

# DAWN

Fiction, 2014, 95 minutes (CH/GB/DE/IL)

Director: Romed Wyder / Script: Billy MacKinnon



Online Screener Link:

<http://dschointventschr.filmlibrary.ch>

Ask for your password at: [musengfischer@gmail.com](mailto:musengfischer@gmail.com)

Stills, trailer and clips can be downloaded under the following link:

[www.dawn-film.eu](http://www.dawn-film.eu)

Password: Pressroom

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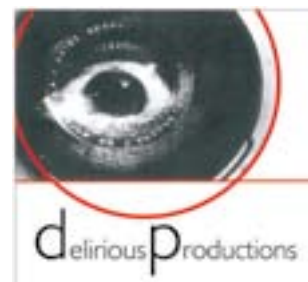
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**PARADIGMA**  
.....F.I.L.M.S.....



# SYNOPSIS



*Dawn* is a psychological drama behind closed doors, in which four comrades in arms pressure the young Elisha to overcome his moral qualms and fully commit to the armed struggle.

The story is set in Palestine in 1947, during the British mandate period. The Zionists are fighting for the establishment of a Jewish state. A member of the armed Jewish underground has been sentenced to death by the British authorities. In return, the resistance has kidnapped a British officer, trying to redeem their friend. The insurgents spend the night together, waiting for the outcome of the negotiation. If the British hang their friend at dawn, one of them will shoot the British officer held as a hostage.

Based on the novel by Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel, *Dawn* sheds a new light on a key moment in history that allows us to re-examine the current political disputes.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

ROMED WYDER

Having completed my last film *Absolut*, I was keen to continue developing the theme of resistance in my next film. During my research I came across the novel *Dawn* by Elie Wiesel. I was immediately fascinated by this novel and by the fact that a Nobel Peace Prize winning author was concerned by the states of mind of a killer – a freedom fighter or a terrorist, depending on the perspective. But the young Elisha and Elie Wiesel have a common past: both are survivors of the camps, forced to reinvent a life. Unlike the author who dedicated his life to the promotion of peace and the memory of the Shoah, Elisha joined the Zionist underground movement, fighting for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and especially the way it is treated here in the West was another reason of my interest in this project. As soon as we dig into history in search for explanations, we realize that there are many hidden historical facts, including those of 1947 and 1948, particularly important and painful. I am now convinced that we Europeans do not only bear a heavy responsibility towards the plight of the Jews in Europe, but also towards the plight of the Palestinians.

## Context

Since the beginning of the British occupation of Palestine, towards the end of the First World War, the British authorities were struggling to maintain peace between the local Arab population and the Jewish newcomers from Europe. When the British denied entry to the survivors of the concentration camps coming by boat to Palestine, they became the Enemy Number One of the Zionist project. Clandestine groups like the Irgun and Lehi subsequently increase their attacks against the British on Palestinian soil.

The theme of the resistance's struggle has not lost its relevance since the novel's publication in 1960. However, the reading of the book today evokes the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in which it is now the Palestinians who are fighting for the liberation of Arab Palestine. The situation's reverse is quite striking and shows that liberation can lead to other forms of oppression, once again leading to fight. Of course, this kind of theoretical reflection is quite distant from the people involved in the everyday struggle. It is therefore necessary to keep a certain distance in order to be able to judge the problem on the whole.

## Themes

The central theme of *Dawn* is the question of belonging. Elisha, the protagonist, lost his family in the concentration camps and in the aftermath of WWII he has become homeless. He joins the armed struggle for the foundation of a Jewish state, thereby hoping to contribute to the creation of a new homeland. At the same time he sees in his comrades a family unit offering him comfort and trust. However, his new sense of purpose is shaken when he receives the order to shoot a British hostage. Will Elisha, who has survived the terrors of the Nazis, become an executioner himself? Will he justify himself with the confidence that the underground movement has granted, or will he act according to his conscience?

Elisha's dilemma, universal in its content, brings out the classic question at the heart of any activist and fighter: does the end justify the means? Elisha's comrades in arms try to persuade him to go ahead and to ignore his pangs of conscience. This raises another important issue: the distinction between persuasion and manipulation. The frontier between one and the other is slippery and often imperceptible. The group's elders make the most out of it by building a useful rhetoric and mythology in order to achieve their goal.

