

# It Must be Heaven

A film by  
Elia Suleiman



97 min / France/Qatar/Germany/Canada/Turkey/Palestine  
In Arabic, French & English with English subtitles / 2019 / Cert. TBC  
Cannes Film Festival World Premiere (Official Competition) 2019  
Winner Special Mention Cannes Film Festival 2019

**Opens June 18th 2021**

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## SYNOPSIS:

ES escapes from Palestine seeking an alternative homeland, only to find that Palestine is trailing behind him.

The promise of a new life turns into a comedy of errors for ES: for however far he travels, from Paris to New York, something always reminds him of home.

From the award-winning director comes a comic saga exploring identity, nationality and belonging, in which Suleiman asks the fundamental question: where is the place we can truly call home?



Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set can be downloaded [.jpg here](#) or [.tif here](#)

## CAST

Elia Suleiman

**ELIA SULEIMAN**

### **NAZARETH**

Neighbour's son

Father

Waiter

Brothers

Sister

Bishop

Bedouin woman

**TARIK KOPT**

**KAREEM GHNEIM**

**GEORGE KHLEIFI**

**ALI SULIMAN, FARES MUQABAA**

**YASMINE HAJ**

**NAEL KANJ**

**ASMAA AZAIZY**

### **PARIS**

Man in the metro

Producer

Ambulance crew

Homeless man

Japanese couple

**GRÉGOIRE COLIN**

**VINCENT MARAVAL**

**CLAIRE DUMAS, ANTOINE CHOLET**

**ERIC CORNET**

**YUMI NARITA, KENGO SAITO**

### **NEW YORK**

Card reader

Femen

Master of Ceremonies

Taxi driver

Teacher

Producer

Airport security

Gael García Bernal

**STEPHEN MCHATTIE**

**RAÏA HAÏDAR**

**FADI SAKR**

**KWASI SONGUI**

**GUY SPRUNG**

**NANCY GRANT**

**ALAIN DAHAN**

**GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL**

## **CREW**

Writer & Director  
Director of Photography  
Editor  
Sound Recordist  
Sound Editors

**ELIA SULEIMAN**  
**SOFIAN EL FANI**  
**VÉRONIQUE LANGE**  
**JOHANEES DOBERENZ**  
**GWENNOLÉ LE BORGNE**  
**OLIVIER TOUCHE**  
**LAURE ANNE DARRAS**

Sound Mixer  
Production Designer  
Costume Designers  
Executive Producers  
Producers

**LARS GINZEL**  
**CAROLINE ADLER**  
**ALEXIA CRISP-JONES, ÉRIC POIRIER**  
**FATMA HASSAN ALREMAIHI, HANAA ISSA**  
**ÉDOUARD WEI**  
**LAURINE PELASSY**

Co-producers  
Production companies

**ELIA SULEIMAN**  
**THANASSIS KARATHANOS**  
**MARTIN HAMPEL**  
**SERGE NOËL**  
**ZEYNEP OZBATUR ATAKAN, GEORGES SCHOUCAIR**  
**RECTANGLE PRODUCTIONS**  
**NAZIRA FILMS**  
**PALLAS FILM**  
**POSSIBILITIES MEDIA**  
**ZEYNO FILM**

In association with  
In co-production with

**DOHA FILM INSTITUTE**  
**EURIMAGES, MITTELDEUTSCHE MEDIENFÖRDERUNG**  
**SODEC QUÉBEC, QUÉBEC CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT**  
**CINÉMA ET TÉLÉVISION - GESTION SODEC**  
**CANADA CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LA PRODUCTION**  
**CINÉMATOGAPHE ou MAGNÉTOSCOPIQUE**  
**CANADIENNE**  
**AIDE AUX CINÉMAS DU MONDE**  
**CNC - INSTITUT FRANÇAIS**  
**CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DEL L'IMAGE ANIMÉE**  
**FFA - FILMFÖRDERUNGSANSTALT**  
**TELEFILM CANADA**

In association with

**WILD BUNCH, LE PACTE, SCHORTCUT FILMS, MAISON 4:3**  
**THE ARAB FUND FOR ARTS AND CULTURE, KNM**

FRANCE/QATAR/GERMANY/CANADA/TURKEY 2019  
97 min

## ELIA SULEIMAN

Born in Nazareth on July 28, 1960, Elia Suleiman lived in New York from 1981 to 1993. During this period, he directed his first two short films, *Introduction to the End of an Argument* and *Homage by Assassination*, which won him numerous awards. In 1994, he moved to Jerusalem where the European Commission tasked him with establishing a Cinema and Media department at Birzeit University. His feature debut, *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, won the Best First Film award at the 1996 Venice Film Festival. In 2002, *Divine Intervention* won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and the Best Foreign Film prize at the European Awards in Rome. His feature, *The Time That Remains*, screened In Competition at the 2009 Cannes film Festival. In 2012, Suleiman directed the short film *Diary of a Beginner*, part of the portmanteau feature *7 Days in Havana*, which screened that year in Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival.



