

المرهقون

THE BURDENED

A FILM BY AMR GAMAL



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 AWSAM ABDULRAHMAN, SHAHD ALGONFEDY
 ISLAM SALEEM, ROAA AL-HAMSHARI, OMAR ELYAS

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 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MARWAN MAFRAQ



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A F I L M B Y A M R G A M A L

2023 - Yemen/Sudan/Saudi Arabia - Drama - 1.85 - 91 min

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CREW

Director	Amr Gamal
Screenwriters	Mazen Refaat, Amr Gamal
Cinematographer	Mrinal Desai
Producers	Mohsen Alkhalifi, Amr Gamal
Co-producers	Amjad Abu Alala, Mohammed Alomda
Production Company	Adenium Productions
Co-production	Station Films
	Red Sea International Film Festival

MAIN CAST

Khaled Hamdan
Abeer Mohammed
Samah Alamrani



SYNOPSIS

Aden, Southern Yemen. Isra'a and Ahmed put all their efforts into offering a normal life and education to their three young children. When they find out that Isra'a is pregnant again, they have to make difficult decisions guided only by their family's interest.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The economic conditions of Yemeni middle-class families began to decline gradually, starting with the Arab Spring revolution in 2011, when Yemen entered a state of political chaos and an unstable security situation that led to the economic collapse.

One of my close friends, he and his wife, work as employees in Aden City Radio station, with a very modest salary. They have two children, and they can hardly provide for their expenses.

In 2014, my friend's wife became pregnant with a third child, and it was a shock to them that this new arrival would shake the family budget and cause a decline in their standard of living. At that time, the idea of getting rid of the fetus appeared on the horizon, but the difficulty of finding a doctor to perform the operation for them, as well as the fear of the reaction of society and the religious scruples, made them retreat from The idea.

My friend's wife gave birth to their third child, but my friend did not receive him with love and used to call him a burden. We denounced his harsh treatment of the third child, and it took a long time before my friend began to accept the presence of his third son.

In 2015, Yemen entered into a very complex war that destroyed what remained of the foundations of a decent life, and most of the average families descended below the poverty line. Aden City Radio and Television was closed and hundreds of employees were left without work. Despite all the protests that the employees made to reopen the radio station, the government did not respond to their demands.

My friend and his wife remained without work, and their income became just a small amount, as a symbolic salary from the state, which does not enrich or fatten from hunger. My friend also refused to work in private channels, since most of them are politicized and serve the agendas of their owners, which contradicts his principles.

My friend's family, which represents most Yemeni families, lived on the brink of poverty, driving their daily life on a bumpy road, hoping to survive day by day.

In early October 2019, my friend was shocked by the news that his wife was pregnant with their fourth child, despite all the contraception they used to prevent them from this pregnancy.

This time, their decision was decisive, because the fetus must be disposed of in any way, otherwise the family will sink to the bottom of poverty and the future of its three children will be ruined.

My friend and his wife began looking for a religious space to avoid religious remorse. In their search for that space, they found a division between Islamic



religious sects, sheikhs, and fatwas (a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority). Some of them categorically forbid abortion, even if the age of the fetus in its mother's womb is one day, and there are those who permit abortion if it takes place before the expiry of 40 days. Others permitted it if it took place within a period of less than 120 days.

My friend and his wife adhered to the fatwa of 120 days, leaving enough space to search for a means of abortion during this period.

Another bitter journey that I witnessed, and I do not think that I will ever forget the features of my friend and his wife, and the amount of fear, frustration, and pain that was painted on their faces. For me, these features are the features drawn on the face of most Yemenis at this harsh stage of time.

I still remember the words of my friend, who was suffering from the difficulty and complications of the journey of abortion, when he said to me: If it were not for this war and its consequences, we would not have taken this humiliating path to get rid of the fetus, perhaps he would be living among his siblings today.



This story, which inhabited me and did not leave my imagination, made me ask my friend and his wife to write it as a movie, and I used them as a source in every stage of writing the script with my writing partner, Mazen Refaat.

The term abortion has always been associated in Arabic literature with the expression of the incompleteness of dreams or the loss of the future and ambition for reasons beyond a person's control, so we say: My dream was aborted, my ambition was aborted, or my future was aborted. This symbolism, for me, represents most of the Yemenis whose dreams, aspirations, and present were aborted by the war and its consequences, and I hope it will not abort their future.

The Yemeni family is very similar to the main characters of our film "Ahmed and Isra'a", even if they are burdened, but they do not give up and try daily to survive in all available and unavailable ways.



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Amr Gamal (b.1983, Poland) is an independent Yemeni film and theater director. In 2003, he received the President's Award in playwriting. In 2005, Gamal established Khaleej Aden Theatre Troupe, he has written and directed all the theater productions by the troupe since 2005. His play 'Ma'k Nazel' became the first Yemeni play to be performed in Europe (Berlin) after its big success in Yemen. In spring 2018, production began for his first feature film '10 days before the wedding', the film premiered in Aden during the summer, becoming the first film to open commercially in Yemen since the last three decades. The film continued to be screened for over 8 months and became Yemen's official submission to the Oscar in 2018. Amr Gamal lives and works in Aden, Yemen.



PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

Mohsen Alkhalifi is a Yemeni-American Producer and TV Presenter. After becoming one of the first Yemeni influencers on Youtube in 2012, he began his professional career as a TV Presenter with a well-known Yemeni TV channel in 2016. Since then, he has presented and produced hundreds of episodes which gained him recognition in the media scene. In 2018, he collaborated with his friend 'Amr Gamal' to create the first Yemeni commercial movie to be shown in theaters: 10 Days Before the Wedding (Yemen's official submission to the 91st Oscars 2018). The film was met with incredible public acclaim, consequently opening the door to the movie-making industry in Yemen.



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