



LETTERS THROUGH THE WALL



TONY MELEISH  
IPLO  
THE WALL CLIMBER FEEL  
FOR THE NAME OF THE WALL  
THE WALL IS NOT THE WALL  
FOR IT BREAKS WHO CAN BREAK  
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3 FOR DERRY



TIÓCFARH  
AR.L.  
SIMN  
FEIN

EIRE  
1916  
.....  
2016

A FILM BY FON CORTIZO

## SYNOPSIS

During the war between Gaza and Israel in the summer of 2014, Basem and Tal write to each other every day. Him Palestinian, her Israeli. Both experience the conflict from different locations but share ideas about possible solutions.

An impotent Basem follows the news about the war from Barcelona, a city which has taken him in since he found himself forced to escape the refugee camp in Jan Yunis. His articles, voicing views against Islamic politics, have provoked hand grenade attacks on his home. Basem took the decision to leave his country and family in order to protect them.

Tal Nitzan lives in Tel Aviv. Years ago she helped Basem find the means to leave Gaza through a writer's programme organised by the 'Pen Club' in Catalonia. Tal's house shakes when the missiles fired from Gaza are repelled by the Israeli 'Iron Dome'. She thinks of the horror that Basem's family in Jan Yunis are living.

Tal, a small girl, lives in the Gazan refugee camp. Her name is Hebrew because her grandfather wanted to give thanks to the Israeli poet, Tal Nitzan, for the help that she gave him. Basem still hasn't met his grand-daughter who was born shortly after his arrival in Spain.

4000km of Mediterranean Sea separates them.



## EVOLUTION

Basem and Tal live on the side-lines of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Their opinions and activism regularly bring them into conflict with their own governments. Both live trapped in realities that hide invisible barriers.

Basem has lived in Barcelona for 4 years and can't leave. Spain does not concede him the title of refugee as Gaza has been declared a safe zone. Every 6 months Basem has to renew the card which allows him to continue living in Spain but he is unable to travel in and out of the country freely. Returning to Gaza with its Hamas Government is not an option. The only solution is to wait for things to change.

Tal Nitzan takes part in the demonstrations against Israeli occupation. She occasionally suffers attacks from extreme-right activists who try to silence her discrepancies. She assures us that the only reason for her still living in Israel is for the language which she loves. Hebrew ties her to a reality in which her political activism becomes a necessity.

The invisible barriers that separate Basem and Tal in Palestine are both physical and mighty. Walls, barbed wire and checkpoints run along the 60km border that circles Gaza, converting it into the largest and most populated prison in the world. Basem's family lives there. His wife, his children, little Tal. She regularly hears stories about her grandfather but has never met him. One of Basem's sons is Adonis. Following in the wake of his father he studied journalism and through his blog he tells the world about real life in the 'strip' and the Islamic world. Thanks to his father he is aware of where the limits lie within his profession. Even so, he has suffered a few attacks for saying or writing what he thinks.

Adonis works in the West Bank and lives in Gaza which means that he must cross various checkpoints on his daily journey except when Israel chooses to close the borders. Every day he faces uncertainty, long queues, searches and questions. Adonis talks to his family over countless pots of tea about a future which seems will never exist in Palestine. He takes photos with his mobile of little Tal in order to send them to Barcelona.



## CURRENT STATE OF THE PROJECT

In the spring of 2016 we learnt of the story of Tal Nitzan and Basem Al Nabriss during the filming of the project, 'Border Poetry', in Tel Aviv. We were filming another poet there, Payam Feilli, an Iranian refugee in Israel. The friendship between a Palestinian and Israeli seemed to us a new positive focal point. One that was rarely approached. We decided not to let the opportunity escape and to begin filming.

