

NO OTHER LAND

Written, Directed, Produced, and Edited by
Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham & Rachel Szor
Produced by Fabien Greenberg & Bård Kjøge Rønning



2024 / Norway & Palestine / Arabic & Hebrew & English / 96min

Sales agent US

Contact

Mobile | Email

Cinetic Media

Jason Ishikawa, Isadora Johnson

jason@cineticmedia.com | isadora@cineticmedia.com

Sales agent Europe

Contact

Mobile | Email

Autlook

Salma Abdalla

+43 6769003771 | salma@autlookfilms.com

Intl. Publicity

Contact Person

Mobile | Email

Claudiatomassini & associates

Claudia Tomassini

+49 173 205 5794 | claudia@claudiatomassini.com

US Publicity

Contact Person

Mobile | Email

Cinetic Marketing

Layla Hancock-Piper

+1 917 963 2448 | layla@cineticmedia.com

LOGLINE

For half a decade, Basel Adra, a Palestinian activist, films his community of Masafer Yatta being destroyed by Israel's occupation, as he builds an unlikely alliance with an Israeli journalist who wants to join his fight.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Basel Adra, a young Palestinian activist from Masafer Yatta, has been fighting his community's mass expulsion by the Israeli occupation since childhood. Basel documents the gradual erasure of Masafer Yatta, as soldiers destroy the homes of families - the largest single act of forced transfer ever carried out in the occupied West Bank. He crosses paths with Yuval, an Israeli journalist who joins his struggle, and for over half a decade they fight against the expulsion while growing closer. Their complex bond is haunted by the extreme inequality between them: Basel, living under a brutal military occupation, and Yuval, unrestricted and free. This film, by a Palestinian-Israeli collective of four young activists, was co-created during the darkest, most terrifying times in the region, as an act of creative resistance to Apartheid and a search for a path towards equality and justice.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

We're making this film together, a Palestinian-Israeli group of activists and filmmakers, because we want to stop the ongoing expulsion of the community of Masafer Yatta and resist the reality of Apartheid we were born into - from opposite, unequal sides. Reality around us is becoming scarier, more violent, more oppressive, every day - and we are very weak in front of it. We can only shout out something radically different, this film - which at its core, is a proposal for an alternate way Israelis and Palestinians can live in this land - not as oppressor and oppressed, but in full equality.

DIRECTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Basel Adra is a Palestinian lawyer, journalist and filmmaker from Masafer Yatta. He has been an activist and documentarian since 15, fighting against Israel's mass expulsion of his community.

Rachel Szor is an Israeli cinematographer, editor, and director from Jerusalem.

