

## ***NAZANIN – a documentary by Darius Bazargan for Channel 4***



***Richard Ratcliffe on hunger strike outside the Foreign Office in London in December 2021***

*Nazanin* is a feature length (72') observational documentary that takes us deep into the heart of one of the poignant human and international stories of the past 6 years. Part love story, part political thriller – *Nazanin* is a film with a big heart and contains a sinister warning from history.

In 2016 Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe – a British-Iranian charity worker – was arrested at Tehran airport as she and her baby daughter Gabriella were flying home to London after a holiday. She was separated from her child, charged with spying and thrown into Tehran's notorious Evin prison, with a five year jail sentence.

Back in London, her husband Richard started a relentless public campaign to get her freed and to discover why she had been seized in the first place.

His investigations lead to him uncover a massive, failed 1970s arms deal with the Shah of Iran. The British were paid £400 million up front for supplying the Iranian dictator very latest Chieftain battle tanks, but secretly kept the money after the Shah fell in the Islamic Revolution

Ever since then – despite protestations they were doing everything they can to help Nazanin – the British government did not settle the matter and Iran started to take hostages to force the issue. Despite having 3 Prime Ministers and 5 Foreign Secretaries – Nazanin remained detained in Iran for six years. In desperation Richard finally goes on a 21 day hunger strike to try and force the government's hand.

Five years in production, filmmaker and investigative journalist Darius Bazargan gained unprecedented access to Richard and little Gabriella as they struggle to Free Nazanin and try their best to live an ordinary life.

We see the personal and emotional toll this tragedy is taking on them – and on Nazanin herself. We hear her heart-breaking phone calls from Evin Prison in Iran, Nazanin reading her prison letters to little Gabriella and we have Facetime calls between Nazanin and her family made from Iran during the 2 year period she was under house arrest.

We have never before seen or heard calls with Foreign Secretary himself and follow the frantic final three days in March 2021, as British negotiators head to Iran to try to bring Nazanin home – and the Iranian regime's sinister Revolutionary Guards decide to have the last word.

This is a deeply personal and emotional portrait of an ordinary family caught up by the sinister forces of international affairs and secrets beyond their control. It is a testimony to human courage, resilience, love and the importance of fighting for family.

<b>Filmed, Produced and Directed:</b>	<b>Darius Bazargan</b>
<b>Film Editor:</b>	<b>Chloe Lambourne</b>
<b>Executive Producer:</b>	<b>Ben de Pear.</b>
<b>Executive Producer for Channel 4</b>	<b>Nevine Mabro</b>

#### **Director's Quotes:**

*I was attracted to this story because it had everything. For me, "Nazanin" is first and foremost a love story – a testament to the importance of family and for fighting for those closest to your heart. But it is also an investigation of sorts, set against political and diplomatic intrigue of the highest order.*

*When I started working and filming with Richard I knew that – all else being equal – there would one day be a resolution to this dreadful injustice.*

*"This all started in an airport and it will end in an airport," I used to tell him. "There will be a happy ending, one day."*

*What neither of us realised, when I first turned on my cameras, was that it would take six years before that day came to pass.*

*If it were not real – it would seem like an unbelievable and exaggerated movie pitch: a young family is torn apart by dark and sinister forces. A new mother is separated from her baby tortured and imprisoned by a notorious regime, for reasons unknown. An ordinary man who has to find it within himself to become an unlikely hero, stand up and fight two governments, all the while uncovering the military secrets that hold the key to freeing his beloved wife and reuniting his family.*

*Yet all this really happened – and it was the greatest privilege of my journalistic and filmmaking career to have access to this brave and dignified family, in some of their darkest hours – and to follow them on this journey through the darkness of a kind of personal hell – and then up, up and back into the light.”*

**Darius Bazargan, Producer & Director (2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023)**

## **Critical Praise for Darius Bazargan’s “Nazanin” on Channel 4**

### **A LOVE STORY ABOUT HOW A FAMILY UNITED CAN OVERCOME THE MOST APPALLING OF HARDSHIPS.**

*Channel 4’s documentary on a mother’s fight for freedom is a beautiful, intimate piece of storytelling... The film “Nazanin” vividly conveys that tension of her ordeal in a way that is raw and sometimes almost unbearable to witness, but watch it we do, because we want to ‘be there’ when it dissolves...*

