

# Israel vs. Israel: A Cinema Political Review



Lee Thomas - The Brunswickan

September 28, 2011

Throngs of old women in headscarves, being herded through a cement-walled check stop. School children having their bags searched by armed men carrying big black guns. Civilians throwing rocks at soldiers, who reply with a hail of bullets. The bloody corpse of a protestor being dragged away by his companions. The series of brutal images is difficult to watch . . . and impossible to forget.

In his intensely provocative new documentary, director Terje Carlsson explores Israeli resistance of the occupation in Palestine. For those unfamiliar with the history of the conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been ongoing since 1967, when Israel conquered the Gaza West Bank and became an occupying military force in the Palestinian territories. After more than 40 years of occupation, life for the Palestinian people remains harsh and restricted.

In Israel, the subject of the occupation is polarizing, a socially-taboo topic that divides friends and families. Religious Jewish citizens of Israel opposed to the occupation are often viewed as unpatriotic or blasphemous. *Israel vs. Israel* examines the stories of four Israelis actively opposing the actions of their state, and the numerous social and legal challenges they face every day.

“The situation in Palestine is one of the greatest tragedies of the world today,” said Tracy Glynn of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick and host of *Cinema Politica* screenings at Conserver House.

“We see it in the news, but we don’t always get the full picture. (*Israel vs. Israel*) tells the stories we don’t hear.”

Indeed, the passionate struggles of the four activists depicted by Carlsson are as moving as they are startling. A grandmother, fighting for more compassionate treatment of Palestinians at check stops, invites the audience into a private conversation between her and her nationalist son. An ex-combat soldier campaigns to break the code of silence surrounding the occupation, and is harassed in the streets by his neighbours.

“You’re not afraid?” asks the voice behind the camera. “Of course I’m afraid,” replies the young man, but his voice and determination are unwavering.

These are the faces of the Israeli resistance, and they share a common goal: to end the unlawful Israeli occupation of Palestine and restore peace to a nation fraught with violence.

The documentary, shown at Conserver House and co-hosted by the Jews for a Just Peace Fredericton and the Fredericton Palestine Solidarity, coincides perfectly with current news events regarding the conflict. This past Friday, Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas submitted an application for full membership in the United Nations. Of the 15 Security Council member states, nine must approve the application before the entirety of the UN membership is permitted to vote on the issue.

Many obstacles lie in the path of Palestine’s bid for membership, not the least of which is the US and Canadian commitments to supporting the Israeli state. Whether this incident marks the beginning of a Palestinian Spring or will simply become another event in the long and complex Israeli-Palestinian history, remains to be seen.