

## **Thorns and Silk**

**A documentary film by Paulina Tervo made under the Real World Scheme jointly organised by Pathways of Women's Empowerment RPC and Screen South**

THORNS AND SILK tells four unusual stories from Palestine, featuring women who work in jobs that are conventionally associated with men in their society. All four of them have the courage to break traditional rules, though not without challenges.

We dip into the life of a wedding filmmaker, who films women-only weddings in the most conservative part of Palestine; hear the stories of a female taxi driver who works in the Israeli parts of Jerusalem; discover a young police trainee at the Palestinian Police Academy and learn about the hardships in occupied Nablus from a mother who takes on male roles in order to keep her family toilet paper factory going.

The stories reflect a variety of women in the West Bank. But all of them have something in common. They are defying gender stereotypes and working hard to survive in a country paralysed by occupation.

**Hanan** is a wedding filmmaker in the conservative town of Hebron. Her job didn't used to exist, until recently. Filmmaking has traditionally been a male profession and female-only weddings have therefore not been documented. Hanan saw a gap in the market, and she always wanted to become a filmmaker. Her story provides a fascinating peek into the hidden lives of women in Islam and their freedom within the rules set by their society.

**Majda** is the only Palestinian female taxi driver in Jerusalem. She wears a Jewish headscarf as her work uniform, as it's the only way for her to work there. She criss-crosses between the West (Jewish) and East (Arab) sides of the city, sharing both positive and negative stories from her experiences with her passengers, who are predominantly Israeli. As she returns home in the evening, she transforms to be her real self again.

**Niveen** is a dreamy, young woman training to be a police officer at the Palestinian national police academy in the desert town of Jericho. One of the first women to be trained there, she is passionate about her country and heritage and determined to succeed in her job. In a country where women are still rarely working outside the house, she finds it hard to meet men who are open-minded enough to accept her masculine job.

**Yusra** lives with her elderly husband and young son in a rural village outside of Nablus, a city severely restricted by the occupation. She keeps things running at the small toilet paper factory she owns with her husband. It's her job to fix the heavy machinery, oversee the production as well as deliver the goods all over the West Bank. Driving a truck, she cuts a distinct figure in her village, where a woman's place is traditionally in the kitchen.