



SONS OF THE CLOUDS: THE LAST COLONY

Directed by Alvaro Longoria

PRODUCED BY
JAVIER BARDEM
ALVARO LONGORIA
LILLY HARTLEY

2012 / 80 minutes / 1.85/ Spain
Original languages: Spanish, English, French, Arabic
Genre: Documentary

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SYNOPSIS

Alvaro Longoria partners with Academy Award® winner Javier Bardem for his directorial debut, *SONS OF THE CLOUDS: THE LAST COLONY*. This compelling documentary brings to light the political and human rights issues facing the people of the Western Sahara and the responsibility of Western powers in the effort to restore peace to the region.

The film examines the current political turmoil and the failed policies, namely *realpolitik*, which have generated tremendous instabilities. A personal journey for Bardem, the film focuses on the bleak reality of the Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony that is now occupied, in part, by Morocco and has resulted in almost 200,000 refugees living in camps in the desert.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The directorial debut of Alvaro Longoria, *SONS OF THE CLOUDS: THE LAST COLONY* uses a dynamic mix of action, interviews and archival footage to analyze the historical context of this region and pursue a resolution for its future. In light of the Arab Spring and the tragic events taking place in Syria, *SONS OF THE CLOUDS: THE LAST COLONY* tells the store of the Sahrawis, a people whose most basic rights are being disregarded in the name of political and economic gain.

LIFE OF THE FILM

The film made its global premiere at the 2012 Berlinale this February and was invited along with the filmmakers to screen at the European Parliament in Brussels. There, the film screened for members of Parliament, and the director and producers spoke on a panel discussion.

The film premiered theatrically in Spain on over 20 screens. We are collaborating with the RFK Center for Human Rights & Justice on an outreach and action plan.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The story unfolding in Syria and the uprisings of the Arab Spring have made clear that those authoritarian governments who trample the dignity of their citizens will not remain in power without a fight.

We take an in-depth look at one of the forgotten conflicts of Africa, the destiny of its last colony. The problems and situations present in Western Sahara are the same in all Arab nations where democracy and human rights are not respected.

Our goal is to educate the audience by taking them on the journey as we experienced it: we learned about the injustices, we met with the people and we resolved to understand how and why this could happen in spite of an International Court ruling and peacekeeping missions from the United Nations.

The difficulties we encountered serve as a metaphor for the reality of those who are either *too few to matter*, or *naïve* enough to believe that international rule of law will protect them and their rights.

This film intends to be a call to ALL citizens to remember that it is our duty as well as our right, to remind governments that they must, above all, respect and protect basic human rights both home and abroad.

Alvaro Longoria, 2012

PRODUCER'S INTENTION NOTE

With this documentary, we aim to bring into the spotlight the desperate situation of a people and conflict that are largely ignored. We hope to present a balanced view of the issues that have brought us to the current status quo and let the audience reach conclusions of their own.

The culture and the very lives of the Sahrawis are in danger of becoming extinct or erupting in violence. By then, it will be too late. We cannot stand by and allow justice and human rights to become a casualty of political and diplomatic agendas.

The Sahrawi People deserve our support and much more.

Javier Bardem, 2012

DIRECTOR - ALVARO LONGORIA

Born in 1968, Alvaro Longoria graduated from Boston University “cum laude” in 1990 and from the Stern School of Business of New York University in 1993.

In 1999 he and his partners established the audiovisual production company MORENA FILMS. Since then, his credits as producer or executive producer have included:

2012: 7 DAYS IN HAVANA - Benicio del Toro, Pablo Trapero, Elia Suleiman, Juan Carlos Tabío, Gaspar Noe, Julio Medem and Laurent Cantet).

2011: THE MONK - Dominik Moll

2010: ROOM IN ROME - Julio Medem - *4 Goya Nominations*

2007: CHE: GUERRILLA & THE ARGENTINE - Steven Soderbergh - *Cannes FF*

2006: LA ZONA - Rodrigo Plá - *Venice FF*

2005: IBERIA - Carlos Saura - *Toronto FF*

2004: LOOKING FOR FIDEL - Oliver Stone - *San Sebastián FF*

2003: PERSONA NON GRATA - Oliver Stone - *Venice FF*

2002: COMANDANTE - Oliver Stone - *Sundance FF, Berlín FF*

PRODUCER - JAVIER BARDEM

Javier Bardem is the youngest member of a family of actors that has been making films since the early days of Spanish cinema. He got his start in the family business at age six when he made his screen debut in *El Pícaro (The Scoundrel)*. As a teenager, he acted in several TV series, played rugby for the Spanish national team, and toured the country with an independent theatrical group. Bardem's early film role as a sexy stud in the black comedy *Jamón, Jamón* (1992) propelled him to popularity. He refused similar subsequent roles and has gone on to win acclaim for his ability to appear almost unrecognizable from film to film. Bardem has received numerous awards, including the Academy Award® for Best Supporting Actor in 2007 for *No Country for Old Men*.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2010 BIUTIFUL - Alejandro González Iñárritu Cannes FF - Best Actor

