

Palestine, War and the Lethal Role of Journalists

Two Films by John Pilger

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John Pilger first made the film ‘[Palestine Is Still The Issue](#)’ in 1977. It told how almost a million Palestinians had been forced off their land in 1948, and again in 1967. Twenty five years later, in 2002, John Pilger returned to the West Bank of Jordan and Gaza, to make another film, giving it the same title. The film asks why the Palestinians, whose right of return was affirmed by the United Nations more than half a century ago, are still caught in a terrible limbo - refugees in their own land, controlled by Israel in the longest military occupation in modern times.

“If we are to speak of the great injustice here, nothing has changed,” says Pilger at the start of the film, “What has changed is that the Palestinians have fought back. Stateless and humiliated for so long, they have risen up against Israel’s huge military regime, although they themselves have no army, no tanks, no American planes and gunships or missiles. Some have committed desperate acts of terror, like suicide bombing. But, for Palestinians, the overriding, routine terror, day after day, has been the ruthless control of almost every aspect of their lives, as if they live in an open prison. This film is about the Palestinians and a group of courageous Israelis united in the oldest human struggle, to be free.”

Pilger distills the history of Palestine during the twentieth century into a comprehensible struggle for land - the theft of 78 per cent of that belonging to Palestinians when the state of Israel was founded in 1948. This, and the campaign to eradicate the indigenous population — exemplified by the current Israeli assault on Gaza -are still the issue.

‘[The War You Don’t See](#)’ (2011) is a timely investigation into the media’s role in war, tracing the history of ‘embedded’ and independent reporting from the carnage of World War One to the destruction of Hiroshima, and from the invasion of Vietnam to the reporting of Palestine.

“We journalists,” says Pilger in the film, “are only real journalists if we defy those who seek our collusion in selling their latest bloody adventure in someone else’s country. For propaganda relies on us in the media to aim its deceptions not at a far away country but at you at home... In this age of endless imperial war, the lives of countless men, women and children depend on the truth or their blood is on us.”

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