

Film Review: 'Occupation of the American Mind' Unravels Israel's Propaganda War in US

By [Roqayah Chamseddine](#)

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"The Occupation Of The American Mind," directed by Loretta Alper and Jeremy Earp, is a stunning documentary examining Israel's public relations war in the United States. It premiered last month.

The [film](#), which begins with a heart-stopping shot of an apartment complex in Gaza as it is bombed during the 2014 war, pulls no punches. The sounds and images are riveting. You're able to see the fire and thick smoke pouring into the air, but there are no voices that break the quiet aftermath. Only the sharp clinking of debris.

Roger Waters, Pink Floyd co-founder and BDS advocate, narrates the film, sending viewers back into that bloody summer in 2014—one which now seems to much of the world as though it was a lifetime ago.

Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu on CNN. Still from "The Occupation Of The American Mind"
(<http://occupationmovie.com/>)

While rage was building against Israel during that summertime bloodbath, in the United States the story was far different. The American people, Waters says, held firm in their support for the bombing of Gaza. The much beloved talking point that "Israel has a right to defend itself," one that became a kind of religious mantra during that war and those before it, is explored from the very start of the film.

Still from “The Occupation Of The American Mind” (<http://occupationmovie.com/>)

With help from Peter Hart, of Fair Media Watch, Yousef Munayyer, executive director of The U.S. Campaign to End The Israeli Occupation, and others, the film deconstructs the establishment media’s propaganda efforts. Yousef Munayyer argues that when we examine the formula that mainstream media outlets follow we find Israeli spokespeople are over-represented when compared to Palestinian spokespeople by a margin of 3 to 1. So when Israel is discussed, we are inundated with commentary from officials, who propagate in support of Israel’s use of violence.

American elected officials also join the chorus in order to reinforce Israel’s “right to defend itself,” and this translates into news anchors echoing the same talking points, thereby directly influencing the public’s perception of the conflict.

The Occupation Of The American Mind” also takes viewers back in time to the moment in history referred to in Arabic as al Nakba, or The Catastrophe, when countless Palestinians were forced out of their homes in order to make way for unfettered colonization in a newly formed Israel.

Waters tells the story of how more than 700,000 of Palestine’s native population were expelled, while a chilling video of thousands of Palestinians, forced to march away from their homeland, plays on screen. Viewers see the toll that this uprooting took on the faces of Palestinian men, women, and children, in black and white photographs.

Years later, the state of Israel not only worked tirelessly to dehumanize and massacre the Palestinians inside Palestine, but elsewhere. In Lebanon, the Sabra and Shatila massacre, which was televised for the entire world to see, became what Phyllis Bennis, author and fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, describes as “a watershed moment for Israel.” The massacre of Palestinians and Lebanese civilians in 1982 by the Phalangists, a fascist Lebanese militia, was overseen by Israel. It marked the first time the colonial settler state went on the offensive, defending itself from bad publicity.

The 1982 war in Lebanon was a game changer for Israel. Out of the blood-soaked ashes of south Lebanon and West Beirut, Israel’s public relations strategy was born.

As the film explores U.S. public opinion, it unravels the dominant narrative concerning the occupation: that Israel, the brave David, is facing the Palestinian Goliath.

Renowned scholar Noam Chomsky gives the final blow before the film ends:

"The U.S. government will support [the occupation] as long as the U.S. population tolerates it.

This is a masterful and riveting film that not only dispels the myth of Israel's victimhood, but brings the past and present together in order to unearth realities of the occupation, which rightfully humanize the Palestinians. It is moving in a way that goes beyond images and a retelling of a painful history. It challenges not only the establishment media, but the American public as well.

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