

## Exploring the Intimacy of Palestine Refugees in Brazil

Contributed by Isaura Daniel  
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Stela Grisotti and Paschoal Samora packed their bags and traveled to Jordan to spend two days in the desert, on the frontier with Iraq. That was around a year and a half ago and it was not exactly an adventure. Grisotti and Samora are movie makers and traveled to visit Palestinian refugees who lived there.

Without speaking Arabic, and with little translation, the filming and interviews - in a linguistic jumble that goes from Arabic to English to Portuguese and back - resulted in the first part of the documentary "A Chave de Casa" (The Key to the Home).

Some of these refugees came to Brazil and nine months after their arrival, the directors continued the work, filming them in Brazil. The documentary was released this year. It has already been selected and exhibited at festival "É tudo verdade" (It's All True), in São Paulo, and on Cultura TV.

It was, in fact, filmed by Cultura TV, as the project developed by Stela was chosen in a selection process for films about refugees in contemporary wars. Now, the plan is to place the film in cinemas and also at video rentals in Brazil.

The initial project, according to Stela, was not focused on the Palestinians. But it all changed when she heard about the Arab refugees who were to come to Brazil. After negotiating with the government of Jordan, Stela and Paschoal, accompanied by an executive production team and a photography director, traveled there.

They arrived in Amman, the Jordanian capital, and, from there, traveled five hours by car with a local driver until they got to the refugee camp. The promise was to count on the assistance of a Brazilian, who was the head at the camp.

When they got there, however, the woman had traveled to pick up the relatives of the refugees scheduled to travel to Brazil and they had to improvise with the help of the driver who spoke Arabic and a little English.

The next day, the driver was replaced by his father, who did not speak English. The Brazilian who was to aid them was only present at a few moments. Thus, not knowing very well what the interviewees were saying, Stela and Paschoal went on with the project. Much of what was said was a surprise to them when they received the translation in Brazil.

The focus was on five refugees. The documentary tells their story beginning in the refugee camp and then in Brazil. Some, according to the director, are doing very well and are happy with their new life in Brazil, as is the case with the teacher who gives Arabic lessons to immigrants in Florianópolis.

Others, like a PhD in Veterinary Genetics, whose wife stayed in Iraq, are not so happy. "Each one is at a different moment," says Stela. One of the women complains that she no longer knows the direction to Mecca when it is time to pray. She would not like to return to the camp, of course, but to her native Palestine.

Different from most productions about Palestine, film "A Chave da Casa" does not tell the story of the conflict between the Arab country and Israel. But it recalls the life of the Palestinians.

"We worked on the intimate history of each one," she stated. According to her, the audience who saw the documentary was greatly interested, wanting to know more about those people, in the debate after the exhibition.

"It touches due to the humane side," she said. The characters are Palestinians who lived in Iraq and were obliged to leave the country, having to flee to the camp in Jordan after the war, in 2003.

"A Chave da Casa" was also scripted by Stela and Paschoal, who also directed. The duration is 60 minutes and the producer is Mixer. The music is by Ale Guerra, the photography by Dado Carlin. Stela's plans are to place the movie in movie theatres and video rentals this year. She also wants to continue working on the matter of refugees. Another project, which depends on funds, may be about the refugee children.

Stela graduated in journalism. She has already worked as television journalism editor for Cultura and Globo TVs, but has been in cinema for 15 years. Paschoal graduated in cinema from Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation (FAAP) and was invited to develop the project together with Stela.

Anba