



PEACE, PROPAGANDA & THE PROMISED LAND

U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

"Painstakingly stripping away the myths and inaccuracies regularly passed off as 'truth' by the U.S. media, this film not only reveals the motivations and methods of those responsible for skewing the picture, but also manages to present the most concise and accurate account of the history and implications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the role that the U.S. has played in the continuation of that conflict that I have seen."

DONNA BAILLIE | Women in Black & Director, *Secret Hebron: The School Run*

Americans rely on the news media for information about events occurring around the world. News, especially television news, exerts a powerful influence on our perceptions, telling us which events are important and shaping our understanding of the issues. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict currently dominates American news coverage of international issues. Given the central role played by the United States in the Middle East conflict, and thus the vital role played by American voters, it becomes important to examine the stories the news media are telling and to ask the question: *Does the news coverage reflect the reality on the ground?*

Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land provides a striking comparison of U.S. and international media coverage of the crisis in the Middle East, zeroing in on how structural distortions in U.S. coverage have reinforced false perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This pivotal documentary exposes how the foreign policy interests of American political elites—oil, and a need to have a secure military base in the region, among others—work in combination with Israeli public relations strategies to exercise a powerful influence over how news from the region is reported.

Through the voices of scholars, media critics, peace activists, religious figures, and Middle East experts, *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land* carefully analyzes and explains how—through the use of language, framing and context—the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza remains hidden in the news media, and Israeli colonization of the occupied territories appears to be a defensive move rather than an offensive one. The documentary also explores the ways that U.S. journalists, for reasons ranging from intimidation to a lack of thorough investigation, have become complicit in carrying out Israel's PR campaign. At its core, the documentary raises questions about the ethics and role of journalism, and the relationship between media and politics.

FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH:

Seth Ackerman | Mjr. Stav Adivi, IDF (reserves) | Rabbi Arik Ascherman | Hanan Ashrawi | Noam Chomsky | Robert Fisk | Neve Gordon | Toufic Haddad | Sam Hussein | Hussein Ibish | Robert Jensen | Rabbi Michael Lerner | Karen Pfeifer Alisa Solomon | Gila Svirsky

**AVAILABLE NOW ON VHS & DVD FOR \$29.95
AT WWW.MEF.TV**

REMARKS

"Extraordinarily powerful and courageous."

BO SMITH | Boston Museum of Fine Arts

"The work is brilliant...touching the heart and stimulating the mind. The script, visuals, and editing are superb—never have I been so moved by a single film."

JACK G. SHAHEEN

Author, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*

"...hands down one of the best films I've seen on American media and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

LAILA AL QATAMI

American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

"...enormously intelligent and effective...very well edited and presented."

PAUL BECKETT

Palestine-Israel Peace and Justice Alliance

"...essential viewing for all who care about human rights, for all American taxpayers, and especially for journalists and editors."

MAZIN QUMSIYEH, M.D.

Al-Awda Right of Return Coalition

"A really clear presentation of the problems of media and Middle East conflict. A superlative film."

GILA SVIRSKY

Coalition of Women for Just Peace, Israel

"Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land is the best, least biased presentation we have of all the issues involved. A must-see documentary."

CHALMERS JOHNSON | Author, *Sorrows of Empire*

"I'm just blown away [by] the sheer scope of it, the depth, the clear analysis."

AMIR TERKEL

Filmmaker, *Other Voices from Israel and Palestine*, 4blacksheep

"While I have always understood that the war here is over words and images, as much as it is over land and bones there, the film really enlightened me about the complexity and profundity of this form of colonization of the mind...[It] will clearly be pivotal in this movement and a priceless educational tool."

CECILIE SURASKY | Jewish Voice for Peace

"Superbly done!"

