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FIELD DIARY REVISITED

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SENT

**WEST OF THE
JORDAN RIVER**

**A FILM BY
AMOS GITAI**

BREA

CADOR DOCUMENT NON CONTRACTUEL

BREAKING THE SILENCE

**BREAKING
THE SILENCE**

YITZHAK RABIN
HUMAN RIGHTS

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HUMAN RIGHTS

THE PARENT

CADOR DOCUMENT NON CONTRACTUEL

SYNOPSIS

Amos Gitai (RABIN, FREE ZONE) returns to the occupied territories for the first time since his controversial 1982 documentary FIELD DIARY. Gitai drives to the West Bank, where he witnesses the efforts of citizens, Israelis and Palestinians, trying to overcome the consequences of the 50-year occupation. Gitai participates in a meeting of The Parents Circle, an association of both Jewish and Palestinian parents who lost children in the conflict, and also a gathering for B'Tselem, a human rights organization which helps Palestinian women to video violations in occupied territories. He also visits a Bedouin School, now threatened with demolition due to the much-debated Regulation Law on Jewish settlements in occupied territories recently passed by the country's reactionary government. Gitai asks prominent Israeli politicians and journalists how they see the future of the West Bank, occupied by Israel since the Six-Day War of 1967. WEST OF THE JORDAN RIVER shows the human ties woven by human rights activists, journalists, the military, mourning mothers and even Jewish settlers. Faced with the failure of politics to solve the occupation issue, many men and women have risen and acted in the name of civic consciousness.





STANDSTILL

It has been 35 years since I made *FIELD DIARY*, before and during the 1982 Lebanon War. I had a very similar feeling then: there were growing pockets of conflict that the Israeli government continued to build without taking into account the consequences. The situation today remains at a standstill. There is a very reactionary government in power in Israel today. Its intervention in everything from justice to culture to education has resulted in efforts to limit freedom of expression and spread feelings of racism and hatred.

FIELD DIARY

FIELD DIARY was the third film of a trilogy following *HOUSE* (1980) and *WADI* (1981), all made after I finished by architectural degree. The first public showing of *FIELD DIARY* was in January 1983. I showed it at the Jerusalem Cinematheque, at the invitation of the late Lia van Leer. Because of the cold weather, I had expected less people, but it was packed. Some people even came directly from the war front with their arms. The atmosphere was very tense, even explosive. US critic and intellectual Annette Michelson was there. She would later write

that it was for her a good introduction to my films witnessing the conflictual context in which they are created. The turmoil and the hostile reactions were such that I had to leave the country. I had the urge to return to Israel after Yitzhak Rabin was elected prime minister.

HUMAN ENCOUNTERS

To understand the reality of a situation, it's sometimes necessary to dig in the archeological sense. Thirty-five years after making *FIELD DIARY*, I decided to return to the West Bank. Travelling to towns like Hebron with a small crew of myself, a cameraman and a sound guy gave the opportunity to ask questions that would normally not be asked. I went there simply to observe and record. *WEST OF THE JORDAN RIVER* is about human encounters. I wanted to reach the heart of the matter by approaching associations and individuals who are concerned with current situation and try to build bridges between the people of the Middle East.

CIVIL COURAGE

WEST OF THE JORDAN RIVER is a tribute to the civil courage of individuals who feel disappointed, like

I do, by the lack of political action to resolve the problem. Because of this, we are all forced to act individually in our own way. This is the optimistic side of the film. We see a large collection of people of different backgrounds who take action into their own hands. There are some citizens who are sensitive to human rights and who love their countries. There are many women, Arabs and Jews, who are very active in these associations struggling for reconciliation.

50 YEARS

The struggle of these associations is not an easy one. Their work produces antagonism, hate. They are too often treated badly, yet they remain convinced of the necessity that Israelis must hold out their hands in good faith to the Palestinians under occupation for now 50 years. From 1967 to 2017. Let's not forget: it has been 50 years. That's two-thirds of the life of the country of Israel. These associations bring up questions of ethics and morality to the public, and I think they deserve to be acknowledged for their courage. They are living proof that there are Israelis who want genuine reconciliation, and that the country doesn't belong to its leaders in power.



BIOGRAPHY AMOS GITAI

In 1973, when the Yom Kippur War breaks out, Amos Gitali is an architecture student. The helicopter that carries him and his unit of emergency medics is shot down by a missile, an episode he will allude to years later in *Kippur* (2000).

After the war, he starts directing short films for the Israeli public television. In 1980, his first documentary, *Bayit* (House), a portrait of Israelis and Palestinians living in the same Jerusalem house, is censored. Two years later, the controversy created by *Field Diary*, shot before and during the invasion of Lebanon, drives the filmmaker to exile, a situation that will inspire his reaction features.

Amos Gitali returns to Israel in 1993, the year of the signature in Washington of the Oslo I Accord, promoted by Yitzhak Rabin. This marks the beginning of a period of intense activity during which he directs documentaries (*Wadi*, *Ananas*, *In the Valley of the Wupper*, *News from Home...*) and fiction films (among them *Kadosh*, *Kedma*, *Alila*, *Promised Land*, *Free Zone*, *Disengagement*, *Ana Arabia* and recently *Rabin The Last Day*). For the past 40 years, Amos Gitali has been building a body of work that is at once universal, politically conscious and always intrinsically marrying the intimate, the political, and the poetic to pursue hope without losing a critical edge.



CAST & CREW

A film by **Amos Gitai**
Dop **Oded Kirma**
Eitan Hai
Vladimir Truchovski
Sound **Amos Zipori**
Nir Alon
Yishai Ilan
Editing **Tal Zana**
Vincent Schmitt
Yuval Orr
Original Score **Amit Poznansky**
Written by **Amos Gitai**
Assistant Director and Coordinator **Mira Bauer**
Artistic Consultant **Marie-Josée Sanselme**
Executive Producer **Patricia Boutinard Rouelle**
Editorial Producer **Romain Icard**
Line Producer France **Macha Prod**
Stéphanie Schorter
Producer Israël **Amos Gitai**
Line Producers Israël **Shuki Friedman**
Laurent Truchot

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WEST OF THE JORDAN RIVER

A film by Amos Gitai
2017 / DCP / Stereo / Documentary
Running time: 84 MIN.
Languages: English, Arabic, Hebrew
Country: Israel / France

World Premiere: Cannes Film Festival 2017

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