

LES FILMS PELLÉAS AND JAFAR PANAHİ PRODUCTIONS  
PRESENT



FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE 2025  
COMPÉTITION

# IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT

A FILM BY Jafar Panahi



2025 – IRAN – FRANCE - LUXEMBOURG – THRILLER – PERSIAN – 102'

**mk2**  
FILMS

# SYNOPSIS

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What begins as a minor accident sets in motion a series of escalating consequences.

# INTERVIEW WITH JAFAR PANAHI

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## **What has happened in your life since your 2022 film *No Bears*?**

I've entered a new phase as a filmmaker. From my first film, *The White Balloon* in 1995, until *Offside*, I focussed on my issues as a director. There were pressures, of course, but I could concentrate on finding solutions to cinematic problems. After my first arrest in 2010, where I was banned from travelling or making films, my focus shifted to my own circumstances. Before, my camera was turned outward, but since then, it has turned inward, toward what I was experiencing – as can be seen in the films I made, from *This Is Not a Film* to *No Bears*. But now that those restrictions have been lifted, I've felt the need to look outward again – only differently this time, shaped by everything I've been through, including a second prison sentence between July 2022 and February 2023. So yes, the camera turns outward again, but with a different point of view than before.

## **Would you say your two prison sentences mark the evolution of your work?**

Yes, but not in the same way. The first time I was incarcerated, I was put in solitary confinement for 15 days, and then placed in a cell with just two or three people. I barely saw anyone. But during my second sentence, I was among many other prisoners – people from very different walks of life. I had long conversations and exchanges with them throughout the seven months I was detained. When they let me out after my hunger strike, I felt disoriented. I didn't know how to exist on the outside. I was torn between the relief of being free and my attachment to those I had left behind. And that tension has stayed with me. I still can't shake it.

## **When you say the restrictions were lifted, is that official?**

Yes, the sentence that banned me from making films, writing, giving interviews, and travelling has been officially annulled. But in practice, I remain on the margins: for example, it would make no sense to submit the script for this film to the authorities for approval – so I have no choice but to keep working outside the system.

## **Would you say *A Minor Accident* grew directly out of your second incarceration?**

Absolutely. From the beginning, my films have dealt with what's happening in society and my immediate environment. So naturally, spending seven months in the very specific context of a prison is bound to find a way into my cinema. Back when I was first arrested in 2010, my interrogator asked, "Why do you make these kinds of films?" I replied that my movies are based on what I'm going through. So what I was experiencing at that very moment would inevitably appear in a film, in some form or another. That's exactly what happened in *Taxi Tehran*, particularly in the conversation with lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh. But the second prison experience left an even deeper mark. When I got out, I felt compelled to make a film for the people I'd met behind bars. I owed them that film. Even though I'm speaking from personal experience, it aligns with what was happening in Iranian society more broadly – especially with the *Woman, Life, Freedom* revolution that began in the fall of 2022. A great deal has changed during that period.

## **How does an experience like that transform into a film – this film, in particular?**

The initial idea came quickly: I asked myself what would happen if one of the people I'd met in prison were released and came face-to-face with someone who had tortured and humiliated him? That question triggered a writing process with two screenwriter friends, Nader Saeivar and Shadmehr Rastin. We began sketching out possible developments, but I quickly realized that what mattered most was the authenticity of the stories about life in prison, and the different ways they can be told. I brought in someone who had spent a lot of time in prison, and who is unfortunately back there again – Mehdi Mahmoudian. He helped with the dialogue, drawing from what actually happens in detention, and how differently people talk about it, once they're out.

**Would you say that characters like Vahid, Shiva, Hamid, etc. represent specific individuals?**

They're fictional, but the stories they tell are based on real events experienced by actual prisoners. What's also real is the diversity of these characters and their reactions. Some become very violent and driven by a desire for revenge. Others try to take a step back and think about longer-term paths. Some were highly politicized – or became so. Others weren't at all and got arrested almost by chance. That's the case with Vahid, the main character: he was a worker who simply asked to be paid his wages. The regime doesn't distinguish between these people. Each of the other characters represents one of the many loosely or tightly organized opposition groups. These groups often clash, even behind bars. They all agree on opposing the regime, but beyond that... Since Mahsa Amini's death and the rise of *Woman, Life, Freedom*, regime rejection has become widespread. Often, people don't know what to replace it with. You can see it plainly today – for example, many women now appear in public without the hijab. That kind of mass civil disobedience was unthinkable just a few years ago. But the scenes in the film, which were shot in the streets with unveiled actresses, reflect today's reality. Iranian women are the ones who have imposed this transformation.