AHMED BOUZID | Palestine Media Watch

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MEF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

PEACE, PROPAGANDA & THE PROMISED LAND

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CREDITS

Directed by BATHSHEBA RATZKOFF & SUT JHALLY

Produced by BATHSHEBA RATZKOFF

Edited by KENYON KING & BATHSHEBA RATZKOFF

Written by BATHSHEBA RATZKOFF & SUT JHALLY

Narrator LORETTA ALPER

Production Supervisor KENYON KING

Camera KELLY GARNER

Second Camera PERRY HALLINAN • MIGUEL PICKER • DAVID RABINOVITZ • JEREMY SMITH • KENYON KING

DVD Editor KENYON KING

Audio Engineering & Mixing THOM MONAHAN & MARK ALAN MILLER (SLAUGHTERHOUSE STUDIOS)

Original Music THOM MONAHAN

Music by kind permission of PETER GABRIEL

From the album *Passion*

©1989 Real World/Virgin Records Ltd. & Geffen Records

Motion Graphics by MICHELLE ROJAS • ALISA PLACAS • JEREMY SMITH • PETER HARKAWIK

Executive Producer SUT JHALLY

UNITED STATES • 2004 • 80 mins • Color • BETA/DVD/DVCAM/VHS
1.16:1 aspect ratio • In English/Spanish/French/Arabic/Hebrew Subtitles

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BIOGRAPHIES

BATHSHEBA RATZKOFF | *Producer, Co-Director & Co-Editor*

Bathsheba Ratzkoff is a producer and editor at the Media Education Foundation (MEF) and has been with MEF since 2001. She is the producer, co-director, and co-editor of *Peace Propaganda & the Promised Land: U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Ratzkoff is currently producing a new film—*Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies A People* based on the book by Jack Shaheen. She is an associate producer on *Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire*. Ratzkoff received her BA in Anthropology and in Social Thought & Political Economy from the University of Massachusetts- Amherst in 1999.

SUT JHALLY | *Executive Producer & Co-Director*

Sut Jhally is a professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and founder and executive director of the Media Education Foundation in Northampton. He is one of the most popular teachers at the University of Massachusetts and is nationally known among college students for his videotape *Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Music Video*, which received national press after MTV threatened with a lawsuit. The national recognition and numerous requests for copies of the video led to the founding of The Media Education Foundation in 1991. Over the ensuing 13 years, Sut Jhally has been the executive producer of more than twenty-five videos produced and distributed by the Media Education Foundation.

He is the author of *The Codes of Advertising*, the forthcoming *The Spectacle of Accumulation: Essays in Cultural Politics*, and co-author of *Social Communication in Advertising and Enlightened Racism*. He is also co-editor of *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* and the forthcoming *Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire*. He has written broadly on issues of popular representation and is regarded as one of the world's leading cultural studies scholars in the area of advertising, media, and consumption.

KENYON KING | *Co-Editor & DVD Author*

Kenyon King is a video editor, DVD author, and post-production supervisor at the Media Education Foundation (MEF). King is the editor of *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land; Hijacking Catastrophe; Playing UnFair; Captive Audience; Beyond the Frame*; and *Speak Up*. His DVD authoring credits include *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land; No Logo; Wrestling with Manhood; Rich Media, Poor Democracy; Captive Audience*; and *Beyond the Frame*. King earned his BA in Philosophy from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 2001.

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U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

FEATURED INTERVIEWS

SETH ACKERMAN Media Analyst and Contributing Writer, Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)

MJR. STAV ADIVI, IDF (RESERVES) Courage to Refuse | Board Member, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Israel

RABBI ARIK ASCHERMAN Executive Director, Rabbis for Human Rights, Israel

HANAN ASHRAWI Founder & Secretary General, The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), Palestine

NOAM CHOMSKY Professor of Linguistics, MIT | Author, *Hegemony of Survival*

ROBERT FISK Journalist, *The Independent*, UK

NEVE GORDON Ta'ayush: Jewish-Arab Partnership & Professor of Political Science, Ben Gurion University, Israel

TOUFIC HADDAD Co-editor, *Between the Lines*, West Bank

SAM HUSSEINI Communications Director, Institute for Public Accuracy

HUSSEIN IBISH Communications Director, American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

ROBERT JENSEN Professor of Journalism, University of Texas–Austin

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER Founder & Executive Director, *Tikkun Magazine*

KAREN PFEIFER Professor of Economics, Smith College | Contributing Editor, Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)

ALISA SOLOMON Journalist | *The Village Voice*

GILA SVIRSKY Women in Black and Co-Founder | Women for Just Peace, Israel

QUOTES FROM THE FILM

"It's the last taboo subject in America. You can talk about lesbians, blacks, gays, anything you want, but not America's relationship, or not any serious examination of America's relationship with Israel, or what Israel is doing, be it almost always with American weapons. The relationship between American journalists, particularly television journalists, and the centers of power has become incestuous. So close—because an argument could cut you off from access to the center of power—that it's impossible any longer to convey what you know about the centers of power. All you can do is say what you think they mean and what you know they say. So what's the point of journalism?"

