



# IN THE LAND OF BROTHERS

در سرزمین برادر

A FILM BY ALIREZA GHASEMI & RAHA AMIRFAZLI

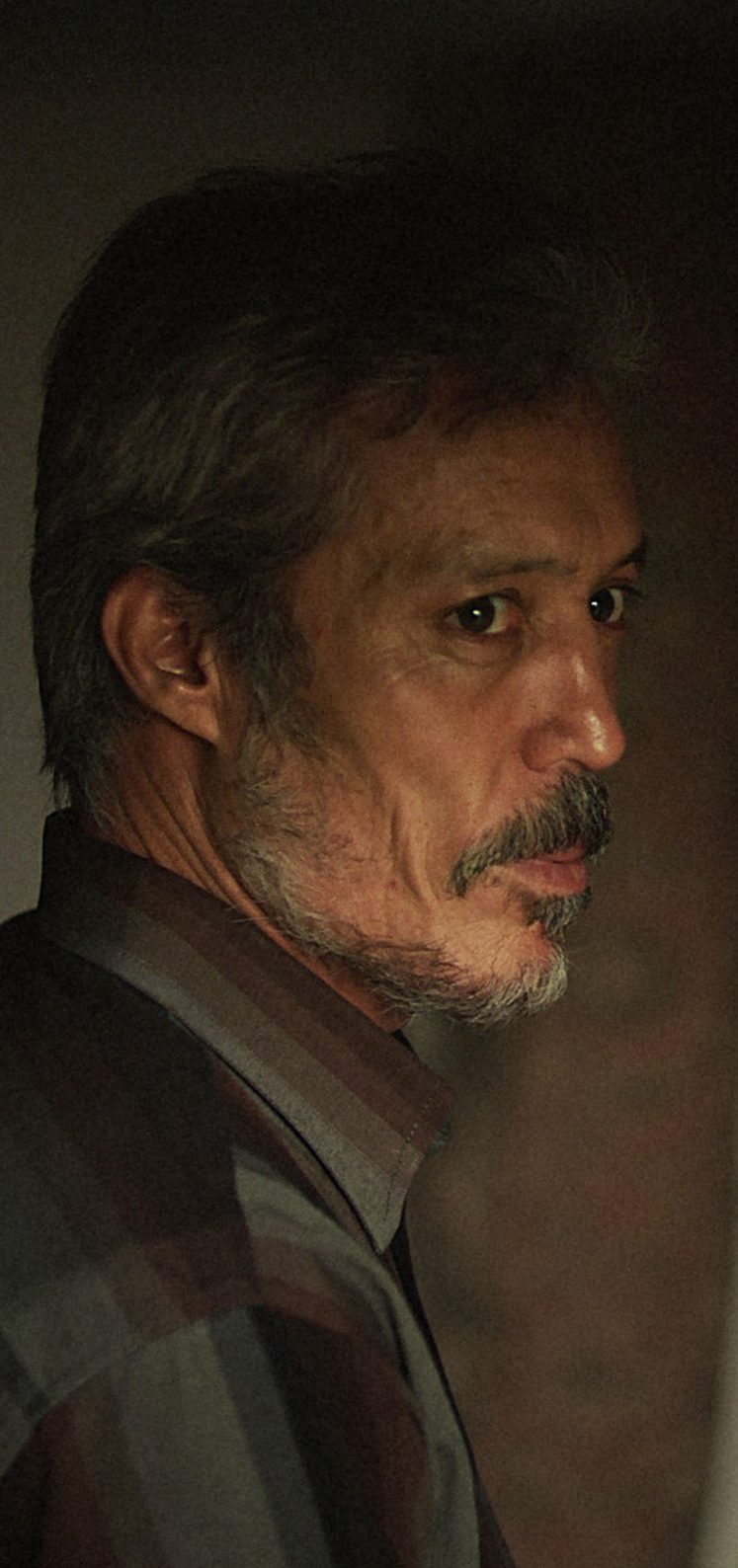
Iran, France, Netherlands | 2024 | 95' | Persian (Farsi, Dari, Hazaragi)

## **LOGLINE**

Three members of an extended Afghan family start their lives over in Iran as refugees, unaware they face a decades-long struggle ahead to be “at home”.

