



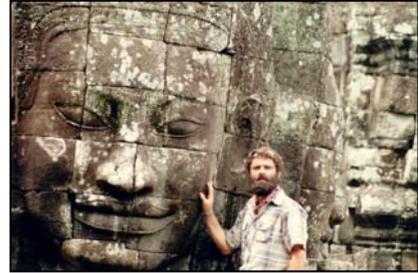
Shai Lah Productions :: Documenting Life

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Cambodia: Days of Hope

**unbelievably hopeful journey through
a devastated country**

**a proposed feature documentary
by Erez T Yanuv Barzilay**



Introduction

I was fortunate in **1992** to be one of the first foreign journalists to have travelled widely in war-torn Cambodia, a country just awakening from the violent nightmare of the previous three decades. I was even more fortunate to finally step out of Cambodia alive and in one piece.

Little did I know then, that this unbelievably hopeful journey amongst the Khmer nation's ruins was only the beginning of a long personal road that fascinated me with last century's Genocides and encouraged me to explore and document stories like: Rwanda, Sudan, Kosovo, Angola and Somalia, in the years to come.

Production Summary

[Cambodia: Days of Hope](#) brings to light, for the first time, some amazing and daring footage taken during Cambodia's initial steps towards peace. It offers exclusive access into one of the most compelling and complex stories of modern history, with a strong message to Humanity as a whole.

With seven illegal crossings between Cambodia and Thailand I have managed a task no foreign journalist was able to achieve in early 1992.

I crossed live and unmapped minefields, hitchhiked with locals, NGOs and some cooperative Thai and Khmer military officers. My undeclared mission: documenting the recently return from exile, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, during his historic visits to each of the headquarters of the different factions, including the Khmer Rouge, fighting to oust the Vietnamese from their ancient land.

As a result, my exclusive footage captured the crisp sense of anxiety and hope filling the Phnom Penh streets, the killing fields and the majestic temple city of Angkor.

My personal journey is woven with dozens of interviews, with survivors of the Killing Fields as well as with the leading figures of this fascinating transition period. My 1992 journey ended on the day the first group from half a million Khmer refugees were repatriated, returning to a homeland ruled by instability and riddled with landmines.

However, I was to return. The [Cambodia: Days of Hope](#) camera revisited Cambodia again a decade later, in **2002**, looking into the Khmer nation's progress. Discovering the journey to peace has been rocky, but is still filled with hope.

October 2006 will mark 15 years since the historic peace accord ending the Cambodian conflict and bringing the Khmer people to a new era of rebuilding, reconciliation, freedom and hope.

I am determined to finally bring the [Cambodia: Days of Hope](#) feature documentary to light in conjunction with the **15th anniversary of the historic Cambodian peace accord**.

Originally developed with the assistance and support of the **National Film Board of Canada** and the **United Nations Association in Canada**.



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Documentary Highlights:

1992

• The Prince and the Hope

Following Prince Norodom Sihanouk during an historic week - visiting all three headquarters of the rival factions by the Thai border. Witnessing the warm receptions by the Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan; one of the men that toppled him from power, KPNLF leader, Son Sann, drawing Cambodia into the Viet Nam war; and by his own loyalists, inaugurating his son, Norodom Ranariddh, as the leader of the FUNCINPEC party.

• Demining Cambodia - a task that will take years

Following HALO Trust volunteers on a landmine survey mission in western Cambodia and the Angkor Temple complex including a look at a recently created map of minefields in the area. Talking to UN officials and military personnel. Witnessing teaching Cambodians how to clear their land from mines. Following the Thai military clearing mines on the main roads.

• Going back home

Talking to refugees, NGO personnel and UN officials about the main obstacles in the way of safe and successful repatriation. Witnessing the preparations in the refugee camps in Thailand. Following the first families to cross the border back into Cambodia.

• Angkor temples - bleeding evidence of a glorious past

Villagers of Siem Reap suffered badly in the three decades of war. Evidence of their suffering is everywhere around the Angkor Temple City hidden in the jungles. UNESCO sponsored reconstruction is underway, but the whole area is heavily mined, unstable and mostly abandoned.

• Shattered environment

UNDP has completed an alarming report about the state of the Cambodian environment. Glimpses of the destruction can be seen in some slide shots, a short visit to the Pailin area under Khmer Rouge control and comments by Prince Sihanouk and a UNDP official in Phnom Penh.

• The immense toll of a treacherous past

Eyewitness accounts of people persecuted and terrorised during the recent civil war in Cambodia. Visiting some of the main memorials to the horror of the Khmer Rouge regime. Remembering the atrocities of Thailand and Vietnam.





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• Crossing the Lines

Crossing some of the different lines of control which divides Cambodia: a minefield between the government controlled area and the Thai border; crossing from Thailand to the Khmer Rouge controlled area of Pailin; crossing from Thailand to the area controlled by the Royalist Militia; crossing back to Cambodia at Poi Pet; travelling the main smugglers route from Phnom Penh south to Kep.

• Peace victims

While following the efforts to clear Cambodia from landmines more victims are falling to the hidden assassins. About 80% of people injured by mines in western Cambodia in past years knew they were entering mine fields. They did it because they had no choice; they had to cross certain areas to survive.



2002

• Bustling border crossing

The border city of Poi Pet is thriving and bustling with Cambodians returning from daily work places in Thailand. Dozens of newly built casinos are dotting the landscape of the dusty city.

• Cambodia's strong man

Following a public tree planting ceremony presided over by Prime Minister Hun Sen who keeps firm control over the political landscape while marginalising the Royalist party and the opposition.



• Restored Tourist Industry

The ancient Temple City of Angkor is back on the world tourism map. The temples are crowded with foreign and local enthusiasts. Some visitors and locals are performing religious ceremonies around the ancient temples. The Siem Reap 'Center for Travel & Tourism Studies' is graduating a new group of young Cambodians in the presence of the Tourism minister.

• Huge success of HALO Trust

With all of Cambodia mapped for suspected minefields, no new injuries are occurring in areas cleared by the Scottish based organisation. HALO Trust is fully operated by Cambodians, and has over a thousand employees, and only a handful of whom are foreigners.



• Environmental Hopes

While more evidence is recorded daily of increased deforestation and environmental exploitation, a local organisation teaches the children of Cambodia how to balance development with preserving the ecosystem of Tonle Sap.

In memory of:

12 years old, **Hean Touch**, died from a landmine injury during the filming
Tim Goggs, HALO Trust, killed in Afghanistan 1992

Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, killed in Iraq 2003