rights Commission, and foreign embassies. He landed asylum outside Israel almost as quickly as he arrived.

Unlike Abdu, Louie has always been conflicted about leaving Israel. But when he got wind of this “miracle case,” Louie insisted that their lawyer introduce them. The meeting that followed was tense. Abdu was complacent yet caring, Louie—furious, jealous, confused. “How can you leave forever? This is your culture! You're from here!” Louie demanded. Abdu's stark reply: “Your culture? Israel? Palestine? Everyone's trying to kill you!” Days later, Louie was spontaneously arrested and shipped back to the West Bank. Like he had so many times before, Louie snuck back inside Israel. He called his lawyer the next morning. Louie was finally ready to take the first step to leaving Israel permanently.

The film “The Invisible Men” will tell Louie's story as he is forced—just for being gay—to forever abandon his identity, culture, and home. On that journey, we will discover other gay Palestinians, Abdu and Fares, who are hiding in Tel Aviv, trying to get there or find a way out. These men, alienated on so many levels, have nowhere to run and are some of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict's greatest victims. But even with asylum, their personal conflict—hardened by physical, cultural, and emotional borders—may never subside or heal. The very least we can do is let these “invisible men” be seen.



The entrance to Tel Aviv's LGBT center. It doubles as a secret meeting place for gay Palestinians.

STATUS OF PROJECT

“The Invisible Men” has been developed under the Greenhouse Program for the Development of Documentaries on the Theme of Human Rights & Racism, which is funded by the EU and The New Israeli Film Fund. It has also been developed under the EAVE 2010 Producers Program (European Audio Visual Entrepreneurs). It was selected for the co-production market, part of the Leipzig Film Festival in October 2010. The film is at advanced stages of development, research, and filming. Our written materials are thorough. We also have visual footage including a trailer and sequences.

The documentary is produced in cooperation with Canadian producer, Ina Fichman (Intuitive Pictures) and Dutch producer Sander Verdonk (Lev Pictures). To date, the film is supported by The New Israeli Film Fund (\$50,000), Dutch TV IKON (10,000 €), Canadian TV5 (\$20,000), and an anonymous gay investor from the United States (\$25,000). The film is under the legal consultation of human rights, refugee, and asylum experts. It is in part based on the research of two such lawyers from the Tel Aviv University Human Rights Clinic, as presented in their article, “Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel” (April 2008).

SELLING POINTS

The principal selling point of “The Invisible Men” is that it is the first film of its kind to document the violent persecution of gay Palestinian men who, without any recourse, must escape to Tel Aviv. There, they become double victims of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and therefore seek asylum outside of Israel and Palestine.

The documentary engages a number of social issues of international public interest, especially ones important to our target audiences:

- Human and civil rights
- The fight against homophobia
- The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Middle East politics (for which we provide a new angle)

Director Yariv Mozer earned his reputation in cinema with his first film, the award-winning documentary, “My First War.”

TARGET AUDIENCE BREAKDOWN

General target audience: Female art house filmgoers, ages 35-65

Secondary target audience: The LGBT community, ages 30-65

ONLINE SOCIAL CAMPAIGN

Advised and initiated by POOL MEDIA (The Netherlands):

--“We all know that you don’t need to be gay to support gay rights – *become a GAYPAL.*”

Pool Media is a specialist in advertising and online awareness campaigns. Inspired by “The Invisible Men,” they have initiated “GAYPAL:” a not-for-profit social platform that seeks to advance issues that are vital to the gay community. GAYPAL will serve a gay and straight audience alike. It will be centered around a website where anyone will be able to promote academic and social projects (lectures, fellowships), and cultural events and works of art (films, books, exhibits) in order to publicize and seek funding for them.

Instead of creating a standard film campaign like many other documentaries, the film “The Invisible Men” will be the launching point for this widespread digital campaign that further advances the types of issues it raises.

DIRECTOR'S DECLARATION OF INTENT
(including a note on the visual aspects of the film)

Like Louie, I am 32 years old and moved to Tel Aviv 8 years ago. But unlike Louie, who was forced to come out of the closet and risks his life to remain outside it, I stayed hidden until the age of 25. It is that shared pain that drove me to unfurl Louie's character.

My interest in people like Louie began long before I met him. I had always been intrigued by the lives of gay Palestinian men who live kilometers from Tel Aviv, isolated by security fences, checkpoints, and their deeply religious society. However, the political reality of the Occupation never allowed me to meet such men. In 2008, I read "Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel," a report published by two lawyers from the Tel Aviv University Human Rights Clinic. Their research includes the testimonies of gay Palestinians who had escaped to Tel Aviv—monologues that recount awful stories of emotional and physical torture. I cried as I read the report again and again. For the first time, I learned that there were gay men in Tel Aviv, the most liberal city in the Middle East, *forced back into hiding* because they were Palestinian. That double threat—of being gay in Palestine and Palestinian in Israel—made me determined to find these men and to expose their plight to Israel and the world.

