



Name: Rachel Levy
Died: March 29, 2002

TO DIE IN JERUSALEM



Name: Ayat al-Akhras
Died: March 29, 2002

PRODUCTION COMPANY:
EJH PRODUCTION
P.O. BOX 4817, BOISE, ID 83711
(208) 955-7602
INFO@TODIEINJERUSALEM.COM

FOR SCREENING:
DRAGOMAN FILMS
RAVIT TURJEMAN
718-971-5857
INFO@DRAGOMANFILMS.COM

TODIEINJERUSALEM.COM



RACHEL LEVY



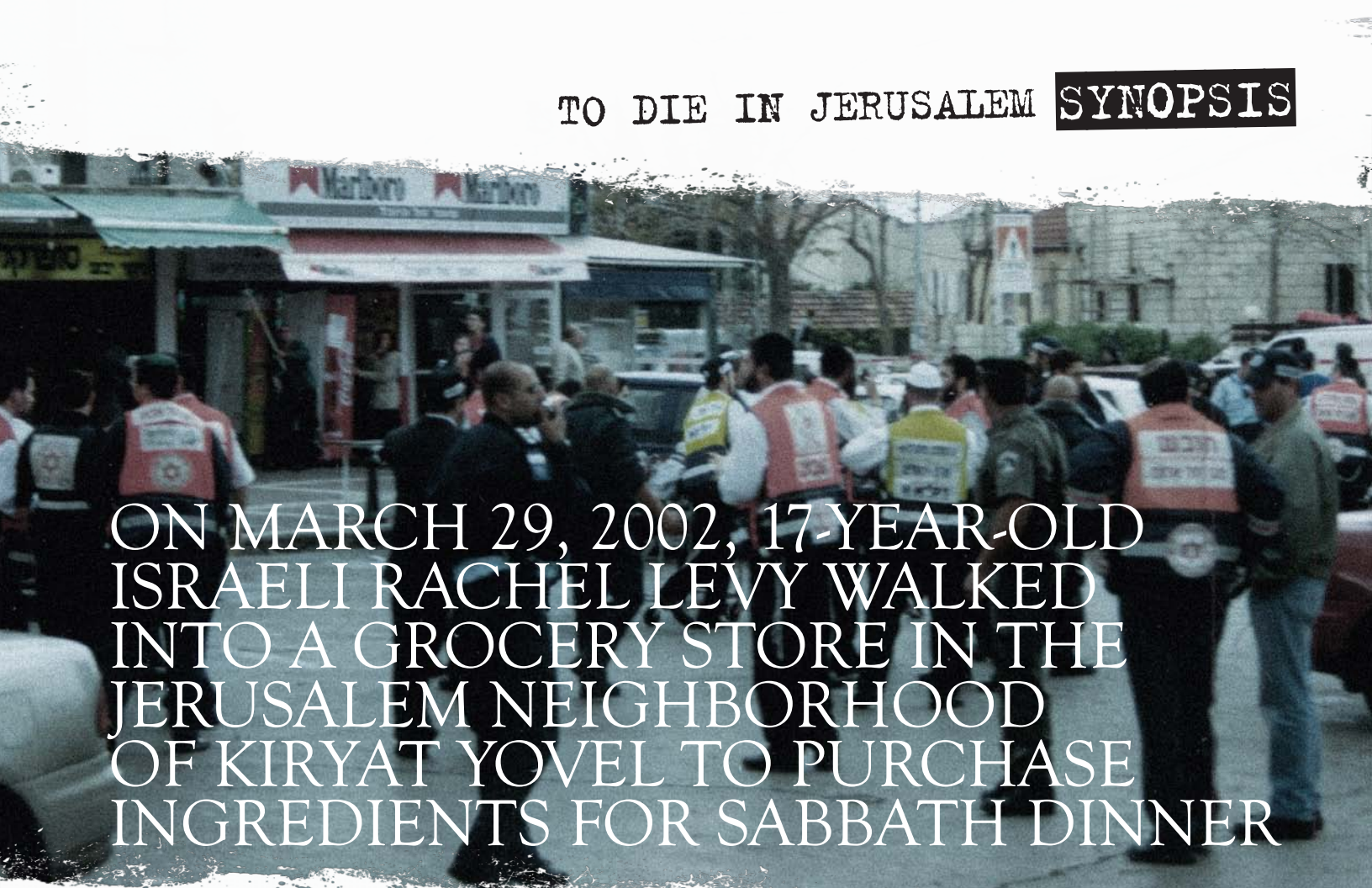
EVER SINCE ISRAELI 17-YEAR-OLD RACHEL LEVY WAS KILLED FOUR YEARS AGO IN JERUSALEM BY A PALESTINIAN SUICIDE BOMBER, HER MOTHER AVIGAIL HAS FOUND HARDLY A MOMENT'S PEACE

