

NOT JUST FOOTBALL

A FILM BY PAOLO CASALIS

70'



Produced by

**Produzioni
FUORIFUOCO**

In collaboration with

ACT

With the interest of

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
Italians for Darfur

NOT JUST FOOTBALL

70' (52' TV version available)

A documentary by Paolo Casalis

Produced by Produzioni Fuorifuoco - www.produzionifuorifuoco.it

Ask for full online screener to info@produzionifuorifuoco.it

Logline

To break the indifference on Darfur humanitarian crisis, an enterprising activist must create an all-refugee national football team and compete in the World Cup.

Synopsis

In 2005 Gabriel Stauring, a young and enthusiast activist from California, decided to create an N.G.O. and move to Africa - always with a camera in his hand - to help the thousands of refugees from Darfur escaping from a cruel, dramatic civil war in Sudan.

Eight years after, Gabriel's enthusiasm is far less: nobody is any longer interested in his mission.

What could he do, to capture the world's attention?

In 2012, he creates "Darfur United", a soccer team made of young Darfuri refugees living in the camps of Chad, representing an unexisting state.

"These are not refugees", Gabriel provokes, "don't look at them as refugees, this is just football".

Through exclusive access to 500 hours of video footage directly filmed by Gabriel and the other film's characters in over 15 years, *Not Just Football* follows the story of "Darfur United" players, from the dust of the refugee camps to the lights of the Football World Cup. They're trying to complete a long and complex path, from refugees to citizens.

Not Just Football.

Title: Not Just Football

Director: Paolo Casalis

Production: Produzioni Fuorifuoco, Italy

Current Status: Film Completed - Unreleased

Genre: Creative Documentary, Bio

Length: 70' / 52'

Format: HD (various sources and formats)

Language: English (Subs: English, Italian)

Rights: all rights belong to Produzioni Fuorifuoco - distribution rights available, all territories

Festivals and Screenings: the film is still unreleased

Music and Video rights: all rights for music and footage are worldwide cleared

Partners



Italians for Darfur Onlus

Film summary

In 2005 Gabriel Stauring, a 39 years old Californian activist, founder of NGO I-ACT (www.iativism.org), moved to Africa for the first time, to give his help to more than 280.000 refugees from Darfur who had settled in the refugee camps of Chad.

This unheard-of humanitarian crisis still continues today, almost 15 years after, though it has never been front-page news nor does it now, as the new Syrian and Rohingya crisis are covering all media.

Gabriel, whose way of helping is filming and collecting stories, and spreading the voices of the refugees outside Africa, soon realizes the world is not interested in hearing his stories of war, poverty and hunger.

To raise attention, he has to search for something different and new.

In a land of war and massacres, he has to tell a unique, positive story, and to share it with the world. What does everybody like? Football, soccer, that was his instant answer.

In 2011, to raise attention on Darfur crisis, Gabriel creates "Darfur United", a football team made up of refugees from the 12 different camps of Chad, and his project becomes more precise: using football to close the gap between the refugees and the rest of the world, to raise people's attention and show them the hard situation and life conditions in the camps. Was it a cinic decision? For sure, it worked.

Since then, Gabriel has followed the team with his camera, from the team's selection to the very first trainings in the extremely hot and dusty terrain of the refugee camps, to the Kurdistan Viva World Cup 2013. No, not the prestigious FIFA World Cup, but the VIVA one, a tournament for unrecognized states and ethnic groups.

Moubark and Ismail played respectively as midfielder and goalkeeper in the team who competed in Kurdistan, losing all matches by 10-0 or 20-0, but scoring the first, hitorical goal in Darfur history.

In 2014, during an international competition in Sweden, they escape and ask for asylum.

Their stories are quite the opposite. On soccer fields, Ismail was always positive and smiling, while Moubark injured his knee and didn't play any match. Today, Moubark speaks fluent english and swedish, works in the staff of Ostersund's football team and is well insterted in swedish society. Ismail, on the contrary, stills feels like a refugee in a foreign country, and sometimes dreams of coming back to the refugees camp.

"Not Just Football" is a film telling almost 15 years of story of his characters, from 2004 up to 2018.



Artistic Approach / Director's Statement

In the latest years we've all seen dozens of documentaries about refugees and refugee crisis. Me too, I thought everything had already been said on this argument, so when I started working at the project - in early 2016 - I was attracted by its power and narrative potential but, for these reasons, I abandoned it for some months.

But suddenly I found the key to tell this story, and it appeared to me as something unique, for two different reasons.

The first was the long and complex trajectory of the story, a narrative arc that covers almost 15 years and (quite a unique case!) is all well documented and filmed by his own characters. We had the exclusive to use more than 500 hours of video footage!

The second was the original, provocative approach used by Gabriel Stauring.

"Ok, refugee stories are sad, and people don't like sad stories, let's give them something different, something they can like". And he creates a football team made of refugees.

At a first view, there could be something cinic and even wrong in all this thought, in this approach. But only at a first glance.

Gabriel doesn't want to hide the refugees behind the smiling faces of a football team.

