

المواطن أسامة CITIZEN OSAMA

A documentary by **Ahmed Hassouna**



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
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Official Selection



Masharawi Fund for Films & Filmmakers in Gaza
& Coorigines Production
in coproduction with Filcam

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CITIZEN OSAMA PRESS KIT

Palestine - France

2026 | DCP/MOV/MP4 | 5.1 | 1.77 | Colours



Synopsis

In the northern part of the besieged Gaza Strip, cut off from all aid and medical services, Osama lives with his wife and their newborn baby. His son was born in the eighth month of this never-ending war, in a hospital overwhelmed by death and lacking the resources needed for childbirth.

Once aspiring to become an artistic photographer, 33-year-old Osama has unexpectedly become a war photographer. Wearing a bulletproof vest and a journalist's helmet, he travels through devastated areas, documenting the destruction while trying to help others.

Osama's daily life revolves around the struggle for survival, as he searches for food, water and a safe place for his family. The emotional burden is immense, especially when he captures the deaths and funerals of fellow journalists, friends and loved ones.

Despite the psychological pressure, Osama believes he must continue documenting the war and protecting his family. He hopes for an end to the violence, or at least a ceasefire to ease the suffering of civilians.

Citizen Osama is a film that portrays his life. It offers a window into the resilience, fear and humanity of those trapped in one of the most violent conflicts in the world.





About the director

Ahmed Hassouna is a Palestinian filmmaker. After earning a degree in journalism from Al-Azhar University in Gaza, he turned to filmmaking. His work includes several award-winning documentaries that have received prestigious recognition, including the Al Jazeera Award in 2013.

Istrupya (2019), his first feature-length fiction film, won the Special Jury Prize at the Alexandria Film Festival. More recently, his film *Sorry Cinema*, part of the *From Ground Zero project* (2024), was shortlisted for the Oscars, reflecting his growing recognition on the international film scene.

His work revolves around memory and identity, exploring the human condition in times of war and profound transformation. Through a sensitive visual language that blends realism and contemplation, he brings an intimate and deeply human dimension to everyday life.

Filmography

- Toon — short film / fiction
- Cut Strings — short film / documentary
- Shuja'iyya Neighborhood — short film / documentary
- Istrupia — feature film / fiction
- Sorry Cinema — short film / documentary
- Citizen Osama — feature-length documentary



About Osama Al-Ashi

Osama Al-Ashi is a Palestinian director of photography, journalist, and documentary photographer. He is the main character in the film and a friend of director Ahmad Hassouna.

He has worked as a freelance contributor for several international media outlets, including CCTV (China), ARD (Germany), Channel 4 (United Kingdom), and the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant, covering current events and producing documentaries from Gaza.

He is also the producer of the documentary *Gaza: Doctors Under Attack*, which won a prize at the British Academy Television Awards in 2026, as well as another documentary, *Israel and Gaza: Into the Abyss*, which was nominated for a BAFTA in 2024.

Osama and Ahmad Hassouna have already worked together on several documentary projects for international channels and platforms. This ongoing collaboration has built a strong mutual trust and a synergy that naturally comes through on screen.

Interview with Ahmed Hassouna

Why did you choose Osama as the main character?

First and foremost, Osama is a close friend and he was one of the few journalists who remained in northern Gaza to cover the events. What drew me to his story was the deeply human and personal dimension of his life. I closely followed his journey, starting with the anticipated birth of his child.

Osama had recently gotten married before the war and the expected due date of his wife coincided with the peak of the fighting. This paradox became the catalyst for Osama's story: a father, a journalist and a human being enduring the horrors of war.

The film alternates between Osama's daily life and his work.

Why did you choose this approach?

I wanted to reveal the hidden side of the life of a Palestinian journalist, emphasizing that he is a human being and a citizen who suffers just like anyone else in the Gaza Strip. A journalist is not a soulless camera; he is a man struggling to find water, fighting to obtain food and constantly worrying about how to find milk for his newborn baby or how to feed his wife so she can breastfeed their child.

Through this narrative alternation, I wanted to show that the journalist who captures suffering for the world is himself living through that same tragedy behind the lens. He documents agony while simultaneously enduring it, both as a father and as a professional.

“I wanted to break the stereotype: a journalist in Gaza is not just a mere chronicler of events, he is the event and the suffering itself.”

What were the main challenges you faced during the production and filming?

