

The Flower Of Aleppo

a film by:
RIDHA BEHI

ALYA FILM

CA
CEDARS ART
PRODUCTION
SABBAH BROTHERS

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SYNOPSIS

37 year old Selma is a Tunisian ambulance driver working hard for public and private sectors alike. Selma lives with her 18 year old son Mourad who's become psychologically disturbed after his parent's divorce. Feeling abandoned, Mourad finds comfort in joining the Salafi army. He is shipped to Syria to join their Jihad. Selma disguises herself as a Jihadi woman and follows in her son's footsteps into the bloody war torn hell of Syria. Will Selma succeed in her goal to bring her son back to Tunis...?

THE TEAM

Title: The Flower Of Aleppo / Fleur D'Alep

Original Language: Arabic (Tunisian/Syrian Dialect)

Written & Directed by: Ridha Behi

Producers: Ridha Behi, Sadek & Ali Sabbah, Hend Sabri,
Ziad H Hamzeh, Dimitri Khodr

Director of Photography: Mohamad Maghraoui

Music by: Omar Aloulou

Sound Engineer: Fawzi Thabet

Art Direction: Taoufik Behi

Edited by: Kahena Attia, Bertrand Reynold

Cast: Hend Sabri
Badis Behi
Hichem Rostom
Mohamed Ali Ben Jomaa
Rayya Laajimi
Bassam Lotfi
Jihad Zoghby

Running Time: 100 mins

Format: HD, Color



HEND SABRI
Salma



BADIS BEHI
Mourad



HICHEM ROSTOM
Hichem



MOHAMAD ALI BEN JOMAA
Nizar



RAYYA LAAJIMI
Reem



BASSAM LOTFI
Abou Al Walid

ON THE INTENT

(Place a fiction in the real world with a rich perspective: The real is transmitted only if it involves the subjectivity of an author who invents his fashioned world through the use of real: diaries, family chronicles, travel books, various fables of individual and collective small and great history.)

Laurent Roth



The fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia has become a pivotal moment in the history of my country.

On one hand the “Arab Spring” had brought hope for better future, on the other hand it brought with it a disastrous turns of events. Amongst such unfortunate events is the movement of jihadists and Islamist activity that threatens the present and compromise the future.

In this context, I chose to tell the story of a woman belonging to the modern and responsible women on whom Tunisia has always counted.

This is the history of Salma: a nurse-paramedic and mother of a young boy Mourad who is enlisted by the Salafist movement to join the jihad in Syria. The Flower Of Aleppo chronicles her journey into the heart of darkness in order to save her son.

HOW FAR WOULD A MOTHER GO TO SAVE HER CHILD?

A CONVERSATION WITH RIDHA BEHI

What is the genesis of “The Flower Of Aleppo”? How did the project come about?

During the summer of 2013, my neighbors in La Marsa had two children who chose to wage Jihad in Syria ...

I knew the two brothers. It was incredibly shocking. They belonged to a good middle class family (the father retired banker, and the mother was a French teacher at a high school in the northern suburbs of Tunis) ... The two young were accomplished students, one in 2nd year majoring in medicine, the second was a physicist ...

Nothing predisposed these two young men to join the jihad.

Another case (seen in a report on Tunisian television): A mother had arrived in Turkey to bring back her 17 year old daughter home after the child had decided to join the jihad in Syria.

After learning about these two cases, I became obsessed of understanding the causes that drove these young people to join the jihad in Syria... I read and studied the various testimonies ...

I went Lebanon to seek further information about the lives of jihadists in Syria.

I was deeply impacted by the discoveries and decided to make a fiction based on my findings ... It was the only way to cope with the emotional trauma I felt for these young people, for my country and for my religion.

Your film deals with the choice and the departure of Tunisian youth for Jihad in Syria, did you intend to make a political film?

I am a sociologist (former pupil of Jean Baudrillard, Marc Ferro, Labica Georges and Jean Rouch), the stories and characters of my films always have a sociological background and therefore political in nature.

"The Flower Of Aleppo" demonstrates the struggle of a Tunisian mother as she journeys into the heart of darkness to bring her son home.

Why did you choose Tunisia and in specific your choice of a privileged environment where culture is nevertheless very present in this family?

I placed the action of my film in Tunisia because a) I'm Tunisian. b) It is that Tunisia has become the leading provider of terrorists that joined the jihad in Syria.

I placed the character of the young man Mourad in a middle class family due to the research and study I invested in understanding the economic

sources for the Jihadist hordes of young people and discovered that they have actually come from all social classes and with different intellectual levels. I wanted to get away from "root causes" that the social statues are the cause of "murderous rage." I truly believe that this thesis is wrong. It encourages to pay attention to anything but Islamist ideology and its modes of expression, the emotional intensity and nuances of the "terrorist rage" itself.

