



For our encounter with NGO's at home, we, as Utrecht University students, went to see the theatre play *Jihad* being performed in Amsterdam and subsequently had a Q&A evening with its director, Daria Bukvić, at our university. *Jihad* is a play currently being performed in the Netherlands to address the crises of radicalization and segregation in Dutch society.

The play is a Dutch translation of a French-Belgian original by Ismaël Saïdi, who experienced jihadist radicalization up close and personal when many of his teenage peers left for Afghanistan in the late 80's and early 90's. The Dutch director, Daria Bukvić, is herself a refugee whose family fled Bosnia for the Netherlands when she was only three.

The play presents three Dutch Muslims from an immigration background travelling to Syria to join an unnamed Jihadist group. At the end of the play, one of the three has died, the second decides to abandon jihad and return to the Netherlands, and the third decides to head deeper into Syria to join IS. While clearly opposed to radicalization, the play does not seek to preach a moralistic or judgmental message. It presents all three characters as both flawed and sympathetic, and infuses their tragic story with plenty of humor and lighthearted moments.

The ultimate goal of the play is to encourage discussion. To do so, the play is presented to Dutch teenagers in cooperation with their secondary schools as part of a broader educational package. And it is presented not only to students who share a similar background as the play's characters, but also those who do not. If not for the play, many of the latter would never have encountered the arguments and issues *Jihad* raises.

In our Q&A with Daria, we got the chance to ask her how the play was received by the secondary school pupils that were invited to see the performance - free of charge. For many, it was the first time entering a fancy theatre venue and to her as a director this was a success on its own. Her goal as a director is to bring stories of change and inspiration - not stories for the elite, as is often the case with theatre. At the same time she wishes to tell true stories of conflicts, segregation and opposing political viewpoints. In december of this year, she will stage the first Dutch *Othello* performance with a black actor in the lead. To her, Shakespeare's work is still of great importance to any contemporary director, as many of the issues displayed in his works are still relevant today. She hopes to evoke laughter, feelings of solidarity, but also criticism from the audience with every performance. She stresses her performances are not to please the audience but to encourage open discussion and conversation in the widest sense for every audience. By doing so, she is using theatre as a device to educate, bring together and learn from. To her, theatre as a live experience with actors on stage, close to the audience, different every evening, can establish much more understanding of each other than the watching a story on screen.

Link: <http://www.jihaddevoorstelling.nl/>