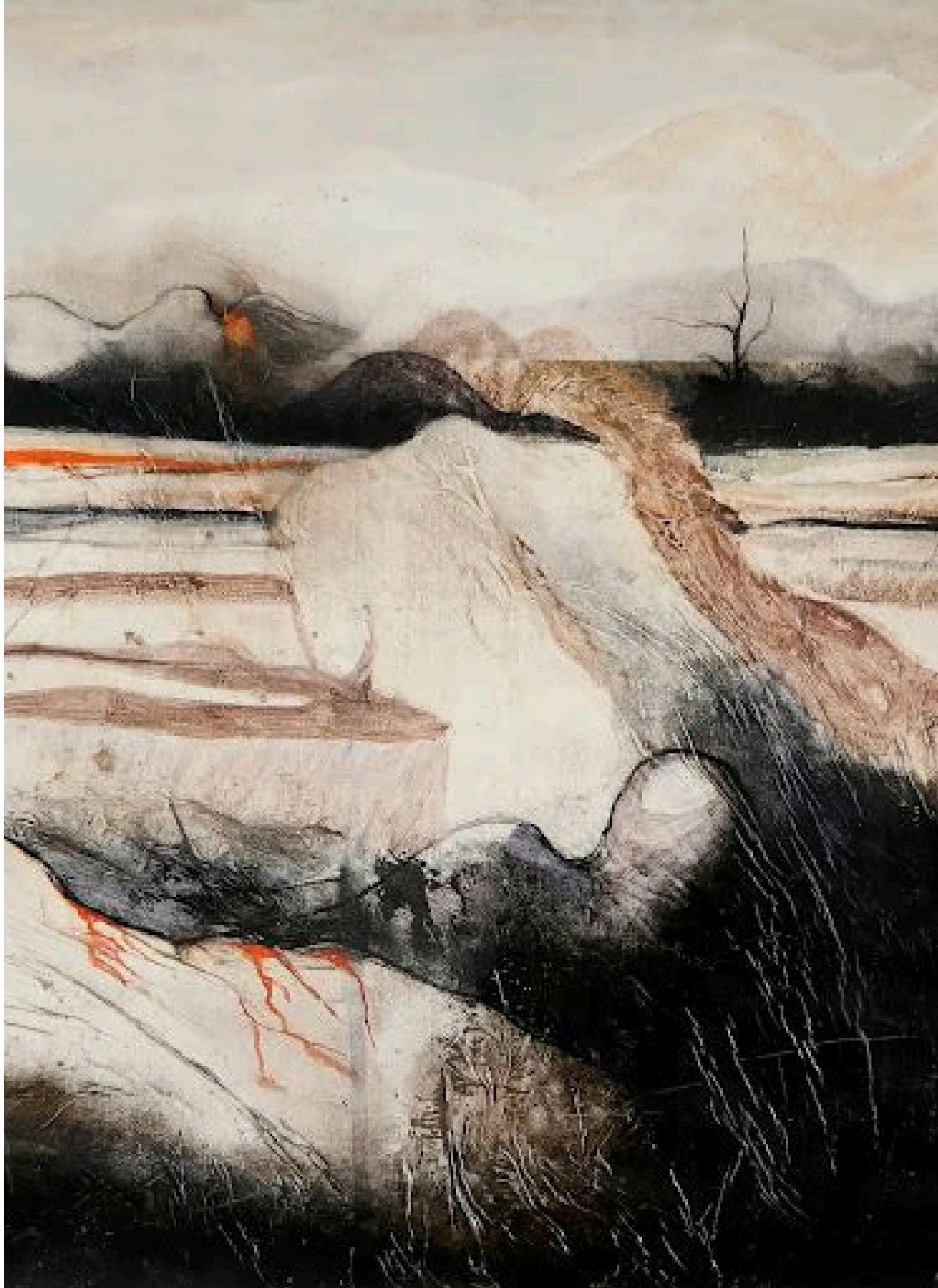


05/12/2024

IRAQ

THE LAND OF
TWO RIVERS

SOLIDARITY SCREENINGS GLASGOW





MESOPOTAMIA, MEANING 'LAND BETWEEN TWO RIVERS' IS THE OLDEST CIVILISATION IN THE WORLD - IT IS LOCATED IN PRESENT-DAY IRAQ.