ROBERT FISK

"It's been the point of view of the Israeli peace movement for years that the fundamental cause of the conflict is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and the settlement policies. But that view is considered in the United States something that is extremely marginal and you rarely see that view put forward in the American media."

SETH ACKERMAN

"I'm an Israeli patriot, we are Israeli patriots. I served more than 25 years in the Israeli army as a major in the IDF. All of us were volunteering to do our army service in dangerous places and we earned the right to say that the occupation does not serve the security of Israel, and we're doing it from our stand as specialists for a military job. We are the military; we know what provides security. We paid with our time and energy, some of us paid with their blood in order to keep Israel safe. And, if from our point of view, as patriots, as Zionists, as officers in the Israeli army, we are saying that the occupation has nothing to do with security, we have the right to say it."

MAJOR STAV ADIVI (reserves)

"The context that's often missing from the current reporting is that the Palestinian uprising is a revolt against a 34-year-long occupation [interviewed in 2001], and if there's no occupation in the story, then the story doesn't really make sense, and the occupation is frequently missing."

ALISA SOLOMON

"Alon Pinkas, Consul General for Israel in New York and coordinator of Israel's PR efforts, was recently quoted as saying: 'We are currently in a conflict with the Palestinians, and engaging in a successful PR campaign is part of winning the conflict.'"

ROBERT JENSEN

"Since the September 11th attacks on the U.S., Israel's PR strategy has been to frame all Palestinian actions, violent or not, as terrorism. To the extent that they can do that, they've repackaged an illegal military occupation as part of America's war on terrorism."

ROBERT JENSEN

"The main major television news networks and newspapers in the United States have long ago got their fear to be supreme over their duties as journalists. They are not monitoring the centers of power when it comes to the relationship between America and the Middle East, Israel and America, and America and the Arabs, and the Palestinians. They will not ask the right questions, they will not report it using the correct words, they will not confront the reality, and they've given up. And I think once you acquire fear, it's very difficult to get rid of it."

ROBERT FISK

"You have activist organizations from the right, the pro-Israeli right, that very effectively, they say monitor, I would say harass, journalists and their editors and try to make sure that the coverage is objective, by which they mean pro-Israel."

ALISA SOLOMON

"One part of that intimidation is to say that any Jew who raises criticisms about a current Israeli policy is a self-hating Jew. But on the contrary, my criticisms and Tikkun Magazine's criticisms of Israeli policy flow directly from our commitment to Judaism and our love for the Jewish tradition and our insistence that it be taken seriously, not just as a bunch of empty words, but as a set of principles that we really take seriously and believe in."

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

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QUOTES FROM THE FILM

"To find critical views on American diplomacy you really have to go beyond the mainstream media. You can find very critical views in the British press. You can even find critical views in the Israeli press. But whereas there will be some criticism at the margins of details of how America conducts its diplomacy in the Middle East, you don't find a real alternative viewpoint in the mainstream media."

SETH ACKERMAN

"When you have a population that is being occupied, when their fundamental human rights are being systematically denied, when they're not allowed to move from city to city or from place to place without huge amounts of harassment, when they're being subject to torture, when people are essentially in desperate conditions, it's not a surprise that they're going to be very, very, very angry... But, there is absolutely no understanding on the part of the American media and hence on the part of the American population that's educated by that media about what creates this circumstance."

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

"We have what is now a quite an oppressive regime in the occupied territories, where Israelis are lording it over Palestinians, usurping their territory, demolishing their homes, exerting a very severe form of military rule in order to remain there. And on the other hand, Palestinians are lashing back, trying to throw off the yoke of oppression of the Israelis."

