

VARIETY

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## 'Heart' beats for Palestine

By **ALI JAAFAR**

Who says cinema can't make a difference?

Auds in the Palestinian town of Jenin will be getting a cinema for the first time in a generation following the warm international response to doc "The Heart of Jenin," which won the Cinema of Peace award in Berlin Feb. 9.

Pic tells the true story of Palestinian Ismael Khatib, whose 12-year-old son Ahmed was shot dead by an Israeli soldier who mistook the boy's toy gun for a real weapon. Ismael donated his son's organs to several Israeli children and four of them, including the daughter of an Orthodox Jewish couple, are alive today thanks to his act.

Doc was produced by German shingle Eikon and co-helmed by Israeli Leon Geller and German Marcus Vetter.

When Vetter wanted to arrange a screening in Jenin for those in the film, he found that the town's one cinema had been damaged and unused for nearly 20 years. So he launched the Cinema Jenin project with Palestinian exec Fakhri Hamad to rebuild the theater. After a rapturous Berlin market screening, the German foreign ministry pledged €170,000 (\$220,000) to the effort.

Vetter is also making a followup doc about the attempts to rebuild the Jenin cinema.