



# 1948

## CREATION & CATASTROPHE

A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT  
THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN  
CONFLICT



## Screening and Discussion Guide







# Table of Contents

How to Use this Guide.....	2
From the Filmmakers.....	3
About the Film.....	4
Timeline of Events Highlighted in the Film .....	5
How to Host a Screening.....	7
Sample Agenda .....	8
Potential Partners.....	8
Setting the Tone .....	9
Discussion Questions .....	10
Audience Activity .....	11
Resources .....	12
Addendum: Additional Discussion & Essay	
Questions for College and University Classrooms .....	13



# How to Use this Guide

This discussion guide for the documentary *1948: Creation & Catastrophe* is designed to help you plan a screening of the film at your school or with an organization. It provides background information about the film and guides you through the process of hosting an engaging event. You'll also find suggestions for partners to work with on the event and sample discussion questions and activities that can help you create a participatory experience for your audience. By sharing this film with your community, you are helping to amplify the voices of Palestinians and Israelis who lived through the events of 1948 and still live with the consequences today. We thank you for your efforts.

# From the Filmmakers

This project was a labor of love for ten years. My co-producer and I are so proud to at last share it with the world. This documentary began shortly after I graduated with my master's degree in Middle East Studies. I had spent years studying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in both my undergraduate and graduate studies, but quite frankly, I never truly understood the conflict. Then, I began digging deeper into 1948. Suddenly, everything clicked. The forces that drive the continuing violence today began to make sense. I realized that, if I had a master's degree in Middle East Studies and still couldn't explain the conflict, I could never reasonably expect an average American to explain what was going on. I decided that the critical first step on the path to peace was to bring the history of 1948 to the American public.

I teamed up with Ahlam Muhtaseb, a professor at California State University San Bernardino who has conducted extensive field work in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. The two of us began tracking down Palestinians and Israelis who remembered the war first-hand. Many were eager to share their stories, but our requests for interviews were frequently met with, "We don't talk about that." We persisted, managing to collect dozens of stories from fighters, refugees (many still living in camps) and survivors of the war now living in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. Their stories are powerful, heart-breaking and shocking.

On top of those interviews, we conducted a mountain of research (over 20,000 pages of history), painstakingly fact-checking every statement made in the documentary. Our team gathered photographs and film from archives across the globe. We retrieved copies of military orders from Israeli archives. We translated dozens of Arabic and Hebrew interviews as well as secondary documents. And we interviewed and consulted with some of the most respected historians in the field.

This has been a colossal amount of work. We sincerely hope you get something out of it!



**ANDY TRIMLETT** (Co-Director/Executive Producer) has a Master's degree in Middle East Studies from the University of Washington and a Bachelor's degree in International Security and Conflict Resolution from San Diego State University.

He has more than a decade of experience in public television, having served as senior producer, associate producer, editor and camera operator on a wide range of productions. He has worked on PBS programs in the United States, Hungary and Austria, winning a regional Emmy for a 30-minute documentary he co-produced about property tax law in California.



**AHLAM MUHTASEB** (Co-Director/Executive Producer) is a professor of media studies at California State University, San Bernardino. Her research interests include digital communication, social media, and diasporic communities. She has

published her scholarship on digital communication and other communication sub-topics, and has presented her scholarship to national and international conventions and scholarly meetings. Her most recent project is the documentary *1948: Creation & Catastrophe*, a film on the year 1948 and its catastrophic consequences which has originated from her field work in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. In addition, most of her recent research focuses on digital media and social movements online (cyber activism), and Arab and Muslim images in the media.





## About the Film

*1948: Creation & Catastrophe* is the story of the establishment of Israel as seen through the eyes of the people who lived it. Rather than being a history lesson, this documentary is a primer for the present. It is simply not possible to make sense of what is happening in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today without an understanding of 1948.

Yet despite the critical importance of 1948, most of the people interviewed for this documentary have never been able to tell their story in full until now. For seven decades, they have been living with the legacy of that fateful year. Many of the veterans, refugees, and witnesses we interviewed have already passed away. This truly is the last chance to hear this story directly from those who lived it.

The documentary promises to reveal this story – and more important – to provide a way of understanding the underlying dynamics of the seemingly incomprehensible conflict that continues to capture headlines to this day.

