

FADIA

BURIED ALIVE.
SILENCED NO MORE.



A Fiction by Shady Srouf
Thriller

Feature TV Film / mini series

Israel / Palestine

2026

Languages: Arabic, Hebrew

International Premiere

Presented by:

CINEMA VIRGIN & MAKAN

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LOGLINE

After a young Arab Palestinian woman is left for dead by her own family, she is secretly rescued by neighbors and forced into hiding, beginning a tense fight for survival in a society torn between shame, silence, and modernity.





SHORT SYNOPSIS

Fadia, a young Arab Palestinian woman from the Galilee, becomes the target of her own family after a video spreads online threatening the family's reputation. Left for dead and secretly rescued by neighbors, she is forced into hiding while struggling to reclaim her identity, safety, and voice.

As fear, paranoia, and social pressure close in around her, Fadia finds herself trapped between survival and resistance in a society divided between deep-rooted traditions and a rapidly changing modern reality.

Blending psychological tension with social realism, FADIA is a suspenseful and emotionally charged thriller about betrayal, resilience, and the hidden violence many women endure behind closed doors.



LONG SYNOPSIS

In a conservative Arab village in the Galilee, Fadia belongs to one of the most respected and influential families in the community. But when a video circulates online appearing to show her behaving “dishonorably,” outrage spreads rapidly through the village, placing her family under growing social pressure and public humiliation.

As gossip escalates and fear overtakes reason, the family is driven toward an unthinkable act in the name of preserving family honor.

Buried alive and left for dead, Fadia miraculously survives after members of a neighboring liberal family secretly rescue and hide her inside their home. While the village believes she is gone, Fadia begins a suffocating existence in isolation, haunted by trauma, paranoia, and the unbearable realization that the people meant to protect her became the source of her destruction.

Confined between fear and survival, she watches as silence, denial, patriarchy, and social conformity continue to shape the lives around her. The tension inside the village grows as rumors spread, loyalties fracture, and the boundaries between victim, witness, and accomplice become increasingly blurred.

But survival alone is no longer enough. As Fadia slowly reclaims her voice, she is forced to confront not only her family, but an entire social structure built on fear, reputation, and control, even if that confrontation leaves her completely alone.

Combining psychological suspense with intimate social realism, FADIA is a tense and emotionally charged thriller about survival, dignity, and the cost of resisting systems designed to silence women.

Q & A WITH THE DIRECTOR



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What drew you to tell this story, and how did you approach such a complex subject?

The central question that guided me was very simple and complex and disturbing: how does a young man come to kill his own sister - someone who helped raise him? How do parents become participants in the death of their daughter? These questions are not abstract. They force you to confront ideas of responsibility, conditioning, fear, and social structure.

As a teenage boy, I felt this kind of social pressure myself. My social conservative environment expected me as a son and brother of four girls to dominate and oppress my sisters. My masculinity was measured in terms of my ability as a man to control the women in my sphere. That experience stayed with me for many years. After I grew up, I realized the power of social influence on young men.

On the other hand, Growing up as the only boy among four sisters gave me a particular proximity to that world. It allowed me, from an early age, to witness and understand certain realities that are often invisible or unspoken. In that sense, the decision to make this film is not only artistic, it comes from a personal need to imagine and contribute to a better, more just environment.

In this project, I wanted to break down the concept of 'murdering women for dishonoring their families' into its elements, and make viewers see the reality - just like looking in a mirror." To approach this, I conducted very extensive research, looking into real cases and speaking with women who are deeply engaged with this issue, including activists and professionals in the field. What I encountered was often shocking and painful. But more importantly, it revealed a reality that is lived daily, not as an exception, but as an ongoing tension.

At the beginning, I wrote the script as a drama. But as I went deeper into the research I was exposed to stories that didn't seem to end, I felt a growing sense of horror.

