

'My month long wait for Gaddafi'



A British based film maker has told how she turned down an approach from Colonel Gaddafi to make a biographical movie about his life.

Libyan born Dr Halla Diyab (pictured), who now lives in Leicester, was invited to Tripoli last summer and met with Gaddafi aids who told her the Colonel himself had selected her for the task of taking his heroic life story to the masses.

Immortalise

But having experienced the Libyan leader's mind games and erratic behaviour in the past she decided to politely decline the opportunity to immortalise him on the big screen.

She had first met Gaddafi in 2007 when he commissioned the production company she worked for to make a film about the Italian occupation of Libya.

She flew to Tripoli with four others and was met by Minister for Culture Nouri Humaidi. Dr Diyab and her team were transferred to a push hotel "Corinthia" and given new Libyan sim cards for their mobile phones.

She said: "I have friends in Tripoli so I left the hotel to take a stroll and thought I would visit my friend. However I soon realised I was being followed by two young men - two of the numerous bodyguards who were assigned to us and had been milling around the hotel lobby.

"I continued walking but soon took a call on my phone - it was the Minister of Culture. He asked where I was going and insisted I return to the hotel. It was intimidating and I decided it would be unwise to disobey so I returned to the hotel."

After a month had

passed by she was summoned to the hotel lobby by a phone call at 4am.

Intimidated

Three cars were waiting with an armed guard to take Dr Diyab and her team to meet Gaddafi at his encampment close to his birthplace in the town of Sirt - around a five hour drive from Tripoli.

She said: "Even before Gaddafi arrived it was very intimidating for me. I was the only woman with another female writer there and the place was filled with military and young men with guns.

"We were seated on white plastic chairs and then Gaddafi walked in with two armed soldiers who stood by his side. We were asked to present our ideas on a film about the Italian occupation.

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"I was frightened. He was wearing Libyan "Jard" traditional clothes - a brown gown. He was not wearing

any cover to his head. I was scared and intimidated, my voice was trembling and I was face to face with his soldiers who were armed.

"He did not have any eye contact with us, he talked to us while he was looking up, as if we were nothing. I thought there was something wrong with his vision as he couldn't look us in the face.

Presentation

"Somehow I got through the presentation. He said he wanted to pay \$50m for a film about the occupation. He explained that he needed the film to put pressure on the Italian government to pay compensation to Libya for the occupation."

Dr Diyab put the episode behind her until, last summer, she was contacted by a pro Gaddafi journalist who said the Colonel had chosen her to make a film of his life-story.

Intrigued Dr Diyab flew out once again to Tripoli, but this time there would be no meeting with the Libyan leader.

She said: "The journalist explained that Gaddafi thought I was the perfect person to make the film of his life. He had decided the film maker should understand Libya but that the film would have more credibility if it was made by a European based film maker.

"The aim of the film was to tell his life story to a whole new generation. He wanted to show himself as a great father and a great husband, as well as a great leader. It was to be his legacy. I listened but decided the project wasn't for me so I bowed out politely explaining that my schedule was extremely busy."