

Mozier Films and LEV Pictures presents

The Invisible Men



Directed by **Yariv Mozer** Co-directors **Adam Rosner, Yariv Mozer** Director of Photography **Shahar Reznik** Edited by **Yasmine Novak**
Music composed by **Wouter van Bommel** Sound Editing and Mix by **Hugo Dijkstal** Produced by **Yariv Mozer, Sander Verdonk, Gertjan Langeland, Adam Rosner, Hila Aviram** Executive Producer **Margje de Koning**
Associate Producers **Roshanak Behesht Nedjad, Carine Ruzsniowski**

Supported by The New Israeli Film Fund for Cinema and TV, The Ministry Of Culture & Sport, The Israeli Film Council, yes Docu, The Netherlands Film Fund, IKON and The Other Israel Film Festival.

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REHTO ISRAEL

DOX

THE INVISIBLE MEN

General details:

Original title (Hebrew): Gvarim Bilti Nir'im

English Title: The Invisible Men

Genre: Documentary

Release Year: 2012

Production Countries: Israel, The Netherlands

Production Companies: Mozer Films Ltd. (Israel), LEV Pictures (The Netherlands)

Niches: Gay/Lesbian, The fight against homophobia, Human and civil rights, Social Issue, The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Middle East politics.

<http://www.theinvisiblemenfilm.com>

Technical details

Length: 68 Min (Theatrical version) / 57 min (TV version)

Shooting Format (original film gauge): HD

Screening Format: DCP, HDCAM, Digibeta, Beta Analog

Spoken Language: Hebrew, English and Arabic

Narration: English/ Hebrew

Subtitles: English/ Hebrew

Frame Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Sound: Stereo / Color



THE INVISIBLE MEN

One Line Synopsis:

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.'

Synopsis:

'The Invisible Men' tells the untold story of persecuted gay Palestinian who have run away from their families and are now hiding illegally in Tel Aviv. Their stories are told through the film's heroes: Louie, 32 years old, a gay Palestinian who has been hiding in Tel Aviv for the past 8 years; Abdu, 24 years old, who was exposed as gay in Ramallah and then accused of espionage and tortured by Palestinian security forces; Faris, 23 years old, who escaped to Tel Aviv from the West Bank after his family tried to kill him. Their only chance for survival -- to seek asylum outside Israel and Palestine and leave their homelands forever behind.

Leading Characters:



Louie



Abdu



Faris

THE INVISIBLE MEN

Credits:

Directed by:
Yariv Mozer

Written by:
Adam Rosner, Yariv Mozer

Director of Photography:
Shahar Reznik

Edited by:
Yasmine Novak

Music composed by:
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Margje de Koning

Associate Producers:
Roshanak Behesht Nedjad
Carine Ruszniewski





THE INVISIBLE MEN

Film Festival Awards:

2012 Doc Aviv Special Jury Award

2012 Frameline 36 Outstanding Documentary Feature Award

2012 RIFE Best Documentary Feature & Best Director

2013 SDFP Programmers Award for Feature Documentary

Film Festival Screenings (2012):

25.03.2012 World Premier:

Movies that Matter, Amnesty International Film Festival, The Hague

Doc Aviv, Tel Aviv International Documentary Film Festival

Bergen queer film festival

Boston LGBT Film Festival

TLVFest, Tel Aviv's International LGBT Film Festival

Frameline 36 San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival

Vancouver Queer Film Festival

The Rome Gender Docu Film Fest

Oslo Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

The Fresno Reel Pride festival

The Palm Springs Gay and Lesbian Film Festival - *voted an audience favorite*

San Diego Film Festival

Filmfest Hamburg

Albuquerque Southwest Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

Austin Gay and Lesbian International Film Festival

Fort Lauderdale Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

Chicago International Social Change Film Festival

ImageOut: Rochester LGBT Film and Video Festival

Washington D.C. REEL Independent Film Extravaganza

Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival

The Barcelona International LGBT Film Festival

The Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival

Berlin Israeli Film Festival

Saint Petersburg Side by Side LGBT International Film Festival

East Bay Jewish Film Festival

Ottawa Free Thinking Film Festival

Montreal image+nation festival cinema lgbt

New York Other Israel Film Festival

St. Louis International Film Festival

Mix Brazil

13th Prague Queer Film Festival Mezipatra

The Helsinki Refugee Film Festival

IDFA – Special selection program

Vienna human rights film festival

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Film Festival Screenings (2013):

Atlanta Jewish Film Festival
Kingston Reelout Queer Film Festival
Victoria Film Festival, Canada
Beloit International Film Festival
The Mardi Gras Film Festival in Sydney
One World – International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, Czech Republic
Festival LGBT de Belgique
The Melbourne Queer Film Festival
LICHTER Filmfest Frankfurt International
Fort Myers Film Festival
Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival
Florence Middle East Now Festival
Toronto Jewish Film Festival
Athens Outview Film Festival
Torino GLBT Film Festival
The 15th Annual Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival
The Gay & Lesbian Film Festival Pink Apple in Zurich/Switzerland
Kashish – Mumbai International Queer Film Festival
Babel Filmklubb, at the University of Oslo
Zagreb Jewish Film Festival
The Albuquerque Film and Media Experience
Bologna Cuore di Palestina
Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival
Durban Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, South Africa
Festival MIX MILANO di Cinema Gaylesbico e Queer Culture
Philadelphia QFest
Chile Diva Film Festival – Festival Internacional de Cine Diversidad Valparaiso
13th annual Rochester Ames Amzalak Jewish Film Festival
Osaka / Kyoto Kansai Queer Film Festival
Tokyo 8th UNHCR Refugee Film Festival
Jewish film festival to Budapest, Hungary
Queersicht Gay and Lesbian Film Festival Bern

THE INVISIBLE MEN

Universities and community centers:

USA:

O-Cinema Miami - LGBT youth groups
Washington DC - LGBT synagogue, "Bet Mishpacha",
Towson University - Hillel Group
University of Washington, Seattle - Hillel Group
University of California, Merced - Social justice film series
UC Berkeley - The International House film series
Purchase Collage
Princeton University - Unified Film Festival from the Middle East
Washington University St. Louis - Hillel Group
American University, Washington DC, Center for Israel Studies
Columbus, OH, OSU Hillel
LA, USC Hillel

The Netherlands:

Filmhuis Delft

Austria

ORQOA-Oriental Queer Organization-Austria

THE INVISIBLE MEN

Special screenings:

NOV 9, 2012 UN Church Center

Love Beyond Borders and the UUA-UNO Present
A UN and NGO Premiere Screening of The Invisible Men

DEC 10, 2012 International Human Rights Day:

Special screening at B'Tselem (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories)

& Screenings at Dutch embassies in

Bukarest, Romania

Nicosia, Cyprus

Prishtina, Kosovo

Skopje, Macedonia

St. Petersburg, Russia

Vienna, Austria

Tirana, Albania

& 11 screenings at Turkey Human Rights Film Days:

Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Antalya, ESKİŞEHİR, GAZİANTEP, DİYARBAKIR and more

JAN 24, 2013 US Embassy Israel

At the Deputy Chief of Mission's residence

The First and Second Tour Officers Association (new/junior diplomats at the Embassy), members of GLIFAA (Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Association), and representatives from the French, Canadian, Spanish, and Italian embassies

March 19, 2013 Motion Pictures Association, Washington DC

The Human Rights Campaign, The State Department and the Motion Picture Association of America hold an invitation-only screening of The Invisible Men.

