Jiyan

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Peter Bradshaw
The Guardian, Friday 14 February 2003

Jiyan
Release: 2001
Country: Rest of the world
Cert (UK): 18
Runtime: 110 mins
Directors: Jano Rosebiani
Cast: Choman Hawrami, Derya Kadir, Kurdo Galali, Pirshang Berzinji, Pisheng Berzinji
More on this film

"Martyred Halabja is at your service," says a young boy in this engaging, touching and unaffectedly optimistic serio-comedy about Diyari (Kurdo Galali), a Kurdish man who comes to Halabja to build a new orphanage there - though whether this is with his own money or with that of some aid agency that he has at his personal disposal is unclear. Halabja is the town notoriously gassed by Saddam Hussein and every single inhabitant is deeply affected by the atrocity: especially a girl, Jiyan (Pirshang Berzinji) whose face is scarred but who comes to symbolise the gentle warmth that somehow exists in this shattered community. Writer-director Jano Rosebiani is Kurdish-born and American-educated, and his first movie has something of Kiarostami and Ghobadi, but simpler and happier, without being sentimental.

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