

RECONCILIATION

A film by Marija Zidar



director Marija Zidar **producers** Danijel Hočevar, Latif Hasolli, Jelena Mitrović, Drita Llolla **director of photography** Latif Hasolli **editor** Uroš Maksimović
co-editor Mariana Kozáková **composer** Dimitrije Vasiljević **colorist** Teo Rižnar **sound** Miloš Drobnjaković, Julij Zornik, Jovo Kljajić

A Vertigo Ljubljana production in coproduction with RTV Slovenia, Dera Film, Film House Baš Čelik, Seagull Entertainment with the support of Eurimages, Slovenian Film Centre, Film Center Serbia, Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, Film Centre of Montenegro, Creative Europe MEDIA, Kosovo Cinematography Center in collaboration with Film Studio Viba Film, Friendly Production, NuFrame, 001



RECONCILIATION

Feature documentary
by Marija Zidar

Original title: **Odpušćanje**
DCP 2K, in colour, 1:1.85
Duration: 82 minutes
Language: Albanian
Slovenia / Serbia / Montenegro / Kosovo

Director: **Marija Zidar**
Director of Photography: **Latif Hasolli**
Editor: **Uroš Maksimović**
Co-editor: **Mariana Kozáková**
Sound: **Miloš Drobnjaković, Julij Zornik, Jovo Kljajić**
Composer: **Dimitrije Vasiljević**
Colorist: **Teo Rižnar**

Producer: **Danijel Hočevar**
Co-producers: **Latif Hasolli, Jelena Mitrović, Drita Llolla**
Production company: **Vertigo** (Slovenia)
Co-production companies: **RTV Slovenia, Dera Film** (Kosovo), **Film House Baš Čelik** (Serbia), **Seagull Entertainment** (Montenegro)

With the support of: **Eurimages, Slovenian Film Centre, Film Center Serbia, Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, Film Centre Montenegro, Creative Europe – MEDIA, Kosovo Cinematography Centre**

In collaboration with: **Film Studio Viba Film, Friendly Production, NuFrame, 001**

Developed at: **dok.incubator 2018, BDC Discoveries 2015**
Presented at: **Last Stop Trieste 2021** (winner of First Hand Fund Award), **DOK Leipzig Coproduction Market 2015**

LOGLINE

Short

After his daughter was killed in a bitter family feud in the Albanian highlands, a father is pressured to break the vicious cycle of conflict.

Longer

In the Albanian highlands, a father is pressured to reconcile with his daughter's killer and his family to break the vicious cycle of conflict. The remains of an age-old tribal code, religious faith, and a fragile constitutional law collide.

SYNOPSIS

An 18-year-old girl is killed in a bitter family feud in the Albanian highlands. Her bereaved father is torn by the pressures from a local bishop and an NGO chairman from the capital, not only to forgive the imprisoned killer and his family, as a Christian, but to reconcile with them – as the age-old tribal code, Kanun, once required. A poignant and insightful account of a patriarchal society caught between a lingering past and a precarious present.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Reconciliation is a slow-burning observation of a male conflict in a highly patriarchal Balkan society. A young woman lost her life in the crossfire. My eye, and the camera, focused on the men making decisions about her legacy, witnessing the reality of conversations and rituals – from which, from times immemorial, women were excluded.

There are such conflicts in every family, every society everywhere. Yet here, in Albania, the protagonists were facing profoundly complex circumstances. The dramatic social situation in the 1990s saw the revival of old value systems, along with a half-forgotten ancient code of law, the Kanun. A quarter of a century later, the protagonists in my film still cannot agree on which value system to rely on to resolve the conflict.

The father's wounds of the past spoke to Albania, and the Balkans, looking back to centuries of unresolved conflict, with differing perspectives. And now, they stood for Europe, where the rising far-right populism is serving to the disenfranchised old solutions for modern problems. The film, together with the protagonists, seeks meaning in a precarious present, and asks difficult questions.

With *Reconciliation*, I aimed to offer a nuanced portrayal of patriarchy, and a woman's observation of a feud in it – one that the audiences can also read from the face of the mother in my film, standing silently in the corner.