Notable attendees were Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor at the State Department and other high-ranking State Department officials, **Congressman Jerrold Nadler, and Senator Chris Dodd.**

THE INVISIBLE MEN

"Examining the multiple layers of identity that add up to make a person, award-winning director Yariv Moser's intimate film sheds light on a world where one cannot be gay in Palestine, or a Palestinian in Israel. In this world, they truly are The Invisible Men".

-- ALEXIS WHITHAM, Frameline 36

"...Humor comes from pain, and there's a lot of it in The Invisible Men. Louie, who cleans houses, wears a Star of David and passes as a Jew. "You can take that off now," says an Arab friend when they are by themselves".

-- David D'Arcy, Blouin Artinfo

<http://blogs.artinfo.com/outtakes/2012/05/16/docaviv-clerical-abuse-porous-borders-polish-horrors-and-more/>

"... The film is a step above the average Israeli documentary, chronicling life in the nuanced cultural underbelly of the Jewish state, where the public sphere is brilliantly shattered by various incongruent lifestyles. Instead of your run-of-the-mill snapshot of Israeli countercultures (such as the avant-garde bohemians, the ultra-Orthodox and the Arabs) with a dash of iconoclastic irony, Moser's documentary of the adventures of three Palestinian seekers of sexual liberty, rings bells of naturalism, making it a kind of 'Huck Finn' for the Middle East, but with much darker and realistic undertones".

-- Scott Krane, The Times of Israel

THE INVISIBLE MEN

"Yariv Mozer's Invisible Men provides a fascinating insight into the rarely seen inner struggles of Palestinian men who have had to flee their families and society in fear, because of their homosexuality. At risk of violence and even death, they choose instead to live illegally in the liberal state of Israel, where new and different struggles await them. The film examines in a sensitive and balanced way the complicated questions that arise from their illegal migration; questions of personal identity, societal acceptance, and separation from home--be it birth home or adopted home. This film deserves to be seen widely and will facilitate a better understanding of the highly complex relationship between Israel and Palestinians, when human and social concerns conflict with those of security and immigration."

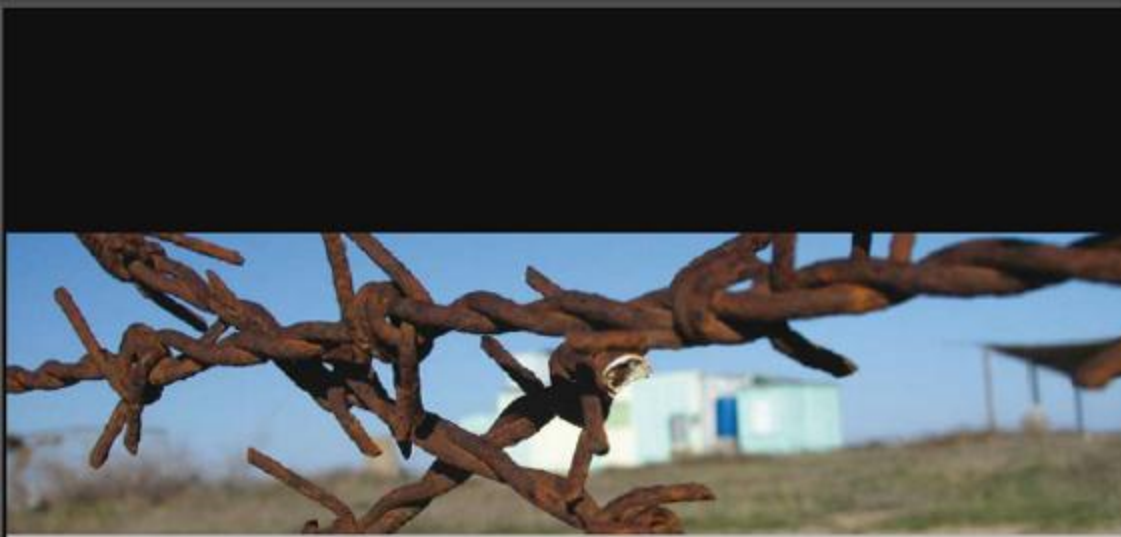
-- Jonathan Sacerdoti, Director, The Institute for Middle Eastern Democracy.



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"The invisible men" is based on the research:

<http://www.law.tau.ac.il/Heb/Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/Nowhere.pdf>



NOWHERE TO RUN Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel

Michael Kagan & Anat Ben-Dor

THE INVISIBLE MEN



Yariv Mozer

*Writer, Director and
Producer*

Yariv Mozer had graduated with distinction from Tel-Aviv University's Film and Television Department. He is currently completing his first feature film **"Snails in the rain"**. Previously he directed the documentaries, **"The Invisible Men"** (Israel-The Netherlands 2012), Winner of The 2012 Doc Aviv Special Jury Award and **"My First War"** (Israel 2008), a co-production with Zdf-Arte, Winner of The Doc Aviv Special Jury Award, IDFA First Appearance Nominee and Best Film Winner of The Toronto Jewish Film Festival. Mozer had also produced more than 15 documentary films, among them are "The Heart of Jenin" (Germany 2008), and more; Mozer is a member of the **European Film Academy** and the Israeli film Academy.

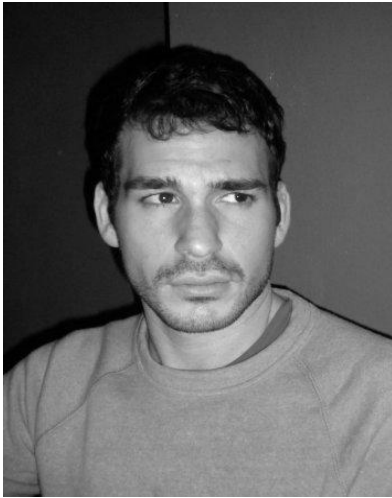
Official website: www.mozer-films.com

IMDB : <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2103438/>

Filmography

- 2013** *"Snails in the Rain" (Feature, Israel-Spain)*
- 2012** *"The Invisible Men" (Documentary, Israel-The Netherlands)*
- 2010** *"Bed Stories" (Short, Israel)*
- 2009** *"there must be another way"(documentary, Israel)*
- 2008** *"My First War" (Documentary, Israel-France-Germany)*

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Adam Rosner, Script writer & 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.



Sander Vendonk, Producer, 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."



Hila Aviram, Producer, 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" (2011) and "Snails in The Rain" (2013).

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Yasmine Novak, Editor. 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" (ARTE/WDR) is a Winner of 13 international awards and participated in numerous festivals worldwide.



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.



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.

THE INVISIBLE MEN

Official website

<http://www.theinvisiblemenfilm.com>

Photo Album

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/93465707@N00/sets/72157631122676176/>

You Tube Official Trailer:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9lvumrzkgw>



Movie Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/theinvisiblemen.documentary>



<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2075340/combined>

From the Media:

<http://euromedaudiovisuel.net/2012/p.aspx?t=news&mid=21&l=en&did=612>

THE INVISIBLE MEN

The New York Times

Films Show an Israel Divided From Its Neighbors and Itself

By ETHAN BRONNER

Published: November 7, 2012

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Mozer Films

“The Invisible Men” by Yariv Mozer portrays the gay world of Tel Aviv.