The challenges were immense and constant, but we refused to stop. As the war stretched on for more than two years, these hardships became a daily reality we had to adapt to in order to simply survive.

The biggest personal challenge was balancing my role as a director with my duties as a father. Before each scheduled shooting day, I had to secure my family's basic needs, fetching water and finding scarce food supplies amid famine; and Osama was doing exactly the same. Most of the time, our encounters happened spontaneously on the battlefield.

On a technical level, preserving the film's footage was a true nightmare. At one point, I received an urgent order to evacuate my home because the building next door was about to be bombed. My first reaction was panic at the thought that all the hard drives containing the film inside might be destroyed. My family fled in haste, leaving everything behind; the house was damaged, but the footage survived. Another time, my neighborhood was declared a military evacuation zone and I had to risk everything to recover the equipment. Accompanied by my technician Hatem Selmi, we returned to the house under heavy fire and amid drones flying overhead, managing to save the footage and filming equipment.



Production note

Citizen Osama was produced in the greatest secrecy due to the risks faced by journalists in northern Gaza. At the time, the Israeli army was preventing foreign journalists from entering the enclave. As Osama himself states, they were among the last to be able to document the reality on the ground.

Journalists were being specifically targeted. It was therefore essential to avoid drawing attention to Osama and his family, which explains the precautions taken and the complete absence of communication around the film. It is thus an exclusive documentary, featuring images that had never been previously broadcast. Although the situation remains difficult for journalists in Gaza, we are now able to unveil this film, a powerful testimony of a man who became both a father and a journalist in wartime.

Our aim was to document the critical situation of journalists in Gaza by producing a contemporary testimony on press freedom. But also to show their everyday lives, as they, like all other residents of Gaza, faced what they were filming and had to protect their families while finding ways to survive.

In Osama's case, this also includes the concerns of a young father. That is why the film follows a one-year chronology, from the birth of his son to his first birthday. The alternating structure creates a stark contrast between survival and journalism, with Osama risking his life while his family's anxiety steadily grows.



Coorigines Production

Coorigines Production is a film production company dedicated to promoting intercultural exchange and amplifying rarely heard voices. Focused on international and independent co-productions, Coorigines seeks to foster intercultural dialogue and offer unique perspectives through its cinematic works.

Founded in 2023, the company draws its identity from the diverse experience of its founder, Laura Nikolov, who studied history and cinema in Paris. Her previous roles, including serving as director of an Alliance Française and as a consultant for film festivals, have enriched Coorigines' vision and approach.

