

maqluba مقلوبة

Written and Directed by
Mike Elsherif



SYNOPSIS

“Maqluba” is a short narrative film centered on the relationship between a Palestinian-American grandmother (Teta) and her granddaughter (Laila). Laila visits her grandmother in her new apartment during a powerful storm under the guise of helping her unpack. But her nefarious goals slowly unfold as they delve deeper into the mystical fateful night. They spend the evening together feasting on maqluba, reading Turkish coffee grounds, and coming to terms with past traumas.

The film is a darkly comic, macabre Palestinian fable about two generations of immigrants struggling to deal with trauma, displacement, and life in the diaspora. It stars Rand Faris (*Dune: Part Two*, *Incendies*, *Memory*) and the director’s Palestinian mother, Amineh Elsherif, in her debut performance at 82.

The film has screened at both national and international film festivals including The Muslim House at the Sundance Film Festival, El Gouna, and the Oscar-Qualifying festivals BlackStar and Woodstock.

LAILA

Laila grew up in America and represents the younger generation of Palestinian-Americans disconnected from their ancestral land but still feeling the sting of displacement decades later. Her grandmother's trauma has slowly trickled down to her throughout the years, making her feel aimless and drawn towards prescription drug addiction to deal with the feeling of never belonging and being stuck between two worlds. Both women are desperate to find spiritual connections to alleviate the pain of displacement; Teta through Islam and Laila through drugs.





TETA

Teta and Laila represent two sides of the same coin, embodying the complexities of the Palestinian experience across generations. Teta symbolizes the older generation of Palestinians, who have endured a lifetime marked by the trauma of displacement. For her, every meal prepared, every recipe passed down, is a poignant link to her homeland—a tapestry woven with memories of family gatherings and the familiar scents of traditional dishes. Her connection to food serves as a means of preserving her cultural identity, while her spiritual practices anchor her in the faith that has offered solace amid loss. In contrast, Laila represents the younger generation, navigating a world shaped by these historical experiences, striving to carve out a future while honoring the rich heritage handed down by figures like Teta. Together, they reflect the enduring struggle and resilience of their people, intimately tied to both past and present.

PAST & UPCOMING SCREENINGS

PALESTINE CINEMA DAYS - Ramallah, PALESTINE

EL GOUNA FILM FESTIVAL - El Gouna, EGYPT

SPEED CINEMA - Louisville, KY

THE MUSLIM HOUSE (Sundance Film Festival) - Park City, UT

CHICAGO PALESTINE FILM FESTIVAL - Chicago, IL

ARAB FILM FESTIVAL - Dearborn, MI

CAAMFest - San Francisco, CA

BLACKSTAR FILM FESTIVAL - Philadelphia, PA

FLYOVER FILM FESTIVAL - Louisville, KY

WOODSTOCK FILM FESTIVAL - Woodstock, NY

D.C. PALESTINIAN FILM AND ARTS FESTIVAL - Washington D.C.

CALGARY ARAB FILM NIGHTS - Calgary, Alberta, CANADA

PRESS COVERAGE

LEO Weekly, July 1st, 2025

[THIS PALESTINIAN AMERICAN FILMMAKER TURNS EXPECTATIONS UPSIDE DOWN](#)

WAVE-3 News, November 17th, 2024

[LOCAL FILMMAKER SHOWCASES FILM AT SPEED CINEMA](#)

LEO Weekly, November 11th, 2024

[MEET LOUISVILLE FILMMAKERS AT THE FREE PREMIERE OF 'MAQLUBA' THIS SUNDAY](#)

Lousville Public Media, November 8th, 2024

[LOUISVILLE FILMMAKER USES ART TO TACKLE GENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND DISPLACEMENT](#)

Cairo News, October 29th, 2024

[PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN MIKE ELSHERIF: "MAQLUBA" TELLS THE STORY OF MY MOTHER'S JOURNEY OF DISPLACEMENT](#)





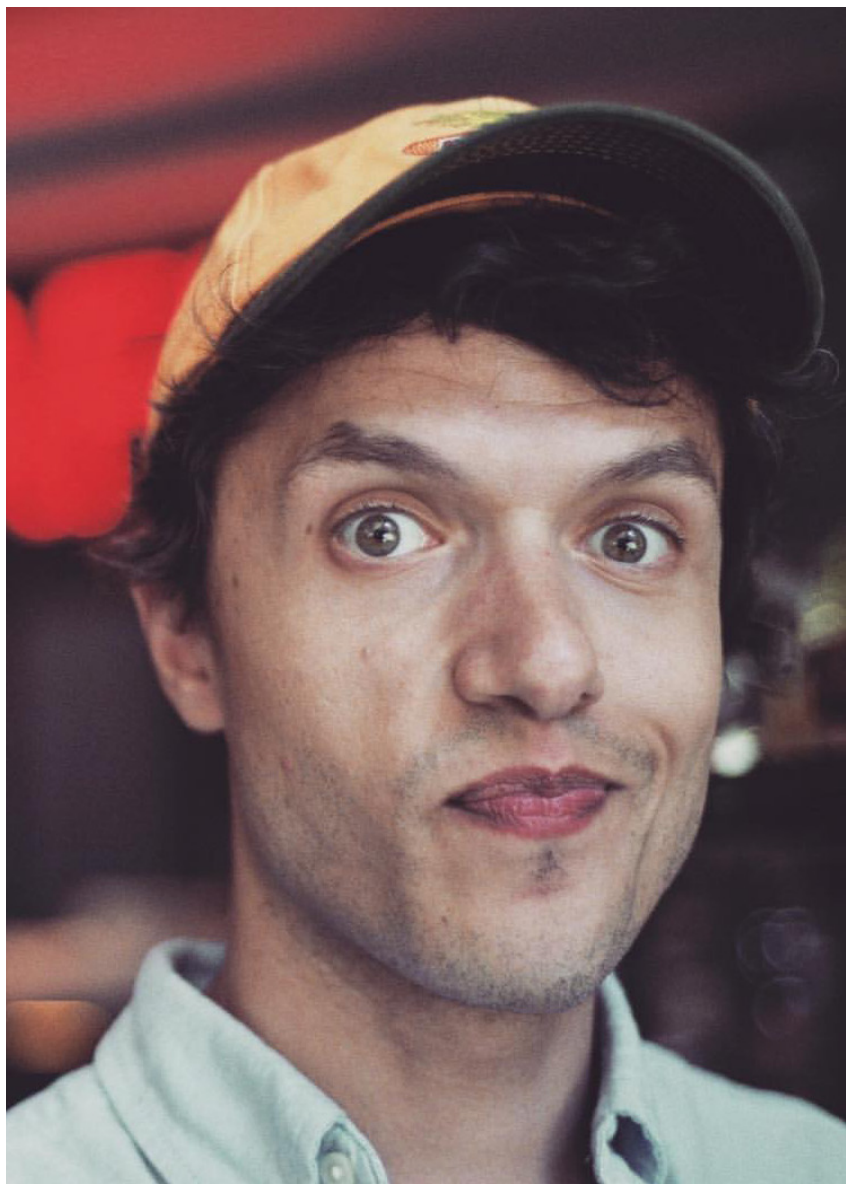
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The film's Arabic title, Maqluba, translates into English as upside down. The title refers to the famous Palestinian dish of rice, eggplant, and lamb and the upside-down Turkish coffee cup that holds the characters' fate. These are metaphors for the characters' inner lives in upheaval as they attempt to let go of the familiar past and plunge into the uncertain future. The film is about two generations of Palestinians yearning for home in an indifferent world and finding solace and connection in their familial bond.

My Palestinian mother's life inspired me to make this film. I chose her to star in the film because of the sense of verisimilitude that it would add to the character and material. I spent a year rehearsing with her and her co-actress, Rand Faris. I explored our history together and learned more about her past and the trauma she had endured. Her bond with her co-actress was one of the most beautiful things I've ever witnessed. They began to think of each other as family and loved each other deeply.

"Maqluba" is my first Arabic-language film that explores Palestinian themes I've wanted to examine my entire life. I sought to capture the experience of Palestinians in the diaspora and how past traumas inform present fears and manifest themselves throughout the years. This film is about my mother's life, mortality, generational trauma, and all the Palestinians trying to find their way back home through religion, food, music, and drugs.





MIKE ELSHERIF - writer / director

Mike Elsherif is an award-winning Palestinian-American writer and director who immigrated to America from Kuwait following the Persian Gulf War. His films deal with themes of displacement, mortality, and the immigrant experience. He was recently awarded the Sunbird Stories Award by FilmLab Palestine and the 40 Under 40 Award by Arab America Foundation. He's been a Rawi Fellow at the Rawi Screenwriters Lab, an Al Smith Fellow selected by the Kentucky Arts Council, a Writer-in-Residence at The New Harmony Project, a COLLIDER Artist-in-Residence through the Louisville Free Public Library, and an Artist-in-Residence at Bernheim Forest and Arboretum. Mike is a graduate of the University of North Carolina - School of the Arts School of Filmmaking.

JOHNBEN LACY - producer / cinematographer

JohnBen Lacy is a filmmaker from Louisville, KY. He has been captivated by the magic of storytelling from an early age, beginning his professional career as an actor. In 2011, he started Clovehitch Productions and has been writing, producing and directing narrative, documentary, and commercial film projects ever since.

JohnBen's films gravitate towards themes of escapism and absurdity, featuring characters whom often find themselves in unusual and surreal situations. His work has screened at BlackStar Film Festival, El Gouna Film Festival, Sound of Silent Film Festival, and Flyover Film Festival. JohnBen studied Dramatic Arts at Centre College.



CAST & CREW

LAILA Rand Faris
TETA Amineh Elsherif

Written and Directed by MIKE ELSHERIF
Produced by Clovehitch Productions and Metals Media

Executive Producer JULIE CRUTCHER
Producers JOHNBEN LACY, SHEPHERD AHLERS

Director of Photography JOHNBEN LACY
Gaffer NATE SPICER & ZACHARY ERWIN
Key Grip DANIEL WILLIAMSON
Grips MILO MARTINEZ & BOBBY SPALDING
First Assistant Camera MICHAELA A. TWYMAN
Second Assistant Camera GILLIAN SPARKS
Drone Photography VIZIONAIR / DREW DUFFIN & IAN
WILLMOT

Production Designer W.G. RICKEL

Costume Design TORA EFF
Hair & Makeup Designer LESLIE DALE HUMPHREY
Hair & Makeup Artist LORIE KARNES
Hair, Makeup, & Costume PA KATE ROACH

Production Sound Mixer JAMES FRILEY
Post-Production Sound Services by SNAPSOUND
Supervising Sound Editor / Re-recording Mixer ZACH SEIVERS
Co-Supervising Sound Editor BESO KACHARAVA
Sound Effects Editor GEORGE MURGULIA

Colorist NOUR ABUKAMAL
Visual Effects JONATHAN KLINGENFUS

Score Mix JOHNBEN LACY
Flute KAELAH MCMONIGLE
Percussion CHRIS MARTIN-LEIDNER
Production Assistants JOSIE TEGETHOFF & MAHER SHERIF