### Behind closed doors

The narrative of *Dawn* opens on an autumn afternoon and ends the following morning at dawn. The main part of the film takes place at night in an old Arab house used by the underground movement. During the day, the place is used to give Hebrew lessons to new immigrants, a perfect activity to conceal the fighters' gatherings. That night, five members of the group are awaiting the negotiations' outcome, which will seal the fate of the prisoners. In case the negotiations fail, their British hostage is to be executed at dawn. During the hours preceding the deadline, the relationships between the protagonists evolve and confrontations erupt. Gradually, they reveal their intentions, their dreams, their fears and their injuries. They pursue the same goal, but each one of them has his own history and his own motivations.



**Elisha** (Joel Basman) is on his first mission. He is part of a small group of four fighters. Right from the start, he feels that they do not tell him everything. He is not very sure of himself and tries to understand the issues without revealing his insecurity. He is in the classic position of the neophyte and has to prove during this initiation night his ability to be part of this group. Facing their English hostage brings back memories of his Nazi executioners and weakens his resolutions even further. He then tries to justify himself in front of his parents he thinks he has seen in the dark corridors leading to the cellar. In this vulnerability he's looking for comfort and becomes so easily influenced.

**Gad** (Liron Levo), the proud and charismatic leader of the group, recruited Elisha in Paris, where he settled after the war. The sabra from Jerusalem is twelve years older than Elisha and has become like his older brother. Gad is well aware that Elisha also came to Palestine to find a new family, and thus takes his role as an educator very seriously. When Elisha refuses to obey the orders, his human and strategic abilities are put to the test. He continues to control perfectly the situation, until he learns of his friend David's execution.

**Joav** (Moris Cohen), a vicious big mouth, is constantly testing Elisha's strength and ability. To him, that night seems too long; he can't wait for it to come to an end and does not approve Gad's way of doing things. In fact, no one here has lessons to teach to this former Casablanca street criminal. He was recruited for his knowledge of weapons and his cold blooded way of using them. But behind his appearance of a tough guy and a brute, he is a man in lack of recognition, respect and love.

**Gideon** (Rami Heuberger), a practicing Jew, works with Joab. They form an unlikely couple, born out of the need for an armed struggle. His strong point is his intelligence and calm, which he manages to keep at all times. Gideon knows that the Jewish state is not the will of God, but that of man. This disobedience hurts him sometimes, but he knows of too many broken destinies to be aware that there is no alternative to their struggle. Born in Germany, he says he wants to "return" to Hebron and settle in the city where it all began.

**Ilana** (Sarah Adler), who was born in France, is the voice of their clandestine radio and Gad's girlfriend. She met Elisha in Paris when he was recruited. Ilana is very touched by what he went through, and tries to be friendly to him. Her kiss in Paris was supposed to show him that the future can be beautiful and that the struggle for a Jewish state is right. Defying the orders, she goes to the school despite of the curfew in order to reassure Elisha and protect him from the others. But in the end, she has the same goal as the rest of the group: help Elisha to commit fully to their cause. Conscious of her power, she replies to Joab, who accuses her of never having used a weapon: 'I kill with my voice'.

**Dawson** (Jason Isaacs), the British hostage, is trying to influence Elisha in the other direction. He is not convinced that the British presence in Palestine is relevant, and he hopes to be with his wife and son as soon as possible and go back to his civil job as a teacher. Right from the start, he does not believe the exchange of prisoners will work. He focuses all his efforts on Elisha, who is as old as his son. By using his teacher's faculties and developing a subtle argumentation, he manages to actually touch Elisha.

# PRODUCER'S NOTE

SAMIR

Gilat Shalit, Daniel Pearl, Ingrid Betancourt: these are just a few of the hostages that people have heard about in the past few years. Yet political violence is as old as mankind itself. As such, the question behind the legitimacy of political violence in the name of liberation or the fight against despots or violent social systems, has been posed time and again.

Currently, influential Western politicians are spreading the word of so-called Islamic terror. That these "terrorist" forms of political struggle are rooted in 19th century Europe, seems to have been entirely forgotten. Lenin attacked his leftist opposition at the start of the 20th Century with terrorist' methods. Dostoyevski's *The Devils* is a prime masterpiece on misguided terrorists. The dilemma of portraying a human being that is prepared to kill someone else "for a good reason" has been broached in literature and film for centuries.

