



# Our River...Our Sky

a narrative feature film by Maysoon Pachachi





*Gala event in Dubai for the IWC Filmmaker Award 2012*

## INTRODUCTION

Our River...Our Sky is the first internationally co-produced narrative feature film written and directed by a female filmmaker of Iraqi origin – the London-based film producer / director / editor Maysoon Pachachi.

Co-written with Irada Al-Jubori - a Baghdad-based writer of fiction - the film offers an authentic insider's perspective to the contemporary Iraqi narrative.

In 2012, the script won the \$100,000 IWC Schaffhausen Gulf Filmmaker Award at Dubai International Film Festival - presented to the film's director by Head of Jury, Cate Blanchett.

## LEAD ARTISTIC & TECHNICAL TEAM

Writer & Director

Co-Writer

Production, Set & Costume Designer

Head of Production

Cinematographer

Sound Recordist

Hair Stylist & Makeup Artist

Editor

Sound Designer

VFX Director

Music Composers

Consulting Producer

Casting Director

1st Assistant Directors

Maysoon PACHACHI

Irada AL-JUBORI

Rayah AASEE

Ghassan ABDALLAH

Jonathan BLOOM

François WALEDISCH

Kazem ABBASSHIRAZI

Alexandre DONOT

André STIEBE

Luc SERRANO

Mario SCHNEIDER

Ehsan EMAM

Khyam ALLAMI

Chris CURLING

Leila BERTRAND, CDG

Haidar HAKIM

Ahmed YASEEN







## CAST MEMBERS

### NAME

Darina AL JOUNDI  
Zainab JODA  
Basim HAJAR  
Labwa ARAB  
Amed HASHIMI  
Meriam ABBAS  
Mahmoud Abo AL ABBAS  
Badia OBAID  
Zaydun KHALAF  
Suzan MUNEAM  
Sami AL-ALI  
Siham MUSTAFA  
Kholod MOHAMAD  
Ali EL KAREEM  
Kameran RAOOF  
Mustafa MOHAMMED  
Muslem HASSOUN

### ROLE

Sara  
Reema  
Kamal  
Mona  
Yahya  
Dijla  
Abu Haider  
Sabiha  
Kareem  
Khairiya  
Nabil  
Nermeen  
Tamara  
Boatman  
Professor Sami  
People Smuggler  
Haider



## LOGLINE

In a typically mixed Baghdadi neighbourhood, the stories of a novelist and her neighbours unfold and intersect, as their lives are torn apart by extreme sectarian violence while nightly curfews trap them inside their homes.

Zainab JODA as REEMA.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

SARA is a single mother and novelist, shocked into silence, at a time of extreme sectarian violence and nightly curfews in Baghdad. She and her neighbours let us into their everyday lives, as they struggle to resist the fragmentation of their world and renew a fragile sense of hope and belief in a better future.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

Baghdad. The last week of 2006. All over the city, people of different religions are being forced out of their homes on a daily basis and neighborhoods are being divided by concrete walls. At night, under curfew, the residents remain trapped inside their houses...

SARA hunches over her computer obsessively scouring the internet: How many dead today? As her daughter sleeps fitfully against a muted background of mortars and gunfire, her mother scribbles numbers on scraps of paper and sticks them to a map of Baghdad stuck on the wall. At least if she keeps track of the attacks she can try to predict where the next one may happen...

Sara is a novelist but no matter how hard she tries, she cannot write any more. It would all just be a lie anyway. Maybe she and her daughter should leave this unlivable place? Yet everything that matters to her is here and Reema seems alright; she tells jokes, plays tricks. But Reema knows much more than she tells her mother...

When Sara's closest friend and neighbor, SABIHA, a former actress and a Christian, is forced into exile by a sectarian gang, Sara begins to fight back and recover a sense of defiance. But the random killing of Reema's school bus driver causes Sara to re-think things and she starts to look for a way out...

