

იქ, სადაც სახლია

ON THE

WAY

HOME

A FILM BY GIORGI KVELIDZE





SYNOPSIS

In 1993, after a war in Abkhazia, Georgia - known as the Abkhaz-Georgian Conflict, thousands of ethnic Georgian families sought refuge in the decaying Soviet sanatoriums nestled in the town of Tskaltubo, in western Georgia. This documentary unveils the untold stories of these displaced individuals as they try to build a new life amid the haunting ruins, revealing not only their resilience and camaraderie, but also the profound transformation of the sanatoriums from symbols of health and luxury to havens of survival and unity. Iamze, 81, and Nikusha, 12, are awaiting promised government housing, all the while being indelibly shaped by the echoes of war.

NIKUSHA

Nikusha Berulava is a 12 year old boy who was born in Tskaltubo in 2009. He lives there with his grandmother, who is a refugee from Abkhazia. Nikusha's mother was 13 years old when she became a refugee with her family and they found shelter in one of Tskaltubo's sanatoriums. She now lives and works in Turkey, where she emigrated to seek a better job and income. Nikusha talks to his mom daily via WhatsApp and hopes to see her soon. His grandmother works in the blueberry and hazelnut fields with a daily income of 30 lari (\$10). Nikusha goes to school in Tskaltubo and enjoys skateboarding with his friends, playing basketball, and playing video games on his phone. Like lamze, Nikusha and his grandmother are hoping to get an apartment in one of the new buildings in Tskaltubo that have been built by the Georgian government for the refugees.



IAMZE

Iamze Giorgadze is an 80 year old refugee from Abkhazia living in Tskaltubo and waiting for a new home that will be provided by the Georgian government. She loves to read and chat with her friends in the sanatorium where she lives. Her daughter lives in Greece and takes care of elderly people for a living. Her son fought for the Georgians in the War in Abkhazia. He was injured in the war but later died from complications in surgery due to bullet fragments that remained in his head from the war. We follow Iamze through her daily life living in the crumbling sanatoriums and hear the story of her fleeing her home in Abkhazia, losing her son, starting from scratch and maintaining the patience for a better life





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The idea for this film emerged when I saw children running around in flip-flops, kicking a ball in a courtyard covered with shattered glass and surrounded by soviet-era sanatorium buildings. My passion for filmmaking, mixed with my strong interest in social justice inspired me to share the stories of refugees who resettled in Tskaltubo, Georgia, and have lived there for generations, since the 1992 war in Abkhazia.

Any war leaves a mark and an indelible trauma in humans. It is noticeable in their eyes, heard in their voices, and even seen through their body language. Ignoring their trauma and looking away from it is something we should not let ourselves do. The stories must be told and they must be heard with an attempt to raise awareness and improve the lives of those who have suffered consequences due to wars and political conflicts. I wanted to show the generations that have been touched by the war. Iamze can tell us everything about Abkhazia, the war and its consequences, while Nikusha doesn't really know much about Abkhazia, but he is very much a part of it.

This film was my first big project and many elements were experimental. While filming the characters inside the sanatoriums, we used natural light for the low exposed image to create a metaphor that underlines the characters' being: the darker side of the image represents their traumatic lives after the war, and the brighter side of the image is the symbol of their survival and future hopes.

By using wide shots and cinema verite, I was able to show the greatness of the crumbling sanatoriums and its people while diving into the intimate moments of their ordinary lives. The verite style will let viewers easily familiarize with the characters and their lifestyles, homes, and living conditions. I wanted to create a feeling as if the viewers are part of the characters' lives, and of the existing chaos and meaningful silence.

While following our main characters, I also wanted to show Tskaltubo and share the stories of other refugees living there. By filming peoples' apartments inside the sanatoriums I wanted to create a feeling for viewers as if they are walking down the hallway peering through the apartments. Throughout the movie viewers will see the clocks on the walls, a reminder that other than the arrows moving, nothing yet has changed.



Giorgi Kvelidze is a filmmaker based in both Tbilisi and New York. After studying Business and Economics at Tbilisi State University, he relocated to New York in 2015 to embark on a career in filmmaking. Notably, he directed a four-part documentary series titled "Europe and Me" for the European Union in Georgia. "On The Way Home" stands as his debut feature documentary.