There's a psychological twist, though. These men are *still* reluctant to leave Israel; Louie took over 8 years to apply for asylum. Why? It all became clear when he invited me to his temporary flat. When I arrived, he was putting the finishing touches on a mural—a square with crisscrossing stripes that he rendered in pink paint and white plaster. I asked him to explain the image. He described the square "as a window" and the stripes "as prison bars" that represent his life in Tel Aviv. "Here, I am only half-free. I'm almost there. The bars look broken but I still can't get out." The work intrigued me, but I was more concerned with an equally curious decoration on the other side of the room—an Israeli flag. I asked him if the flag's there in order to dupe his landlord. He insisted, "No, I've had it ever since I moved to Israel."

I finally understood Louie. He's right. He does feel at home in Israel, so much so that he's scared to give up the components of his camouflage: his flag, his Jewish Star—even Tel Aviv. But Louie also doesn't know anything else. He's always been an outcast. Life has always been a matter of death. To use Louie's own words, he has become "an animal." His survival bears no logic. It knows no bounds. As double victims of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Louie and Abdu have been dehumanized, stripped of their identity just so they can survive. That is their story and the story of this film.



Louie's mural.

The documentary “The Invisible Men” will be told in my voice and from my point of view. Visually, the film will create a sense of what survival is for a gay Palestinian—of what it means to be invisible in Tel Aviv. It will combine two layers: (1) my perspective on the characters’ unpredictable daily lives through my narration—a tool that will support the story’s structure and provide basic context for the viewer; (2) the home video footage taken by my characters (each one requested a handheld camera). Their personal recordings bring us closer to their lives, but they also solve a practical problem. They enable us to capture the chaos they inhabit without the burden of an entire film crew;

Louie and Abdu have agreed to fully reveal their faces. They understood the protection the camera could afford them—from their families and the authorities in the short term, and in the long term, with asylum. Equally significantly, Fares, still in danger, has refused to reveal his face; he has only recently arrived in Tel Aviv. I will film him in the shadows he calls home, between light and darkness, his face never blurred.

Collectively, these circumstances speak to the greater conflict surrounding this film—the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. In certain respects, Louie is one of its greatest victims, alienated on so many levels that he’s been left without a home, family, friends, a nationality, or an identity. It is my goal to strike at Israeli antipathy and ambivalence toward these innocent boys and men. Through Louie, I want to break down the socio-political barriers that have contributed to his isolation on both sides of the Green Line. And while I certainly condemn homophobia wherever it prevails, I do not single out Arab/Islamic attitudes toward homosexuality.

Documentary film has the extraordinary power to transform the reality it captures. But documentary film also has the extraordinary power to transform its characters, especially when they get behind their own cameras. As much as it is my goal to render these invisible men undeniably visible, it is their bravery—to take cameras and fight for their lives—that inspires this film.



Louie and Abdu.

Notes on the Creative Aspects of the Film:

In general, my cinematic language is based on an intimate approach to the life and story of my characters. I believe that only by caring and becoming close to them, sometimes too close, can I observe their lives in a sincere way. My questions, discussions, and dialogue with them are always on a personal level, eye to eye, and never from a journalistic, removed, critical approach.

The camera observes the life of the characters; it starts from a view of their scenery, trying to portray the geography and landscape surrounding them and then closes up on to their facial gestures and body language. This style is achieved by placing the camera as much as possible on the tripod. That way, the cinematographer and I are forced to create a focused and stylized point of view—to choose the details, parts of the characters' lives and story that are important to us. The format we have chosen is an HD video resolution and we use a professional camera, the Sony F350 cam. We always intended to build a cinematic language and camera style that would fit the big cinema screens and would enhance the viewer's experience of the reality portrayed in the film.

The visual style created by our camera will contrast sharply with that of our characters' own home video footage. The differences in style will enable viewers to appreciate the nuances of both. We generate an observational cinema language using a pure "fly on the wall" documentary approach, sometimes observing on the events in long-lasting shots that match the true pace of the characters' lives.

At the same time, I always knew that I would be a part of this film, with my personal point of view, my own curiosity and relationship with my characters. I therefore wanted to break the silence and add myself as another character to the film, using my voice but never appearing on camera. In that way, I emphasize that my personal experience is central to the film but not its focus.



Louie finds shelter on a roof in south Tel Aviv.

Editing and Rhythm:

Our primary objective is to create a piece of cinema that will bring viewers inside our characters' lives, making them a part of the choices they have to make. That goal will sometimes demand a slower pace of editing, a more contemplative look that befits the silver screen. Of course, during moments of action and suspense, the editing will match the situation at hand.

Music and Sound:

I have always wanted this film to reach a wide audience and to appeal to the international art house market. Therefore, it was important for me to collaborate with key creative persons from outside of Israel. In terms of music and sound design, I have the privilege of working with Wouter van Bommel and Hugo Dijkstal. I was twice a member of the prestigious film development program, "Greenhouse," initiated and mentored by Mr. John Appel. His unique film work is an inspiration to me and I was determined to collaborate with the artists he had previously worked with.