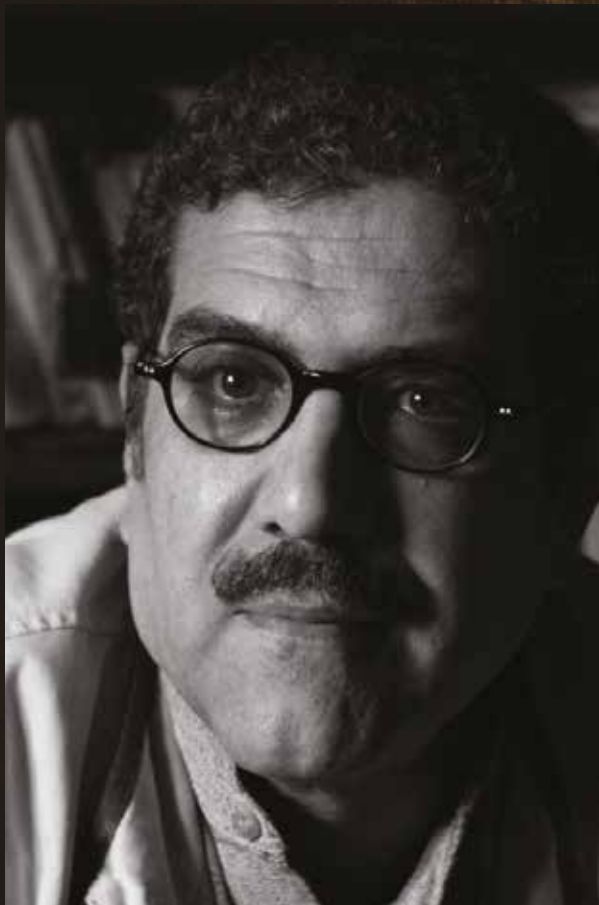
You chose the prism of the mother, why?

I wanted to pay a tribute to the courageous and selfless Tunisian women. Without their effort and without their vigilance, the country would have fallen into the chaos of what was called the "Arab Spring." After-all, need I remind you that Tunisia is founded by a woman?

HOW FAR INTO DANGER CAN ONE GO IF MANIPULATED?



BIOGRAPHY



RIDHA BEHI

Writer, Director, Producer

Ridha Behi is a highly accomplished Tunisian filmmaker who has won many international awards and various honors in celebration of his work.

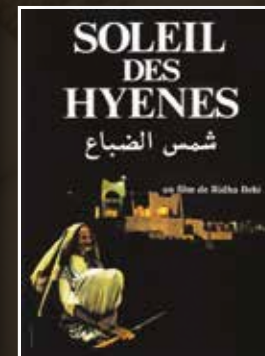
His first two films, *Soleil des hyènes* (1977) et *Les Anges* (1984) were chosen to premier as part of the Directors' Fortnight of the Cannes Festival. His film *The swallows never die in Jerusalem* selected for the Venice International film festival and went on to receiving the special prize at the Carthage film Festival and a special jury mention at the 22nd International film Festival of Amien. *Always Brando* 2011 was an official selection of the International Film Festival at Toronto.

Ridha has made a dozen documentaries in the Gulf between 1979 and 1983 along with a series for Al Jazeera, entitled *Portraits of filmmakers* between 2006 and 2008. He is a regular member or chair of juries in the Arab world including: 1987 jury member of the Arab TV Festival, 1987 Member of the jury of the Mostra de Valencia Mediterranean Film, 2004 Member of the jury of the International Festival of the Cairo Film, 2006 President of the Jury of the International Film Festival of Dubai, 2008 Member of the jury Cinematographic Days Carthage6, 2013 jury member of the Festival of Mediterranean Film Alexandria, 2013 President of the Jury of the International Arab Film Festival of Oran, 2014 Member of the jury (feature films) of the African Film Festival Louxor7. Ridha continues to invest his heart and energy in educating Tunisian filmmakers. He is a regular lecturer at the School of audiovisual and cinema Gammarth.

FILMOGRAPHY of writer/Director

RIDHA BEHI

1967: LA FEMME-STATUE
1972: SEUILS INTERDITS
1977: SOLEIL DES HYENES
1980 - 1983: THE DHOWS (LES BOUTRES) & LES FONDS DU GOLF
1984: LES ANGES
1986: CHAMPAGNE AMER
1994: LES HIRONDELLES NE MEURENT PAS A JERUSALEM
2002: LA BOITE MAGIQUE
2006 - 2008: SÉRIE DOCUMENTAIRES PORTRAITS DE CINÉASTES
2010: GARAGE LEKRIK
2011: ALWAYS BRANDO
2016: FLEUR D'ALEP



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