

Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk [12A]

2025 France/occupied Palestine/Iran 110 mins

UK released **22 August 2025**

Director **Sepideh Farsi**

Cinematography **Sepideh Farsi**

Music **Cinna Peyghamy**

Cast **Sepideh Farsi; Fatima Hassouna**

Even before this year's Cannes Film Festival began, a major media frenzy erupted over a documentary on a current event. Since the start of the Israeli military offensive following the Hamas attack, more than 55,000 people have died in Palestine, including 211 journalists. The 25-year-old photojournalist Fatma Hassouna is one of them. Her last months, condensed into a portrait, *Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk*, has now come to Cannes.

For over 200 days, Fatma had been the constant interlocutor of the exiled Iranian filmmaker Sepideh Farsi via smartphone. The result was a cinematic, almost intimate portrait of this woman in the death zone, for whom Farsi was her only contact with the outside world.

One day after Farsi was able to inform the young woman, who had never left Gaza in her life, that her filmed portrait would be shown in Cannes' parallel section, the «Association du cinéma indépendant pour sa diffusion (ACID),» Fatma Hassouna was killed along with seven family members in an Israeli bombing raid.

What is fascinating in this filmic portrait, is the incredible energy—one might almost say *joie de vivre*—of this young woman. Farsi seems to deliberately avoid directly addressing her traumatic experiences of the recent past. Instead, we meet a woman who, even under the most painful circumstances, never loses her laughter, her energy of positive, empathetic concern, her desire to believe in something beyond and after the destruction. Yet we also see that this energy weakens over the 200 days, and Fatma seems to surround herself with a mental protective

space. The viewer also learns that stages of actual hunger have already begun.

The interruptions and delays caused by poor internet quality complicate communication. In stark contrast to this is the insertion of Hassona's own photographs, images that depict death and survival yet repeatedly reveal the power of a human face amidst the destruction.

The recorded smartphone conversations between the two women also contain the insistent sounds of exploding bombs and military helicopters. But we also see conversation sequences during which Hassona recites her own poems and interprets her songs. These creations seem like flamethrowers over the abyss.

It was only after her death that Sepideh Farsi quoted much more serious lines from the young woman in a TV interview on the channel «France 24 Perspective,» which foreshadowed her own death: «I want the whole world to know that the death of Palestinians now means that an extended vengeance will grow and burn its killers, his brother, who was silent, about his killing and the knife to cut his neck. And I want the whole world to know that my death means that the world is losing itself in front of me, in front of us, in front of itself. What kills me was not a bullet, not a shrapnel, not even a missile, what killed me every day... is the oppression from all those who remained silent when they should have been screaming.»

Dieter Wieczorek, *Modern Times*, 12 June 2025 (abridged)

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