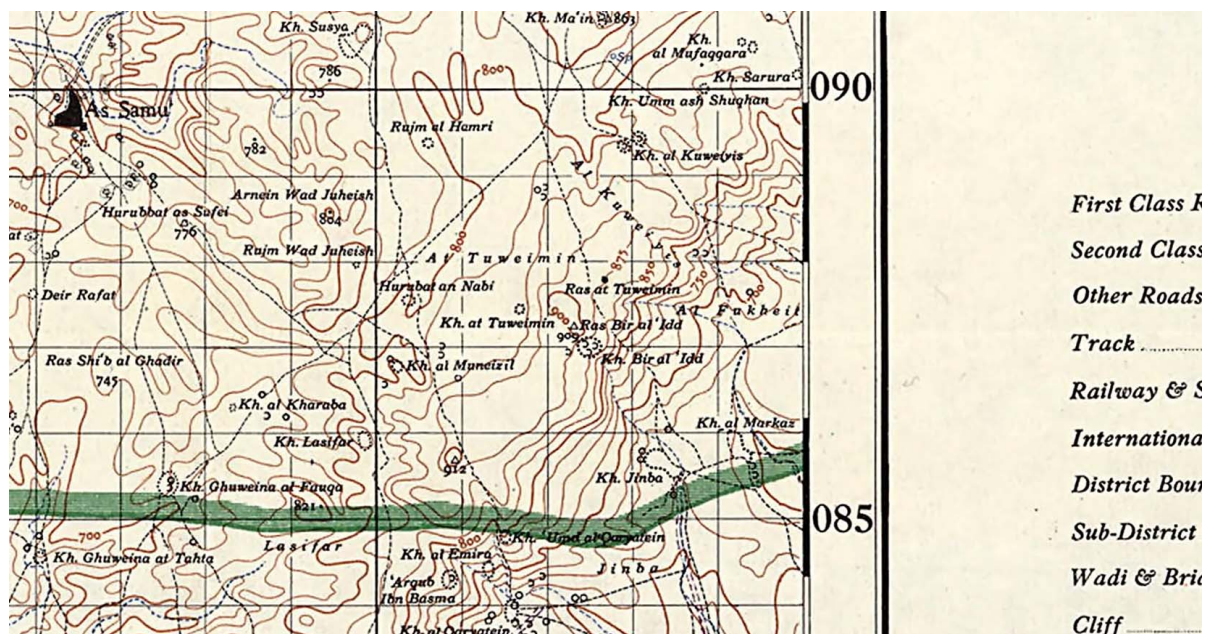
Hamdan Ballal is a Palestinian photographer, filmmaker and farmer from Susya, and has worked as a researcher for several anti-occupation human rights groups.

Yuval Abraham is an Israeli filmmaker and investigative journalist from Jerusalem.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Masafer Yatta is a beautiful mountainous region dotted with twenty ancient Palestinian villages, on the Southern edge of the West Bank. The villagers lead a farming lifestyle, many live in old stone structures and caves.

The small hamlets appear on maps from before the establishment of Israel, for example, in this British map of Palestine from **1945** (like Al Mufaqqara, Al Markaz, Al Fakheit, Jinba), yet the Israeli occupation doesn't recognize their existence. The villages were erased from Israeli maps.



In **1980**, the Israeli military declared the land of Masafer Yatta a “closed military training” zone - meaning it was officially declared off limits for Palestinians. As later revealed in two secret Israeli state documents ([link](#), and [link](#)), Ariel Sharon, former Israeli Prime Minister, then Agricultural Minister, explained at the time that this was done to displace the villages and allocate their land to Israeli settlements,

Basel Adra, the film's director, was born in one of these villages in **1996**. Three years later, in **1999**, the military ordered all Palestinians living in Masafer Yatta to leave, so soldiers could use their land as a military training ground.

That's how a struggle began to save the villages from expulsion, led by Basel's parents and neighbours. The Palestinian residents of the area, who have no voting rights and are living under occupation, also approached a group of Israeli [lawyers](#), who petitioned Israel's high court against the forced expulsion in **2000**.

In 2022, after a two decade long legal battle, the high court gave the military a green light to carry out the expulsion - which is the largest single act of forced transfer carried out in the West Bank since it was occupied in **1967**.

The decision to destroy the Palestinian villages and evict around 1,800 people so the military can use their land for tank training exercises triggered worldwide condemnation and is [considered](#) by many, including Amnesty International and UN Human rights experts, to be a war crime.

One way the military carries out this expulsion is by a policy of *systematic home demolitions*.

The Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank [rejects more](#) than 98% of Palestinian requests for building permits, while allowing settlers in the area to build freely. This colonial policy uses military law to force entire families in Masafer Yatta to leave their historical lands - since they are unable to build anything legally. All of their homes, schools, water wells, and roads are considered “illegal” by the army and marked for destruction. Their mere existence, on their private land, is illegal.

Our film is the first documentary to shed light on the systematic policy of forced expulsion through home demolitions.

When homes are destroyed, families in Masafer Yatta have nowhere to go, they can either rebuild, become homeless, or rent houses in crowded Palestinian cities where there is no space for grazing sheep and cultivating land. The loss of land is thus a loss of community and a way of life - they stop working as farmers.

