

**DADA FILMS**

## The Reports on Sarah and Saleem



Directed by  
**MUAYAD ALAYAN**

Written by  
**RAMI ALAYAN**

Produced by  
**MUAYAD ALAYAN**  
**RAMI ALAYAN**

Starring  
**ADEEB SAFADI**  
**SALEEM SIVANE KRECHNER**  
**SARAH ISHAI GOLAN**  
**DAVID MAISA ABD ELHADI**  
**BISAN**

127 mins / In Arabic, English and Hebrew with English subtitles

### CONTACTS

#### PRESS

required viewing

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#### DISTRIBUTION

Dada Films

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**“Impressive and naturalistic performances.”**

– Wendy Ide, *Screen International*

**“A compelling drama in which the personal crosses paths with the political. Excellent performances.”**

– Jordan Mintzer, *The Hollywood Reporter*

**“Engrossing... sharply edited. [This] taut psychosocial drama with political thriller elements deftly conveys the tensions, both physical and mental, between West and East Jerusalem.”**

– Jay Weissberg, *Variety*

**“Muayad Alayan’s beautifully observed, studiously discomfiting film has a lot to say about power and privilege. A morally complex film where political tensions seep into everyday life in unexpected ways.”**

– Jennie Kermode, *Eye for Film*

## SYNOPSIS

Sarah, an Israeli café owner living in West Jerusalem, has a clandestine relationship with Saleem, her Palestinian bread vendor, who lives in East Jerusalem. When their spouses discover the affair, two lives – already divided by politics, culture, class, and marital commitments – are made infinitely more complicated. A not uncommon betrayal takes on an entirely sinister new twist as Israeli and Palestinian authorities misread the writing on the wall. Muayad Alayan’s psychological thriller is shot through with dark, entirely believable intrigue that gives new meaning to the adage the personal is political. Based on true events.

## FESTIVALS | AWARDS

International Film Festival Rotterdam

- Special Jury Prize for Best Screenplay
- Hubert Bals Fund Audience Award

Seattle International Film Festival

- Grand Jury Prize Best Feature Film

Durban International Film Festival

- Best Film, International Competition
- Best Actress

BAMcinémathèque Contemporary Arab Cinema

San Francisco Arab Film Festival

CPH:PIX

Hamburg Film Festival

Tokyo International Film Festival



### DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

By setting our story of two couples in the divided city of Jerusalem, I could depict how life in the holy city dictates a dangerous response to a common social drama that can happen anywhere in the world. But when it happens here, with the crushing pressures of the socio-political environment, a steeper price is exacted from characters that are pushed to act selfishly and hurtfully towards one another in order to survive.

How much pressure can one endure before sacrificing one's own moral code?

I am intrigued by the moral dilemma inherent in the human story: are we able to risk our privileges for someone else, or do we instinctually always put ourselves first? By following four characters in Jerusalem, I present the contrasting choices available without imposing on the audience any particular viewpoint or my own agenda: I want the conflicting perspectives and arguments of the characters to let the audience conclude their own perspective.

I have always been touched and moved by cinema with characters that find themselves in situations bigger than themselves -- situations that challenges the average person, who is often an anti-hero, to survive and find comfort and safety amidst life's absurdity.

Being the hero, to me, is about surviving the turbulence and troubles of life; the twists and turns that never fail to surprise us with how awkward and challenging life can be, even more so than any work of fiction.

And this is particularly true in a troubled place like Jerusalem where I grew up in its militarily occupied eastern side, segregated from its western part by many barriers both literal and figurative. Every single day you cannot predict what new challenge life can throw at you and what you have to do to get through your run-of-the-mill day.

I was a teenager during the years of the second Palestinian uprising, the Intifada. Jerusalem was haunted with fear and tension. As dark as these days were, everyone had to go on living, breathing, securing an income and searching for happiness. At the time I had to take jobs in the western part of the city, like most Palestinians from East Jerusalem. In most cases, this would be the first encounter for a Palestinian with the Israeli community, beyond the usual daily encounters with Israeli soldiers.