LEVY'S KILLER WAS AYAT AL-AKHRAS, also 17, a schoolgirl from a Palestinian refugee camp several miles away. The two young women looked unbelievably alike. The impact of the blast that killed them both remains as powerful today as it was the moment of the explosion.

The documentary film, *To Die In Jerusalem*, explores — through the two families' personal losses and Avigail Levy's search for answers — the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, mutual pain despite cultural differences and diverse perceptions of death; and ultimately, the hope for peace. The film's most revealing moment is in an emotionally-charged meeting between the mothers of the two dead girls.



AYAT AL-AKHRAS



ON MARCH 29, 2002, 17-YEAR-OLD ISRAELI RACHEL LEVY WALKED INTO A GROCERY STORE IN THE JERUSALEM NEIGHBORHOOD OF KIRYAT YOVEL TO PURCHASE INGREDIENTS FOR SABBATH DINNER

SOON THEREAFTER, 17-year-old Palestinian Ayat al-Akhras approached the store's entrance carrying a black purse loaded with explosives. She issued a brief warning to two elderly Arab women sitting just outside selling fruits and vegetables.

The store's security guard stopped al-Akhras, who seemed suspicious. She immediately activated the explosive bag — killing herself, Levy and the guard, while injuring 30 civilians. The end result: three more victims added to the Middle East catalogue of martyrdom.

Al-Akhras had been transported to the store by Ibrahim Sarahnah, an Israeli Arab*, with whom she'd rendezvoused earlier, near Bethlehem. Sarahnah was later captured — on his way back from another bombing — and is now serving time at the Gilboa Jail in northern Israel.

Before al-Akhras had left the camp earlier that afternoon, she read her suicide statement into a video camera. It included verses from the *Quran*, and blamed Palestinian and other Arab leaders and armies for not coming to the aid of the Palestinians and their cause. She also blamed them for "leaving the fighting to Palestinian girls." Among its themes, the film investigates what might have led this young Palestinian girl to undertake such a deadly mission.

One wonders whether the two 17-year-olds with very similar looks may have briefly glanced at one another before the detonation. Perhaps they noticed that they were around the same age, had long dark hair and dark complexions, small body types and even similar facial features. Both were high school seniors with plans and dreams.

But, even though the two young women had numerous similarities and had grown up less than four miles apart, they hailed from two vastly different worlds. Al-Akhras lived in the Dheisheh refugee camp near Bethlehem, a heavily populated and impoverished area under the constant threat of Israeli incursions and where some 11,000 people are crammed together in one square kilometer. Al-Akhras' formative years were spent in an environment of death, fear, checkpoints and humiliations. Levy, by contrast, grew up in a Jerusalem neighborhood remarkably western in style and culture, with an atmosphere of openness, freedom, independence and abundance. With all that, there is also the constant threat of terror, which creates lack of basic freedom and difficulties and fear in daily life.

* Israeli-Arabs are full citizens of the State of Israel, with equal protection under the law, and full rights of due process. Israeli Arabs comprise around 15 percent of the country's total number of citizens. They are the descendants of the 150,000 Arabs who remained within Israel's borders during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and of the Wadi-Ara Palestinians who came under Israel jurisdiction as part of a territory exchange under the 1949 Armistice Agreement with Jordan.



