



E I K O N Media GmbH Film und Fernsehproduktion

הלב מג'נין
the **Heart of Jenin**
قلب من جنين



Press Review

updated August 2008

The Film

“The Heart of Jenin” tells the story of Ahmed Khatib, a Palestinian 12 years old boy from the Refugee Camp of Jenin, who was shot by the Israeli Army, after mistaken his toy gun for a real one. Despite his grief, his father Ismael decided within hours to donate his son's organs to six Israeli children and save their lives.

Three years later, Ismael travels from Jenin to the northern hills on the Lebanese border, passing through the Holy City of Jerusalem, down to the edge of the Negev Desert in the south to visit the children that received his son's organs. The film is a journey throughout today's Israel which not only leads to the recipient families, but also attempts to reconstruct the events that took place in Jenin in 2005.

Credits

Written and directed by
Marcus Vetter and Leon Geller

Editor: Saskia Metten
Cinematography: Nadav Hekselmann
Original music: Erez Koskas
Line Producer: Kristin Holst, Yariv Mozer (Israel)
Producer: Ernst Ludwig Ganzert, Ulli Pfau
Commissioning Editors: Gudrun Hanke-El Ghomri and Martina Zöllner (SWR),
Ulle Schröder (ARTE)
Production Company: EIKON Südwest
World Sales: Telepool
Format: HD / 16:9 / Dolby SR
Length: 89 min
Production year: 2008
Funded by **MFG Filmförderung-Baden-Württemberg**

HAARETZ.com

...The heart of Jenin, A German documentary, was also screened in the first week of the (Jerusalem) film festival. It tells the story of Ahmad Khatib, 12 years old, who was shot to death two years ago by IDF soldiers while carrying a toy gun. Six of Ahmad's organs were donated to transplant by his family. The protagonist of the film, directed by Marcus Vetter and Leon Geller, is the Father's child, Ismail Khatib. Khatib's character is impressive and captivating. His restrained presence gives the film its immense humane volume.

The film, which is hard to watch without a throat choking with tears, tells the story of Ahmad's death and its consequences. In the second part of the film the father goes to meet some of the children that carry his son's organs, including a girl from an ultra orthodox family. Her father hesitates for a long time whether to meet the father of the boy that saved his girl's life. When the meeting occurs, the atmosphere is loaded with mutual fear and embarrassment. "The Heart of Jenin" is a simple and not an especially sophisticated film. But that is exactly the reason why its emotional straightforwardness works, mostly avoiding sentimentality and sticky kitsch.

Uri Klien
Haaretz, Israel



July 14, 2008

Hope And Pain In Film About Palestinian Organ Donor

By REUTERS

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Of the hundreds of tragic tales of children killed during decades of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ahmed Khatib's must rank among the most remarkable.

Khatib was shot dead in 2005 by Israeli soldiers who mistook him for a gunman in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin. Still grieving, his father agreed to donate Ahmed's heart, liver, lungs and kidneys to save the lives of Israeli children. Offering a startling vision of hope while laying bare the deep divisions between Israelis and Palestinians, "The Heart of Jenin," a new German-Israeli documentary film, recounts the story of Ahmed, his father, and three of the five people who received the donated organs.

"It's not about politics, about Jews or Arabs, it's about human beings," said Ismail Khatib, Ahmed's father, in an interview after the film's premiere in Jerusalem. "I see my son in these children."

Khatib and his wife decided to donate Ahmed's organs after doctors at an Israeli hospital in Haifa were unable to save him. Palestinian hospitals lacked the facilities to treat their dying son or make use of his organs. They hesitated at first over whether to include his heart, but eventually agreed, and now it beats in the chest of Samah Gadban, a pretty Druze Muslim teenager from northern Israel.

One of Ahmed's kidneys saved the life of Mohammed Kabua, a Bedouin child who lives in Israel's southern Negev desert and rarely stops grinning in the film. Two other Israeli recipients of his organs requested to remain anonymous.

His kidney also saved Menuha Levinson, the toddler daughter of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish family in Jerusalem. But her father's initial discomfort at the idea of an Arab donor betrays the deep personal suspicion that stokes this conflict, and gives the film a darker undertone. Yaakov Levinson remarks shortly after his daughter's life-saving operation that he would have preferred a Jewish donor and remarks that he would never allow his children to be friends with Arabs for fear of "bad influence."

HOPE?

"The Heart of Jenin" splices original interviews with news footage from the bloody suicide bombings and army raids that marked the second Palestinian Intifida, or uprising. The German and Israeli filmmakers hope to show it internationally.

One of its most touching, and disappointing, sequences is toward the end of the film, when, two years after Ahmed's death, Khatib and his brother embark on a road trip around Israel in a beat-up saloon to visit the children whose lives they saved.

The climax is a confrontation with the Levinson family, who, in an awkward exchange at their Jerusalem home, apologize for their earlier comments and thank Khatib, but betray a deep misunderstanding about life in the occupied West Bank.

Co-director Marcus Vetter argued the Levinson family showed personal progress in their treatment of Khatib during the making of the film, offering hope for reconciliation. He said he purposely ended with a shot of Menuha on a playground swing. "That was our message of hope," Vetter told Reuters. "She has the power to change things."

(Editing by Douglas Hamilton)

VARIETY

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2009

'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.

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