



OUT OF ALEPPO

2018

26:24 minutes



Mohammad Shasho (age 17) made the perilous journey from Syria to Berlin and struggles with his family to set up a new life. Mentored by award-winning documentary filmmaker, Anja Baron, Mo finds his own voice and gives voice to his fellow refugees. He explores loss, art and hope in his debut film.

Since 2011, over 5.6 million people have fled Syria and its deadly civil war. Creating a tragic human rights crisis, this mass exodus has not only displaced millions of Syrians, but also rendered them largely voiceless. By documenting his experience and interviewing fellow refugees, 17-year-old Mohammad Shasho reclaims his narrative and lends a voice to refugees silenced by circumstance.

In 2013, under the pretense that they would take a prolonged holiday and return in a month, Mohammad's family left their home in Aleppo. As the conflict worsened, the temporary flight became a permanent escape. Mohammad and his family endured the treacherous journey to Turkey, from where his father—a surgeon—traveled on to Germany on a fragile raft to secure his family's safe passage. One year later, Mohammad, his mother and his four siblings, are reunited with their father and husband in Berlin.

Caught between painful remembrance and hope for the future, Mohammad's family simultaneously celebrates safety, longs for home and adjusts to their new life in Germany. As the Mohammad and his family work to reclaim normalcy, a deadly attack on a Berlin Christmas market fills them with the defeating, familiar sense that danger lurks everywhere. Despite this disruption and the constant desire to return home, Mohammad anchors himself in a guiding principle: "Ride it, don't fight it."

While each family member processes the trauma of displacement differently, Mohammad finds solace in art. He writes poetry and addressing both himself and the reader with the pensive honesty of a teenager, relates that "it's different here, Mohammad." He participates in theater, finds the silver lining in life's conflicts and challenges, and by portraying a fragile sense of happiness, creates it. Connecting poetry, theater and film, Mohammad highlights the plight of his fellow refugees. He lends a voice to new friends who, after traveling to safety without their families, do not know if they will ever see their loved ones again. In documenting the stories of these "unaccompanied minors" as they attempt to work through their complex set of emotions and the traumas they have endured, a particularly harrowing aspect of this humanitarian crisis emerges.

Mentored by Emmy-nominated documentary filmmaker Anja Baron, Mohammad uses his artistic instinct to provide an underrepresented perspective. He does not preach; he does not indoctrinate; and he does not politicize. Instead, Mohammad shares the refugee experience with the candor and nuance of a teenager.

By giving kids from diverse backgrounds around the world tools, skills and guidance to make documentary films, this great organization provides an outlet for sharing personal stories, which in turn brings us closer together as an international community rooted in compassion and understanding.

Former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg

ABOUT BYKIDS

BYkids is a global educational movement that uses storytelling through film to inform, engage and inspire action. **BYkids** provides kids around the world with the training and the video cameras to make short documentaries about their lives, and then enables these fresh, new perspectives to be seen and shared by a global community. Over 245 million are joining our movement by seeing our films, developing educational programming and supporting our work. Join us at BYkids.org.