FOLLOWING THE DEATHS OF THEIR CHERISHED DAUGHTERS

BOTH FAMILIES ARE HURT AND BROKEN.

Levy's mother can't get over the loss of her daughter and struggles constantly with continue living beside the agony. Levy is unable to comprehend how a 17-year-old girl could decide to end her life — just like that — and potentially take so many others with her. As part of her quest for answers, Levy decides that she wants to meet the mother of her daughter's killer.

TO DIE IN JERUSALEM presents the deadly conflict between Israel and Palestine through the eyes of two mothers who have lost their daughters in the conflict. By contrasting the lives and deaths of these two teenage girls, the documentary offers a personal perspective that is all too often eclipsed by political issues. The film explores on one side, al-Akhras' reasons and ideology, and the events that led her to sacrifice her life. On the other, Levy, who paid with her life when she was caught up in the ongoing conflict during her daily routine.

Nothing about it is simple or clear. While one girl's death was, in a sense, chosen, the other's was a twist of fate or tragic destiny — yet both are victims of one of the longest, most complicated and disturbing conflicts of our time. The film's glimpse into each young woman's world seeks to enhance the viewer's understanding of the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, while opening a window into the lives of these tragic families as they cope with their pain.

TO DIE IN JERUSALEM doesn't suggest a solution to the conflict, but unabashedly explores the difficulties, fears and gaps between opposing sides. However, as Avigail Levy's character develops through the film, and al-Akhras agrees to meet with her, a channel of communication opens up. And with it, new hope for a better future.

ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 29, 2002, AYAT AL-AKHRAS HAD JUST SPENT A LONG NIGHT OF STUDYING FOR A BIG TEST AT SCHOOL. AFTER TAKING THE TEST, SHE MET THE MAN WHO DROVE HER TO A TARGETED GROCERY STORE, WHERE, AT 1:45 PM

SHE DETONATED HER BOMB — KILLING HERSELF, RACHEL LEVY AND A GUARD, AND INJURING 30

BECAUSE AL-AKHRAS AND LEVY LOOKED SO MUCH ALIKE, there was immediate confusion following the bombing as to who had carried it out. In an interview, the chief of police initially said that there appeared to have been two female suicide bombers. Professor Yehuda Hiss from the Forensic Institute remembers how the two girls were even wearing similar clothes and had been injured in what is known as the “mirror image effect,” i.e., their injuries were almost identical. As they lay side-by-side in the morgue, it was impossible to ignore the similarities between them. And, both girls had plans for the future.

Al-Akhras was engaged to be married that summer and wanted to go to college to become a journalist so she could defend the Palestinian cause before the world. Undoubtedly, the environment of Israeli occupation in which she grew up, and the exposure to violence and death, had influenced her profoundly. When al-Akhras’ motivation for committing this act is examined, it appears that she might have had several reasons; however, substance abuse does not seem to be one of them. Professor Hiss concluded there were never traces of drugs or any other toxic substance that could indicate a motivation for the suicide bombing. Dr. Anat Barko, in her book, *On The Way To Heaven – The World of Suicide Bombers*, has suggested that most female suicide bombers have personal problems such as family conflict, an intimate relationship with a terrorist, sexual relations before marriage, or a problematic social status (such as divorce or sterility). Others have indicated that suicide bombing is a way for females to gain power in a male-dominated society. Or perhaps al-Akhras and others like her simply want to fight for their cause but are feeling frustrated by current conditions and negative, suppressive and/or traumatic life experiences they’ve endured thus far.

Levy, like all 18-year-old Israelis, was about to join the army and wanted to study art and design. Her family had returned to Jerusalem following nine years in the United States. When Avigail and Amos divorced, their three children — Guy, Rachel and Kobi — stayed with their mother, while their father moved to Tel Aviv.

Neither of the young women’s fathers supported the idea of a meeting between the two mothers.





