



Contact:

POV Communications: Communications@pov.org, 212-989-7425

Cathy Fisher, cfisher@pov.org, Brian Geldin, bgeldin@pov.org

POV pressroom: www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom

POV Documentary ‘Return to Homs’ Is an Intimate, Unforgettable View of Syrian Insurgency, Premiering on Monday, July 20, 2015 on PBS

“Scenes . . . tap veins of adrenalin which Hollywood blockbusters can only dream of finding . . . a sober, sobering bulletin of unambiguous intention and undeniable power.”—Neil Young, *The Hollywood Reporter*

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

Airdate: **Return to Homs** has its national broadcast premiere on **Monday, July 20, 2015** at 10 p.m. on the **POV (Point of View)** series on PBS. American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, POV is the recipient of a 2013 MacArthur Foundation Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

The Film: War changes people, including Abdul Basset Saroot, once the teenage goalkeeper of the Syrian national soccer team, who morphed into a peaceful advocate of Arab Spring reforms and then into an armed opponent of President Bashar al-Assad’s regime ready to be martyred for his cause.

Return to Homs chronicles Basset’s transformation and heroic struggle to save civilians in his hometown of Homs from annihilation. An underdog winner of Sundance’s 2014 World Cinema Grand Jury Prize for Documentary as well as the recipient of the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award, the movie captures the early promise of the Arab Spring and the brutal urban combat that followed. Directed by Talal Derki, the heart-stopping and often wrenching film has been compared to Gillo Pontecorvo’s 1966 classic, *The Battle of Algiers*.

Shot between August 2011 and April 2013, **Return to Homs** provides an unprecedented look at the Syrian regime’s war against its own people—a war largely waged behind a media blackout. Stark and fast-paced, the film is a plea for intervention in a conflict the world has mostly overlooked.

Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at www.pbs.org/pressroom.

Online: POV’s website for **Return to Homs** —<http://www.pbs.org/pov/returntohoms/> — offers a broad range of exclusive online content to enhance the PBS broadcast. Watch the full film online for free for a limited time following the broadcast (July 21 – Aug. 20, 2015), learn from the filmmaker in an extended video interview, view photos from the film, download a discussion guide and other viewing resources, and find out what’s happened since the cameras stopped rolling. What’s Your POV? Share your thoughts about **Return to Homs** by posting a comment online.

Filmmaker’s

Statement: “The movie is about the Syrian citizen who challenged everything and everyone to demand freedom,” says filmmaker Talal Derki. “It’s a movie about war and the pressure of being in a battlefield.”

“When I got to Homs and met Abdul Basset al-Saroot, I was inspired immediately. I knew it: He was the personality that I had been looking for, a courageous 19-year-old man, full of character and charisma. He could bring the people closer to him in a second, and everyone loved him and appreciated his energy.

“What started as peaceful protests in Syria soon evolved into siege in Homs, into the battles and violence around the country, where snipers shot citizens and the regime shelled places killing innocent souls. That’s when Saroot started carrying weapons.

“The crisis changed each and every one of us. The challenges changed us, but mostly it was death. Death left its mark on every one of us: We all changed because of the increasing violence, the loss of people close to us, the injustice, the fragmentation. However, Abdul Basset was strong and very solid; he was and still is persistent.”

Filmmaker Bios: Talal Derki (Writer/Director)

Talal Derki, born in Damascus in 1977, is a Syrian filmmaker who studied film directing in Athens. He worked as an assistant director on Arabic feature films and was a director for various Arabic television programs from 2009 to 2012. He was also a freelance cameraman for CNN and Thomson Reuters. He made two short fiction films and a short documentary prior to his first feature-length documentary, *Return to Homs*. His films have screened at various festivals around the world. In 2014 he was a member of the feature-length documentary jury for the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. On Dec. 14, 2014, he and producer Orwa Nyrabia were featured on *60 Minutes*, which showed footage from *Return to Homs*. Derki, who is also a published poet, currently lives with his family in Berlin, where he is working on his next feature documentary.

Orwa Nyrabia, Producer

Orwa Nyrabia graduated from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus in 1999 and worked as a columnist at the *As-Safir* newspaper for four years before he began working in film. He worked as assistant director on such high-profile fiction films as *The Box of Life* by Ossama Mohammed (Un Certain Regard selection, Cannes Film Festival 2002) and played a lead in *Bab el shams (The Gate of Sun)* by Yousry Nasrallah (an out-of-competition selection screened at the Cannes Film Festival 2004). Since he co-founded Proaction Film, Nyrabia has worked on a number of documentary and fiction films. A graduate of AFIC at the Sorbonne and the Institut National de l’Audiovisuel, he got his start with the international co-production documentary *Dolls: A Woman from Damascus* by Diana El Jeiroudi. He is a co-founder and organizer of DOX BOX, an annual international documentary film festival in Syria.