**Were you able to shoot openly this time, or did you have to film in secret, as with your earlier works?**

Since I didn't apply for official permits – which I wouldn't have received anyway – I had to use the same clandestine methods as for previous films. Just before we wrapped, plainclothes officers turned up and demanded all the footage. I refused. They continued to put pressure on us by threatening to arrest the crew and shut down production. In the end, they gave up. We paused the shoot for a while, then resumed. Nothing further happened.

**Is it important to know where the film is set, or in what city or region it was shot?**

No. It was filmed in and around Tehran simply because it was the most practical. But it could be anywhere.

**Who are the actors?**

Vahid Mobasseri, the actor playing Vahid, is Azeri [*The northwestern region of the country where Panahi is from and where a previous film of his was set*]. He works for the local television station in Tabriz, and previously played the man who rented me a room in *No Bears*. When he's not acting, he drives a taxi. Maryam Afshari, who plays Shiva, is not an actress – she's a karate referee. Hadis Pakbaten, who plays the bride, is a stage actress. The groom, Majid, is my nephew, who also appeared in *Taxi Tehran*. Mohamad Ali Elyasmehr, who plays Hamid, is both a carpenter and studied theatre. Salar, the older man in the bookstore, is played by Georges Hashemzadeh, an actor-director. The only professional film actor is Ebrahim Azizi, who plays Eghbal – but he only works on films outside the system and refuses to participate in productions that have been approved by the censors.

**Was any of it improvised?**

No, everything was written. When I cast the actors, I invited each of them over to my home, gave them the script, and asked if they were willing to take part in a project that was potentially risky. Once mutual trust was established with each of them, we worked from that shared commitment.

***It Was Just an Accident* is stylistically quite different from your earlier films. Did you plan your directing choices in advance, or did they come about during filming?**

Initially, I wanted to shoot in a conventional style – with clear, clean shots focussed on the action. But during the shoot, I felt the directing needed to be more expressive. As the characters met and grew closer, I wanted there to be more freedom in the framing and length of the take. The idea was that, in spite of all their conflicts, they would all end up in the same frame. I also wondered how to film Eghbal, and whether to frame him in a different scale. I made sure he was always alone in the frame, never with the others. But at the end, when he realizes what he's done, he shares the frame with Shiva.

**Iranian films that openly criticize the regime usually omit the names of cast and crew from the credits. But not this time.**

If anyone had asked for their name to be left out, I would have done so. But they all wanted their name to appear. And most are coming with me to Cannes.

**So you're going to Cannes. But isn't there a risk you won't be able to return to Iran afterward?**

That hasn't even occurred to me. I can't live anywhere else. Many of my fellow Iranians have chosen – or have been forced – to emigrate. But I can't do that. I don't have the courage! I'm unfit to live outside Iran. We'll see what happens. In any case, this film had to be made. I made it, and I'll accept whatever consequences may follow.

*(Interview by Jean-Michel Frodon*

*Translation from Persian: Massoumeh Lahidji)*

# ABOUT JAFAR PANAH

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Jafar Panahi was born in 1960 in Mianeh, Iran. After studying at the Iran Broadcasting University, he directed several short films, documentaries, and TV movies. He later worked as Abbas Kiarostami's assistant on the set of *Through the Olive Trees* (1994).

In 1995, he directed his first feature, *The White Balloon*, co-written with Abbas Kiarostami. The film was selected at Cannes' Directors' Fortnight, where it won the Caméra d'Or.

He followed this with *The Mirror*, which was in competition at the Locarno Festival in 1997 and won the Golden Leopard. Three years later, *The Circle* caused a stir at the Venice Film Festival, winning the Golden Lion and the FIPRESCI Prize. The film unflinchingly examined the condition of women in Iran and deeply moved audiences worldwide. It was nevertheless banned in its homeland.

In 2003, Panahi returned to Cannes with *Crimson Gold*, which earned him a spot in the Official Selection. This dramatic thriller was screened in Un Certain Regard, where it won the Jury Prize. Initially selected to represent Iran at the Oscars in the Best Foreign Language Film category, *Crimson Gold* was ultimately banned by the authorities, preventing it from being shown in Iranian cinemas.

With *Offside*, Panahi once again turned his attention to women's rights in Iran. Presented at the Berlinale in 2006, the film received the Silver Bear for Best Director. It tells the story of young Iranian women who defy authorities and secretly attend a football match. *Offside* was also not approved for release in Iran.