I came across incidents from different parts of the world: a woman whose body was dismembered and hidden beneath a house in London, another killed by members of her own family in Syria by hammer, young women attacked or killed in extremely brutal ways. At that point, I understood that approaching this story as a conventional drama was not enough for me. The emotional reality I was encountering was closer to something more urgent, more unsettling. That is why I shifted the film toward the language of a thriller, not to sensationalize, but to reflect the intensity, fear, and immediacy that surround these situations. For me, the film became a social-realist thriller. And importantly, this is not a phenomenon limited to one region. It exists across different societies - in Europe, in the United States, in the Middle East, India and Asia. And also it moves across borders, sometimes hidden, sometimes ignored. I wanted the cinematic language to be global, the roots of this violence are deeper and more widespread than we often admit. Through all of this, I realized that the subject cannot be reduced to a single narrative. It is layered, filled with contradictions, dilemmas, and different perspectives, even among those who resist the term itself. For me, it was essential not to simplify it into something black and white, but to explore its complexity and the human mechanisms behind it.

Why did you chose the name FADIA?

Fadia is the feminine form of the Arabic name Fadi, which means “the redeemer,” “the savior,” or “the one who sacrifices himself for others.” In Christian tradition, Christ is often referred to as “Al-Fadi”- The Redeemer.

For me, the name carries both spiritual and symbolic meaning. Fadia is not only a woman struggling to survive violence and silence, but also someone who, through her suffering and confrontation, exposes the deeper wounds within society itself. In many ways, her journey becomes an act of sacrifice, resistance, and rebirth.

This film itself was born out of both pain and hope. Violence against women, and violence in general, is a global epidemic. Through Fadia’s story, I hoped not only to create suspense and emotional tension, but also to spark conversation and perhaps contribute, even in a small way, to real change.

The scene in which Fadia is buried and later emerges from the grave is deeply symbolic. It represents the voice of women, a voice that cannot be buried, silenced, or suppressed. It is an expression of resilience, life, and the immense strength women carry within them everywhere.

So, in light of all that, symbolism connects directly to the meaning of her name. In Christian tradition, Jesus was buried and rose again to redeem humanity from sin. In a similar symbolic sense, Fadia rises from death carrying not only her personal survival, but also the possibility of confronting silence, fear, and oppression. As a man exhausted by persistent patriarchy and chauvinism, I sometimes feel that perhaps humanity has been waiting for the wrong savior all along. Across religions and cultures, societies continue waiting for a Messiah who will redeem the world from violence, hatred, and destruction, almost like the endless waiting in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. For me, Fadia becomes a symbolic response to that idea. She represents the possibility that the redeemer humanity has been waiting for may not be another masculine figure of power, but a female voice capable of leading through compassion, care, emotional intelligence, resilience, and the profound responsibility embodied by motherhood.



As a Palestinian filmmaker citizen in Israel, how has your identity shaped the stories you choose to tell?

Honestly, my position and background as a Palestinian citizen in Israel place me within a framework that often defines the kinds of subjects I am expected to address as a filmmaker. In order to secure funding, I have to approach film funds, broadcasters, and television platforms, and very often these institutions expect me to bring stories directly connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict simply because of who I am.

In truth, throughout my artistic career, whether in films or television series, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has remained central in one way or another. This reality is not artificial; in many ways, it is part of our daily resistance, what we call "Sumud," the act of remaining steadfast and holding onto life, identity, and humanity under constant political pressure. Even in the last documentary series I directed about Palestinian cuisine, the subject eventually became political. We live politics in almost every aspect of daily life, and institutions themselves often reinforce this reality.

At the same time, I sometimes fear that being trapped exclusively within this political framework can create another kind of danger — one where society is seen only through conflict, occupation, and survival, while deeper social and human issues remain unspoken. I believe that if we stop confronting the internal fears, silences, violence, and emotional fractures within our own society, we risk gradually dehumanizing ourselves and reducing our existence to a purely political narrative.



Sometimes I feel there is an expectation for us to present a kind of "National Geographic" version of Palestinian existence through everyday human life.

With FADIA, for the first time, I wanted to move away from direct politics and approach something deeply social, human, and existential instead. What interested me was not the political conflict itself, but the internal fears, silences, pressures, and emotional structures operating within society and inside the family. It took me almost nine years to bring this project to life. For me, FADIA is not only a social story, but also a philosophical and existential one, dealing with survival, identity, dignity, and the price a person may pay when confronting an entire society alone.

