

**Just Vision Presents
In Association with Fork Films**

NAILA AND THE UPRISING

**Directed by Julia Bacha
Executive Produced by Suhad Babaa
Produced by Rula Salameh and Rebekah Wingert-Jabi**

**Official Selection, DOC NYC Festival 2017
Official Selection, International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA) 2017
Official Selection, Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) 2017**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Short Synopsis

When a nation-wide uprising breaks out in 1987, a woman in Gaza must make a choice between love, family and freedom. Undaunted, she embraces all three, joining a clandestine network of women in a movement that forces the world to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination for the first time.

Naila and the Uprising chronicles the remarkable journey of Naila Ayesh whose story weaves through the most vibrant, nonviolent mobilization in Palestinian history – the First Intifada in the late 1980s.

Medium Synopsis

When a nation-wide uprising breaks out in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, a young woman in Gaza is forced to make a choice between love, family and freedom. Undaunted, she embraces all three, joining a clandestine network of women in a movement that forces the world to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination for the first time. *Naila and the Uprising* chronicles the remarkable journey of Naila Ayesh whose story weaves through the most vibrant, nonviolent mobilization in Palestinian history – the First Intifada in the late 1980s.

Using evocative animation, intimate interviews and exclusive archival footage, this documentary brings out of anonymity the courageous women activists who have remained on the margins of history... until now. While most images of the First Intifada paint an incomplete picture of stone-throwing young men front and center, this film tells the story that the mainstream media missed – an unbending, nonviolent women’s movement at the head of Palestine’s struggle for freedom.

Long Synopsis

When a nation-wide uprising breaks out in 1987, a woman in Gaza must make a choice between love, family and freedom. Undaunted, she embraces all three, joining a clandestine network of women in a movement that forces the world to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination for the first time.

Shortly after the beginning of the First Intifada – the most vibrant, nonviolent mobilization in Palestinian history – thousands of Palestinian men have been rounded up and imprisoned by the Israeli army for organizing grassroots opposition to the occupation. When Israel’s arrest campaign left the movement gutted and leaderless, hundreds of Palestinian women filled the void. They were working class and elite, religious and secular. They were teachers, farmers, lawyers and housewives, rising up from villages, cities and refugee camps.

Under then Defense Minister Rabin’s strong hand, the women did what the men could not. They drafted leaflets and secretly distributed them in bags of spinach and loaves of pita

sold at the market. They determined strike days and marched in demonstrations. Innovative and dynamic, they allowed life to flourish in the midst of the uprising, forming committees to teach children, grow food and treat the sick and injured. But perhaps their greatest victory was to free Palestinian women from the shackles of oppressive social mores. Equal parts women's liberation activists and nationalist revolutionaries, they shattered the stereotype that women had to stand on the sidelines as their husbands, fathers and sons changed history. The First Intifada women's movement didn't just rescue the uprising – it lifted it, and Palestinian society alongside it, to new heights.

The film revolves around the tragic and remarkable story of Naila Ayesh, General Director of the Women's Affairs Center in Gaza in the 1980s and an active student organizer. At the Women's Affairs Center, she works to build economic independence for women. She is a tireless advocate for self-sufficiency and has spent years building the infrastructure for a boycott of Israeli products. Naila is pregnant when first arrested in 1986. None of her friends and family knows where she is being detained, and the Israeli army and prison system deny that she is in their custody. After days of torture in the prison, she starts bleeding – a sign of a possible miscarriage – but guards ignore her repeated requests to see a doctor.

Naila's husband and long-time partner in activism, Jamal, reaches out to Israeli journalist and activist Roni Ben Efrat, imploring her to look into Naila's case. She works with Israeli journalist Oren Cohen, who learns that others had refused to cover the story for lack of evidence. He publishes just the same. Oren's story hits the headlines, forcing the authorities to reveal that Naila Ayesh is being held by the Shin Bet, Israel's secret service. By the time the bureaucratic machine releases her – without charge – she has lost her child.

One year later, her husband Jamal is deported, just days before she gives birth to their son, Majd. As the Intifada breaks out, she pours her heart into it, carrying her son around as she organizes throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Again, she is detained, held in Israeli prison for her role in the uprising. Majd, now six-months old, is left alone in their home. With Jamal deported, Naila must make a choice – leave her infant son alone at home or accept an Israeli offer to bring him into prison with her. She reluctantly agrees to the latter. For six months, Majd accompanies the imprisoned women of the First Intifada, a source of comfort and hope for the women leaders of the uprising. Naila's story is a microcosm of the courage, humor, resilience and tragic absurdity of a women's movement that has remained on the sidelines of history... until now.