Music score – *Words by Wouter van Bommel:*

Immediately after the first meeting with Yariv and Sander the phrase "trapped in tradition," as used by Yariv, popped up as a key idea for composing the score. "Trapped" and "tradition" can both be musically evoked feelings, and are possible ingredients for this score, as well as "struggling" and "walking a dead end." The most important role of the music, however, will be to catch the colors of tension, torn feelings of love for family and home ground, and support the story inside the movie, balancing between enforcing it or counterpointing it, and so making it a timeless, universal story; This makes it immediately such a tempting challenge to compose a score for this movie. I will also try to incorporate the sound of the environment, which is sometimes such a hostile character in itself for the main characters, as well to give fair space for the voice-over of the director. I look forward to working together with both the editor and sound mixer, and above all, to be involved with making this important documentary with Yariv.



On the way to asylum: Abdu parting from his boyfriend.

TREATMENT

FILM'S OPENING/ INTRODUCTION

Using archive material from Tel Aviv university Human Rights Clinic article, "Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel" (April 2008), actors (through voice over) will recite the testimonies of gay Palestinians against the backdrop of the current authentic locations where their torture occurred: a town square in the West Bank where one homosexual was set on fire, a dark alley in Gaza where another was nearly pummeled to death. These monologues will become the opening of the film giving the viewer an understanding and context of the wide phenomenon.

N.B. The following treatment is based on our own extensive research of Louie and others like him. However, we are also indebted to the work of Anat Ben-Dor and Michael Kagan of the Tel Aviv University. In the footnotes below, we quote their text in order to inform our own.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE FILM

The film "The Invisible Men" reveals an untold side of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Louie's everyday life as he struggles for political asylum. As director, that bureaucratic process provides me with a useful structure for the film—a timeframe that reflects Louie's conflict and its necessary resolution. Yet there is a comfort that asylum will not bring Louie; the journey toward securing a new life abroad will compel him, as well as his viewers, to confront the everyday dilemma of his identity: Louie's journey of self-discovery is a tragic one that has no guaranteed course or conclusion. But not to take it would mean denying the very fact that he is just a human being—one who has been hiding from himself and from others for so long, far too long, and hopefully for not much longer.¹

The film's narrative will follow Louie on this unpredictable journey toward asylum; against the backdrop of this physical journey, I will go deep inside his emotional and mental change: from a passive character that is constantly struggling to survive, he confronts for the first time in his life the question of asylum and its consequences for his life.

I have decided that this film is "The Invisible Men," and not "man," as it is much more than just about Louie. It is about an entire phenomenon: there are many other gay Palestinians hiding in Tel Aviv. It is about a problem: very few people are willing to help them. For that reason, I have insisted on centering the film around Louie, invoking supporting characters that are in the same situation and share the same struggles, but shed different light on the phenomenon. They are Abdu and Fares. The three characters of the film will allow us to move beyond the modern city around us and into the greater world of gay Palestinians: the Tel Aviv hovels they call home, the places where they secretly work. We will go where some dare not: a bimonthly, underground, Arab gay party where the alcohol flows freely and the sex is open to the naked eye. We will encounter the nearby parking lots where Palestinians – those who manage temporary entry permits to Israel – change out of their drab clothing and into more flamboyant wear. We will discover the basement offices of Israel's LGBT Union – the only place where gay Palestinians can find discreet and trustworthy help. And from Tel Aviv, we move with

¹ The Refugee Convention's basic definition of a refugee is: Any person who...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. People fleeing homophobic violence and who lack government protection are eligible for international protection under the Refugee Convention. This is the emerging consensus of leading courts, governments and UNHCR, and is consistent with the way Israeli courts have handled other cases of homophobic discrimination. Gay Palestinians who would be targeted for violence because of their sexual orientation should be eligible for protection in states that are party to the Refugee Convention, including Israel.

them to Palestine to try to unveil the faces and places of the gay Palestinian underground: an undeclared gay café in Ramallah, the dark alleys of Nablus.

At the end of the film, when the characters will be safe in their country of asylum (which will not be revealed in the film), I will turn the camera to their families. I will reveal their pain, their point of view, and thus, assemble the full picture of this film.

Given the chaotic lives of these 3 characters, the physical length of their journey (from Palestine to Israel to a third country) and the intensity of the emotional and political themes at hand, their story demands the length of an entire feature documentary film.



Louie sees his village -- and Palestine -- for one last time.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

The man who directly leads us into this gay Palestinian underworld, the only person Louie relies on is: **SHAUL**, age 46, formerly religious, a landscaper by trade. He is a man whose burly figure belies a true gentleness; for the past 10 years, he has spent the majority of his time as a volunteer at Israel's LGBT Union. There, he serves as Coordinator of Youth and Minority Activities, including the gay youth center that was also the site of a brutal attack in August 2009—a staunch example of Jewish-Israeli homophobia. Shaul's more sensitive responsibilities include helping Louie and his covert counterparts. In fact, Shaul has become the principal Israeli contact for gay Palestinians, be they in Tel Aviv, the West Bank, or Gaza.