Sara and Reema's story intersects with those of their neighbours: KAMAL, a former prisoner-of-war in Iran who is trying to erase the past; his pregnant wife MONA, who can't forget her children from a past marriage; and her mother NERMEEN, whose son was 'disappeared' by the regime. Elsewhere, Sara's manic-depressive friend DIJLA is always hunting for 'happy pills' while the pretty college student TAMARA keeps herself busy with music and fashion to distract herself from an unbearable reality. HAIDER, a teenager on the cusp of manhood, is being drawn into a sectarian gang as his father ABU HAIDER takes to the bottle. YAHYA, Sara's brother, has to choose between accepting bribes to stay in his job or leave the country too.

In spite of a fresh bomb attack, Sara regains a renewed sense of defiance and resistance. She takes her daughter to the Tigris River for the first time. Sitting at the riverbank, they agree that Baghdad belongs to them and they will not leave it.





*Maysoon Pachachi on location in Iraq.*



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I'm a filmmaker of Iraqi origin with deep roots in that country and, at the same time, I am a Londoner who has lived in the city for almost all of my adult life. I often feel like a person whose home is on a bridge with a view of both sides of the river.

Iraqis have lived through decades of dictatorship, war and sanctions and since 2003, ongoing extreme daily violence and chaos. Their lives are ruptured and full of loss, with no breathing space to process and repair. This is the emotional context in which people get on with daily lives in a situation where the unthinkable has become the norm, where you have to 'act life' as people in Sarajevo used to say. The powerful external circumstances affect everyone and create a sense that you are living a story that is at the same time personal, and collective.

I and my co-writer, Irada Al-Jubori, an Iraqi novelist, were interested in finding a fictional form which would reflect this experience.

Our film takes place in Baghdad, in the last week of 2006, a time of extreme sectarian violence and nightly curfews. Connected individual stories, each with its own trajectory, unfold simultaneously and, together, they describe a collective drama happening in this particular time and place. How you tell the story is part of the story.

I am interested, not so much in what happens but in what we as human beings do with what happens. When the world inside and outside us is fragmenting, how do we keep a sense of our self and our story, how do we hold our life together? How do we survive psychically, emotionally? Where do we find the will and the courage to resist the damage and renew a fragile sense of hope every morning? Can we be true to our values and beliefs? What do we tell our children? Can we retain any sense of community? How?

This is what our film is about and was in part inspired by dialogue and scenes, which I and my co-writer, Irada, heard and saw in Iraq in 2006/7. Using this real-life source material as a springboard, we created our fictional narrative, making the feelings of our characters present in the way that drama makes possible, while at the same time, trying to express the energy, danger and chaos of the wider reality in which they live.

We feel that it's especially important now for stories of individual resistance and hope to be told about the Middle East, where so many still manage to maintain solidarity with one another as human beings, in spite of the intensely divisive pressures of religion and politics, with which they are living.



## **BIOGRAPHY FOR MAYSOON PACHACHI**

*Writer, Director and Producer*

Maysoon Pachachi is a London-based filmmaker of Iraqi origin. She was educated in Iraq, the USA and the UK. She studied Philosophy at University College London (BA Hons) and then filmmaking at the London Film School. She was for many years a documentary and drama film editor in the UK, and has worked since 1994 as an independent documentary film director, largely making films in and about the Middle East.

Maysoon has also taught film directing and editing in Britain and Palestine (in Jerusalem, Gaza and at Birzeit University). In 2004, with her colleague, Iraqi filmmaker, Kasim Abid, she co-founded INDEPENDENT FILM & TELEVISION COLLEGE, a free-of-charge film-training centre in Baghdad, whose students produced 17 short documentary films, shown at festivals and screenings internationally and within Iraq at a traveling festival.



## FILMOGRAPHY OF MAYSOON PACHACHI

**VOICES FROM GAZA** (Channel 4 – UK, 1990, 52 mins) (producer/editor)

In reaction to 20 years of Israeli occupation, Gazans rise up in a show of solidarity and collective action.

*\*Red Ribbon Award\* American Film and Video Festival, San Francisco*

**IRAQI WOMEN - VOICES FROM EXILE** (Channel 4 – UK, 1994, 52 mins) (director/producer)

Modern Iraqi history recounted through the experiences of Iraqi women living in exile in London.

**IRANIAN JOURNEY** (ZDF/Arte, 1999, 83 mins) (director)

A documentary road-movie about the only woman in the Islamic world working as a long-distance bus driver.