## FILMOGRAPHY

2019 IT MUST BE HEAVEN

Official Selection – In Competition – Cannes 2019

2012 7 DAYS IN HAVANA – segment (Diary of a Beginner)

Official Selection - Un Certain Regard – Cannes 2012

2009 THE TIME THAT REMAINS

Official Selection – In Competition – Cannes 2009

2007 CHACUN SON CINÉMA – segment (Irtebak)  
Short film for the 60th anniversary of the Festival de Cannes

2002 DIVINE INTERVENTION  
Jury Prize – Cannes 2002

2000 CYBER PALESTINE  
Directors' Fortnight – Cannes 2001

1998 THE ARAB DREAM  
Order for Arte Télévision, for the end of the Millenium 2000

1996 CHRONICLE OF A DISAPPEARANCE  
Best First Film Prize - Venice 1996

1992 HOMAGE BY ASSASSINATION  
Rockefeller Award – USA 1993

1991 INTRODUCTION TO THE END OF AN ARGUMENT  
Best Experimental Documentary – USA 1992



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

*"The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner;  
he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong;  
but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign land.  
The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world;  
the strong man has extended his love to all places;  
the perfect man has extinguished his."*

### **Hugh of Saint Victor**

*"Where do the birds fly after the last sky?"*

### **Mahmoud Darwish**

If my previous films tried to present Palestine as a microcosm of the world, my new film, *It Must be Heaven*, tries to show the world as if it were a microcosm of Palestine. The film shows ordinary everyday situations of people across the world living in a climate of geopolitical global tension. And the violence erupting in one place is similar to the violence erupting in another. Images and sounds containing this violence or tension are being felt in all the world centres and not, as in the past, just somewhere in the far corners of the world. There are checkpoints in each country at airports and in shopping malls. Police sirens and security alarms are no longer intermittent, but constant. Rather than focus on the 'larger' picture constantly bombarded by the mass media, always generalised, masked and falsified, *It Must be Heaven* depicts the moment in the margin, the trivial, or that which is usually out of focus. Consequently, it approaches what is intimate, tender and touching. It's the personal and human stories that are based on identification which raise questions and hope. As in my previous films, there is little dialogue; what is spoken is more like monologue to infuse rhythm and musicality. Otherwise, the narrative of the film is knitted from a subliminal montage; scenes that are composed from choreographic movements; burlesque drawn from the world of the absurd; images that open up to the poetry of silence, which is at the heart of cinematic language.





## INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

By Kaleem Aftab ([Cineuropa](#))

***It Must be Heaven sees you trying to get to the essence of what it means to be not just Palestinian, but an outsider. Did you feel you had to move away from the Arab-Israeli conflict in this film?***

No, I did not try that at all. I think I was just trying to say that the conflict has extended its tentacles to everywhere else around the world and that there's a global "Palestinianisation" of the state of things. That's basically what this film is trying to indicate, actually. I mean, the state of exception, the police state and the violence are now like a familiar common ground everywhere we go. So the tension and the anxiety are now practically everywhere and it's no longer just a local conflict.

***Why did you choose Paris and New York?***

For the very, very simple reason – almost as simple as I am – that I did not want to make the movie in places I'm unfamiliar with. I have done this once before and it was great. New York and Paris are two places where I've lived for a long time – you know, 14 years here and 14 years there – so I'm familiar with the humour and the ambience of those places.

***The scenes in Paris stand out because you shot with the streets completely devoid of people and cars. Why did you make this choice?***

To show the bare bones of Paris is to reveal the underclass, to reveal the oppressed, the homeless, the poor, the Arabs being chased by the police, the police state. I wanted to make that really apparent and not realistic, of course, and to do that, I needed to do what I did. Somehow, I was always hoping that if I did that, the question



to be asked about the state of things would become more prominent than it would have been if I had made it with animation, or with realism of some sort.

***The first time we see Paris, it's a picture-postcard version of the city, and then you show the cleaners. Did you intend to show that there is a collective diaspora of people being pushed down by Europe and America?***

I didn't intend to say that; it is simply evident. Basically, the class and economic gap, migration, anxiety and violence – that's what this film is about. It's about discrimination. It's about downgrading by colour. That's what this film is trying to reveal, and it's connecting all of this back to colonialism.

