

Awards & Recognition



- [Harrell Award for Best Documentary at Camden International Film Festival 2023](#)
- Best International Documentary Film at DocPoint 2024
- Audience Choice Award for Best International Documentary Film at Mena Film Festival 2024
- Buraq Award for best alternative and experimental take on MENA/SWANA identity at MENA Film Festival 2024
- Won the Alphapanda Award at Cannes Film Festival's docs-in-progress screening as part of Marché Du Film. Variety covered the showcase here: ([Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)).
- Selected to participate in two fellowships: SFFILM Catapult Documentary Fellowship & The Gotham Documentary Feature Lab.

Festivals



- [Visions du Réel 2023](#) (World Premiere)
- [Malmö Arab Film Festival 2023](#) (Swedish Premiere)
- [Toronto Palestine Film Festival 2023](#) (Canadian Premiere)
- [Camden International Film Festival 2023](#) (U.S. Premiere, **Best Documentary Award**)
- [IDFA 2023](#) (Dutch Premiere, Best of Fest)
- [DOC NYC 2023](#) (NYC Premiere, Fight the Power)
- [Reel Palestine Film Festival 2024](#) (MENA Premiere, Dubai)
- [MENA Film Festival 2024](#) (Winner, **Buraq Award**)
- [DocPoint 2024](#) (Finnish Premiere, **Best International Documentary Film**)
- [Big Sky Documentary Film Festival 2024](#)
- [True/False 2024: True Life Fund](#)
- [Zagreb Dox](#)
- [Sheffield Doc Fest](#) (UK Premiere)

Press Links

- PURE NONFICTION: [Yousef Srouji on Palestinian Home Movies](#)
- SCREEN SLATE: [True/False 2024](#)
- ROGER EBERT: [True/False 2024: A Photographic Memory. There Was There Was Not. Three Promises](#)
- REDEFINE MAGAZINE: [Three Promises Film Interview: A Remarkable Story of Family Filmmaking in Palestine](#)
- HYPERALLERGIC: [Highlights From Canada's Middle East and North Africa Film Festival](#)
- ABC: [Big Sky Documentary Film Festival features announced](#)
- DOCPOINT: [DocPoint's National and International Competition Lineups Announced](#)
- DEADLINE: [‘Three Promises,’ ‘Queendom,’ ‘Knit’s Island’ Win Prizes As Camden International Film Festival Wraps 19th Edition](#)
- VARIETY: [Camden Film Festival, a Key Stop on the Awards Circuit for Doc Contenders, Reveals 2023 Lineup \(EXCLUSIVE\)](#)
- VARIETY: [Cannes Docs Hails Vibrant Palestinian Nouvelle Vague](#)

- VARIETY: [“The Alphapanda Award was given to Yousef Srouji’s “Three Promises”](#)

Logline

A mother films her family's life while sheltering from Israel's attacks during the Second Intifada in the West Bank. Her son revisits the past through this footage, delivering a heart-breaking portrait of the anguish of parents forced to choose between their children's safety and the emotional upheaval of leaving home.

Brief Synopsis

While the Israeli army retaliates against the Second Intifada in the West Bank in the early 2000s, a mother films her family's daily life, punctuated by time spent shielding her family from harm in the basement. Now, her son revisits this past, delivering a heart-breaking portrait of the anguish of parents who are forced to choose between their children's physical safety and the emotional upheaval of leaving home.

Long Synopsis

Three Promises is the story of a mother and her camera, of a son and his suppressed memories, and of an entire country. At the start of the 2000s, while the Israeli army is retaliating against the second intifada in the West Bank, Suha films her daily family life, punctuated by frequent trips underground and overwhelmed by the anguish of her two young children. At every moment of intense danger, she promises God that she will leave if they survive. In 2017, her son, the director of this film, discovers this archive and reconnects with this suppressed past, wondering with his mother what drove her to record a daily life of suffering, a stolen childhood, and why she delayed fleeing, paralyzed by the hope for change and burdened by the impossible choice between physical safety and emotional upheaval. While on the surface there emerges the heartrending portrait of everyday life in times of war, it is the staggering beauty of a mother's love that is revealed between the lines. Blending the voice of the present with impressive family footage, Yousef completes the story begun by Suha, thus averting the act of forgetting, both personal and collective.

Director's Statement

The memories of the time before we left Palestine have stayed with me long after we moved to Qatar. I had the faintest recollections of my mother filming us at that time, a time we never discussed as a family, banishing it to the unmentionable caves that had transformed us from one family unit into four separate individuals. In those memories were glimpses of my mother and her camera, but it wasn't until the winter of 2017 that I first discovered her archive of home footage. This footage trespassed into a taboo time of war and chaos that ripped us from our home, and I was captivated. The images of my younger self navigating the divide of childhood and adulthood at the age of 10 grabbed me in a mysterious way, validating the memories that haunted me, both joyful and terrifying.

This film, *Three Promises*, is my way of processing this time together and fulfilling my mother's original wish: that the experience her family and community went through be shared with the world. To do that I sat with my mother and recorded multiple conversations about her memories from that time, her intentions, dreams and more. And that wasn't at all easy. My mother was never very open about this subject, but this time was different. With the footage finally out in the open and in front of us she began to share how she was really feeling. The film brings together her home footage and these conversations to tell an interwoven story about a mother's struggle between staying with her family in her hometown and making the difficult decision to immigrate.