*\*First Prize\* Kalamata International Documentary Festival, 2000*

**LIVING WITH THE PAST: People and Monuments in Medieval Cairo** (ECHO Productions - USA, 2001, 52 mins)

(director)

A portrait of Cairo's Darb Al Ahmar, a neighborhood in the heart of the old city facing a process of radical change.

**BITTER WATER** (Legend Productions/Oxymoron Films - UK, 2003, 76 mins) (co-director/producer)

Documentary about 4 generations of refugees in a Palestinian camp in Beirut.

**RETURN TO THE LAND OF WONDERS** (ZDF/Arte, 2004, 88 mins) (director/producer/camera/editor)

Made about the filmmaker's return journey to Baghdad in 2004, after more than 35 years.

**OUR FEELINGS TOOK THE PICTURES: OPEN SHUTTERS IRAQ** (Oxymoron Films – UK, 2008, 102 mins)

(director/producer/camera/editor)

12 women from 5 Iraqi cities, produce photo stories about their lives in Iraq.

*\*Jury Special Mention\* Arab Film Festival Rotterdam, 2009*



## **BIOGRAPHY FOR IRADA AL-JUBORI**

*Co-Writer*

Irada Al-Jubori was born in Kerbala, Iraq. She is a writer, researcher and women's rights activist. From Baghdad University, she holds a MA from the College of Arts and a PhD from the College of Mass Communication. The subject of her doctoral thesis was the image of women in Iraqi cinema 1946-1994. At present, she is a Professor and Assistant Dean of post-graduate studies at the College of Mass Communication, Baghdad University, as well as editor of Baghdad University's Media Researcher Journal.

In 2006/7 she was Iraqi project manager on Open Shutters Iraq, a participatory photography project involving women from 5 cities in Iraq. The project produced a body of work which was exhibited internationally, a dual-language book and a documentary film, directed by Maysoon Pachachi. In 2011, Irada and Maysoon Pachachi wrote the first draft of *Kulshi Makoo* (Arabic title for Pachachi's debut narrative feature film). Additionally, Irada has written five collections of short stories, a novel and a book for children.





## **BIOGRAPHY FOR TALAL AL-MUHANNA**

*Producer*

Talal Al-Muhanna produces documentary and fiction films with filmmakers of Arab descent and projects in the Arts & Culture genre. Films produced have screened at major festivals including Directors' Fortnight in Cannes and New York Film Festival.

Talal holds a BA and MA in Film & Moving Image Production from Leeds Beckett University (UK) and a Certificate in Fundraising from New York University. He has served on film juries in the MENA region and for La Femis Gulf Summer University in Paris. In 2015, Talal was a Producing Fellow at the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM). In 2017, he was Head of Industry for Kuwait Film Festival. In 2020 Talal received the Professional Achievement Award from the British Council Kuwait for his work in film, TV and performing arts. ([www.imdb.com/name/nm3827614](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3827614))

## **COMPANY PROFILE - OXYMORON FILMS**

The subject matter may differ, but all of Oxymoron's films have in common a drive to let people tell their own stories and to depict them not as victims only, as so many well-meaning films do, but as complex, often contradictory, individual human beings, who may be caught up in difficult circumstances. There is a commitment to listening, to patience in finding resonances and connections, to not imposing a false and overly tidy, 'coherent' narrative on the reality being filmed – and to not forcing a spurious sense of drama. The films are often, at the same time, collective and individual stories.

Our River...Our Sky is an international co-production between UK-France-Germany-Kuwait-UAE-Qatar.

**PRODUCERS:**

(in order of participation, chronologically)

Maysoon PACHACHI & Talal AL-MUHANNA (Oxymoron Films / UK)  
Talal AL-MUHANNA (Linked Productions / Kuwait)  
Patrice NEZAN & Laurent VERSINI (Les Contes Modernes / France)  
Alexander RIS (Neue Mediopolis Filmproduktion / Germany)

**CO-PRODUCERS:**

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Cinéma (France)  
Lightburst Pictures (Germany)

**ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS:**

(in order of participation, chronologically)

