

EXT. COURTYARD. DAY

HOMS, SYRIA, 2014

A broken skyline, sun reflecting off misshapen buildings.

An open bright courtyard. Women carry buckets of water back to their apartments. A dozen children scream and laugh as they play a game of football.

Two of these children, JAMAL MALAS (7) and HAMZA MALAS (11) come into focus, scrapping for the ball. Their mother SAIRA observes from a doorway, amused but watchful.

A MAN lingers behind a wall on the edge of the courtyard, only his head and shoulders visible. He stares across the yard.

Another GROUP OF MEN emerge from a house on the other side of the square.

The first man whirls around from the wall and opens fire.

In the group, a man's head snaps back as a bullet connects. He collapses, dead instantly.

The group instantly start firing back.

Gunshots sound across the yard. Children scream for their parents. Bullets rip through innocent people.

Hamza tackles his younger brother, covering him on the ground.

Saira shouts at them from the doorway:

SAIRA:  
(in Arabic)  
Stay still! Stay still!

The ground erupts around the two boys, the bullets tearing up the earth...

CUT TO

INT. BEDROOM. EARLY MORNING.

BIRMINGHAM, UK, 2024

A small bedroom. Jamal, now 17, sits bolt upright in bed, screaming. He is drenched in sweat, his body shaking.

The door swings open. Saira (41), his mother, rushes in and embraces him.

CUT TO

INT. THE MALAS FLAT, KITCHEN. MORNING.

A small but tidy kitchen. Coffee boils on the hob.

Saira and RIAD (44), Jamal's father, watch a breaking news story on a small TV:

*"A government white paper published today sets out a revised agenda for the Migrant Repatriation Program. Under new laws, the nation-wide task force will be given enhanced powers to help tackle the immigration crisis..."*

Riad clenches the kitchen table. Saira shakes her head in disbelief.

*"... These include fast-tracking the repatriation of immigrants with expired visas or those suspected of tax evasion. In certain cases, they will even be able to revoke British citizenship."*

Jamal walks into the kitchen, rubbing his eyes.

*"...The new scheme has already been trialed in East London and Birmingham, and will now be tested in other major UK cities including Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds..."*

As Jamal sits down Saira quickly turns down the volume on the TV.

SAIRA

(To Jamal) You ok?

Jamal nods and tries for a smile.

FARIAH MALAS (13), Jamal's sister, enters the kitchen: navy hijab to match her school uniform; eyes locked on her phone; animated fingers tapping as she manoeuvres to her seat.

RIAD

Put that phone away please.

No reply.

RIAD

Fariah, I won't ask you again.

FARIAH

I'm helping Yasmine with her homework.

RIAD

Don't worry about her, she should  
have done it herself.

JAMAL

Sure it's not her brother you're  
helping?

Fariah freezes.

RIAD

You better not be helping that  
boy!

Fariah plasters on a smile.

FARIAH

No, course not Dad.

She glares at her brother. Jamal cracks a mischievous  
grin and looks at the TV. His smile fades.

JAMAL

Mum, is that true?

Saira turns to the news broadcast: images show police  
breaking down doors, manhandling families out into the  
streets.

The kitchen falls silent.