This experience allowed me to witness the everyday interactions of Palestinians with the Israeli community. To witness was also to experience first hand how, amidst the intense political atmosphere, some rare moments of ease could let you forget the social and political barriers set between you and the other. I also witnessed how the politics and social divisions found their way into human interactions when least expected and suddenly, the barriers were back in place in a heartbeat.

In THE REPORTS ON SARAH AND SALEEM my brother and writer, Rami Alayan, and I wanted to tell a human story beyond the stories covered in the media reporting on the consequences of the ongoing Israeli occupation.

We wanted to move away from the romanticized works in cinema or other art forms that use idealized narratives about Palestinians and Israelis coming together that all-too-often ignore the reality that set people apart in the first place, and the crushing systems that are created to maintain the divide, power and segregation between them.

We wanted to tell a story based solidly in everyday life in Jerusalem that speaks to our capacity for human connection and interaction as well as our human limits when faced with extreme pressures from our repressive surroundings.

The film uses naturalistic and realistic storytelling style in image, sound and edits to emphasize the realism, and often instability, of the situation in the lives of the characters. The goal was to focus on the characters and their state of mind as they pursue their passions, struggle with their personal and moral dilemmas, float in limbo, encounter the turbulence of their story world, clash, evolve and change.

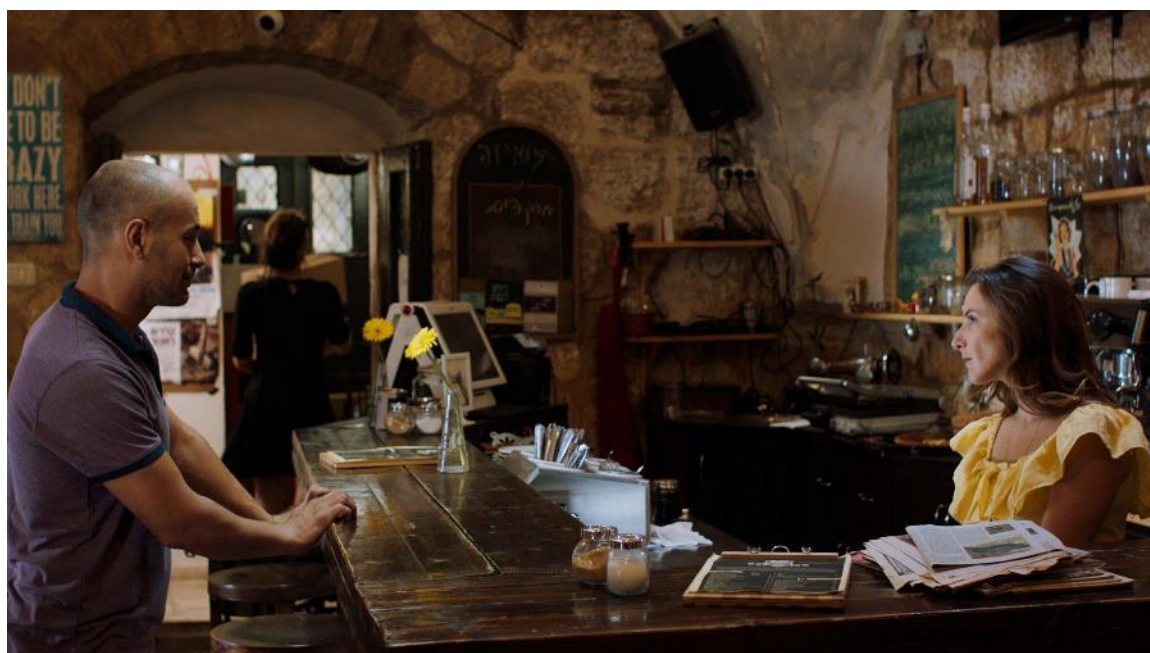
The camera is not a mere spectator on the action but rather part of the choreography and performance highlighting the characters' passions, needs and weaknesses: Converging to reflect the potential for human connection, intimacy and caring between the characters, but also diverging to reflect the fear, isolation and distance when the story beats turn and twist, setting the characters apart and deep in conflict.

