

PALESTINE 36



A FILM BY ANNEMARIE JACIR

Palestine's Official Submission for the Academy Awards®

OFFICIAL SELECTION



TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2025

GALA PRESENTATIONS



PALESTINE, UK, FRANCE, DENMARK, NORWAY, QATAR, KSA, JORDAN - 2025
119 min – Arabic, English - 2.35:1 - 5.1

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General Information

SYNOPSIS

1936. As villages across Mandatory Palestine rise against British colonial rule, Yusuf drifts between his rural home and the restless energy of Jerusalem, longing for a future beyond the growing unrest. But history is relentless. With rising numbers of Jewish immigrants escaping antisemitism in Europe, and the Palestinian population uniting in the largest and longest uprising against Britain's 30-year dominion, all sides spiral towards inevitable collision in a decisive moment for the British Empire and the future of the entire region.



NOTE OF CONTEXT

Featuring, among others, Hiam Abbass, Saleh Bakri, Dafer L'Abidine, Yasmine Al Massri, Billy Howle, Liam Cunningham, Robert Aramayo, and Jeremy Irons, **PALESTINE 36** began preproduction in January 2023, prepping a myriad of locations across the country, sewing and embroidering costumes and village dresses, collecting old props from all over, and renovating and restoring an entire village, including planting fields of obsolete crops, as well as building old British war vehicles and weapons - in what was the country's most ambitious film to date with a team of hundreds. After October 7th, they were forced to shut down production, and the team relocated production to Jordan. After thirteen months, they were able to return to complete shooting in Palestine against the odds. In November of 2024, after having to stop and start production four times due to the increasingly tense geopolitical situation, the team of **PALESTINE 36** finally wrapped the final phase of shooting. The only feature film to shoot in Palestine in the last two years, the team continues their work and commitment in the belief that "every beautiful poem is an act of resistance" (Mahmoud Darwish)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The farmer-led revolt against British colonialism in 1936 marked the beginning of the largest and longest uprising against Britain's 30-year rule. Palestinians from all classes were mobilized, and nationalistic sentiment spread in the Arabic press, schools, social and literary circles. The British, taken aback by the extent and intensity of the revolt, retaliated by placing Palestine under martial law, deploying over twenty thousand troops to Palestine, and still failed to control a population of less than one million people. Ships arrived loaded with tanks and machine guns. The Royal Air Force began strafing the countryside. Thousands of Palestinians were imprisoned, beaten, and the leadership exiled. The revolt lasted for three years and was arguably the largest and longest anti-colonial uprising in the British Empire.



Director's Statement

Gazan poet Ne'ma Hasan said, *"When the roads are blocked, draw a new map."* This has become our way of life, one we learned from our parents and grandparents. It feeds into everything we do; going to work, going to a doctor's appointment, visiting family, making a film..."

It has been a long-time dream to tell the story of the 1936-39 revolt, and telling it through the different points of views of an ensemble of characters came naturally. The 1936 uprising marks the most pivotal moment of our history and I was interested in telling the story in an intimate, raw and personal way. The script's structure follows the various characters' journeys, weaving in and out like embroidery. Every one of them is somehow connected to another. Their lives intersect, sometimes just barely. Each one is confronted with a moment that changes them, brings them to a place they did not expect and it is there they make a choice of how to go forward.



PALESTINE 36 is a period film, but I never conceived it as something of the past. It has always been current, relevant and alive. Sometimes critical, never nostalgic, always searching. Set in a time I never lived, **PALESTINE 36** is deeply personal. We do not choose the circumstances of our lives, we do not choose war or the million painful moments we learn to survive. Sometimes we choose how we react to them.

The idea of the film came to me in images. Simple at first – a hand-stitched lace curtain, a burnt black field, a dock worker staring at the waves, an old radio bringing unwanted news. A country finally erupts into open rebellion. Images became stories. My work is deeply entrenched in the world I live in. For **PALESTINE 36**, I disappeared into a river of research for the film. Reading every book, every document, every account I could get my hands on. Collecting images, photographs, film reels, and countless impressions. I could not stop thinking about the massacre at Al Bassa village, just 25 kilometers from my home today.

