

CLIPPER MEDIA and RAI CINEMA

Present

EXILES

Three documentaries to tell the stories of exiles in the third millennium

by

Barbara Cupisti

Production

Clipper Media with Rai Cinema

PRODUCTION

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Director's note

This trilogy of movies is the result of three years long work of research and filming. The idea was born in 2012 after visiting a refugee camp in Turkey on the border with Syria, one year after the beginning of the war. At that time, the situation in the camps was already showing that refugee camps could not represent a permanent solution for millions of Syrians who had to escape from urbanized cities. Furthermore, with the continuation of the war, it was clear that millions more would follow them. For this reason, we felt strongly that it was necessary to show to western societies this reality, also to nurture a feeling of a greater understanding and solidarity that could facilitate the welcoming and acceptance of refugees in Europe.

The goal of the first movie is to tell how the daily life in a refugee camp unfolds, and how difficult and precarious continuing to grow a family in such conditions can be, while losing their jobs, education and their normal standard of living.

From the refugee camps in Turkey and Jordan – where millions of Syrian are still living – to the Daadab camp in Kenya, where Somali refugees are stationed since the early nineties, we go deeply into the individual stories of men, women and children who have lost their home and who are stuck there.

With the recent arrivals of hundred of thousands of people in Europe from refugee camps and war torn countries, it is essential to have a close look at the stories of these individuals, to understand why they had to leave their homes and why then, they left the refugee camps.

With the second movie we want to show how it is both important and difficult, for people who have been forced in exile, to maintain their identity. For this, we show how a refugee community has been able, despite many challenges, to adjust to life in exile.

The Tibetan diaspora, who followed His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1959 when he had to flee from Tibet after its invasion, has built educational, cultural and political institutions to try to maintain and preserve their unique identity, while in exile.

While telling the heart-breaking stories of former political prisoners, relatives of self-immolators (147 Tibetans have burned themselves since 2009 to protest against China's rule in Tibet), we also look at how the Tibetan diaspora has created a sustainable – although not permanent – way of life in exile under the leadership of the Dalai Lama, who we were privileged to interview for this project.

In the third movie, we focus on the exploitation of natural resources that has already caused the destruction of the environment that, coupled by climate change, threaten the life of millions of people worldwide. We went to stay with the Guarani people in

what remains of the forest of the *Mato Grosso do Sur* (originally the forest was big as Germany), to learn about the special relationship between this indigenous people and the environment and how learning to respect Mother Earth is going to be essential for the future of humanity. The Guaranì people have been constantly attacked by private security of landowners, and recently some of their villages have been destroyed and some of their leaders have been killed, raising the serious concerns of humanitarian organizations.

We also went to see the life of some communities in California, where American citizens and immigrants are now facing the effects of severe drought and of the absolute lack of water in their homes. In the near future, the continuous lack of water, could force them to leave their home and become “refugees” in America, a clear paradox for the most developed nation in the world.

Barbara Cupisti

EXILES

Three documentaries to tell the stories of exiles of the third millennium

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of 2014 more than 59.5 million people had been forced to abandon their homes due to conflicts, humanitarian, socio-political and environmental crises. 51% of this population are children under 18. If these 59.5 million persons were a nation, they would make up the 24th largest in the world. Three quarters of these refugees are still in a situation of "long term exile" with no prospect of going back home.

These numbers describe a permanent forced exile for hundreds of thousands of people who, year after year set out, risking their lives to escape death, persecution or poverty they would be faced with if they stayed where they had always lived, often leaving behind everything they loved most.

Studies maintain that the refugee population will continue to grow throughout the next decade, also in new and diverse forms. New connotations will be determined by demographic growth, especially in Africa and Asia; by urbanization, which will create a growing number of urban refugees; by climate change and natural disasters which cause millions of exiles every year; by the rising cost of food resulting from urbanization and a reduction in agricultural production in Africa and Asia, as well as by increasing conflicts that could cause the de-population of entire areas.

The Project

Clipper Media production together with RAI Cinema have produced three documentary movies about refugees. In recent years, Clipper Media and RAI Cinema have worked together in many documentaries concerning human rights.

Barbara Cupisti, an Italian multi-awarded documentary film director, who has focused her work on the most vulnerable people, directs the three documentaries. From 2007 to 2015 she directed 10 documentary movies on human rights issues; her movie *Mothers* (90 min), shown in the Venice Film Festival 2007, won the 2008 David di Donatello for Best Documentary of the year and for one of her last works, *Fratelli e sorelle, storie di carcere* - the first documentary to be filmed inside overcrowded Italian prisons - won the prestigious Ilaria Alpi National Journalism award.