## **SYNOPSIS**

Under the shadow of the US invasion, an extended Afghan refugee family begins their new lives in Iran unaware of the ultimate price expected of them as outliers in this (un)welcoming environment: Mohammad, a young teenager and promising student; Leila, a woman isolated by geography, and Qasem who bears the weight of his family's sacrifice.



## **FROM THE DIRECTORS**

### **ALIREZA GHASEMI AND RAHA AMIRFAZLI**

IN THE LAND OF BROTHERS is about the feeling of being “the other” in a place you thought you belonged. We want the audience to rethink the false constructs of boundaries around the globe, and to imagine a world without them.

Our biggest inspiration behind the film is evolutionary – from the assembled memories of our childhood Afghan friends leaving us, to recognizing the barriers Afghan immigrants face in Iran telling their own stories, as well as our deep artistic desire to tell stories of those marginalized societies and characters that surprise us in the hardest of circumstances.

In a world that is struggling with the daily displacement of many refugees that end up in an unfamiliar environment in hopes of building a new life, most media suggest that the immigrants think differently, possess values distinct from others, and consequently, may pose a threat to societies. We intend for this film to show people otherwise, to make them think of refugees as equals, and not as others.

We hope for our audiences to feel empathy for our characters, and to extend that empathy towards all people; to see how the despair of a predetermined fate can be fatal, and to rally against the existing complexities for refugees felt universally around the world.



## ABOUT THE FILM

### SCREENWRITING

During the scriptwriting stage, we confronted the first challenging decision: adhere to the regulations of the government and secure funding, or remain steadfast to the authenticity of the story, potentially risking self-imposed exile upon completion. Our choice was the latter, which is why Alireza now lives in Paris and Raha now lives in New York.

This film is a tribute to all Afghan people in Iran, and memorably our cast. Although we've created a self-imposed exile upon ourselves by making this film a reality, we hope to be able to make Iran worthy of the name "*In the Land of Brothers*".

**Alireza:** I decided to become a lawyer back in high school, but I also happened to take the art entrance exam for the university. I was accepted to both law school and film school, and I had to choose one. I was very hesitant about which one to choose. I remember my mother saw my hesitation and told me, 'You love storytelling; use it to convince the world instead of the judge!' So, I chose to attend film school. It was a decision I never regretted!

**Raha:** As an introverted only child, there's only so much you can do to entertain yourself. After a while, the school bus becomes a 19th century wagon and you the wagoner in the front row; the ladybug in the park attains a heartbreaking love story, and a spill of rice on the ground is an aerial shot of a war-zone with soldiers fighting each other. As far as I remember, I've always had multiple storylines going on in my head. Somehow among the chaos of the university entrance exam in Iran, I managed to get into film school, and only after that was when I realized, this was the thing I've loved and spent my whole life doing.

**Alireza:** Filmmaking has become an integral part of my identity. Perhaps there was a time when I knew precisely why it held such importance for me, but now, I can't pinpoint a specific reason. I merely know that without making films, my life would be considerably more challenging. I believe that human beings possess a significant veiled potential for doing evil, and that any form of art can serve as a

restraint. Perhaps this is the most crucial aspect of filmmaking for the world we live in these days.

**Raha:** Films have now been around enough years for us to say every generation has grown up watching them. For me, it was through films that I got to discover different emotions, and the weird and sometimes uncomfortable mixture of them. I'm certain that there are so many untold and fresh stories that can evoke a whole new mixture of emotions and experiences in the audience, and it is in doing that that I found pleasure as a filmmaker. In the short life we lead, films provide a medium through which the audience can experience life in a completely different setting as their own. As an artist, giving people that gift is the most enjoyable thing I can do with my life.

