

## Project presentation:

Too often the media concentrates on covering war itself, not paying enough attention to what is hidden behind military alliances and agreements. At this historic moment in the Syria conflict, attention is turned to the fight against the last pocket of Isis near the Iraqi-Syrian border. Jinwar, however, represents an important example of how a community in a country that has been at war for almost seven years has been able to look beyond the fighting and start building a future for itself. Through the experience of war, the women of Jinwar have worked out their own needs and goals and have come together to realize them. Their actions spring up within the context of conflict but represent an effort to create an alternative way of life for themselves, and alternatives within the context of Northern Syria and the Middle East. Theirs is an important story of community resilience, resistance and courage. Jinwar is a place for Syrian women who want to live following an alternate model of living, far away from war and patriarchal society. They have started to build new lives for themselves, bolstered by their recent experience organizing on a regional and local level.

Meaning “women’s village” in Kurdish, Jinwar, near the town of Dirbesiye in Northern Syria, is a place for Syrian women who want to live differently, such as those who have lost their husbands and would normally be required to remarry or mourn for the rest of their lives, and those who reject the traditional idea of a family. The construction of the first homes in August 2017 was an important act of resistance in the face of the ongoing conflict. More than just a series of houses (50 in total are planned), the village will be an alternate model of living.

I focused on several personal stories, taking portraits of women with an instant camera, asking them to talk about an object they have brought to their new homes. From this symbol, the work bore witness to their aspirations for themselves and their community, and to how, supported by a strong spirit of solidarity, women in this part of the Mideast are not only achieving military success, but taking important steps to carve out a different future.

To do so, in mid-2016 I firstly went to meet the first women aiming to build the village. I wanted to be sure they would appreciate and share my project. Their feedback was enthusiastic. Like me they are still curious to know which objects other women keep in their new life and the reasons behind their choice. That’s why my project is not finish yet, and it won’t be finished since Jinwar will attract more and more women from different parts of Syria.