In the 70 years involving the Palestinian struggle, I have yet to see footage like ours. While the world is the most friendly it has ever been to Palestinian narratives, mainstream media is still devoid of telling fully human Palestinian stories. This is where I believe our film can begin to shift the narrative. Our footage, shot in real time through a mother's eyes, demonstrates the complexities and nuances of the impacts of war on a real family - a reality that continues to be faced by families across Gaza and the West Bank as we've seen in the most recent bombings and shellings.

With forced migration escalating as a growing phenomenon and reality for communities across the globe - due to armed conflict and the wide range of climate related disasters - this question of when to leave home is one that will resonate deeply with diasporic and third-culture communities.

Additionally, with the collective experience of pandemic lockdown shared among the majority of humans on this planet - I think the reality my family faced, sheltered at home and in hiding places across our town, will be more resonant and relatable than ever before.

Finally, I really want audiences to feel like they are watching their own, or their friend's or family's, home videos. I hope that my mother's narration is able to create that connection with the audience, while the footage that she filmed over 20 years ago carries some weight of its own. My biggest success would be to have this film resonate and reach Western audiences, while also empowering and healing my Palestinian (and broader Arab) community.

Team Bios



Yousef Srouji, Director

Yousef is a first time documentary filmmaker and longtime storyteller. His work centers around understanding the dynamics of occupation in Palestine, and community resilience in conflict zones. He holds a Master of Development Practice from UC Berkeley and hopes to use his skills to aid and empower marginalized communities in the Middle East. Yousef spent the first part of his childhood in Palestine, then relocated to Qatar with his family in the midst of the Second Intifada. He attended the University of British Columbia, where he earned a BA in Economics. He has been a fellow with the SFFilm Catapult Documentary Fellowship, received production and post-production grants from the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), and has been a fellow with the Gotham Documentary Feature Lab (formerly IFP Documentary Lab.)

Marielle Olentine, Producer

Marielle Olentine is multimedia storyteller and filmmaker championing a collaborative and regenerative approach to filmmaking. From covering the Syrian Revolution to following presidential candidates on the campaign trail in 2016, her work has appeared on VICE, Al Jazeera, Huffington Post, and HBO. As an Associate Producer on Erin Lee Carr's MOMMY DEAD & DEAREST and Ben Younger's BLEED FOR THIS, her work has premiered at SXSW & TIFF. As a storyteller she seeks to weave together narratives that honor, celebrate and bridge differences, finding inspiration in the interconnectedness of nature and the devotion of oral story-keepers across the globe. Through her work on THREE PROMISES she participated in SFFILM's Catapult Documentary Fellowship and the Gotham Documentary Lab (formerly IFP Documentary Lab) and was a recipient of the Arab Fund for Arts & Culture's (AFAC) production and post-production grants. When she's not producing films she manages a non-profit media production organization called Tikkun Olam Productions, that provides accessible multimedia storytelling to frontline social & environmental justice groups.



Zein Khleif, Co-Producer

Zein is a Palestinian-American writer, producer, and actress. She graduated from Brown University with a BA in Political Psychology before moving to Los Angeles in pursuit of a storytelling career. Zein aims to take part in, and create, art that is powerful and transcends the stereotypes society has put on her Arab culture. Her goal is to humanize people of the Middle East - in all their races, religions, and ethnicities - and generate written and visual media highlighting the complexities of the region. She is dedicated to accurately representing the nuances of culture, and she advocates for diversity and equal representation both on screen and behind the camera.

**Mahdokht Mahmoudabadi, Editor**

Mahdokht is an Emmy nominated, Iranian-born, New York-based editor working with various production companies and award-winning directors. She brings her passion for storytelling and knowledge as a classically trained musician to every project she works on.

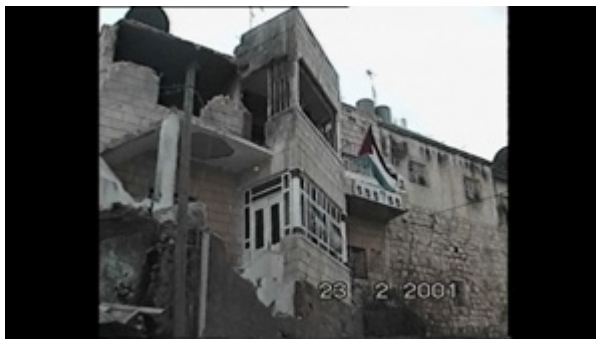
Additional Credits

Filmed by	Suha Khamis, Yousef Srouji & Mashal Kawasmi
Written by	Yousef Srouji, Marielle Olentine & Mahdokht Mahmoudabadi
Original Music by	Ghiya Rushidat
Editor	Mahdokht Mahmoudabadi
Post-Production Supervisor	Wael Joudehh
Sound Recording by	Sarouna Mushasha
Sound Designer	Dani Masaadeh (Rum Pictures)
Post Production Producer	Hasan Ameen (Rum Pictures)
Colorist	Sherif Fathy (The Cell)
Assistant Editors	Hany Hawasly Koohyar Hosseini
Post Production Team	Jordan Pioneers
Consulting Editor	Rabab Haj Yahya
Director of Photography (Palestine)	Mashal Kawasmi

Stills

Access to film stills is available [here](#).





Support for *Three Promises*