WHILE WORKING ON MY MASTER'S DEGREE in film and television at Southern Illinois University, I read a newspaper article about a bombing in Jerusalem. Shortly thereafter, I saw an article in Newsweek about the event, with a close-up photograph of the two girls on the cover. I couldn't stop looking at them! The more I read, the more I realized that this tragic story ironically represents everything I feel regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As I started to learn more about the girls, it struck me that in a different time and place, they might have been best friends or even sisters who were simply out shopping together. Faith, or fate, brought each of them to the end of her life in such a tragic manner!

HILLA MEDALIA **DIRECTOR/PRODUCER**

I TRIED TO PUT MYSELF IN AYAT'S PLACE. I TRIED TO UNDERSTAND...

What would lead a beautiful girl just starting her life and with plans for the future, to wake up one morning, take a bag of explosives and put an end to her life — and in the process end the lives of others.

I contacted the mothers of the girls — Avigail Levy and Um Samir al-Akhras — and found them to be two wonderful women, each struggling to cope with her daughter's death. They opened their hearts and shared their pain with me. This is where the real challenge began: Could I help close the gap between them or would cultural differences and hatred ultimately stand in the way of reconciliation? Are their lives permanently unbridgeable in light of pictures/posters praising the young Palestinian's actions and her parents' hesitant pride as a result?

The more I got to know the mothers and their stories, the more I felt a deepening desire, along with Avigail Levy, to embark on a journey in search of the answer to the most basic question, Why? The highlight of the journey — for all of us — is an emotional meeting between Avigail and Um Samir.

Just as seeing the pictures of Rachel and Ayat — so similar and yet so different — drew me into their story in the first place, the dream of a meeting between the two women stirred me to take my own personal journey with this film. I believe that theirs is a story that needs to be told, in part because we can all identify with the individuals in this tragedy. Most of us have all been 17, after all.

THE DAUGHTERS

RACHEL LEVY was born in Israel in 1984, and spent her early years in Los Angeles, California, returning to Israel at the age of 9. She was somewhat reserved and a good student. At home she was close to her family, enjoyed being a big sister to her brother Koby and helping her mother Avigail. Rachel was a senior at Ziv high school in Jerusalem and like other Israeli teenagers she was no stranger to the ongoing tensions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Less than a month before her death, a Palestinian sniper had shot and killed a relative, bringing the conflict even closer to home. Like all 18-year-old Israelis, Rachel was about to join the army. Her future plans included the study of art and design. Unfortunately, she never got the chance to fulfill any of her dreams.

AYAT AL-AKHRAS was raised, along with four brothers and five sisters, in the Deheishe Refugee Camp near Bethlehem, on the West Bank. A straight-A student, she hoped to attend college and become a journalist. Ayat was engaged to a Palestinian named Shadi with plans to wed in the summer of 2002. But she joined (or was recruited into) a fairly secular terrorist group called the Al-Asqa Martyrs Brigade. Her hopes and dreams would never come to pass — she had become a suicide bomber and would die first, taking others with her. Before her mission, Ayat made a video in which she lashed out at the regimes and militaries of Muslim nations everywhere: “I say to the Arab rulers, enough sleeping and failing to fulfill your duty, and watching as Palestine girls do the fighting.”

THE MOTHERS

AVIGAIL LEVY, Rachel’s mother a strong, brave, outspoken woman. Following the bombing she gave repeated interviews to local and international media, and became very active politically. She is still struggling to come to grips with her daughter’s death and visits her grave every Friday. A member of a support group for parents who have lost children in the conflict, Levy is the only one without a marriage partner. She remains intensely focused on her daughter’s death, is highly emotional and wants to know exactly what happened that day in order to understand the other side, including al-Akhras’s reasons for doing what she did. To that end, Levy has actively sought a meeting with the mother of her daughter’s killer. She believes that former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon should have acted differently earlier to prevent bombings like the one that took her daughter’s life. Levy and her family had once been close friends with a Palestinian family. Now, since her daughter’s death, Levy has become increasingly distrustful of Arabs in general. Still, she says she is willing to do whatever it takes to stop the bloodshed. She constantly saying — “Enough”, lets stop it and make a change for our children.

