

JOURNEY FILM
PRODUCTIONS

THE PARTISAN NECROPOLIS

In Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the destruction of a WWII partisan cemetery by neo-fascist forces sparks a determined fight by relatives to protect their families' legacy, exposing a wider struggle against right-wing revisionism and the erasure of history.

PRESS KIT

FILM SYNOPSIS

In Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Partisan Memorial Cemetery—once a striking tribute to young partisans who resisted Nazi-aligned forces—now stands shattered, defaced, and engulfed in political controversy.

Built between 1959 and 1965 by renowned architect Bogdan Bogdanović, the site has become a powerful flashpoint in a society grappling with the resurgence of right-wing revisionism.

The documentary traces the cemetery's transformation from a celebrated monument to a target of neo-fascist destruction, culminating in the 2022 overnight attack that obliterated hundreds of engraved stone markers. While many local leaders and institutions dismiss the memorial as a relic of a bygone ideology, a small group of families refuses to let their loved ones' legacies be erased. Their fight to preserve the site—and what it represents—anchors a broader examination of how histories are rewritten and weaponised.

Drawing on rare architectural sketches, archival film, and expert commentary, the story reveals the cemetery's unique design, symbolic depth, and its place within Mostar's long-standing divisions. Dissenting voices who question the memorial's relevance reflect a Europe-wide struggle over memory, identity, and the growing normalisation of extremist narratives.

At the heart of the film are the relatives who sift through rubble, searching for fragments of names and stories. Their persistence exposes the emotional stakes of remembrance in a climate hostile to confronting the past. The documentary shows how the struggle over this single cemetery echoes far beyond Bosnia—revealing a global battle over memory, identity, and the rising forces determined to reshape the past to control the future.





The Partisan Memorial Cemetery from beginning to the present day



PRODUCTION STATUS

Development began in January 2023, with support from the Pulitzer Center funding an eight-day shoot in Mostar. The production included 14 in-depth interviews and extensive filming of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery and the city. In September 2023, the project was presented at AIB DOC, where it received a €5,000 BHRT award for archival material.

Further filming took place in February and March 2024, documenting Mostar's contested Liberation Day and collecting intimate personal testimonies that became central to the film. In October 2024, Al Jazeera Balkans joined as a co-producer and commissioned a 52-minute broadcast version. Following the network's closure in June 2025, the film's broadcast plans were interrupted.

The film is now fully complete. Both the 70-minute feature and the 52-minute broadcast version have been finished, technically signed off, and are ready for immediate delivery.

The broadcast master includes completed PACS documentation and is fully broadcast-ready.



CHRIS LESLIE

BIO

Chris Leslie is an award-winning photographer, filmmaker, and director based in Glasgow. His work explores urban change, memory, and post-conflict recovery, documenting communities across Scotland, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. His long-term projects include *Disappearing Glasgow*, chronicling the city's social and physical transformation, and *A Balkan Journey*, a 30-year photographic record of the former Yugoslavia. His photographs are held in the National Galleries of Scotland, and his writing has appeared in *The Guardian*. His debut feature documentary, *Finding Family* (2014), won two Scottish BAFTA New Talent Awards.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My deep connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina began in 1996 when I volunteered in Sarajevo, leading a photography project for children in an orphanage. That experience shaped my career. Over the past 30 years, I have documented stories from the region, including the two-time Scottish BAFTA-winning documentary *Finding Family*.

Although I am from Glasgow, this is a Bosnian collaboration. My creative team is Bosnian, including Director of Photography Oggi Tomic, one of the children I first taught photography in Sarajevo. When I visited the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar in 2021, I was deeply moved by its beauty and significance. Its subsequent vandalism reinforced the urgency of preserving this extraordinary monument. Through this film, I hope to celebrate its history and contribute to protecting its legacy for future generations.



WHY THIS FILM MATTERS

Why should anyone care about a cemetery in Bosnia?

Because this is not just the story of a monument—it is a story about memory, identity, and what happens when history is allowed to disappear.