[Enlarge This Image](#)

Start with the documentary “The Invisible Men,” by [Yariv Mozer](#). It tells the story of Louis and Abdu, two gay [Palestinian](#) men from the West Bank, each of whom has been threatened with murder by his own family. Louis bears a gruesome knife scar across his cheek from when his father tried to kill him. The men do not know each other but have been absorbed and welcomed by the gay world of Tel Aviv, taking odd jobs and Jewish lovers. They are introduced by mutual friends, and Louis is amazed to find a Palestinian soul mate after 10 years of hiding among Israeli Jews. But their quest for acceptance is hardly over. The Israeli police are after them for being in Israel illegally.

“The Palestinians won’t accept us because we are gay, and the Israelis won’t accept us because we are Palestinians without permits,” Abdu tells Louis one soft evening as they sit on a beach listening to the music of the Egyptian singer Um Kultum. “It makes me sick. Everyone here hates everyone else.” Through the help of the Tel Aviv

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University law clinic, both men ultimately find a way out, but they make clear that they miss their home desperately.

Isaac Zablocki, executive director of the festival, and director of film programs at the JCC in Manhattan, where many of the films are playing, said that the outlook of this and the other movies in the festival may seem bleak but that the goal is still to inspire dialogue and change.

“Our festival is kind of a last hope,” he said by telephone. “We do attract a diverse audience and a young one. Seeing so many people in their 20s and 30s at last year’s festival made me hopeful for the younger generation.”

The festival was created by Carole Zabar, whose husband, Saul, is an owner of Zabar’s, the Upper West Side food emporium. Ms. Zabar, who puts up all of the \$175,000 it costs to run the festival, lived and studied in Jerusalem in the early 1960s. She is both a great lover of Israel and a harsh critic, especially of its treatment of Palestinians. She said one goal of the festival was to make American Jews face difficult realities.

“I am doing this for those Jews who go to Israel and see only the fine and rosy parts of life there,” she said. “I think they have to see this. It is the real Israel. That is the bottom line of why I started this festival.”

That approach has made her and this festival outliers, in a way, among the Jewish establishment. Palestinian and other Arab organizations are even less supportive, with many of them urging people not to attend or submit their works to this festival as part of a boycott of all Israeli products, even those that highlight Palestinian stories. Efforts by the festival organizers to reach out to Arab groups have met with rejection over the past few years, Mr. Zablocki said.

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[“The Invisible Men” Accused of Pinkwashing](#)

by [Sigal Samuel](#) Nov 12, 2012

As the first frame of “The Invisible Men” flashed across the big screen Friday at New York’s Cinema Theater, I steeled myself for the worst. Back in August, I’d seen the Israeli documentary [accused of pinkwashing](#) when it screened at the Vancouver Queer Film Festival, and the film endured [similar charges](#) in San Francisco in June. This would be my first time seeing the movie, and I was fully prepared to chalk it up to another Israeli attempt to put a progressive face on a brutal occupation.

But within the first few seconds of the documentary, director and narrator Yariv Mozer equated Israel’s policy of deporting gay Palestinians to the Occupied Territories with “sending them to certain death.” He bemoaned the fact that these men, many of whom sneak into Tel Aviv seeking refuge from violently homophobic families, are then “constantly hunted” in Israel as “illegals.” As the film went on to depict checkpoints, barriers, and the thousand indignities visited upon Palestinians every day, it became increasingly hard to see how this film could rightly be accused of pinkwashing.



A still from "The Invisible Men." (Mozer Films)

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“The Invisible Men” tells the story of Louie, a gay Palestinian forced to flee the West Bank when his father attacks him with a knife after learning of his sexual orientation. Louie escapes to Tel Aviv, where he ekes out a life taking odd jobs and dodging Israeli police. The Tel Aviv law clinic from which he seeks legal help puts him in touch with Abdu, an outspoken gay Palestinian from Ramallah who aptly sums up their double-edged situation: “The Palestinians won’t accept us because we are gay, and the Israelis won’t accept us because we are Palestinians without permits.” Eventually, both men are granted asylum in a European country, and they leave their homeland behind for good. But the choice to leave is bitter for Louie, who says, “I want to breathe my culture, my land. I really don’t want to go abroad.”

The audience applauded loudly as the credits rolled, giving Mozer and writer-producer [Adam Rosner](#) a warm welcome as they stepped up for a post-screening Q&A hosted by the [Other Israel Film Festival](#). But they asked some tough questions, too. “Do you believe gay Palestinians should be granted asylum in Israel?” one man wanted to know. Rosner sidestepped the question with a blanket statement—“Israel has a moral obligation to protect those who need protection”—while Mozer explained that the issue is a thorny one for Israel since the first Palestinian to be granted asylum could create a precedent for the Palestinian right of return.

Outside the theater, Mozer responded to the charges leveled against his movie. “I don’t understand where is the pinkwashing in this film,” he said. “I don’t think that this film came to promote Israel. This film was a huge criticism of Israel. I’m criticizing the occupation, the Israeli officials, the army, everyone.”

“I think the film does a tremendous job of avoiding accusations of pinkwashing,” Rosner agreed, adding, “Its approach is very balanced, if only because Yariv and I have divergent political views.”

Balanced or not, “The Invisible Men” was bankrolled in part by the [Israeli government](#), and that’s what motivated Vancouver’s Queers Against Israeli Apartheid to call for a boycott of the movie in August. That group [saw itself](#) as acting in line with Palestinian queer organizations that support the call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel, including cultural and academic boycott.

Rosner seemed to think such boycotts simply serve to impoverish our knowledge of these crucial issues. “As far as academic boycotts of Israel,” he said, “I think that any time you boycott knowledge, that’s a failure for academia.”

Mozer, meanwhile, emphasized that he did not believe there was an “official” Israeli program of propaganda underlying the government’s decision to finance his film. Asked whether he thought there might be some unofficial pinkwashing going on, he shrugged his shoulders and grinned. “It sounds like something too smart for our current prime minister to think of,” Mozer said. “Honestly, he’s just not capable.”

THE INVISIBLE MEN OUT

TRAVEL & NIGHTLIFE OUT GOES TO ISRAEL



Twice Divided

10.15.2012

BY MICHAL SHMULOVICH

For gay Palestinians, Tel Aviv is a precarious and complicated sanctuary.

Photo courtesy of The Invisible Men

Ra'ed, a soft-spoken Israeli-Palestinian man in his forties, lives in south Tel Aviv with Ahmad, his devilishly handsome boyfriend. They are both from small Arab villages in the north of the country.

In Tel Aviv, Ra'ed, Ahmad, and their friends live an ordinary life by many standards -- they go out dancing "at least once a week," Ahmad says; they have friends over for meals; they go to the

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beach. Yet, lurking behind their stories -- of existing between two binary cultures and proscribed sexual identities -- is the contentious nature of queer Palestinian activism.

Palestinian society is inherently divided: first, between Palestinians who live in Israel as citizens and those under occupation in the West Bank or in Gaza. Their struggle is further split between those who see their role as part of the global LGBT movement and others who view Palestinian gay rights advocacy as part of the struggle against Israel.

