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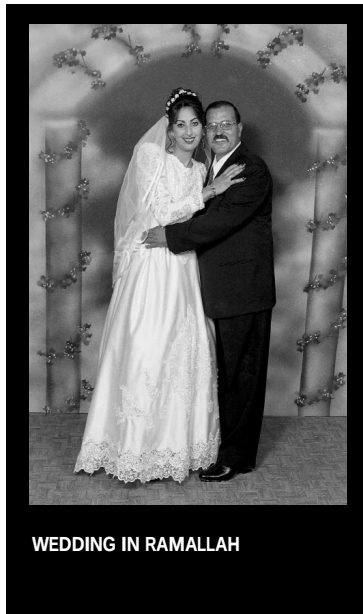
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Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:

www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos

Program companion website: www.pbs.org/weddinginramallah



**INDEPENDENT LENS's "A WEDDING
IN RAMALLAH" TAKES INTIMATE,
POIGNANT LOOK AT AN ARRANGED
MARRIAGE SET AMIDST THE RAVAGES
OF WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

*—Rare Window into Daily Lives of Palestinians
Puts a Human Face on Middle East Crisis—*

**Film by Sherine Salama
Premieres Nationally on "Independent Lens,"
ITVS's Acclaimed Series on PBS
November 4, 2003 at 10 P.M.
(check local listings)**

"A compelling culture-clash documentary in which language, love (or its absence) and gender roles collide...sad, funny and alarming – but always illuminating."

—STEPHEN REA, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

"Poignant, revealing...this clear-eyed, evenhanded film is a major achievement for its young director."

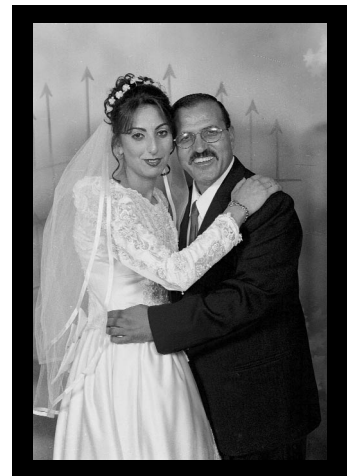
—DAVID STRATTON, VARIETY

(San Francisco, CA)—For most Americans, the word “Palestine” conjures up only shaky, distant images from the news of seemingly endless violence and turmoil. But for millions, Palestine is home—a place of family, friends, school, work, love, marriage and children. Sherine Salama’s **A WEDDING IN RAMALLAH** gives viewers a candid, intimate look at the daily life of an extended Palestinian family by chronicling the arranged marriage of a Palestinian-American man to a young woman who has lived a traditional village life in the Middle East. Both humorous and poignant, **A WEDDING IN RAMALLAH** airs nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Don Cheadle, on Tuesday, November 4th at 10 P.M. (check local listings.).



Bassam Abed has lived in Cleveland for over 10 years, working as a telephone repairman. His American marriage was a love match but it ended badly, leaving Bassam broken-hearted and determined to do things differently the second time around. The film joins him as he returns to the Middle East to marry Mariam, a traditional Palestinian woman chosen by his family. Their meeting doesn’t send off romantic sparks, but both hope the deal will work out—Bassam will have a woman to care for him, and Mariam, who at 25 is seeing her marriage prospects run out, will be able to please her family and start a new life in America, away from the constant ravages and devastation of war in the West Bank.

They have known each other for only a month when their huge, traditional wedding—complete with a dowry of gold and goats—takes place in the summer of 2000. It is a relatively peaceful period for Palestine, but the peace talks at Camp David are breaking down. After the wedding, Mariam leaves her village to live with Bassam and his family in Ramallah until the planned move to America. There she bonds with her new sister-in-law, Sinora, whose husband also lives in the United States but rarely visits her and their daughter.