My home in this land that gives to us and takes from us. A landscape which persists and survives and has room for all who love it. Of course the land would become a major character in the script's embroidery. To make a film set at the height of the revolution means to capture a feeling, the same way that poetry does. A feeling that at that specific moment, in that small window, everything feels possible. Full of fear and full of hope and ambition. The most pivotal moment in our history. A circle was the strongest image; **PALESTINE 36** was always a cyclical story.

PALESTINE 36 is a celebration of a defiant rebellion facing insurmountable military opposition: a dramatic portrayal of its failings and its resilience. Colonialism and imperialism, our own betrayals and affairs, we witness the disintegration of a country. In 1936, we lost a part of ourselves. I wonder did we lose? Did Empire win? This film is about all those things. It is a story of a village, a community of people full of dreams and desires. Ordinary people who find themselves in an extraordinary time. It is a nod to the persistence of the human spirit, the desire of a people to be free. It is our story.

Making this film is the most difficult thing I have ever done. When the genocide began, everything fell apart. Our people were being annihilated and we found ourselves trying to make a film about a dark moment in our history before we knew we'd be going through one of the darkest moments we have ever lived. We plunged into new depths, it felt like insanity. Sometimes we were broken. I lost count of the number of times production started and stopped. We kept going. The cast and crew came together to insist to make something, to pour all our pain into an act of love, to say to each other we will not be erased. The script, the story, the location, everything changed. One thing grew stronger. This film became an offering.

About Annemarie Jacir

Annemarie Jacir has written, directed and produced over sixteen films. Her films have premiered in Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Locarno, Rotterdam and Toronto. All three of her feature films were selected as Palestine's official Oscar Entry. Her short film *LIKE TWENTY IMPOSSIBLE* (2003) was the first Arab short film in history to be selected in Cannes and continued to break ground as a finalist for the Academy Awards.

In 2007, Jacir shot the first feature film by a Palestinian female director, the acclaimed *SALT OF THIS SEA*, her second work to debut in Cannes, *Salt of this Sea* went on to win the FIPRESCI Critics Award, and fourteen other international awards including Best Film in Milan.

Her second feature *WHEN I SAW YOU* won Best Asian Film at the Berlinale and garnered a nomination at the Asian Pacific Screen Awards. Working in both fiction and documentary, other films include *Until When*, *A Few Crumbs for the Birds*, and *a Post Oslo History*. Recently *Wajib* (2017) won 36 international awards including Mar Del Plata, Dubai, and London BFI Festival.



With a commitment to mentoring, training and hiring locally, Annemarie also teaches, actively promoting independent cinema in the region. Founder of Philistine Films, she collaborates regularly as an editor, screenwriter and producer with fellow filmmakers.

She has served as a jury member to numerous festivals including in Cannes, Sundance and Berlin, is a member of the Asia Pacific Screen Academy, AMPAS and BAFTA. Her fourth feature film **PALESTINE 36** is her most ambitious project to date.

In 2019, New York's prestigious BAM art center held the first retrospective of her work. Most recently the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) hosted her in a retrospective of her work, screening many works for the first time. In November 2024, she was granted a BlackStar Luminary Award.

In 2022, she directed for the groundbreaking Hulu hit series *Ramy*. She has been granted an honorary doctorate by Artois University in France for her contribution to cinema. She lives and works in Palestine.

Selected Filmography:

WAJIB 2017

Official Palestine's Official Oscar Entry,
Foreign Language Film
Best Film (Golden Muhr) - Dubai International Film Festival
Best Film (Golden Unicorn) - Amiens International Film Festival
Best Film (Golden Astor) - Mar Del Plata International Film Festival
Best Film, 2018 Arab Critics Award
Best Feature Film - Argentine Film Critics Association, Mar Del Plata

WHEN I SAW YOU (2012)

Official Palestine's Official Oscar Entry,
Foreign Language Film
Best Asian Film – Berlin Int. Film Festival
Best Arab Film – Abu Dhabi Film Festival
Best Film – Amiens Int. Film Festival
Best Picture – Phoenix Int. Film Festival
Jury Prize – Cairo Int. Film Festival

SALT OF THI SEA (2008)

Official Palestine's Official Oscar Entry,
Foreign Language Film
World Premiere, Cannes Film Festival,
Official Selection, Un Certain Regard
First Prize – Best Film, Sguardi Altrove Film Festival Italy
FIPRESCI Critics Award, Osians Arab & Asian Film Festival
Official Selection London BFI Film Festival

Producer's Note

1936 — a year I have heard about for as long as I can remember.