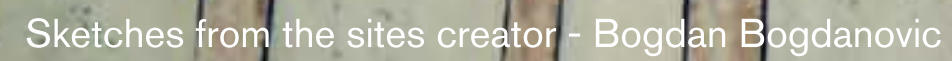
Bosnia & Herzegovina continues to grapple with political division, economic uncertainty, and the lasting legacy of war, while a generation of young people leaves the country in search of a future elsewhere. In such a fractured landscape, the fate of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery raises a much bigger question: who decides which histories are preserved, and which are erased?

Once one of the former Yugoslavia's most celebrated memorials, the cemetery has endured decades of neglect, vandalism, and political indifference. The brutal attack on the site in June 2022 became a turning point, exposing the vulnerability of one of Europe's most important modernist memorials and demonstrating that symbolic destruction remains a powerful political act.

In 2023, the cemetery was named one of Europe's most endangered heritage sites, bringing international attention to its plight. But, as architect and conservation activist Senada Demirović argues in the film, recognition alone cannot protect heritage. Without meaningful political will and international support, even nationally protected monuments can continue to disappear.

The story is also profoundly timely. The year 2025 marked both the 60th anniversary of the memorial's inauguration and the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War—milestones that invite reflection on how societies remember conflict, confront difficult histories, and defend shared cultural heritage.

At a time when historical revisionism, nationalism, and attacks on cultural heritage are resurging across Europe and beyond, this film asks a universal question: what do we lose when we allow the past to be erased?