If he's cinic, it's not towards the refugees, but towards football. He uses football to let people talk of the refugees, to let people view and know something they would never have explored and faced in their life: the inner life of a refugee camp, hunger, poverty, death.

The film starts from this points, and keeps them as focal points for its structure and narrative development.

I think it's important to have a documentary like this NOW because Gabriel and the guys of Darfur United have already walked a long path that will be faced in the next years by all the thousands of refugees that just came or are still coming to Euope, to the US, to Asia. In other words, due to the long narrative arc, this film gives an occasion to "watch the future", to face the potential, the problems and the difficulties that we (as host countries) and the refugees will find in the years yet to come.

In large part, *Not Just Football* is a "found-footage" documentary, collecting images filmed by someone else in another part of the world.

As a filmmaker, I've found this unusual approach as the best way to create something intimate, something real. I could not ask to my characters "Do this, tell me that", I could just "create" the movie using images made by the film's characters, with their feelings, sensibility, emotion, so this "found-footage" gives a great power and richness to the whole story.

Of course, the documentary could not be finished without answering a question.

Where are these refugees now? Where and how do they live, what happened to them?

So, we've moved to Sweden to film two Darfur United players, Moubark and Ismail, who are (together with Gabriel and Mark, the coach) the film's main characters.

Their stories are still open, even today, 15 years after the first time Gabriel moved to Africa.

15 years of filming are not enough to close the personal stories of the film's characters, maybe because reality is an ongoing and never-ending process, and people (Gabriel, Mubark, Ismail...) will just continue evolving and slightly moving, like the continental drift.

Main Characters



Gabriel Stauring, founder of Darfur United

Gabriel is the Founder and Executive Director at i-ACT, a California based non-profit. In addition to visiting the refugee camps on the Chad-Darfur more than 20 times, Gabriel has spearheaded campaigns such as the 100-Day Fast for Darfur, Darfur Freedom Summer Vigils, Camp Darfur, Darfur Fast for Life, and innovative programs like Darfur United and Little Ripples.

In 2012 Gabriel founded Darfur United football team. Not just a football team formed to take part in an international competition, but much more. A team that represents an entire people, and a way to raise attention on Darfuri people, using a simple and attractive language: football.

After more than 10 years, he considers the people of Darfur no longer as someone to help, but as his closest friends.

Moubark Abdallah

Moubark is part of Darfur United team since its formation. He is a talented soccer player, but his life has been full of sport accidents. In 2014, during the 1st match against Padania, he had a serious injury.

Days after, only 10 team players remained available, since many of them had escaped from the tournament to ask for asylum in Sweden. Moubark was still injured, but he succeeded in playing, thus becoming Gabriel's personal hero.

Today Moubark lives in Ostersund, Swden, where he decided to stay after the match. He is studying english, he is a young, brilliant guy who has just received a 2-years valid visa and is trying to insert himself into swedesh society: he is working for OFK (Ostersund Football Club) and every month he sends some money to his family living in the refugee camps of Chad..

Ismail Gamaradeen

Ismail is Darfur United's goalkeeper. More than a decade ago his mother was walking in the market when their village was attacked by militia. Her husband was shot and as he lay wounded, he told her to gather their seven children and escape.

Ismail's mother walked with her children for 20 days across the desert, with no food or water in a bid to reach the border of neighbouring Chad. For almost 11 years, Ismail and his family have lived in a tented refugee camp in eastern Chad.

In 2014 he went with Darfur United to Sweden for their 2nd international tournament.

On that occasion, one night he run away, and decided to ask for asylum, first in Norway, than in Sweden. Now he lives in Ostersund, Sweden.

Topic Summary

DARFUR CRISIS

In early 2003, two primarily Muslim non-Arab Darfuri rebel groups launched a rebellion against the government of Sudan.

The government responded to the rebellion by enlisting the help of some of the nomadic Arab tribes in Darfur, promising them land in exchange for their military allegiance. These groups formed militias known as the Janjaweed, and, with the support of the government, began wreaking havoc throughout Darfur.

Since the conflict began over ten years ago, approximately 300,000 people have lost their lives and an additional 4 million have been displaced from their homes.

Today, there are approximately 300,000 Darfuri refugees living in thirteen camps in Eastern Chad.

Sports programs, physical activity, and psychosocial support for children are all considered “non essential” by the United Nations.

i-ACT

i-ACT is a registered 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization based in Redondo Beach, CA

The i-ACT team visits refugee camps in Eastern Chad and provides daily video webcasting, interactive blogging, pictures, and continuous social media communication.

Videos, photographs and testimonies from i-ACT are compiled and utilized to create multi-media presentations that build relationships between the survivors of Darfur and those who can act on their behalf.

Since 2005, i-ACT has visited the Darfuri refugee camps on the Chad-Sudan border more than 20 times.

i-ACT has created an all-refugee soccer team and youth academy made up of Darfuri refugees living in camps in Eastern Chad.

VIVA AND CONIFA WORLD CUPS

Not to be confused with the FIFA World Cup, every two years football players and fans meet for other, less known and almost mysterious Football World Cups.

In the VIVA and CONIFA World Cup, the participating teams represent a collection of unrecognized states, ethnic groups, islands and “frozen conflict” zones.