CULTURAL LIFE



IRAQ'S CULTURAL FIGURES

ALI AL-WARDI



Iraq's biggest modern intellectual; renowned for his work in psychology and sociology where he studied the city-country contradiction.

MUHAMMED MAHDI AL-JAWHIRI



Considered to be the greatest Arab poet. He was deeply involved in the struggle against the British. His brother, Ja'far was martyred in the struggle.

LAYLA AL-ATTAR



Feminist painter and director of the Iraqi National Art Museum who uplifted women in her art. She was martyred when a US missile struck her home in 2003.



**“WHY IS IT WHENEVER A VIOLENT STORM SHAKES US THOROUGHLY
WE RESORT TO PEN AND PAPER**

**DID THE WRITERS OR POETS RESCUE THE SHAM
OR BAGHDAD BY THEIR WRITINGS?”**

AL-MUTANABBI STREET

Al-Mutanabbi Street, named after famous Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi, is a powerful example of Iraq's cultural life. It's a 1 km road filled with bookstores and stalls, ending with an old Ottoman palace and the Baghdad Cultural Center

Baghdad Cultural Center is active every single day with talks and small room museums donated by local intellectuals.

Al-Mutanabbi Street was not spared by the barbaric war the nation was thrust into as a car bombing on the 5th of March 2007 killed 30 and wounded 100. Yet Al-Mutanabbi Street survived and thrives again.





THE LONG RESISTANCE TO IMPERIALISM

1918

Seige of Najaf



War of Independence

1920S

1947

Iraq (Abdel Kareem Qasem) against Zionist colonialism.

Iraqi attack on the Zionist entity.

1991

2003 ONWARDS

The weight of the whole world came crashing down against Iraq. Yet, we resisted and are still resisting.



STAGE 1: AMERIKAN OCCUPATION

During the open US occupation and invasion, our resistance was primarily expressed through the militia form in order to combat the colonisers. The Mahdi Army were at the forefront.

Imperialist strategy versus the peoples strategy.

Falluja saw one of the most intense battles against the invader and became a symbol of resistance. Despite the atrocities committed by the imperialists, such as the bombing of a mosque, the US had to retreat.

There was growing Shia-Sunni unity to resist occupation. Iraq had to be put down, the weapon of sectarianism had to be utilised in attempting to defeat us.



STAGE 2: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST DAESH

ISIS, A US PROXY

Research on this is limited, yet looking at their arms, much of it was NATO equipment - armed by the Saudis and Turkey, who are propped up by the US, EU and UK.

Links to the extremist Syrian rebels, who's leading faction has its roots in Al-Qaeda - supported by the US, Turkey and the Zionist entity.

US assassination of Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi - both instrumental figures in the defeat of ISIS.

Daesh saw Shias as "more the enemy than the west" and believed that Shias are apostates and must be killed. Sectarianism aids the imperialists.

THE POPULAR MOBILISATION FORCES (PMF)



The PMF was formed in response to ISIS in order to liberate Iraq and defend all ethnic and religious groups. Their origin lies in the people's guerrilla war against the Amerikan invaders.

While the Shia factions are dominant, the PMF includes organisations from all groups in Iraq, be they religious, such as Yazidis or ethnic, such as the Turkmen.

It is due to the PMF that Daesh were defeated, not US, British and other imperialist bombs.

ISIS was an excuse for the imperialists to terrorise our people, de-develop us and attempt to make us reliant on their aid, both militarily and economically.



STAGE 3: AL-AQSA FLOOD

The international imperialist world used **Daesh as an excuse to have Amerikan troops remain in Iraq**. The Green Zone is still a center of the imperialists; in fact, the US embassy in Iraq is the largest US embassy in the world! Not many Americans live in Iraq...

A coalition of Iraqi Shia resistance groups (a part of the PMF) formed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI) in 2020. The IRI joined the Al-Aqsa Flood in October last year by attacking a US base. The IRI has constantly sent drones against the Zionist entity and has worked closely with Yemen. It has so far conducted over **170 strikes against US bases in Iraq, Syria and Jordan**.

While the Lebanese resistance takes a well-deserved (and likely short) breather, **the Iraqi resistance has promised to escalate further**.



