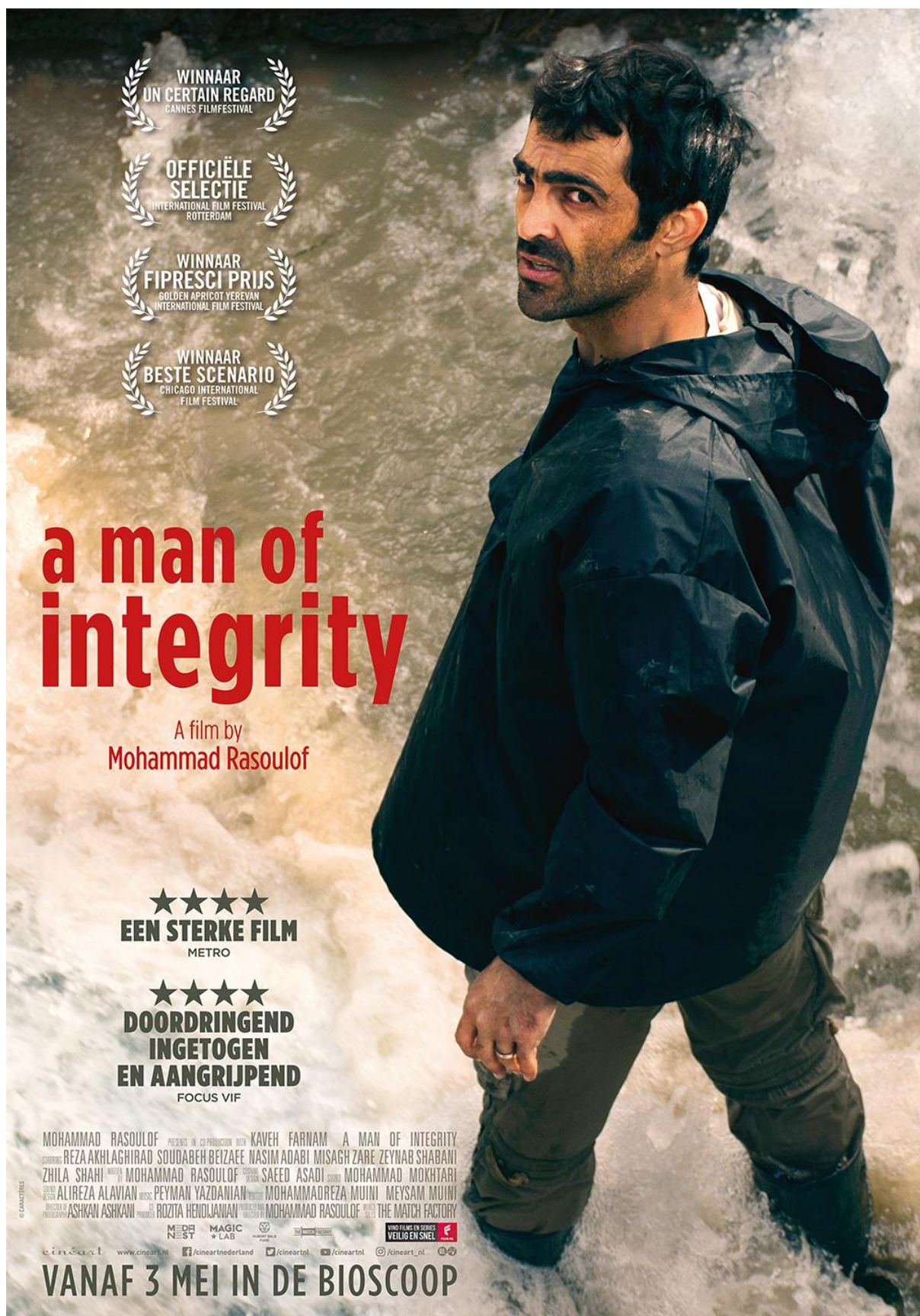


PERSMAP



WINNAAR
UN CERTAIN REGARD
CANNES FILMFESTIVAL

OFFICIËLE
SELECTIE
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM

WINNAAR
FIPRESCI PRIJS
GOLDEN APRICOT YEREVAN
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

WINNAAR
BESTE SCENARIO
CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL

a man of integrity

A film by
Mohammad Rasoulof

★★★★★
EEN STERKE FILM
METRO

★★★★★
**DOORDRINGEND
INGETOGEN
EN AANGRIJPEND**
FOCUS VIF

© GARDNER
MOHAMMAD RASOULOF PRESENTS IN CO PRODUCTION WITH KAVEH FARNAM A MAN OF INTEGRITY
SCREENPLAY BY REZA AKHLAGHIRAD SOUDABEH BEIZAEI NASIM ADABI MISAGH ZARE ZEYNAB SHABANI
ZHLA SHAHI DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MOHAMMAD RASOULOF EDITOR SAEED ASADI COSTUME DESIGNER MOHAMMAD MOKHTARI
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALIREZA ALAVIAN MUSIC PEYMAN YAZDANIAN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MOHAMMADREZA MUINI MEYSAM MUINI
PRODUCED BY ASHKAN ASHKANI EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROZITA HENDJIANIAN PRODUCED BY MOHAMMAD RASOULOF PRODUCED BY THE MATCH FACTORY

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VANAF 3 MEI IN DE BIOSCOOP

A MAN OF INTEGRITY

Een film van Mohammad Rasoulof

A MAN OF INTEGRITY is een intens en verontrustend drama over corruptie en onrecht. Regisseur Mohammad Rasoulof draaide de film clandestien in het noorden van Iran en smokkelde hem via een USB-stick het festival van Cannes binnen. Daar werd hij onderscheiden met de hoofdprijs van Un Certain Regard.

Reza woont op het platteland met zijn vrouw en zoon. Hij kweekt vissen en zij is directeur op een meisjesschool. Zo proberen ze het hoofd boven water te houden, maar een groot bedrijf heeft zijn oog op Reza's grond laten vallen. Op alle mogelijke manieren worden ze onder druk gezet. Daarbij worden ze steeds weer geconfronteerd met het feit dat je in een corrupte samenleving geen kant op kan zonder smeergeld te betalen. In dit land word je onderdrukt of ben je de onderdrukker. Hoe ver ga je om je eigen integriteit te bewaren?



Speelduur: 117 min. - Land: Iran - Jaar: 2017 - Genre: Drama
Releasedatum bioscoop: 3 mei 2018

Meer over de film:

<http://www.cineart.nl/films/a-man-of-integrity>

Download persmaterialen:

<http://www.cineart.nl/pers/a-man-of-integrity>

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MOHAMMAD RASOULOF

Mohammad Rasoulof was born in Shiraz in 1972. He started his artistic activity at age nine by acting in the theatre in Shiraz. He then pursued writing and directing for the theatre. He has studied social sciences. Focusing on social issues and the mutual impact on the individual and society, by living under a dictatorial and impervious government, has been the subject of most of his films. The documentary *THE TWILIGHT* (Gagooman, 2002) was his first



feature length film and won the Crystal Simorgh (phoenix) at the 21st Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran, as well as Best Documentary award at the 6th Iran Cinema House ceremony. Following the events after the 2009 Presidential election in Iran, Mohammad Rasoulof and Jafar Panahi were arrested while on location making a film. At the ensuing trial Rasoulof was sentenced to six years imprisonment (5 years on charges of gathering and collusion against national security and 1 year on charges of involvement in propaganda against the regime). In the appeals court, he was acquitted of the first charge and his sentence was reduced to one year. In 2011, due to selection of his film *GOODBYE* (Be Omid e Didar, 2011) at the 64th Cannes Film Festival, his exit ban from Iran was lifted. In 2013, after making the film *MANUSCRIPTS DON'T BURN* (Dast-Neveshteha Nemisoozand, 2013) and its screening at the 66th Cannes Film Festival, his passport and personal belongings were confiscated at Tehran Airport. Currently he is out on bail. In 2013, at the 40th Telluride Film Festival, the Silver Medal of the festival was awarded to Mohammad Rasoulof, Coen Brothers and Robert Redford.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

"The people's fear of power causes its identification with that very power [which violates the people's rights]."

This view of the American sociologist, C. Wright Mills, best describes *A Man of Integrity's* central characters embodied by the [fish-farming] couple. A man and a woman who, out of necessity, withdraw into isolation in a remote area, making a living out of fish-farming, only to end up identifying with that same corrupting environment they had chosen to escape.

