

The Syrian Bride

Author

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The film, *The Syrian Bride*, is a fictitious movie intended to present the situation that has prevailed in the Middle East for a long time. The setting is in the disputed territory of the Golan Heights. The territory is real, and has been at the centre of animosity between Syria and Israel.

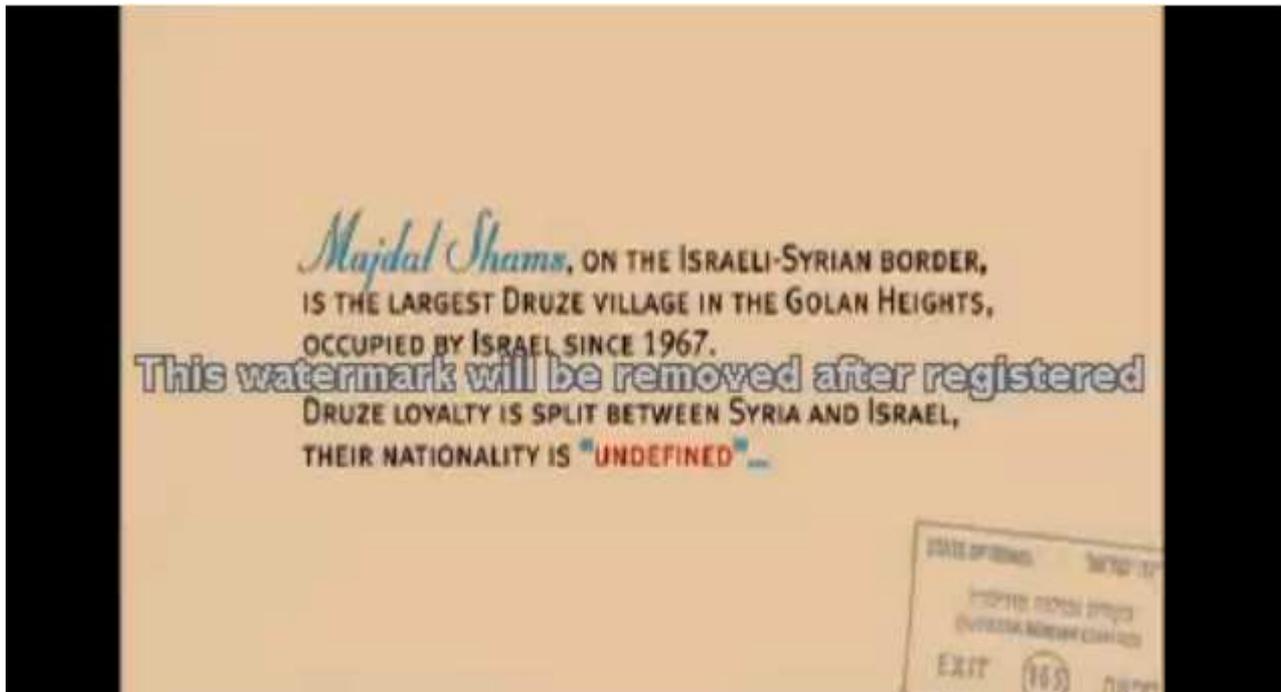


Figure 1: Acknowledgement of the setting.

While the geographical setting and reference to some people are real, the families preparing for the wedding are fictitious, and some of the events are fictitious too. It is just after the dawn of the second millennium in 2001, and the negotiations concerning the Golan Heights are facing difficulties, putting a Druze village in the disputed territory at the centre of a political row. Golan Heights is occupied by Israel while Syria claims its ownership. Thus, the residents do not know their legitimate citizenship. A family in the disputed territory prepares one of its members, Mona, to travel to Syria to marry a television personality. The bride has not met Tallel, the television personality, before. This makes her situation sad and uncertain. Although the characters in the film are fictitious, the existence of a family in a

similar situation is a possibility in the region. The story turns out to be believable and the characters can represent real people in the Middle East.

The director seems to have selected the actors properly with the cast being appropriately matched. All characters fit well in to their role, with the bride, who is one of the major actors, being a careful selection. Furthermore, Mona's sister is a remarkably appropriate selection too, and plays a major role in the film. Clara Khoury, an actor who has played similar role in an earlier film, plays as *Mona*, the bride. The idea of focusing on family and the institution of marriage brings out the social distress in the region due to the barriers imposed by the governments. While Israel maintains an iron grip on Golan Heights, Syria continues to claim total ownership of the territory.

The theme of the film is conflict. Syria and Israel have always been in conflict over the extent of their borders and the legitimacy of the state of Israel. Civilians are caught up in the conflict between the two countries. The Salman family is a perfect depiction of the social and political problems the people in Golan Heights might be going through. Mona's brothers and sister are affected by the conflict, with her brothers deciding to marry foreigners, which is a breach of tradition. Mona's sister is also battling multiple problems and conflicts in her family. Their father feels embarrassed and betrayed by his sons.