We follow Naila and the women's struggle through the end of the uprising and into negotiations with Israel, where Palestinians are recognized for the first time on the world stage. The women's movement bore immediate fruit, with three grassroots activists taking their place on the Palestinian delegation, more female representation than any other party. But will the women be able to carry forward the vision of gender equality that their activism set in motion?

Through evocative under-camera animation, exclusive interviews and never-before-seen archival footage, the film brings out of anonymity the women behind the headlines. Most images of the First Intifada paint a misleading picture of violent young men front and center. *Naila and the Uprising* smashes that fallacy and shows what truly took place – an unbending nonviolent women’s movement at the head of Palestine’s struggle for freedom.

Director's Statement

For over a decade, whenever I've asked Palestinian grassroots leaders about the models of inspiration that they draw on, they've consistently pointed me towards the First Intifada. I knew after years of filmmaking in the region that the historical memory of the First Intifada was flawed, clouded by a mainstream media narrative that simplified the uprising as stone-throwing Palestinian youth facing off against Israeli tanks. But I didn't understand the extent of the simplification until the Just Vision team began digging deeper. I was captivated by what we learned: The First Intifada was not only a vibrant, strategic and sustained nonviolent civil resistance movement; for months, it was led by a network of Palestinian women who were fighting the dual struggle for national liberation and gender equality.

Between calls from the grassroots and our own research, we knew we had to bring this story to light by creating a documentary that could provide insight and wisdom from the veteran women activists of the First Intifada for today's rising leaders. We knew that it was our responsibility to provide a more holistic account of that time, illuminating how Palestinians have historically engaged in nonviolent activism, underscoring the power of civil society in creating change and elevating the role of women in civil resistance.

The project held an even greater urgency for me in the wake of the most recent US elections, as I witnessed not only a scaling back of civil and political liberties in the country I've come to call home, but also a vibrant women's movement standing up and fighting back. From the First Intifada to the present moment, it became clear: women's leadership in civil society organizing is regularly sidelined or ignored. It's ironic, because studies demonstrate several ways in which movements with women in leadership positions are much more likely to employ strategies of nonviolence – and as a result, much more likely to achieve their goals. This research resonated strongly with what Just Vision had already observed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including in the successful struggle against the separation barrier waged by the village Budrus, in which the women and girls in the village played a central role.

Our research on the First Intifada drove the point home: Budrus was far from the only example. Women have consistently been a part of influential social movements coming out of the Middle East, but time and again, our cameras focus on armed men, leaving us with a narrative that not only erases women from the struggles, but often misrepresents the struggles themselves. Women's involvement in the First Intifada, we came to realize, was a key component of the successes achieved during the uprising. Had women not been largely excluded from the Oslo process and beyond, Palestinians and Israelis would be living in a very different reality today.

When the team at Just Vision first embarked on *Naila and the Uprising* nearly four years ago, we knew that surfacing this history was important. But we didn't fully anticipate exactly how timely the film would be. The women in *Naila and the Uprising* are not only

models for the rising generation of Palestinians and Israelis struggling for justice and equality. They also illuminate lessons and legacies for communities around the globe who are demanding more of their political leaders as they organize for the rights and well-being of all.

The women we were privileged to connect with in making this film demonstrated incredible courage – both in their ongoing resistance on so many levels – and by stepping forward to tell their stories, despite the incredible challenges that they face. I know that their courage will inspire and inform audiences worldwide as they have inspired and educated me.

-Julia Bacha

About Just Vision: short version

Just Vision researches, documents and disseminates the stories of Palestinians and Israelis working to end the occupation and build a future of freedom, dignity and equality for everyone in the region.

About Just Vision

Naila and the Uprising is created by the non-profit organization, Just Vision. Comprised of an award-winning team of Palestinian, Israeli, North and South American journalists, human rights advocates and filmmakers, Just Vision documents and disseminates the stories of Palestinians and Israelis working to end the occupation and build a future of freedom, dignity and equality for everyone in the region. They tell their under-documented stories through their award-winning films, their Hebrew-language news site, *Local Call*, and creative educational tools that undermine stereotypes, inspire commitment and galvanize action.

Just Vision has produced several award-winning documentaries (*My Neighbourhood*, *Budrus*, *Encounter Point*) featuring Palestinian and Israeli grassroots leaders that have reached millions of viewers and garnered sustained press coverage from the world's leading journalists. Their documentaries place in top film festivals internationally from Berlinale to IDFA to Tribeca, receiving high-level media attention and winning numerous prestigious prizes, including over two-dozen festival honors, the 2012 PUMA Creative Impact Award and a Peabody Award in 2013.

