

ENCOUNTER POINT

A TRUE STORY ABOUT THE EVERYDAY LEADERS WHO REFUSE TO SIT BACK AS THE
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT ESCALATES

DIRECTED BY RONIT AVNI & JULIA BACHA
PRODUCED BY JOLINE MAKHLOUF, NAHANNI ROUS AND RONIT AVNI

WWW.ENCOUNTERPOINT.COM

**** WINNER AUDIENCE AWARD BEST DOCUMENTARY
SAN FRANCISCO INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2006****

****WINNER AUDIENCE AWARD BEST DOCUMENTARY
RENCONTRES FILM FESTIVAL 2006****

****WINNER SPIRIT OF FREEDOM AWARD
BAHAMAS INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2006****

****WINNER BEST FIRST DOCUMENTARY AWARD DOCUPOLIS
INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL OF BARCELONA 2007****

****WINNER GRAND JURY PRIZE BEST DOCUMENTARY
SAO PAULO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL 2007****

****WINNER BEST MUSICAL SCORE, BENDFILM FESTIVAL 2006****

****OPENING NIGHT, VANCOUVER INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2006 ****

****OFFICIAL SELECTION TRIBECA INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2006
NAMED AMONG TOP 4 BEST FILMS BY FESTIVAL DIRECTOR PETER SCARLETT****

****OFFICIAL SELECTION DUBAI INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2006****

****OFFICIAL SELECTION HOT DOCS FILM FESTIVAL 2006
RANKED TOP 5 AUDIENCE PICKS ****

****OFFICIAL SELECTION JERUSALEM INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2006****

****OFFICIAL SELECTION RIO DE JANEIRO INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2006****

****OFFICIAL SELECTION AL JAZEERA FILM FESTIVAL 2007****

****OFFICIAL SELECTION BERGEN INT. FILM FESTIVAL 2007****

PRESS REVIEWS

"Concise, intelligent docu[mentary]... Dynamically edited... deftly avoids schmaltz in its delineation of grief and its celebration of cross-cultural activism."- **Ronnie Scheib, Variety**

"A riveting documentary, which blazes with a kind of spiritual grace while remaining firmly grounded in a tragic reality..." - **Melissa Levine, Village Voice**

"Something else entirely.... Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha never flinch from the brutal tragedies these men and women have endured, thereby capturing the heroism of their nonviolent choice." - **Hank Shteamer, TimeOut NY**

"A moving documentary..."- **Shazna Nessa, Associated Press**

"Assured, thoughtful and clear-eyed... This film may prompt others to take up the cause." – **Anita Gates, New York Times**

“Vital and refreshing... By breaking down the conflict to its most personal impacts, ‘Encounter Point’ remains accessible, and valuable, even to those with no immediate stake in the situation... Oddly funny and deeply troubling.”

- **Mark Olsen, Los Angeles Times**

"Encounter Point is a very touching and convincing film with powerful visuals. It shows how human beings are trying to build bridges of understanding despite their personal pain and suffering. This eventually would create a culture of non-violence and of accepting the other. I hope that there are more people like that who would adopt such an attitude to reach a just solution for the Palestinian Israeli conflict." -**Khairy Beshara, Film Director**

“In this fascinating documentary, directors Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha ask what kind of person counters malicious violence with activist conciliation, but offer neither pat answers nor false redemption. – **Ella Taylor, LA Weekly**

"Its a five star-shining, pro-peace-punching, hate-pacifying, trans-border bounding, ciné-humanizing, actively e-volving, power-fully-fulfilling, e-motion-al picture. □ Congratz to you and your just visionaries" - *Peter Wintonick, Producer, Critic, POV magazine*

"Inspiring."- *Gregg Rickman, San Francisco Weekly*

“★★★★★” –*Betsy Pickle, Knoxville News Sentinel*

"The heartwarming story of four Israelis and four Palestinians who overcome their prejudices, see through their anger, and work together to find a peaceful resolution to the discord between their two nations... A nice message to hear, made even nicer by the fact that it's true." - *Joshua David Stein, HuffingtonPost.com*

"In Encounter Point, the meetings of Jews and Arabs who barely spoke to each other before are as poignant as their testimony of the losses that brought them to that point." - *David D'Arcy, GreenCine Daily*

"An interesting documentary... [it] promotes a message of hope." - *Dan Dunn, AM New York*

"A portrait so unexpected and wrenching that it cuts right through the viewer's armor of certainty and prejudice."- *Michael Fox, J (The Jewish News Weekly)*

"One of the few guardedly optimistic films about the Middle East that I have seen in recent years." - *George Robinson, Jewish Week*

“At first blush, this year's model is Encounter Point... To their infinite credit, Avni and co-director Julia Bacha don't pander to moviegoers in order to win fans for their wounded and often conflicted subject.” – *Michael Fox, Moment Magazine*

