

LONG SYNOPSIS - #chicagoGirl

From her childhood bedroom in suburban Chicago, Ala'a, a 19-year-old American girl, coordinates the revolution in Syria. Through Facebook, Twitter and Skype, she coordinates protests for Aous, a dental student in Damascus, Bassel, a film student from Syracuse who returned home to Syria after the revolution began, and a score of citizen journalists in Homs. It's Revolution 2.0. Tunisia fell in 28 days when a cell phone video went viral. Egypt fell in 18 days in a revolution sparked by a Facebook post. Why not Syria? At first, Ala'a helps organize demonstrations for her social network in Syria. Because Syria is rife with government informants, Ala'a helps decide the protest route and the escape routes. She helps small groups of protestors link up so that they can stage giant protests.

Six thousand miles away from Damascus, Ala'a is out of the regime's reach. But her social network isn't. As government forces and snipers crackdown on protestors and dictator Bashar al-Assad institutes a media blackout to prevent the world from seeing the brutality on the ground, Ala'a and her network are forced to change tactics. Using their cameraphones and digital cameras, Aous, Bassel, and the citizen journalists devise an intricate system to show the world the truth of what's happening in their home country. Someone in the network takes a video and uploads it to YouTube. Ala'a, in her bedroom outside Chicago, downloads the video, blurs faces, subtitles it in English and sends it to news organizations around the world, where it becomes "breaking news." Ala'a and her social network help keep Syria at the forefront of the world news. But after dictator Bashar al-Assad bombs the city of Homs, killing thousands of his own people, the videos take on a new meaning. They are cries for help to outside countries, to the Red Cross, to the UN, to foreign nations, to please come help Syria. While Ala'a and her network are able to show the world in real time the horrors on the ground, that doesn't mean that the world can help in real time. After the UN fails to intervene, Ala'a and her network question their effectiveness in the revolution. Aous decides to put down his camera phone and pick up an AK-47 and join the Free Syrian Army. Bassel decides to stay with his camera. He sneaks back into Homs and using what he learned at Syracuse's film school, he trains other citizen journalists in how to more effectively film human rights atrocities to be used as war crimes evidence after the regime does finally fall. Bassel pays the ultimate price when he's killed by a mortar shell while filming in the streets with his students. Feeling helpless from 6,000 miles away, Ala'a decides to sneak into Syria to bring badly needed supplies to those in her social network.

The film is dedicated to Bassel Shahade, the cameraman in the film who lost his life showing the world what is really happening in Syria.