IRAQ'S NATURE



FROM THE MOUNTAINS IN THE NORTH TO THE DESERT IN THE WEST, AND MARSHES IN THE SOUTH - IRAQ'S BREATHTAKING LAND HAS NURTURED A PEOPLE WITH A BLOOMING INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY.





THE MARSHES

THE MESOPOTAMIAN MARSHES OF SOUTHERN IRAQ

Iraq's Garden of Eden was once among the largest wetlands in the world, covering 10,500km² in 1973, an area roughly the size of Lebanon.

They were home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, such as coastal fish and shrimp, the smooth-coated otter, sacred Ibis, the mesopotamian crow and the buffalo.

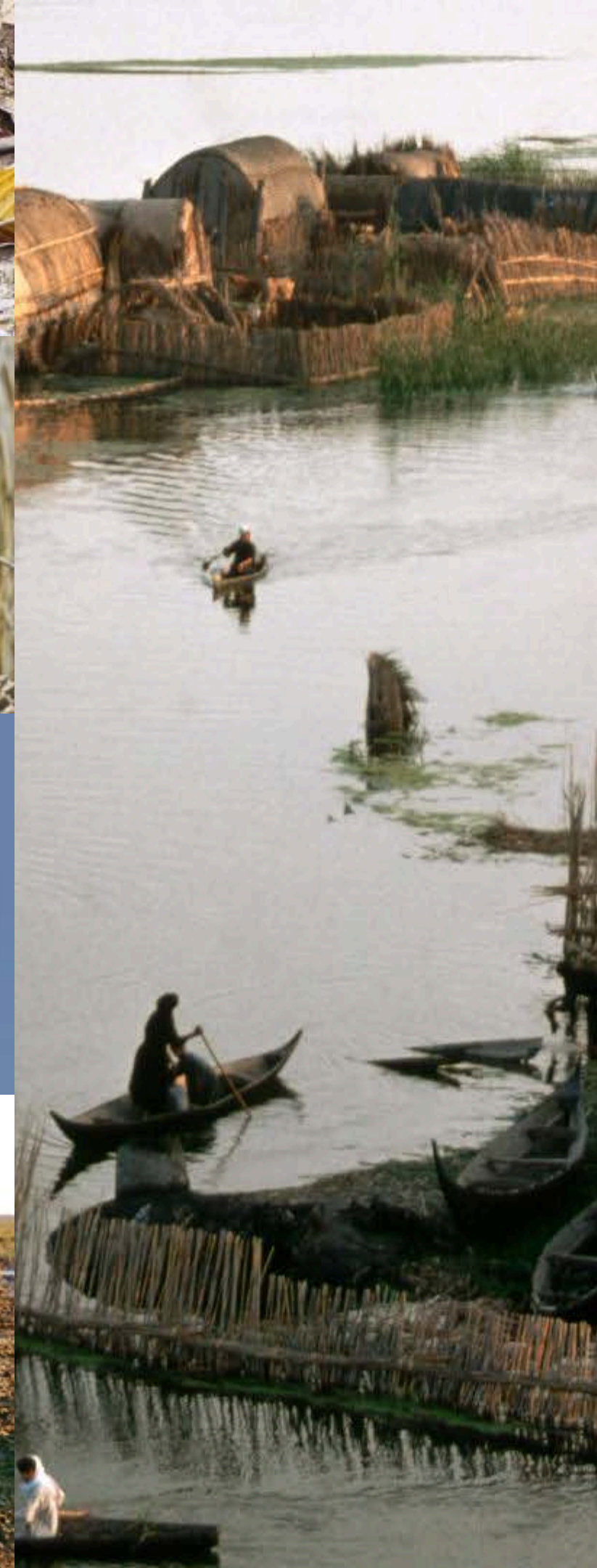
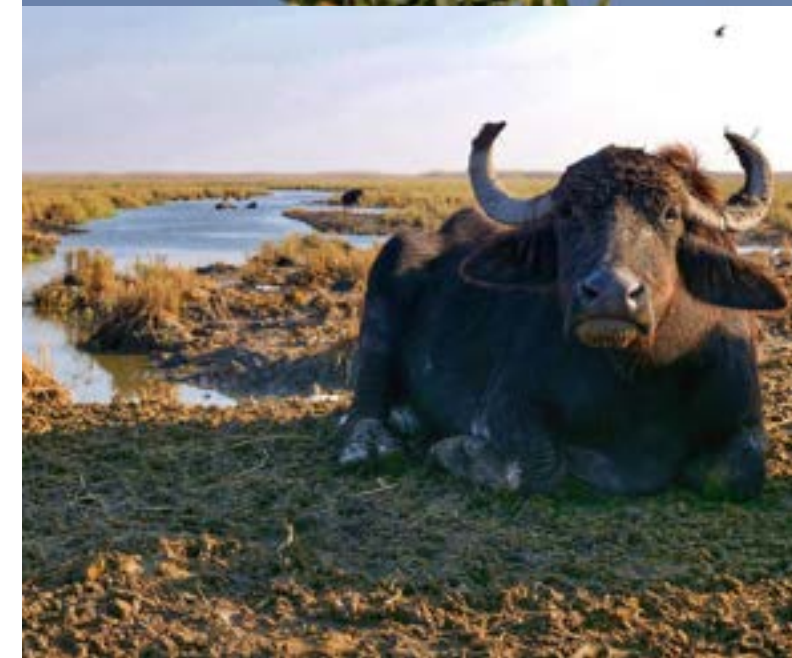
By the middle of the 20th century the marshes supported a human population estimated at 500,000.

