

# WHAT WALAA WANTS

A FILM BY CHRISTY GARLAND



A Murmur Media, National Film Board of Canada, Final Cut for Real Production

## BERLINALE SCREENINGS

**Official Screening: Saturday 17/02 I 12:30 I Zoo Palast 2**

Additional Screenings:

Sunday 18/02 I 20:15 I Cubix 8

Tuesday 20/02 I 11:00 I CinemaxX 3

Friday 23/02 I 12:30 I Filmtheater am Friedrichshain

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS DAYS: Saturday 17/02 + Sunday 18/02**

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## WHAT WALAA WANTS - EPK

A film by Christy Garland

### **LOGLINE:**

Raised in a West Bank refugee camp while her mother was in prison, Walaa is determined to be a policewoman on the Palestinian Security Forces – not easy for a girl who breaks all the rules.

### **SYNOPSIS:**

#### SHORT (523 characters incl spaces)

Raised in a refugee camp in the West Bank, while her mother was in prison, Walaa is determined to survive basic training to become one of the few women on the Palestinian Security Forces – not easy for a girl who breaks all the rules. Following Walaa from 15 to 21, with an intimate POV and the exuberant energy of its subject, this is the story of a young woman navigating formidable obstacles, learning which rules to break and follow, and disproving the negative predictions from her surroundings and the world at large.

#### LONG (775 characters incl spaces)

Raised in a refugee camp in the West Bank while her mother was in prison, Walaa dreams of being a policewoman, wearing a uniform, avoiding marriage, and earning a salary. Despite discouragement from her family, even from her beloved brother Mohammed, Walaa applies - and gets in. But her own rebellious behavior and a complicated relationship with her mother are a challenge, as are the circumstances under which she lives.

Following Walaa from 15 to 21, with an intimate POV and the exuberant energy of its subject, this first-ever look inside the Palestinian police academy brings us the story of a young woman navigating formidable obstacles, learning which rules to break and follow, and disproving the negative predictions from her surroundings and the world at large.

### **DIRECTOR'S NOTES:**

"She's a delinquent in a hijab. If she does make it into the PSF, she'll be a rotten, bad cop."

That's a pretty damning condemnation of a 16-year-old girl. I'd shown the trailer to a colleague, and that was the reaction. That comment was a gift, a motivating force for the film and a challenge to my own assumptions. It focused my reasons for making the film and my belief in Walaa. It made clear how polarizing this story of a young teenage girl might be. The presence of her mother Latifa will provoke very different reactions. But Walaa is a teenager with a good heart and the same potential for positive growth and change as any other young person.

I'm making this film because it's a positive, humorous, rousing story, with a focus on a great female character with some rough edges, battling demons (and negative expectations) on various levels, an intimate story that will resonate in a larger context. Walaa's story will add something to the conversation. She's smart, funny, yearning for something, and vulnerable, but she's inherited her mother's temper and can be a royal pain in the ass. I love her for all of it, and I'm rooting for her as a human being, a girl who is interesting because she breaks rules, and because there are some rules she's learning to follow, the hard way.

### **PRODUCTION NOTE:**

In July 2012 the director Christy Garland was in the West Bank shooting with a Danish artist, who teaches digital storytelling workshops in conflict zones. On the last few days, they were in Balata Refugee Camp and that's when Christy met Walaa. Walaa's mother had recently been released from prison after 8 years, and it was clear that Walaa's life, and her family dynamic was affected by that. Christy met with the family and told them her own stories, and why she was interested in theirs, they were open to it and the journey started from there.

Christy filmed on her own, using an observational approach over 10 trips to the West Bank beginning in July 2012, finishing in January 2018. She began by following Walaa's life in Balata Camp, focusing on the complex dynamics of her relationship with her mother, Latifa. When it emerged that despite the discouragement of others, Walaa had a dream to be a police officer on the Palestinian Security Forces, the filming focused on her pursuit of that goal and the obstacles that fell in her way. It was the first time someone has been allowed to film inside the Palestinian Security Forces.

Ekram Zubaydi, production coordinator and translator, has been involved since the very beginning. She is a feminist and Coordinator at the Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy in the West Bank.

Christy Garland co-produced her two last film with Nordic countries, one even taking place in Northern Finland. Garland's company Murmur Media has collaborated with Danish production house Final Cut for Real on this film since early days. National Film Board of Canada became involved in 2016.

The many years of filming resulted in quite an amount of footage, and Canadian editor Graeme Ring spent months editing down to an assembly, before the film was brought to Denmark and Danish editor Michael Aaglund.

### **BIOGRAPHIES / FILMOGRAPHIES / COMPANY PROFILES:**

#### **Christy Garland - Director**

Christy Garland has directed award-winning and critically acclaimed documentary features and fiction shorts. Based in Toronto, she often co-produces with the Nordic countries. Distributed worldwide, Garland's films deliver strong dramatic development, poignant character transformation and universally felt themes. 'The Bastard Sings The Sweetest Song' (2012, Hot Docs, Sheffield a.o.) garnered rave reviews at its theatrical release, "echoing the work of Bresson

and the Dardennes” (Globe & Mail). Her latest film ‘Cheer Up’ (2016, HotDocs, DOC NYC a.o) was called “a biting portrait of young womanhood” by Vice.