This film is the story of that year — the moment that altered the course of my people's history, when Palestinians united, found hope, and gave birth to a culture of resistance that still lives on today. Making a film of this size once is a feat; to prepare it twice, amid war and instability, was an ordeal. After years of preparation, we lost almost everything we had built. The war forced us to restart and rebuild from the ground up, navigating instability, delays, and the heavy emotional toll borne by everyone involved. It was a reminder of the trauma we have lived over and over, a trauma inherited by generation after generation.

The heartache and suffering that surrounded us did not silence our vision, but sharpened it. Filmmaking, we believe, is not only a response to pain but also a product of it. Through these struggles, the urgency and relevance of our story became even clearer.

This is my fourth collaboration with Annemarie Jacir, without a doubt our most difficult and most personal project. From the moment I read the script, it struck me as a film with the potential to become a classic — a cornerstone of Palestinian cinema. A film we hope will be shown to children in schools, one that speaks to every generation. A story that brings an untold chapter of history to light and challenges us to find meaning and love in everything we do — in the darkest times.

Together with a remarkable team of producers, we carried this film through its trials because we believe it stands for something greater: a film for those who love stories, who seek human connection, and for anyone who has ever claimed their freedom.

Ossama Bawardi



Main Cast - Credits

HIAM ABBASS – “Hanan”

Known for: Paradise Now, The Visitor, Blade Runner 2049, Gaza Mon Amour, Ramy (Hulu), Succession (HBO)

KAMEL EL BASHA – “Abu Rabab”

Known for: The Insult (Volpi Cup, Venice 2017), Hamza, Curfew, House of Gods, Room 207, Dawaie Safar

YASMINE AL MASSRI – “Khuloud Atef”

Known for: Caramel, Pomegranates and Myrrh, Miral, Quantico (ABC)

JALAL ALTAWIL – “Father Bolous”

Known for: Green Border (Venice 2023), Boy From Heaven (Cannes 2022), Neighbours (Locarno 2021), Foreign Language (Berlinale 2024)

ROBERT ARAMAYO – “Captain Wingate”

Known for: The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power (Amazon), The King's Man, Game of Thrones (HBO), Antebellum

SALEH BAKRI – “Khalid”

Known for: Salt of This Sea, The Time That Remains, The Blue Caftan, Salvo.
Longstanding collaborator with director Annemarie Jacir

Yafa BAKRI – “Rabab”

Screen debut

KARIM DAOUD ANAYA – “Yusuf”

Screen debut – Theater actor at Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin

WARDI EILABOUNI – “Afra”

Screen debut

WARD HELOU – “Kareem”

Screen debut – Previously cast in The Stranger's Case (aka I Was A Stranger) by Brandt Andersen

BILLY HOWLE – “Thomas Hopkins”

Known for: On Chesil Beach, The Serpent (BBC), Under the Banner of Heaven (FX), The Perfect Couple (Netflix), MotherFatherSon (BBC)



DHAFER L'ABIDINE – “Amir Atef”

Known for: Children of Men, The Eddy, Eugenie Nights, Ghodwa (director, FIPRESCI Award), To My Son

LIAM CUNNINGHAM – “Charles Tegar”

Known for: Game of Thrones (HBO), 3 Body Problem (Netflix), War Horse, Hunger, The Wind That Shakes the Barley, The Vault, The Last Voyage of the Demeter

JEREMY IRONS – “High Commissioner Wauchope”

Known for: The French Lieutenant's Woman, Reversal of Fortune (Oscar), The Lion King, Watchmen (HBO), House of Gucci, The Mission, Brideshead Revisited

Main Cast - Introducing...

Yafa Bakri – “Rabab”

Marking her screen debut, Yafa Bakri, born into a family of celebrated Palestinian actors, brings her artistic heritage to the screen in her debut film *PALESTINE 36* directed by Annemarie Jacir. A drama therapist, Bakri has long explored the transformative power of performance as both a tool for healing and a form of storytelling. She began singing at the age of five and continues to give voice to rich, emotional landscapes through her work.



Karim Daoud Anaya – “Yusuf”

Karim Daoud Anaya began his artistic journey by jumping over rooftops in the West Bank city of Qalqilya, where parkour became a way to move beyond walls — both real and imagined. What started as an act of resistance and freedom turned into a language of expression. He was featured in the documentary *Qalqilya: Where Palestinian Boys Are Learning How to Fly*, which captured the underground youth and skate scene in Qalqilya. In 2016, he moved to Berlin and joined the Maxim Gorki Theater ensemble, where he has been actively working in theater ever since. *PALESTINE 36* marks his transition to screen acting, in his debut film performance.



