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OFFICIAL SELECTION 2013



# Rags and Tatters

A Film by Ahmad Abdalla

2013 / Egypt / Arabic / Drama

87 min / HD / 1.85 / Dolby 5.1

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## **LOGLINE**

Escaping from prison amid the turbulence of the 2011 Tahrir Square demonstrations, a nameless fugitive desperately seeks warmth and shelter in the outer regions of Cairo.

## **SYNOPSIS**

After escaping years of incarceration, a nameless man tries to find his way home in a Cairo turned upside down by the protests of the Jan25 Egyptian Revolution. As he revisits the family and country he has been separated from for so long, he finds that everything about life as he knew it has irrevocably changed.

## **FESTIVALS**

Toronto International Film Festival (World Premiere)

## **TECH SPECS**

Running Time:	87 min
Country:	Egypt
Language:	Arabic
Shooting Format:	HD (RED 4K)
Exhibition Format:	DCP
Print:	Color
Sound:	Dolby 5.1
Aspect Ratio:	1.85
Production Companies	Film Clinic Mashroua

## **CAST**

Asser Yassin  
Amr Abed  
Yara Gubran  
Mohamed Mamdouh  
Atef Yousef

## **CREW**

Writer / Director	Ahmad Abdalla
Producer	Mohamed Hefzy
Executive Producer	Hany Sagr
Co-Producer	Omar Shama
Cinematographer	Tarek Hefny
Editor	Hisham Sagr
Music	Mahmoud Hamdy
Art Director	Nihal Farouk

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Since our revolution is still an emerging one that hasn't solidified yet either politically or even in our souls, as a filmmaker, I wanted to make a film with multiple stories and character lines without a single spoken dialogue, leaving the events and the images to clarify themselves, giving myself –before the audience –a chance to contemplate and absorb the events that, without exaggeration, changed my life forever along with many Egyptians.

In a lot of the scenes, I often depend on presenting the major event before or after dialogue between characters begins or ends, leaving the audience –myself included- a chance to contemplate the event, always remembering what Sufi Sheikh Neffari said: "I only speak so you can see... If you see, no need to talk".

As tragic events evolved during the first days of the revolution, some I witnessed myself, I found myself drowning in Sufi studies from Al-Hallaj to Ibn Al-Farid and many others, and I became fascinated by Egyptian Sufi chanting which constitutes another line in this film. For that reason Sufi songs and chants were excluded from the "dialogue-ban", but instead relying on the poetry of these chants as food for thought.

During the sit-in in Tahrir Square, I personally volunteered at what was known as the "Media Camp" which is a tent built in the square to collect footage from mobile phones and cameras of the protestors and revolutionaries, while other volunteers archived and organized the footage before sending them to international stations when communications were cut across the country. This is how I got to spend weeks reviewing diverse footage that shows a range of events from brutal violence to absolute joy, all taken by regular people who have their very special and personal ways of storytelling.

I can personally say that this is how I saw and knew stories of the revolution. This gathered material that was sent to TV stations all over the world was also the way people of the world found out what Jan25 means, and that's why I found myself spontaneously drawn to the idea of using similar filming techniques, long takes and handheld camcorders with a style close to amateur videos on the internet, including all the defects and disadvantages of cheap digital cameras and video compression on the internet. So we intentionally use these defects to create a new visual style of storytelling that carries us to a time and place away from the conventional style.

There is also a main goal which is making the audience a part of the event, just like how the videographer was a part of the revolution and how his presence with the camera often made a change to the flow of events as we learned from all the footage we saw. I also think it's important to emphasize the role of the handheld camera in this film, focusing on materializing it into a simple style that does not break the solid aesthetic concepts of cinema which we'd like to keep.

In the end, *Rags & Tatters* –a term that refers to a type of Sufi chanting competition improvising wisdom poetry- is a film that I'm making for myself, to contemplate where I've been and where I'm going. Thinking about the revolution not as a political concept that we'll keep discussing as long as we live, but as a concept that goes beyond our human tragedy to hope in salvation of our souls in this difficult world.

## **DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY**

### **Ahmad Abdalla**

- Born in 1979 – Cairo, Egypt.
- Studied Music in 90's (Classical music & Viola player).
- Worked as a Film Editor since 2003, edited a number of commercial Egyptian Films
- (2003-2009) and worked in many documentary films.
- Currently focusing on establishing a new independent film production company in Egypt with other young filmmakers.

## **FESTIVALS AND AWARDS:**

### ***Microphone***

- ♣ Golden Tulip – Istanbul International film festival - 2011
- ♣ Golden Tanit – Carthage Film Festival – 2010
- ♣ Best Arabic Film- Cairo International Film Festival – 2010
- ♣ Best Film – El Festival de Cine Africano de Tarifa 2011
- ♣ Best Editing – Dubai international film festival 2010
- ♣ Best Film- le 9e FESTIVAL des CINÉMAS d'AFRIQUE du PAYS d'APT – 2011
- ♣ Other festivals participation including: Toronto International Film Festival, London International Film Festival, and Thessaloniki International Film Festival.

### ***Heliopolis***

- ♣ Best 1st screenplay – Sawiris Foundation awards – 2008
- ♣ Special Mention - Cairo International Film Festival – 2009
- ♣ Other festivals participation including: Toronto International Film Festival, Marrakech International Film Festival, Thessaloniki International Film Festival, Abu Dhabi International film festival.

## **CREDITS**

### **Main Cast:**

Asser Yassin  
Amr Abed  
Yara Gubran  
Mohamed Mamdouh  
Atef Yousef  
Mohamed Farouk  
Sondos Shabayek  
Hamdy El-Tounsy  
Mona El-Shimy  
Seif El-Aswany  
Maryam El-Quisny  
Michael Mamdouh  
And  
Latifa Fahmy

### **Crew:**

#### **1st AD**

Omar Zohairy

#### **Sound Editor**

Ahmed Moustafa Saleh

#### **Sound Mix**

KOSTAS VARIBOPIOTIS

#### **Art Director**

Nihal Farouk

#### **Music**

Mahmoud Hamdy

#### **Editor**

Hisham Saqr

#### **Executive Producer**

Hany Saqr

#### **Cinematography**

Tarek Hefny

#### **Co-producer**

Omar Shama

#### **Producer**

Mohamed Hefzy

#### **Written and Directed by**

Ahmad Abdalla