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GLASHÜTTENSTRASSE 2  
20357 HAMBURG

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PRESS KIT

  
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Berlinale Shorts  
Competition



# RETREAT

A DOCUMENTARY BY ANABELA ANGELOVSKA  
DCP, 30 MIN, GERMANY/ NORTH MACEDONIA, 2022

Thousands of young women and men were recruited in North Macedonia to work in the kitchens and laundries of the US military bases in Afghanistan and Iraq. With the withdrawal of the last US troops in 2021, they came back and brought with them quickly-earned money, but also traumatic memories.

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## SYNOPSIS

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion in Ukraine we all feel that the war has an effect on our daily lives in the European world. Beyond the battlefields we are affected more and more by territorial conflicts. And we are vulnerable.

People from North Macedonia know about the complex relations between war and economy for more than 20 years now. Since 2001 war in the Middle East had an increasing impact on the small country on the edge of Europe with its poor economic conditions.

Thousands of young people were recruited in North Macedonia to work in the kitchens and laundries of the US military bases in Afghanistan and Iraq. Their incomes –up to 30 times higher than in their homeland– were invested by their families in the construction of small palaces and lucrative real estate in North Macedonia.

With the withdrawal of the last troops from Afghanistan in summer 2021, they returned home – bringing with them quickly-earned money but also traumatic memories.

The documentary RETREAT depicts the complex connections between supposedly far-off and abstract wars and their very real effects at home. It demonstrates the price of labour migration and exposes the gains and losses of decades of political and economic crises.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The starting point for my film »RETREAT« was my interest in the new forms of labour migration which was going on in North Macedonia in the past 20 years: Thousands of young Macedonian women and men left their country with the aim to earn money in war zones in the Middle East in order to realise their dream houses when they return home. A protagonist in the film explains this existential need with a Macedonian saying: »If you haven't built a house, you haven't lived«. It was astonishing to see that Kumanovo, the second largest city of North Macedonia, was witnessing an excessive building boom at the peak of an economical crisis in the country.

In my father's hometown Kumanovo almost everybody has a family member who worked in the Middle East. I knew that when I started shooting the film, but I was not aware how deep the experience from the war zones affected the social life in Kumanovo on all levels.

Also our shooting was influenced by the traumatic memories from the war zones several times and had to be paused. Not only the protagonists in front of the camera were affected by the post traumatic disorder, we also had to struggle with the problem behind the camera as one of our Macedonian team members, who also had worked in the Middle East before, suffered a flash back while we were shooting the film. It was obvious that almost all of them who worked in the war zones struggled with their experiences from the war. This made the work on the film extremely exhausting, but at the same time all difficulties even strengthen the project as we all felt the importance of telling the story.

Because of my origins and my travels to North Macedonia, which has changed its name two times since my childhood, I have an insight into the changes on site. The stories are both strange and familiar to me, since I was born and grew up in Germany. It is this balance of closeness and distance that keeps the tension and which helps me to find the stories and to reflect them from different perspectives.

RETREAT reveals the turmoil and contradictions of the world in which the protagonists live and also raises questions about the way of life in the western world and the effects on those forms of labour migration in the Global South. I wondered whether this new forms of labour migration are indicating a change in values and I wanted to find out to what extent the living and working conditions in a small country like North Macedonia can indicate new parameters of labour and work in a global way.



## CREDITS

	Danica Stanojkovska Djordje Stanojkovski Daniel Cvetkovski Darko Panevski Dejan Petkovski Florim Prestreshi Dr. Mice Duducki, Suzana Andonovic Toni Nikolovski Valentina Krstevska
Director and Script	Anabela Angelovska
DoP	Betty Herzner
Sound	Petar Jovanovski
Editor	Anbela Angelovska Imke Koseck
Translation English	Michel Chevalier
Proofreading	Branka Bilogrevic
Sounddesign & Mixing	Roman Vehlken
Subtitles	Kirsten Herfel
Digital Postproduction	Optical Art, Inhouse Producer Jan Heuser
Color Grading	Optical Art Jochen Hinrichs-Stöldt
Mastering	Optical Art, Stefan Tänzler
DCP	Kinopost, Martin Heckmann
Corporate Design	Matthias Schmidt
Music	Sven Janetzko
Production	Anabela Angelovska

## ANABELA ANGELOVSKA



The filmmaker and artist lives and works in Hamburg. She studied visual communication with a major in film and media philosophy at the Academy of Fine Arts Hamburg and has lectured at art academies and universities since 2005. Her films and video installations, which explore constructions of identity and take a critical look at representation, have been presented internationally in art institutions and at film festivals. Her documentary *Hakie – Haki. Living as a Man.* premiered in the Perspektive Deutsches Kino section at the 65th Berlinale.

### FILMOGRAPHY

- 2022 — »RETREAT«  
Documentary
- 2015 — »HAKIE – HAKI. Living as a Man.«  
Documentary
- 2010 — »REMIX«  
Documentary,
- 2009 — »Templum Novum Salomonis«  
Essay Film
- 2007 — »25th of May – Day of the Youth«  
Essay Film