Charlotte Savage is an editor who has spent her career working on various commercials and branded content documentaries. She studied Film and Television at the Savannah College of Art and Design before moving to New York where she spent several years editing long form sponsored documentaries at CNN's award-winning branded content studio, Courageous. She currently works independently and splits her time between Tbilisi and Brooklyn.

Josh Braunreuther is a New York City based cinematographer with 10+ years of experience working on documentaries and commercials, most notably THE DISSIDENT and the Oscar-winning documentary ICARUS. He has also worked for such clients as ESPN, BMW, NBC, Fox Sports, NFL Films, WWE, MLB, BET, PBS, Marc Jacobs and Great Big Story.

Nino Shengelaia is a film producer whose primary focus is documentary series and features. Based bi-coastally in both Los Angeles and New York, Nino is originally from Zugdidi, Georgia and moved to the States in 1991 at the age of four. She has produced projects for several studios and streaming networks, including Paramount Pictures, HBO, Netflix, Peacock, ESPN and Hulu. The first film she produced, *This Is Personal* (Paramount), premiered at Sundance in 2019. She is passionate about contributing to stories that unveil social injustices in an effort to advance global social progress.

David Michael is a writer, producer, and director based in Stockholm, Sweden. Until 2021, he worked as a writer and creative director at CNN's Courageous Studios in New York. His videos have appeared on CNN, HBO, PBS, and Great Big Story, among others, while his essays and reportage have been published by The New York Times Magazine, The New Republic, The Paris Review, Slate, and Commonwealth. He is a recipient of an Edward R. Murrow Award, and he is currently developing a feature documentary with FunMeter (McMillion\$, The Big Conn).

Leland James is an award-winning editor, cinematographer, and director, Leland James is the cinematographer and editor behind *The Fix*, which won best documentary at the Soho Film Festival and played festivals across the country. After leaving CNN, Leland started his own post-production studio and just finished as supervising editor on *Black Girls*, a feature documentary about several activists of color. He is currently working on a feature documentary about the historic Brooklyn bar Farrell's.



DIRECTOR
GIORGI KVELIDZE

PRODUCERS
NINO SHENGELAIA
DAVID MICHAEL
CHARLOTTE SAVAGE
GIORGI KVELIDZE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
T.T. ROBERTS

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
JOSH BRAUNREUTHER

SOUND RECORDIST
SHOTA DVALISHVILI

EDITED BY
CHARLOTTE SAVAGE
GIORGI KVELIDZE
LELAND JAMES

ORIGINAL SCORE
AVI MUSAIFI
CHARLOTTE SAVAGE
GIORGI KVELIDZE

COLOR
SANJA BLAU

POST SUPERVISOR
JOHN CLIFTON

PRODUCED BY
ANTARES FILMS LLC

MEDIA COVERAGE

ANTHONY FRANCIS, FILM THREAT

"On the Way Home is a film that brings the humanity of the displaced into focus, showing compassion towards its subjects while existing as a heartfelt call for peace."

ERIC RAY CHRISTENSEN, SLUG MAG

"The film does an excellent job of showing what people's lives are like as refugees."

JOE BENDEL, J.B. SPINS

"Highly recommended for anyone interested in displaced people—I mean genuinely interested and not parroting tiktok garbage."

PETER WONG, BEYONDCHRON

"On The Way Home" manages to be simultaneously heartfelt, oddly beautiful, and more than a little melancholy."

SERGIU INAZIAN, EYE FOR FILM

"Despite its brief 60-minute duration, On the Way Home packs quite a powerful punch."

STEVE KOPIAN, UNSEEN FILMS

"This is a moving film. To be certain it is another in the too long line of films concerning refugees, however it is necessary."



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EXECUTIVE PRODUCER T.T. ROBERTS PRODUCED BY NINO SHENGELAIA DAVID MICHAEL CHARLOTTE SAVAGE GIORGI KVELIDZE
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY JOSH BRAUNREUTHER EDITED BY GIORGI KVELIDZE CHARLOTTE SAVAGE LELAND JAMES
SOUND MIXER SHOTA DVALISHVILI ORIGINAL SCORE BY AVI MUSAIFI CHARLOTTE SAVAGE GIORGI KVELIDZE



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CONTACT INFO

Nino Shengelaia, Producer: nino@shengelaiaproductions.com

David Michael, Producer: david@bellfoundermedia.com

Charlotte Savage, Producer: charlotte@seamlesspictures.com

Giorgi Kvelidze, Director: kvelidzegio@gmail.com



www.onthewayhomefilm.com

