



YALLA PARKOUR

directed by **Areeb Zuaiter**



a **Kinana Films** production,
produced by **Basel Mawlawi**

in co-production with **Film i Skåne** - executive producer: **Lisa Nyed**
Sweden, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Palestine | 2024 | 89 Minutes

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film info



LOGLINE

In her relentless pursuit of a memory that reinforces her sense of belonging, Areeb crosses paths with Ahmed, a parkour athlete in Gaza, sparking a journey where conflicting aspirations intersect. Nostalgia meets with ambition, and the weight of a confined past meets with an unpredictable future.

SYNOPSIS

Filmmaker Areeb visited Gaza for the first time at the age of four, where she experienced her first encounter with the sea. This moment, infused with the magic of the sea and her Palestinian mother's smile, left a lasting impression on her. Recently, nostalgia for her homeland resurfaced when she discovered a video of young men practicing parkour on Gaza's sandy shores. Their joy starkly contrasted with the distant echoes of explosions. Longing to reconnect with her past, Areeb reaches out to the parkour team and forms a bond with an athlete named Ahmed. Together, they navigate the remnants of Gaza, exploring places like a cemetery, a run-down mall, and the remains of an airport.

As their relationship deepens, Ahmed reveals the harsh realities of life in Gaza, transforming Areeb's initial curiosity into a profound awareness of the struggles he faces. Areeb grapples with feelings of guilt and conflict as she witnesses Ahmed's desire to escape the confines of his homeland, understanding the emotional void such a departure would entail. Their journey becomes not only a quest to reclaim memories but also an exploration of identity, belonging, and the haunting legacy of a home left behind.



My parents spent their childhood in Nablus, Palestine, before leaving as adults. Whenever we visited, my mother transformed; her smile would radiate, and the warmth and freedom of the place became tangible. These annual visits allowed her to reconnect with her true self, unknowingly giving me some of the happiest moments of my childhood. Folded in those trips to our hometown was a single visit to Gaza, where my mother's smile met the sea, creating timeless magic.

As time passed, I saw my mother gradually lose her smile and sense of home. Palestine became fractured and destroyed. Nablus grew distant and unreachable, and Gaza turned into a hell on earth. I left farther; to the US, and my mother passed. I became left with memories of a pleasant childhood where I felt I belonged, in a foreign land where I now reside but do not feel a sense of belonging.

Finding Ahmed in 2015 was like rediscovering my mother's abandoned smile in a place that had become inaccessible. Ahmed invited me on his journey, driven by a single dream: he wants to make it to the international scene as a Parkour player. Finding him and following his aspirations felt like unlocking my mother's smile from where it had been trapped.

Ahmed starts by sharing his passion. I see the city through his "parkour" lens. He takes me to his home in Khan Yunis, to where he and the team practice; to the cemetery, to sandy hills, to an abandoned hall, and finally to the dysfunctional airport.

Up to that point, he has been doing the filming and showing me what he wants to show me through his own lens. Ahmed confirmed something that I had spent my life unsure about: the profoundness of my Palestinian identity. With that, I decided to see beyond what he usually displays for the outside world from Gaza. I asked him to show me what I needed to see as an insider; as Palestinian.

I got a true sense of Ahmed's challenges and struggles. I felt the prison in which he lives. And I lived his determination to leave. When he speaks of that specific determination, I develop conflicted feelings. I know so well the void that he will have to face leaving Palestine behind. Living in the diaspora is tainted by guilt that my mother and I have felt for abandoning our hometown and looking for a better future. It is also accompanied by an intangible void and emptiness.

Eventually, Ahmed's journey became a reflection of my mother's, and mine. Today, Ahmed and I watch from the same angle my mother once did. We see our homeland being erased from the map. Ahmed's visit to Gaza last September might be his last, and the documentary you will see now may offer you the last glimpse of a pre-October 7th Gaza.



Areeb Zuaiter is a multinational filmmaker based in Washington, D.C. Her work focuses on art, identity, and social issues. She holds an MA in Film and Video from American University. Zuaiter's work had won multiple international awards. Her debut short, *Stained*, won the Jury Award at Beirut's European International Film Festival. Her documentary, *Colors of Resistance*, was nominated for Sony's Outstanding Thesis Award and won multiple awards at the Colorado Activism Film Festival and the Spotlight Documentary Film Awards. Zuaiter had previously worked at the Associated Press, and served a Goldman Sachs Film and Video Fellow at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. Zuaiter lead the Regional Training Department at the Royal Film Commission - Jordan, and taught at several universities in Washington, DC. In addition to working on her films, Zuaiter heads the programming department at the Amman International Film Festival (AIFF).



Basel Mawlawi is a producer at Kinana Films, a production company based in Malmö focused on producing content in Sweden, Europe, and the MENA region. He previously worked at Filmcentrum Syd for more than eight years. Basel received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Middlesex University in the UK and a Professional Diploma in Film Production from SAE Institute. He also participated in several prestigious producer-specific labs, such as DFI's Producers Lab and EAVE 2021. Basel also works part-time as a creative producer at the European Writers Club, designing their upcoming program *Bridging Generations 2025*, supported by the European Union and aimed towards experienced TV Series writers across Europe.

credits



directed by

Areeb Zuaiter

produced by

Basel Mawlawi

edited by

Phil Jandaly

cinematography

Ibrahim Al-Otla - Gaza
Marco Padoan - Sweden
Umit Gulsen - Turkey

DI colorist
sound recording

Johan Eklund
Marwan Sawwaf
Yehya Breshe

post production sound
sound designer & editor
mixing and mastering
sound mixer

Unison Studio - Sweden
Yehya Breshe
Soniska - Sweden
Gaetan Golembiewski

composer

Diab Mekari

original-score-recording

DM Studio - Turkey
Unison Studio - Sweden

Dramatic Advisor

Salwa Nakkara
Nino Kirtadze

artistic advisor

Johan Simonsson

consultancy support

Alex Szalat

with the support of

The Swedish Film Institute
The Doha Film Institute
Red Sea Fund
The City of Malmö
FilmCentrum Syd
A0 Productions
Bayt Al Shawareb
Unison Studio

developed at

EAVE - European
Audiovisual Entrepreneurs
Boost HBG
MEDIMED
Movies that Matter
CLOSEUP - A Cinematic
Initiative for Non-Fiction
Filmmakers
Cinephilia Productions
Advanced Documentary
Filmmaking Lab
The Royal Film
Commission
Amman Industry Days
(AFID)
Malmö Industry Days
(MAFF)
DFI Producers Lab
DocCelerator