Abkhazia, Aramean Suryoye, Kurdistan, Tamil Eelam, Darfur United, Ellan Vannin, South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh, Padania, Occitania... These are some of the team names.

Regions or ethnic groups not recognized as a nation, stateless people (es the Romani People team), regions and micro-nations not affiliated to FIFA. Some just want to raise awareness of their unique culture and show the world they exist or, through soccer, raise awareness about humanitarian and social crisis, conflicts and civil wars.

Others hope for greater autonomy and perhaps, one day, even a nation of their own.

“Soccer helps provide an identify for all nations, a vision of their imagined community made real”, writes sport journalist Steve Menary.

PAOLO CASALIS

Paolo Casalis is an Italian film director born in 1976.
He's the founder of production house Produzioni Fuorifuoco.



Filmography

Barolo Boys. The Story of a Revolution (64', 2014)

doc, a film by Paolo Casalis & Tiziano Gaia

Premio Bandiera Verde CIA 2017

Winner of DOC Wine Travel Food Prize 2014

Official Selection Vancouver Film Festival 2015; Seminci - Valladolid International Film

Festival, 2015; Festival de Cine de Paracho, Mexico 2015 Food Film Fest, Bergamo

2015; Official Selection Viva Festival Sarajevo 2015; Italian Contemporary Film Festival,

Toronto Canada 2015; Euganea Film Festival 2015; Lake Como Film Festival 2015 Feast

Food & Film Victoria, Canada 2015; Wine Country Film Festival 2014; Festival Internacional

de Cinema Documental, Rios - Portugal, 2015; Piemonte Movie Glocal Film Festival, 2015;

Overlook Festival, Rome, 2014; Kinookus Festival, Croatia, 2014; Corto e Fieno Festival, 2014

Supported by Film Commission Torino Piemonte, Eataly Media

Langhe Doc (52', 2011)

doc, a film by Paolo Casalis

Official Selection David di Donatello 2012

Winner Valsusa Filmfest 2011

Winner Sardinian Sustainability Film Festival

Menzione Speciale Festival delle Terre 2011

Premio del Pubblico Corto e Fieno 2012

Official Selection Docaviv Festival, Tel Aviv

Il Corridore / The Runner (52', 2010)

doc, a film by Paolo Casalis & Stefano Scarafia

Trento Film Festival 2011 (Selezione Ufficiale)

BCNSFF2010 (Barcelona International Ficts Festival);

Piemonte Movie 2010; Cherasco Movie 2010; Marcarolo Film Festival)

"Sport Movies&TV" Milano 2010

Terra Madre People, (26', 2009)

Cinemambiente 2009 Torino; Slow Food on Film 2009, Bologna;

Piemonte Movie 2010; Aniene Film Festival

Allegato al libro di Carlo Petrini Terra Madre. Come non farci mangiare dal cibo

PRODUZIONI FUORIFUOCO

Produzioni Fuorifuoco is a video production and distribution company based in Bra (Italy) that produces works for the cinema, feature films and short films of fiction and documentary films. Produzioni Fuorifuoco produces and distributes feature films related to social and environmental issues: among them, the documentary film *Barolo Boys. The story of a Revolution*, by Paolo Casalis and Tiziano Gaia has been awarded with the DOC Wine Travel Food Award 2014 as the best documentary of the year on the themes of Food & Wine. The documentary *Langhe Doc. Stories of heretics in the Italy of warehouses*, by Paolo Casalis, has been selected at the David di Donatello prize as best Italian documentary in 2011.

Filmography

Barolo Boys. The Story of a Revolution, 2014

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de Cinema Documental, Rios - Portugal, 2015; Piemonte Movie Global Film Festival, 2015;

Overlook Festival, Rome, 2014; Kinookus Festival, Croatia, 2014; Corto e Fieno Festival, 2014

Supported by Film Commission Torino Piemonte, Eataly Media

Vento. Italy by bike along the river Po, 2014

doc, a film by Paolo Casalis, Pino Pace, Stefano Scarafia

COFFI - Italian Film & Art Festival, Berlino 2015

Moffe Film Festival 2015; Document.Art - The International Festival of Documentary Films,

Bucarest, 2014; Life After Oil Festival, 2014; Detour Festival Internazionale del Cinema di

Viaggio, 2014; Cherasco Movie 2014

Langhe Doc, 2011

doc, a film by Paolo Casalis

Official Selection David di Donatello 2012

Winner Valsusa Filmfest 2011

Winner Sardinian Sustainability Film Festival

Menzione Speciale Festival delle Terre 2011

Premio del Pubblico Corto e Fieno 2012

Official Selection Docaviv Festival, Tel Aviv

Links

Barolo Boys. Storia di una Rivoluzione - www.baroloboysthemovie.com

Vento. L'Italia in bicicletta lungo il fiume Po - www.filmvento.wordpress.com

L'Ultimo Chilometro - <http://www.produzionifuorifuoco.it/thelastkilometer.com/>

Langhe Doc - <http://www.produzionifuorifuoco.it/langhedoc.it/>

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