WARDI EILABOUNI – “Afra”

12-year-old Wardi loves being around people, making jokes and laughing. She has long dreamed of acting, a dream that finally came true with *PALESTINE 36*. Wardi's hobbies include horse riding, dancing, writing, arts and crafts, and listening to music, especially her favorite singer Olivia Rodrigo. Wardi strongly believes in personal expression and freedom and the importance of being bold: “I don't like being silenced and my voice should always be heard”. A creative young girl with a vivid imagination, she is convinced that if you believe in something, you can make it come true, no matter what.



WARD HELOU – “Kareem”

Young Ward Helou lives in Haifa. Like many Palestinians, he loves the sea. Hobbies also include Jujitsu, surfing, and spending time with his cousins in Nazareth. Ward's introduction to acting began when producer Ossama Bawardi called him regarding a role in *THE STRANGER'S CASE* aka *I WAS A STRANGER* directed by Brandt Andersen. After that, everything changed. Ward is keen to continue on his acting path. He also loves hanging out with his siblings and deep conversations.



Credits

BFI and BBC Film present
Doha Film Institute and Katara Studios present
a Philistine Films **Production**

in co-production with with Autonomous, Corniche, Media, MK Productions, Watermelon Pictures, Snowglobe, Staer Film.

In Association with Roya Media Group, The Royal Film Commission – Jordan, Rise Studios, Telfaz11, Cocoon Films, Metafora Productions, Lucky Number, MK2 Films, MAD Solutions, Koala FX, Haut et Court Distribution, TRT, Foundry, Film i Väst

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PALESTINE 36

فلسطين ٣٦

Director: Annemarie Jacir

Countries of Origin: Palestine / United Kingdom / France / Denmark / Norway / Qatar / KSA / Jordan.

Year: 2025

Languages: Arabic, English

119 minutes | Colour / DCP

Producer:

Ossama Bawardi

Coproducers:

Cat Villiers, Azzam Fakhreddin, Hani Farsi, Nils Åstrand, Olivier Barbier, Nathanaël Karmitz, Katrin Pors, Hamza Ali, Elisa Fernanda Pirir

Executive Producers:

Mohannad Malas, Mohammad Khair Al Zaibak, Annemarie Jacir, Ama Ampadu, Kristin Irving, Lizzie Francke, Ahmed Al Baker, Luca Bercovici, Hussein Fakhri, Michel Sayegh and Fares Sayegh, Isam and Samia Salfiti, Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Hanaa Issa, Suha Shoman, Sawsan Asfari, Suad Hussein Juffali, Amanda Turnbull, Ziad Srouji, Alaa Karkouti, Malik Ali and Badie Ali, Naim Jadue, Khalil Khaled Miqdadi, Abdallah Turki, Muhammed Alhamoud, Sama Haddad, Tufik Assad and Naila Assad, Roula Kamhawi and Robert Burtoft, Ali Kalthami, Frank Barat, Sima Khaled Miqdadi, Khaled Khalil Miqdadi, Khalid Haddad, Zahi Khouri, Basil Qunibi, Maher Diab, Omar Abdulhadi, Wasim Salfiti, Morten Lundin, Tim Smith, Tom Harberd, Philip Burgin, Richard Kondal, Dasha Sherman.

Screenplay: Annemarie Jacir

Cinematographer: Hélène Louvart

Sarah Blum, Tim Fleming

Editor: Tania Reddin

Production Designer: Nael Kanj

Costume Designer: Hamada Atallah

Sound: Rawad Hobeika, Bruno Tarriere, Samuel Mittelman

Original Score: Ben Frost

Principal Cast:

Hiam Abbass, Kamel Al Basha, Yasmine Al Massri, Jalal Altawil, Robert Aramayo, Saleh Bakri, Yafa Bakri, Karim Daoud Anaya, Wardi Eilabouni, Ward Helou, Billy Howle, Dhafer L'Abidine with Liam Cunningham and Jeremy Irons

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Middle East: Mad Solution
UK: Curzon
France: Haut et Court
Turkey: TRT
Switzerland: Trigon