ECOLOGICAL & CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

Labelled by UNESCO as a 'refuge of biodiversity', the marshes are natural freshwater storage systems. They moderate the local climate and filter out pollutants before they reach the Arabian Gulf.

Marsh Arab (Ahwari) culture of fishing and agriculture provide an important window to the past - and the story of Iraqi civilisation.

Marsh buffalo milk is an important part of Iraqi cuisine as we can see with Geymer, which is an essential cream that is had with Khaye.





THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MARSHES

Following an attempt in 1991 to overthrow Saddam by Shias and Kurds, the marshes were drained to punish the (majority Shia) Ahwaris that inhabit the marshes.

Saddam Hussein, who was initially put in power by a US-backed coup, severely oppressed non-Sunni Arabs and other ethnic minorities of Iraq. Following the drainage of the marshes, the population size decreased to about 20,000 with 80,000-120,000 displaced in refugee camps in Iran.

The depletion is now considered **one of the greatest environmental and humanitarian disasters of the 20th century.**

While we try to rebuild the marshes, Turkey has built 34 dams on the Tigris and Euphrates which has harmed recovery. The climate crisis has also been severely impacting the marshes in the form of severe droughts. **The extent of the marshes now varies between 25-50% of their size in 1973.**


A person is seen from a high angle, sitting in a small boat or canoe on a body of water. The water is surrounded by dense, tall grass or reeds, creating a marshy environment. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The overall tone of the image is dark and moody.

AL-AHWAR

THE MARSHES

Kassem Hawal (1976, 45min)





Documentary film chronicling the lives of the marsh people during the 1970s by PLO filmmaker Kassem Hawal. Dependent on reed exports for papermaking, these communities lived amidst ancient rituals and traditions rooted in Mesopotamian civilisation. The film captures their dignified poverty and reflects on their connection to the land, telling the story of human belonging and resilience.

