

# CHRISTINE GARABEDIAN

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*Telling filmic true stories that touch the heart and open the mind*

## AWARD-WINNING FILM MAKER

I am a Grierson and International Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker, deeply committed to strong, clear, narrative-driven filmic true storytelling that offers insights into our common humanity. International Emmy for Best Documentary (2018), Grierson Award for Best Current Affairs Documentary (2017), Rory Peck Sony Impact Award (2017), Monte-Carlo Television Festival Special Red Cross Award (2016), International Press Council and Next Century Foundation New Ground Award (2017)

## MULTILINGUAL

Fluent in French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Arabic, and Dutch, I have a natural gift for being accepted into peoples' lives in challenging, difficult, emotionally, culturally and politically charged situations. I am a London-based EU citizen and have a US iVisa.

## EXPERIENCED PRODUCER-DIRECTOR & CAMERA OPERATOR

I love to observe human lives through a camera with visual and emotional purpose and compassion. I am skilled at managing complex and challenging investigations, observational films, and dramatic real-life historical events. My natural leadership qualities inspire and empower others to realise the creative vision and narrative drive of a documentary film from its inception through to the shoot, scripting, edit, and final post-production.

**Gaza Dreams** (BBC Arabic, BBC Our World, BBC World News)  
Producer-Director, Camera, Sound

*"So telling, revealing pain and suffering, while maintaining the dignity of those interviewed...A fine, brave portrayal, exact and exacting, so hard to watch."*

Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

*"Very powerful. like a beautiful haiku! Beautiful, I was full of wonder at the way people talked on camera. More than the pain of the individuals you talked to came across - they were able to convey their hurt."*

Martin Kemp, Psychotherapist

- Filmed in Gaza at a time of heightened political and military tensions and ongoing demonstrations at the fence separating Gaza from Israel in 2018.
- Had to respect the strict limitations imposed by the BBC safety rules. Time was of the essence.
- With support from a colleague at the BBC Gaza Bureau, I found individuals willing to speak about trauma and the emotional effects of the siege and economic blockade. This is a taboo subject in Palestinian culture.
- Being fluent in Arabic allowed me to gain peoples' trust and to immerse myself in their stories.
- Limited by not being normally allowed to film outdoors for safety reasons, I captured real-life scenes from the hotel room window.
- Through patient observation and listening to people with an open mind, stories emerge to help us understand.
- Being alone with a camera in search of meaning and emotion is empowering and liberating. Filmed with the Canon EOS C300 camera. Also recorded sound.

**Goodbye Aleppo** (BBC Arabic, BBC World News)  
Producer-Director

*"Compelling. The filmmaker uses the excellent raw footage shot by the citizen journalists to create a lucid well constructed narrative, with intimate moments that are powerfully authentic, leading to a conclusion which is hard to not find deeply moving."*

Grierson Awards Jury Chair,  
Andy Whittaker

*"The most intimate, gripping and moving work we could see of these last days in Aleppo...It is like a love story, a love diary, to their city. A superb, a tremendous film."*

Rory Peck Judges

Winner of the 2018 International Emmy for *Outstanding Documentary*, the 2017 Grierson Award for *Best Current Affairs Documentary*, the 2017 Rory Peck Sony Impact Award, and a Monte-Carlo Television Festival Special Red Cross Award.

- From the BBC in London, I led a team of young filmmakers in East Aleppo during the last days of the siege at the height of the war, as the city was being bombed from the air by Syrian and Russian aircraft.
- Briefed the team twice daily on what to film, on how to get the poetry and truth out of the horror of their daily lives, how to speak to us, and how to make their stories and images resonate with an audience.
- Encouraged, inspired, and supported them, ensuring they were safe at a time when they faced death on a daily basis.
- Through an extensive network of contacts and with the help of BBC colleagues, I sourced and meticulously verified hundreds of hours of footage filmed by activists inside East Aleppo.
- Making this film was an emotional, creative, and a leadership challenge.

### **The Siege of Mecca (BBC Arabic)**

Development Producer

- Researched, developed, produced and wrote the story for a historical documentary about of the siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979.
- The search for participants and witnesses still alive today in Saudi Arabia and beyond was a great challenge.
- Some stories are inherently difficult to tell, because powerful governments, in this case Saudi Arabia, want them to remain secret.
- The search involved gaining the trust of individuals involved at intelligence levels, and witnesses to the event.
- Conducted some of the interviews for the film, which was five years in the making.
- Persistence, discretion, sensitivity, and close collaboration with expert colleagues allow hidden stories to come to light, against all the odds.