Israel has accepted hundreds of individual gay Palestinian asylum-seekers from the West Bank and Gaza; it has also deported many who entered the country illegally. In 2008, two Tel Aviv University lawyers published a study, "Nowhere to Run: Gay Palestinian Asylum-Seekers in Israel," in which they claimed Israel, a signatory to the 1951 Refugees Convention, didn't provide *enough* of a haven to gay Palestinians seeking refuge.

Those issues come under scrutiny in ***The Invisible Men***, a new documentary by Yariv Mozer and Adam Rosner, that depicts gay Palestinians running from danger in their own society and skirting authorities while hiding in Israel. Their struggle is the elusive quest for safety -- with nowhere to go, no place to hide.

Mozer's documentary was inspired by his own curiosity about the experience of gay Palestinians "on the other side of the separation wall." He met Louie, a gay man in his thirties, originally from the West Bank, who had been hiding in Tel Aviv for nearly 10 years. "When Louie's family found out he was gay, his father tied him up with ropes and slashed his face with a knife," Mozer explains. "He left home with a scar on his face. The story really struck me, so I decided to make a film about it." (Louie now has residency in a third country.)

"I wasn't trying to depict Tel Aviv as a 'safe haven,'" Mozer says. "Because for [the gay Palestinians hiding within the city], it wasn't safe," says Mozer. "True, Tel Aviv's the only place in the Middle East that's liberal and where they can be openly gay -- but their coming here is a logical thing. It's not connected to politics." He points out that gay Palestinians who are given permanent residency within Israel "are rare or unique cases."

Will Louie ever come back to Tel Aviv? "It wouldn't be very wise, and he knows it," Mozer says. "People who have Palestinian origin have a very difficult time getting into Israel; I don't think they really want to."

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Tablet

A NEW READ
ON JEWISH LIFE™

PERSONAL HISTORY

Shades of Gay in Israel

For one Jewish filmmaker, making a documentary about gay Palestinians helped him accept his own identity

By Adam Rosner

November 12, 2012 7:00 AM



A still from *The Invisible Men*. (Shahar Reznik)

Tonight, a documentary I wrote and produced in Israel, *The Invisible Men*, will screen at the Other Israel Film Festival in New York City. The film tells the untold stories of gay Palestinians hiding in Tel Aviv, seeking refuge from the families and Palestinian security forces that want them dead and the Israeli authorities that want them out of the Jewish state. Five years after I moved to Israel and three after embarking on this project, these screenings present me with less a homecoming than a privilege: I return to my hometown more proud than ever to be Jewish, American, Israeli, and gay.

I grew up on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and I was, to put it simply, your all-American Jewish kid with all of the attendant neuroses and privileges. I was educated at the Ramaz

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School and Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, two flagship institutions of Modern Orthodox Judaism and American religious Zionism. I excelled in school. Socially, I was in the middle of the pack—somewhat awkward, always chubby, but who cared. I was accepted to Princeton University and graduated with a degree in Russian Literature with high honors. I wrote a thesis on Woody Allen. In the competitive worlds I was raised in, was accepted to, I was a “winner.” To my parents, especially my father—born to Polish Holocaust survivors, shtetl Jews, in a German Displaced Person’s Camp in 1946—I was living the life that he had always wanted for himself but could never have had.

But there was one competition for which I wasn’t even eligible—a “BNB” as Modern Orthodox Jews call it, a *bayit ne’eman b’yisrael*, a loyal home among the Jewish people, which normatively means a wife and children. As had started to become clear to me around the age of 12, I felt “different.” At summer camp, I wasn’t sneaking off with girls—not that I was sneaking off with boys. As I lost weight, I justified my confusion with same-sex attraction for insecurity and a difficult relationship with my father. In the 10th grade, I distinctly recall Ramaz Principal Rabbi Haskell Lookstein’s well-known Jewish sexual-education course. One of the few biblical quotes we had to memorize was Leviticus 18:22: “You shall not lie down with a man as with a woman: This is an abomination.”

Real clarity about my sexual orientation didn’t emerge until late into my college years—held off, I think, by the unusual relationship between Princeton’s straightness and its “small but strong” Jewish community. Princeton’s active Jews are often sheltered from the dominant WASPy culture that pervades campus socializing. At least this was how I experienced it when I tried to bridge my Jewishness with the secular freedom I enjoyed as just another student on campus. I felt this life—part-partier, part-student, partly Jewish, partly secular—left no room for coming out of the closet.

As I neared graduation with vague ambitions of an academic career and no desire to become a doctor, a lawyer, or banker, I thought back to Israel. Earlier that year, I had visited a high-school friend who was living in Jerusalem. We spent a day in Tel Aviv, and I was struck by how gay the city is. I realized, if subconsciously, that I could go to Israel and figure out the part of me that I had flat-out ignored. No one would ask questions. And so I moved to the Tel Aviv under the guise of an academic fellowship.

It was in Tel Aviv that I began to confront myself. I recognized and resigned myself to two things: One, I didn’t “feel different”—I actually was. And two, my family could never find out. But months into my time in Tel Aviv, an openly bisexual friend said: “Rosner, you seem a little repressed.” I admitted I was. She gently continued, “Are you ... a little gay?” Her own

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experience comforted me enough to reveal a kernel of the truth. “I am,” I told her. It would be our secret.

My fellowship was wrapping up just as I was making personal progress. I needed a legitimate excuse to stay in Israel—and fast. I secured a job working for a veteran Israeli producer and then met Yariv Mozer, the director of *The Invisible Men*, and made the leap into film.

The first time I met our main subject, Louie, was also the first time I ever met a Palestinian. At Ramaz, the only person who didn’t seem to regard Palestinians as our remote enemy was my Hebrew teacher and mentor to this day. She was the only person who mentioned the word “Occupation,” *ha-kibush*, in that educational setting. Louie, having lived in Israel for over 10 years, is a double victim of that Occupation—as a gay man and as a Palestinian. At the time, I was still hiding in Israel from my family much like Louie and the other men we filmed were. The stakes were entirely different, of course. Whereas I was free to exercise my right of return to the Jewish state, they were alienated by their families and societies, ineligible to live legally in Israel because of their nationality, and facing possible death if they returned home. In shoot after shoot, conversation after conversation, my subjects, unbeknownst to them, forced me to interrogate my upbringing relative to my sexuality and nascent Israeli identity.

I asked myself the once-unquestionable: What is my right to send in a bunch of paperwork, become Israeli, and plop myself down in Tel Aviv when this man’s life hinges on evading capture in a city that I had grown to love? Do the religious Zionists I grew up with even realize that Tel Aviv is a destination for tens of thousands of gay Europeans and Americans? Do they realize that there are Palestinians who would die to be there? Who would likely die if they weren’t?

Some friends suggested that *aliyah* was a convenience of the closet. In fact, *aliyah* led me to this documentary and to these extraordinary men. It gave me the courage to come out to my own family, and then to come out once more, as Israeli.