Academy Award® Nomination - Best Actor

2008 VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA - Woody Allen

Golden Globe Nomination - Best Actor

2007 NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN - Ethan Coen, Joel Coen Academy Award® - Best Supporting Actor

Golden Globe Award - Best Supporting Actor

2004 THE SEA INSIDE - Alejandro Amenábar
Goya Award - Best Actor
Golden Globe Nomination - Best Actor

2004 COLLATERAL - Michael Mann

2000 BEFORE NIGHT FALLS - Julian Schnabel

1997 LIVE FLESH - Pedro Almodóvar
Goya Nomination - Best Actor

1995 MOUTH TO MOUTH - Manuel Gómez Pereira
Goya Award - Best Actor

1992 JAMÓN JAMÓN - Bigas Luna
Goya Nomination - Best Actor

PRODUCER – LILLY HARTLEY/CANDESCENT FILMS

Candescent partners with pioneering filmmakers to produce and finance socially conscious films. Through compelling character-driven documentaries, Candescent aims to educate the public and ignite conversation. Candescent champions the passion projects of acclaimed actors committed to raising awareness for global issues.

Lilly Hartley recently formed Candescent Films, and the first film Candescent was involved with, *The Queen of Versailles*, was released summer 2012 by Magnolia Pictures. *Sons of The Clouds* is Candescent's upcoming feature documentary.

ORIGINAL MUSIC - FERNANDO VELÁZQUEZ

An accomplished cellist, Fernando Velázquez studied performance and composition at the RCSM Madrid and Paris. Active as a symphonic and theatrical composer, he has also provided the scores for a large number of short films such as *Historia de un Búho*, *El Hombre Esponja*, *A las 7:35 de la mañana* and *El Soñador* - all of them winners of Best Soundtrack awards at various film festivals.

Velázquez's feature film credits include *Devil* (John Erick Dowdle), *Impossible* (J.A. Bayona), *Babycall* (Pål Sletaune), *The Birthday* (Eugenio Mira), *The Backwoods* (Koldo Serra), *Lope*, (Andrucha Waddington) and *El Síndrome Svensson* (Kepa Sojo). He came to

international prominence with his score for J. A. Bayona's *The Orphanage*, which earned nominations for the European Film Awards and the Goya Awards.

In 2010, the International Film Music Critics' Association nominated Velázquez for Best Original Score for a Documentary Feature for *Garbo: El espía*.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Western Sahara is a former Spanish colony in Africa. When Spain left in 1975, Morocco took control of the territory against the wishes of the native population who, for 18 years, and with Algeria's support, fought a fierce war against the Moroccan army.

The United Nations brokered a peace plan in 2000 and ordered a referendum for Sahrawi self-determination for independence from Morocco. This was over a decade ago and has since been blocked by Morocco, with the support of European and Western powers.

The Sahrawi people live in desperate conditions divided under Moroccan occupation, where their human rights are not respected, and in refugee camps in Algeria where they have been waiting for 36 years to return home.

Internationally-acclaimed actor Javier Bardem visited the refugee camps in 2008 and has since devoted his efforts to raising awareness of this forgotten conflict and encouraging politicians to change the status quo before terrible violence erupts.

PERSPECTIVE

The Arab revolutions prove that the people must be allowed a voice. It is the duty of western democratic powers to protect human rights and promote democracy even outside their national borders. *Realpolitik* as foreign policy should not be tolerated at the expense of individuals or societies.

During this feature-length documentary, Javier Bardem guides the audience through the complicated world of international diplomacy and geostrategic interests that sparked the Arab Spring. As we analyze the harsh history of the inhabitants of Western Sahara - the last colony in Africa - we begin to understand that this conflict is very similar and must be resolved before more blood is shed.

The film explains the different viewpoints and diverse political, economical and strategic interests of the main actors (countries) who continue to prevent the resolution of a conflict that has been bogged down in a cold war for more than 35 years. Since 1975, the

Sahrawis find themselves divided up between the bleak refugee camps in the Sahara Desert and the rich Sahrawi territory occupied by Morocco.

Shot over three years in 6 different countries, the documentary presents the testimonies of Sahrawis, both refugees and human rights activists, in occupied Sahara; politicians from France, Spain, Algeria, Italy, Austria, the US, the UN, etc.; journalists; historians; diplomats; all of whom, in one way or another, have played a role in the recent history of this shamefully ignored and forgotten humanitarian disaster.

Within the context of the Arab Spring, the film analyzes the Sahrawi case to remind everyone that all people have the right to choose their own future, and that it is the citizens' obligation to remind their governments that it is their duty, in turn, to promote justice and the respect for all human rights, both inside their borders and beyond.

A
MORENA FILMS
PINGUIN FILMS
CANDESCENT FILMS
PRODUCTION

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
WILD BUNCH

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF
CANAL PLUS ESPAÑA

AND THE SUPPORT OF
ICAA

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