Shaul attributes his desire to helping other homosexuals to his army days. While still deep in the closet (he came out at 27), he harshly rejected the advances of a fellow soldier who was later driven to suicide. Ever since then, Shaul has made it his personal crusade to help other homosexual men and women in distress, regardless of religion or citizenship. Yet Shaul's ultimate goal is not to hide gay Palestinians in Tel Aviv, nor acquire them temporary legal residence. He wants to get them out of the Middle East because they can never fully integrate into common Israeli society: Jewish Israelis don't welcome them, police stop them wherever they go, their Arab-Israeli family members harass them, and they can't help but feel too close to Palestine to ever feel settled in Israel. Shaul, therefore, must first convince them to leave "home" behind. Ironically, he advises them to get arrested and shipped back to the West Bank. He then tells them to reenter Israel, get arrested and expelled again and again. By their third arrest, they enter the Israeli legal system and will have to answer to a judge. Once there is a legal record of their plight, these men can finally apply for asylum abroad. Hopefully, and if they're lucky, they can then get out of Israel for good.²

Shaul has been in contact with Louie for the past 4 years of which it took him the first two to convince him to seek asylum. What makes Louie different than all of Shaul's other "clients" is the simple fact that he *knows* and willingly *declares* that he's gay (the others say that they "just sleep with men").

Shaul serves as a confidant and a link to basic necessities (doctors, medicine, etc.), but **YOHANNA**, 30s, is a crucial source for legal advice. A specialist in human rights and refugee law, Yohanna is stubborn, stoic, and uncompromising. Unlike Shaul, she stays out of her clients' emotional lives. Otherwise, her work would be too overbearing. Together, Shaul and Yohanna lend us access to the lives of other gay Palestinians—all of whom are in Tel Aviv, trying to get there or get out—in order to better understand Louie's situation.

After Louie, our most important Palestinian character is **ABDU**, 23, born in a village outside of Hebron, raised in Ramallah. He is fluent in English, highly articulate, cunning, charismatic, and determined—so much so that he secured political asylum in Europe after being in Tel Aviv for only 2 months. His story—despite its "happy ending"—is no easier to digest. Eight months earlier, a friend exposed Abdu for being gay and living with his then-boyfriend. Like many other gay Palestinians, he was automatically arrested for "spying for Israel," interrogated, and tortured by Palestinian security services—kept awake for over 48 hours, hung by his legs for hours at a time, his head repeatedly drowned in human excrement. He was released soon after, but to his male relatives who tried to kill him. So he fled to Jordan.

In Amman, Abdu found work at an underground, undeclared gay café. Over the 6 months that followed, he began making the connections that would eventually land him asylum. He first met Americans who encouraged him to go to Tel Aviv. Through Facebook, he communicated with Israeli gay men; one of them, his current boyfriend, **OR**, 34, a Hebrew teacher. They have been inseparable ever since.

² Asylum claims by Palestinians give rise to understandable concerns. How will Israel protect its people's security while granting asylum to Palestinians? How will Israel prevent itself from being overwhelmed by a flood of Palestinians? How can Palestinians' right to seek asylum be separated from the controversy over the "right of return"? Yet, given the poor human rights record of the Palestinian Authority and the proximity between Israel and Palestinian areas, Israel is a natural haven for persecuted Palestinians. Were Israel to completely close its doors to Palestinian asylum-seekers, people in mortal danger could find themselves with no place to flee.

Abdu found Tel Aviv exhilarating—the sea, the sun, the nightlife, the men, especially Or—but he also knew that he could never stay. So he went to the Tel Aviv University Human Rights Clinic and consulted with its attorneys. He shopped his story to the UNHCR and various foreign embassies. And within a matter of weeks, a European government had granted him asylum.

Many people have helped Abdu along the way. But he owes his success to no one but himself and his determination for change—a rare precociousness that extends far beyond the past 8 months. For years, Abdu has been politically active with the Palestinian Fatah, deeply opposed to Hamas, and familiar with several Palestinian political and intellectual figures. He has been an outspoken critic of the Israeli separation barrier, demonstrating with like-minded Israelis as far back as 2007. In Europe, Abdu will pursue his dreams of education and a career in journalism.

FARES, 23, unlike Louie and Abdu, is feminine, gentle—stereotypically gay.

When Abdu arrives in Norway, he sends Louie a Facebook message urging him to go to Ramallah: Fares, Abdu's friend from home, was just caught by his father, who threatened to report him to the police. Because Louie can't risk his cover and travel to the West Bank, he tells Fares to contact me. Late one night, I get a phone call from Fares. He's desperate and crying. He asks me to meet him. In violation of Israeli Law, I travel to Ramallah, a city where Israelis are not allowed, and meet this fragile young man at the city's undeclared gay café. It's nearly empty. Fares is shaking, trying not to cry: his father had found pictures of him dressed as a woman and alerted the authorities. Fares has been hiding in friends' apartments. Like Louie and Abdu before him, Fares just made it to Israel after being tortured by Palestinian security services. He's currently in Beersheba, one of Israel's southernmost cities verging on the desert, where he's found shelter in the home of a politically active, radically left wing, middle-aged gay couple. Fares's fate remains to be seen.