My desire to be Israeli, to be a part of a national, secular Jewish society and not a diaspora community tugged at me throughout my childhood. I remember in 1998, 14 years old, returning to New York from my family’s first trip to Israel. I hung a gigantic Israeli flag in my room, which my mother promptly told me to take down: “Don’t be silly, you’re not moving to Israel.” Another close friend said much the same, “Adam, you’re not making *aliyah*.” I would tell her, “You just don’t get it.” We still respectfully diverge with separate but equal dedication to Jewish tradition: She pokes fun at my assumed Israeliness; I joke that if she had a drag name, it’d be “Lady Diaspora.”

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Today, I have even more questions than answers, since I have spent most of the past year in Los Angeles where I'm in my second year of film school. (Someone recently quipped: "Adam, now you're really Israeli. You live in Los Angeles!") Where I'm going immediately after I graduate is to be determined. But for now, I'll go to New York and present a documentary whose subjects, at the very least, deserve to be seen—and if they are, can raise some of the questions that have driven me to them.

Adam Rosner is a screenwriter and producer living between Tel Aviv and Los Angeles. He is currently in his second year at the Peter Stark Producing Program at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts.

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<http://www.timesofisrael.com/sympathetic-film-unveils-invisible-gay-palestinians/>

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

[Sympathetic film unveils 'invisible' gay Palestinians](#)

In his new documentary, director Yariv Mozer explores the uneasy existence of Arab men hiding in Israel from their families

By [Jordan Hoffman](#) November 9, 2012

Just when you think you've heard about every aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a new angle pops up to surprise you.

For most audiences, that'll be the effect of Yariv Mozer's new documentary, "[The Invisible Men](#)," which details the struggles of gay Palestinians living in hiding in Israel. Ostracized by their communities, and often by their own families, many face lynching if they return home.

Making their situation even more precarious is that they're also not supposed to be in Israel. Security measures prevent Palestinians from entering the country — even those seeking asylum. Furthermore, there's the very real possibility they'll be discovered by a family member living inside Israel, another threat to their safety.

"The Invisible Men" focuses primarily on Louie, a quietly tragic figure who has been hiding in Israel for the better part of a decade, and Abdu, a more self-reliant man working with an underground agency to find sanctuary in Europe. We also meet Faris — timid, young and on the run from certain death at the hands of his own family.

On Saturday and Monday, Mozer, a former department head at Jerusalem's [Sam Spiegel Film and Television School](#), will attend [screenings](#) of "The Invisible Men" at the [Other Israel Film Festival](#) in New York City. Dedicated to programming about Israel's non-Jewish minorities, the eight-day festival, which begins Thursday, represents the homestretch of a US tour for "The Invisible Men" that has included screenings in Washington, DC; Ft. Lauderdale, Seattle, Milwaukee and Berkeley. The film will also show at Princeton's Unified Film Festival on November 11, and the St. Louis International Film Festival on November 16.

Mozer recently spoke to The Times of Israel about his new film. A transcript of the interview, edited for length and continuity, appears below.

I imagine this film is generating a little bit of controversy.

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Yes.

Was that your intention?

My intention is not to stir controversy for no reason. I wanted to make people aware of a political phenomenon.

‘There are parts of Palestinian society that are more modern and more moderate, but in the villages, it remains traditional,’ says director Yariv Mozer

Let’s begin with some background questions. Is homosexuality illegal in the Palestinian territories?

There is no law that prohibits it, but there is no law that legitimizes it. There is not one Arab state that legalizes it in any way.

But it isn’t illegal there. Technically, in Great Britain it was illegal up [until the 1960s](#).

Hey, it was technically illegal in Israel [until 1988](#).

When someone is outed as gay in the Palestinian territories, he can be lynched by his family or community. Are there any protections for gays?

No. It is very complicated. The traditions of the conservative families — and the families are big tribes, essentially — they consider this an act of humiliation that harms the honor of the family. Because of the political situation in the territories, which are isolated, rumors about someone being gay spread very fast. As such, these people have nowhere to escape if they are in the West Bank or Gaza. Especially Gaza.

So if someone is outed and the families “take care of it,” will the police there look into it as a murder? Will they prosecute if there is evidence?

To my knowledge, they will not. You have to understand that any act of homosexuality is perceived as an influence of the West and of Israel. Every gay person is suspected of cooperating with the Israeli system. This happens with Abdu in the film — when he was caught by the police, he wasn’t accused of being gay. He was caught because he was gay, and then accused of working with the Mossad. This is how they perceive homosexuality, because when you are gay, you are against the norm of Palestinian identity.

I look at atrocities in Afghanistan, where [they stone people for adultery](#), and my perception of Palestinians has always been that, by and large, they are more progressive than that.

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There are parts of Palestinian society that are more modern and more moderate, but in the villages, it remains traditional. Also, in villages where you have Hamas in power, it is even harder. To make it more complicated, the fact that gay people go back and forth within Israel [the film leaves ambiguous precisely how this is accomplished], it raises suspicion that they are cooperating with the Israeli system. Louie, who was living in Israel for so long, was terrified that if he returned, he would be accused of cooperating. Vulnerable people in general are targets of the security services on both sides. What I'm saying is, I'm sure Israel doesn't have a policy of tracking gay people. However, for the purposes of national security, Israel will do whatever it can do. The secret service will use and exploit gay people for their service.



Mozer says gay Palestinians are often suspected of spying for Israel. (Courtesy of Yariv Mozer)

So what you mean is, to try and convince them to become spies?

Yes, which is what leads to the gay Palestinians being accused. It is an additional complication.

Arab communities within Israel — are they more tolerant of homosexuality?

It is still a very traditional society. Not just [regarding] homosexuality, but women's rights, arranged marriages. However, gay people in Arab society [in Israel] can travel more easily. They can leave the country, they can go to Tel Aviv. I know very few who are out of the closet, but it is still easier.

And if there were a lynching like in the Palestinian territories, the Israeli police would look into it, not sweep it under the rug.

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Yes. And we know of cases like this.

Obviously Israel has to be very cautious about who is allowed in the country, but Louie says it himself: If you come from Thailand, you can work here, but he's from here, and he has to be in hiding. Do you think there needs to be a discussion about granting refugee status to gays who are trapped and can't go home?

I am not so optimistic, particularly with the current administration. For our interior minister [Eli Yishai] from the Shas Party, you don't need to get into being Palestinian — all [gay people are a sin](#).

Louie has relatives in Jaffa. This, of course, is one of his great fears — that he'll be seen by one of them.

'For our interior minister from the Shas Party, you don't need to get into being Palestinian. All gay people are a sin'

There are, of course, lots of Arabs living inside of Israel, and they enjoy the democratic country of Israel, but they have no connection with their families in the West Bank. It is part of the difficulty.

Your film has something of a happy ending, when we see certain figures living a free life in an undisclosed European country. But you can see that Louie would rather be in Israel. He has a line, "We all live in yearning." There really is no solution — gay Palestinians can be safe, but in a place that's totally alien to them, with a whole new language they need to learn.

Exactly.

The LGBT agency that sent them to Europe was a non-government agency?

Correct.

It runs on private money?

I can't get into too many specifics ... Let's just say that the organization that is supporting this process is behind the scenes. Let's just say that ... there is a very large international organization, and they are doing something against an internal policy and in conflict [with the laws of] two nations. They aren't supposed to do this. But they understand that this is the only way to help gay Palestinians.

But there are many progressives in Israel. You'd think there are people who would like to help.

