



## ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND Streaming Launch on Monday, May 22 on [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS App](#)

**New Series from Award-Winning Director James Bluemel and the BBC, Tells Extraordinary Human Stories from Those Who Lived Through The Troubles**

**Series To Have Broadcast Premiere August 28-30 on PBS**



Anne Marie, aged 10, throwing bottles at British troops during a riot in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1981. EP 4 Peter Marlow TBC - 1970s Magnum Photos N/A LON39805  
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Arlington, VA; May 11, 2023 – **ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND**, a powerful new five-part series, gives voice to the people who lived through Northern Ireland’s violent past by sharing intimate, unheard testimonies from all sides of the conflict. The series combines unfiltered personal accounts with archival footage to tell the story of the people and communities that had to live with conflict daily — and are still dealing with its legacies today. With a streaming launch set for Monday, May 22 on [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS app](#) at 5:00 p.m. ET, **ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND** will have its

broadcast premiere August 28-30 on PBS.

**Bill Gardner**, Vice President of Multiplatform Programming and Head of Development for PBS, says: *“ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND is an extraordinarily intimate and affecting portrait of how events and actions of the past are measured in individual lives and collective memories. At the heart of every conflict are the people involved, and we are grateful to the courageous men and women who shared their personal stories with us. PBS is honored to partner with James Bluemel, Keo Films, Walk on Air Films, and our colleagues at BBC Two and BBC Northern Ireland to bring this deeply impactful and deeply human series to audiences across platforms.”*

Commissioned for BBC Two, BBC Northern Ireland, iPlayer and PBS, the series comes from award-winning director James Bluemel and the team behind the BAFTA and Emmy Award-winning series **ONCE UPON A TIME IN IRAQ**, which aired as a FRONTLINE documentary special in 2020 on PBS.

**ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND** runs chronologically from the beginning of The Troubles in the late 1960s to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

signed 25 years ago, in April 1998. All five hours will be available for streaming on Monday, May 22. Episode descriptions are below:

**Episode 1** “It Wasn’t Like a Movie Anymore”

Monday, August 28, 9:00 p.m. ET

The opening episode charts Northern Ireland’s progression from relative peace to full-blown conflict. When tensions between Catholic and Protestant communities explode, the British Army is deployed. When 13 unarmed Catholics are shot dead in Derry by British Paratroopers, the world looks on in shock. Known as “Bloody Sunday,” it has far reaching political consequences and is seen by some as a recruitment drive for the Provisional IRA.

**Episode 2** “Do Paramilitaries Lie Awake at Night?”

Monday, August 28, 10:00 p.m. ET

It is now 1972, and a deeply segregated society has emerged, with many Catholic and Protestant working-class communities policed by paramilitary organizations. Hatred and fear of the ‘other side’ are endemic, as is a devotion to one’s own culture and traditions. Six months after Bloody Sunday, the IRA explode 19 bombs across Belfast in an hour, killing nine and injuring 130 others. But punk music emerges as a unifying force for some young Catholics and Protestants, who defy the chaos and segregated world around them.

**Episode 3** “So Many Broken Hearts”

Tuesday, August 29, 9:00 p.m. ET

The devastating impact of the conflict is explored through the stories of three women as IRA prisoners begin their hunger strike in protest against Margaret Thatcher’s policies. Tit for tat killings, car bombs and assassinations are now part of everyday life in Northern Ireland. Fatigue, from a population desperate for a respite from the violence, is creeping in.

**Episode 4** “The Dirty War”

Tuesday, August 29, 10:00 p.m. ET

By the late 1980s, the news in Northern Ireland is a daily list of the dead — but 14 bloody days in March 1988 mark a new level of harrowing savagery. The conflict also becomes an intelligence war, as the move to prevent further terrorist violence is concentrated on infiltrating paramilitary organizations. “Trust nobody” is the mantra as fear and suspicion permeate all parts of everyday life.

**Episode 5** “Who Wants to Live Like That?”

Wednesday, August 30, 10:00 p.m. ET

In 1994, President Bill Clinton controversially invites Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Fein (often referred to then as the ‘IRA’s political wing’), to the United States. For some

it's a symbol of international support for peace talks. But others, whose families have been devastated by the violence, are horrified.

A year earlier, an IRA bomb exploded prematurely on Belfast's Shankill Road, killing the bomber and nine Protestant men, women and children. In the days afterwards, loyalist gunmen retaliated assassinating many Catholics.

It seemed that violence might escalate further as tensions ran high, but following years of negotiations between politicians, paramilitaries and the British and Irish Governments, an IRA ceasefire was announced in 1994. A loyalist paramilitary ceasefire followed 6 weeks later.

There is widespread joy when the Good Friday Agreement is finally announced in 1998. But peace comes at a cost. The early release of all paramilitary prisoners from prison — a key part of the agreement — causes anguish for many, especially the injured and bereaved, who face what all post-conflict societies face, a peace built upon the violence of the past.

**ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND** will be available to stream through November 22 on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS app](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO.

**ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND** (5x60) was commissioned by Clare Sillery, Head of Commissioning, Documentaries, and Eddie Doyle, Head of Content Commissioning, BBC Northern Ireland. The five-part series is a co-commission between BBC Northern Ireland and BBC Two for BBC and PBS in partnership with The Open University, co-produced by Keo Films and Walk on Air Films, and distributed by BBC Studios. It is due to premiere in all markets simultaneously in May.

The BBC Commissioning Editors are Hamish Fergusson and Mary McKeagney, the Executive Producers for Keo Films are Will Anderson and Andrew Palmer, and the Series Producers are Vicky Mitchell and Rachel Hooper. Bill Gardner is the Executive in Charge for PBS.

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