

## FACT SHEET

### Film: "When I Saw You" Written and Directed by Annemarie Jacir (2012)

Told from an 11-year-old child's point of view, Annemarie Jacir's film is an emotive form of anti-Israel propaganda. It "comes a little close to cliché sometimes," according to a *The Guardian*<sup>1</sup> reviewer, while the *New York Times* observed that it is a "child's view of war" with "a strong core of political anger."<sup>2</sup>

Viewers watch the protagonist, Tarek, and his mother, displaced by the 1967 War, living in an impoverished Jordanian refugee camp and how the restless child is welcomed in a fedayeen camp where he finally feels at home and pledges to become a fighter. Israelis are only mentioned once, however, the message is clear: Israel is the reason for Tarek's suffering, Israelis are only aggressive and destructive, and terrorism is noble.

**The film is deceptive about its political message which advances the demand for the Palestinian refugee "right of return."**

- The displacement of war is tragic for innocent civilians, especially young people like Tarek, but Jacir turns the film into an emotional plea for the Palestinian refugee right of return to Israel. She omits the fact that since 1949, this demand has been a euphemism for the destruction of Israel by flooding it with Palestinians.<sup>3</sup> As President Obama said, fulfilling this demand, "would extinguish Israel as a Jewish state, and that's not an option."<sup>4</sup>

**The film omits or distorts historical context to portray the Palestinians as helpless victims with no agency.**

- The causes of the 1967 War are not mentioned, leaving the impression that Israel targeted the West Bank (where Tarek had lived) for no reason. For Israel, this was a defensive war for survival. In fact, Jordan, which controlled the West Bank between 1948 and 1967, attacked Israel despite Israeli promises not to engage in military operations against Jordan if Jordan did not attack. Israel was forced to defend itself.<sup>5</sup>
- The film omits Israel's June 19, 1967, offer to trade land for peace with its Arab neighbors. The Arab League rejected Israel's peace initiatives in the Khartoum Resolution (Sept. 1, 1967) which declared no recognition, no peace, and no negotiations with Israel.<sup>6</sup> Arab leaders' refusal to make peace perpetuated the conflict.
- The film ignores the Jewish refugees of the Arab-Israeli conflict. After 1948 and especially after 1967, close to 850,000 Jews fled or were expelled from Arab countries where they had lived, in some cases for millennia. They have not been compensated for the belongings and property they were forced to leave behind.

**The film falsely implies that Israel alone is to blame for the Palestinian refugee crisis.**

- Refugees are a tragic by product of war. Benny Morris, the most prominent historian of the Palestinian refugee crisis, has stated that most of the refugees were not in fact "forced from their homes" by Israel. The main cause of the refugee crisis was the decision by Arab forces to attack Israel, instead of negotiating peace.

**The film romanticizes Palestinian terrorists.**

- A *New York Times* reviewer noted, "...we see playful weekend soldiers whose kindness to the child conceals the violence of their intentions."<sup>7</sup> Another reviewer observed that the Fedayeen camp seemed more like "a

college campus than a training ground for armed rebellion. They listen to Western music, quote Marx, and paint posters of revolution,”<sup>8</sup> and still another reviewer objected to the “holiday camp atmosphere.”<sup>9</sup>

- The film neglects to mention the murder and destruction these Fedayeen were inflicting on Israeli civilians. Terrorist leader Yasser Arafat and his men organized and conducted 61 attacks on Israeli civilians—farms, homes, movie theaters—between September and December of 1967.<sup>10</sup> They also conducted terror attacks against West Bank residents who cooperated with Israelis and chose to work in Israel.<sup>11</sup>
- Indoctrinating children with the desire to be fighters—not peace partners—is celebrated. Tarek’s childhood girlfriend says she wants to marry a “fighter;” the Fedayeen include Tarek in their training activities and are proud of him when he announces he will become a fighter. No adult or outside voice suggests another way.

### **The film justifies Palestinian terrorism.**

- The viewer can feel Tarek’s yearning and rage, and desire to “go home,” which is transposed to the Fedayeen, whose emotions and goals seem similar. Nowhere is the real political purpose—the destruction of Israel—mentioned.
- Violence is presented as the only alternative. No other options, such as making peace with Israel, are even entertained in the world the film presents.

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Bradshaw, “When I Saw You Review: Poignant Palestinian Refugee Drama,” *The Guardian*, June 5, 2014 at <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jun/05/when-i-saw-you-review>

<sup>2</sup> Jeannette Catsoulis, “Confused Boy Wants to Play, Even When Others Want to Fight:” ‘When I Saw You’ Delivers a Child’s View of War,” *New York Times*, Jan. 14, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/15/movies/when-i-saw-you-delivers-a-childs-view-of-war.html? r=0>

<sup>3</sup> Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, Israel Universities Press, 1974, p. 28, at <http://books.google.com/books?id=ocybbUgguOEC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<sup>4</sup> Barack Obama, “Obama: Opposes ‘Right of Return Inside Israel,” *YouTube*, May 2, 2008, at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/husslet.html> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xatt3DmTXHo>

<sup>5</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, “The Six-Day War: Message from Prime Minister Eshkol to King Hussein (June 5, 1967) at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/husslet.html> and Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, 2006, p. 643.

<sup>6</sup> “Kartoum Resolutions,” archived at Yale Law School Avalon Project, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/khartoum.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/khartoum.asp)

<sup>7</sup> Jeannette Catsoulis, “Confused Boy Wants to Play, Even When Others Want to Fight:” ‘When I Saw You’ Delivers a Child’s View of War,” *New York Times*, Jan. 14, 2014 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/15/movies/when-i-saw-you-delivers-a-childs-view-of-war.html? r=0>

<sup>8</sup> Alan Jones, “When I Saw You Review,” *Slant*, Jan. 17, 2014 at <http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/when-i-saw-you>

<sup>9</sup> D.W. Mault, “Film Review: When I Saw You,” *Cine Vue*, <http://www.cine-vue.com/2014/06/film-review-when-i-saw-you.html>

<sup>10</sup> Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, 2003, p. 39

<sup>11</sup> Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, 2006, p. 683.