The hopes, fears and grievances that drove the war in 1948 are still central to the conflict today. By dispelling the myths about 1948 and providing an understanding of the events of this foundational moment, this documentary will make it possible for Americans to make sense of present conflict in the region. And once we understand the conflict, it becomes possible to search for a solution.

**Runtime: 1 hour and 25 minutes**

Web site: <https://www.1948movie.com>

Facebook: [facebook.com/1948movie](https://facebook.com/1948movie)

# Timeline Events Highlighted in the Film

1880s

- « The Zionist movement is founded in response to worsening persecution of European Jews and thousands of Jews begin to immigrate to Palestine, the land surrounding Jerusalem where 450,000 Arabs lived under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

1917

- « In the Balfour Declaration, the British government states its support for establishing a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

1918

- « With the help of Arab leaders, Britain defeats the Ottoman Empire in World War I and gains control over British-mandate Palestine for the next 30 years.

1936-39

- « Arabs revolt against the British and the growing Zionist presence in Palestine. The British stem Jewish immigration to Palestine in an attempt to address concerns just as the Holocaust of World War II begins.

[continued on next page]



## TIMELINE EVENTS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE FILM [continued]

1946

- « Upset with British anti-immigration policies, the Irgun, a Zionist militia, bombs the King David Hotel where the British-mandate government is headquartered. The blast kills 91 people.

1947

- « The UN General Assembly recommends the partition of British-mandate Palestine into two separate states, one for Jews and one for Arabs. Palestinians reject the proposal as unrepresentative of the demographic distribution of Jews and Arabs living in country at the time. Fighting breaks out, including at the Balad al-Shaykh oil refinery.

1948

- « In March, the Haganah, the largest of the Zionist militias, adopts Plan Dalat, which outlined orders for securing the coming Hebrew state and clearing Arabs from the land.
- « In April, the Haganah launches Operation Nachshon to clear out Arab villages on the road to Jerusalem. Arab leader Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni is killed in the fighting. Nearby, Arab villagers are massacred at Dayr Yasin, while Arabs flee Haifa and Jaffa in response to Zionist attacks. Arab fighters attack Jewish settlements in and around Jerusalem.
- « In May, the British leave Palestine, and David Ben Gurion, the leader of the Jewish people in Palestine, declares the state of Israel. Arab Legion armies invade Palestine and enter the war. Israeli forces begin their final assault on the town of Acre.
- « In June, the UN brokers a 28-day truce, during which Israeli forces build up their army.
- « In July, Israel begins Operation Danny, forcing thousands to flee the villages of Ramle and Lydda. Egyptian forces take Kibbutz Yad Mordechai and attack Negba. Israeli forces launch Operation Dekel and capture Nazareth, but Commander Ben Dunkelman refuses to expel Arabs. The UN brokers a three-month truce, but fighting and expulsions continue.
- « By the end of 1948, Jordan has established control over the West Bank and Egypt establishes control over the Gaza strip. Control of Jerusalem is split between Israel in the west and Jordan in the East.



I saw this scene...

# How to Host a Screening Event

Whether you are planning to host a screening on campus, in a community space, or in your home, the basic steps for a successful event are the same. Review and complete the checklist below and you'll be on your way to great screening!

## STEP 1: PLAN AND SECURE

*1-2 months prior to the event*

- ☐ Review this guide, and familiarize yourself with the film.
- ☐ Approach partners that you'd like to collaborate with on planning the event—find ideas in the Potential Partners section of this guide.
- ☐ Select a date and time for your event, and make sure to avoid religious or other holidays.
- ☐ Find a venue with the proper audio/visual equipment to screen the film.
- ☐ Work with your partners to identify your target audience and how to reach them.
- ☐ Determine your speakers and/or moderator for the post-screening discussion.

## STEP 2: REACH OUT AND PROMOTE

*2-4 weeks prior to the event*

- ☐ Invite your speakers and/or moderator.
- ☐ Use Facebook to create an event listing and be sure to tag @1948movie in your posts.
- ☐ Create a promotional flyer using the customizable template found here.
- ☐ E-mail an announcement about the event to all of your contacts and listserves.
- ☐ Ask your partners and venue to promote widely through their networks. Make sure to share promotional materials with them early so they have time to circulate.

