



presents

ON HER SHOULDERS



Directed by **ALEXANDRIA BOMBACH**
Produced by **HAYLEY PAPPAS** and **BROCK WILLIAMS**

World Premiere:

2018 Sundance Film Festival – *Winner: Directing Award, U.S. Documentary*

Festivals:

2018 South by Southwest Film Festival – *Winner: SXSW LUNA Chicken & Egg Award* | 2018 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival | 2018 Human Rights Watch Film Festival | 2018 Sydney Film Festival | 2018 Sheffield Doc/Fest | 2018 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival

Run Time: 94 minutes



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SYNOPSIS

Twenty-three-year-old Nadia Murad's life is a dizzying array of exhausting undertakings—from giving testimony before the U.N. to visiting refugee camps to soul-bearing media interviews and one-on-one meetings with top government officials. With deep compassion and a formal precision and elegance that matches Nadia's calm and steely demeanor, filmmaker Alexandria Bombach follows this strong-willed young woman, who survived the 2014 genocide of the Yazidis in Northern Iraq and escaped the hands of ISIS to become a relentless beacon of hope for her people, even when at times she longs to lay aside this monumental burden and simply have an ordinary life.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When Nadia Murad walks into a meeting—whether with a politician, a journalist, or a diplomat—there is a sense of tension. Understandably, it seems that for many it's difficult to know what to say, what questions to ask, how to express that they care but at the same time not promise too much. They most likely know her wrenching story before she starts, yet no matter how much detail she gives, they also know they couldn't possibly, truly understand her experience.

This is a film that explores that space—the distance between the victim and her voice, the fragility of human emotions that both provoke and hinder positive change, and the unbelievable resilience of a woman willing to sacrifice herself to play the media game that is modern advocacy.

The past four years of Nadia's life have been unimaginable. On August 3, 2014, ISIS declared that the Yazidi people of Northern Iraq had long been a shame to their idea of Islam, and set out to commit genocide. An estimated 5,000 people were killed in the weeks that followed, and over 7,000 women and children were captured, forced to become sex slaves and child soldiers. Nadia was captured on the same day that ISIS killed her mother and six brothers. Eighteen members of her family were either killed or enslaved.

As she begins to tell her story, which I heard her recount over and over again, you might think that she would become used to it. But Nadia communicates the weight of her experience in her eyes. At the end of each and every meeting — through the business suits and flurry of handshakes, a long lens captures her sinking back into herself to recover— she is visibly drained.

I followed Nadia and the people working closest with her in the summer of 2016. From refugee camps in Greece to a memorial rally on the anniversary of the genocide in Berlin, to the House of Commons in Ottawa and the United Nations headquarters in New York, Nadia's life is in constant motion. What I saw was an exhausting process, with no real roadmap for success. I started to see her lose faith in outlets that she had entrusted with her story. It seemed the incessant barrage of questions from the media turned to "How did they rape you" more often than "What can be done for the Yazidis?"

The platform of the victim, the survivor, is nothing to be taken lightly. Nadia herself knows that her words have moved people to take action. It is my hope that this intimate access into Nadia's life off the podium will reveal the true struggles that a voiceless community faces in getting the world to act.

– Alexandria Bombach

BIOGRAPHIES

Nadia Murad

Nadia Murad is a human rights activist. She is a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize, the recipient of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize and the Sakharov Prize, and the UN's first Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking. She has also received the Clinton Global Citizen Award, the Peace Prize from the United Nations association of Spain, and was named 2016 Woman of the Year by *Glamour Magazine*. Together with Yazda, a Yazidi rights organization, Nadia is currently working to bring ISIS before the International Criminal Court on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Alexandria Bombach – Director, Cinematographer, Editor

Alexandria Bombach is an award-winning cinematographer, editor, and director from Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her first feature-length documentary, *FRAME BY FRAME*, followed the lives of four Afghan photojournalists who were facing the realities of building Afghanistan's first free press. The film had its world premiere at SXSW 2015, went on to win more than twenty-five film festival awards, and screened for the president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani. Alexandria continued her work in Afghanistan in 2016, directing the Pulitzer Center-supported *New York Times* Op-Doc, *AFGHANISTAN BY CHOICE*, an intertwining portrait of five Afghans who had to weigh the costs of leaving or staying as the country's security deteriorated. In addition to her feature documentary work, Alexandria's production company Red Reel has been producing award-winning, character-driven stories since 2009. Her 2013 film *COMMON GROUND* unearthed the emotion behind a proposed wilderness-area addition for a community in Montana as heritage and tradition are seemingly defended on both sides. Her Emmy award-winning 2012 series *MOVESHAKE* captured the internal conflicts of people dedicating their lives to a cause.

Hayley Pappas – Producer

Hayley Pappas is the Head of RYOT Films, where she runs all content and creative strategy—overseeing industry partnerships, content development, packaging and distribution, and all ancillary marketing campaigns. With RYOT, Hayley has produced a slate of award-winning docs, including two Oscar®-nominated shorts, *BODY TEAM 12* and *WATANI: MY HOMELAND*, as well as over a dozen virtual reality films with partners such as NPR and the Associated Press. She's sold work to partners ranging from HBO and MTV to Hulu and Apple. Her work has covered topics including sexual assault, solitary confinement and mass executions and has premiered at Sundance, Tribeca, SXSW, and Hot Docs among others.

Brock Williams – Producer

Brock Williams is a Los Angeles-based producer working in both narrative and documentary film, and is an alumnus of the Film Independent Producing Lab. With strong ties to Missouri and Texas, he has produced narrative feature films in those states, including *BOX ELDER* (2008), *AWFUL NICE* (2013), and *SLASH* (2016). His first feature documentary as creative producer was *KILLING THEM SAFELY* (2015) and he was a consulting producer on Alexandria Bombach's first feature, *FRAME BY FRAME* (2015). He also works as a documentary editor and photographer.