GILA SVIRSKY

"Yes, Israelis are being shot at and killed and so yes, Israel does have real defense needs. At the same time, defense in Israel in particular has become this mantra, and once people hear the word defense they stop thinking. And so all too often anything can be called defense and then justified."

RABBI ARIK ASCHERMAN

"When Israelis in the occupied territories now claim that they have to defend themselves, they are defending themselves in the sense that any military occupier has to defend itself against the population they are crushing... You can't defend yourself when you're militarily occupying someone else's land. That's not defense. Call it what you like, it's not defense."

NOAM CHOMSKY

"There have been periods where almost no Israelis have been killed and large numbers of Palestinians have been killed. Those periods have been referred to routinely by the American press as periods of 'relative calm'. What that means is that it's relatively calm if only Arabs are dying."

HUSSEIN IBISH

"The pipeline of violence is very much stamped 'Made in U.S.A.' The United States has been brokering an alleged peace process for how long, and what does the situation look like? Clearly, in the name of peace other things are going on here."

SAM HUSSEINI

"The U.S. blocked diplomatic moves from Arab states, from Europe, from the PLO, anything, simply because it refused to accept this kind of diplomatic settlement. Well, there's a name for that in the United States. It's called the 'peace process'. What it actually is is the process by which the United States prevented peace."

NOAM CHOMSKY

"In the face of a powerful Israeli army, some Palestinians think the only answer, and I condemn this, but some Palestinians think that the only response to a powerful army is a guerilla tactic, going into Israel and setting bombs off in cities, and there is increasing support for this among Palestinians because of the growing frustration of not getting anywhere."

GILA SVIRSKY

"The United States has presented itself as a neutral broker between these two parties, but if you look at its actions rather than its words you'll see that it has favored Israel almost 100% of the time. The U.S. has vetoed resolutions many times that would have put a stop to Israel's actions in the territory."

KAREN PFEIFER

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QUOTES FROM THE FILM

"You have, for example, an Israeli soldier who is on Palestinian territory shooting Palestinians. If he gets injured or killed, immediately you get the fullness of his humanity. You go to his funeral, you see his grieving mother or wife or child. You learn a lot: his name, his hopes, his dreams, where he came from, and so on. And yet, you have hundreds and thousands of Palestinians killed and you never get to know their name, you never get to see a funeral; you're not exposed to the grief of the family... They become part of the abstraction, you know, 400 Palestinians killed. That's it. It's a number."

HANAN ASHRAWI

"We in the women's peace camp in Israel organized a mass vigil of Women in Black and a mass march through the streets of Jerusalem. Two thousand women strong, both Israelis and Palestinians. Can you picture that dramatic moment? Two thousand women dressed in black marching down the streets of Jerusalem to the walls of the old city where we hung banners from the walls of the old city saying 'Peace' in three languages: Hebrew, Arabic, and English. And guess what, it didn't get into the media."

GILA SVIRSKY

"This Intifada had very little to do with Camp David. Because on the ground, parallel to what the leaders were talking about—who had become so many talking heads as far as the average Palestinian was concerned—you had ongoing land expropriation, tree uprootings, road building, settlements were being expanded at a quicker pace under Barak than they had been under Netanyahu, unfair water allocation by which many Palestinians in the summer and the fall have approximately two hours running water a week when next door you can have a settlement with green lawns and a swimming pool. So what are people supposed to think?"

RABBI ARIK ASCHERMAN

"If people know what's going on in the occupied territories, they're not going to want to support it any more than they support other atrocities that we're responsible for. So we keep it quiet, we describe it as a defense against terrorism, not as a brutal military occupation, which is evoking resistance. If U.S. policy shifts, the coverage will shift."

NOAM CHOMSKY

"Their struggle in many ways is a just struggle. What are they struggling for? They're struggling for a state. We in Israel have a state. The American people have a state. Why shouldn't the Palestinian people have a state?"

NEVE GORDON

"The only way that Israel will have peace and security is by making peace with our neighbors. The only way that we will have a safe Israel is by making a just peace with the Palestinians."