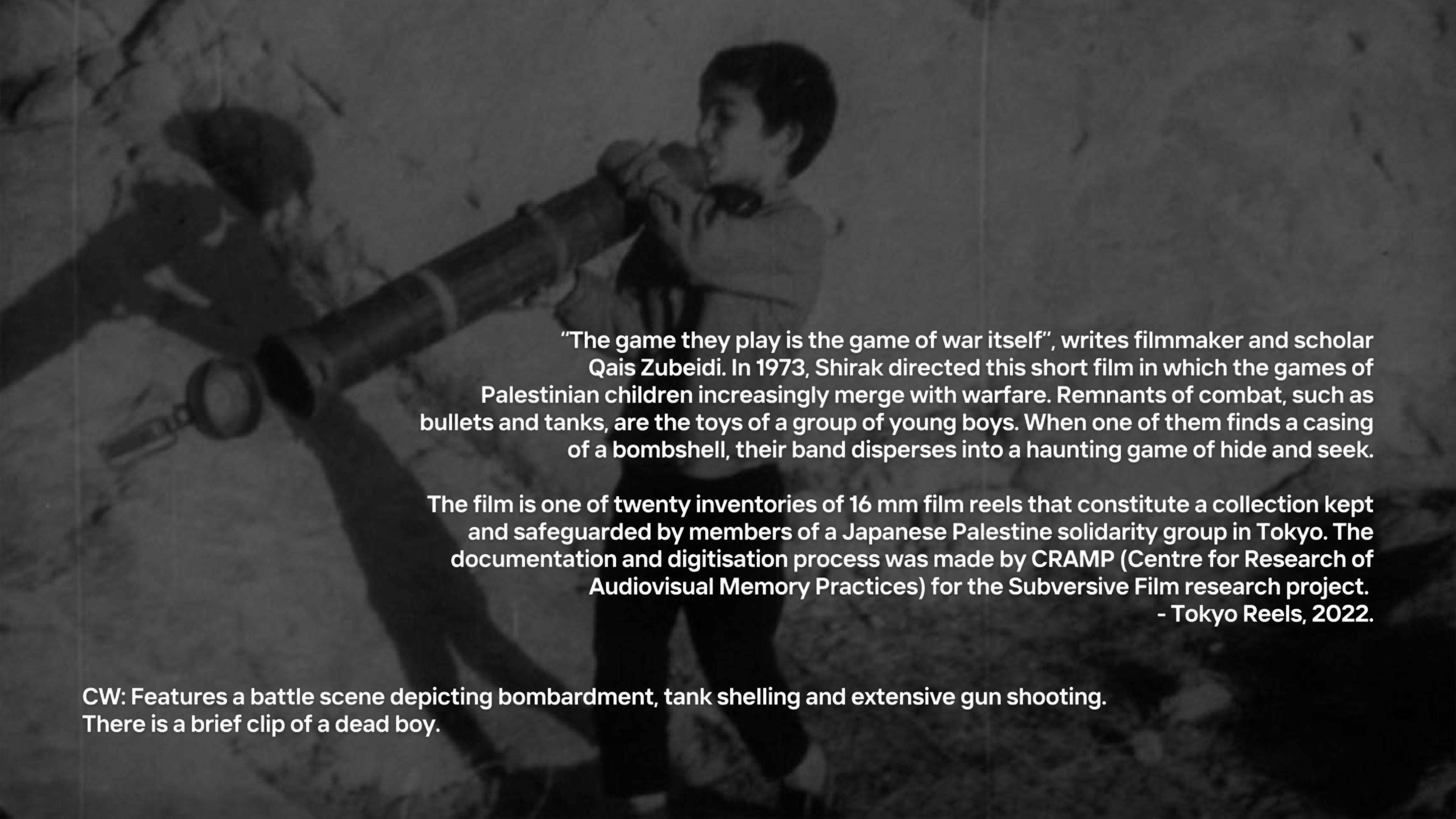
Just before the order was given to drain this 5,000-year-old habitat, in an effort to erase the Marshes' cultural memory, Hawal's film was ordered to be destroyed.

Hawal's work transcends documentary, blending anthropology, sociology, and cinema to preserve the fading essence of an ancient way of life. The film is not only a visual record of a disappearing world - it serves as fiction to yesterday's reality.

AL-L3BA

THE GAME

Shirak (1973, 16min)



"The game they play is the game of war itself", writes filmmaker and scholar Qais Zubeidi. In 1973, Shirak directed this short film in which the games of Palestinian children increasingly merge with warfare. Remnants of combat, such as bullets and tanks, are the toys of a group of young boys. When one of them finds a casing of a bombshell, their band disperses into a haunting game of hide and seek.

The film is one of twenty inventories of 16 mm film reels that constitute a collection kept and safeguarded by members of a Japanese Palestine solidarity group in Tokyo. The documentation and digitisation process was made by CRAMP (Centre for Research of Audiovisual Memory Practices) for the Subversive Film research project.

- Tokyo Reels, 2022.

CW: Features a battle scene depicting bombardment, tank shelling and extensive gun shooting. There is a brief clip of a dead boy.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1.

How instrumental is cinema in preserving memory of marginalised peoples?

2.

How does Iraq show us the Arab dimension of the struggle for a liberated Palestine?

3.

**This is our final screening of 2024!
What would you like to see for Solidarity Screenings in 2025?**



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قنوج

الفن

At last we become a film