'RECONCILIATION' BACKGROUND AND THE KANUN



The documentary is set in contemporary Albania, where the Kosovan-Albanian Director of Photography Latif Hasolli and the Slovenian Director Marija Zidar began researching and filming in 2014. The country experienced some of the most abrupt social transitions in all of Europe, and their complexities, as experienced by Albanians today, are the setting for this film.

In Albania, the fall of Enver Hoxha's communist dictatorship in early 1990s saw a revival of old value systems, especially in the remote northern areas. In the absence of a functioning state, and in the ensuing social disorder (the new democratic government fell in the late 1990s), the Kanun was revived – a customary code of law that had for centuries regulated communal life as well as private matters in the Albanian tribal society, but was outlawed and harshly punished during the regime. For a killing or a grave offence of honour, the code allowed a man two rights and duties: blood revenge (Albanian: gjakmarrja, the taking of blood) or forgiveness to the other family and reconciliation, achieved through mediation, whereby the two clans would become closer than kin. The Kanun also prohibited women and children to be targeted in revenge.

However, while in the 1990s the mentality and social pressure regarding both revenge and reconciliation were revived in parts of Albania, the strict Kanun codes, rules and rituals were not. Modern revenge killings bear little to no resemblance to the codified, almost ceremonial aspects of Kanun based blood feud, which in the old days could sometimes prevent taking revenge for generations. Recalling tradition became a justification for committing crimes. These ancient laws have also become a source of exploitation for various local NGOs and individuals who claim to mediate according to the Kanun. Many among them have been persecuted by the state as corrupt practices interfering with constitutional law.

While today the country is being rapidly modernised, the path of transition has been long.

PRESS QUOTES selection

A **suspenseful and thought-provoking documentary...**
The magnificent highland landscapes, **elegantly shot by DoP and co-producer Latif Hasolli**, give the film and its theme an epic dimension.

Vladan Petković

Cineuropa, April 29, 2021
| CPH:DOX 2021 Next:Wave
Review: Reconciliation

Full review:

<https://cineuropa.org/en/newsdetail/403791/>

Carefully observed, nuanced and gripping...

While there may seem nothing in common between the streets of Minneapolis and the mountains of northern Albania, US civil rights and Balkan blood feuds, Zidar's film illustrates a powerful connection: **the extremely difficult, emotionally charged, sometimes political path to reconciliation...**

Demetrios Matheou

Screen Daily, April 24, 2021
| 'Reconciliation': CPH:DOX
Review

Full review:

<https://www.screendaily.com/reviews/reconciliation-cphdox-review/5159099.article>

Business Doc Europe
CPH:DOX NEXT WAVE
INTERVIEW: RECONCILIATION

BY MARIJA ZIDAR
Geoffrey Macnab, April 18, 2021

Selected excerpts from the interview:

// *It was all triggered when an Albanian scholar told me that this subject had been done a thousand times and never correctly, Slovenian director Marija Zidar recalls to Business Doc Europe of the circumstances which led to her making Reconciliation (a premiere at CPHDOX in Next Wave Award this month).*



The subject in question was blood feuds in Albania and the country's ancient code of law, the Kanun, which can allow for reconciliation rather than revenge.

Like many other old traditions, the Kanun is often misunderstood and misrepresented by outsiders. In her film, Zidar was determined to move beyond the stereotypical portrayals in western media of blood revenge, honour and primitive violence, complete with "women and children crying and ethnic music in the background."

Zidar quickly discovered that the reasons behind the revival of Kanun were "far more complex than just old laws surviving intact in the present day."

In her documentary, Zidar is depicting a deeply patriarchal society. As the menfolk of the rival families discuss the possibilities of reconciliation, the voices of the women aren't heard.

The director points to double standards that apply to female documentary makers too. "There is this trend within the industry that we are expected to focus on women characters in our films. I find this incredibly problematic. Just as we started entering filmmaking in greater numbers, we are already limited at what we can gaze."

Reconciliation has a lot of scenes of men talking to each other. "It was incredibly distressing and emotional even for me. I didn't take a side," Zidar remembers what it was like to be in the room with the rival parties in this heated family conflict.

