



المنام

**The Dream** (al-Manam)

a film by **Mohamad Malas**

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### Content

Shot in 1980-81, the film is composed of interviews with different Palestinian refugees including children, women, old people, and militants from the refugee camps of Sabra, Shatila, Bourj el-Barajneh, Ain al-Hilweh and Rashidieh in Lebanon. In the interviews Mohamad Malas questions them about their dreams at night. The dreams always converge on Palestine: a woman recounts her dreams about winning the war; a fedai of bombardment and martyrdom; and one man tells of a dream where he meets and is ignored by Gulf emirs. During filming Malas lived in the camps and conducted interviews with more than 400 people. In 1982 the Sabra and Shatila massacres occurred, taking the lives of several people he interviewed, and he stopped working on the project. He returned to it in 1986 and edited the many hours of footage gathered into this 45 minute film, released in 1987.

### Credits

Syria 1987, 45 min, Arabic with Engl., German or French ST

Director	Mohamad Malas
Camera	Hazem Bayya'a, Hanna Ward
Editing	Kais al-Zubaidi

### The director about the film

I think I managed to formulate a view that differs totally from other Arab and foreign contemplations. The difference is mainly that I adopted the position of a neighbor, thus and Arab, and not that of a Palestinian. This led to me focusing rather on our mutual relations than on the conflict with Israel. The viewer might realize how I emphasized those nightmares which the Arabs caused in the lives of the Palestinians. My concern is to show how the Arab world is addressing the Palestinian cause: first one wanted to use the Palestinian issue and when this was not possible anymore, one tried to harm it. [...] The fight between Israelis and Palestinians is as licit as public, yet the Arab-Palestinian conflict remains an internal affair, it happens in secret.

(11th International Documentary Film Festival Munich 1996)



## Film-maker Mohamad Malas

Mohamad Malas was born in 1945 in Quneitra on the Golan Heights. He is a prominent Syrian filmmaker whose films garnered him international recognition. Malas is among the first auteur filmmakers in Syrian cinema.

Malas worked as a school teacher between 1965 and 1968 before moving to Moscow to study filmmaking at the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography (VGIK). During his time at VGIK he directed several short films. After his return to Syria Malas started working at the Syrian Television. There he produced several short films including Quneitra 74, in 1974 and al-Zhakira (The Memory) in 1975.

Along with Omar Amiralay he co-founded the Damascus Cinema Club.

Between 1980 and 1981 Malas shot the documentary, al-Manam (The Dream), about the Palestinians living in the refugee camps in Lebanon during the civil war.

He directed his first feature film, Ahlam al-Madina (Dreams of the City), in 1983. The autobiographical coming-of-age film received the first prize both at the Valencia and the Carthage Film Festivals.

In 1995 Malas, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of cinema, shot with Omar Amiralay Nur wa Zilal a documentary film about Nazih Shahbandar whom he described as Syria's first filmmaker. The film was banned by Syrian authorities and could only be screened one time in 1993 at the American Cultural Center in Damascus.

Malas's second feature film, al-Lail (The Night), was realized in 1992. The autobiographical film is set in Quneitra in the years between 1936 and the Arab–Israeli War of 1948. It forms, along with Ahlam al-Madina, the first and second parts of a yet unfinished trilogy. Both films were shown at Berlinale's Forum section. Al-Lail received international recognition and won first prize at the 1992 Carthage Film Festival. However, the film was banned in Syria until 1996. In 2013 Ahlam al-Medina was among the top 10 of the "100 Greatest Arab Films List", which film professionals from the Arab World and associates of Dubai International Film Festival voted for.

Another collaboration between Malas and Omar Amiralay is the 1996 documentary film Moudaress about the Syrian pioneer painter Fateh Moudarres.

Bab al-Makam (Passion), released in 2005, was Malas's third feature film, it won the Special Jury Award at the Marrakech International Film Festival. Sullam Ila Dimashq (Ladder to Damascus), released in 2013, premiered at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival and was screened in more than 50 festivals since.

Mohamad Malas' 1991 book "The Dream. A Diary of the Film" was translated into English and published by the American University of Cairo Press in 2016. A monograph on Mohamad Malas will be published at Palgrave MacMillan by the end of 2017.



## The Book about the Film

The Dream. A Diary of the Film

In 1991 Mohamad Malas published his diary about the shooting of "The Dream" including those dreams which were not included into the documentary under the title "al-Manam. Mufakirat Film" at Dar al-Adab in Beirut. In 2016 the English translation, "The Dream. A Diary of the Film", was released by the American University in Cairo Press.





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