In 2014, Nyrabia was one of the producers of the acclaimed documentary *Silvered Water, Syria Self-Portrait*, directed by exiled Syrian filmmaker Ossama Mohammed in collaboration with young Kurdish activist Wiam Simav Bedirxan. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, screened at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and Toronto International Film Festival and won the Grierson Award for Best Documentary. Nyrabia currently lives in Berlin.

Hans Robert Eisenhauer, Producer

As commissioning editor for ZDF/ARTE and deputy program director for ARTE, Hans Robert Eisenhauer produced more than 50 theatrical-length commissions for TV and cinema, including Oscar® winners. Eisenhauer has served as director of the Berlin Film Fund and

helped to create the European Film Academy. Since his retirement from ZDF/ARTE, he has been running Ventana-Film, a film and television production company in Berlin focused on international documentaries. He is currently working with Talal Derki on his next feature documentary.

Related Stories: “The ghost children of Homs, Syria,” by Régis Le Sommer, Mashable, June 8, 2015. <http://mashable.com/2015/06/08/the-ghosts-of-homs-syria/>

“What Happened in Homs,” by Jonathan Littell, New York Review of Books Blog, March 18, 2015. <http://bit.ly/1doWXL>

“How to Correct America’s Strategy in Syria,” by Robert S. Ford, Middle East Institute, March 11, 2015. <http://www.mei.edu/content/at/how-to-correct-americas-syria-strategy>

“Syrian soccer goalie-turned-rebel becomes icon,” by Barbara Surk, AP, May 19, 2014. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/syrian-soccer-goalie-turned-rebel-becomes-icon>

“Syrian filmmaker Orwa Nyrabia speaks about his new film, ‘Return to Homs,’ by Mark Jenkins, *The Washington Post*, April 22, 2014. <http://wapo.st/1GmF1w8>

“Amid the Debris of Homs, a Guerrilla Is Born,” by Rick Gladstone, *The New York Times*, Feb. 12, 2014. <http://nyti.ms/1GEYvxx>

“Talking to Talal Derki,” by Luna Safwan, *NOW*, Jan. 30, 2014. <http://bit.ly/1IDPF2h>

Outreach: POV works with public television stations, national organizations, community groups and educators to present more than 650 free screenings across the county. In addition, POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow develop discussion guides to foster education, dialogue and action. The **Return to Homs** discussion guide includes information on Syria’s history and religious demographics, the Civil War in Syria from 2011 to the present and the dangers faced by journalists in the country. POV and Dr. Rogow also produced a standards-aligned lesson plan, “News Writing, Target Audience, and the Syrian Conflict,” with free streaming clips for use in 9th-12th grade classes. In partnership with the Princeton Public Library, POV has compiled a reading list of fiction and non-fiction books that further explore the issues in the film. Visit the [Return to Homs Partner Toolkit](#) to download these materials and find everything you need to get involved with the film. Join POV’s [Community Network](#) to borrow **Return to Homs** for free from our DVD Lending Library. For a list of upcoming screening events, visit www.pbs.org/pov/engage/.

Credits:	Writer/Director:	Talal Derki
	Producers:	Orwa Nyrabia, Hans Robert Eisenhauer
	Associate Producer:	Diana El Jeiroudi
	Editor:	Anne Fabini
	Associate Editor:	Martin Reimers
	Camera:	Kahtan Hassoun, Ossama Al Homs, Talal Derki, Orwa Nyrabia
	Running Time:	86:46
	POV Series Credits:	
	Executive Producers:	Chris White, Simon Kilmurry
	Associate Producer:	Nicole Tsien
	Coordinating Producer:	Nikki Heyman

Pressroom: Visit POV's pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

About POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc., POV is public television's premier showcase for nonfiction films. The series airs Mondays at 10 p.m. on PBS from June to September, with primetime specials during the year. Since 1988, POV has been the home for the world's boldest contemporary filmmakers, celebrating intriguing personal stories that spark conversation and inspire action. With our documentary broadcasts, original online programming and dynamic community engagement campaigns, we are committed to supporting films that capture the imagination and present diverse perspectives.

POV films have won 32 Emmy® Awards, 18 George Foster Peabody Awards, 12 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards®, the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award and the Prix Italia. The POV series has been honored with a MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, a Special News & Documentary Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking, two IDA Awards for Best Continuing Series and the National Association of Latino Independent Producers Award for Corporate Commitment to Diversity. More information is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

Major funding for POV is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding comes from Wyncote Foundation, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee, Nancy Blachman and David desJardins, Bertha Foundation, The Fledgling Fund, Marguerite Casey Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, Ettinger Foundation, and public television viewers. POV is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KQED San Francisco, WGBH Boston and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG.