

STATELESS

(APATRIDES)

A film by Narjiss Nejjar



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SYNOPSIS

Hénia, a stateless young woman, tries desperately to return to Algeria to join her family, torn apart by History since 1975, when Algeria expelled 350,000 Moroccans from the country. But a love story will blur the rules and sow chaos.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I could feel rich being born from two opposing sides. But the East and West are often star-crossed lovers, especially in these troubled times. I think about the world around me with France's more relevant idea, as large, freedom, in its broadest sense.

Yet I feel poor when my eyes cross the Mediterranean and see those lands where freedom is defeated. My film is about these contradictory impulses, these frontiers.

I make movies because it is not acceptable that a man or woman can be a disjointed puppet in the hands of a few who will decide her fate. That is why my film could be summed up by this quote by J. Amado:

"The world is a nation where the best interests of the states stop at the borders of lower interests of people."

This film features characters that truly have no free will. The premise is this, it could be this event, it could be another or it could be even elsewhere: in 1975, Algeria takes the arbitrary decision to expel tens of thousands of Moroccans residing on its soil since sometimes several generations, without any human or legal consideration. Most are stripped of their property, entire families are separated. This "Black March" is an affront to human dignity, a dignity that some will lose because their identity will become cloudy.

This is the case of Henia, my protagonist, of Algerian mother and Moroccan father. His father dies following his forced exile. Barely-pubescent, she's married to an old man and runs away after her wedding night.

And from the moment she decides to escape the law of abusive men, she becomes a prisoner because she is a Stateless Woman. Until that meeting with the Son and the Father, and then Lise, the Son's wife, that comes from France and makes her understand the extent of her imprisonment and urges her to break free.

My bias is in no case documentary. I just want to highlight the backyard of a personal story in the midst of the Great History.

I seek neither to justify nor explain a blatant political act, but to open a reflection on our society, coward and timid when witnessing the unspeakable. Because there are no such borders as those that barricade our humanity.

DIRECTOR



Born in 1971 in Tangier, Morocco, Narjiss Nejjar is both a filmmaker and a screenwriter. 1989 marks her departure for Paris where she continues her film studies before starting to work as a Director Assistant on several films.

She made her first documentary film in 1994 “L’exigence de la dignité” (The Demand for Dignity), then in 1996 “Khaddouj, mémoire de Targha” (Khaddouj, Memory of Targha). In 1998, she co-produced documentary series in Morocco “Les Salines” (The Saltworks). She is nonetheless, the screenwriter and author of a novel published in 1999, “Cahiers d’Empreintes” (Imprints’ Notebooks). Narjiss Nejjar directed a short films trilogy: “Le Septième Ciel” (The Seventh Sky) 2001, “Le Miroir du fou” (The Lunatic’s mirror) 2001 and “La Parabole” (La Rive des muets) (“The Parabola”—“The Mute’s Shore”, 2002). Her first fiction feature “Les Yeux Secs” (“The Dry Eyes”), 2003, was selected at the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs in Cannes, at the FIFF, at Marrakech Festival and obtained numerous honors, of which the Bayard d’Or for The Best Scenario. She made “Wake-up Morocco” in 2005, her second feature length. After a participation in 2010 at the collective film “Terminus des anges” (Angels’ Terminal), she directed “L’amante du Rif” (The Rif Lover) 2012, selected in several official competitions.

FILMOGRAPHY

2017 *Apatride/Stateless*, 95 min

2011 *L’amante du Rif/ The Rif Lover*, 90 min

2008 *Terminus des Anges/ Angels’ Terminal* Co-directed Tryptic with Mohamed MOUFTAKIR and Hicham LASRI , 86 min

2005 *Wake up Morocco*, 110 min

2002 *Les Yeux Secs/ Cry No More*, 116 min

2002 *Le Miroir du fou / The Lunatic’s mirror*, 39 min

2000 *Le Septième Ciel / The Seventh Sky*, 35min

1999 *La Parabole / The Parabola*

CAST AND CREW LIST

Hénia El Ghalia Ben Zaouia
Son Avi Chay Benazra
Lise Julie Gayet
Father Abdelziz El Fadili
Aunt Nadia Niazi
Cousin Mohamed Nadif
Official Zakaria Atifi
Young Hénia Kenza Es-Safi

Producers Lamia Chraïbi
Michel Merkt

Co-producer Caroline Piras

Executive producer Noufissa Sbai

Producer Associate Leila Amran

Cinematography Stéphane Vallée

Film Editing Marie-Pierre Renaud, Julien Fouré

Sound Patrice Mendez

Director of production Lamia Chraïbi

Assistant director Ferdaouss Ait Laghdir, Zakaria Atifi, Zineb Ennaji, Jean-Frédéric Chaleyat

Script Hanane Ouarda

Production Design & Art Decoration Lamia Chraïbi, Selwa Tamim Nanou, Mehdi El Haddad, Hamid Benjeddi, Ismail Anabat, Aziz Jaber

Costume & Wardrobe Assia Ismaili Abdelhak Ratil

Make up & Hair dressing Touria El Abassi Najat Sahraoui Youssef Ouzellal

Sound Department Jamal Quandil, Ferdinand Bouchara, Cristinel Sirli, Christian Germain, Eric chevalier, Thibaud Dupuis, Pierre Simion

Camera and Electrical Department Mouna Khaali, Soukaina Belghiti, Nossair Chkerbouby, Mohamed Faraj Daoudi, Ahmed El Arassi, Mohcine Jmila, Mouad Mrabet, Loic Bouladjat, Said El Hachimi, Said El Hadchi.

Grading Jean-Christophe Savelli