Since October 7th, the situation in the West Bank has dramatically deteriorated: extreme settlers used violence to evict [16 entire Palestinian villages](#) all over the West Bank.

An Interview with the director collective

Basel, can you tell us more about Masafer Yatta? What are the characteristics of the place, and what does it feel like to live there?

Masafer Yatta is a society of farmers. People here are very connected to their land and live a farmer's way of life. I've lived here all my life and it's the only place I really feel at home in. For me, village life is better than the city. My biggest wish, honestly, is just to be able to live a normal life here with my family. Without the military occupation and violent settlements that are stealing our land. I feel a lot of love towards my neighbours and the special atmosphere we have here, and I am afraid it will all be lost soon. That we will cease to be and Masafer Yatta will be gone.

When and how did you become aware of Masafer Yatta? What brought you to the story of NO OTHER LAND? How and when did all of you meet?

We all met five years ago, when Yuval and Rachel came to Masafer Yatta for the first time as journalists. They asked Basel, who was working as a journalist as well, for help on a

piece they wrote about the Israeli attempts to evict the residents. Basel and Hamdan, both born in Masafer Yatta, have spent most of their adult lives documenting the violent policies aimed at evicting them from their villages. Hamdan's village was destroyed seven times, and he still lives in it, with the possibility that his home will be destroyed every day. After becoming friends through fighting against this injustice on the ground, the four of us decided that alongside our journalism and activism, we needed to make a film together about this - that will enable us to say things and reach an emotional truth we are unable to quite reach as journalists. And so, our journey began.

The official Israeli rationale for the forced evacuation of Masafer Yatta is the conversion of the area into a military training ground for the IDF, the so-called "Firing Zone 918". Could you give us some context of why this is significant?

The declaration of "Military Firing Zones" has been a [longstanding tool](#) of the military occupation to take over Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. Shortly after the West Bank was occupied, roughly 20% of the land was declared as a "Firing Zone", which means it was closed off to Palestinians. Former prime minister Ariel Sharon, who designed these firing zones, [admitted](#) in a secret uncovered state document that "all firing zones were created to reserve the land for Israeli settlers".

Basel, how did you become active in the fight for Masafer Yatta's existence at such an early age? Weren't you scared to become involved in standing up to the Israeli army as a mere boy?

Reality caused me to be an activist, I don't feel it was ever really my choice. I grew up in a community that decided to confront the occupation, and specifically, in my own home, both my mother and father are activists that I learnt much of what I know from. I was brought to many protests by them. This is the way they decided to raise me.

It was very scary for me as a child. At seven years old I remember I used to sleep with my shoes on to prepare for our home being raided by soldiers after protests. But fear wasn't the only thing present - I understood we have no other way. That if we don't fight, we will be evicted from our land and lose our community. The inevitability of our struggle helped with the fear, somehow.

Basel and Hamdan, ven before October 7, 2023 was so far the most violent year for West Bank settler attacks on Palestinians, with [10 Palestinians killed and homes and cars torched in more than 1.200 violent incidents](#). To judge from the past few weeks, 2024 is likely to be even more violent. How would you describe the interactions between Palestinians, the IDF and Israeli settlers?

2024 has already begun and it's incredibly difficult. Groups of armed settler militias started creating roadblocks near our homes and entering villages to expel people. This is how my cousin was shot (Basel). Some of these settlers put on army uniforms while doing this, while others are indeed soldiers - and it's impossible to know. The military itself [recruited](#)

thousands of settlers for “special settler battalions” after October 7th, and soldiers are regularly documented supporting or ignoring settler attacks as they take place in the West Bank. There is full cooperation between the two parties. While the war in Gaza continues, the mass home demolitions continue as well in the West Bank and both settlers and soldiers are using the “opportunity” to forcefully transfer us.