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I am sure of it, but in the current administration, there is no policy that can help. The LGBT center is an NGO; the lawyers ... you see in the film are volunteering. They are approaching this unnamed international organization, and it is all very secretive. It is not an official policy.

One of your subjects had a terrible, abuse-filled childhood. You want to shout, “Get him into therapy!” But before that can happen, he has to be safe.

Exactly, and he is getting psychological treatment in the country where he is now. He has a job, renovating for the town. Things are improving, but he watches the Israeli news every night. He longs for Israel. It will be a long process for him.

Louie’s attitude toward Israel is fascinating. He wears a Star of David to “pass.” He seems really to like Israeli society, but also speaks of himself as a proud Arab. There’s a heartbreaking moment when he sings Arabic music. Is there anywhere in the Arab world that is accepting of gays?

Not to my knowledge. There are some underground communities flourishing, but they’re still secret.

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America-Israel Cultural Foundation

Monday, December 3, 2012

[Featured Artist of the Week: Yariv Mozer](#)



Film Director, Producer, and Scriptwriter, [Yariv Mozer](#) graduated with distinction from Tel-Aviv University's Film and Television Department (2003). He is currently completing his first feature film *Snails in the Rain*, supported by The Rabinovich Film Fund. Yariv is a member of the European Film Academy and the first Israeli producer to participate in EAVE (European Audio Visual Entrepreneurs). In

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addition, Mozer is a member of the Israeli Academy of Motion Pictures and the Israeli Documentary Filmmakers Forum. He is a teacher and former head of Entrepreneur Production Studies at the Jerusalem Sam Spiegel Film School (2007-2010), former Supervising Producer of Israeli production company "Alma Films" (2005-2007) and has also served as director of the 10th Tel Aviv International Student Film Festival (2004) which was host to Richard Gere (USA) , Patrice Leconte (France), Catherine Breillat (France), Thomas Vinterberg (Denmark) and Nabil Ayouch (Morocco) in Tel Aviv.

1) What or who inspired you to want to be an artist?

I knew from a very early age (probably 4 years old!) that I would be involved in show business. I had been acting and performing as a child and always carried with me a home video camera, to use for family events, school, in the army-- everywhere. I have been inspired by great artists that dedicated their life to their work like Pina Bausch, Peter Brook, John Cassavetes, and by Israeli artists such as Hanoch Levin & David Perlov.

2) What was your creative journey that has brought you to where you are in your career today?

After completing my obligatory army service, I started immediately to study film at Tel Aviv University's Film & Television Department. Like many young students, I came with a lot of TV knowledge, but less of cinema, yet I fell in love with the art of cinema, discovering a whole new world of classic motion pictures from all over the world. I have always combined my passion to direct films with my work as a producer. I have established my own company and gained the freedom to produce my own films. Although I have always had the desire to direct fiction-based films, life took me into a different direction. During the second Lebanon war, I was called to serve in the army and I took with me my personal video camera, this led to my first documentary film *My First War*. Since then I have directed two more documentaries, and I am now just completing my first feature film.

3) What do you need as an artist today?

The desire to tell a story and reveal a world, as long as I will have something to express to the world out there.



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4) What creative project are you working on now?

I am completing my first feature film *Snails in The Rain*, based on a short story, published in Israel in the early 90's by author Yossi Avni Levy.

5) Where do you see yourself and your career in 10 years?

Hopefully succeeding in doing more of my films. 10 years, 10 more films!

6) What does it mean to you to be an Israeli artist?

An artist brings with him his background, his roots, his own story, culture and his place of birth. With all of its complexity, Israel will always be part of me. I care for my country and therefore I will always try to make it a better place. At this point in my life, Israel is the backdrop of my films and is where I create my films, but I am sure one day I will also tell stories from other places. Still, my Israeli roots will remain my inspiration.

7) What does it mean to you to have an organization like AICF available in the art world?

The America Israel Cultural Foundation gave me my first grant of excellence when I was still a film student. It helped me produce my first short film. Organizations and funds like AICF are a valuable source of encouragement to young creative people, in their first steps in the art community.

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November 27, 2012, 5:00am

[Plight of Gay Palestinians No Credit to Israel](#)

By [Allen Ellenzweig](#)

With the recent coinage of the term "[pinkwashing](#)," presumably an "unofficial" official policy whereby the Israeli government touts its progressive stance vis-à-vis gay and lesbian rights as a way to deflect criticism of the Occupation, one entry into the sixth annual [Other Israel Film Festival](#) took on new urgency earlier this month. But the documentary "The Invisible Men," while hardly a wholesale indictment of the Occupation, offers a balanced but equally troubling spectacle. While Israel refuses to "legalize" Palestinian gays who enter the country fleeing persecution in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian families, adhering to religious and cultural norms, and Palestinian police, enforcing those norms, think nothing of abusing their own children and subjecting them to emotional, psychological, and physical torture. Thus the dilemma for young Palestinian homosexuals: survive illegally in Israel under threat of expulsion or legally in the territories under threat of death?



This Hobson's choice is made painfully clear in "The Invisible Men." Personal testimonies from three Arab men — two living undocumented in Tel Aviv and one under Palestinian jurisdiction — force us to wonder what sort of world compels people to live at the boundary of madness and suicide, renunciation and helplessness, self-denial and abjection.

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Director Yariv Mozer and writer Adam Rosner home in on Louie, 33, who has been living illegally in Tel Aviv for 10 years. A skilled manual laborer — we see him repainting an apartment with such care that the owner extends her compliments — Louie's position has nevertheless become untenable. He is repeatedly picked up by the authorities and sent back to the territories where it is impossible for him to live. His sexuality is known and rejected by his family; his father has even threatened his life with a knife at the young man's throat. Scarred by that violent encounter, and as much or more by the rape he endured at age 8 by an older boy, Louie finds his way back to Jaffa, living under the radar and wearing a Star of David around his neck in hopes of warding off the police.

Israel's national LGBTQ group provides counseling; two young lawyers advise Louie to make a formal request for asylum to another country. This may or may not succeed, and on a timetable impossible to forecast. Nor will his destination country be known to him until the last moment. Hoping to ease Louie's anxieties at the prospect of abandoning his cultural heritage, his counselors put him in touch with another young gay Palestinian living in Tel Aviv, Abud. More strongly gay-identified than Louie, the handsome 23-year-old Abud has the casual swagger of a confident Romeo who rolls with the punches and refuses to be beaten down.

Abud is close to repatriation, having been accepted by another country. He tries to calm Louie's anxieties, introducing him to the underground Tel Aviv Arab gay scene where a monthly "party" roams from one house to another. In Abud we meet a young man whose cool cynicism is an antidote to the Kafkaesque situation in which he finds himself. Yet like Louie, he, too, has had to overcome past trauma — a Palestinian police interrogation and torture that he seems to have willed himself past.

A third young man appears after Abud's departure; recommended to Louie, he is in hiding somewhere in the territories and has managed a phone call. While Louie, fraught by his own anxieties, hardly seems the best person to devise someone else's escape into Israel, director Mozer is savvy enough to arrange an on-site interview somewhere over the border. Young Faris, more effeminate than the other men, offers a compelling case of a gay Palestinian exiled within his own

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community — unable to let family or friends know his whereabouts and suffering the loss of a boyfriend who died two years earlier in an accident. While the details are never elucidated, the tearful testimony Faris provides stops the heart and catches the throat. Official Israeli policy on one side and Palestinian orthodoxies on the other have frozen these gay Arabs in a cruel netherworld.