UM SAMIR AL-AKHRAS, Ayat’s mother cries over the loss of her daughter. When her husband is around, she hardly speaks and does not express her thoughts and feelings, which is not uncommon in traditionally conservative Middle Eastern families. However, when her husband is not around, al-Akhras has a lot to say. She is full of sorrow over her daughter’s loss and objects to the very idea of suicide bombing, yet she believes it was God’s choice for her daughter. Al-Akhras insists that, had she been aware of her daughter’s plans, she would have done everything in her power to prevent her from going on the suicide mission. Like Levy, she has wanted to meet.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

HILLA MEDALIA — Medalia earned a master's degree from Southern Illinois University (2004). Recently, she was a senior producer of the award-winning documentary *39 Pounds of Love*, (2005 Ophir Award, "Israeli Oscar"). The film also won "best documentary" at both The 2005 Palm Beach and Mill Valley film festivals. *39 Pounds of Love* was released in U.S. (Landmark) theatres in late 2005 and made it onto the Academy Award short list for best documentary film. Medalia has received numerous honors and recognitions including a 2005 Regional Emmy Award for the documentary project *Condition: John Foppe*, and the 2004 Angelus Award for directing the short film, *Daughters of Abraham*. The project also won second place in the documentary category at 2004 BEA, received the 2003 UFVA Carole Fielding Student Grant, and was screened at festivals around the world. She also won a National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) Film and Student Award for ALT.LANDSCAPE, a five-minute scripted narrative. Currently Medalia is in post production of a new feature documentary *After the Storm*. *To Die in Jerusalem* is Medalia's first feature documentary, the film premier at the 2007 Jerusalem film festival and will air on HBO in November.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

PRIDDY BROTHERS — John and Ed Priddy, co-founders of Priddy Brothers develop, produce and distribute independent films that explore with respect, grace and artistry the depth and breadth of the human experience. The company champions high-quality film projects created by self-energized, entrepreneurial filmmakers passionate about their art and its message. Staunch supporters of young filmmakers, the Priddys were instrumental in launching the Windrider Forum, which takes place each year during the Sundance Film Festival. The Forum includes lively, creative workshops and discussions, which allow both cutting-edge graduate and undergraduate film students to interact with the year's top film projects. John and Ed are long-time sponsors of the Angelus Student Film Awards and creators of the Triumph Award. The Priddys are executive producers of award-winning documentaries: *39 Pounds of Love* and Doug Block's thought provoking film *51 Birch Street*. Upcoming projects include Michael Hoffman's *Out of the Blue*, Craig Detweiler and John Marks new film *Purple State of Mind*, Hilla Medalia's *After the Storm*, and Heather Rae's *First Circle*.

CO-PRODUCER

KEREN RATTENBACH — Rattenbach earned a bachelor's degree in communications and management from Tel Aviv Management School and a master's degree in film and communications from the New School University. She was part of the team that created a new interactive cellular radio station. In 2001, Rattenbach became a marketing manager at Partner Communication - Orange, the leading telecommunications company in Israel. Rattenbach was the head producer during the launching of Israel's Entertainment Channel. Currently Rottenbach is a content manager at the Israeli Children's Channel and producing few independent documentaries.

EDITOR

GEOF BARTZ is a three-time nominee and two-time Academy Award winning editor who has worked in the film industry for over 30 years. His credits include: *Pumping Iron*; *King Gimp*; *Lenny Bruce: Swear To Tell The Truth*; *Big Mama*; *Stripper*; *Dwarfs: Not A Fairy Tale*; *The American Experience: LBJ, FDR, TR, Truman and America: 1900*; *The Best Hotel On Skid Row*; *The Wyeths: A Father And His Family*; *Lifeline* (NBC Series); *The Body Human* (CBS Series); *The Men Who Made The Movies*; and *Beauty Knows No Pain*. Geof has won four Emmy Awards and has been nominated for an Emmy a total of eight times. For 20 years, he taught film editing in the Graduate Division at Columbia University. He is now the Supervising Editor for Documentary Programming at Home Box Office.