And yet, I believe that even confronting these social issues eventually becomes political in itself because, sadly, in our different realities as Palestinians whether inside Israel or West Bank or Jerusalem or Gaza or in the Diasporas, reserving our humanity, dignity, and emotional health of a society is also a form of resistance. In that sense, FADIA may move away from direct political conflict, but it still returns, in the long run, to the broader meaning of Sumud, the struggle to protect not only land and identity, but also the human soul of a society and family.

Can you talk about your collaboration with the creative team behind FADIA?

FADIA was built through a very intimate and organic collaboration between people who were deeply emotionally connected to the material. I co-wrote the script with Laurel Hunter (Something Better, The Highway Home), and from the beginning we discovered that, despite coming from completely different backgrounds and cultures, we shared a very similar emotional response to the story and to the violence experienced by women around the world. She brought a deeply personal connection to the material after losing a female family member to a horrific act of violence. I think this combination of perspectives allowed the script to become both culturally specific and emotionally universal at the same time.

Visually, the series came to life through my collaboration with cinematographer Barry Markowitz (Crazy Heart, Sling Blade, All the Pretty Horses). Barry brought decades of cinematic experience and an incredible emotional sensitivity to the project. What I appreciated most was his ability to approach the story without exoticizing it. Together, we wanted the camera to stay emotionally close to Fadia, almost trapped inside her psychological state, while still preserving realism and intimacy.

My collaboration with editor Naaman Bishara began long before filming started. Even during the writing process, we were already working in a kind of creative “ping-pong,” discussing rhythm, structure, silence, and emotional tension. In many ways, the editing process started on the page itself. Naaman is fearless when it comes to cutting scenes and stripping moments down to their emotional essence. Sometimes almost too fearless. But that rigor became essential for the tense and contained language of the series. Together we constantly searched for precision, restraint, and emotional honesty rather than melodrama.

I worked with actors who come from a strong theater background so they can carry emotional depth, psychological complexity, and a strong sense of tragic humanity. We shared artistic language through discussions around major playwrights such as Shakespeare, Henrik Ibsen, and Samuel Beckett. For example, while working with actress Khawla Debsy in the mother’s role, we explored inspirations from Lady Macbeth and particularly Judi Dench’s haunting interpretation of the character. Together we created characters not as social symbols, but as deeply conflicted human beings trapped between guilt, fear, power, silence, and survival.



How have audiences in your community responded to FADIA?

The reactions I received were divided into two main directions: social responses and political responses.

The social reactions were deeply emotional and, in many cases, very painful. Many viewers, especially women, told me that the project reflects realities they personally recognize within their own families and communities. For some people, FADIA opened a space to speak for the first time about stories that had remained buried in silence for decades.

I remember one viewer telling me: “My cousin was killed when I was still a child, and even after more than forty years, nobody in the family speaks about her because it is forbidden.” That response stayed with me because it revealed how silence itself becomes part of the violence. Many women were also deeply affected emotionally, some even crying, because they saw themselves reflected in Fadia’s fear, loneliness, and struggle for dignity. What moved me most was not only that people related to the story, but that they recognized parts of their own hidden emotional reality within it.

At the same time, there was also a strong political reading of the project. Many viewers interpreted Fadia symbolically as reflecting the broader Palestinian condition itself and the Palestinian cause. They saw her as representing a people and the Palestinian cause that others repeatedly try to bury, silence, or erase, yet which continues to rise again and survive despite abandonment and isolation.

Some viewers told me they felt Fadia’s loneliness mirrors the Palestinian reality, left to confront its fate alone, while even those who sympathize often feel powerless to truly change the situation. I found these interpretations very powerful because they emerged naturally from the audience rather than being imposed by the work itself. In many ways, these reactions also reveal how deeply Palestinians live surrounded by politics, to the point where even intimate human stories inevitably become connected to the larger political reality around them.