Omar AL-MASAB (OFilms), Ra-Ana GILANI, Chipu CHUNG, Tom CLARK

**CO-LINE PRODUCERS:**

Masti Film Production Company (Sulaymaniyah & Baghdad) &  
Fuad Jalal RASHEED (local producer)

Ishtar Iraq Film Productions (Baghdad) &  
Huda AL KADHIMI (local producer)



## **FUNDERS** *(listed alphabetically)*

Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation-ADMAF (United Arab Emirates)  
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British Film Institute (United Kingdom)  
Brot für die Welt (Germany)  
CNC (France)  
Creative Europe Programme – MEDIA of the European Union  
Doha Film Institute (Qatar)  
Eurimages (European Union)  
Institut Français (France)  
Indiegogo (crowdfunding support)  
IWC Schaffhausen Filmmaker Award & Dubai International film Festival (United Arab Emirates)  
Media Mundus (European Union)  
MDM Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (Germany)  
Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (France)  
Regional Audiovisual cooperation (United Arab Emirates Embassy of France)  
SANAD The Development and Post-Production Fund of twofour54 Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)  
Visions Sud Est - SDC Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Switzerland)

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## WORLD SALES

Sales Agent: The Party Film Sales  
Address: 9, rue Ambroise Thomas, 75009 Paris  
Country: France  
Contact persons: Samuel Blanc, Co-Head of International Sales  
E-mail: samuel.blanc@thepartysales.com  
Website: www.thepartysales.com

## ARAB WORLD / MENA DISTRIBUTOR

Company: MAD Distribution  
Address: 18 Salah Eldin Street, Third Floor, Flat 10 – Zamalek, Cairo  
Country: Egypt  
Contact persons: Moshira Farouk, Cultural and Theatrical Distribution Manager  
E-mail: moshira.bahar@mad-solutions.com  
Telephone: +2 02 2735 7937  
Mobile: +201224010362  
Website: www.madsolutions.com

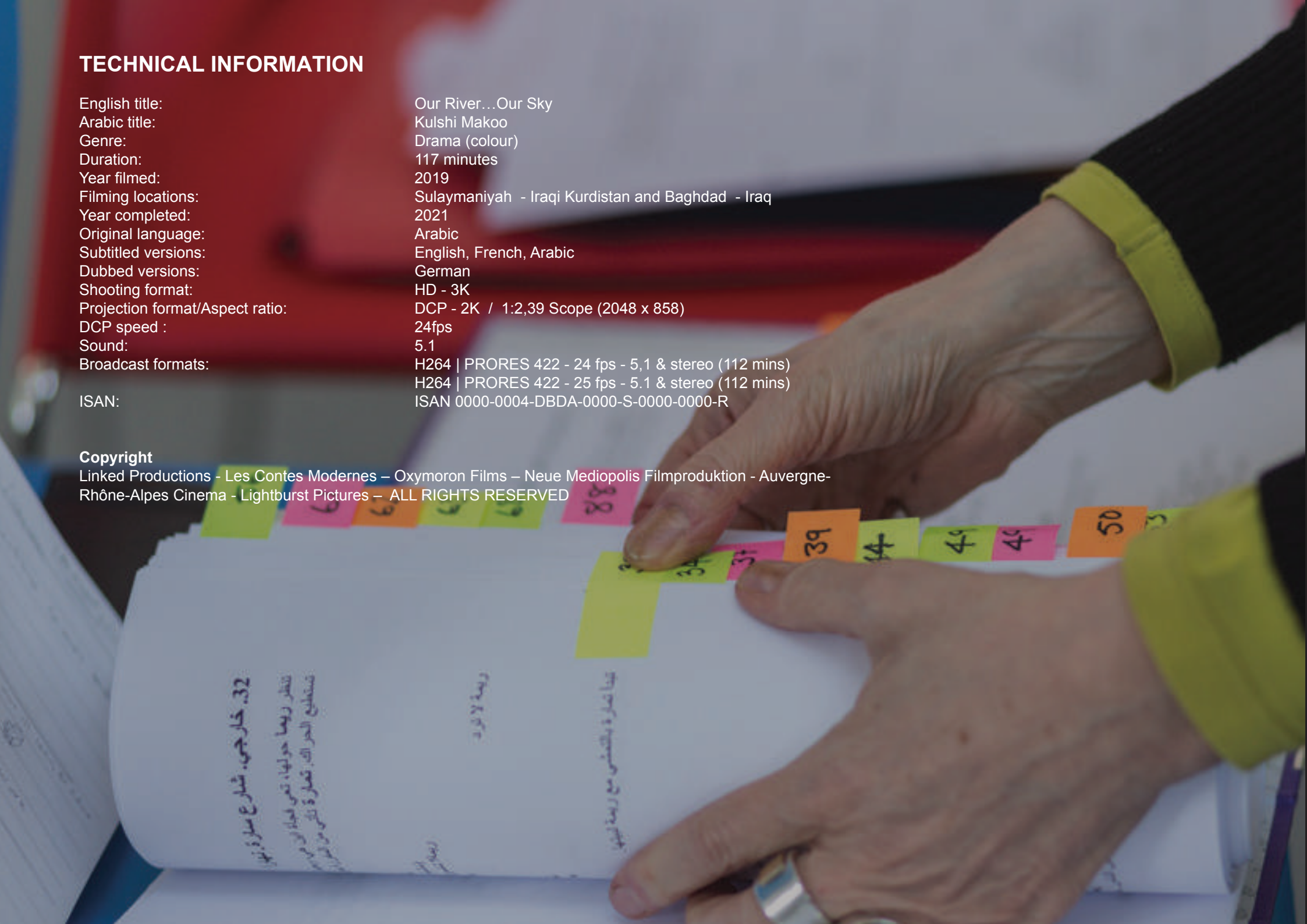
The World Sales agent for the film is The Party Film Sales (France).  
The Arab world distributor is MAD Distribution (Egypt/UAE).

