



## LOGLINE

We follow the lives of a group of teenage girls serving time in an Iranian juvenile detention center for the murder of a male family member. With the camera as witness, they reveal their innermost thoughts, feelings and doubts.

## SYNOPSIS

In an Iranian juvenile detention center, a group of adolescent girls are serving time for having murdered their father, husband or another male family member. Filmmaker Mehrdad Oskouei managed to build up a remarkable relationship with these inmates, whose frank conversations and playful interactions he observes, and who gradually open up about the consequences of, and sometimes the reasons for, their terrible act.

Mehrdad occasionally leaves them alone with the camera, allowing it to become a means for them to address both their victims and their accomplices, three of the girls having killed their fathers with the help of their mothers. The mothers await execution elsewhere.

Unlike their mothers' somber pall, the atmosphere in the girls' living quarters, shared cell with teen-bed-room feel, classroom and grass-lined courtyard where a brood of ducklings scamper about, seems almost carefree. It gradually becomes apparent, however, that apart from being a prison, this closed, all-female environment is also a shelter from an aggressively male-dominated society.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film focuses on the act of murder. Not so much the 'how', but more the 'why.' Iranian women who murder their husbands show very little remorse for their homicides. Even after years in prison they still believe they were in the right. But why would a mother kill her husband with her daughter's help? What had happened in their lives to bring them to such an act? There are those who say they should have got divorced instead of killing their husbands, but when divorce is decided by the husband with no say for the wife, what then?

In this film we see murder through the eyes of the murderers, the mother and daughter. I wanted to scrutinize their act of killing from various perspectives, understand their reasons and find out whether the act itself was a difficult task. Do they carry the burden of their deed for years on end? I have been filming at Centers for Correction and Rehabilitation for 12 years. Both my father and grandfather were political prisoners and, as a consequence, prisons and prisoners have always fascinated me. What's more, when I was 15 I attempted suicide after my father's third bankruptcy. Suicide strangely makes one both murderer and murdered. That is perhaps why I feel the need to delve into the motivations of those who kill and try to elucidate them.



### International Sales & Festivals

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# Sunless Shadows

A Film by Mehrdad Oskouei





Design: Masoud Shokrnia - Poster Design: Ali Bahari

## BIOGRAPHY

Mehrdad Oskouei is an Iranian filmmaker, producer, photographer and researcher born in Tehran in 1969 and later graduating in film direction from the University of Arts. His films have been screened at numerous festivals both at home and abroad to great critical acclaim, making him one of the major Iranian documentary makers. In 2010 Oskouei received the Dutch Prince Claus Award for his achievements. He is a founding member of the Institute of Anthropology and Culture and has sat on several international film festival juries as well as being a cultural ambassador for the United Nation's humanitarian committee UCHA. He also teaches at film schools in Iran and other countries.

## FILMOGRAPHY

### SELECTED TITLES

- 2019: **Sunless Shadows**, HD, Colour, 74min.
- 2016: **Starless Dreams**, HD, Colour, 76min.
- 2011: **The Last Days of Winter**, HDV, Colour, 52min.
- 2007: **It's Always Late for Freedom**, DVcam, Colour, 52min.
- 2005: **Nose, Iranian Style**, DVcam, Colour, 52min.
- 2004: **The Other Side of Burka**, DVcam, Colour, 52min.
- 2000: **My Mother's Home, Lagoon**, DVcam, Colour, 29min.

## CREW

- Written and Directed by:** Mehrdad Oskouei
- Director of Photography:** Mehdi Azadi
- Editing:** Amir Adibparvar
- Music:** Afshin Azizi
- Sound Designer:** Mahmoud Khorsand
- Sound Recordist:** Parsa Karimi
- Color Grading:** Hamidreza Fatourechian
- Assistant Director:** Masoud Shokrnia
- Production Manager:** Vahid Hajilouei
- Producer:** Mehrdad Oskouei
- Executive Producer:** Siavash Jamali
- Production Company:** Oskouei Film Production
- Co-producer:** Carsten Aanonsen
- Co-Production Company:** Indie Film
- Involved TV Channels:** NRK (Norway)



## SUPPORTED BY

- \* Development and post-production fund of IDFA Bertha Fund, Netherlands
- \* Bertha Foundation, UK
- \* Sundance Documentary Fund, USA
- \* Sørfond, Norwegian South Film Fund

- Shooting format:** 2K
- Screening format:** DCP
- Sound:** 5.1
- Ratio:** 1:2
- Original version:** Persian
- Subtitled in:** English
- Running Time:** 74min
- Year:** 2019

Documentary - Colour - 74min - 2019 - Iran / Norway