Bryn Mooser – Executive Producer

Bryn Mooser is the CEO and co-founder of RYOT. Acquired by AOL in 2016, RYOT is the leading immersive media company specializing in virtual and augmented reality. As a two-time Oscar®-nominated filmmaker, Bryn has overseen the production of more than 200 linear and immersive films. RYOT's work has earned accolades across the industry, including two Emmys. Before starting RYOT, Bryn spent years as a humanitarian serving in the Peace Corps in Africa and working in Haiti, where he helped build the country's largest secondary school in Port-au-Prince. Bryn has been featured in *WIRED*, *CNBC*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and was an *Esquire* "American of the Year" in 2014.

Matt Ippolito – Executive Producer

Matt Ippolito is the VP, Strategy and Ops / COO of RYOT, where he leads content acquisition and business, legal, finance, and day-to-day operations. Matt has executive produced films which premiered at Sundance and negotiated the sale of industry-leading original content including three series with Hulu. Prior to RYOT, Matt was an investment professional at US Renewables Group (USRG), a \$750M growth equity firm focused on sustainable technologies, where he pitched over \$20M of equity investments, structured \$20M of debt transactions, and negotiated the sale of four companies.

Adam Bardach – Executive Producer

Adam Bardach is a filmmaker, producer, and production executive with over twenty-five acclaimed feature documentaries and nonfiction series to his credit. Most recently, Adam executive produced *BEFORE THE FLOOD*, directed by Fisher Stevens, with Leonardo DiCaprio serving as one of the producers. The film reached more than 60 million people worldwide and surpassed a record-setting one billion minutes viewed across linear, digital, streaming, and social platforms making it arguably one of the most watched documentaries in history and the most watched NatGeo film ever.

Marie Therese Guirgis – Executive Producer

Marie Therese Guirgis is Head of Production and Development at RatPac Documentary Films. Since joining RatPac in 2013, Marie Therese has developed and overseen production of such films as NIGHT WILL FALL by André Singer, CHUCK NORRIS VS COMMUNISM by Ilinca Calugareanu, THE 100 YEARS SHOW by Alison Klayman, AUTHOR: THE JT LEROY STORY by Jeff Feuerzeig, and BEFORE THE FLOOD by Fisher Stevens. Prior to joining RatPac, Marie Therese produced award-winning feature films and documentaries and also worked for many years in film distribution, most significantly as SVP, Distribution and Acquisitions at Wellspring, a renowned director-driven independent distributor. Her previous producing credits include Ira Sachs' KEEP THE LIGHTS ON, Julia Loktev's THE LONELIEST PLANET, Jonathan Caouette's TARNATION, and Rupert Murray's UNKNOWN WHITE MALE.

Alison Klayman – Executive Producer

Alison Klayman is a Sundance-winning director and producer. Her feature documentary AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY about China's most famous artist/activist was awarded a Special Jury Prize at the festival in 2012 and went on to be shortlisted for the Academy Awards®. The film earned two Emmy nominations, a Director's Guild of America Award nomination, and a duPont-Columbia Journalism Award. Alison also directed THE 100 YEARS SHOW, about Cuban-American painter Carmen Herrera, and executive produced the Peabody and Independent Spirit Award-winner HOOLIGAN SPARROW, about Chinese human rights champion Ye Haiyan. She has a new Netflix Original feature documentary set to debut in 2018.

Elizabeth Schaeffer Brown – Co-Producer

Elizabeth Brown is a resource mobilization and communications professional focused on projects designed to counter violent extremism through education, partnership development, fundraising, branding, and media. She has worked in some of the world's most vulnerable areas to strengthen international and local justice systems, expand access to digital education while protecting the rights of women and girls. Elizabeth has been working with the Yazidi community since August 2015 when she traveled to Iraq with Luis Moreno Ocampo, Kerry Propper, and Murad Ismael to launch a case against ISIS for genocide crimes against the Yazidi people. She is co-founder of Uncommon Union and a founding member of Nadia's initiative.

Patrick Jonsson – Composer

Patrick Jonsson is an Emmy-nominated film composer. In 2013 Patrick scored BENDS, directed by Flora Lau, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival as part of 'Un Certain Regard.' He went on to score the Academy Award® and BAFTA-nominated feature documentary VIRUNGA, directed by Orlando von Einsiedel and executive produced by Leonardo DiCaprio. More recently he wrote the music for the Academy Award®-winning Netflix short documentary THE WHITE HELMETS, also directed by von Einsiedel,

for which he was nominated for a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Music Composition for a Limited Series, Movie, or Special.

Patrick's other credits include the BBC Three drama FIVE BY FIVE, starring Idris Elba and directed by Kate Herron; the acclaimed documentary FRAME BY FRAME, directed by Alexandria Bombach and Mo Scarpelli, for which he was nominated for Best Documentary Score at the Hollywood Music in Media Awards 2015; and MOON SHOT, a documentary web series for Google produced by JJ Abrams/Bad Robot.

About RYOT

RYOT is an Emmy Award-winning, Academy Award®-nominated media brand that specializes in exceptional video content in traditional and emerging formats. It comprises RYOT Films, a prolific film and television development shop that creates both short and feature-length content; RYOT Studio, a next-generation creative studio that provides premium, end-to-end content marketing solutions; and RYOT Lab, a technology and innovation hub that capitalizes on emerging formats including AR and VR. RYOT is part of Oath, a global media technology company and dynamic house of brands people love.

CREDITS

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Hayley Pappas Brock Williams

Executive Producers

Bryn Mooser

Matt Ippolito

Marie Therese Guirgis Adam Bardach

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