



WE NEVER LEFT

(رحنا بس ما رحنا)



Official selections:

**(2024) Arab Film Festival, Karama Human Rights Film Festival,
(2025) DisOrient Film Festival, Socially Relevant Film Festival, Salem Film Festival,
Beirut International Women Film Festival, Arab American National Museum Film Festival,
DOK.fest München, Nuit Blanche du Cinéma des Droits Humains,
Mizna's Twin Cities Arab Film Festival, Alexandria Mediterranean Film Festival,
Festival du Film Libanais de France, Lebanon Cinema Days Canada, NewFilmmakers LA**

Running Time: 83 minutes

Genre: Documentary

Year: 2024

Language: Arabic/English

Subtitles: English/Arabic, French

Country of Origin: Lebanon, USA

Shooting format: 24fps, 16:9

Screening format: DCP / Prores; 5.1 / Stereo

North American Distribution: Watermelon Pictures

Sales/Distribution contact: Loulwa Khoury / loukhoury@gmail.com / +1 (203) 554 5911

Website: www.weneverleftdoc.com

Social Media: @loukhoury ; @weneverleftdoc



LOGLINE

Set during the Lebanese revolution, **WE NEVER LEFT** portrays a heart-wrenching duality between Beirut and New York, an impassioned testament to the Lebanese diaspora's unrequited but irrepressible love for their homeland.



SYNOPSIS

Saying goodbye to loved ones at the Beirut airport has become an unfortunate tradition in Lebanon, almost a curse. Lebanese emigrants, driven abroad by decades of turmoil, are more than double those still left in their homeland. After civil protests erupt in Lebanon on October 17th 2019, WE NEVER LEFT follows three young Lebanese expats as they take part in the Lebanese revolution from New York fighting for a better country, each protesting in their own way. As they go through their collective journey, they all individually confront both their relationship with their homeland and their own complicated identities. This is the story of the Lebanese people and revolutions both political and personal.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



There are more Lebanese living abroad than within the country. For hundreds of years, Lebanese have been emigrating, due to the endless turmoil. I myself left when I was 22 for a better future. But over the years I've been wondering if I made the right decision to leave, or if I truly ever left.

When the Lebanese revolution started in October 2019, I met the Lebanese diaspora of New York and I found myself compelled like never before as a filmmaker. I was amongst my people. Up until that point I was a film editor, but I grabbed my camera and started filming. These were my instincts as a filmmaker and as a citizen – to shed light on what's happening in my country and tell the story of my people.

LOULWA KHOURY

Director/Editor/Producer/Cinematographer

Loulwa Khoury is a New York based filmmaker, film editor born and raised in Beirut. She edited *Paradise Without People* (2019), *Dusty and Stones* (2022), *Joy Dancer* (2024) and *Traces of Home*.

She also directed her first award-winning feature documentary, *We Never Left* (2024).

Her other work includes award-winning documentaries *City of Ghosts* (2017), *Some Kind of Heaven* (2020) and *It Will Be Chaos* (2018).

She was also one of the mentees of the Karen Schmeer Editing Fellowship Diversity Program of the year 2019-2020, a fellow in the Sundance Co//ab Art of Editing Fellowship 2020 and the DOC NYC x VC Storytelling Incubator as well as a winner of the Creative Power Award.



MARK BECKER
Co-Producer / Consulting Editor

Mark Becker co-directed and edited the documentary ART AND CRAFT (2014, Oscilloscope Laboratories), which was shortlisted for the 2015 Academy Awards, nominated for an Emmy Award, and won recognition with the National Board of Review. Becker directed and edited the Emmy-nominated film PRESSURE COOKER (2008). He produced, directed and edited ROMANTICO (2005, Kino International), which was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, received two Independent Spirit Award nominations. Becker co-wrote and edited the Emmy-nominated documentary CIRCO (2011), and co-edited the acclaimed LOST BOYS OF SUDAN (2003). He recently premiered his docu-series Instant Life at Sundance 2022.



MARIE-LOUISE ELIA

Co-Editor

Marie-Louise 'Malou' Elia is a Lebanese screenwriter, director and editor. She studied Film Directing and Screenwriting in Beirut and New York. A Film Independent alumna and a Global Media Makers fellow, Marie-Louise wrote and directed several short films and documentaries. Her latest short "Death and Other Fears" is currently having its festival run. She also edited many documentaries and short fiction films. In 2014, she was selected among the editing talents of Beirut Talents.

In addition to co-writing a comedy series "Men Home La Hon", Marie-Louise is currently developing three films: The Savior, a feature comedy, "Yearning" a short dramatic film and another feature screenplay We Find You Anywhere, winner of the Most Promising Screenplay prize, second place, at the Cinemai'yat Film Festival (2016).

She is also a lecturer at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) and formerly at Saint Joseph University and the Lebanese University.



YARA EL-MURR

Associate Producer

Yara El Murr is an award winning journalist and emerging documentary filmmaker currently based in between Toronto and Beirut. She has covered migration, labor, climate, health, and the repercussions of Lebanon's civil war on society in both writing and film. Her documentary work includes *WE NEVER LEFT, THE SOIL AND THE SEA* (2023), and *REVERBERATIONS* (2022). She is currently the Engagement Editor at The Green Line Toronto where she leads a community reporting and video-journalism program.



JOELLE KHOURY

Music Composer

Born in Beirut, Joelle Khoury is a composer/pianist who performs contemporary classical music and jazz. For almost two decades, she has composed contemporary classical music pieces and concertos for chamber and philharmonic orchestras, as well as pieces for her own jazz quintet.

Rather than “orientalizing” her music, she always thought that, “A true composition is the fruit of a unique idea, developed into a concept, based in what the composer has heard, aiming at expressing an individual point of view, a certain personality. Therefore it is neither ‘western’ nor ‘oriental,’ taking into account the fact that we have all heard numerous styles of music.” She has made five CDs, which include *Tumbling Up* (jazz quintet); *Is It So* (jazz quintet); *Music and Poetry* (chamber music and voice); *Dream She Is* (opera monodrama in Arabic) and *Beirut Jazz 2020* (jazz quintet).



ELIA EL HADDAD
Sound Designer/ Sound Mixer

Educated, trained and experienced in Recording, Editing, Mixing for Cinema, TV, Radio and Podcast, in addition to his 9+ years of experience as a sound designer and mixer, Elia owns a studio and is a previous lecturer in 2 universities. He's worked on sound for France 3, BBC and Al Jazeera to name a few. In studios, he's also worked on numerous projects ranging from award winning films to TV ads, documentaries and Cinema movies. He believes that sound can make a film a total failure or an absolute success, that's why clients have been trusting him with their projects to ensure the latter.



CHARLES TRABOULSI

Colorist

Born in Montreal, raised in Beirut and based in Paris, Charles marries his love for drawing, his ease with computers and his need for instant gratification in the form of color grading. He tackles projects big or small, technical or freestyle, in-suite or in-PJs. When he's not staring at a screen nerding out on work, he can be found staring at a screen nerding out on history, linguistics, martial arts, and other fun stuff.



CASEY FRIEDMAN

Motion Graphics

Casey Friedman is a queer filmmaker living in Brooklyn, NY, originally from Montclair, NJ. He is a 2015 graduate of Brown University with a B.A. in Sociology.

As a filmmaker, he's interested in the intersection of queerness, botany, colonialism, folklore, and nature.



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