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MOVIES

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Jiyan (2003)

Reviewed by [Jamie Russell](#)

Updated 05 February 2003



"We are trapped between four monsters and our voice doesn't go far," explains one of the citizens of the Kurdish village of Halabja.

It's a fitting comment on the plight of a people who have been systematically harassed by Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. And who, on 16th March 1988, were bombed by Iraqi warplanes carrying chemical and biological weapons.

Five thousand men, women, and children died. nine thousand people were horrifically injured. It was just one of several chemical attacks during the 80s.

Largely ignored by the international community - America had supported Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran and didn't want to openly condemn him - **the massacre at Halabja was a tragedy of epic proportions.** Not least because the West refused to offer any substantial aid or support to those affected.

Jano Rosebiani's film begins with the arrival of Diyari (Kurdo Galalf), a Kurdish architect who fled to the United States when he was nine-years-old.

Returning to his homeland to build an orphanage in the village, he finds himself confronted with a community in which daily burials of the dead are a regular occurrence, even years after the attack.

In the midst of this mourning community he discovers two children, cousins **Shêrko (Çoman Hawramî) and Jiyan (Pîsheng Berzincî), who prove that it is still possible to salvage something from this decimated village.**

From this simple premise, **Jiyan (whose name translates as "Life") leads the outsider to a greater understanding of the human cost of the tragedy.**

Reaching towards redemption rather than condemnation, Rosebiani's Nietzsche-reading hero rejects cries for vengeance and instead embraces the village's gathering sense of joyous regeneration.

It's a moving film, at times terrible, at other times terribly funny. It reminds us that tragedies don't end just because the media spotlight has moved elsewhere.

In Kurdish with English subtitles.

End Credits

Director: [Jano Rosebiani](#)

Genre: [Drama](#), [World Cinema](#)

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