"MAHMOUD", 18, lives in Gaza. He has just made contact with us via email. He's seeking a way out but doesn't know how. He is also in active contact with Shaul.



Fares in the home of his protectors, Beersheba, Israel.

FILMED SCENES (SELECTED) – to reflect the structure of the feature length documentary film

The film begins against a black screen. Opening credits appear one after the other and the voices of the monologues below begin to fade in to the soundtrack. These are the voices – shaking, fearful, distressed – of young Palestinian men as they were interviewed by the Tel Aviv University Human Rights Clinic. As each voice speaks, we move to the locations where the events of violence against the subjects took place:

“A 25-year-old gay man named Ismail was attacked in his house by four men who broke his arm and leg. They wrote on the walls that he was a homosexual. Almost no one from his family came to his help afterwards. He soon disappeared altogether.”

“When I was a teenager, I had sexual relations with other young men from the village. One of them, a young man called M., wasn’t discreet enough and was suspected of being a gay by the villagers. Graffiti was sprayed against him in the village, and at one point he was caught by a local gang. They captured him, set him on fire, and told him it was a punishment for his sins, and a warning to others. He suffered severe burns, especially to his face. I saw him a few years later and it was a shocking sight. To my knowledge, no legal action was ever taken against the attackers, and no one was even questioned.”

“It is also viewed as an act against the Palestinian struggle for independence. Known homosexuals are presumed to be weak and to identify and collaborate with Israeli Jews. The sanctions are extremely harsh, beginning with physical and verbal abuse and often ending in death at the hands of one’s own family or others. Of the three gay men I knew in the Palestinian Authority areas, all were in deep hiding. I do not know whether they are still alive, and if so, where they are living.”

“Each day – sometimes twice a day, he would call [to where I was staying in Israel], cursing and promising to kill me. He said he would hang me in front of our entire village, that everybody would see how he would kill me. N said he would find me even if I had facial surgery. Sometimes, he said he would tell the Hamas to “take care of me.”

“On other occasions, the policemen and interrogators would order me to stand on one leg and raise my hands. When I put my leg down, they would hit me. One of them said: “He wants to be Jew.” Another said: “Look at this Lutti (queer/homosexual).”

Cut to Black. Fade in.

An average day in Tel Aviv for an unaverage resident. Louie, 32, wakes up and prepares for work. He leaves his one-room apartment, walks down the decrepit staircase and hails a taxi. The run-down streets of Tel Aviv are still empty. The Jewish Star that hangs confidently around his neck contrasts sharply with his look of alarm. His defining trait: a rugged scar that spreads across his cheek.

Filmed from Louie’s personal video camera and from his point of view: Louie exits the taxi in front of a residential building. Inside, he greets his boss, 40s, and coworker, 22, recently discharged from the IDF’s Border Police (the unit in charge of capturing Palestinians inside Israel); they do not know his true identity.

Later, Louie tells us how when he started work that day, he heard police sirens. He dropped his equipment and ran out the door, fearing it was a police unit searching for illegal workers.³ When he returned to a very

³ The Entry to Israel Law forbids the deportation of a foreigner who has been arrested for illegal stay during the first three days of his arrest (section 13(d)); during this time, the foreigner may turn to the authorities or to the courts to challenge the deportation. However, a different rule applies to Palestinians who stay illegally in Israel: according to section 13G(b), a police officer may order the immediate deportation of a Palestinian who stays in Israel illegally. Subsection (c) prescribes that only an officer is authorized to order such deportation, the order should be given in writing, and the

confused boss, Louie outs himself – as gay and Palestinian. His boss blows up at him and fires Louie on the spot.⁴

A new day. Louie is making his way around downtown Tel Aviv. His large sunglasses provide him with a measure of armor against the glare of those around him. He takes a deep breath and steps inside an office: Yohanna L., Attorney at Law, Human Rights Specialist.

Yohanna is seated firmly behind her desk. Louie doesn't want to seek asylum abroad – he wants to stay in Israel. She demands that he provide her with his personal testimony—the circumstances that led him to escape Palestine and reside illegally in Tel Aviv. But Louie can't read or write Hebrew. Yohanna is losing patience; this isn't the first time she's asked him to prepare the document. "Figure it out," she tells him. This time, Louie promises that he'll do it. This time really is different. The police know where he lives. They've been calling him, demanding that he report for questioning.