Social corrupt [and corrupting] structures either crush or turn one into a link of corruption in the chain of corruption. Is there any other choice?

Filmography

- 2017 *A MAN OF INTEGRITY* (Lerd)
- 2013 *MANUSCRIPTS DON'T BURN* (Dastneveshteha Nemisoozand)
- 2011 *GOODBYE* (Be Omid e Didar)
- 2009 *THE WHITE MEADOWS* (Keshtzar haye sepid)
- 2005 *IRON ISLAND* (Jazireh Ahani)

INTERVIEW WITH MOHAMMAD RASOULOF

Is any part of this story based on real life people or situations?

Normally the stories which interest me relate to the environment around me. My characters are based on those around me. In my mind, I can find references to the events and characters in this film too.

I am only looking around me. I tell my stories and within them ask my questions. Many are questions that have remained with me since my childhood. For example, when our history books in school told us that, from hundreds of years ago, kings have ruled people by subjecting them to oppression and injustice, I used to ask myself how is this possible? I think that I am still asking the same questions.

How does the censorship of your work in your home country affect your creative process? Does your relationship with the authorities make it more difficult to find the right collaborators?

It's often been said that encounters with censorship and limitations result in more creativity for the artist. But this is not always true. Eventually you reach a saturation point and it results in despair for the artist. When the censorship authority does not allow you to connect with your audience, you have to try indirect and subtle ways and you are always working to avoid being depressed by this enforced retreat to the sidelines. On the other hand, when your connection with your audience becomes this limited, gradually your work becomes like a monologue. Then you have to find a cure for this problem too. The same censorship mechanism that has forced you to the sidelines, by painting a manipulated picture of you and your work (which is not available to the public), directs the feelings of the majority of people towards their own ideals. It's a little disheartening - but you do always find some people around you who are seeking the truth. My main crew remains the same and we have, after many years of working together, developed a mutual understanding and respect.

Even with all this, we still encounter unexpected problems during production. For instance, in *A MAN OF INTEGRITY* there was an important role, which required a strong actor. I knew this would be a very sensitive role and it is possible that due to the subject and fear of censorship, no one would want to play a character who is not a Muslim and whose religion is not defined. Nevertheless, I started by offering this role to one of my close friends. No one accepted to play the role. We were finishing the shooting and still hadn't found anybody. I was very worried, until something interesting happened. My assistants found a very distinguished actor who accepted it. He left Tehran in the evening and reached the filming location in the morning. He was very tired but due to the limited time that we had at that location, he had to perform the most important and difficult part of his role that day. I was worried whether or not he would be ready. At the same time, I was interested to know what made him accept this role. On the location, a few minutes before shooting, I sat in a car with him to talk about these issues. He knew everything. He understood the character very well and told me that he knows people who have gone through the same experience. It was obvious that his motive for accepting this role was to express his feeling towards this injustice. He played the role very calmly and without fear.

Your main character's relationship with authority is also somewhat paradoxical...

This paradox is the result of the main protagonist's respect for ethics, because the social values of the environment around him find themselves in direct contrast to his moral principles. In such conditions, the social structure, like a giant machine, carries on regardless. If you don't obey the prevalent value system, which itself seems to be totally immoral, you become seen as an outsider and a troublemaker.

Tell us about the corporation in the film.

In our story, “The Corporation” is a place where politics, money and power are intertwined. A place where, due to its social structure, has influence over the village. It has violated social values and, unhappy from this structure, many of the village inhabitants prefer to affiliate themselves with the ruling system rather than try to bring about reforms and changes in the conditions.

Do the goldfish Reza raises in the film represent something in Iran, symbolically?

The Iranian people, as part of the New Year celebrations, display goldfish as a symbol of vitality and reward. However, by selecting this profession for Reza, I wanted to explain part of his character. Though Reza seems to be a grumpy and sullen character, and there is a steeliness and coldness in his gaze, inside he is a tender soul. He is like a snail who has hidden inside his hard shell.

What about the cave in which Reza finds refuge and escapes the pressure of everyday life?