Frequently Asked Questions

(Q) How did you identify the protagonists?

In response to calls from Palestinian and Israeli activists on the ground, we began researching the stories behind the headlines of the First Intifada. Because of the nature of a grassroots uprising, much of what we found had been hidden and was coming to light for the first time. Each interview led us to other courageous women – union organizers, farmers who developed “victory gardens” to break reliance on Israeli agriculture, nurses and doctors who organized mobile clinics to reach communities isolated by curfews, strategists who issued leaflets specifying strike days and targeted boycotts of Israeli goods and many more. Our research also led us to Israeli journalists who defended the Palestinian women’s leadership and broke their stories in the Israeli press.

We came to learn in interviews that many of the women leaders had never told their stories, and for good reason. Some wanted to shield their children from experiences that were too painful to revisit. Others feared repercussions in an environment of ongoing political repression. We built deep relationships over those four years. Together, we agreed that it was time to share their stories and their legacies with the rising generation of activists and organizers. Naila’s story frames the film because it captures the courage, resilience and tragedy of the thousands of women who sacrificed so much to bring freedom and equality to their communities, and who can hopefully serve as a model for women today.

(Q) What were some of the challenges of production?

(A): Because much of the hidden story of the First Intifada hadn’t been told, we had to dig deep to find footage. By and large, the mainstream media at the time missed the story of daily civil resistance efforts and the underground women’s leadership. Much existing footage came from reporters traveling with the Israeli army, so those images captured the military lens of tanks, stone-throwing youth and burning tires. We needed more, and were fortunate to use parts of “Amal, Inam, Naila,” a Finnish documentary on Naila’s life by Iikka Vehkalahti, and gained access to home videos and other archival images of the underground schools, mobile clinics, victory gardens and so on.

We ultimately decided to bring in the animation to fill some of these gaps, especially of personal stories. One reason we used this specific style of animation – called Under-Camera animation, in which everything is created by hand – is that we wanted to create a subtle visual experience that brings viewers closer to the story by inviting them to use their own imagination to fill in the blanks. The simplicity of the animation makes it possible for each audience member to put themselves into the narrative, which will hopefully allow for a variety of experiences and interpretations of the film.

Finally, the women we featured are still living under occupation, some of them under siege in Gaza. This meant that production was hampered by checkpoints, border crossings, visas and electricity outages. Even today, many of the Palestinian women will be unable to travel internationally for screenings or to speak at events. It's a feature of production in Palestine, one that offers a glimpse into the daily challenges of life under occupation.

(Q) What are the distribution plans for *Naila and the Uprising*?

Just Vision has built an extensive network over the past 14 years through our strategic public engagement campaigns, especially for our award-winning documentaries, *Budrus*, *My Neighbourhood* and *Encounter Point*. In addition to screening at festivals across the world, our prior films were shown in theatres in the US, UK, Australia, Germany and beyond and were broadcast in over 40 countries around the world.

We're also excited to embark on a partnership with Fork Films and THIRTEEN/WNET to include *Naila and the Uprising* in the four-part *Women, War & Peace II* series. The series is slated to have its exclusive US broadcast premiere on PBS in 2018, as well as broad international distribution. This is the second installment of the *Women War & Peace* series, which highlights how women in contemporary conflict zones risk their lives and lift their communities in pursuit of freedom and justice. The first installment of the series in 2011 – which included groundbreaking films like *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* – exceeded the expectations of PBS and the series producers.

We will follow festival, theatrical and broadcast releases with targeted outreach across Palestine, Israel and the US. Our previous public engagement campaigns have worked at the grassroots with faith communities, universities, youth groups and more while engaging decision makers and policymakers, including those of the European Parliament, US Congress, White House, United Nations, US State Department and beyond, as well as influential international platforms including the World Economic Forum, TED and Skoll World Forum.

For sales rights, please be in touch with Emma Alpert, Just Vision's Public Engagement Manager: emma@justvision.org

The Production Team

Julia Bacha (Director) is a Peabody award-winning filmmaker, media strategist and the Creative Director at Just Vision. Credits include *Control Room* (2004, Writer/ Editor), *Encounter Point* (2006, Writer/Co-Director), *Budrus* (2009, Director/ Producer), *My Neighbourhood* (2012, Director/Producer) and *The Wanted 18* (2014, Impact Producer). Her work has been screened at the Sundance, Berlin and Tribeca Film Festivals, broadcast on the BBC, HBO and Al Jazeera, and shared with Palestinian refugee camps and the US Congress. In addition to 20 international film festival awards, Julia is recipient of the 2017 Columbia University Medal of Excellence, 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship, King Hussein Leadership Prize, Search for Common Ground Award, Ridenhour Film Prize, and PUMA Creative Impact Award. She is a Term Member at the Council on Foreign Relations, a Young Global Leader at the World Economic Forum, an Advisory Board Member to the Tribeca Film Institute and a TED speaker.