The film does not impose on the audience which point of view of the lead characters to adopt. It presents the conflicting perspectives and arguments of each of the main characters leaving the audience to experience the different human conditions and conclude their own perspective.

The film depicts Jerusalem as a character in its own right, with its segregated communities, socio-economic disparities, cultural contradictions, and political environment intact, all of which have consequences to the story and lives of the characters.

The direction in the film was intended to let the audience experience the city with the characters as they navigate their fears, passions, dreams, disappointments, dilemmas and hopes, and as they confront the surprises of fate and life in the system of occupation, corrupt politics and social pressures that collectively form the antagonist against them as individuals.

## FILMMAKER BIOS



### **Muayad Alayan, Director/Producer Bio**

Muayad Alayan is a Palestinian film director, producer and cinematographer based in Jerusalem. His directorial feature debut *Love Theft and Other Entanglements*, which was also co-produced and co-written by him, premiered at the Berlinale Panorama in 2015 and went on to win two Best Arab Narrative Film awards as well as being nominated for several First Feature awards at Berlinale, Seattle Film Festival, Taipei Film Festival, Carthage and others. It has been distributed in over 20 territories.

Alayan's first narrative short, *Lesh Sabreen*, premiered in competition at the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in France in 2009 and went on to compete at several other prestigious festivals including Aspen Shortsfest, Cinemed, Palm Springs Shortfest and Dubai Film Festival, in addition to over 60 other festivals worldwide. It was distributed widely on DVD and television and won the youth jury prize for Best International Film at the Cork Film Festival in Ireland as well as two honorary mentions at La Cittadella Del Corto in Italy and Al-Ismailia Short Film Festival in Egypt.

Beyond his narrative film work, Alayan worked extensively in documentary and TV production in Palestine. He lent his lens as a cinematographer to numerous local and international productions including productions by ZDF, Arte, Al-

Jazeera Documentary Channel as well as several independent productions. His co-directed and co-produced documentary, Sacred Stones, won the Best Foreign Film award at the Tierra Di Tutti Film Festival in Italy as well as the Al- Jazeera Documentary Channel award in 2012.

After completing his studies in San Francisco and being part of its grassroots filmmaking culture, Alayan returned to Palestine with the goal of making organic cinema by and about Palestinians as a community; a cinema made through the participation of people coming together to tell stories, against all odds and with means that creatively defy limitations. To this end, Muayad worked extensively with youth and community centers and non-governmental organizations on projects promoting cinema culture in Palestine. He also acted as an instructor of directing and cinematography at several academic institutions.

Alayan co-founded PalCine Productions, a film production company involving a collective of filmmakers and audiovisual artists in Jerusalem and Bethlehem to facilitate collaborative film and media production as well as to provide production services in Palestine. Alayan is also a co founder of the Palestine Film Meetings, the first of a kind film industry event to be held in Palestine organized by Film Lab Palestine as part of the annual Days of Cinema Film Festival.

### **Rami Alayan, Writer/Producer Bio**

Rami Alayan is a Palestinian film producer, screenwriter and designer. He is producer-writer on the feature film Love, Theft and Other Entanglements which premiered at the Berlinale Panorama in 2015 and won two Best Arab Narrative Film awards as well as being nominated for the Best First Feature award at Berlinale, Seattle Film Festival, Taipei Film Festival, Carthage and many others. The film has since been sold to over 20 territories.