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

English title: Our River...Our Sky  
Arabic title: Kulshi Makoo  
Genre: Drama (colour)  
Duration: 117 minutes  
Year filmed: 2019  
Filming locations: Sulaymaniyah - Iraqi Kurdistan and Baghdad - Iraq  
Year completed: 2021  
Original language: Arabic  
Subtitled versions: English, French, Arabic  
Dubbed versions: German  
Shooting format: HD - 3K  
Projection format/Aspect ratio: DCP - 2K / 1:2,39 Scope (2048 x 858)  
DCP speed : 24fps  
Sound: 5.1  
Broadcast formats: H264 | PRORES 422 - 24 fps - 5,1 & stereo (112 mins)  
H264 | PRORES 422 - 25 fps - 5.1 & stereo (112 mins)  
ISAN: ISAN 0000-0004-DBDA-0000-S-0000-0000-R

## Copyright

Linked Productions - Les Contes Modernes – Oxymoron Films – Neue Mediopolis Filmproduktion - Auvergne-  
Rhône-Alpes Cinema - Lightburst Pictures – ALL RIGHTS RESERVED







Meriam ABBAS as DIJLA (L) and Darina AL JOUNDI as SARA (R)

## Oxymoron Films would like to thank:

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## Crowdfund Supporters

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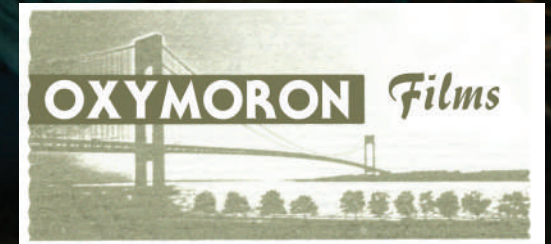


Karam THAMER as EMAD, YOUNG POLICEMAN



## COMPANY CONTACT

Name: Maysoon Pachachi  
Production company: Ozymoron Films Ltd.  
Postal address: 55 Windsor Road, London, N7 6JL  
Telephone: +44 207 272 9324  
Email: maysoon.pachachi@gmail.com  
Website: www.oxymoronfilms.com  
IMDB: www.imdb.com/name/nm0655224/



## SOCIAL MEDIA & FILM TRAILER

Website: riverskyfilm.com  
Facebook page: Our River Our Sky  
Twitter: @AnotherDayinB

Note: Previous titles for the film, while in development, included "Nothing Doing in Baghdad" and "Another Day in Baghdad"