### CASTING

After writing the script, we were determined to find actors from the Afghan community in Iran. To our great luck, we found an independent theater company in Tehran that worked exclusively with Afghan people. With their help, we started a 6-month process of interviewing non-actors. We met with many wonderful people, and got to know many that have lived through the experiences we had in our script. Eventually, we found our passionate ensemble that stuck by our side during many hours of rehearsal, and helped us through multiple revisions of the characters.

**Raha:** After we finalized the cast for the film, I knew we had made good choices but the realization of how truly amazing our cast was, came way later when they were on camera. Working with a cast that consists mainly of non-actors is magical. Each day they show up in front of the camera, as themselves, and trust the camera to capture their beauty, their charm, and their vulnerabilities. During each of the three stages of shooting this film, I became more certain that I'll always prefer to work mainly with non-actors.

**Alireza:** Choosing the film locations was one of the most challenging yet enjoyable aspects of **IN THE LAND OF BROTHERS**, I found. The film was shot in five different Iranian cities, and to choose these locations we extensively explored almost half of Iran across different seasons. Some of the most breathtaking and unique scenes I've ever witnessed in my life emerged from our search for the film's locations.

### **ABOUT AFGHANS LIVING IN IRAN:**

Forty years ago, following the invasion of Afghanistan, nearly four million Afghans fled to Iran, calling it the "*land of brothers*".

As the war became complex and the Afghans were unable to leave, the Iranian government began to enact laws pushing Afghans out, paving the way for widespread discrimination and creating distinction between Iranians and Afghans.

This becomes more specific towards the Hazara ethnicity, whose distinctive facial features make them recognizable from the Iranian. Through this film, we tried to understand the Afghan people's perspective on Iranian society, to explore the issues they face: survival, identity, dignity, and rights.

As Iranian citizens, police brutality and discrimination have been integrated into our daily lives for the last 40 years. We've been brought up to constantly fight a system that gets power by manipulating its people.

For years now, Iranians have become refugees themselves and spread across the world; but, when the concept of leaving one's own country became important to us as filmmakers, we finally assembled all the memories we had of the immigrant population in our own country: Raha's childhood friend getting deported overnight back to Afghanistan; Alireza's high school theater getting canceled when the Afghan leads were forced to suddenly leave the country, for example, and many, many more.

**Alireza:** As a child, my father (who was a doctor) would share stories he heard from his Afghan patients with my mother and I while keeping their identities private, of course, and I remember getting terrified of some of the details, thinking to myself "why is this treatment normal?"

**Raha:** My mom is a civil engineer working with Afghans all day as they are the major force of construction work in Iran – her personal working relationships with the Afghans yielded a lot of stories that I grew up hearing, always questioning the fairness of the situation they faced.

Afghan refugees are not allowed to work in any profession other than manual labor inside of Iran; thus, the voices of Afghan artists are kept in the dark – by law, they do not have a pathway to tell their own stories.

We hope people come out of watching **IN THE LAND OF BROTHERS** having experienced the struggles and mental strength that it takes for the people who try to build their new life outside of their home, and approach their daily lives with that knowledge. Empathy is a strong tool that can be achieved at its purest through watching films.

Our story is about people who fall in love, demonstrate loyalty to their families, and make sacrifices to protect one another, all while navigating the complexities of life in their forced exile, experiencing the deepest aspects of the human condition.





## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHIES

### RAHA AMIRFAZLI



Raha Amirfazli is an Iranian filmmaker (1995 - Tehran) who graduated from the Art University of Tehran in Film Directing. She has made several short films that have earned her national and international screenings, including Solar Eclipse. In addition to serving as a referee in the Danish journal "Short Film Studies," she also served as the editor-in-chief of the "24 Frames" website. Raha is currently advancing her studies in the MFA Film

Production program of New York University. Raha has completed in 2024 her first feature film "In the Land of Brothers".

