

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT





GENRE: Drama

RUNNING TIME: 15 Min

PRODUCTION COMPANY: Cinemote

LOGLINE: A young asylum seeker must find a way to avoid deportation before his court hearing, as his new arrangement turns out to be an unexpected and unravelling affair.

Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/cinemote/The-Illegal-Trailer>



SYNOPSIS:

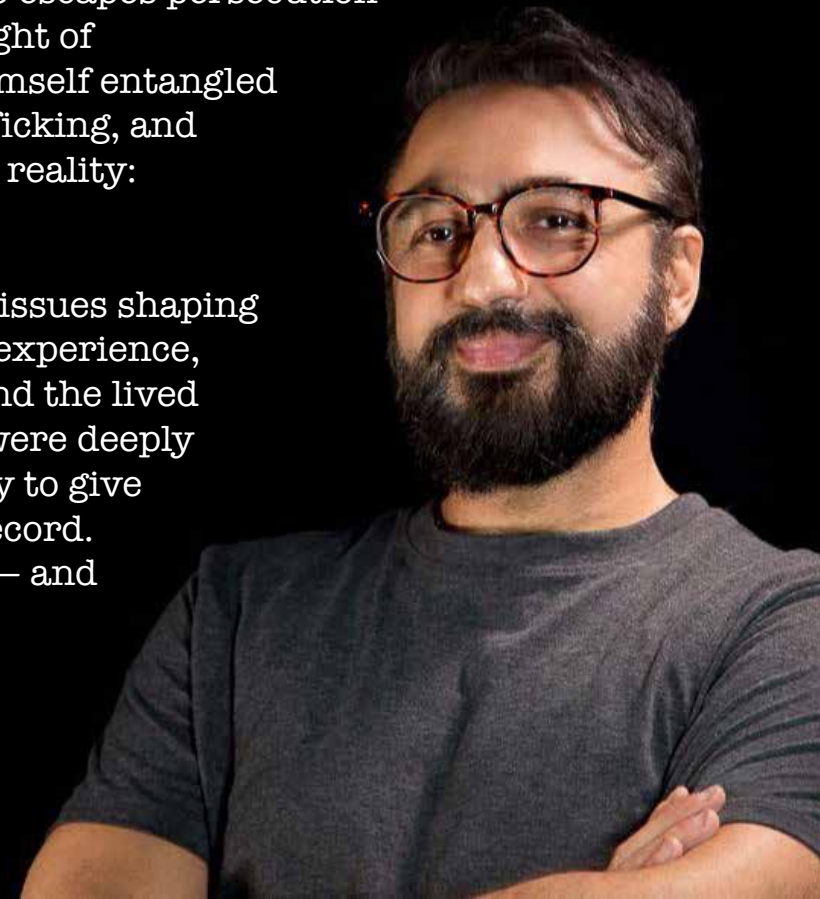
Ahmed, a political activist, has fled the Middle East due to persecution and torture. He must prove that his life is in danger if goes back to his country, but he has no evidence to back up his claim in the court. Jakub, a mob boss, makes an arrangement between him and Claire -a broke and opioid addicted young woman- to fake a common-law relationship in exchange for the rest of his cash. However, Claire's jealous, white-supremacist ex-husband, Cole, won't take it well.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

On June 13, 2009, what began as a peaceful protest against Iran's presidential election results was shattered by gunfire. Snipers positioned on rooftops opened fire on unarmed civilians. I was there, among the millions marching, witnessing the violence unfold in real time. In the days that followed, hundreds were killed and thousands were arrested, tortured, and subjected to unimaginable abuse. A year later, the wave of uprisings known as the Arab Spring spread across the Middle East, dismantling long-standing power structures and forcing countless individuals to flee their homelands.

The Illegal begins where many of those stories are often left untold — at the moment of arrival. The film follows Ahmed, a political asylum seeker who escapes persecution during the Arab Spring and lands in Canada carrying the weight of unresolved trauma. Instead of safety and stability, he finds himself entangled in a violent criminal underworld shaped by racism, drug trafficking, and white supremacist extremism. His struggle reflects a broader reality: survival does not end at the border.