#### Filmography:

2018 **What Walaa Wants**, Director/Producer (documentary)  
2016 **Cheer Up**, Director/Producer (documentary)  
2012 **The Bastard Sings The Sweetest Song**, Director/Producer (documentary)  
2008, **Doormat**, Producer/co-Director (documentary)  
2000, **Dual Citizen**, Writer/Director (short fiction comedy)  
1999, **Dear Mr. Newton**, Writer/Director (short doc)  
1999, **These Goods Are Manufactured**, Writer/Director (short doc)  
1998, **Blind Spot**, Writer/Director (short fiction drama)

#### **Ekram Salama Zubaydi – Production coordinator & Translator**

Ekram Zubaydi is from Tulkarm, West-Bank, where she works as a Project coordinator for the Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy, an NGO supported by UNWomen, the Swedish organization Kvinna til Kvinna (Woman to Woman) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, among others. Ekram is also a social and feminist activist on her spare time. She speaks Arabic, English and French and studied French Literature. Ekram has worked on the film since the very beginning, and it couldn’t have been made without her.

#### **MURMUR MEDIA (Canada)**

MURMUR MEDIA is an emerging documentary film production company, with a growing presence in the international documentary marketplace. It is home to producer/director Christy Garland. Murmur specializes in one-off documentaries that focus on intimate, character-driven stories that deliver strong dramatic development, and universally felt themes.

**Producer Matt Code** is a producer of award-winning films and television, with a track record of films at TIFF, TriBeCa, Hot Docs, Palm Springs, and Santa Barbara. Code is an alumnus of the Canadian Film Centre (Producer’s Lab), and member of the Canadian Media Producers Association and was awarded the CMPA Indiescreen Emerging Producers Award at TIFF 2017.

#### **FINAL CUT FOR REAL (Denmark)**

FINAL CUT FOR REAL is a two-time Oscar®-Nominated production company, dedicated to high-end, creative documentaries and fiction for the international market. Recent titles include: **The Look of Silence** and **The Act of Killing** by Joshua Oppenheimer, **Les Sauteurs / Those Who Jump** by Estephan Wagner, Moritz & Abou Bakar Sidibé, **Death of a Child** and **Pervert Park** by Frida & Lasse Barkfors, **Land of the Free** by Camilla Magid, **The Distant Barking of Dogs** by Simon Lereng Wilmont.

**Producer Anne Köhncke** is co-founder and producer at Final Cut for Real since 2009. Prior to that she worked as Commissioning Editor of documentaries at Danish Broadcasting Corporation and as Sales Executive at TV2 World.

## NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

The NFB is Canada's public producer of award-winning creative documentaries, auteur animation, interactive stories and participatory experiences. NFB producers are embedded in communities across the country, from St. John's to Vancouver, working with talented creators on innovative and socially relevant projects. The NFB is a leader in gender equity in film and digital media production, and is working to strengthen Indigenous-led production, guided by the recommendations of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. NFB productions have won over 7,000 awards, including 18 Canadian Screen Awards, 17 Webbys, 12 Oscars and more than 100 Genies.

**Justine Pimlott** is an award-winning producer and the co-founder of Red Queen Productions. In 2014, she joined the National Film Board of Canada, where her slate of projects have included the feature documentary *A Better Man*, the interactive project *Portrait of A Family*, the Governor General short films *Sculpting Memory & Who is The Real Martin Short?* and the VR project *Draw Me Close*.

## WHAT WALAA WANTS MAIN CREDITS

### PRINCIPAL CAST:

Walaa Khaled Fawzy Tanji  
Latifa Abu Draa

Director	Christy Garland
Editors	Michael Aaglund Graeme Ring
Editing Consultants	Molly Malene Stensgaard Janus Billeskov Jansen
Cinematography & Location Sound	Christy Garland
Producers	Anne Köhncke, Matt Code, Christy Garland Justine Pimlott
Production Coordinator & Translator	Ekram Zubaydi
Executive Producers	Signe Byrge Sørensen, Anita Lee, Waël Kabbani, Penny Charter
Composer	Tom Third
Sound Designer	Peter Schultz/Cosmo Tone
Colorist	Anders V. Christensen/Kong Gulerod Film
Post Production Manager	Maria Kristensen

**IN ASSOCIATION WITH:**

Doha Film Institute  
Iambic Dream Films  
DR  
UR

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GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

**PUBLICIST BERLINALE 2018**

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**LINK TO PRESSKIT & STILLS**

<http://www.finalcutforreal.dk/s/EPK-WHAT-WALAA-WANTS.zip>

All photos by Christy Garland

**LINKS:**

Facebook:

[https://www.facebook.com/WhatWalaaWants/?notif\\_id=1517565970684931&notif\\_t=page\\_admin&ref=notif](https://www.facebook.com/WhatWalaaWants/?notif_id=1517565970684931&notif_t=page_admin&ref=notif)

Web: <http://www.finalcutforreal.dk/what-walaa-wants>

Trailer: TBA

**BASIC PRODUCTION INFORMATION:**

Original title: What Walaa Wants

International title: What Walaa Wants

Production year: 2018

Genre: Documentary

Running time: 89' & 56'

World Premiere: Berlinale, Generation14plus

Premiere date: 17<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Country of origin: Canada, Denmark

Filming location: Palestine

Language/s: Arabic

Subtitles: English

Ratio: 16:9

Sound system: Dolby Digital 5.1