GILA SVIRSKY

PEACE, PROPAGANDA & THE PROMISED LAND

U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

FACT SHEET

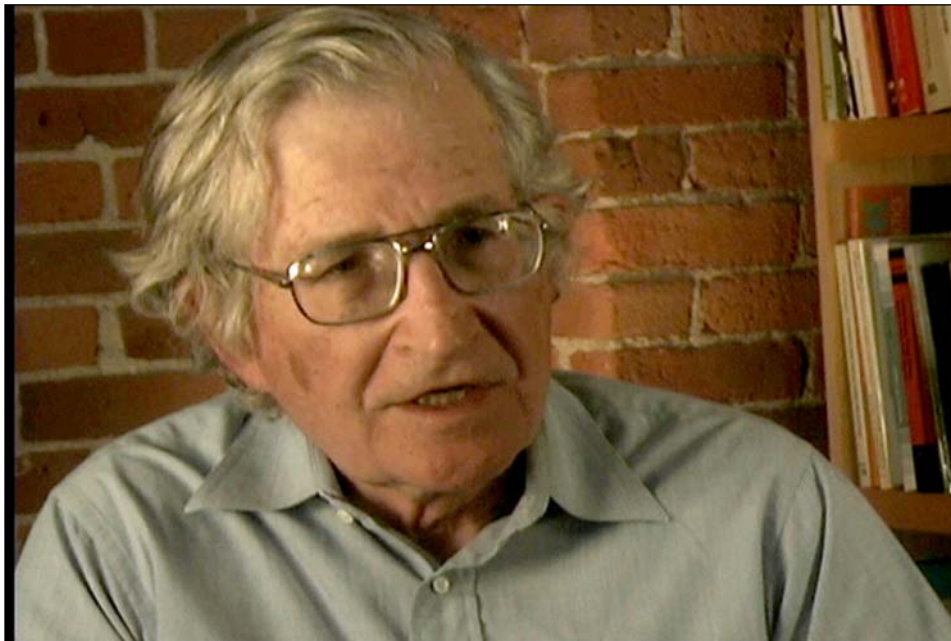
- » In 1983, Israel launched the Hasbara Committee, an organization dedicated to ensuring positive press about Israel in the U.S. media.
(Hasbara Committee website, www.infoisrael.net)
- » The Israeli settlements, together with the surrounding land that has been expropriated, control over 40% of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
(“Land Grab: Israel’s Settlement Policy in the West Bank,” B’Tselem report, May 2002)
- » From fiscal years 1949 through 1998, American aid to Israel totaled \$84.8 billion.
(“The Cost of Israel to U.S. Taxpayers: True Lies About U.S. Aid to Israel,” *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 2004)
- » Most U.S. loans to Israel are forgiven, and many were made with the explicit understanding that they would be forgiven before Israel was required to repay them.
(“The Cost of Israel to U.S. Taxpayers: True Lies About U.S. Aid to Israel,” *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 2004)
- » Twenty percent of Americans blame Israelis for current violence in Middle East; thirty-six blame Palestinians.
(CNN/USA TODAY/Gallup Poll, October 2003)
- » Eighteen percent of Americans believe that the U.S. should take Israel’s side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; four percent believe that the U.S. should take Palestine’s side.
(Gallup Poll, June 2003)
- » Fifty-eight percent of Americans sympathize with Israelis; thirteen percent sympathize with Palestinians.
(Gallup Poll, February 2003)
- » Twelve percent of Americans blame Israelis for the conflict in the Middle East; forty-three percent blame Palestinians.
(Harris Poll, August 2002)
- » In August 2003, when two Palestinians each killed one Israeli, CBS, NBC and the *LA Times* each reported that the “summer truce” had been “shattered” after “a month of relative quiet”. During this “relative quiet,” 17 Palestinians were killed and 59 injured by Israeli occupation, according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society.
(FAIR Study: *Journalists find ‘calm’ when only Palestinians die*, August 2003)

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Hanan Ashrawi interview still from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.



Noam Chomsky interview still from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.

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U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict



Robert Fisk interview still from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.



Gila Svirsky interview still from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.

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U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict



Aftermath of a suicide bombing in Israel, from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.



Palestinians in front of an Israeli tank, from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.

PEACE, PROPAGANDA & THE PROMISED LAND

U.S. Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict



American news report, from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.



Israeli peace activist, from *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land*.