Through Ahmed's journey, The Illegal confronts three urgent issues shaping our contemporary society — systemic racism, the immigrant experience, and the opioid crisis. The narrative draws from true events and the lived experiences of freedom fighters and survivors. Some scenes were deeply difficult to write as they hit close to home. Yet it felt necessary to give voice to moments that history has overlooked or refused to record. This film is not only a story of displacement, but of resilience — and of the hidden battles that continue long after escape.



CAST



Iyad Mokhtar



Chloe Coyle



Andrew Bee



Michael Masurkevitch

CREW

Writer and Director Amir Kiani

Producers: Amir Kiani and Krishna Kolanupaka

Cinematographer Justin Arjune

Editor Majid Azadmanesh

Set Decorator Marjan Hekmati

Makeup Mykaela Wattie

Assistant Director Santiago Loaiza Daza

Sound Recorder Blair Cooper

Composer: David Mesiha



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Title: The Illegal

Director: Amir Kiani

Runtime: 15 min

Completion Year: 2024

Country of Origin: Canada

Shooting Format / Aspect Ratio: Digital / 16:9

Audio Format: Stereo

Language(s) : English, Arabic

Subtitle Language(s): English, French, German, Spanish

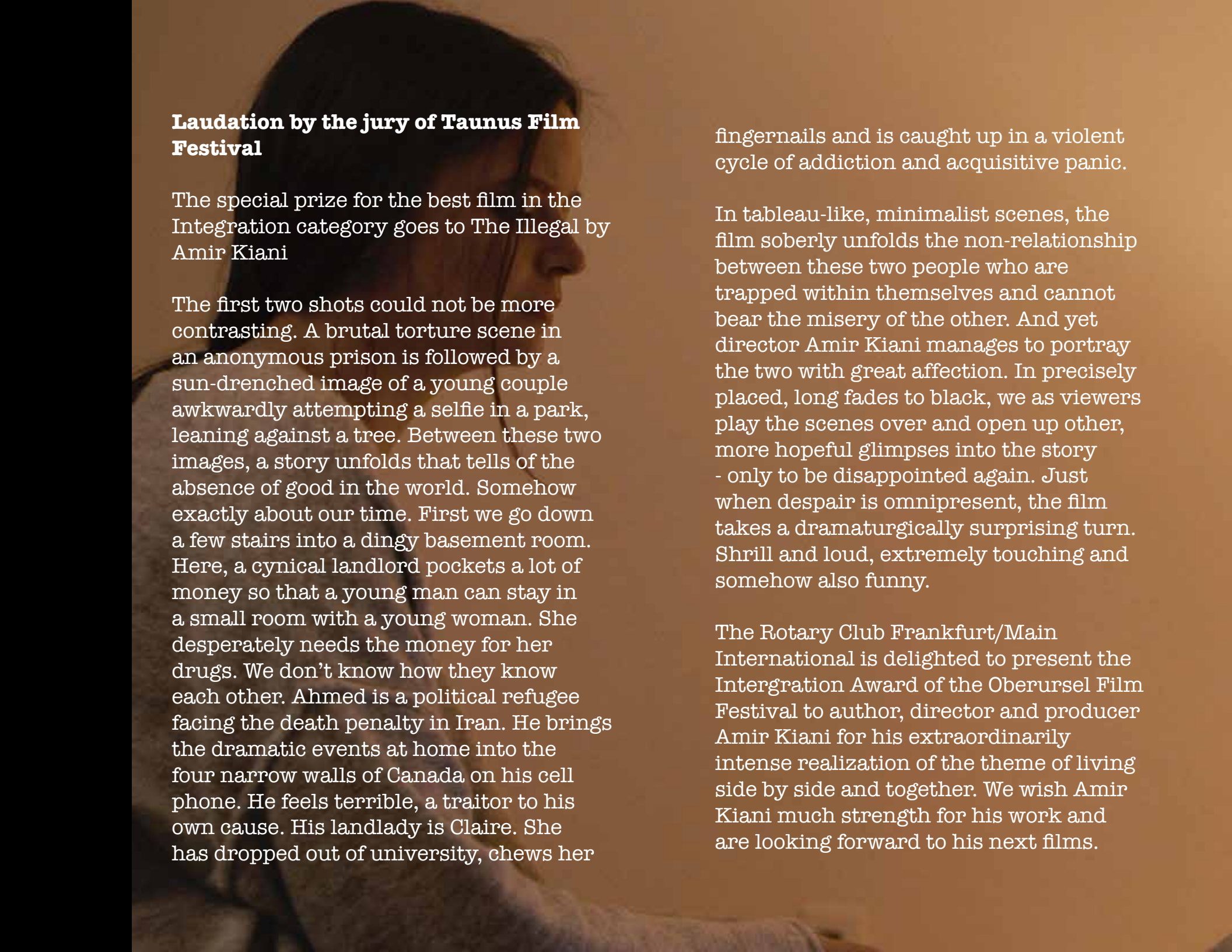
AWARDS & NOMINATIONS

Golden Sheaf Awards Nominee, Yorkton Film Festival, Canada, 2024
Special Jury Prize Taunus Film Festival (TAUNALE) Germany, 2024



FESTIVAL PARTICIPATION

77th Yorkton Film Festival, Canada, 2024
14th Taunus Film Festival (TAUNALE) Germany, 2024
19th Intl Human Rights Film Festival, Albani 2024
12th Toronto Shorts International Film Festival 2024
7th Morehouse Human Rights Film Festival, USA, 2025
20th Rocket City Film Festival, Alabama, USA 2025
13th Social Justice Film Festival, USA, 2026
22nd Beloit International Film Festival, USA, 2026
23rd International A.S.T.O. Short Film Festival, Greece 2026
13th Torino Underground Cinefest, Turin, Italy 2026
12th Garofano Rosso Film Festival, Forme (AQ) Italy 2026



Laudation by the jury of Taunus Film Festival

The special prize for the best film in the Integration category goes to *The Illegal* by Amir Kiani