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TESTIMONIALS

"There is a voice in the Middle East that can transform the weight of both sides' bloody history effectively into a demand for peace. *Encounter Point* has found it." □- **Michael Wallach, Seeds of Peace Board Member**

“Encounter point is a must see documentary that goes beyond today's headlines revealing what viewers seldom see -- the humanity of Israelis and Palestinians. The closing scenes are poetic. A plea for the voices of peace to be heard” – **Jack Shaheen, writer “Reel Bad Arabs”**

“*Encounter Point* is one of the most important films on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to date. Specifically developed to educate those in both Israel, Palestine, and abroad about this conflict, this documentary sheds critical insight on many of the opinions, hopes, and dreams of these peoples, individuals struggling to change the status quo of war.” - **Aaron Hahn Tapper, Co-Executive Director Abraham's Vision**

"Encounter Point is a very touching and convincing film with powerful visuals. It shows how human beings are trying to build bridges of understanding despite their personal pain and suffering. This eventually would create a culture of non-violence and of accepting the other. I hope that there are more people like that who would adopt such an attitude to reach a just solution for the Palestinian Israeli conflict." -**Khairy Beshara, Egyptian Film Director**

As a pretentious Israeli who claims to have seen it all and is supposedly moved by nothing, I can speak with authority. Encounter Point is probably the most moving film about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, not to mention the first thing that gave me any hope in a very long time. Whether you are completely immersed in the conflict or know nothing about it, or if you are anywhere in between you have to see this film. – **Student at Yale University**

"This film is different. I didn't think such people existed." □- **College student from Jenin**

"*Encounter Point* was a glimmer of hope amidst the general gloom that hovers over Israel's prospects for real peace. It raises tough and provocative questions about what 'reconciliation' with Palestinians might eventually look like and feel like. No matter what your politics, this powerful work will make you think about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in profound and unsettling ways." □- **Rabbi David W. Nelson, Ph.D., Associate Director, Association of Reform Zionists of America**

"A superb job in capturing different elements in both societies. There were moments in the film when viewpoints were almost painful to listen to. But those voices are part of the reality - on both sides - and they are what make the film honest. The film is not only thought-provoking and a great conversation starter - but it is incredibly touching and moved me to tears several times." □- **Yasmin Hamidi, Network of Arab-American Professionals NY**

SYNOPSIS

“Sometimes I'm very angry with myself that I didn't protect my child. So what do you do with this pain? Do you take it and look for revenge and keep the whole cycle of violence going, or do you choose another path to prevent further death and further pain to other parents.” --Robi Damelin, Israeli

“Sometimes I'm faced with questions like: ‘How can you still do this after all you've been through? You could have great status in your society. You have the right to hate.’ But I tell them I don't have to love Israelis to make peace with them. And I'm not asked to forgive the soldier who killed my brother. I'll never forgive him.” --Ali Abu Awwad, Palestinian

Caught in the crossfire of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are civilians who seek to build a secure, peaceful future. Their stories seldom make the headlines, drowned out by explosive coverage of suicide bombers and an occupation maintained by one of the world's most powerful armies. This critically acclaimed documentary follows the lives of everyday leaders struggling for peace in the midst of an escalating conflict.

Reverberations from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are felt worldwide. It is perhaps the most divisive, polarizing and documented political issue of our time. Encounter Point moves beyond sensational and canned images to tell the story of an Israeli settler, a convicted Palestinian fighter, a bereaved Israeli mother and a wounded Palestinian ex-prisoner who sacrifice their safety, public standing, communities and homes in order to press for a grassroots movement for nonviolence and peace. Their journeys lead them to the unlikeliest places to stem hatred among their peoples and confront fear within themselves. Encounter Point explores what drives these and thousands of other like-minded civilians to overcome anger and grief to work for peace. Without dogma or righteousness, it implicitly asks why, with the world's cameras focused on this conflict, we have never heard about these vital efforts?

The film's protagonists, true civic leaders, have endured suicide bombings and checkpoints and yet have the courage to meet with militants, the wounded and apathetic masses on both sides. Audiences are left with a sense that the gulf between Israelis and Palestinians is at once bridgeable and tremendously wide.

Encounter Point's Palestinian, Israeli, North and South American production team of young women forged unprecedented relations of trust with the subjects and spent more than 16 months documenting their lives. Directed by Ronit Avni, Co-Directed by Julia Bacha (writer/editor of Control Room, the Sundance and Berlin 2004 Official Selection), and produced by Nahanni Rous, Ronit Avni and Joline Makhoul, the film subtly tackles larger issues, including the role of media coverage in shaping the conflict; and the effects of trauma, segregation and loss on individuals and communities in the region.