Romed Wyder's idea, to adapt for the screen a novel on this theme, a novel written by a man who himself survived a concentration camp, is audacious or at the very least, bold. Yet it makes sense. Just like we have chosen to forget that in the 19th Century the Swiss confederation was founded on the often violent actions of a 'liberal' party... So it seems to have been forgotten that the construction of a Jewish state, was similarly accompanied by the policy of terrorist politics.

Since the late 1990s, some films have been made on terrorism, but *Dawn* is radically different. Most of these films are made from a Western point of view, or more precisely, from an American point of view; and it is rare that a "terrorist" has the opportunity to explain their action. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict *Dawn* gives a totally new perspective on these political disputes.





# CAST & CREW

## Autoren

**Director** **Romed Wyder**  
*Pas de café, pas de télé, pas de sexe*  
*Absolut*  
*Squatters*

**Screenplay** **Billy MacKinnon**  
*Hideous Kinky (Marrakech express)* by Gillies MacKinnon  
*Small Faces* by Gillies MacKinnon  
*Sweetie* by Jane Campion

**Original novel** **Elie Wiesel**  
 Author awarded by various literary prizes  
 Nobel Peace Prize 1986  
 Founds *The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity*

## Cast

**Elisha** **Joel Basman**  
*Sennentuntschi* by Michael Steiner  
*Hanna* by Joe Wright  
*Luftbusiness* by Dominique de Rivaz

**Joav** **Moris Cohen**  
*Ha-Shoter (Policeman)* by Naday Lapid  
*Out in the Dark (Alata)* by Michael Mayer  
*Ha-Mashgihim* by Meny Yaesh

**Ilana** **Sarah Adler**  
*Meduzot (Jellyfish/Les méduses)* by Shira Geffen and Etgar Keret  
*Notre musique* by Jean-Luc Godard  
*Marie Antoinette* by Sophie Coppola

**Gad** **Liron Levo**  
*This Must Be the Place* by Paolo Sorrentino  
*Disengagement* by Amos Gitai  
*Strangers* by Guy Nattiv and Erez Tadmor

**Gideon** **Rami Heuberger**  
*Michtavim Le America* by Hanan Peled  
*Matana MiShamayim* by Dover Koshashvili  
*Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg

**Dawson** **Jason Isaacs**  
*Harry Potter* by Chris Columbus  
*Green Zone* by Paul Greengrass  
*The Patriot* by Roland Emmerich



Joel Basman



Moris Cohen



Sarah Adler



Liron Levo



Rami Heuberger



Jason Isaacs

## Production

- Creative Prod.** Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion/Samir
- Switzerland** Paradigma Films/Romed Wyder  
Radio Télévision Suisse SSR /Alberto Chollet, Urs Fitze
- Israel** Lama Films/Amir Harel  
*Paradise Now* by Hany Abu-Assad  
*Meduzot (Jellyfish/Les méduses)* by Shira Geffen and Etgar Keret  
*Walk on Water (Tu marcheras sur l'eau)* by Eytan Fox
- Great Britain** Delirious Productions/Phil Gates  
*Aka* by Duncan Roy  
*Wayfaring Stranger* by Richard West  
*Corps* by Richard West
- Germany** Enigma Film/A. Loskant, C. Grollmann, F. Hohagen  
*Die Schwarzen Brüder* by Xavier Koller  
*Puppe* by Sebastian Künzli  
*Homies* by Adnan Köse

## Key Creative Positions

- Ex. producer** Tunje Berns  
*Puppe* by Sebastian Künzli  
*Opération Libertad* by Nicolas Wadimoff  
*Räuberinnen* by Carla Lia Monti
- DOP** Ram Shweky  
*Vasermil (Une jeunesse israélienne)* by Mushon Salmona  
*Strangers* by Guy Nattiv and Erez Tadmor  
*Yamim Kfuim (Frozen Days)* by Danny Lerner
- Prod. designer** Roger Martin  
*Stationspiraten* by Mike Schaerer  
*Tandoori Love* by Oliver Paulus  
*Tulpan* by Serei Dvortsevoy
- Editing** Kathrin Plüss  
*Skinhead Attitude* de Daniel Schweizer  
*Verliebte Feinde* de Werner Schweizer  
*Angry Monk* de Luc Schaedler
- Composer** Bernard Trontin  
*Absolut* by Romed Wyder  
*Lonely Pioneers: The Young Gods* by Christian Walther  
*Neutre* by Xavier Ruiz



# ROMED WYDER

DIRECTOR/CO-PRODUCER

Romed Wyder was born in Brig (Switzerland) in 1967. In 1995, he graduated with a degree from the cinema department of the Ecole Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Geneva.