The project consists of three documentaries, each of them about an hour long.

The first one is dedicated to those who flee from their homes because of **wars and conflicts**. It was shot in Jordan, Turkey and Kenya and implemented with the collaboration of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who has conceded its High Patronage.

The second is dedicated to the **Tibetan diaspora** who fled from Tibet due to political and religious persecution. It was shot in India, in particular, in Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan Government in Exile, and in Ladakh, the so-called "Little Tibet of India".

The third one tells the stories of **ecological refugees**, who are facing the effects of climate change, desertification, depletion of resources and compulsory migrations caused by the exploitation of natural resources. It has received the patronage of Amnesty International. It is shot in Brazil, where the Guarani people are suffering and disappearing because of the destruction of the Mato Grosso forest, and in California, which is facing one of the most severe drought on record and has started, for the first time, to ration the use of water by private citizens.

For the research needed to prepare the three documentaries, we have benefited of the support of authoritative sources, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Embassies of the countries in question, various local and international non-profit organizations (Action Aid, Survival International, International Campaign for Tibet) who constantly provide assistance to exiles and refugees.

RAI TV will guarantee distribution of this project through television and film festivals. Furthermore, the humanitarian organizations involved in the project, such as UNHCR and Amnesty International, will contribute to the distribution through festivals dedicated to human rights.

EXILES - The Wars

Production: Clipper Media and RAI Cinema

Director: Barbara Cupisti

Screenplay: Barbara Cupisti

in collaboration with Natascia Palmieri

DOP: Sandro Bartolozzi

Editor: Alessandro Marinelli

Sound: Stefano Civitenga

Music: Tommaso Gimignani, Vittorio Giannelli - Warner Chappell Music Edition

Production Manager: Natascia Palmieri

With the High Patronage of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Time: 70'

Format: HD

Thousands and thousands of people are exiled every year due to wars. 55% of all refugees come from the main countries affected by conflicts: Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Sudan. Studies maintain that entire areas of the world could be depopulated in the next decade due to the increasing of conflicts.

War refugees, internal displaced persons and asylum seekers represent the best known and most dramatic side of forced departure. The "refugee camp" is the most emblematic and unresolved example of this, since it is often a situation of protracted humanitarian assistance, where programmes for re-settlement and re-introduction in society languish at length.

We are dealing with hundreds of thousands of people obliged to leave their homes to look for shelter in neighbouring countries. Thousands of people fleeing from conflicts that increasingly involves civilian populations.

The documentary movie is dedicated to these refugees and to the stories of those who have been forced to flee to save their lives and those of their families.

The aim of this documentary is to contribute to a better understanding of the living conditions of war refugees, and to a greater solidarity and capacity to welcome and accept them on the part of European citizens.

From the refugee camps to the informal settlements, from the urban refugees to the ones integrated in the host societies, the documentary emphasizes the life stories, the memories, emotions and desires of the characters.

In 70 minutes, this documentary narrates the reasons for escape; life inside refugee camps; the sufferings, emotions and hopes of people who were forced to abandon their countries.

The tales of the main characters lead the spectator into the daily lives of a refugee camp. Concrete problems are discussed, together with an investigation of the intimate and existential meaning of being a refugee.

A distressing picture comes out from the documentary, with thousands of people living on the edge of survival, in need of total assistance and in a condition of insecurity at all levels: housing, health, education, job and economy.

The documentary focuses on refugees coming from the main crisis areas: Syrian Arab Republic and Somalia. It has been assessed, in fact, that more than half (53%) of all refugees worldwide came from just three countries: the Syrian Arab Republic (3.88 million), Afghanistan (2.59 million), and Somalia (1.11 million). At the same time, it has been shot, among other, in the countries which are hosting the greater refugee population: Turkey, where almost 1.6 million of resident refugees are making it for the first time the world's largest refugee-hosting country, and Jordan, the second country worldwide –after Lebanon- hosting the largest number of refugees in relation to its national population.

Moreover, the documentary deals with one of the main ancient history of exile: the Palestinian one. The stories of Palestinian refugees remind us how protracted exile could damage an entire population and represent a threat for all the world.

The documentary starts in the biggest refugee camp in the world: Dadaab. Here, in a remote, arid and desolate land on the boarder between Kenya and Somalia, around 430.000 Somalis escaped from war, have been living for over 20 years.

Dadaab camp appears as a huge shantytown where life goes on marked by the rhythm of humanitarian aid distribution, attacks and raids. This situation, together with the fact that people are often without documents, makes it impossible for them to leave the camps.

