

How to Trash a Movie in Support of a Lie

The cover-up of Israel's genocide of the Palestinians during the Nakba continues

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Global Research, December 13, 2022

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

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Israel's new government is planning to give de facto [operational control](#) of the national police and heavily armed border police to Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of a party of right wing, racist extremists. It can perhaps be regarded as the prelude to the last phase in the uprooting and displacement of the Palestinian people. Those who resist will be killed and not a single Israeli soldier or policeman will be punished for carrying out what the Benjamin Netanyahu government will frame as a war against terrorists blessed by Yahweh in support of his "Chosen" people.

The Zionist view of what should be done to the indigenous inhabitants of a place once called Palestine has been unflinching since the founding of the state of Israel. The Zionist [historic boast](#) that a Jewish homeland would be built on "A land without a people for a people without a land" ignored the fact that Palestine already had plenty of inhabitants and a well-established economy where Jews were a distinct minority, [less than 20%](#) of the population in the 1930s.

The solution to correct the numbers was to compel the natives to leave by one means or another. Israel's founding father David Ben Gurion early on endorsed a policy of [removal by force if necessary](#) the Christians and Muslims. The fighting that followed in 1948 after the United Nations' partition of the country into two separate states left the mostly unarmed Palestinians helpless before the well-armed Jewish militias, which quickly expanded their zone of control well into the area that was granted on paper to the Palestinians. It is estimated that 15,000 Palestinians were killed outright by the Zionist forces while 800,000 more were driven from their homes, to which nearly all were denied any right to return. Four hundred Palestinian occupied villages were "ethnically cleansed" and in some cases physically destroyed.

The *de facto* seizure of the remainder of historic Palestine outside the borders of the Jewish state after the June 1967 Six Day war gave Israel direct control of all key strategic areas as

well as land in Syria and Lebanon. Since that time, successive Israeli governments have pursued an ethnic cleansing policy both in Israel itself and on the West Bank consisting of gradually forcing the remaining Palestinians to leave to be replaced by all-Jewish towns and settlements. The Palestinians know that the final push is indeed coming and have begun to resist, though having few weapons they are helpless against the heavily armed Israel Defense Force (IDF), which [has killed 195 Palestinians](#), mostly teenagers, in the past eleven months.

A recent killing [captured on surveillance video](#) shows an Israeli border policeman shooting a young man dead after an encounter on the main street of a West Bank town. Far-right Otzma Yehudit Party leader and incoming National Security Minister Ben-Gvir, [praised the policeman](#) who did the shooting as a “hero,” citing his “Precise action, you really fulfilled the honor of all of us and did what was assigned to you.”

The Palestinians refer to their dispossession and killing at the hands of the Jewish soldiers in 1948 as the Nakba, meaning “catastrophe,” which has sometimes been popularized as the Arab version of the so-called holocaust. I have recently watched a controversial film called *Farha*, made in Jordan by a woman filmmaker of Syrian descent, which views the Nakba through the eyes of a fourteen-year-old village girl. She, the eponymous Farha that gives the film its title, was preparing to go off to advance her education, presumably in Jerusalem, when Israeli soldiers attacked her village. The Israelis used loudspeakers to announce that all residents must leave immediately. Anyone seeking to remain would be killed. In a panic, the girl’s father, the village chief, locked her into a storage shed for safety as he tried to figure out what to do, but he then disappears from the tale and it might be presumed that both he and the rest of the family were killed.

Farha has only a crack in the door to witness what is going on outside. In a particularly dreadful sequence, a Palestinian man and his family who are trying to escape but are apparently confused regarding what way to go are detained by an Israeli officer and his men. After some perfunctory questioning, the father, mother and two children are lined up against a wall and shot dead. A newborn baby was left lying on the ground, alive, crying for its mother. The officer tells one of his men to kill it, but adds “Don’t waste a bullet on it.” The soldier prepares to stomp on the baby’s head to carry out the order, but cannot bring himself to do it and walks away. The baby continues to wail until later that day it stops, presumably dead from exposure or other factors.

Eventually Farha escapes from her prison and the movie concludes with her walking away in tears to an uncertain future. The film is very powerful, with excellent acting, cinematography and direction and it is based on a true story as handed down by Director Darin J. Sallam’s mother’s best friend, but I ended up wishing that it were stronger in its depiction of the savagery exercised by the Israelis, perhaps recreating an actual major massacre of Palestinian civilians, like occurred at Deir Yassin, where 107 Arabs, including many women and children, were shot dead by Israeli militiamen from the Irgun and Lehi groups. [Other massacres took place](#) in hundreds of villages across Galilee as well as in cities like Haifa or Akka, all far worse than what is revealed by the film. For those who are interested, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé in [his book](#) *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* describes, in detail, the brutality of what Israeli forces unleashed on the largely unarmed Palestinian people during the Nakba.