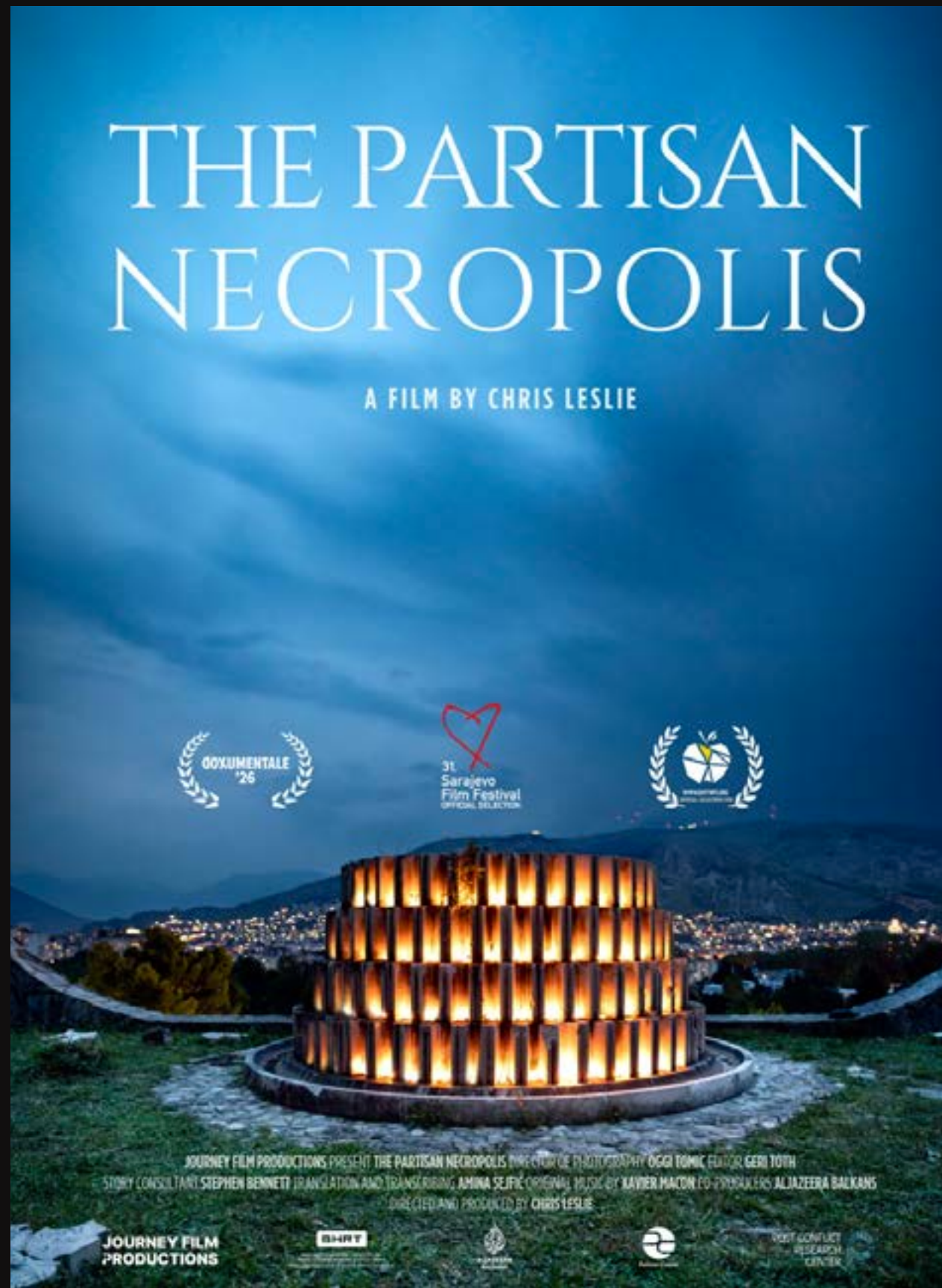


The Partisan Memorial Cemetery pictured before the widescale destruction in 2022.



The documentary follows 4 families in search of their loved ones' headstones amidst the destruction.

© Charles



PARTNERS

Funders

Pulitzer Center - USA

Crowdfunder - UK

Aljazeera Balkans - Bosnia & Herzegovina

Supporters

BHRT - Bosnia & Herzegovina

Post Conflict Research Center - Bosnia & Herzegovina

PRODUCTION TEAM



Chris Leslie

DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER

Chris Leslie is an award-winning photographer, filmmaker, and director based in Glasgow. His acclaimed project Disappearing Glasgow chronicles the city's socio-spatial changes, while A Balkan Journey explores post-conflict recovery over 30 years. His debut feature film Finding Family (2014) won two Scottish BAFTA New Talent Awards



Oggi Tomic

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

A specialist in lighting and cinematography, Oggi Tomic creates cinematic promotional films and documentaries for corporate clients, television networks, and production companies. His notable credits include Sarajevo Roses (2018) and Vincent Van Gogh – New Way of Seeing (2020), both as Director of Photography.



Geri Toth

EDITOR

With a decade of experience in film and TV editing, Geri Toth has worked across TV commercials, scripted and unscripted short films, and feature-length projects. He specializes in crafting compelling taster tapes designed to engage major TV network commissioners.



Stephen Bennett

STORY CONSULTANT

Self-shooting documentary director Stephen Bennett has been working in television for 30 years, working on international prime time commissions for Storyville, BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5, Discovery, Hearst Networks, History (USA), NHK (Japan), Sky and Stan. (Australia).

KEY FACTS

GENRE SUBCATEGORIES	History, Politics, Conflict, Heritage
TOTAL RUNNING TIME	71 minutes (feature) / 52 minutes (tv edit)
PRODUCTION COMPANY	Journey Film Productions
PRODUCTION LOCATION	Bosnia & Herzegovina
ASPECT RATIO	16:9
OUTPUT	DCP / IMF

LENGTH	Feature-length / TV
ORIGINAL LANGUAGES	English / Bosnian
PRODUCTION YEAR	2025
EXHIBITION FORMATS	Digital Projection (DCP)
LANGUAGES	English, Bosnian
SUBTITLES	English, Bosnian

PRESS



BALKAN INSIGHT

Scottish Filmmaker Chases World War II Ghosts at Bosnian Necropolis



THE GUARDIAN

Protecting Bosnia and Herzegovina's anti-fascist legacy: Mostar's Partisan Memorial Cemetery



N1 BOSNIA TV

Photographer Chris Leslie is producing a film about the Mostar Necropolis

FESTIVALS



SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL
August 2025



BHFF, NYC
April 2026



DOKUMENTALE, BERLIN
June 2006

**JOURNEY FILM
PRODUCTIONS**

CONTACT ME

Chris Leslie - Director and Producer

THANK YOU

MOBILE

+00 44 (0) 7737 370481

EMAIL

CHRIS@CHRISLESLIE.CO.UK