

STRANDED BY  
HISTORY

ON THE WRONG  
SIDE OF THE BORDER

# FADIA'S TREE

A FILM BY  
SARAH BEDDINGTON

PRODUCED BY OVER THE FENCE FILMS  
PRESENTED BY SUSAN SIMMETT AND SARAH BEDDINGTON  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MIA BAYS AND HANNA ATALLAH  
WRITTEN BY ARIADNA FATJO VILAS AND MUQATA'A  
DIRECTED BY SARAH BEDDINGTON

a film by  
**Sarah Beddington**

produced by  
**Over The Fence Films**

edited by Ariadna Fatjó-Vilas

music by Muqata'a

sound design by Stefan Smith

executive producers Mia Bays, Hanna Atallah

with the support of



# FADIA'S TREE

## Synopsis

Fadia is a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, stranded by history on the wrong side of the border, yearning for the ancestral homeland she is denied. When a chance meeting introduces her to the director, Sarah, she challenges her to find an ancient mulberry tree that grew next to her grandfather's house in historic Palestine.

With only inherited memories, a blind man and a two-headed dragon as her guides, Sarah embarks on the quest to find the tree. Along the way she learns that the region is also one of the busiest superhighways for bird migration. And it is the observations of the ornithologists, on the homing instincts of these millions of birds, that inadvertently reveals key elements of the Palestinian refugee situation.

Spanning fifteen years, this story of a friendship that stays connected across a divided land and a fragmented people adopts a birds' eye perspective to reflect on freedom of movement, exile and the hope of return.



When home is neither 'here'  
nor the imagined 'there'...

Fadia Loubani  
Bourj el-Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut

# FADIA'S TREE



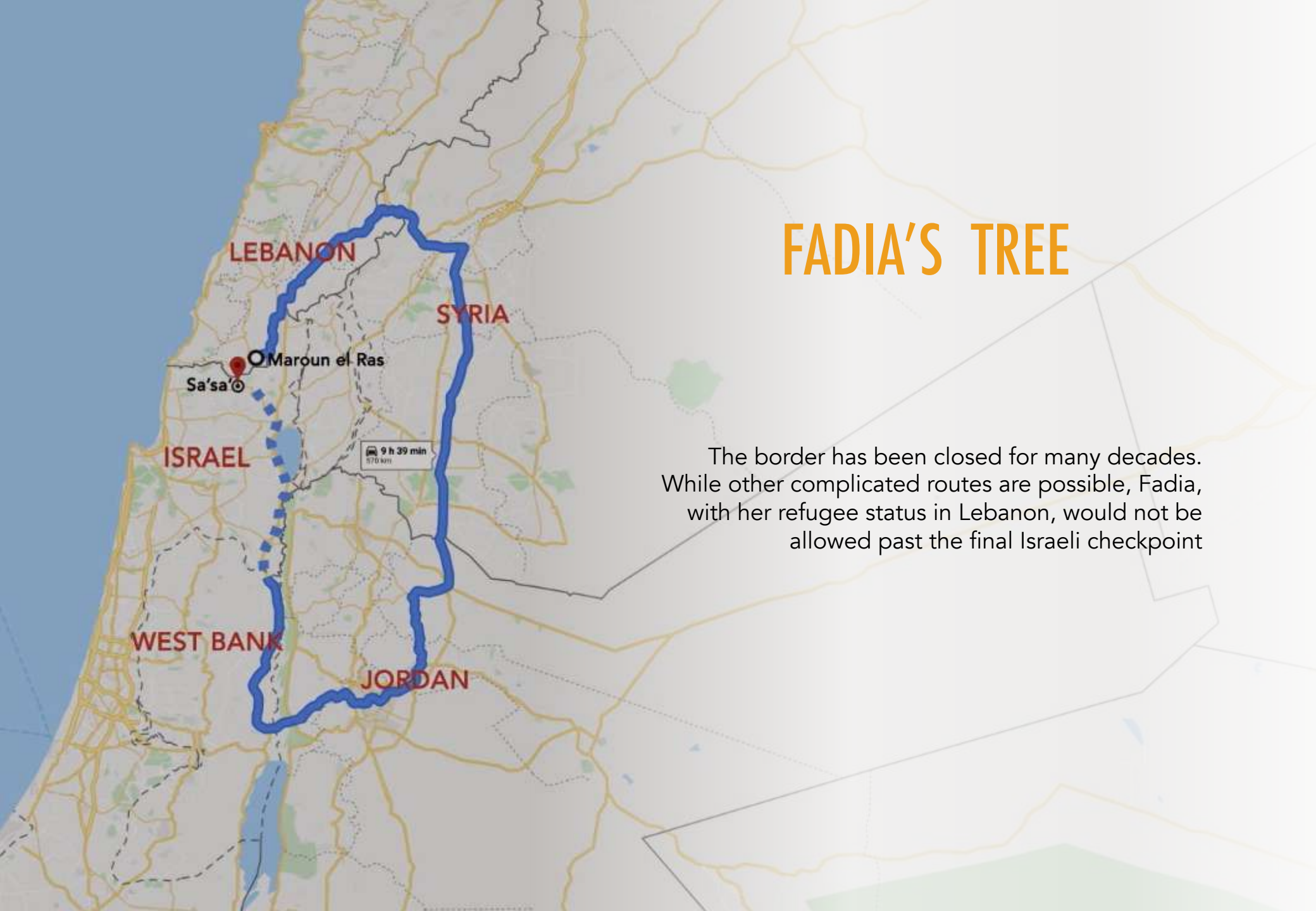
## Relevance

Over 5 million Palestinian refugees have been waiting more than 70 years for their situation to be resolved. They form the largest body of displaced people held in limbo for the longest period of time. Despite a UN resolution being passed more than a hundred times that recognizes their right to return or to receive compensation for their loss, nothing has been forthcoming.

During this last year the spread of Covid-19 across the planet has created a sense of isolation and timelessness for many people, curbed movement and curtailed freedoms once taken for granted. These are privations that have been endured by the people in the film every day, for many decades.

It feels timely to re-examine their situation and in telling Fadia's story we hope to broaden discussion of the refugee situation by engaging through the intimate and the personal.

# FADIA'S TREE



The border has been closed for many decades. While other complicated routes are possible, Fadia, with her refugee status in Lebanon, would not be allowed past the final Israeli checkpoint

# FADIA'S TREE

## Director's statement

A chance encounter fifteen years ago introduced me to Fadia Loubani. I felt an instant rapport, shared a sense of humour and greatly respected her unwavering determination in her work. When she suggested I make a film, I didn't want to repeat the already much documented, nor frame the same polarized rhetoric.

It was whilst living in the Old City of Jerusalem that I discovered the work of local ornithologists and was struck by the contrasting freedom of the birds migrating through the skies and Fadia's limited situation on the ground. Already drawn to aerial photographic documentation of the region in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this birds' eye view, following the ancient markers in the landscape, the sun and stars and the earth's electromagnetic field, allowed me to imagine a more connected world beyond the divisions on the ground.

Fadia's challenge to find an ancient mulberry tree that marked her ancestral home, was a turning point that came with much responsibility – if alive, the tree would stand as testament to Fadia's historic and cultural identity. I was nervous as I travelled for the first time to Fadia's village, Sa'sa', following a route up the Great Rift Valley that mirrored that of the migrating birds and reflecting on freedom of movement and the enforced stasis of the refugees.



*"Fadia's Tree is a very beautiful film: you emerge into the light with your understanding intensified, feeling perhaps a little altered. It both tells a personal story and presents a historical narrative by delicate metaphor, never harangues, is elegantly paced, and very timely."*

James Woodall has written on film for the Economist, Financial Times and The Arts Desk.



# FADIA'S TREE

## Comparatives



Fire at sea - 2016



Honeyland - 2019



The Cave - 2019



# FADIA'S TREE

A woman in a green hijab and a man in a white t-shirt are looking upwards. The woman is in the foreground, smiling slightly, while the man is behind her, looking more serious. They are in an outdoor setting with a building and a clear sky in the background.

## Reach

- Socially conscious individuals
- Like to be challenged intellectually
- Marginalised communities
- Art house indie film lovers
- Human rights, social justice interest
- Palestinian solidarity
- Middle Eastern politics
- Geopolitics – history
- Nature lovers, conservationists



# FADIA'S TREE

## Team



Sarah Beddington is a British artist and filmmaker currently based in London. Her research-based works in film and video, sculpture, performance and public art, explore the overlaps between the historical, the mythical and the everyday, often focusing on journeys and migration. She has completed many multi and single-screen film and video works that have been shown in film festivals, museums, non-profit spaces and galleries around the world.



With an earlier career in advertising that established good habits in telling stories clearly, succinctly and with heightened engagement, Susan navigated her way through the world of finance, auctioneering and tech start-ups to find her home in the film industry with Over The Fence Films. She develops and produces short and long form content with stories that provoke.



# FADIA'S TREE



- A character driven documentary with a strong narrative arc
- Artistic in tone, politically topical, currently resonant
  
- Feature length – 82 minutes
- A UK production
- Filmed in Lebanon, Palestine and Israel
- Currently submitting to festivals
- All territories available



# FADIA'S TREE

For further information, stills and a link to the finished film:

Email  
[susan@overthefencefilms.com](mailto:susan@overthefencefilms.com)

Phone  
+44 (0) 7946 403 679

[www.fadiastree.com](http://www.fadiastree.com)