

WAJIB

Palestine (2017) 96 minutes

Director: Annemarie Jacir

Cast: Mohammad Bakri (Abu Shadi); Saleh Bakri (Shadi);
Tarik Koptý (Abu Murad)



Screening 2 October 2019 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Shadi, an architect living in Rome, returns to his family home town of Nazareth to help his father fulfil the local tradition of hand delivering his sister's wedding invitations. As father and son travel between old friends, relatives and acquaintances an light hearted and endearing picture of Nazareth's Christian Arab community begins to emerge. Yet politics are always just under the surface as the tensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict form a backdrop to deep-seated family tensions which threaten to resurface as the wedding day draws near.

Reviews



There's a quiet warmth that runs like a current through *Wajib*, a new film from the Palestinian director and writer Annemarie Jacir. The title is Arabic for "duty," and here the obligation is shared by father and son. Abu Shadi, an aging divorcee living in a Christian Palestinian community in Nazareth, is driving around his neighborhood and its outskirts all day at the beginning of the Christmas season — he's got "Jingle Bells" as his phone's ringtone — hand-delivering invitations to his daughter's wedding. With him is his son, Shadi, an architect who now makes his home in Rome.

Their duty dictates that they go door to door as a team, but their united front is strained. Abu Shadi is unhappy that Shadi has left Nazareth, and that he's involved with a woman whose father is a Palestinian activist — "a P.L.O. leader," Abu Shadi says indignantly. Shadi bristles at the prospect of visiting one neighbor who he says conducted surveillance on Shadi and his friends when they were at school.

Despite their mutual irritation, there's a real bond here and their exchanges with each other pivot from exasperation to affection more often than the other way around.

Glenn Kenny, The New York Times

Is there anything we owe to our homeland? To the people and community that raised us? Can we ever fully diverge from the path they have laid for us, and if so do we have any say in how those we leave behind choose to lead their lives? In the private setting in which she addresses these questions, Jacir offers wider thoughts on Palestinian life, not least on the emotional price paid by those living under Israeli rule.

The film sees Shadi (Saleh Bakri), a young architect working in Rome, return to his hometown to attend his sister's wedding. Most of *Wajib* is set in his car or at the homes of relatives, as Shadi drives door-to-door to hand-deliver wedding invitations with his father (Mohammad Bakri). Tension builds along their journey as Shadi's father, both privately and in public, tries to convince him to move back to Nazareth so that he can "do the right thing" and settle down with a wife.

It is clear, however, that Shadi has no intention of coming back nor to abandon the culture he has embraced abroad. He struggles to readapt to the customs of his homeland, which he now examines through an eye informed by the new ideas he adopted in Europe. Shadi only has disdain for the way things are done in Nazareth.

Thomas Nguyen, Little White Lies

Film Facts

- Abu Shadi and Shadi are played by real-life father and son Mohammad and Saleh Bakri.
- *Wajib* is Arabic for social duty.
- Annemarie Jacir's 2008 feature film *Salt of This Sea* was the first directed by a Palestinian woman.