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MAHMOUD AL MASSAD'S "RECYCLE" TO AIR NATIONALLY ON PBS'S INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009

*Ride Shotgun with ex-Mujahadeen Fighter Abu Ammar Through the
Chaotic Streets of Zarqa, Jordan—A Hotbed of Political Extremism and Birthplace of Both the
Infamous al Qaeda Leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi and Filmmaker Mahmoud al Massad*

“A resonant tale about broken dreams and Middle Eastern poverty. The conditions that breed radical Islamic terrorists are observed through the prism of one weary ex-mujahadeen in Mahmoud al Massad’s elegantly conceived **RECYCLE**.”—*Variety*

(San Francisco, CA)—What makes a terrorist? In Zarqa, Jordan’s second-largest city, with close to 1 million people, it is a much-debated question. Zarqa’s political Islamists are a powerful force in this industrial center, and it is the birthplace of Abu Musa al Zarqawi, the brutal leader of al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, who was killed by American forces in 2005. Many in town knew al Zarqawi, many in his family remain, and Zarqa continues to be a source of new recruits to the jihadist cause. A film by Mahmoud al Massad, who was born in Palestine and raised in Zarqa, **RECYCLE** will air on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, March 31, 2009, at 10 PM (check local listings).

RECYCLE is a portrait of the city as seen through the eyes of Abu Ammar, a 40-something Jordanian who served as a mujahid during the Afghan-Soviet War and the former owner of a failed grocery store who now struggles to support his two wives and eight children by collecting discarded cardboard for sale to a recycling plant. A deeply religious man, he has also collected thousands of scraps of paper with Islamic sayings that he intends to use in a book on jihad as soon as he can find a publisher.

The film joins Abu Ammar on his daily work routine, in intimate family settings at home, at prayer, and after his arrest and four-month imprisonment on suspicion of involvement in the 2005 hotel bombings in Amman. The subjects of his periodic, wide-ranging conversations with friends and neighbors include the inadvisability for Muslims to work or live in “infidel” countries, the 9/11 attacks in America, the rise of extremist violence, and the role of Muslim theologians.

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Reminiscences of Zarqawi are also related, with all agreeing that he was a very unremarkable man, a man who was uneducated, apolitical and not at all religious—indeed, his main concerns seemed to be pills, alcohol and women—but who suddenly became religious and surfaced as “the Prince of al Qaeda” in Iraq.

Filmed over a period of two and a half years, **RECYCLE**, in its patient and gradual accretion of biographical and social details, portrays a man who is torn between his religious beliefs and ever-pressing economic problems and who, as his situation deteriorates into bankruptcy, must make a difficult decision. In exposing this all-too-common environment of poverty, political humiliation and Islamic fundamentalism, **RECYCLE** reveals the social environment that spawns both terrorists and economic immigrants. Unlike the daily bombardment of dramatic “good and evil” headlines about Islam and the war on terror, **RECYCLE** suggests that the potential for evil can emerge quietly in the most ordinary of circumstances.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **RECYCLE** at pbs.org/independentslens/recycle. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmaker

Mahmoud al Massad (Director/Cinematographer) Independent filmmaker Mahmoud al Massad was born in Zarqa, Jordan, in 1969. At age 18, he moved to Europe and worked in the film industry for broadcasting companies in Romania, Italy and Germany, making more than 12 short films. Mahmoud divides his time between Jordan and the Netherlands.

Since 2002, Mahmoud has been returning to Jordan consistently and working on several projects, including *Shatter Hassan*, *Jackie and the 40 Yellow Cabs*, *Certificate*, *Ritual*, *Human Landscape*, *White Wall*, *Sufi* and others. **RECYCLE** has been shown in many international film festivals; it won the World Cinema Cinematography Award at Sundance 2008 and received seven Cinema in Motion awards at San Sebastian. He is currently in production with his newest project, *This Is My Picture When I Was Dead*.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers.

Independent Lens features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at pbs.org/independentslens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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