COMPOSER ORIGINAL SCORE

ISSAR SHULMAN, a former double bass at the new opera orchestra of Israel, has written music for TV shows, dance, theater, movies and documentary films. Issar lives and works in Tel Aviv.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ISRAEL

RAN SHETREET was born in 1976 in Jerusalem. After completing his military service, Shetreet began his academic studies at Hadassah College in the film and television program. Simultaneously, he began a career as a cinematographer. He has worked for Telad, one of Israel's leading television stations, on a variety of series, talk and reality shows, and documentaries. He shot and directed a short documentary and several music videos.

DIRECTOR OF OF PHOTOGRAPHY PALESTINE

RAMEZ KAZMOUZ was born in 1973 in Nazareth, Israel. He is currently working toward a bachelor's degree in film and television at Tel-Hai College in northern Israel. In 1993, he joined AlAraz Studios in Nazareth as a videographer, and now serves as head of the company's photography and production department. Kazmuz has wide experience as a photographer, director and a producer. He has filmed features and documentaries, news, election campaigns and commercials for local and international broadcasters including the feature documentary *Jenin Jenin* (by Muhamad Bakri), *Prime Time War* (for ARTE), *Sesame Street and Democracy on Deadline* (for PBS), and other projects for television stations such as Al Jazeera and Abu Dabi. Currently Kazmuz is working on a new documentary about the status of Arab women in Israel.

TO DIE IN JERUSALEM CREDITS

DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY
HILLA MEDALIA

PRODUCERS
JOHN PRIDDY
ED PRIDDY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
SHEILA NEVINS
JOHN PRIDDY
ED PRIDDY

EDITED BY
GEOF BARTZ, A.C.E.
SHLOMI SHALOM

SUPERVISING PRODUCER
SARA BERNSTEIN

DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY
RAN SHETREET
RAMEZ KAZMOUZ

ORIGINAL SCORE
ISSAR SHULMAN

CO-PRODUCER
KEREN RATTENBACH

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS
ADNAN TAHA
JAN THOMPSON

TRANSLATION
IMAD SAMARAH

WRITTEN BY
HILLA MEDALIA

CREATIVE CONSULTANT
DAN SETTON

PRODUCTION MANAGERS
NIZAR YOUNES
ROY MANDEL

ADDITIONAL CAMERAS
ODED KIRMA
ADNAN TAHA
ISSA FREIJ
WASSIM SAFADI
JAMES SALDANA
CHRISSY MAZONE

CAMERA ASSISTANTS
AMOS GUETA
YUVAL SALONIKI
ROEE FARAG
RONI NAWATHA
SAMER YOUNES
MIKI ISRAEL

PRODUCTION COORDINATORS
KATIE SCHULZ
EYAL HAREL

SOUND
ZERAR ALOSH
ELI BAIN
NASER SAMARA

ADDITIONAL SOUND
GUY KEISAR
ISAM RASHED
OSNAT HADID

WEB SITE
SHAWN RODRIGUEZ
BRIAN MARTINI

TITLES AND GRAPHICS
MIKHAIL MAZOR

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS
NELLY HOROWITZ
OSNAT HADID
ADAM SLUTSKY

