

Tadmor: Beyond horror towards the light

[Giorgia Del Don](#)

- The latest powerful documentary by Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim is competing in the international competition of the Visions du réel Festival in Nyon



German journalist **Monika Borgmann** and Lebanese philosopher **Lokman Slim**, who also made the sublime [Massaker](#) (which won the FIPRESCI Award at the Berlin Film Festival and the SRG SSR idée suisse award at [Visions du réel](#) in 2005) presented the world premiere of their latest intense documentary, [Tadmor](#) [+], in Nyon.

(The article continues below - Commercial information)

With in-depth knowledge in the field of violence and war memories (among other things, they founded UMAM together, a production, documentation and research centre dedicated to these important issues),

Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim break another taboo with *Tadmor*, by speaking openly and with disconcerting calm about the violence suffered by prisoners of war who had the misfortune of being locked up in the terrible Tadmor Prison (Palmyra in Aramaic). The prison, which has also been referred to by poet Faraj Bayraqdar as the “kingdom of death and madness” is sadly renowned for being the toughest prison to have ever existed under the regime of Assad. Destroyed in 2015 by Islamic State militants when they took Palmyra, Tadmor prison risked ending up in that black hole that unfortunately swallows up many of the atrocities committed in times of war, stifling the cries of those that have suffered and leaving an unbridgeable and dangerous void in history. To avoid this outrage and free themselves from the shadows that still dog them, eight prisoners of Tadmor, Lebanese opponents to the Syrian regime, decided to talk about and above all portray the horrors they endured and bore witness to. With almost superhuman courage, they act out, before the camera, on a ‘theatrical’ set they built, the torture and humiliation that for so many years comprised their everyday lives.

Tadmor is the extraordinarily brave testimonial of a group of men trying to rediscover the part of humanity they lost within the walls of that prison, reduced to shadows with automatic and depersonalised reflexes driven by one single force: survival. Their verbal accounts, filmed head-on in a neutral environment, collide with the reconstructions of what went on, with close-up shots of their quivering bodies and the deep abyss in their eyes. *Tadmor* broaches the issue of the memory of the body, triggering terrible emotions that crawl around under the skin and will never go away. The hands, eyes and skin of these men, hardened by torture, slowly but surely take the place of words to bring us an extremely powerful vocabulary, trembling with truth and pulsating with life in spite of everything. The strength of words comes across through the human body. At the same time the camera is transformed into a weapon, a carrier of truth and a blazing torch used to light up the life that still resonates through the bodies of the few people that have survived Tadmor Prison. With their courage, the eight protagonists of the film by Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim make an extraordinary accusation that rings out from

Lebanon across the whole world. Therapy through images that speak directly to our consciences. A necessary and brave film, the likes of which we would like to see more.

Tadmor is a co-production between France ([Les Films de l'Étranger](#)), Switzerland (GoldenEggProduction) and Lebanon (Umam Production). Parisian company [Doc & Film International](#) will be handling international sales of the film.