## STEP 3: PREPARE AND FINALIZE

*1 week prior to the event*

- ☐ Confirm the number of chairs, tables, and any A/V equipment needed with your venue.
- ☐ Download the film's video file to the computer that you'll use to play the film at your event.
- ☐ Gather materials for any activities and/or resource tables you'd like to have at the event.
- ☐ Confirm the plan for the discussion with your moderator and/or speakers.
- ☐ Prepare an introduction to read before the film begins. Use the About the Film and Setting the Tone section of this guide for language to incorporate into your introduction, and make sure to thank your partners and your guest speakers and/or moderator.
- ☐ Send out reminders to everyone you invited.

## STEP 4: SCREEN AND DISCUSS

*Day of the event*

- ☐ Screen the film and lead your planned discussion and/or activities.
- ☐ Take photos, upload them to Facebook, and tag @1948movie in your posts.
- ☐ Livestream your discussion using Facebook Live and tag @1948movie when you post.
- ☐ Make sure to thank your guests, partners, and speakers for participating.



# Sample Agenda

## ■ 1 HOUR BEFORE EVENT

Set up your event and test all of the equipment used to screen the film.

## ■ 45 MINUTES PRIOR TO START TIME

Speakers and/or moderators arrive to review the event plan.

## ■ 30 MINUTES PRIOR TO START TIME

Doors open and greet guests. Invite them to engage with any organized audience activities or resources available before the film begins.

## ■ START TIME

Read your introduction and play the film, which will run 1 hour and 25 minutes.

## ■ AFTER FILM

Introduce your moderator and/or speakers and begin a 30 minute discussion.

## ■ AFTER DISCUSSION

Thank your partners and guests for attending and allow 30 more minutes for audience members to engage with any organized audience activities or resources available.

# Potential Partners

Partner organizations can help you design your event, find speakers, promote to their member networks, and connect your audience with resources related to the film's subject matter. Community organizations are often interested in partnering on film screenings because they can access media content that will help promote their missions. Here are some ideas of organizations to approach:

- Local academic centers or programs, such as Middle East Studies, Peace and Conflict Centers, International Studies/Relations, History Departments, Ethnic Studies, Mediterranean Studies, Arab Studies, Diaspora Studies, and Political Science
- Multicultural student centers or International Houses
- Students for Justice in Palestine affiliates: <https://www.nationalsjp.org/interactive-map.html>
- Jewish Voice for Peace chapters: <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/chapters/>
- Amnesty International groups: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/take-action/find-a-group/>
- United Nations chapters: <http://unausa.org/membership/directory>
- Local activist groups, such as anti-war advocates



# Setting the Tone

The subject of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can evoke strong feelings and positions in your audience members. If you have chosen to screen this film, chances are that you have been involved in events or discussions previously that address the issue. Draw on your personal experiences or those of your partners to design a discussion that will be constructive for all of your audience members. These tips can help you achieve that:

- **NATIVE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**— If you are screening in North America, your event is likely taking place on land where Native people have been displaced. A Native land acknowledgement is a small way to honor this history. It also helps to establish a connection between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the room your audience occupies. An acknowledgement might sound like this: “Before we begin, I’d like to acknowledge that we are on the ancestral land of the Kumeyaay.” Consider continuing this acknowledgement before any future meetings or events you hold.
- **DISCUSSION GUIDELINES**— It can be helpful to establish some guidelines for discussion before the conversation begins. Thus, if a debate breaks out, you can kindly remind audience members of the guidelines to move the conversation forward. Examples of discussion guidelines might include:
  - Use “I statements” to avoid over-generalizing personal viewpoints (“I believe that...” rather than “We all know that...”).
  - No interruptions when another audience member is speaking.
  - “Step up and step back,” meaning that audience members are encouraged to share opinions, but they should also be mindful not to dominate the conversation.