At the end of the day, FADIA is a work of art, and I believe art should remain open to interpretation. Every viewer brings their own experiences, fears, memories, and political or emotional realities into the work. For me, work of art always exists somewhere between the objective and the subjective, between what the filmmaker intentionally creates and what the audience ultimately discovers within it. That dialogue between the artwork and the viewer is part of what keeps cinema alive.



What is the film landscape of Nazareth? Is there an active community of filmmakers there?

Well-known filmmakers came out of Nazareth and gained international recognition. Nazareth is considered the capital of major Palestinian filmmakers, beginning with Michel Khleifi in the 1980s, followed by Elia Suleiman and Hany Abu-Assad. Each of them developed a unique cinematic language reflecting the reality here, and what made their work internationally significant was their engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader political reality surrounding it.

There are also many other filmmakers from Nazareth who continue to create important work, but almost all of them search for funding abroad, whether in Europe or the United States, because we face a very complicated dilemma when financing films. If we receive Israeli funding, parts of the Arab world may boycott the work, while funding from parts of the Arab world can make Israeli support impossible. It creates a constant negotiation around identity, belonging, and narrative. But in the end, I simply want to make films and express myself honestly in my own voice.

At the same time, we also live inside a system that constantly places us in contradiction as Palestinian citizens of Israel, a system that fights you as an Arab, wants your loyalty as a citizen, takes your taxes and participation, yet still often discriminates against you socially, politically, and culturally. Because of this, there is an ongoing struggle over narrative, identity, and who has the right to tell stories and define reality.

There is a strong group of professionals from Nazareth who have worked on films selected for major festivals such as Cannes or even nominated for Academy Awards. But despite this talent, there is still no real film industry in Nazareth itself. Many artists are forced either to leave the city, wait for productions to arrive, or survive by working in completely different professions.

I represent part of a newer generation of filmmakers coming from Nazareth and the surrounding area, and that carries a great responsibility. Not only to continue telling stories, but also to preserve an independent cinematic voice capable of existing between all these political, cultural, and social pressures.



CREDITS – FADIA

starring

YARA JARRAR -as Fadia

ALAA DAKKA -as Shareef

JALAL MASAREE -as Fadi

SHADI MARA'I -as Waleed

KHAWLA DEBSI -as Siham

MAHMOUD SOBUH -as Saleem

REBECCA TALHAMI -as Majida

SHADY SROUR -as Tarek

casting director
SAMA HADAD

production designer
RABIA' SALFITI

costume designer
MOHAMAD ATALLAH

colorist
ALON BARAK

make up artist
MERVAT HAKROSH

scriptwriters
SHADY SROUR & LAUREL HUNTER

producer & director
SHADY SROUR

cinematographer
BARRY MARKOWITZ-ASC

editor
NAAMAN BISHARA

original score
DANIEL MARKOVICH

sound design & mix
MICHAEL GOOREVICH

executive producer
SANA TANOUS

Filmography - Shady Srour

2026 - Split – three documentary episodes about Mixed cities in Israel showing the life and dynamics on those cities between Arabs and Jews since the British Mandate until today. (co-director with Dina Riklis producer Alma Production) in post-production

2025 - Grounded – a documentary series (8 episodes) that introduces Palestinian cuisine to its viewer explores a vanishing generation of women who preserve the memory of rural cooking. (writer, director) produced by Medalia Production Ready to air on Makan TV soon

2025 - Fadia – a 95 min Feature film\ a four episodes Mini Series Ver. - that follows the journey of a young woman who survives an honor killing. (Co-writer, Director, Actor, Producer)

2021 - Gangster Chocolate – A feature length documentary film that follows Azmi, a 56-year-old, who becomes addicted to drugs and goes to prison for drug trafficking and comes out with connections and knowledge that leave him susceptible to the criminal world for years but turns to be social worker. (Actor/Producer)

2019 - Oslo – A short film about Palestinan labors, European Academy Award Candidate / Official Selection - Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival / recipient of nine different awards Oslo -short film won 9 prizes (Writer/ Director/ Producer).