WHO'S WHO

Ali Abu Awwad

Ali went to Saudi Arabia in 2000-2001 for medical treatment after an Israeli settler shot him in the leg. While there, he learned that his brother Yusef had been killed by an Israeli soldier. Ali had spent years in Israeli prisons for actions like demonstrating against the occupation, throwing stones, and being a member of a political party. When Yusef was killed, Ali joined the Bereaved Families Forum to work with Palestinians and Israelis who together advocate nonviolence and reconciliation. Ali braves hatred of the “other” on both sides, and the stigma against those who work with the “enemy” as he spreads his message of nonviolent resistance throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, speaking with Palestinian militants and those threatened by Israeli settlers. Ali says that he will never forgive the soldier who killed his brother, but that he doesn't have to love Israelis to make peace with them. Since the release of Encounter Point, Ali has co-founded an organization called Al Tariq (“The Way”), which promotes civic leadership, democracy and peace building in Palestinian society.

Robi Damelin

In 2002 a Palestinian sniper killed a group of Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint. Robi's son David was one of them. Robi is haunted by the loss of her son, and the knowledge that he was posted to defend an Israeli settlement in occupied Palestinian territory to which he was politically opposed. After David was killed, Robi joined the Parents Circle-Bereaved Families Forum. She speaks in support of Israeli/Palestinian reconciliation throughout Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and internationally. Robi says that all of her work is aimed at furthering understanding between the Israeli and Palestinian people. Robi sees echoes of her childhood in South Africa in the Israeli occupation.

Shlomo Zagman

For most of his life Shlomo lived in Allon Shevut, an Israeli settlement near Bethlehem. As a youth, he actively supported a political party that advocated deporting Palestinians to neighboring Arab countries, until a religious Jewish mentor convinced him that Israel's continued occupation and settlement of Palestinian territory endangers its future as a Jewish state. His public expression of these views angered many people in his hometown. He and his wife left the settlement and moved to a city inside Israel, and Shlomo became a founding member of the Movement for Realistic Religious Zionism, a group working to encourage religious Israelis to support withdrawal from settlements. Shlomo embarks on a journey through the West Bank and Israel, questioning his own and his society's assumptions about the conflict, and moving beyond traditional Right and Left-wing positions.

Sami Al Jundi

Sami grew up in a Palestinian refugee family in the Old City of Jerusalem, but spent his twenties in Israeli prison. He served a ten-year sentence for involvement with friends who were building a bomb to detonate against Israelis. While behind bars, Sami immersed himself in books and debate. Inspired by the writings of Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr he came to embrace the idea that nonviolence was the best approach to resolving the conflict and securing his people's rights. Since his release in 1991, Sami has worked in nonviolence and peace building projects. Sami became the supervisor of the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem, where he worked to train the next generation of Palestinian and Israeli youth in

dialogue and leadership for peace. Sami remains active in co-existence and peace work.

Tzvika Shahak

In 1996, Tzvika's daughter Bat-Chen was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber outside a Tel Aviv mall. She was fifteen years old when Tzvika identified her body at the morgue. During the period of mourning, Tzvika and his wife Ayelet discovered that their daughter's diaries were full of poems about peace. They published Bat-Chen's poetry in Hebrew and Arabic, and became founding members of the Bereaved Families Forum, working together with hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian families to end violence and occupation. Tzvika is a decorated war veteran and believes a strong military is important for Israel, but that genuine security will come from making peace with the Palestinians. Tzvika and his wife are dedicated to their work with Israeli and Palestinian families.

George Sa'adeh

In March 2003 in Bethlehem, George, his wife Najwa and their two daughters were driving home from the supermarket. Israeli soldiers opened fire on their car, killing twelve-year-old Christine. George spent three days unconscious in intensive care with nine bullet wounds, while his wife buried Christine without him. Less than a year later, George joined hundreds of other Palestinian and Israeli families in the Bereaved Families Forum working together for reconciliation, and against violence and occupation. Elected the deputy mayor of Bethlehem, George says that as a Christian, he forgives the soldiers who killed his daughter, but that peace can only come when Israel ends the occupation of Palestinian territory.

Rutie Atsmon

When the phone rings in Rutie's unobtrusive ground floor office in the heart of Tel Aviv, it is most likely news about military curfews in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or army-issued travel permits for her Palestinian partners—information that determines whether their workshops can go on. Rutie is the director of Windows, a joint organization that publishes a children's magazine in Arabic and Hebrew, and brings together Israeli and Palestinian youth. Rutie works tirelessly, refusing to be deterred by military checkpoints or fears in both societies, or the precarious balancing act of working together with Palestinians confined to the other side of the "Separation Barrier".

Aziz Tanji

Aziz lives in the Palestinian city of Tulkarem, where he grew up in the local refugee camp. A social worker, Aziz is dedicated to improving the lives of Palestinian children. Believing that Palestinian and Israeli children benefit from meeting together and learning about each other's lives, Aziz became the co-founder of the Windows youth organization's center in Tulkarem. Though the Israeli army hasn't granted him a permit to enter Israel for years, Aziz communicates with the Israeli staff daily and hosts them when they come to Tulkarem. He and his Israeli colleagues struggle to overcome the endless obstacles posed by military occupation and conflict in order to work together.