In July 2009, Panahi was arrested for the first time after attending the memorial of a young protester killed during demonstrations following the disputed re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. A few months later, he was denied a visa to attend the Berlin Film Festival. He was arrested a second time on 1 March, 2010, and spent 86 days in Evin Prison before being released on bail on 25 May. He was invited to serve on the jury at Cannes, but his chair remained symbolically empty for the duration of the festival. He received widespread support from artists and filmmakers around the globe.

In 2010, Panahi was sentenced to a 20-year ban from directing films, writing screenplays, giving interviews to the press, or leaving Iran, under threat of a six-year prison sentence. The verdict was upheld on appeal in the fall of 2011.

Despite these restrictions, he co-directed *This Is Not a Film* with Mojtaba Mirtahmasb. Shot entirely in his apartment, the film captures his daily life as an artist forbidden to work. *This Is Not a Film* was screened out of competition at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2011.

In 2012, Panahi was awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament. His daughter accepted the award on his behalf at a ceremony he was unable to attend. That same year, he clandestinely co-directed a new film with Kambuzia Partovi entitled *Closed Curtain*, which went on to win the Silver Bear for Best Screenplay at the 2013 Berlin Film Festival.

In February 2015, he premiered *Taxi Tehran* at the Berlin Film Festival. It was his first film shot on his own and in public since 2010. Critically acclaimed worldwide, *Taxi Tehran* also won the jury over, presided by American filmmaker Darren Aronofsky. The film received the Golden Bear and the FIPRESCI Prize. It was sold in over 30 countries. Distributed in French cinemas by Memento Films two months later, it quickly became a cultural phenomenon, drawing over 600,000 viewers. It remains the second highest-grossing Iranian film in France, after Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation*.

In 2017, Panahi began production on *3 Faces*, which took him from Tehran to northwest Iran. The film competed at Cannes in May 2018, where it won the Best Screenplay Award.

On July 11, 2022, Jafar Panahi was arrested and would not be released until February 3, 2023, after a hunger strike.

2022 is also the year he received the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival for *No Bears*.

In 2025, he returns to the Cannes competition with *It Was Just An Accident*

## **FILMOGRAPHY – JAFAR PANAHI**

2025	IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT – In competition, Cannes Film Festival
2022	NO BEARS – Special Jury Prize, Venice Film Festival
2018	3 FACES – Best Screenplay Prize, Cannes Film Festival
2015	TAXI TEHERAN – Golden Bear and Fipresci Prize, Berlin Film Festival
2013	CLOSED CURTAIN – Silver Bear for Best Screenplay, Berlin Film Festival
2011	THIS IS NOT A FILM – Out of Competition, Cannes Film Festival
2006	OFFSIDE – Silver Bear for Best Director, Berlin Film Festival
2003	CRIMSON GOLD – Jury Prize, Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival
2000	THE CIRCLE – Golden Bear and Fipresci Prize, Berlin Film Festival
1997	THE MIRROR – Golden Leopard, Locarno Film Festival
1995	THE WHITE BALLOON – Caméra d'Or, Cannes Film Festival

# CAST

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Vahid  
Shiva  
Eghbal  
Golrokh  
Groom  
Hamid  
Salar  
The little girl  
Eghbal's wife

Vahid Mobasseri  
Maryam Afshari  
Ebrahim Azizi  
Hadis Pakbaten  
Majid Panahi  
Mohamad Ali Elyasmehr  
Georges Hashemzadeh  
Delmaz Najafi  
Afssaneh Najmabadi

# CREW

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Written and Directed by  
Produced by  
Co-produced by  
Associated producers  
Cinematography  
Artistic Consultant  
Script Consultants  
Editing  
Sound recording, Foley, and sound editing  
Sound editing  
Mixing  
Production Design and costumes  
Assistant Director  
Production Manager  
Post-production supervision  
A production of  
In co-production with  
In association with  
With the support of  
  
International sales  
Distribution

Jafar Panahi  
Jafar Panahi, Philippe Martin  
Sandrine Dumas, Christel Henon  
David Thion, Lilina Eche  
Amin Jafari  
Panah Panahi  
Nader Saeivar, Shadmehr Rastin, Mehdi Mahmoudian  
Amir Etminan  
Abdoreza Heidari  
Valérie de Loof, Nicolas Leroy  
Cyril Holtz  
Leila Naghdi  
Shahrokh Panahi  
Behnam Roshan  
Pooya Abbasian, Juliette Mallon  
Jafar Panahi Productions and Les Films Pelléas  
Bidibul Productions, Pio & Co, Arte France Cinéma  
Memento, mk2 Films  
l'Aide aux cinémas du monde - Centre national du Cinéma et  
de l'Image animée - Institut français, Film Fund Luxembourg  
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Memento



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