The first two shots could not be more contrasting. A brutal torture scene in an anonymous prison is followed by a sun-drenched image of a young couple awkwardly attempting a selfie in a park, leaning against a tree. Between these two images, a story unfolds that tells of the absence of good in the world. Somehow exactly about our time. First we go down a few stairs into a dingy basement room. Here, a cynical landlord pockets a lot of money so that a young man can stay in a small room with a young woman. She desperately needs the money for her drugs. We don't know how they know each other. Ahmed is a political refugee facing the death penalty in Iran. He brings the dramatic events at home into the four narrow walls of Canada on his cell phone. He feels terrible, a traitor to his own cause. His landlady is Claire. She has dropped out of university, chews her

finger nails and is caught up in a violent cycle of addiction and acquisitive panic.

In tableau-like, minimalist scenes, the film soberly unfolds the non-relationship between these two people who are trapped within themselves and cannot bear the misery of the other. And yet director Amir Kiani manages to portray the two with great affection. In precisely placed, long fades to black, we as viewers play the scenes over and open up other, more hopeful glimpses into the story - only to be disappointed again. Just when despair is omnipresent, the film takes a dramaturgically surprising turn. Shrill and loud, extremely touching and somehow also funny.

The Rotary Club Frankfurt/Main International is delighted to present the Intergration Award of the Oberursel Film Festival to author, director and producer Amir Kiani for his extraordinarily intense realization of the theme of living side by side and together. We wish Amir Kiani much strength for his work and are looking forward to his next films.

“extraordinarily intense cinematic language”

Frankfurter Rundschau

Mehr als 30 internationale Film-Produktionen / Preisverleihung als krönender Abschluss (German)

<https://www.fr.de/rhein-main/hochtaunus/oberursel-ort69327/rund-1000-gaeste-kommen-zum-festival-93239093.html>

“a remarkable refugee story with dramatically surprising cuts.”

Taunus-Nachrichten

Essen, Leben, Lieben im Hotel und Open Air im Rushmoor-Park (German)

<https://www.taunus-nachrichten.de/oberursel/nachrichten/oberursel/essen-leben-lieben-hotel-open-air-rushmoor-park-id166767.html>

The Spot Media & Film (German)

Filmfest Oberursel übertrifft Erwartungen

<https://the-spot-mediafilm.com/news/festival-news/filmfest-oberursel-uebertrifft-erwartungen>

PRESS COVERAGE

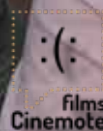
Frankfurter

Preisverleihung krönt Festival in Oberursel (German)

<https://www.fnp.de/lokales/hochtaunus/oberursel-ort69327/preisverleihung-kroent-festival-in-oberursel-93238907.html>



Contact Information



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