The film moves toward a suspenseful resolution as we watch Louie decide whether he can make a leap of faith and abandon his family, his culture, his heritage. He must either accept stasis — or he must allow himself to enter the territory of change.

Mozer and Rosner have sensibly limited their inquiry into three representative lives. Their documentary style is intimate, avoiding any “expert” testimony or sociological data and evidence. While Mozer conducts off-camera interviews, we barely sense his presence. Rather, his subjects answer his questions with measured, painful candor. Mozer just lets the camera record—clear-eyed and unsentimental, and all the more damning for that.

The film might have withstood a more determined attempt at contextualizing these cases. We get no sense of how many gay men’s lives are attached to the history of the Occupation like the ones Mozer has pursued. And there are ambiguous moments that pass by quickly; I hesitate to declare this account definitive. But whether 10, 1,000 or 10,000 gay Palestinians are so situated, “The Invisible Men” provides searing evidence that governments and provisional authorities are more than willing to play politics at the expense of already marginalized groups — and pin the blame on each other.

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INTERVIEW WITH YARIV MOZER

Author: Yanir Dekel

Published: October 17, 2012

DIRECTOR YARIV MOZER TALKS ABOUT HOW HIS DOCUMENTARY THE INVISIBLE MEN CAME ABOUT, GROWING UP IN ISRAEL, AND HIS FUTURE PROJECT WHICH BRINGS HIM (BACK) IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA



A Wider Bridge supports [Yariv Mozer](#), whose award winning documentary 'The Invisible Men' will be screened today at the Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, **and tomorrow night (October 18) at the University of Washington in Seattle (see details of the screening below)**. The movie revolves around three persecuted gay Palestinians who have run away from their families and are now hiding illegally in Tel Aviv. Their challenges and the hardships they face, the painful choices that confront them, and the courageous Israelis who work to help them are all portrayed in the film. "I was always intrigued with knowing more about the life of gay Palestinians in the occupied territories," Mozer says in an exclusive interview with *A Wider Bridge*, "and then I got an offer to direct a piece for an investigative TV program about it. I started the research, met several gay Palestinians who were hiding in Tel Aviv, and immediately after I met with Louie, the main character, I knew I would need to make a film and that it would take time to follow his life. So I turned down the TV report and went on independently to make this documentary."

Are you still in touch with them?

"I am constantly in touch with them, and the film made our relationship stronger. For Louie it was hard to cope with the film and the memories it raised, so he prefers not to watch it any more or to talk about his past, and I respect that. Abdu is fighting today for gay refugee rights, and Palestinian rights in particular. Sometimes he does interviews to promote the film, although it is still hard for him to relate to an Israeli film. I met Faris once at a special screening we had and he was enthusiastic about the film. For the first time, he looked happy and free with his gay identity, and he had colored his body with makeup."

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Mozer, 34, a Tel Aviv native who was raised in Herzliya (a small city 20 minutes north of Tel Aviv), was attracted to making movies from a very early age. "I started studying theater when I was very young," he says, "but later on, after my army service, I moved to the other side of the camera and studied film and television at Tel Aviv University."

"I was always more attracted to fiction, but after my studies I started working in a leading Israeli production company that dealt mainly with documentaries, so suddenly I found myself in this field."

Yariv has made his directorial debut in a unique way. It all started during the 2nd Lebanon War in Israel in 2006 when he was called to duty. "I took my personal home video camera with me, without knowing that later on it would be the source of my first documentary film," he says. This documentary was eventually titled "My First War."

So, what's coming up for you?

"I am about to complete my first feature film, 'Snails in the Rain,' based on a short story by Israeli author and current Israeli ambassador in Belgrade, Yossi Avni Levy. We shot the film a year ago in Tel Aviv and it's scheduled for a 2013 release."

"The film happens in the early 90's in Tel Aviv, more than 20 years ago, when a young handsome student named Boaz starts receiving anonymous love letters written by a guy. He doesn't tell his girlfriend about them, and suspects the men around him, but he doesn't know that she already knows about the letters and she is about to discover who is writing them... So it's a passionate triangular love story and I am very proud of it. I look forward to exposing it to the public. And I am also acting in the film in a supporting role."

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The Status of Homosexuals in the Territories

In response to "Homosexual rights in Israel cover up expressions of racism" by Sarah Shulman. (Ha'Aretz, 16.1.12).

Sarah Shulman's article was published next to the announcement of Tel Aviv winning the title of "Best Gay City" of 2012. Her attempt to link the rights of Palestinians to the state of homosexuals in Israel is beyond ridiculous.

The film "The Invisible Men" directed by Yariv Mozar will be released soon. His film tells of all the aid that the LGBT Association, and other bodies in Israel, provide to Palestinian homosexuals who flee the intolerable reality of the Palestinian Authority.

Under the cover of concern for human rights, they [the activists] attack Israel instead of dealing with the situation of homosexuals under Palestinian rule. The main question is: "Why those young Palestinians have to escape from their homeland to Israel and what kind of threat they suffer from their own authorities"?

The "Rainbow" (Alqaws) organization works successfully with Israeli Arabs. It organizes parties with Jews out of feelings of friendship and brotherhood. Could parties like this ever happen in the Arab states?

The situation of homosexual Arabs in Israel is among the best in the Middle East. It would be better if organizations and people with opinions like Sarah focused on the hunting down of homosexuals in the Palestinian Authority and the Arab states.

It's blatant hypocrisy to blame Israel. We don't see her and her supporters demonstrating outside the Iranian Embassies against that country hanging young (16 year-old) gays or drawing attention to the Egyptian government that harasses and arrests gays.

Condemning Israel for "pink washing" is a yet another attempt by the global anti-Israel efforts to delegitimize the very existence of the State of Israel.

Ron Paran
Tel Aviv

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ENTERTAINMENT



OVERSIGHTED: EVERYBODY BE A CRISIS

BY: DANIEL VILLARREAL

6.29.2012

The Frameline film festival just wrapped up in San Francisco this last weekend. And although the celebrity documentaries about Lance Bass (*Mississippi: I Am*) and Chris Crocker (*Me @ the Zoo*) received lots of press, the winner for Outstanding Documentary caught our eye most.

Yariv Mozer's *The Invisible Men* examines the lives of several gay Palestinian men who have run away from their families to illegally hide in Tel Aviv. While they wait for a chance for asylum outside of Israel and Palestine, they risk being discovered, deported and killed by the family and neighbors that rejected them.

Mozer's beautiful film reveals a world where mere public acts of affection, rumors about boyfriends and even suspicions of homosexuality can result in torturous arrests, familial rejection and even murder on the streets.

While it sounds grim, there's something defiantly hopeful about seeing young gay trying to survive in spite of a hateful society. There's also something touching and familiar about seeing young men try to understand a place that hates them just for who they love.

LGBT folks in America still get harassed, imprisoned, disowned and killed just for being different every day. So while these "invisible men" live many miles away, their conflicts hit surprisingly close to home, making them not-too-distant relatives of our beleaguered gay family.

