

Berlinale
75 Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Berlinale Shorts
Competition

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دربند

تهیه کننده و کارگردان: حسام اسلامی
Director and Producer: Hesam Eslami

CITIZEN-INMATE

CITIZEN-

Original title: Dar band

Tehran through the Panopticon

Stories of surveillance and resistance

The electronic monitoring has transformed Tehran into a digital panopticon, turning the nightmare of constant surveillance and control into reality. But what happens when the roles are reversed and the focus is turned on the surveillants?



- INMATE

Director's note

In the Birth of Prison, Michel Foucault documents the transition to a new disciplinary system which combines two formerly distinct regimes of control: one through exclusion, the other through a systematic segmentation of society: *"The exile of the leper and the arrest of the plague, do not bring with them the same political dream. The first is that of a pure community, the second that of a disciplined society. Two ways of exercising power over men, of controlling their relations, of separating out their dangerous mixtures. [...] We see them coming slowly together."* Foucault notes Bentham's Panopticon as "the architectural figure of this composition".

Triggered in our time by the COVID19 pandemic, the rise of Electronic Monitoring systems mirrors a similar transition toward a combination of disciplinary regimes. The exclusion that underlies the prison system comes together with the ubiquity of the mass surveillance regime to create a modern-day Panopticon.

Over the last ten years, I have directed three feature documentaries about people on the margins of society, whose common trait is their refusal to be victims of circumstances. They attempt to escape a life of guaranteed misery, by taking risks on the borders of legality. Taking destiny into their own hands, they have some wins and some losses; frequently getting into trouble with the law and frequently bouncing back to their feet.

In recent years, I have seen a seismic shift in the relationship of power between the marginalized people and state institutions. The Woman, Life, Freedom uprising of 2022 escalated the reliance on technologies of control and suppression and have helped diminish the spaces of agency and survival on the margins. The gap between the powerful and the powerless is widening, but resistance is ongoing too. I want to capture this shift and the dynamic of suppression and resistance as it is ongoing and before it has a chance to settle.

In this film, for the first time, I will be turning my camera away from the powerless and toward the centres of power, while still foregrounding the human aspect and the impact and power of storytelling.

Biography

Hesam Eslami is a Tehran-based filmmaker, who has directed and produced documentaries for international TV and Cinema since 2013. He got his BFA and MA in cinema from Tehran University of Art. His latest works focus on the margins of the Iranian society: the 20th Circuit Suspects (Premiered at Hotdocs, 2017), depicts a gang of young delinquents, stuck in a cycle between petty theft and prison, as they survive their adolescence on the streets of Tehran. His second feature, the Marriage Project (Premiered at Visions De Reel, 2020), co-directed with Atieh Attarzadeh, looks at the right to a love life within the confines of a Tehran psychiatric institute. A Band of Dreamers and a Judge (Premiered at IDFA, 2023) is his third feature. Following in the footsteps of the first two, it depicts characters who refuse to be victims of circumstances and risk everything in order to take their fates into their own hands.



CREDITS

- Title **CITIZEN-INMATE (Dar band)**
- Type **Documentary**
- Duration **15 min**
- World Premiere **BERLINALE SHORTS COMPETITION, 2025**
- Image Format **DCP | PRORES**
- Screen ratio **16:9**
- Sound Format **Stereo**
- Languages **Farsi**
- Subtitles **English**
- Director | Producer **HESAM ESLAMI**
- Production Company **ARAS FILMS**
- Email **contact@arasfilms.ir**