

THE LONGEST RUN

A documentary by Marianna Economou

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Jasim and Alsaleh are underage refugees in a Greek prison. Coming from Syria and Iraq, they were arrested and accused of smuggling illegal immigrants. With unique access in the juvenile prison and court room, the film follows the two friends closely while in custody, during the trial and after the verdict, through a narrative of suspense which reveals how youngsters are forced to transport migrants across the border to Greece while the smugglers stay behind and continue their job uninterrupted. If Jasim and Alsaleh are found guilty, they will face extremely long prison sentences. Phone conversations between the imprisoned young boys and their mothers at their war-stricken countries accentuate the double enclosure that these families experience. No one knows how and when their long run will end.

LOGLINE

A story about two teenagers trapped in smuggling of illegal immigrants; about juvenile prisons in Greece and shattered dreams.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

After a long and dangerous run from their native lands, two teenage refugees, Jasim from Iraq and Alsaleh from Syria are wrongly accused of smuggling illegal immigrants into Greece. The film follows closely the two friends in a Greek juvenile prison in Central Greece before, during and after their trial. Through a narrative of suspense, it exposes the fear and confusion caused by the fact that professional smugglers are forcing under-age migrants to perform illegal actions by involving them in the smuggling procedure. In Greece, with slow legal procedures and harsh laws against smuggling, refugees are often condemned to incredibly long prison sentences. Central to the film, the phone conversations between the imprisoned young boys and their parents in their respective war-stricken countries accentuate the double enclosure that these families experience.

Two young Kurdish boys, Alsaleh from Kobani in Syria and Jasim, a Yazidi from North Iraq, spend their long days in a juvenile prison in Greece, accused of smuggling illegal immigrants, while their families experience the severe consequences of the war in their home countries.

With unique access to the juvenile prison and court room, 'The Longest Run' unravels the personal stories of these youngsters by exposing a tragic phenomenon in the illegal immigration network which is recently taking alarming proportions: how professional smugglers force (or trap) under-aged immigrants to transport people across the border from Turkey to Greece or from Greece to Europe and thus turn them into smugglers themselves.

According to the Greek law, a smuggler is convicted to ten years of imprisonment for every person transported. Jasim, the Iraqi boy, was in a boat with 7 people and Alsaleh was trying to leave Greece in a truck with 40 people. During their time in custody, they realize that the court can condemn them to life imprisonment!

In an observational manner, the documentary follows the developments before, during and after the boys' court cases by focusing on their psychological anguish regarding their uncertain future in a foreign land. It exposes their childlike nature and forced maturity as it focuses on their special friendship and their relationship with the prison teacher and the social worker. The film documents Jasim's trial and follows him for another two months after the verdict.

Crucial to the film are the telephone conversations between the boys and their parents, conversations which communicate in a very direct way the desperate situation of the war in Syria and Iraq and convey a tragic sense of 'double confinement': the long and uncertain confinement of the boys in Greece - what they thought would be their rescue in a 'Promised Land' - and the enforced confinement of their parents who are under the ISIS threat.

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