Night has fallen on Tel Aviv and Louie feels calmer as he descends the stairs to Tel Aviv's LGBT Center. There, he meets Shaul – the go-to-Israeli for Palestinians who've made it to the big city. Shaul pulls out a piece of paper and begins to record Louie's life story. *What was his first homosexual experience?* Being raped by his uncle when he was 9 years old. *And how did Louie end up hiding in Tel Aviv?* Eight years ago, a friend caught him having sex with a man, photographed it with his cell phone, and sent to his father. Louie was then lured back to Nablus where his father tied him up and sliced open his right cheek. He hasn't returned home since.

Louie walks out of Shaul's office and into the darkness. He gets in another taxi and tells me to come along: "Yariv, I have something to show you in Jaffa." From inside the safety of the vehicle, we approach a kiosk, and Louie tells the driver to slow down: "You see that guy in the red shirt? That's my cousin. He's always looking for me. And there's another one inside." Louie thinks he's been seen: "Drive, drive faster."

Back in Tel Aviv, we exit the cab near Rothschild Boulevard—the main artery of the city's gay nightlife. It was here that Louie first met the men who have walked in and (mostly) out of his life. It was here that Louie learned not to fall in love with Israeli men—if he's not arrested first, they'll leave him out of fear and not without cheating or stealing from him. It's hard for Louie to say the name of his first Israeli boyfriend: "Guy."

We move toward a popular gay bar that Louie has been glancing at from down the block. He's familiar with the local spots but is always too afraid to enter. He brags, "If I were to go inside, everyone would be looking at me. I'd be the best dancer there by far." Louie smiles, "Too bad, I have to go home. I have a job in the morning. First one in weeks."

Back home, Louie is studying Hebrew from a children's literacy book. The text is his haven from the crime that pervades his neighborhood—an area of the city on the brink of gentrification but still dominated by the underworld that claimed it first. Louie pours over the text. He painstakingly duplicates the rigid lines of Hebrew print, "Alef, bet, gimmel, daled, hay." The letters sound like Arabic. Louie puts down his book to go to sleep. Glass shatters. A man grunts. The sounds of crime continue to invade.

Determined to stay in Israel, Louie arrives at Yohanna's office. He wants her to find him a way to remain in Tel Aviv—he'll convert to Judaism, he'll marry any woman, Muslim or Jewish. Yohanna laughs, "Stop wasting your time. Forget Hebrew. Learn English." That's because Louie has no place in the Jewish State. Truth be told, he needs to get the hell out of here, the sooner the better. So Yohanna tells him about Abdu – the miracle child

Palestinian should be given a prior hearing. According to the information provided by some of our interviewees, regular policemen often deported them without a hearing or a written order.

⁴ The 1952 Entry to Israel Law makes it extremely difficult for a person without legal status to survive in Israel. Section 12A of the Law criminalizes the provision of a sleeping place to a foreign resident who has entered Israel illegally or is staying in Israel illegally. In addition, subsection (b) criminalizes the employment of a foreign resident. Subsection (c) criminalizes providing transportation to people who stay illegally in Israel.

who secured asylum abroad with unprecedented speed. Louie is furious: “Why am I stuck here for 8 years?!” He demands to meet Abdu, face to face. Yohanna makes some calls. Abdu invites Louie to the Arab gay party – an event Louie has always been too scared to attend.

An undeclared meeting point in the slums of Tel Aviv, but outside the club—a bustling scene. LGBT Arabs – men, transsexuals and drag queens of all ages, from across Israel, the West Bank, and even Gaza – are quickly making their way through a dark door. Security guards watch closely. Not a word of Hebrew in sight.

Louie meets **ABDU** for the first time. Their conversation quickly descends into an argument. Louie cannot understand how Abdu, who will soon leave for Europe, can turn his back on his “culture,” leave to never return. But Abdu cannot understand Louie: “Why the fuck do you want to stay here, man?! They’re trying to kill you!” Louie asks, “And what if you never come back?” Abdu reassures Louie that they will both return someday.

The two disappear inside the underground party. Out of respect for individual privacy, we do not attempt to bring out cameras inside—although we do secure Louie with a neck mic. He captures the sounds from within and we document the scene from outside: the pervasive Arabic, the booming music of Lebanon and Egypt, the faces unfamiliar to Tel Aviv, the sense of secrecy, the sexual urgency.

Abdu waking up with his boyfriend, Or. They get ready for the day. Abdu makes Or breakfast before work. He explains his love for Or—and fear of leaving him— despite their short acquaintance.

Abdu on Facebook, opening up a prison of homosexuals from across the Arab world. He then shows us the pictures of people who helped him escape to Israel—and pictures of him with Palestinian politicians, including Hanan Ashrawi, former Palestinian Authority spokeswoman.

Louie is caught by Israeli police, and in a single night, deported back to the West Bank. Using his handheld camera, Louie documents his escape route back into Israel. The next morning, he calls Yohanna. He’s ready for asylum outside of Israel.

Abdu organizes a going away party with all of the friends he has made in Tel Aviv. It’s a bittersweet celebration. Louie looks lost and confused.

Abdu and Or’s last night together. The pain of their separation is acute.

Summer time. Yohanna has sent Louie on a number of assignments. He first makes his way to the UN Human Rights Commission office in central Tel Aviv. He is refused entry.