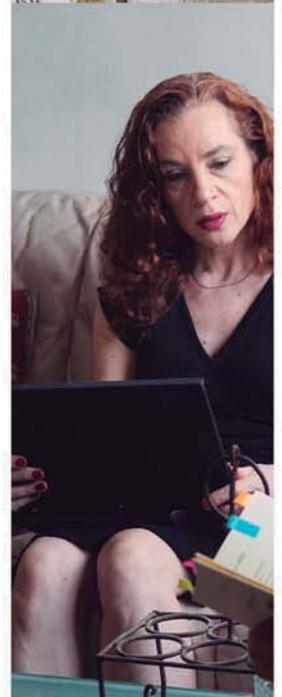
The relationship between the two had begun a long time before, but it is during the war of 2014 that their communication starts to become more intense. During the 50 days in which the conflict lasts, they exchange daily texts which voice their worries, fears, ideas... Little Tal, Basem's grand-daughter, is always present as a symbol of the friendship between them and also the fragility of the civil population in a Gaza under fire. Tal and Basem agree to share their letters from those days and we decide to tell their story through those letters.

In Tel Aviv we make the most of a couple of free days to film Tal. Conversations, poems, letters. During the filming we get to know her story and what little Tal represents to her. In this moment we consider the possibility of crossing Gaza to film with Basem's family but the difficulties involved and shortage of time hold us back.

The return journey and compulsory stopover in Barcelona enable us to come into contact with Basem on the exact day in which he has a recital in a nearby town. There, we soak up his poems and stories and decide to stay on for longer in order to spend more time with him. Maintaining the parallelism with the Israeli poet we film fragments of conversations, recited poems and written communication between them both.

In order to complete the project we see the necessity of filming at the refugee camp in Jan Yunis where Basem's family and little Tal live. There we will record the strange daily life of a family in a refugee camp. Filming will focus on Adonis and Basem's grand-daughter.

Afterwards we will also record once again with Basem and Tal in order to complete the filming. The unlikelihood of a change in the circumstances which keep them apart gives the concept of our idea a vision of hope, peace and friendship but not without a touch of bitter powerlessness.



## NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Letters through the Wall* tries to approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, through a friendship that crosses borders, but generates new ones, perhaps invisibles.

The style marked by previous filming sessions uses fixed camera shots and oppressive composition; using doors, windows or walls to frame the protagonists in an attempt to visualise their surroundings.

With a taste for every day and insignificant factors, what happens on and off camera are reinforced by its static nature, making the camera almost invisible. Doors and walls that stand in the way, observations through windows and lines that separate, speak about the distance between people but also the distancing of us as spectators.

However, this does not lead us to any emotional detachment. The impotence that one feels as a part of the audience should take us into the same space as the protagonists, one of long distance communication but heavily charged with affection and emotion.



## FON CORTIZO

Fon Cortizo trabaja desde 2002 como realizador y operador de cámara en las principales televisiones y productoras del sur de Galicia. En 2006 crea *a\*sombra producciones*, desde la que realiza proyectos de televisión, publicidad y documental.

Entre 2007 y 2013 asume los mandos técnicos en diversos proyectos documentales, entre los que destaca *100% CEF*, ganador del *Premio Mestre Mateo* como mejor documental de 2012 o el *Premio del jurado en IFFEST Bucarest*. También participa en otros documentales como *Festival de la Luz*, *Cabo Verde*, *a rede cooperante* o *Gándaras de Budiño*.

Entre 2010 y 2012 dirige el programa *Galicia Connection* para *Vtelevisión*. También desde 2010 hasta la actualidad, dirige el festival de cortometraje *Curtopía*.

En 2016, Fon Cortizo presenta su primer largometraje, *Contrafaces*, un documental híbrido en torno a los lenguajes y las identidades, filmado en 2015 en Galicia, Islandia y Quebec. El documental fue seleccionado en *Visions du Reel*, *Play-doc*, *Cineuropa*, *Voix Vives Toledo* o *Primavera de Cine de Vigo*.

Entre 2015 y 2016 se produce el rodaje de su segundo largometraje documental, *Border Poetry*, en el que la visión de 7 poetas nos dan a conocer sus realidades en Nueva York, Palestina, el rural gallego, Jordania o el País Vasco Francés.

Durante el rodaje de *Border Poetry* nace el proyecto de *Letters through the Wall*, largometraje documental sobre el conflicto palestino-israelí, del que se ha rodado el 40%





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