The peace talks officially over, the tensions between Israel and Palestine become worse each day and Bassam returns to America to try to expedite a visa for his wife. The months drag by. Stranded in war-torn Ramallah with Bassam’s family, Mariam is miserable as she and the family live under the constant barrage of explosions and gunfire. Eventually the visa is granted, and Mariam, unable to speak English, arrives in cold and snowy Cleveland. She soon learns that Bassam is holding down two jobs and is almost never home. Expected to clean their apartment and have his evening meal ready, which he likes to eat while watching wrestling on TV, Mariam seems to have traded one dreary life for another.

An up-close look at Palestinian life during wartime, **A WEDDING IN RAMALLAH** is also a fascinating report from the frontlines of the universal and never-ending battle between men and women, husband and wife, and duty and freedom.



The film concludes in the summer of 2001. Filmmaker Sherine Salama visited the couple in Cleveland in April 2003 and reports, “Bassam has bought a grocery shop and Mariam goes with him to work in the store nearly every day. She’s picking up some English mainly from the customers, but she has also begun some English classes. They seem happily married and are very well suited to each other. But both would obviously still like to return home to Ramallah one day.”

The program’s interactive companion website at www.pbs.org/weddinginramallah features detailed information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, updates on the couple, as well as links and resources pertaining to the film’s subject matter. The site also features a “talkback” section for viewers to share their ideas with one another, preview clips of the film, and much more.

WEDDING IN RAMALLAH Credits

DIRECTED BY	Sherine Salama
PRODUCED BY	Sherine Salama
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY	Sherine Salama Catherine Marciniak Tomi Streiff
EDITED BY	Mona Eldaief Andrew Arestides Andrea Lang

AWARDS

Grand Jury Prize (International Documentary Competition), American Film Institute
(Los Angeles International Film Festival)

Grand Prize, Cinema du Reel, Paris

Best Documentary, National Film Board of Canada (Calgary International Film Festival)

Best Documentary and Best Director (Documentary), Australian Film Institute

Best Documentary, Australian Film Critics’ Circle

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Sherine Salama was born in Cairo and moved to Australia with her family when she was three years old. Her father is Egyptian and her mother Palestinian. The idea for **A WEDDING IN RAMALLAH** arose in 1996 when she spent nine months in the Palestinian Territories training Palestinian television journalists for the United Nations. Salama’s last film was *Australia Has No Winter* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1999), an award-winning documentary which followed a refugee family from Belgrade to Melbourne and chronicled their settlement experience.

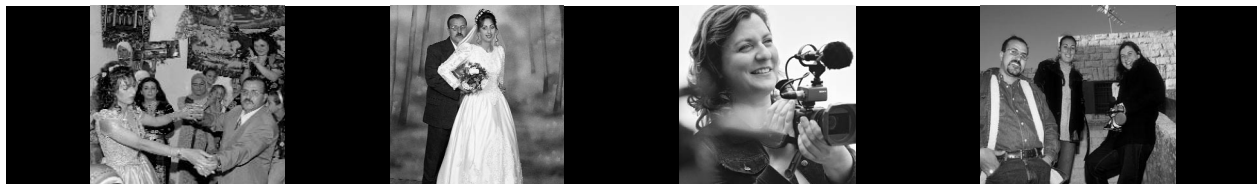
Over the past 14 years, she has traveled and worked throughout the Middle East. From 1989 to 1991, she was based in Cairo where she worked as a freelance journalist. As a news and current affairs reporter for Australian television from 1993 to 1995, she received the United Nations Media Peace Prize for a report detailing the rape experiences of Bosnian women. From 1997 to 2000, Salama served as a part-time member of the Refugee Review Tribunal. She recently returned from Baghdad where she was exploring an idea for her next film.

ABOUT *INDEPENDENT LENS*

Independent Lens is a weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history, which prompted Nancy Franklin in *The New Yorker* to write "Watching *Independent Lens* ... is like going into an independent bookstore—you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted." Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community outreach campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS.

ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting www.itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.



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