He is an active member of Cinéma Spoutnik and founded Laika Films with five other filmmakers in 1993. Romed developed a tape to film system and an online widget generator. He founded Paradigma Films SA in 2003. During 12 years he was a member of the Federal Film Commission. Between 2005 and 2008 he was the president of the Swiss Filmmakers Association.

He works as director and producer since 1990. After Squatters (documentary), No coffee, no TV, no sex (fiction) and Absolut (fiction), Dawn is his fourth movie with theatrical release.



# DSCHOINT VENTSCHR PROFILE

*Dschoint Ventschr* Filmproduktion develops, produces and sells films that are primarily concerned with the aspects of cross culture, politics and society: feature and documentary films that have the meeting of various cultures as their theme. *Dschoint Ventschr* works consistently on the continuing development of a modern cinematic pictorial language and utilises the creative possibilities of new technologies.

*Dschoint Ventschr* produces one or two feature films for the cinema each year and regularly creates several documentary films which are seen in the cinema and on television. More than 90 dedicated, full-length documentary and feature films for the cinema have been produced since 1994, mostly international coproductions (incl. with Germany, France, Austria, the United Kingdom and Canada), as well as coproductions with well-known television broadcasters such as Arte, 3Sat, WDR, ZDF, SWR, RTBF and of course the Swiss broadcasters SRF, RTS and RSI.

*Dschoint Ventschr* focuses on working with young authors and has made a name for itself in Switzerland as a «talent pool». The San Sebastian Film Festival presented the coproduction «Satte Farben vor Schwarz (Rich colours in front of black)» by Sophie Heldman in the international competition of 2010. The most recent production «Opération Libertad» from Nicolas Wadimoff was shown in the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs programme in 2012 at Cannes.

Many of the films produced have won awards, including «Nachbeben (Aftershock)» by Stina Werenfels, «Das Fräulein (The girl)» by Andrea Staka (winner of the Pardo D'Oro in Locarno 2006), «Snow White» by Samir, «Little Girl Blue» by Anna Luif, «Strahl» by Manuel Flurin Hendry and «Miel et Cendres» by Nadia Fares; the documentary films «Forget Baghdad» and «Babylon 2» by Samir, «Verliebte Feinde (Beloved enemies)», «Noel Field - Der erfundene Spion (The invented spy)» and «Von Werra» by Werner Swiss Schweizer, «Do it» und «Gambit» by Sabine Gisiger and Marcel Zwingli and many more. In 1997, Samir and Swiss were presented with the Zurich Film Prize for their outstanding work as producers.

*Dschoint Ventschr* is, besides the two author-directors and producers Samir (responsible for documentary and feature film projects) and Werner Schweizer (responsible for documentary film projects) and producer Karin Koch (responsible for documentary and feature film projects), Sereina Gabathuler (production manager), Joël Jent (production manager), Franziska Sonder (production assistant) and two interns.