As we live under military occupation with no state or voting rights, when we are attacked by Israelis, we have to go to the Israeli police stations. These stations are inside settlements and managed by settlers.

The police refuse to prosecute and investigate our complaints. 97% of the complaints on settler violence are closed with no indictment, and 99.13% of [complaints](#) against soldiers who attacked Palestinians are closed with no indictments. It's systematic discrimination on all levels - which is why many people feel it's pointless to go to the settler police. For us, other than the camera, there isn't much else we are able to do.

Rachel and Yuval, how would you say has the climate for Human Rights organisations involved in the Palestinian struggle changed within Israel? How do you experience these changes personally?

As Israeli journalists who are critical of the occupation and primarily write in Hebrew, working with Israeli society became more difficult following the Hamas attack and since the attack in Gaza began. Most criticism of the government labels you as a ‘traitor’ since October 7th, and we have faced numerous threats and physical violence for our work. The atmosphere in Israeli society now is very much recruited towards the war and calls for revenge became much more mainstream than before. In this atmosphere, it is very challenging to get people to listen, and there is almost no space for a discussion about political context and a political solution. We hope this will change in the future, and part of our film is an attempt to change that.

How much material did you shoot in the many years you followed events in Masafer Yatta, and how difficult was it to condense this into a relatively short documentary? With four editors, what was your working process like? Did you take all creative decisions collectively?

For me (Basel), I've been filming for more than a decade, hundreds of hours of life around me. My parents and previous generation filmed too, which is why we had a large archive of historical footage of Masafer Yatta that captured many memories from my childhood, to work with. As a collective we filmed over 2,000 hours of footage together, spending weeks on the ground chasing bulldozers, and also filming ourselves as we were doing it. We made a decision from the beginning that we would make all choices for the film only when there is a full consensus between all of us. This means that if one person isn't happy with a decision - we will not go forward with it. This was challenging at times, especially when we had different ideas, but it made us grow closer because it allowed us to have long conversations and learn about the political sensitivities of each other.

The editing was a challenge as well. Since Basel and Hamdan are locked in the West Bank and cannot leave it to meet Yuval and Rachel in Jerusalem, we had to edit a film in unequal circumstances. The military placed both Basel and Hamdan on blacklists, like most activists in Masafer Yatta who are taking a part in the nonviolent struggle against the occupation. For that reason, we edited the film together in Masafer Yatta, in Basel's home. We also received editing consultancy from the incredible film editor Anne Fabini, from the inspiring Close Up Initiative workshop led by Sigal Yehuda, and from the Sundance Documentary Lab - without them we would not have been able to complete the film.

What are your hopes for the film's reception and impact?

We hope our film will trigger pressure on the Israeli occupation to abort the expulsion of Masafer Yatta, cancel the politically motivated "training zone", and allow the villages to exist freely. We also hope it will serve as an urgent call, made by our collective of Palestinians and Israelis, of the need to end the occupation and find a political solution - a new framework within which both Israelis and Palestinians are equally sovereign and free. This is the only way forward.

CREDITS

Director Writer	Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham & Rachel Szor
Producers	Fabien Greenberg & Bård Kjøge Rønning Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham & Rachel Szor
Editors	Basel Adra, Hamdan Billal, Yuval Abraham & Rachel Szor
Editor Consultant	Anne Fabini
Photography	Rachel Szor
Sound Designer	Bård Harazi Farbu
Music	Julius Pollux Rothlaender
Production Company	Antipode Films Yabayay
Production Countries	Palestine Norway
Financed by	Fritt Ord Sundance Institute IMS IDFA Bertha Fund
Image Format	DCP PRORES
Sound Format	5.1 surround Stereo
Languages	Arabic & Hebrew & English
Subtitles	English
Contact Person	Fabien Greenberg, Antipode Films
Address	Torggata 33, 0183 Oslo, Norway
Mobile & Email	+4798679746 mail@antipodefilms.com