# Post-Screening Discussion Questions

- What dominant narratives do you commonly hear about the creation of Israel, and how do the memories shared by those interviewed in the film contradict those narratives?
- Historians are divided on the question of whether or not Zionists designed and systematically implemented a plan of ethnic cleansing against Palestinians. How important do you think this question is to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- Josef Ben-Eliezer says in the film that Zionists were starting to treat Arabs the same way Jews had been treated. How do Jews go from being the “other” in Europe to treating Arabs as the “other” in Palestine? What does that process of “othering” look like, and what are strategies for disrupting or undoing it?
- Several of the Israeli veterans expressed feelings of not having a choice but to follow orders during the war. What is your response to this? If you were an Israeli soldier at the time, what might you have done? If you were a Palestinian at the time, what might you have done?
- Some 700,000-800,000 Palestinians fled their homes in 1948 and have yet to return. What do you think should happen to the Palestinian refugees now?
- “It’s such a grave injustice... that has not been at all attended to or taken care of.” Samia Khoury, a Palestinian from Jerusalem says about the events of 1948. What might “attending to” the injustice look like at this point, 70 years into the conflict?
- Israeli veteran Yoram Kaniuk says in the film, “Fighting for a state is much better than to have a state.” What do you think he means by this?
- *1948: Creation & Catastrophe* has been screening in locations across North America this past year on land where Native populations have been displaced. How do you think America’s own history with displacement has affected its policies towards Israel?
- What current international solidarity, resistance movements, or conflict resolution efforts give you hope in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today? What might we be optimistic about going forward?
- One form of nonviolent resistance among Palestinians and their supporters has been through the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel movement. How much do you know about it? What do you think of this type of resistance?
- If audience members would like to get more involved with this issue locally, what organizations, resources, or upcoming events would you recommend?



# Audience Activity

If space and time allow, consider incorporating an interactive component into your event. The suggested activity below can help your audience members identify with the people interviewed in the film and the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Make sure to have the necessary materials prepared ahead of time, and arrange for a volunteer to oversee the activity at the event to help explain the instructions to your guests.

- **MAP YOUR PERSONAL MIGRATION:** Ask audience members to visually represent the path they and their ancestors took over the course of their lifetime. This activity will make visible histories of displacement, migration, and/or gentrification in the room, and create an opportunity for reflection on one's own relationship to displacement.

- Print maps of the world, your country, and your city as large scale as possible (though a basic map on 8.5 x 11 paper will do).
- Provide audience members with different color markers:
  - one color to represent a forced migration or displacement
  - one color to represent a chosen migration
  - an additional color for those that are not sure of the reasons behind the migration
- Have audience members draw on the maps the paths they and their ancestors have traveled using the color marker they feel best describes the reasons behind the journey.
- At the end, audience members should be able to see a visual representation of migration and displacement represented in the room.
- Make available reflection questions for audience members to discuss in pairs or as a group:
  - Does anything about the visual representation surprise you?
  - Do you see any migration patterns in the visual representation?
  - How did it feel to represent your migration history in this way?
  - How did it feel to see other people's migration histories represented?
  - What questions did this activity bring up for you?
- After the event, make sure to post images of the marked-up maps to Facebook and tag @1948movie to share with filmmakers.



# Resources

## HISTORY BOOKS

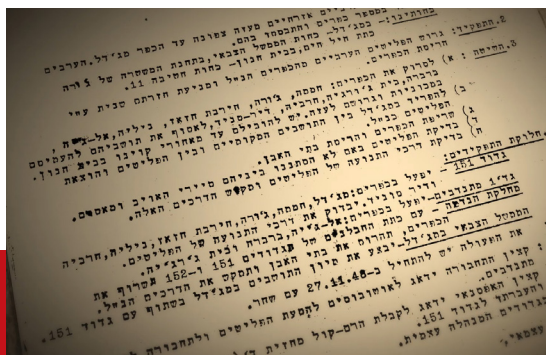
- *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* by Benny Morris
- *Before their diaspora: A photographic history of the Palestinians 1876-1948* by Walid Khalidi
- *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* by Benny Morris
- *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* by Ilan Pappé
- *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The concept of "transfer" in Zionist political thought, 1882-1948* by Nur Masalha
- *Palestine 1948: War, Escape And The Emergence Of The Palestinian Refugee Problem* by Yoav Gelber
- *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* by Charles D. Smith
- *Under the Cover of War: The Zionist Expulsion of the Palestinians* by Rosemarie M. Esber

## PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

- *1948: A Novel* by Yoram Kaniuk
- *In Search of Fatima* by Ghada Karmi
- *1948: A Soldier's Tale: The Bloody Road to Jerusalem* by Uri Avnery
- *Blood Brothers: The Dramatic Story of a Palestinian Christian Working for Peace in Israel* by Elias Chacour
- *Miral* by Rula Jebreal
- *Jerusalem Embattled: A Diary of the City Under Siege* by Harry Levin

