

Citizens for Justice in the Middle East

Reflections on the Documentary Film

"ISRAEL vs ISRAEL"

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Catchy title, isn't it? This award winning documentary "Israel vs Israel" was shown Sunday Oct. 2, 2011 as part of the International Film Festival I attended.

Foreshadowing - After purchasing my ticket I was told to go outside the theater and wait in line against the wall. Of course, what instantly came to mind were Palestinians waiting at check points because of THE WALL. Getting a little anxious with the silence and no "please" or "thank you" offered, I reminded myself I did live in a rarified stratosphere, unlike those living in Palestine. After those with passes entered, our line too was allowed to enter.

Inside the theater was a different atmosphere. Several people to my right were happily chatting, reminding me of a family reunion. They seemed to know everyone and the group was full of life and laughter.

Finally the documentary started. No feeling of family reunions in Palestine; checkpoints, yes; Rabbi Arik Asckerman doing his best to protect farmers harvesting their olive crop, yes; crowded checkpoints with a Jewish grandmother urging a young soldier holding an AK47 rifle to let in parents with sick baby go to doctor, yes; the Wall, known as the security fence in Israel, yes; and Palestinian youths throwing rocks as soldiers fired tear gas, yes, that too.

Other memorable scenes included the retired Israeli Army officer who stated he regretted everything he did every day as a soldier. The opening scene of documentary was more than just interesting. A group of Israelis holding posters for peace and one Israeli walks by and calls them Nazis. Comment from Jewish gentleman in peace group: "Imagine a religious Jew calling another religious Jew a Nazi!"

Probably the scene that haunts me the most was Palestinian 5 and 6 year-old girls waiting in line for school being taunted by Israeli little girls of the same age.

At the end of documentary, everyone in the audience sat in silence, then there was applause by some, and then complete silence as we left the theater.

If you visited Israel, but did not go to the West Bank having been told that area is too dangerous, you need to make a return trip. Visit the West Bank so you can experience firsthand what everyone in Israel does not want to talk about, the Occupied Territories. And just maybe you will be inspired to make your own poster similar to the one being shown at the opening of this film, "FREE PALESTINE = FREE ISRAEL."

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