The solitude Reza chooses shows that he has given up hope of any change taking place. He isolates himself from his surroundings so that if he cannot actually implement change, at least he will not be part of the chain of corruption that has surrounded him. This solitude and loneliness has made him to curl into his shell. Every time he goes to the thermal bath in the cave, he finds some strength that allows him to carry on. Going to the hot water pool is an internal trip for him; somewhere where he meets himself and, by drinking a few glasses of homemade wine, forgets for a moment life’s hardships.

Can you talk about the frantic and dramatic sequence showing the attack by swarming birds?

The birds sequence took form as the story developed. Even when writing this sequence in the script, I was hesitant. In making my films, I am very weary of any artificial devices. But the story had taken me there. From every point of view, the birds’ attack in the script was correct and effective, but I was afraid of doing it with CGI. I was afraid that it would not fit in with the type of stories I tell in my films. In the end, I decided to keep this section in the story and tried to render it in a way that would not be contrary to my type of stories.

How did you develop the dynamics between the married couple of Reza and Hadis?

Hadis’ relationship with Reza is a supportive one. She wants to keep her family. Hadis is a powerful woman and it is apparent that she has a motherly behavior, alongside her role as Reza’s wife. Due to her job, Hadis also has more social contact with the outside world. She understands her husband’s solitude, but she is not a loner like him. So, when they reach a dead-end, she easily succumbs to the dominant social values in place. She tries to use her connections and resources in the school where she works to solve Reza’s problems. Even when the court ruling is issued, she advises Reza to behave like others to come out of this dead-end – to pay people off and make the necessary compromises. Hadis’ situation is one stranded between Reza and the society they live in. She knows that if she is hard headed like Reza, all the doors in their life are going to be closed to them. You could say that Hadis acts as a kind of insulation between Reza and the society.

For you, does the system in Iran have any echoes in Western cultures?

Oppressive systems share glaring similarities. For example, it seems that some of the people in Iran today can identify with many of the experiences of Romanian people in Ceausescu’s times. Although Romania was suffering from a communist dictatorship, today in Iran the political structure relies on a religious power base. Of course, this is not the whole story. The story of A MAN OF INTEGRITY is more concerned with the structure that such a regime has produced. In this structure, social pressure automatically punishes those who do not toe the line and succumb to the governing social values. If you don’t get on board the tank, it will crush you in its path.

How did you work with editing and cinematography to give your film a nail-biting rhythm and make it a kind of thriller?

For me, working with the editor starts at the writing stage. It is in writing that the foundations of the internal rhythm of the story are built. The cinematographer also joins us at the script writing and location scouting stage. Obviously, some of the visual story telling comes from the story itself, but in the end, it is you who decides where to stand and how to tell your story. Storytelling is a reflection of the storyteller's taste and view of the world. For example, in editing you can arrive at a fast and exciting rhythm or a thoughtful (but not necessarily slow) rhythm which requires the involvement of viewer in the thought process. This is a choice that also determines the method of shooting and editing of the film. For instance, in the fire sequence, both me and my editor preferred to show Reza's breakdown rather what was burning. Obviously, the length of the emotional time taken in this type of narrative is longer than what would be used in action films to show a fire. Of course, this is not to sacrifice the attraction of the story, but you are forced to find other ways to maintain the story's appeal. I'd like to also point out sound as another main constituent, alongside editing and cinematography, also an independent unit in the body of the narrative.

For you, does the film's final atmosphere make a definite statement.

I know that anyone who has seen the film will laugh at this statement, but really when I was writing *A MAN OF INTEGRITY*, I tried my best to tell a hopeful story. After showing all the adversity surrounding the main protagonist, I wanted to suddenly say that, despite all this, life is beautiful and one must try to improve the conditions. Throughout the writing process, I wanted Reza to choose an alternative way but I could not tame his anger with my optimism. So obviously this means I foresee a violent conclusion to the existing social conditions in Iran. I could not use hope as an excuse to ignore the reality. On the other hand, I could not ignore the power of individual choice in face of the social structure. For this reason, the final sequence is very important for me. I was looking for a situation where after Reza's final reaction to The Corporations' representative (Abbas), and the offer from The Corporation, see him devoid of any humanity, as if about to turn to stone. In the final scene, Reza resembling a relic on a fossil, in a helpless condition, naked and still, is holding to a rock. Suddenly he starts trembling. The sound of his quiet crying describes his human shame, this internal shame in Reza for me is a great hope that matches reality.



