

# ‘ISIS, Tomorrow’ has a question for us today



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VENICE: In less than 80 minutes, “ISIS, Tomorrow, The Lost Souls of Mosul” tells us how more than 500,000 children were trained by the militant group to become terrorists of the future.

Directed by Francesca Mannocchi and Alessio Romenzi, and screened at the Venice Film Festival last week, the documentary is an insight into the heart-breaking stories of innocent children trained to become suicide bombers.

The film takes us to a time in January 2018 — six months after Mosul was freed from the clutches of Daesh (referred to in the film as ISIS) — where we see a ravaged city, with houses reduced to makeshift tents. Captivating cinematography takes us through buildings that have been flattened from the intense bombing.

Through it all the directors weave a sense of gloom and hopelessness, before panning the camera onto a 16-year-old boy who narrates his experience of being recruited by Daesh and coaxed into joining the bloody movement. The teenager describes how several others were taught to kill their neighbors — to further the ideology of Daesh — complacent in the belief that there is no greater honor than supposed martyrdom.

The film narrates the stark reality of a Mosul recaptured by Iraqi forces where descendants of rebel fighters continue to deal with post-war trauma.

While history has borne witness to how defeated forces bury their weapons and hide their arsenals, in Daesh's case, the militants left behind a powerful and dedicated army of children indoctrinated with the values of the extremist network.

In the end, we feel not anger but compassion for these minors, manipulated by Daesh during the three years that Mosul was held captive. And as the world wonders whether Daesh has been truly defeated or not, the film forces us to ask a more pressing question: How do we stop children from turning into the terrorists of tomorrow?

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