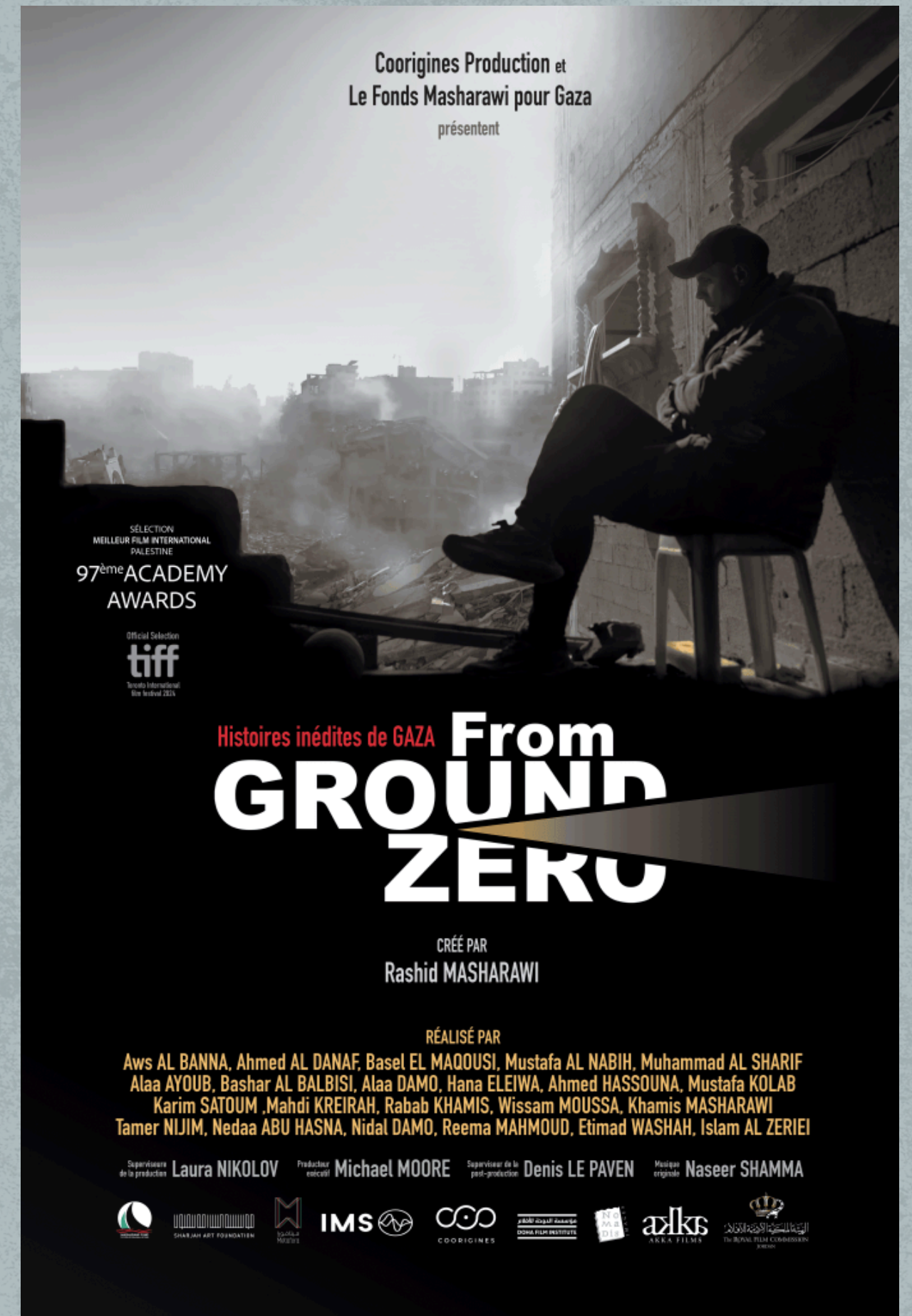
Among the company's notable projects are collaborations with filmmakers Rashid Masharawi and Denis Gheerbrant, and more recently the project *From Ground Zero*, a collection of 22 short films shot in Gaza in 2024 and shortlisted for the 2025 Academy Awards.

Committed to cultural and artistic diversity, Coorigines Production actively participates in numerous international festivals, including Cannes and TIFF, where its projects have been recognized. The company is currently developing several projects, both documentaries and fiction feature films, which explore the reflections and perspectives of people from around the world, including the Middle East, Asia and Europe.



Selective Filmography

- **Sama**, France-Qatar, feature documentary by Rabab Khamis, 65', Cannes Docs 2025
Chicken and Eggs Vision Awards
- **The Clown of Gaza**, France-Palestine-Qatar, feature documentary by Abdulrahman Sabbah, 2025, 61', IDFA Frontlight, FIPADOC International Competition
- **Aïsha Can't Fly Away**, Egypt-France-Tunisia, feature film by Morad Mostafa, 2025, coproduction, 125', Cannes, selection Un certain regard 2025
- **Spring Came on Laughing**, Egypt-France, feature film by Noha Adel, 2024, coproduction, 90', Cairo International film Festival
- **Passing Dreams**, Palestine-Sweden-France, feature film by Rashid Masharawi, 2024, coproduction, 80', Cairo International Film Festival FESCAAL (Italy)
- **From Ground Zero**, Palestine-France-Qatar-Jordan-UAE, collective work initiated par Rashid Masharawi, 2024, 112', Shortlist Oscars 2025
- **La Colline**, France-Belgique-Kyrgyzstan, feature documentary by Denis Gheerbrant and Lina Tsrinova, 2022, in association, 74', selection ACID 2022
- **Recovery**, Palestine-France-Sweden-Germany, feature documentary by Rashid Masharawi, 2021, 60'



Technical Credits

Direction and Screenplay	Ahmed Hassouna
Editing & Colour Grading	Denis le Paven
Cinematography	Yousef Al Masharawi
Sound Engineer (Gaza)	Hatem Salmi
Sound Mixing and Design	Sarah Fasseur Leroux
Production Coordinator (Gaza)	Mohammad Al Baghdadi
Production Assistant (France)	Alexis Auffret
Music by	Rasmus Steen
Produced by	Fonds Masharawi pour les Films & cinéastes
	Coorigines Production
	Filcam for Media Production
Supervision	Rashid Masharawi
Coordination and Production	Laura Nikolov
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