2017 - Holy Air – A feature film that explores the commercialization of religion as the Palestinian Arab Israeli character, who struggles with the idea of becoming a father after his wife announces she is pregnant. with a world premiere screening at the Tribeca Film Festival. Winner of the FIPRESCI prize at the Jerusalem Film Festival. Warsaw Film Festival Free Spirit Competition. Screenings across the film festival circuit around the world. Latin and US distribution handled by Samuel Goldwyn Films. (it was developed through: Sundance Screenwriting Lab\Belgrade Industry Meeting – B2B\ Invited by CNC to the Cannes Film Festival). (Writer/Director/Producer/Actor) many articles has been written about the film worldwide among them Hollywood Reporter, LATimes, Jerusalem Post

Ave Maria – A short film about five nuns living in the West Bank wilderness. Official Selection in Cannes Film Festival 2015 and Oscar nominee. (Lead Actor)

2013 - "24 Hours Jerusalem" – Head of Palestinian directors\ ARTE (Participant) Winner of the German television award for best documentary.

Anna Arabia - Feature film by Amos Giati (Actor)

2012 - Don Juan of Galilee – A feature romance comedy. (Writer, Producer, Actor).

Amos – A compilation (by Amos Giati) of several short films by some of the world's most exciting directors – "Words with Gods" (Actor)

2011 - Watan A Watar – A long-running comedy series which pokes fun at Middle Eastern and Palestinian political and societal issues. (Director)

New Star – the Palestinian version of American Idol. (Director)

2009 - Amwash – a ten-episode television comedy. (Writer, Director, Actor)

Nazareth – a short informational film about Nazareth for the visit of the Pope and an audience of 50,000. (Writer/Director)

2007 - Either Me or Haifa (Ya Ana Ya Haifa) – a short film about refugee rights. Winner of the El Wada Award. Opening homage of Palestine FIFAK. Arabian Nights Selection in the Tunisia/Dubai International Film Festival. Winner of Al-Awda Award for Best Dramatic Short Film. (Director)



2004 - Sense Of Need - Thesis Film at Academy of Art in San Francisco shot in Jerusalem and San Francisco. Winner of Best of Festival Award in the Golden Film Festival., Chicago Palestinian Film Festival 2005, Oakland International Film Festival. Honorable mention in the Nazareth International Human Rights Film Festival. Official selection at the Palestine Film Festival, London. (Writer, Director, Producer, Actor)

Filmography - Shady Srour





Jury Statement:

“The film deals with violence against women within the family in traditional Arab society. Designed as a stylized thriller, the film challenges viewers through surprising twists, and step by step illustrates how violence infiltrates and poisons society as a whole — including those who perpetrate it. It is a penetrating, courageous, and deeply unsettling look into the darker side of society, while attempting to trace a path toward healing and repair.”



Jury Statement:

FADIA is a courageous and deeply unsettling work, built upon a precise screenplay and powerful performances. It holds up a sharp and honest mirror to a socio-political reality that abandons women to their fate and, at times, to their death. It is a human and artistic statement with profound resonance
“Shulamit Aloni Prize promotes human rights, social justice and co-existence”



Golden Nymph Awards Nominee
International premiere
TV Film Version -2026



Jury Statement:

“A film that boldly combines cinematic approaches from different genres in a way that directly and courageously confronts a burning issue within our society. The result merges suspense, urgency, concern, and anger, demanding the full attention of the wider public.”

FADIA

SERIENCAMP
FESTIVAL
09 - 11 JUNI 2026 KÖLN

Spotlight: Women in Series
International premiere
Mini-Series TV Version -2026

According to UN Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), nearly one in three women worldwide experiences physical or sexual violence during her lifetime. In 2023 alone, approximately 51,100 women and girls were killed by intimate partners or family members, an average of 140 victims every day, or one woman every ten minutes. So-called “honor killings” continue to occur across different regions of the world, particularly in parts of the Middle East, South Asia, and within conservative communities globally, with thousands of women estimated to be murdered each year in the name of “family honor.” In recent years, international movements such as #MeToo have helped expose the global scale of gender-based violence and silence surrounding it, turning women’s voices, testimonies, and resistance into an urgent worldwide conversation.