

Nowhere To Hide at International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

By Goeffrey Macnab

Itâ??s late 2011, and the Americans are about to leave Iraq. The local people are rejoicing. â??The whole country is now independent and free,â?• the radio announcer proclaims.

Three years later, and this optimism is well and truly shattered. Male nurse Nori Sharif, working in central Iraq in a part of the country deemed the â??triangle of deathâ?• and a complete no-go-zone for outsiders, chronicles the slow slide into despair, the increasing sectarianism and the rise of ISIS. The violence seeps into hospitals and schools. Kidnappings shoot up.

Kurdish-Norwegian filmmaker Zaradasht Ahmed was â??directingâ?• Nori from a distance. (Ahmed himself was in the town of Sulaymaniyah, in Iraqi Kurdistan.) At first, the idea was that Nori would film what was going on around him â?? he would be the observer, not the subject.

â??We gave him the camera, we gave him the knowledge,â?• Ahmed says of Nori. He and his collaborators would tell Nori what to shoot and where to point his camera. All the time, the violence was moving closer and closer to Ahmed. By the end of 2013 and the start of 2014, society was close to collapse.

At this point, Sharif himself became the subject of the film. It turned into the story of a man and his family trying to survive. â??It was the only way to justify the work, to focus on Nori,â?• Ahmed remembers. â??All material since about 2013 was twisted again. It was more Nori to be in front of the camera, teaching him how to film himself, teaching other people how to film him, to angle it more from a personal point of view.â?•

By the end, Nori was isolated. He didnâ??t know whether to stay or to leave. ISIS was in control. This was a world in which anybody could be a victim â?? and anybody could be an enemy.

Ahmed had between 300 and 400 hours of footage from which to assemble Nowhere to Hide, which runs at 86 minutes. The project involved five years of shooting and a year of research. The director pays tribute to his editor, Eva HillstÃ¶m, and her painstaking work in uncovering the â??hidden human feelingâ?• in the story as they attempted to make a â??different kindâ?• of war film â?? one looking at the experiences of â??ordinaryâ?• people caught up in a conflict theyâ??ve done nothing to provoke. â??The film would have been different without her,â?• the director says.

As for Nori himself, he is not expected at IDFA. â??When I was last in Iraq a couple of months ago, I suggested to him that we wanted him to come,â?• Ahmed recalls. However, over the space of a month, Nori lost two of his brothers. One died in a car accident, the other â??because of ISIS.â?• â??He was not in the mood to travel. He said â??I think I should stay here â?¦ I wish he could have been here to see his work.â?•

(Source: http://www.idfa.nl)

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Date Created
November 24, 2016
Author
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