Rula Salameh (Producer) is a veteran journalist and Just Vision's Educational and Outreach Manager in Palestine. She produced Just Vision's films, *Budrus* and *My Neighbourhood*, and has led the team's public engagement campaigns in Palestinian society for over nine years. Active during the First Intifada as a teenager, Rula played a key role in building relationships of trust with the women protagonists of our film. In addition to her work with Just Vision, Rula is the host of one of the most popular TV shows in Palestine, "Philanthropy in Palestine." She was one of the founders of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation in 1993 and is a member of the International Federation of Journalists.

Rebekah Wingert-Jabi (Editor and Producer) has over 14 years of producing, directing and editing experience in film and television. She was the director and editor of *My Neighbourhood* and worked on films that aired on Al Arabiya, the Discovery Channel and PBS. Rebekah lived in the West Bank for 8 years where she worked with local filmmakers to produce and edit several films, including *Swish, Swish*, and taught filmmaking at Al Quds University and Dar Al Kalima College. Rebekah recently produced and edited the feature-length documentary *Another Way of Living*. She holds a Master of Fine Arts in Film and Television Production from the University of Southern California.

Flávia de Souza (Editor) has worked on more than 20 film and TV projects, including Academy Award-nominated *Open Heart*, *Armed with Faith*, *Rancher*, *Farmer*, *Fisherman*, and *Song of Lahore*. Her films have premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, and the Sheffield International Documentary Festival.

Talal Jabari (Cinematographer) started his career as a film producer in East Jerusalem and has worked on over thirty documentaries. In 2010, he directed *Full Signal*, and has since directed numerous historical and political films and television series around the globe, including *Aggressive Decrees* (2011), *Holy Blood* (2012), and *Enemies of the South* (2014). His work has appeared on the Al Jazeera Documentary Channel and *The New York Times*, among others. He's currently based in New York.

Sharron Mirsky and Dominique Doktor (Animators) are a team of animators based in Montreal, Canada. They came together for the exploration of new and interesting ways of sharing stories. Their specialty is direct Under-Camera Animation, which is a technique that involves an alternative process to the standard 2D or 3D mediums often used today, and lends a unique richness in the quality achieved. Both Sharron and Dominique are graduates of animation at Concordia University's Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema.

Executive Producers

Suhad Babaa is the Executive Director at Just Vision, an organization dedicated to increasing the power and reach of Palestinians and Israelis working to end the occupation and build a future of freedom, dignity and equality. She previously served as the Director of Programming, overseeing all educational and community outreach efforts across the US, Israel and Palestine. Suhad has addressed dozens of audiences at venues including the United Nations General Assembly, Harvard University and film festivals, mosques, synagogues and churches across the US. She was an integral member of the impact campaigns around the award-winning films *Budrus* and *My Neighbourhood*.

Abigail E. Disney is an Emmy Award-winning director and producer, philanthropist and the CEO and president of Fork Films. An active supporter of peacebuilding, she is passionate about advancing women's roles in the public sphere. Abigail's films and series focus on social issues and spotlight extraordinary people who speak truth to power.

Barbara Dobkin is a funder, activist and leader in the social justice arena with a focus on the advancement of women. Barbara has a passion for investing in films that change the world and is a member of Impact Partners and Gamechanger, contributor to a number of film and social change organizations, including Chicken and Egg Pictures, and executive producer to numerous award-winning documentaries, including, *Anita: Speaking Truth to Power*, *Budrus*, *Hot Girls Wanted*, *The Hunting Ground*, among others.

Deirdre Hegarty is a funder focusing on peace and security issues. She serves on the board of Just Vision and is a member of the Women Donors Network, the Peace and Security Funders Group and an alumna of the Philanthropy Workshop. She received an M.A. from Stanford University in International Policy Studies, with a concentration on international security and cooperation issues. Deirdre was a Fellow at the Stanford Center on International Conflict and Negotiation from 2012-2014, where she conducted research on the role of nonviolence.

