Director's commentary

When I arrived in Austria as a nine-year-old, exile was just a word. Even during puberty I didn't think about it very often, until the day I had spent as much time in Iran as in Austria. From that point on I asked myself what we could call the "classic migrant identity question": "Am I becoming more Austrian every day, just because I can't return to my home country?" A number of similar questions suddenly posed themselves, and I wanted to learn everything possible about things I had forgotten about and that weren't available to me in exile. I wanted to get closer to my family and better understand the situation in Iran. I wanted to comprehend the roles played by history and society in shaping individuals, and I wanted to learn the strategies people from completely different cultures develop when dealing with the pain caused by forced separation from their families.

This film is intended to provide insight into a world rarely if ever seen by a wide audience, an effort to introduce viewers to the lives of those unknown refugees which the tabloids frequently associate with social parasites and drug dealers.

I didn't simply decide to make this film one day—I *had* to make it, in spite of the danger involved. It was the product of an inner need to portray one family's story as a document of our times, without self-pity, as part of the struggle for humanism, to which my parents have dedicated themselves all their lives. I planned to do this with the means available to me, thereby creating a monument to them and others like them in the process.

One thing I wanted to avoid was making a political propaganda film, because propaganda films are too one-sided and quickly become irrelevant, as we've seen so many times in cinematic history. The fact that the film is political (which often comes out in a subtle way) and clearly takes a stand against the dictatorial regime will be obvious to anyone who isn't prejudiced. But it shouldn't be forgotten that *Exile Family Movie* is a documentary film, and that it's about real people who have lives before and after it. For this reason I consider it a moral duty not to use them for my propaganda.

Although *Exile Family Movie* is based on a personal story, it touches upon more and more other themes as it progresses, including, in a general way, a clash of differing worldviews. However it's very important to me that this clash involves more than just conflict, that it's entertaining, humorous and unpredictable as life itself. Such lightness when dealing with what is in fact a sad situation has of course been my family's survival strategy over the past decades.