The prison sentence you received together with Jafar Panahi was reduced to 1 year, and then, as of now, not enforced. Do you still fear that the sentence could be executed in the future?

The way the operating systems work in Iran is puzzling. The one-year sentence ruling is hanging over my head like Damocles' sword and I have been told that it will be carried out. But I think that up until now the international objections and pressure have been very effective in preventing the sentence from being carried out. I'm out on bail but I don't call it freedom. This is a phantom of liberty. This is living in fear and on the edge. Every time that I want to exit Iran, I'm afraid that I will be prevented from doing so and every time I enter Iran, I have a deep fear. But I cannot change my course. I believe in this way of life. In this environment and under these conditions what can I do except utilise every small opening for evading censorship and being creative? Each time I try to find a way to pass through the obstacle of censorship and the problems it causes for me and my crew. But I don't know how long I can carry on like this. Still I don't lose hope. I will keep trying. I will work as long as I can and when I can't, I will take comfort in the thought that I did my best. I think an artist will always find ways of expressing his thoughts. Even if they did take film making from me, I will find new ways of artistic creation.

Do you see anything new taking shape under President Hassan Rouhani, new directions or reasons to be hopeful?

President Rouhani has some ideas but his inability to implement them comes with the territory. Because in Iran the president does not have any executive power. Rouhani's government speaks of citizens' rights, which if implemented would be a great step. But in reality, they have no power to implement even a small part of it. The soul and essence of the ruling power in Iran is totalitarian. It does not go hand in hand with freedom of speech and thought. In Iran, there is no rule of law, but the law is the ruler and decider. There is definitely hope, and whether the ruling system wants it or not, social change will gradually take place and everything will be different in the future.

Cast

Reza REZA AKHLAGHIRAD
Hadis SOUDABEH BEIZAE

And: NASIM ADABI
 MISAGH ZARE
 ZEINAB SHABANI
 ZHILA SHAHI

Reza Akhlaghirad

Reza Akhlaghirad was born in Mashhad in 1977. In 2000, he starts his acting career in theatre. A graduate of dramatic arts from the University of Arak, his television and cinema career begins behind the stage as a script supervisor, director's assistant and artistic director. He has several feature films and TV series in his record.

Soudabeh Beizae

Soudabeh Beizae was born in Shiraz in 1982. She studied literature and graduated in 2005 from the University of Ahwaz. She was 25-years old when, discovering her desire to become an actress, she left her job and enrolled at Samandarian School theatre. She has several feature films and TV series in her record.

PRODUCER'S NOTES

I have so far produced up to six films, none of which ever screened in Iran – the land my stories and I belong to. Censorship's jaws have shut all venues. Independent filmmakers, not dependent upon State funds for their production, constantly look for ways to circumvent censorship. To avoid the eyes of the censors and circumvent those crushing jaws, they either submit scenarios whose narratives are confined to the interior of an apartment or choose a location so remote that it practically puts the production out of their sight. However, all this inventiveness often ends up forgoing some of the common tools of cinematography: using small and nonprofessional cameras, renouncing to an operator and advanced lighting techniques, simple narratives... are ways independent cinematographers resort to keep production from additional harassment.

In the underground films I have produced, I have used these stratagems while always trying to keep the narrative structure of the final cut devoid of any visible presence of the censorship's limitations. A Man of Integrity's story however was such that it made forgoing production means practically impossible. The story was so important to my eyes that it was unthinkable to have the censorship's limitations palpable at first glance in the film's structure. Producing it was not easy. And although its screening has been banned in Iran, I have not renounced obtaining the necessary authorization. Meanwhile, I keep looking for innovative ways to circumvent censorship while avoiding cinematographic limitations in production.

CREW

Written and Directed by	MOHAMMAD RASOULOF
Director of Photography	ASHKAN ASHKANI
Editors	MOHAMMADREZA MUINI and MEYSAM MUINI
Set and Costume Design	SAEED ASADI
Sound Design and Mix	ALIREZA ALAVIAN
Composer	PEYMAN YAZDANIAN
Makeup	MAHMOUD DEGHANI
Producer	MOHAMMAD RASOULOF
Co-Producer	KAVEH FARNAM
Co-Producer	ROZITA HENDIJANIA

