

SYNOPSIS



Ladies of the Desert

Herrinnen der Wüste

For over 35 years, the Saharawi (Sahrawi) people have desperately been waiting for a solution to the West-Saharan conflict. In 1975, the International Court of Justice finally filed a ruling stating West Sahara's independent sovereignty and political status, which was another milestone from towards independence from the neighboring Moroccan and Mauritanian states. The conflict however, was not resolved. In 1991, the Polisario (national liberation movement) and Morocco had finally come to agreement upon implementing a cease-fire. Since 1975, thousands of refugees have been anticipating a long awaited referendum, after which they would possibly return home. Up until this day, no such referendum has been carried out. An estimated 160 000 people live in the West-Saharan refugee camps, greatly depending on international aid from NGOs and international organizations, such as the United Nations. Over the years, the media have shown a loss in interest concerning the camps, which resulted in an overall decrease in international aid. The restricted lives led in a refugee camp have called for an amendment to the people's goals. War has once again become an option, and the influence of Islamic rituals and traditions has become more prominent in the Saharawi culture.

The documentary «Ladies of the Desert» describes the lives of the women in the refugee camps and how their role is fundamental to the functioning and survival of the people in these camps. The struggles of finding work and supporting a family are nearly impossible for the woman and children who have neither passports nor documents. Discovering the complexity of the aspects of the women's lives, which have to remain strong and persevere under incredible circumstances; one is introduced to the traditions and moments of everyday life which help these women survive. How does one maintain dignity and hope under such extreme conditions? The women trapped inside the walls of the refugee camps experience an everyday struggle for the answer. The Women of the desert will go their way and those who have survived for so long, will manage to survive for decades to come - and they will tell their stories as they always did, and we will listen, repeating their stories to the world.

Year: 2011

Run-Time: 1 x 50 min.

Directed by Anita Lackenberger

A co-production by ORF and Produktion West

Available worldwide

Languages: German (ORIGINAL) , English (DUBBED)

Format: 16:9 , 16:9 , 16:9

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