Samir



Werner Schweizer



Karin Koch



Sereina Gabathuler



Joël Jent



Franziska Sonder 10

# FILMOGRAPHY DSCHOINT VENTSCHR

## SELECTION

- 2014 **Dora oder die sexuellen Neurosen...**, fiction, 90 min., Stina Werenfels  
**Iraqi Odyssey**, documentary, 162 min., Samir  
**Ulrich Seidl und die bösen Buben**, doc., 52 min., Constantin Wulff  
**2 Francos 40 Pesetas**, fiction 90 min., Carlos Iglesias
- 2013 **My Father, the Revolution and Me**, documentary, 82 min, Ufuk Emiroglu  
**Die Schwarzen Brüder**, fiction, 95 min, Xavier Koller, (CH/D)  
**Enemies in Love**, fiction, 111 min., Werner Schweizer (CH)  
**Augusto Boal**, documentary, 52 min., Anita Blumer (CH)  
**Jan**, documentary 94 min., Benjamin Kempf Siemens and Rafael Benito (CH)
- 2012 **Die Libelle und das Nashorn**, fiction, 81 min., Lola Randl (CH/DE)  
**Opération Libertad**, fiction, 90 min., Nicolas Wadimoff (CH/F)  
**Once I entered a Garden**, documentary 99 min., Avi Mograbi (F/CH/IL)  
**Puppet**, fiction, 85 min., Sebastian Kutzli (D/CH)
- 2011 **Mord hinterm Vorhang**, TV, 90 min., Sabine Boss (CH)  
**Joschka and Sir Fischer**, documentary 140 min, Pepe Danquart (CH/D)  
**Silver forest**, fiction, 85 min, Christine Repond (CH/D)  
**Geysir und Goliath**, TV-doc., 52 min., Alexander Seiler (CH)  
**Colours in the dark**, fiction, 85 min., Sophie Heldman, (D/CH)
- 2010 **David wants to fly**, documentary, 90 min, David Sieveking (CH/D/A)  
**The train station and it's angel**, documentary, 50 min, Samir  
**Young & Jenisch**, documentary, 70 min, Martina Rieder & Karolin Arn
- 2009 **Robber Girls**, fiction, 80 min., Carla Lia Monti (CH/LUX)  
**Dirty Paradise**, documentary, 70 min., Daniel Schweizer (CH/F)
- 2008 **Hidden Heart**, doc, 95 min., C. Karrer & W. Schweizer (CH/D/ZA)  
**La Reina del Condon**, doc, 75 min., R. Stamm & S. Ceschi (CH/IRL)  
**The way of a warrior**, doc, 90 min., Andreas Pichler (D/CH/I)  
**Ya Sharr Mout**, TV-doc, 70 min., Sabine Gisiger
- 2007 **Müetis Kapital**, TV-doc, 59 min., Karoline Arn & Martina Rieder  
**Nur ein Sommer**, fiction, 90 min., Tamara Staudt (CH/D)  
**Slumming**, fiction, 100 min., Michael Glawogger (A/CH)  
**Lost in Liberia**, documentary, 90 min., Luzia Schmid (D/CH)  
**Shadow of the Holy Book**, doc., 98 min., Arto Halonen (FL/CH/DK)  
**Staub/Dust**, documentary, 90 min., Hartmut Bitomsky (D/CH)
- 2006 **Das Fräulein**, fiction, 81 min., Andrea Staka (CH/D)  
**Feltrinelli**, documentary, 80 min., Alessandro Rossetto (CH/I/D)  
**Nachbeben/Going private**, fiction, 98 min., Stina Werenfels  
**Der Keiler**, TV, 90 min., Urs Egger (CH/D)  
**Schönes Wochenende**, TV, 83 min., Petra Volpe (CH/D)
- 2005 **Snow White**, fiction, 113 min., Samir (CH/A)  
**Gambit**, documentary, 107 min., Sabine Gisiger (CH/D)  
**White Terror**, documentary, 89 min., Daniel Schweizer (CH/F/D)  
**Ricordare Anna**, fiction, 96 min., Walo Deuber (CH/D/I)

## Swiss Film Prize Winners

- Enemies in Love (2013)**  
*Best fiction*  
*Best actress (Mona Petri)*  
*Best actor (Fabian Krüger)*
- Das Fräulein (2007)**  
*Best script: Andrea Staka*
- Nachbeben (2007) Prize of the Jury for the ensemble**
- Snow White (2006)**  
*Best Leading Role: Carlos Leal*
- Strähl (2005)**  
*Best Leading Role: Roeland Wiesnecker; Best Supporting Role: Johanna Bantzer; Jury Award for Best Cinematography: Filip Zumbrunn*
- Meier Marilyn (2004)**  
*Best Main Role: Bettina Stucky*
- Do it (2001)**  
*Best film by Sabine Gisiger & Marcel Zwingli*
- Summertime (2001)**  
*Best short film: Anna Luif*
- Babami Hirsizlar Caldi (2000)**  
*Best short film: Esen Isik*
- Pastry, Pain & Politics (1999)**  
*Best short film: Stina Werenfels*