In the Dadaab camp we arrived to shoot in a very dangerous situation since silent cells of the militant group Al Shabaab -the Somali Jihadist group- are based there, mixed up among the refugee population. In the last years, several serious accidents took place in the camp, including the kidnapping of foreign aid workers and the killing of local refugee leaders, aid workers and policemen. For this reason, the great part of the humanitarian organizations stopped their aid activities in the camp. With the help of the UNCHR's local staff we were the first filming crew that was able to visit all the five camps, which composed the Dadaab settlement.

From Africa we go to the war in Syria, which is causing the escape of more than 4 million people, and is generating the biggest humanitarian crisis of the last decade. Their stories take place both in Jordan and in Turkey: in Zaatari camp, 12 km far from the Syrian border - growing so fast that it has become the fourth largest city in Jordan - and in the Ackakale refugee camp, established by the government in April 2012, which shelters about 25,000 Syrian refugees.

The shootings among Syrian refugees took place at the most critical time of the war when, miles long queues of people were fleeing to neighbouring countries.

The documentary ends with the stories of the 1948 period Palestinian refugees. They left their country, convinced that they would return after a few days but are still waiting to go back together with their children and grandchildren, to whom they have handed down the status of refugees. The shores of the Dead Sea, which separates our protagonists from their own country - just few kilometres away - is from where they can see their land, where they have never been able to go back, and where their abandoned homes and loved ones still live.



EXILES - Tibet

Production: Clipper Media and RAI Cinema

Director: Barbara Cupisti

Screenplay: Barbara Cupisti

DOP: Sandro Bartolozzi

Editor: Alessandro Marinelli

Music: Tommaso Gimignani, Franco Eco

Production Manager: Natascia Palmieri

Time: 70'

Format: HD

The Tibetan diaspora, from 1959 to nowadays, told through a crescendo of testimonies of people escaped from the occupation of Tibet.

The movie takes place in India. The main locations are: Dharamsala – where the Tibetan Government in exile has its headquarter – and the Region of Laddak with its impressive and magnificent plateau, also known as "Little Tibet" because of the great cultural and geographical resemblance with the bordering Tibet.

India is the country which host the major number of Tibetan refugees, safeguarding their social, cultural and religious freedom of expression, rights still banned in their homeland.

Palden Gyatso and Ama Ade are former political prisoners who experienced the occupation of Tibet and though their sufferings – and many years spent in jail - describe well the despotic drift of this historical event.

Since 1959, over a 100,000 Tibetans fled to neighbouring countries following the example of their spiritual guide, the XIV Dalai Lama.

According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one of the main responsibilities of Tibetans communities living in exile is to maintain their unique identity and culture living.

Especially because inside Tibet, after the occupation by China, many restrictions have been imposed and have limited the opportunities for Tibetans to genuinely practice their traditions, religion and culture.

For this we visited the Tibetan Children Village, an institution established in the sixties upon request of the Dalai Lama. These villages have been established all over the country and are promoting refugee children's education and training.

Many of the children are orphans or escaped from Tibet.

Tenzin, Lhamo and Khunsang are young Tibetans activists organising debates and demonstrations. They have followed the Dalai Lama's exhortation asking to new generations to take the responsibility to claim the rights of their people.

Jahng is a young monk escaped recently from Tibet who gives us a glimpse of the current situation inside Tibet. Jahng lost his brother who self-immolated and, since 2009 many other young people have done the same.

A symbolic action against the lack of freedom of expression so that the world becomes aware of what is life today in Tibet.

The movie ends with an exclusive dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



EXILES - The Environment

Production: Clipper Media and RAI Cinema

Director: Barbara Cupisti

Screenplay: Barbara Cupisti

in collaboration with Natascia Palmieri

DOP: Sandro Bartolozzi

Editor: Alessandro Marinelli

Music: Tommaso Gimignani, Franco Eco

Production Manager: Natascia Palmieri

In collaboration with Survival International

With the Support of Amnesty International Italian Branch

Time: 80'

Format: HD

The third documentary is dedicated to environmental refugees who are obliged to leave their homes because of events such as natural disasters linked to climate changes, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, depletion of natural resources.

According to the UNHCR, each year there are around 6 millions of environmental refugees and this phenomenon is going to reach 200/250 millions of people in 2050.

Many of them are obliged to flee because of public or private infrastructural works or natural resources exploitation projects that sacrifice the environment and the rights local communities in the name of the economical development.

Often these projects meet the opposition of local and native communities through legal actions but in a large part they end with the impunity for the companies. Nevertheless, among these stories of environmental devastation and human rights violation, there are cases of valiant resistance.

It is calculated that, at the moment, there are more than 1.000 “environmental conflicts” around the world affecting especially the poorest communities and native populations.