PALESTINIAN COORDINATOR
IYAD AL ATYAT

EQUIPMENT
BERGER
ALARZ
UTOPIA

SATELLITE
GAL COMMUNICATION

ROUGH CUT CONSULTANT
ILAN HEITNER

RESEARCH
JESSICA NOLFO
HILLA MEDALIA
ADNAN TAHA
KEREN RATTENBACH
ROY MANDEL
NIVA ZIV

ADDITIONAL EDITING
ITAI LIVNE

ASSISTANT EDITOR
LAURA CARDONA

EDITING STUDIOS
TEL AVIV STUDIOS

AFTER EFFECTS
JONAH TOBIAS

INFERNO ARTIST
ROBERT JAN DE VRIES

SOUNDTRACK DESIGNER
ISSAR SHOULMAN

MUSIC TALENT AGENT
ILAN ZAHLER

DARBUKA
ERAN TIROSH

ONLINE EDITORS
PHILLIP CHALMERS
PAUL COLLINS

SOUND EDIT AND MIXER
CHRIS BERTOLOTTI

COLORIST
ROCCO MELIA

ACCOUNTING CONSULTANTS
ROB GREINER
MATT STEPHENSON
ANAT SHINKAR

LEGAL CONSULTANTS
LINDA HOLLOWAY
AVIRAM MAZAYOV

INSURANCE
CSI ENTERTAINMENT INSURANCE

INTERNS
ELINOR BAWNIK

ADDITIONAL TRANSLATION
ROKAYA CHORI
STEVEN KALIFOWITZ
JIHAD NAYEF SALEM
JONATHAN PERRY
SULTAN SAFADI

**FOR THE NEW ISRAELI FOUNDATION
FOR CINEMA AND TELEVISION**
DAVID FISHER

TO DIE IN JERUSALEM CREDITS

SPECIAL THANKS

ISSA FREIJ
LISA B
TRUDY & ROBERT GOTTESMAN
LINDA HOLLOWAY
ANNA MCMURPHY
DANIEL ILAN
DAVID HALIVA
GIL KARNI
HEATHER RAE
SUSAN BENAROYA
BARBARA CAVER
RAVIT TURJEMAN
HAIM HECHT
ROY MANDEL
RADIO KOL-REGA
MOHAMMAD AL LAHAM
JIHAD NAYEF SALEM
TAL SAPIR
NAFTALY GLIKSBERG
SHOSH SHLAM
HILIK ZIV
DAFNA ENGELSRAT
SARIT SHETREET
BAT-EL LONTSER
HEFTSI HAZUT
MOSHE LEVY
EDNA LEVY
YARIV HOROWITZ
UFVA – CAROLE FIELDING STUDENT GRANT
WINDRIDER FORUM
ANGELUS AWARDS – MONIKA MORENO
FAMILY THEATER PRODUCTION –
FATHER WILLY RAYMOND, CSC
ALIFENEIQ HALL
DEPARTMENT OF RADIO-TV
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
PHD MAX GRUBB
AMY SALKO ROBERTSON
GABRIELLA PEHANICH
MIKE PEHANICH
JON HAYES
ENAT SIDI
DR. ANAT BERKO
BINA & DAVID RATTENBACH
ORA & ABRAHAM MEDALIA

PARTICIPANTS

AVIGAIL LEVY
AMOS LEVY
GUY LEVY
KOBI LEVY
MUHAMMAD AL-AKHRAS (ABU SAMIR)
KHADRA AL-AKHRAS (UM SAMIR)
SAMIR AL-AKHRAS
SAMMAR AL-AKHRAS
HAIFA HASAN
REV. DR. MITRI RAHEB
ISSA FREJ
PROFESSOR YEHUDA HISS,
FORENSIC INSTITUTE
THAWRA MURSHID KAMUR
LATIFA SAADI

SUPPORT GROUP

BELA AVITZEDEK
ELI AVITZEDEK
NAOMI BONE
ZVULUN BONE
ESTER NAGARI
TOBIA NAGARI
TZVIA ZINGER
TZVI ZINGER
YEHUDIT DAVIDOVITCH
DAN DAVIDOVITCH

CHILDREN OF IBDA

FOOTAGE COURTESY OF

LAURA HAIM
CH. 2 NEWS ISRAEL
IBA CHANNEL 1 FILM ARCHIVE
ITN SOURCE
THOUGHT EQUITY MOTION

THIS FILM WAS PRODUCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
THE NEW ISRAELI FOUNDATION FOR CINEMA AND TELEVISION

MUSIC

"SAD SONG"

WORDS, MUSIC & PERFORMANCE: AVIV GEFFEN

"YADI YADI"

C/O IBDA CULTURAL CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF
CHILDREN SKILLS AND INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EXCHANGE

WORDS BY: GBRA HANONA

MUSIC BY: BANAYOT KHEER