Although the discussions were fraught, they were also often "pretty ordinary and banal." The arguments tended to go round in circles.

Reconciliation was made over a period of several years and 250 hours of material were shot. When Zidar and her DOP first contacted the family and started filming, they didn't yet have a producer and invested their own funds. Eventually, Slovenian outfit Vertigo, run by Danijel Hočevár, came on board.

Zidar has already shown Reconciliation to the family in Albania. "They needed to see it first, before anyone else." Some of the family members hadn't been allowed into the discussions and were seeing them for the first time in the documentary. "This is how it was," the father said in approval of what Zidar had achieved. "Yes, that is how it was," agreed the mother, the one who hadn't been allowed to speak.

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For full interview by Geoffrey Macnab in Business Doc Europe please see:
<https://businessdoceurope.com/cphdix-next-wave-reconciliation-by-marija-zidar/>

DIRECTOR ABOUT



Marija Zidar (1976) is a Slovenian filmmaker. Her background is in Journalism (BA in Journalism; BA in English Language and Literature) - and she has a PhD in Sociology at the University of Ljubljana. She is passionate about presenting thoroughly investigated social issue stories through intimate, sensitive and empathetic visual storytelling. She has written three mid-length documentaries for Television Slovenia, and directed one. 'Reconciliation', which she began to shoot in Albania in 2014, is the debut feature documentary.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Contrabandits of Identity (*Tihotapcildentitete*)

2016, Slovenia, documentary, 52 min.

PRODUCER ABOUT



Danijel Hočevár (1965) is producer and managing director of Vertigo, a Ljubljana (Slovenia)-based production company with a distinctive track record. Danijel has produced or co-produced around 45 feature films, 15 documentaries and 50 short films and TV productions. He has been selected among Variety's Ten Producers To Watch in 2001. He's a voting member of European Film Academy and since 2011 the president of the Association of Slovenian Film Producers. He is involved as tutor or guest expert with several European training initiatives, such as MIDPOINT (Head of Studies of MIDPOINT's Feature Launch program since 2017), EAVE (Group Leader between 2009-13, Finance expert since 2014), Nipkow Program (jury member since 2005) and Maia Workshops (2015-2018). He is a member of the selection committee of When East Meets West Co-production Project Market (Trieste, Italy) since 2012.

FILMOGRAPHY

Otac / Father, 2020, Serbia/Slovenia/France/Germany/Croatia/Bosnia in Herzegovina, fiction, 120 min

God exists, her name is Petrunya, 2019, North Macedonia/Slovenia/Croatia/France/Belgium, fiction, 101 min

Half-Sister, 2019, Slovenia/North Macedonia/Serbia, fiction, 105 min

When the day had no name, 2017, Macedonia/Slovenia/Belgium, fiction, 93 min

Nightlife, 2016, Slovenia/Bosnia and Herzegovina/Macedonia, fiction, 85 min

Home, 2015, Slovenia, documentary, 80 min

An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker, 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina/Slovenia/France/Italy, fiction, 75 min

Circles, 2013, Serbia/Slovenia/Germany/France/Croatia, fiction, 112 min

The Alexandrians, 2011, Slovenia/Italy, documentary, 94 min

Slovenian Girl, 2009, Slovenia/Germany/Serbia, fiction, 91 min

The world is big and salvation lurks around the corner, 2008, Bulgaria/Slovenia/Germany/Hungary, fiction, 105 min

Border Post, 2006, Bosnia-Herzegovina/Slovenia/Croatia/Serbia/Macedonia, fiction, 95 min

Spare parts, 2003, Slovenia, fiction, 93

Bread and Milk, 2001, Slovenia, fiction, 68 min

CONTACT INFORMATION

www.reconciliation-documentary.com

Production company:

Vertigo
Danijel Hočevar
info@vertigo.si
Vertigo, Zavod za kulturne dejavnosti
Metelkova ulica 6
1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
www.vertigo.si

Press inquiries:

Dimitra Kouzi
dimitra@kouziproductions.com
+ 00306946060862

Interview with the director:

Marija Zidar
marija.zidar@gmail.com

Trailer:

<https://vimeo.com/537774450>