One of these is the case of the Guaranì of the *Mato Grosso do Sul* in Brazil. Once, these communities occupied a homeland of forests and plains totalling some 350,000 square kilometres (about the size of Germany); today they are squeezed into tiny patches of land surrounded by cattle ranches and vast fields of soya and sugar cane. Some have no land at all, and live camped by roadsides.

The destruction of the forest has meant that hunting and fishing are no longer possible, and there is barely enough land even to plant crops. Malnutrition is a serious problem. Many of the Guaranì were herded into small reservations, which are now chronically overcrowded and with negative social consequences. Affected by the loss

of almost all their land, the Guaraní suffer a wave of suicide unequalled in South America.

Nevertheless, many Guaraní communities have attempted to recover small parcels of their ancestral land. These “retomadas” (literally “re-takings”) have been violently resisted by the powerful farmers who now occupy the region. The ranchers frequently employ gunmen to defend ‘their’ properties, and countless Guaraní have been killed during or soon after the “retomadas”.

The small community of Ñanderú Marangatú is an example. Despite the fact that the community is entitled by law to live within a 9,000 hectare reserve, they were evicted at gunpoint by ranchers in 2005. With incredible bravery, the community returned.

The documentary starts with this story of persecution and resistance and highlights the special and “spiritual connection” of this people with Mother Earth, following very peculiar customs and traditions. It also explains why for the Guaraní people, as for other indigenous peoples, the relationship with their ancestral lands is a matter of life and death, not just for individuals, but also for an entire culture.

The final destination of exiles for environmental conflicts is the neighbouring towns, where it is impossible for them to adjust. In fact, they come from villages located inside the forests where they happily enjoy a very peculiar and unique way of life.

Climate change is not only an issue for developing countries. Many western and highly developed societies are facing the effects of environmental problems, as the documentary shows in the case of California.

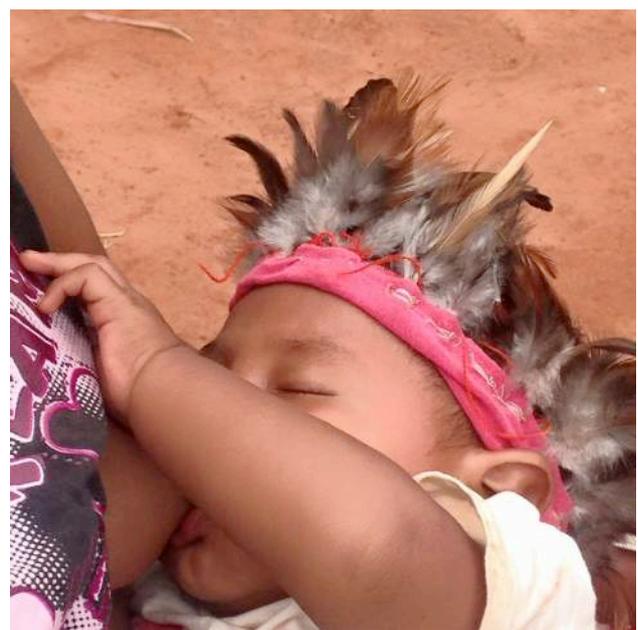
California is entering the fourth year of a “record-breaking” drought creating an extremely parched landscape. Governor Jerry Brown declared a drought State of Emergency in January 2015 and imposed strict conservation measures state wide. Drought in California has increased significantly over the past 100 years due to rising temperatures. A recent study found that the current drought stands out as the worst to hit the state in 1,200 years largely due the remarkable, record-high temperatures.

Here we met Donna Johnson, a volunteer who after suffering herself the consequences of the drought, decided to help families who are lacking water in their homes. We follow her while she distributes water with her pick up truck. Dramatic stories of elderly people or of families who had invested everything in their homes that are becoming inhabitable (red- tagged according to US law), are narrated by the protagonists; these people, who now can only rely on water distributed to them, face the possibility of being evicted from their homes and become internally displaced people in America, the most developed nation in the world.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2050 around 250 million of people will leave their homes becoming environmental refugees.

This is the final message of the documentary. Through the centuries, native populations remind us that man and environment are not to be considered as separate parts. They remind us that Heart is our Mother and that the western economic development model can cause environmental collapse and mankind death.

In spite of their great increasing number, exiles for environmental conflicts and environmental refugees have not yet received a formal juridical recognition and they are little known from the public, despite recent efforts by spiritual leaders such as Pope Francis, who in 2015 published the Environmental Encyclical, raising the attention of the international community of this issue.