Although the two countries have been depicted as insensitive to the plight of the people in the Golan Heights, the film is obviously in support of Israel's claim for the territory. People from Golan Heights are not allowed to cross into Syria with Israeli passports since Syria does not acknowledge the existence of Israel. This is a claim that the film's plot seems to emphasize. In contrast, Mona's community in the disputed territory supports Syria's cause. Mona's father is cautioned not to come near the border by authorities, an order he perceives as oppressive. He ignores the directive and escorts his daughter to the border. Syrian authorities are depicted as dictatorial and oppressive in the film. Officials at the border

seem reluctant to accept passports with an Israeli stamp. For this reason, Syrian authorities are depicted as insensitive even during such a time when a family is struggling to make a difficult wedding enjoyable. This characterization of Syrian authorities seems to criticize them. However, the basis of the insinuation of the film to Syria's oppressive government is a bias since the territory is under dispute and cannot be said to belong to any of the powers at the moment.

The Syrian Bride is set in the arid and semi-arid area of the border between Syria and Israel. The pictures in the film bring out the real life landscape of the territory. There are mountains in the background, which is the real life scenery in Golan. The film is also characterized by higher than average illumination. This is also appropriate since the border between Israel and Syria is open, plant life is scarce, and the sun shines brightly.



Figure 2: The Landscape

The tension at the border is also well represented by the distress of the Salman family. On the other hand, music with many characteristics Arabic culture is played as the sound track throughout the film. This culture is prevalent in the Golan Heights, which for a

long time has been influenced by Syrian Arabic culture. It blends well with the setting and the plot of the film. Pictures in the film were also captured with absolute accuracy with the zoom of the picture being done at appropriate times.

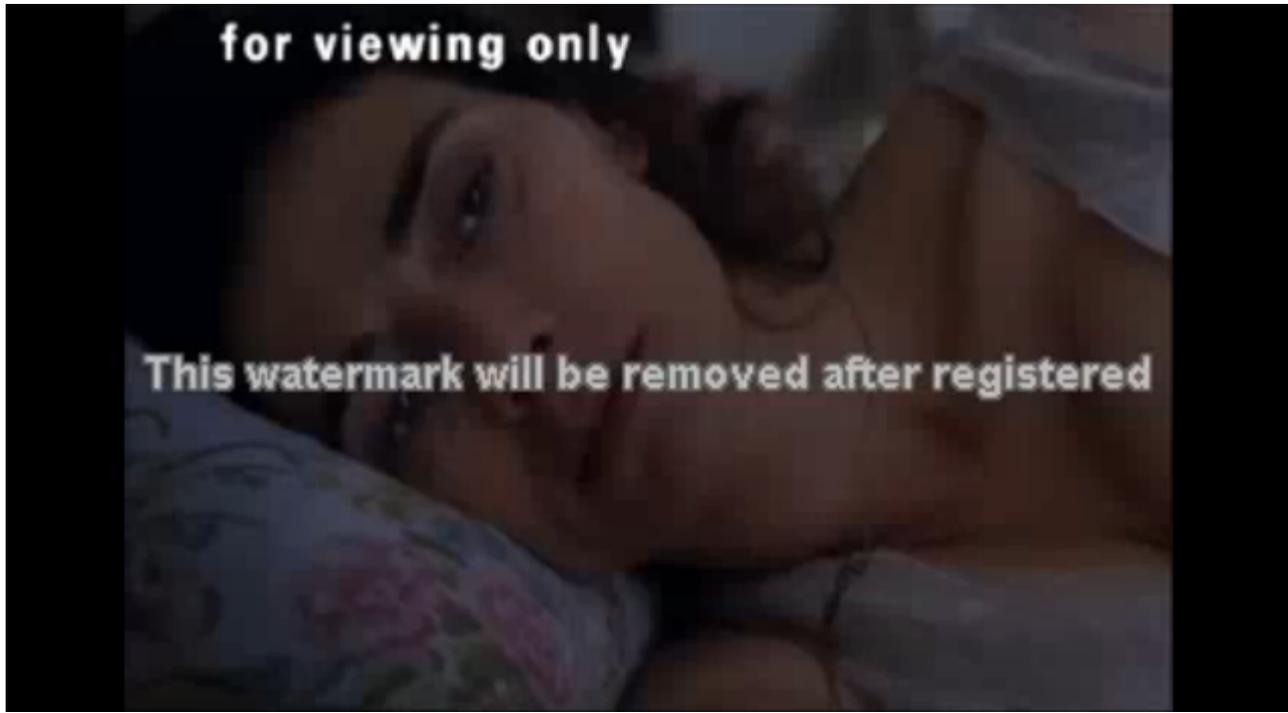


Figure 3: The Zoom to capture mood

The movement of the camera was particularly slow during emotional moments of the film, resulting in a desirable effect. There is little use of symbolism in the film apart from the gown that the bride wears on her way to meet her future husband. It symbolizes the hope and the occasional glimmer of happiness that still remains among people of Golan Heights. This helps amplify the plight of the people caught up in the conflict between the two countries for decades. The film is an otherwise a success and is above the average rating for a movie.