## FILMS AND VIDEOS

- *5 Broken Cameras* by Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi (2011) - A deeply personal first-hand account of life and nonviolent resistance in Bil'in, a West Bank village where Israel is building a security fence. <http://www.pbs.org/pov/5brokencameras/>
- *Budrus* by Julia Bacha (2009) - A Palestinian community organizer, with the help of his 15-year-old daughter, works to save his village of Budrus from destruction by Israel's Separation Barrier. <http://www.justvision.org/budrus/about>
- *Flying Paper* by Nitin Sawhney and Roger Hill (2014) - The uplifting story of resilient Palestinian youth in the Gaza Strip on a quest to shatter the Guinness World Record for the most kites ever flown. <http://flyingpaper.org>
- *Occupation 101* by Abdallah Omeish and Sufyan Omeish (2006) - A documentary on the current and historical root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and U.S. political involvement. <http://www.occupation101.com/>
- *The Occupation of the American Mind* by Roger Waters (2016) - A critical look at the public relations war waged by Israel and the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. <https://www.occupationmovie.org/>
- *Palestine Remix* by Al Jazeera (2018) - A collection of documentaries and video content about Palestine. [https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/palestineremix/films\\_main.html](https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/palestineremix/films_main.html)
- *Promises* by Justine Shapiro & B.Z. Goldberg (2001) - Filmmakers travel to the Middle East to see what seven children—Palestinian and Israeli—think about war, peace and just growing up. <http://www.promisesproject.org/>



# Addendum:

## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION & ESSAY QUESTIONS FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CLASSROOMS

Questions written by  
Dr. Roni Amit, JD, PhD  
Clinical Fellow, Hofstra University  
Adjunct Professor, Human Rights Program, Hunter College

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you think the film represents a particular point of view? In what ways do the filmmakers attempt to balance the competing perspectives on the experiences they document?
- Are the actions of both Israelis and Palestinians fairly characterized in the film?
- What aspects of the film most contributed to your understanding of the historical context for the establishment of the Israeli state, and why?
- One of the Palestinians in the film talks about how they got along with the Jews who were already living in the area. Do you think there was a way for the Jews and Palestinians to have continued co-existing peacefully, even after 1948? Why or why not?
- Some Jews began settling in Palestine by buying land from absentee Arab landlords, whose concerns were not aligned with those of local residents. How does this dynamic contribute to the displacement of the Palestinians? What does this say about the connection between land ownership and state building?
- How do you think events would have turned out if the Palestinians had accepted the partition plan? Why do you think the plan was rejected?
- What role do you think the Arab states have played in the conflict?
- What responsibility do you think the British have in the conflict?
- In the film, Dr. Abdel-Nour asks viewers to consider if the establishment of the state of Israel was a historic wrong. How would you answer this question? If you think it was a historic wrong, what should be done to address it?
- How did viewing the film change (or not) your thinking on the broader Arab-Israeli conflict?



## ADDENDUM [continued]

### ESSAY QUESTIONS FOR EXAMS, TERM PAPERS, OR ADDITIONAL THOUGHT

1. Research the history of sovereign claims to land we now refer to as Israel and Palestine and consider the arguments put forward by advocates for both the Palestinian and Israeli perspectives in the current conflict. Be deliberate about how far back into history your review will delve and why. Does one side have a greater entitlement to the land? On what basis does that entitlement rest--historical, legal, cultural, religious, or otherwise?
2. Many modern-day states are the product of colonialism, including those in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and North and South America. In the Middle East, external powers played a decisive role in creating the modern map within the last 100 years. Given that often superficial imposition of states on the region, how do you assess the partition plan for Israel and Palestine in light of the other agreements that carved out states like Jordan, Iraq, and Syria? How does the fact that both Arab and Western states may have had other domestic or geopolitical reasons for their respective positions on the partition factor into the decision? Who had the authority to make the decision over the land? And why? Had the indigenous populations of these lands been consulted?
3. What obligation did the international community have toward the Jews following the Holocaust? How could their need for protection be reconciled with the rights of the Palestinians? Did the Jews have any specific entitlements after emerging from the Holocaust? How do those entitlements relate to the territory in question and balance against the rights of the Palestinians who lived there?
4. Palestinians consider the Zionist movement as an extension to the European colonization of Arab lands. Do you agree, taking into consideration that the Zionist movement was born in Europe?