Barbara Cupisti

Barbara Cupisti is an Italian actress and documentary movies film director. After a stint as a dancer with the New York-based Louis Falco Dance Company, Barbara Cupisti made the transition to acting at the Silvio D'Amico National Academy for Dramatic Arts under the tutelage of Aldo Trionfo. She began her stage career by working with playwright/director Giuseppe Patroni Griffi. Barbara becomes a well-known leading actress in numerous Italian films by directors such as Tinto Bras, Dario Argento, Michele Soavi, Lucio Fulci and Lamberto Bava. Subsequently she divided her time between Italy, France and the United States working with various directors as: Norman Jewison, Paul Planchon, Antonio Pedro Vasconcelos, John Lofve, Gabriele Salvatores, Angelo Orlando, Carlo Verdone and Franco Bernini. Her last appearance as an actress was in 2002, in *Total Kheops* with Marie Trintignant and Richard Bohringer. Her own directing debut was the 16mm short film *Fotoromanza* (1988), produced in France.

Coming from a family of artists – her father was a painter – Barbara specializes in making documentary portraits of remarkable personalities in the arts, theater, music and the cultural world. Barbara Cupisti creates also TV programs about historical, sociological, cultural and travel-related subjects.

Since 2007 she began working on long documentary movies for cinema.

Her first documentary movie *Mothers* (90 min), showed at the Venice Film Festival 2007, won the David di Donatello 2008 for the best documentary of the year. The movie reveals the interior conflicts and the private dramas of the population, through a series of conversations with mothers living with the terror of never seeing their children back home again.

The second one, *Forbidden Childhood* (2008), was screened in many international movie festivals circuit and received the following awards:

- the “Audience Award for the Best Documentary Film” at the Bahrein International Human Rights Film Festival (May 2009);
- the “Amnesty International Cinema and Human Rights Award” at the Pesaro International Film Festival (June 2009);
- the XII “Sigillo per la Pace” (Florence, 2009).
- the “Provincia di Piacenza Award for the Best Director” at Bobbio Film Festival, 2009

Unicef Italia gave to the movie the High Patronage. The film focuses on Ali Abu Awwad, a former resistance fighter in the first Intifada, now a leading member of the Palestinian non-violence movement. In parallel is Elik El-Hanan, an Israeli ex-soldier and now director of the Israeli chapter of the association Combatants for Peace. Each

relates their experiences of growing up in a militarized society, and of their desire for peace in the future. Meanwhile, children growing up in Palestine today attempt to survive the occupation, enduring long bus rides and checkpoints to visit their relatives in jail.

In the same year, she is chosen as member of the jury in Orizzonti Section at the 65° Venice Film Festival.

In 2011, the movie *Io Sono*, with the patronage of Amnesty International, has been presented out of competition at the Venice Film Festival. The movie was a finalist at the Monte-Carlo Television Festival.

The stories of the protagonists are tales of slavery. People arriving in Italy impelled by hunger, poverty, wars or a striving for an identity of their own, paying outrageous sums for the voyage to criminal organisations. With a desire to improve their lot, once in Italy they instead find they have to work in the underground economy, underpaid, or have even to prostitute themselves to repay their debts. From Crotona to Naples to Rome, the camera records their stories with the verses from Pasolini's poem, *Profezia*.

In 2012, *Brothers and Sisters* won the "Ilaria Alpi Award for the best long Italian reportage" and the "Special Award" at the Flaiano Cinema Award.

The film focuses on the dramatic situation of in the Italian prisons where, instead of following re-educational programs, the prisoners are in overcrowded jails and, in most cases, in passiveness.

In the same year, she filmed a documentary about Roma People, *Interferenze Rom*, which focuses on the human rights situation of the largest ethnic minority in Europe: 10-12 millions of people living in condition of extreme exclusion. The movie is set in Italy, Macedonia and Spain.

Her latest work, *Exiles*, consists of three documentaries that investigate the "reasons for exile".

Exiles - The Wars, the first one, is dedicated to those who flee from their homes because of wars and conflicts. It was shot in Jordan, Turkey and Kenya and implemented with the collaboration of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which has given its High Patronage.

Exiles - Tibet, the second one, is focuses on the situation of those who are persecuted and forced into exile for their religious, racial or political belongings. It is dedicated to the Tibetan diaspora and it was shot in India, in Dharamsala.

Exiles - The Environment, the third one, tells the stories of environmental refugees, who had to leave due to climate change, desertification, depletion of resources and compulsory migrations caused by major works (dams, motorways, etc). It is shot in Brazil, where native populations are suffering and disappearing because of the lost of their lands and in California, affected by a severe draught. The movie has received the High Patronage of Amnesty International.