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[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) > [OPS & BLOGS](#) > [Scott Krane](#)

[The Invisible Men \(a documentary by Yariv Mozer\)](#)

JUNE 22, 2012, 2:38 PM 0

“I always wanted to know what it’s like to be gay on the other side of the security fence, in the Occupied Territories.” says narrator, writer and film producer, Yariv Mozer, as the first few shots of his new documentary, ‘The Invisible Men,’ flash across the screen, depicting security barriers and lonesome desert highways. “I never imagined that there were people like Louie who had to escape all the way to Tel Aviv, forced to live in another country where they are constantly hunted.” Then, cut to the neon Tel Aviv night.

‘[The Invisible Men](#)’ presents the untold narratives of “Louie, 32 years old, a gay Palestinian who has been hiding in Tel Aviv for the past 8 years; Abdu, 24 years old, who was exposed as gay in Ramallah and then accused of espionage and tortured by Palestinian security forces; and Faris, 23 years old, who escaped to Tel Aviv from the West Bank after his family tried to kill him.”



courtesy

The film is a step above the average Israeli documentary, chronicling life in the nuanced cultural underbelly of the Jewish state, where the public sphere is brilliantly shattered by various incongruent lifestyles. Instead of your run-of-the-mill snapshot of Israeli countercultures (such as the avant-garde bohemians, the ultra-Orthodox and the Arabs) with a dash of iconoclastic irony, [Mozer's documentary](#) of the adventures of three Palestinian seekers of sexual liberty, rings bells of naturalism, making it a kind of ‘Huck Finn’ for the Middle East, but with much darker and realistic undertones. Mozer said in an interview explaining the story’s background, “Much has

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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.”

The film takes all of the clichés of the conflict and puts things into a 21st century existentialist perspective by asking questions like, “What is worse, being an undocumented Palestinian in Tel Aviv, or being a homosexual in the West Bank or Gaza?” Of course, the tragedies that befall the lives of these men are only referred to in dialogue, but Mozer manages to capture some adventurous moments and brushes with the authorities on camera. “Documentary film” explains the filmmaker “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 inspired this film.”

Mozer explains, “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.” He continues, “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,” he continues, “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.”

Mozer says: “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,” continues the producer and director, “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.”

The film had its world premier at the [Movies that Matter](#), Amnesty International Film Festival, and then won the special jury award at the [Doc Aviv](#), Tel Aviv International Documentary Film Festival. “Next week” explains Mozer, “the film will have its North American premier at the [Frameline San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival](#).”

Can you give some background on the tenor of the film?

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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 broke the law during the work on this film—but it should not have been 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.

Where did you meet Louie, Abdu and Faris?

During my process of research I met Louie at the Aguda, the Israeli LGBT community center, back in its old place in Nachmany Street where it was much more hidden and discreet.

What do you think is a harder life, being gay in the PA-controlled West Bank or being Palestinian in Israel?

Tough question, eventually I would say that the threat of life was in the West Bank (and of course in Gaza) so that is where life was much more difficult for a gay guy.

How will you protect Louie, Abdu and Faris now that their story will be famous?

In the film any legal document, ID numbers and especially their current location had been blurred. Abdu decided to leave his place of asylum and therefore he lost his protection program. He is outspoken and determined to fight for Palestinian gay rights.

Can you comment on accusations of ‘pinkwashing’?

I just don't see the connection between gay rights and the occupation. The facts are that Israel is undoubtedly much more tolerant towards gay rights and against homophobia incomparably to the situation in the Palestinian occupied territories, as in the whole Arab world. Unfortunately, the Palestinian conservative society does not

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respect human rights in general, and that includes for example women rights and of course gay rights.

Another undeniable fact is that Palestinian people are still under the occupation in all of its faults.

I don't think that there is an official Israeli policy to highlight gay rights in order to undermine the occupation and its consequences.

Abdu said a smart thing during one of our last screenings: the day the Palestinian people will liberate themselves, they will be liberated from the Occupation.

It's a radical thing for a Palestinian to say, but it's the smartest conception of the conflict.

THE INVISIBLE MEN



Thursday, June 28, 2012 |

[Pink-sponge protesters take aim at Israeli documentary](#)

Protesters interrupted the introduction of an Israeli documentary about gay Palestinians, with the film's director then making an impassioned plea on behalf of the Jewish state.

The incident occurred June 23 at San Francisco's Roxie Theater before the screening of "The Invisible Men," which explores the plight of gay Palestinian men who seek refuge illegally in Israel. The screening was part of Frameline36, the Bay Area's annual LGBT film festival, which ran June 14-24.

Just before the screening, K.C. Price, the festival's executive director, went to the front of the theater to introduce the film and its director, Yariz Mozer. As if on cue, a dozen protesters sitting in the front row rose to vocally condemn the festival for showing a film funded by the Israeli government.



A scene from "The Invisible Men," which screened in San Francisco on June 23 photo/shahar reznik

The screening was co-sponsored by the LGBT Alliance of the S.F.-based Jewish Community Federation and the consulate general of Israel for the Pacific Northwest. The 69-minute film won a juried award as the festival's outstanding documentary.

The protesters' thinking, said Arthur Slepian, executive director of A Wider Bridge, a Jewish LGBT organization based in San Francisco, is that "any involvement of the Israeli government is traif. It doesn't make a difference what the movie is about or what the director has to say. Any organization that accepts funding from the Israeli government is a target. It's theater of the absurd."

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Slepian, who was in attendance, said the protesters shouted and handed out pink sponges, symbolic of “pinkwashing” (a strategy that critics say Israel uses to play up its positive track record on LGBT rights and other progressive issues in order to distract attention from its conflict with Palestinians). After five minutes of making their message known, most of the protesters left the theater without seeing the film.

Price then introduced Mozer, who spoke to the capacity crowd.

Recalled Slepian: “When [Mozer] tried to say something counter to the protest, someone in the audience spoke up and said, ‘That wasn’t aimed at you.’ He very forcefully replied ‘Yes it was. My film was partially funded by the Israeli government, my visit here was funded by the Israeli government. I am a leftist and I oppose many of the policies of my government, but I am proud to be an Israeli, and calls for boycott are wrong.’ ”

Price told j. this was not the first time Frameline has been targeted by anti-Israel groups. “In the past two years, the protests were more staged outside the Castro Theatre on opening night,” he said.

Price added that to the best of his knowledge, Frameline protesters have never spoken out against any other country besides Israel.

Slepian said Price and other festival officials handled the incident well.

“Nobody tried to cut the protesters off, nobody asked them to leave,” he said. “Both the movie and the director got much louder rounds of applause. It says something positive about Israel that they are willing to send over a film and a director that highlights this important issue — [a film] that is in many ways critical of Israel.”

The film is about three gay men who, threatened with violence and perhaps even death in their own society, flee the Palestinian territories for Tel Aviv. But while Tel Aviv is considered LGBT friendly, it presents the gay Palestinians a whole new set of challenges in terms of getting by and living legally.

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The film had been produced with the support of:



The New Israeli fund for cinema and television



The Dutch film fund



Yes Docu. Israel



IKON, The Netherlands



The Other Israel film fund



The Greenhouse Development Program



The EAVE 2010 Producers Program



Dragon Forum Poland



Roberto Cimetta Fund



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