

Document Citation

Title	Divorce Iranian style
Author(s)	Susan Jackson
Source	<i>Time Out New York</i>
Date	
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Divorce Iranian style, Longinotto, Kim, 1998

Time Out

New York

Divorce Iranian Style

Dirs. Kim Longinotto, Ziba Mir Hosseini. 1998. N/R. 80mins. In Farsi with subtitles. Documentary.

Despite the fundamentalist theocracy that still wields tremendous power in Iran, divorce is legal. But that doesn't mean it's easy to come by, especially for women. In their compelling, if depressing, documentary, Longinotto and Hosseini look at the system and chronicle the cases of a few women. The bureaucracy begins outside the door of the Tehran government building where divorce cases are heard. At separate entrances, men are searched for weapons and cell phones, and women are checked to make sure they're wearing the proper clothing and very little makeup. (There are supplies of cold cream and extra black veils for scofflaws.) The office itself is a Kafkaesque maze of bureaucrats who routinely lose files and tell couples who've already agreed to divorce to try to work things out.

The film's most heartbreaking tale involves a woman who gave up custody of her two daughters in order to obtain her divorce—and now has changed her mind. Her ex-husband has taken custody of the older girl and wants the four-year-old, too. The woman keeps returning to the office to persuade officials to let her younger

daughter stay with her, eventually resorting to wheedling and lying while the child looks on stoically. As a counterpoint, the filmmakers delve briefly into the lives of the bureaucrats. One woman frequently takes the men's side. Her little daughter, who spends her afternoons at the office, says she never wants to marry.

Divorce is a fascinating, if haunting, window into a society few Westerners see, but it has flaws. Statistics about the divorce rate, information about how the situation changed under the Revolutionary government and an indication of future prospects are all lacking. Then again, the film's abrupt ending is a reminder of how hopeless the situation seems to be. (Now playing; Film Forum)—*Susan Jackson*



FAMILY TIES A mother and child in the documentary *Divorce Iranian Style*.