But even though the film deliberately avoided clichéd scenes of mass violence, it has proven

very powerful with supporters and critics lined up along the completely predictable political lines. The Israelis have in particular come down hard on the film and they and their many friends in the United States, have reacted in their usual tribal fashion, attacking Netflix, which is streaming *Farha* on its network including in the United States and Europe. The Israel firsters are advocating striking back against Netflix for its temerity by canceling the service and attacking the decision to air the film at all. Ironically though not surprisingly, Netflix has hitherto been a leader in obtaining and streaming Israeli films and even television series.

In Israel, the government has declared war on the film, also a characteristic of that nation's circle-the-wagons paranoid response to anything that might even suggest that Jews are just as capable of evil as anyone else. Last month ultra-nationalist Israeli Finance Minister Avigdor Lieberman moved to block scheduled screenings of the film in Jaffa, [saying](#) that "Israel is a place to present Israeli and international works, but is certainly not the place to slander IDF soldiers and the security forces who are acting day and night to defend and protect all the citizens and residents living here."

Lieberman, a Russian Jew known for his ethnocentric and essentially racist views, apparently does not believe that soldiers and security forces should actually protect Palestinians and afford them at least some measure of free speech, which is only allowed to Jews. Israel's ironically titled Culture Minister the oddly named Chili Tropper also [attacked](#) the film for its so-called "false plots against IDF soldiers" denouncing how their actions were presented as similar to "behavior of the Nazis in the Holocaust."

Former IDF soldier and current right wing apologist, Yoseph Haddad also [tweeted](#), "I saw the movie 'Farha' and I can tell you that it is much worse than you think. The IDF soldiers are presented there as inhuman with unimaginable evil, all they care about is murdering and slaughtering without mercy (which is the exact opposite of the truth). This is a blood libel that will certainly increase antisemitism and incitement against Israel. If you haven't canceled your Netflix subscription yet – do it now."

I saw the movie "Farha" and I can tell you that it is much worse than you think. The IDF soldiers are presented there as inhuman with unimaginable evil, all they care about is murdering and slaughtering without mercy (which is the exact opposite of the truth). >>> pic.twitter.com/QmBPVUWR9z

— יוסף חדאד - Yoseph Haddad (@YosephHaddad) [December 2, 2022](#)

In an Instagram post, Israeli model Nataly Dadon also demanded that Israelis and their supporters internationally should drop their Netflix subscriptions in an Instagram post, [claiming](#) that *Farha*'s "sole purpose is apparently to increase anti-Semitism against the Jewish people." *Mondoweiss* [also reports](#) how "author and photographer Laura Ben-David tweeted a photo of her cancellation message with the streaming app and wrote, 'Buh-bye Netflix! Supporting the false and anti-Israel film *Farha* is unacceptable.'"

So Israel, which is passionate about its rejection of the non-violent pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) economic pressure movement, is united in its desire to punish Netflix's bottom line. And the old reliable anti-Semitism tag is being liberally attached to how the argument is being framed. Former Al Jazeera reporter Ahmed Shihab-Eldin suggested to the [Middle East Eye](#) that "The pacing of [all the negative posts] reveals it

was coordinated. With each passing hour, dozens and dozens of vapid and vile reviews would appear, making wild accusations trashing the film. It was clear people had not seen the film, and only wanted to damage its reputation.”

Finally, it would not be about Israel and Jews if there were not space in *The New York Times* to twist and spin the story. A [review of the film](#) by one Beatrice Loayza, a Peruvian-American film critic based in Brooklyn, describes the movie oddly as a “brutal coming-of-age-story.” At one point, Farha discovers an old handgun wrapped up within a sack of lentils. She eventually uses it to shoot the lock and escape the storage room. But this is how the *Times* reviewer describes the sequence: “She finds a gun buried inside a sack of grains — was the threat present all along? One day, a scene of great barbarity plays out before her tiny window.” Aha! So those crafty Arabs actually were potentially using the old handgun among the lentils trick to threaten the friendly Israel soldiers who just happened to drop by to shoot to death a Palestinian family, which is dismissed as a “scene of great barbarity” without any suggestion of what that might have been. In truth, the garbage being peddled by the *Times* as a review of a story of an atrocity committed by Jews is actually achieved without having to include any context or feature any Jews at all. “Remarkable” is all I have to say in conclusion.

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This article was originally published on [The Unz Review](#).

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