Louie receives an urgent message from Abdu, now safely abroad, to meet his friend **FARES** in Ramallah.

Louie at the Tel Aviv University Human Rights Clinic with Shaul and Yohanna.

Louie at the beach, showering and brushing his teeth at the outdoor public showers meant for sunbathers and swimmers.

Fares contacts Louie, asking him to meet him. But Louie can’t go to Ramallah—he can’t risk being caught on either side of the border so he asks me to go in his place. Late that night, I receive a phone call from Fares. He’s desperate. I take my cameraman, and, in violation of Israeli law, we travel to Ramallah.

We meet Fares at an undeclared gay café. He’s crying, shaking: his father had just found Facebook pictures of him dressed as a woman and threatened to alert the authorities. Since then, Fares has been hiding around town, hoping for the best, expecting the worst. He wants somehow to hide in Tel Aviv but he doesn’t speak a word of Hebrew: Fares – not politically active like Abdu and much younger than Louie – grew up in a time

where Palestinians, denied entry to Israel, never needed to learn the language of the occupier. Trembling, Fares tells us that he has no future in Palestine, especially after his boyfriend was killed in a car accident. When we ask him to tell us his boyfriend's name, Fares refuses: "His dying wish was that I never reveal him. That I never tell anyone he's gay."

Weeks go by. Louie's asylum application is now being pushed by the UN and things are looking good. He wants to see his village one last time. He wouldn't dare return, and this is probably his last chance, so we travel to a lookout point where he can see his village from afar.

In a secret process, never before documented by cameras, the UN refugee committee arranges Louie's silent transfer to Norway—the highly anticipated ending of the film. They refuse to let us film. *In fact, The UN refuses to cooperate with the film. They fear admitting that they're transferring Palestinians out of Palestine.*

Fares calls me. He's made it to Israel and is hiding in Beersheba, a city verging on Israel's Negev desert; he's been taken in by a politically radical, left wing, middle-aged gay couple. The neighborhood is strikingly poor, and the building, particularly old. Inside, Fares is dressing himself and putting on his makeup before the day of filming. He wants to look his very best. In comparison to Louie and Abdu, Fares looks incredibly feminine. Over the course of our conversation, Fares tells us that, since we last saw him, he had been arrested and tortured by Palestinian security services. After he was released, he escaped to Israel. Through Abdu's contacts, Fares met the couple who's currently sheltering him. Fares remains in Israel till this day.

Louie's last night in Israel. He asks to go to Jaffa. We drive by the kiosk where his cousins work. We stop at Jaffa's port. He stares into the water and cries. He doesn't want to leave.

At the airport, we use hidden cameras to film Louie's departure, including parts of his thorough security check. He boards a plane for the first time and flies far away to a country we will not reveal. He hesitates at the airport, at the security personnel, at the border police – but mostly at the uncertainty that stands before him, and for the first time, at the opportunity of opportunity itself.



Louie at a free health clinic for illegal residents.

EPILOGUE

I travel to Louie’s village in the West Bank where I meet his family. They discuss their own pain and concern for Louie—they haven’t seen each other in years. Their stories shed new light on Louie. They make his life seem complete.

Winter in Norway; Snow, More snow; “The Invisible Men” captures Louie and Abdu as they contend with new problems in their adopted country: a difficult language, a different climate, a foreign culture, the isolation of a small town. Yet as survivors, their greatest struggle is not the new challenges they face—it’s everything they’ve been forced to leave behind.



February, 2011. Louie in the isolated village of his asylum.



7 a.m. Abdu on the way to school.

Yariv Mozer – director/producer – Filmography

YARIV MOZER, director and producer; graduated in 2003 with distinction from Tel-Aviv University's Film Department. Mozer is the former Supervising Producer of acclaimed Israeli production company, Alma Films. He has also served as director of the 10th Tel Aviv International Student Film Festival hosting in Israel Mr. Richard Gere. In January 2007, Mozer established his own production company, Mozer Films Ltd. Among its productions: "My First War," directed by Mozer and co-produced with ZDF Arte, "The Heart of Jenin" co-produced with EIKON media for SWR, Israeli Academy Award Nominee "The House on Tabenkin St." Mozer recently completed his second documentary featuring the story of political/artistic collaboration between renowned Israeli-Jewish performing artist Noa and Arab-Israeli singer Mira Awad in representing Israel at the 2009 Eurovision. Until the 2010 academic year, Mozer served as head of Entrepreneur Production Studies at the Jerusalem Sam Spiegel Film and Television School and taught production studies in the Tel Aviv University Film and Television Department. He is a member of the Israeli Film Producers Guild and serves on its board of directors. Mozer is also a member of the European Academy of Film and the first Israeli member of EAVE (European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs).



Director's Filmography

2009

- **"Another Way (Noa & Mira Awad)"** – Documentary, 50 min. An IBA Channel 1 Production.
- Guest Journalist Director for **'Mabat Sheni'** (Investigative 60 MIN) TV Program Channel 1.