*These days it’s the theocrats in Tehran who are feeling the heat... It feels pre-revolutionary. As the protesters chant in Iran, in a slogan that might have been inspired by Nazanin herself: ‘woman, life, freedom.’ ”*

**\*\*\*\* The Independent**

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/nazanin-zaghari-ratcliffe-channel-4-iran-b2302109.html>

### **A LIVING NIGHTMARE MET WITH POISE AND DIGNITY:**

*The grainy footage at the beginning of “Nazanin” when she was arrested at Tehran Airport in 2016 is excruciating to watch. As she pushed her luggage trolley, oblivious to the hell’s mouth that was about to open, she looked like a lamb to the slaughter.*

*Those reunion scenes at RAF Brize Norton were beautiful, Nazanin clutching her child and husband and weeping with relief.*

*It was right that the camera then turned off leaving them to a private life. Because what it has cost them amounts to far more than a paltry £400 million.*

**\*\*\*\*\* The Times**

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/nazanin-review-a-living-nightmare-met-with-poise-and-dignity-htffn8m98>

### **NAZANIN REVIEW – “THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE YOU LOSE YOUR FAITH IN HUMANITY:**

*The injustice this family suffered is overwhelming, and the inaction of those who could have helped sooner is horrific and they must be held to account. As a call to arms to fight for those who are still being held hostage around the world, this film is a reminder that love is an incredible motivator, but anger may prove just as potent.”*

**\*\*\*\* The Guardian**

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2023/mar/16/nazanin-review-iran-channel-4>

### **NAZANIN DOCUMENTARY PROVOKES TEARS AND ANGER:**

*"A moving insight into the emotional toll of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's detention on the whole family. Channel 4's intimate film, Nazanin, detailed the personal costs, with great focus on her indefatigable husband Richard."*

**\*\*\*\* The Daily Telegraph**

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2023/03/16/nazanin-channel-4-review-moving-insight-emotional-toll-whole/>

### **CHANNEL 4'S NAZANIN PAINTS A PORTRAIT OF A FAMILY RIPPED APART BY A DIPLOMATIC DISPUTE THEY ARE POWERLESS TO INFLUENCE...**

*The documentary's most captivating moments are its snapshots of daily life for Richard and Gabriella without Nazanin: the anguished goodbyes on FaceTime and memories not made. Richard and Nazanin's conversations on the phone are continually interrupted by a muffled automated voice saying: "This call is made from prison". These are a perpetual reminder of the distance between them.*

*Nazanin and her family cannot quite believe she is being released even as she makes her way onto flight home. Richard frantically goes about cleaning their London house, which is full to the brim with campaigning equipment and clutter. It is a reminder that this has been their reality for six long years: a family in stasis. Their reunion at Gatwick airport is one of the most moving pieces of real-life TV you will see this year, as Gabriella races into her mother's arms.*

**\*\*\*\*\* The Evening Standard.**

<https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/tvfilm/nazanin-zaghari-ratcliffe-channel-4-review-b1067766.html>

### **VIEWERS LEFT 'SOBBING IN FRONT OF THE TV' AS DOCUMENTARY SHOWS EMOTIONAL MOMENT NAZANIN ZAGHARI-RATCLIFFE IS REUNITED WITH HER FAMILY IN THE UK AFTER 6 YEARS IN AN IRAN JAIL.**

*... it is revealed that Gabriella had her fifth birthday party at the prison where Nazanin was being held, so she could spend time with her mother. They shared a cake and drew unicorns, but the birthday girl sobbed when prison guards said it was time to take Nazanin back to her cell. As her sixth birthday approaches, Gabriella reflects on her previous year and tells her father:*

*'That day I couldn't say bye-bye to Mummy... they took me upstairs where the prisoners were. One of the soldiers carried me. He was a kind one.'*

**The Daily Mail**

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-11871665/Nazanin-Zaghari-Ratcliffe-documentary-Channel-4-leaves-viewers-crying-buckets.html>



**Nazanin is reunited with her daughter Gabriella and husband Richard at RAF Brize Norton air base, after 6 years in Iran**