Feature films (Writer, Director)

2024 - IN THE LAND OF BROTHERS (95')

Short films (Writer, Director)

2020 - SOLAR ECLIPSE (15')

2020 - DISINFECTION (5')

2018 - NAUSEA (20')

2017 - MADNESS (15')

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### ALIREZA GHASEMI



Alireza Ghasemi is an Iranian Filmmaker (1990 - Tehran) who graduated in Filmmaking from the Art University of Tehran. He also spent a year as an exchange student at the Film Academy Baden-Württemberg in Germany. Alireza is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talent Campus 2022 and has directed several acclaimed short films, including "Lunch Time," which earned him a nomination for the Short Film Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival

in 2017. Alireza completed his first feature film, "In the Land of Brothers," in 2024

Feature films (Writer, Director)

2024 - IN THE LAND OF BROTHERS (95')

Short films (Writer, Director)

2020 - SOLAR ECLIPSE (14')

2019 - AREZO (8')

2019 - EXTRA SAUCE (15')

2018 - BETTER THAN NEIL ARMSTRONG (20')

2017 - LUNCH TIME (15')

2016 - FREQUENCY (8')

2015 - SHORTCUT (8')

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## COMPANY PROFILES

**Furyo Films** (France) is a production company founded in 2020 by Emma Binet, Adrien Barrouillet and Charles Meresse. Their common desire is to create singular, ambitious and internationally-oriented cinema projects. They build on several years of complementary experience in various fields, from sales to production, and artistic agencies and distribution. They dedicate themselves to defending subtle outlooks from talented filmmakers, of any genre and from any country.

**Limited Circle** (Iran) is a production company that was founded by Raha Amirfazli and Alireza Ghasemi in 2021 in Tehran, Iran. It seeks to bring attention to the arthouse cinema scene within Iran, and the work of Iranian filmmaking diaspora that live and work outside of their home country.

**BALDR Film** (Netherlands), established in 2011 by producer Frank Hoeve focuses on developing and (co-)producing challenging, director-driven films with a distinctive personal signature. Not risk-averse, he keeps urgent content and artistry at the core of his work.

BALDR Film's latest (co-)productions have been released at major festivals; *Sick, Sick, Sick* by Alice Furtado (2019, Cannes Directors Fortnight), *Window Boy would also like to have a Submarine* by Alex Piperno (2020, Berlinale), *Along the Way* by Mijke de Jong (2022, Opening Film IFFR), *In the Land of Brothers* by Raha Amirfazli and Alireza Ghasemi and *Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat* by Johan Grimonprez both selected for Sundance 2024.

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## CREDITS

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### ADDITIONAL CAST

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HAJEER MORADI  
MARJAN ETEFAGHIAN  
MEHRAN VOSOUGHI

### CREW

Directors

Screenwriters

Producers

RAHA AMIRFAZLI & ALIREZA GHASEMI

ALIREZA GHASEMI & RAHA AMIRFAZLI

ADRIEN BARROUILLET

ALIREZA GHASEMI

RAHA AMIRFAZLI

FRANK HOEVE

CHARLES MERESSE

EMMA BINET

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RAHA DADKHAH

HOSSEIN BASHASH & HASAN SHABANKAREH

TACO DRIJFHOUT

JAIM SAHULEKA

BABAK KESHAN FALLAH

REZA BAASTANI

Director of Photography

Editor

Original Soundtrack

Production Design

Costume Designer

Sound Recordists

Sound Design

Sound Mix

Line Producer

First Assistant Director

## TECHNICAL INFO

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Nationality     | Iran, France, Netherlands                                 |
| Producers       | Furyo Films (FR), Limited Circle (IR),<br>BALDR Film (NL) |
| Co-producers    | Cinema Tehran (US), Avidia (FR)                           |
| Completion year | 2024  |
| Duration        | 95'   |
| Color           | Color   |
| Aspect ratio    | Flat 2:1  |
| Format          | 2K  |
| Support         | DCP, ProResLT   |
| Languages       | Farsi, Dari, Hazaragi                                     |
| Subtitles       | English, French, Dutch                                    |

## CONTACTS

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