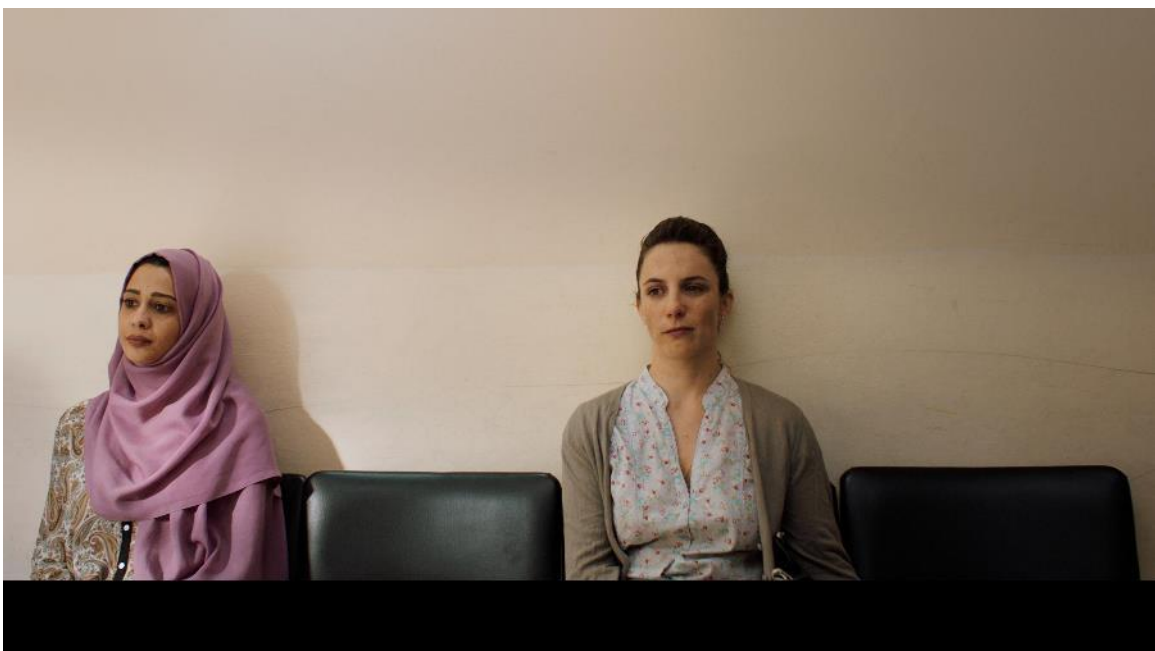
Alayan's work centers around designing visual, narrative and interactive experiences that engage and captivate audiences. Whether the final product flickers on a big screen or responds to touches and clicks on a handheld device, Alayan's work is about imagining and designing what's not there but what's possible.

Alayan works with creative teams of filmmakers and software developers to turn a project's vision into a reality. He engages as a screenwriter and

interaction designer as well as a producer and project manager. Alayan's educational background encompasses creative, technical as well as business training. He holds a certificate in feature film writing from the UCLA Extension School as well as a master's and two bachelor degrees in computer science and business management from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Alayan's debut as a film director was in 2012 with his short film, *Private Sun*, which was selected to over 70 film festivals all around the world including Palm Springs Shortfest, and Montreal World Film Festival. It won 9 awards including 5 for Best Short Film and was distributed on the BBC Arabic channel. It was also selected among 5 short film productions to represent Palestine in the 2015 country focus at Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival.

Alayan co-founded PalCine Productions, a film production company involving a collective of filmmakers and audiovisual artists in Jerusalem and Bethlehem to facilitate collaborative film and media production as well as to provide production services in Palestine.



An extramarital affair in Jerusalem ignites a dangerous game of deceit between those who hold power and those who don't.

The Reports on Sarah and Saleem  
A Film by Muayad Alayan  
Written by Rami Alayan

Main Cast

Adeeb Safadi | Saleem Sivane Kretchner | Sarah Ishai Golan | David Maisa Abd Elhadi | Bisan

Produced by PalCine Productions Co-produced by  
KeyFilm Monofilms Manderley Films

Producers

Muayad Alayan Rami Alayan

Co-producers



Hanneke Niens Hans de Wolf Rebekka Garrido Rodrigo Iturralde Georgina Gonzalez Alejandro Durán Amal Alayan

Countries of production  
Palestine, Netherlands, Germany, Mexico

#### Technical Specs

Runtime: 127  
Year of production: 2018  
Original language: Arabic, Hebrew, English Subtitles: English  
Colour Aspect ratio: 2.39:1  
Sound: 5.1  
DCP frame rate: 24fps

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The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture - AFAC  
The Netherlands Film Fund + Hubert Bals Fund Coproduction Scheme The Hubert Bals Fund +  
Europe Programme of International Film Festival Rotterdam  
The World Cinema Fund Palestine Ministry of Culture  
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