Joan Platt is a funder in the area of human rights with a focus on women's rights, and funds films that bring these issues to the fore. As a supporter of the Sundance Institute and Good Pitch, she believes that storytelling through film contributes to large-scale change, and has contributed to a number of documentaries, including *Newtown*, *True Believers*, *The Hunting Ground* and *Hot Girls Wanted*, among others. She is also a member of the International Board of Human Rights Watch and the Fund for Global Human Rights.

Gini Reticker is the Chief Creative Officer of Fork Films and an Academy Award-nominated and Emmy Award-winning director and producer with a distinguished career that spans more than 20 years. She served as Executive Producer on numerous Fork Films supported projects including the renowned *Cameraperson*; the Netflix original *Hot Girls Wanted*; *1971*; *Citizen Koch*; *Alias Ruby Blade*; and *She's Beautiful when she's Angry*.

Women Donors Network (WDN) is a community of women philanthropists committed to furthering their shared vision of a more just, equitable, and sustainable world through grantmaking, investing, and advocacy. As a community, WDN recognizes the systemic nature of many of the challenges we face as a society. WDN programs are designed to ignite change, providing donors with opportunities to support progressive movement-building, deepen their knowledge, take action in partnership with allies, and engage in nimble and strategic grantmaking.

Character Bios

Naila Ayesh

Naila Ayesh was an activist and student organizer in the years leading up to the First Intifada. Born in Jerusalem, she moved to Gaza in 1986 after marrying her husband, Jamal Zakout, and became increasingly active in political organizing and the women's movement. Naila was arrested and tortured by the Israeli army before the uprising, leading to a miscarriage while in prison. When the Intifada broke out, she and her husband became an integral part of the uprising's mobilizing efforts. After Jamal was deported for his political activities, she was arrested again and forced to bring her infant son, Majd, into Israeli prison. Following her release, Naila continued to be involved in the underground leadership of the Intifada, organizing sit-ins, marches, and boycotts, and distributing leaflets to help coordinate the movement across Palestinian society. She later became the General Director of the Women's Affairs Center in Gaza.

For a shorter bio: Naila Ayesh was an activist and student organizer in the years leading up to the First Intifada and became a leading figure in the uprising. She later became General Director of the Gaza-based Women's Affairs Center, a non-profit devoted to advancing women's leadership and participation in political and public life.

Zahira Kamal

Zahira Kamal has been at the vanguard of the women's movement and national liberation movement in Palestine since the 1970s. She was instrumental as a strategist and organizer during the First Intifada and was one of three women in the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid peace talks. She later became the first Minister of Women's Affairs in the Palestinian National Authority. Today, she serves as the General Secretary of the Palestinian Democratic Union Party – FIDA, the only woman to head up a major political party in Palestine.

For a shorter bio: Zahira Kamal has been at the vanguard of the women's movement and national liberation movement in Palestine since the 1970s. Today, she serves as the General Secretary of the Palestinian Democratic Union Party – FIDA, the only female leader of a major political party in Palestine.

Naima Al-Sheikh

Naima Al-Sheikh was a student activist with the Fatah-affiliated Young Students Movement at the Islamic University in Gaza and an active member of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees when the First Intifada broke out. As an organizer, she became especially active in the women's struggle, taking on social issues impacting young women and girls in Gaza. She continues to fight for gender equity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories today.

Roni Ben Efrat – Jerusalem

As a journalist and activist during the First Intifada, Roni Ben Efrat reported on human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. She was one of the founding members of the Israeli human rights group, Women in Black, in 1987. She wrote for a Hebrew biweekly, *Derech- Hanitzatz*, which was shut down under administrative law during the uprising. Roni spent 9 months in jail for her involvement with the publication.

Production Team

Director

Julia Bacha

Producers

Rula Salameh

Rebekah Wingert-Jabi

Directors of Animation

Dominique Doktor

Sharron Mirsky

Director of Photography

Talal Jabari

Additional Photography by

Mohammed Abu Safia

Editors

Flávia de Souza

Rebekah Wingert-Jabi

Original Score by

Tristan Capacchione

Executive Producers

Suhad Babaa

Abigail E. Disney

Barbara Dobkin

Deirdre Hegarty

Joan Platt

Gini Reticker

Women Donors Network

Co-Producers:

Fadi Abu Shammalah

Suad Amiry

Ronit Avni

Pilar Crespi and Stephen Robert

Suzy Davis & Emilia Ferreira

Jessica Devaney

Jen Marlowe

Nava Mizrahi

Anya Rous

Associate Producers

Sara Fusco

Hannah Lawrence

Haggai Matar