2008 **"My First War"** – Documentary, 80 min. A co-production between ZDF ARTE and Noga Ch.8. and supported by the Rabinovich Film Fund and The Lottery Film Fund. Broadcasted by: YLE, CBC, SBS, NRK, IBA. **Winner of Special Jury Nomination Award** The DOCAVIV Tel Aviv International Film Festival 2008 – Israel; International premiere at **IDFA 2008 Amsterdam - First Appearance Competition Nomination Award**; The Cape Winelands Film Festival- **The Audience Award** Cape Town, South-Africa; The Amnesty International Film Festival- The Movies that Matter Festival- Hague, Netherlands; The Toronto Jewish Film Festival – **The Best Documentary Award** - Toronto, Canada. The Atlanta Jewish Film Festival (AJFF) 2009- Atlanta USA; GÖTEBORG International Film Festival 2009- Sweden; Sguardi Altrove Film Festival 2009- Italy; International Documentary Encounters- Colombia; UK Jewish Film Festival- England; Festival of Visual Anthropology Aspekty- Poland; Festival Film Dokumenter (FFD), Indonesia.

2006 **"Calling You"** – The First Israeli Gay Music Video / by Jonathan. (LOGO Channel USA).

2003 **"Passiflora Waltz"** – Short fiction film (16 mm), 15 min. **Special Mention** – FANO Film Festival, Italy

Producer's Filmography

2009

- **"Jerusalem Moments 2009"** (7 Short Documentary Films), 90 min.
- **"The Life and Death of Gotel Botel"** – Feature Film, 90 min. **Glam Rock Special Jury Award** 2009 CIMM Chicago International Movies & Music Festival,

2008

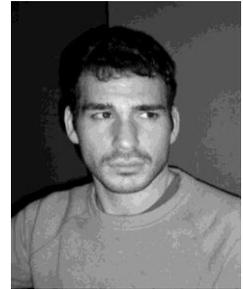
- **"The House on Tabenkin St."** – Documentary, 50 min.
- **"The Heart of Jenin"** – Documentary feature film, 90 min.

2006 **"Monkey Business"**– Feature Documentary, 90 min. **Winner of Best Documentary** – Haifa FF

2005-2006 **Supervising Producer for Alma Films.**

Key Production Personnel

Script writer & Producer - Adam Rosner, scriptwriter and producer, graduated Princeton University in 2007 with a degree in Russian Literature. Since then, he has lived in Tel Aviv, working in various sectors of the Israeli film industry including, production, distribution, screenwriting, and screenplay translation/editing. He was recently selected as one of 25 participants in the Peter Stark Program at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, where he will earn his MFA in production.



Producer- Sander Vendonk, Dutch co-producer, is the co-founder and creative director of LEV Films an Amsterdam-based production company dealing in documentary and feature films. In the first 2 years of its existence, LEV films produced 10 short films and 3 documentaries. Most recently, it one the Golden Calf Award for Best Dutch Short Film "Sunset from a Rooftop."



Producer – Hila Aviram, graduated in 2009 from Tel Aviv University's Film and TV Department, specializing in production. She has worked at Mozer Films since it was established in 2007. Hila has taken part in all of the company's productions at various levels, including production coordinator, production manager, line producer ("My first war" 2008, Zdf Arte, Noga CH.8), and producer. Among her productions: "Jeannette" (NFCT, second authority for TV and Radio- Ch. 2, premiere at 2011 The DOCAVIV Tel Aviv International Documentary Film Festival) and "Not far From the Tree" (Reshet, Ch.2). Currently, she is the Supervising Producer of Mozer Films Ltd. And a business partner of Yariv Mozer.



Executive producer- Roshanak Behesht Nedjad, co-founder of Flying Moon Filmproduktion. The company concentrates on the development and production of high quality feature films and feature-length documentaries with a universal audience appeal. Films by Flying Moon were screened successfully at festivals around the world, among them are award-winning projects like HAVANNA MI AMOR - German National Film Award for Best Documentary 2001 and KHAMOSH PANI - Golden Leopard for Best Fiction Film and for Best Actress at the International Film Festival in Locarno 2003. WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS received the Sundance International Filmmaker's Award for Best European Script in 2003.



Editor- Yasmine Novak, editor and director. Born in Canada and moved to Israel in 1980. Enrolled in the Tel-Aviv University Film Department and Graduated in 2007. Currently developing a script for a feature length fiction film. Her documentary "Bus" (2009). A part of "Jerusalem Moments 2009" screened at numerous film festivals worldwide, including SUNDANCE . Her fiction film Zohar- 30" is a Winner of 13 international awards and participated in numerous festivals world wide. Purchased by ARTE/WDR.



Cinematographer - Shahar Reznik, DOP, has earned his reputation as a talented, passionate, and devoted DOP & Operator through a decade of hard and creative work. Shahar works for major production companies and broadcasters in the local market, shooting documentaries, TV series, commercials, music videos and new media projects with various directors.