### **Aleppo: Life Under Siege (Panorama: BBC Current Affairs)**

Producer

- From the BBC in London, briefed a team of young film makers and activists in East Aleppo on a daily basis as the city was being bombed.
- Directed and guided the team in Arabic together with a Syrian colleague from London to obtain sequences for the film at a time of great danger to them.
- Using my expertise of Syria, Syrian culture, and the situation on the ground, I guided the team about what and how to film sequences for the film.
- Verified the accuracy of their footage and stories.
- Worked in multiple edit suites with a big team to build sequences and deliver the film.
- My expertise and knowledge of Syria enabled me to guide and empower the team working in East Aleppo, and to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the film.

### **Pregnant and in Chains (BBC Arabic and BBC World News)**

Producer-Director

- Led an investigation into the rape and abuse of domestic workers and women who were pregnant outside of marriage in the UAE, where it is considered a crime.
- Travelled to the UAE to find out how the local Sharia laws are applied to women who fall pregnant outside marriage and are punished for it with a prison sentence.
- Because no one dared to speak to me on camera, the search for victims and witnesses was extended to Ethiopia, the Philippines, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and the UK. To do this I tapped into an extensive network of contacts across the world.
- Directed and led a team long-distance with the support of local producers and crews in the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia.
- This was a difficult challenging story because the women wanted to remain hidden, from fear and shame.
- Persistence, patience, close collaborations with teams across the world, and determination made this film possible.
- When there is trust people feel creative and inspired.

### **The President's Man and his Rebel Son (BBC Arabic and BBC World News)**

Producer-Director, Camera, Sound

- Filmed this personal and political documentary about a family rift in Yemen (in Sana'a and Ta'iz), at a time of political conflict and turmoil.
- Filming as a woman in a full hijab and niqab was a physical challenge because I had to manage the camera and sound equipment too.

- The dangers of filming in Yemen meant decisions had to be measured carefully against the risk in a highly weaponised culture and a volatile environment.
- Overcame complex cultural challenges to find ways of being accepted as a film-maker.
- Being an outsider speaking Arabic was an asset.
- Time was of the essence, for security reasons, and dictated and limited what could be filmed.
- Even under great pressure, the kindness and openness of people allowed emotions to emerge, often against all odds.

**Stolen Dreams (Al-Jazeera English)**  
Producer-Director, Camera, Sound

- Filmed in London, this short documentary about three Iraqi artists living in exile involved an emotional investigation into how their art, their lives, and memories of war intertwined.
- The simple narrative involved speaking to them in the run-up to an exhibition held in a small gallery in London.
- Listened patiently to peoples' stories with empathy and emotional understanding enabling trust without judgment.

**House of Journalists (Al-Jazeera English)**  
Producer-Director, Camera, Sound

- Filmed in Paris, this simple tale of a shelter for persecuted journalists from around the world taught me that patience and time to observe allow for trust to emerge from individuals who have endured extreme hardship and trauma.
- The pressures of a tight production schedule and a limited budget did not get in the way of filming emotion.

**The World is Round (El mondo xe rotondo), a self-funded labour of love**  
Producer-Director, Camera, Sound

- My first self-shot film tells the story of a day in the life of an elderly couple running a small restaurant in Trieste.
- This was a labour of love, made on a shoestring with an editor friend, on borrowed computers.
- It taught me that being in a place with a camera makes things happen and encourages people to perform.
- It taught me that some key aspects of film making are innate and intuitive.
- Filming in a small space is a physical and emotional experience.

At the BBC I also Executive-Produced documentaries in the BBC Arabic Close-Up strand: *'Syrian Diaries: Women of the Uprising'*, *'The Policeman of Kirkuk'*, *'Slaves of the Caliphate'*, *'The Battle of Bizerte'*, and others

- The series was nominated for *'Best Documentary Series'* at the Broadcast Awards in 2014.
- Oversaw the development, production, and post-production of a number of films.
- Guided and supported film makers before, during and after filming on location.
- Attended edits in editorially complex and challenging situations.
- Problem-solved in edits, restructured films, clarified and sharpened the storytelling.
- Worked across editorial, compliance too.
- Wrote scripts for voice-overs and I know the importance of simple and clear commentary-writing.
- I verified stories and their accuracy.

**OTHER:**

Produced investigative series on the Assassination of Rafic Hariri (Murder in Beirut). This involved interviewing key characters, working on the series in the edit.

**BATTLE FOR THE GULF:**

Directed shoots in Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, Gaza, and Lebanon, to tell the story of those who were involved at top government level at the time of the war. It involved forensic analysis of the events, and close scrutiny of the narrative claims and statements made by the participants, and building one episode of the series in the edit.