

SRF portrays the Freedom Theater in Jenin as a symbol of children, art, and freedom. In doing so, Susanne Brunner turns the documented biography of its co-founder into a matter of perspective. At the same time, in her radio report, she omits October 7 from the background story. The sentence that dismantles her narrative can be found on the theater's own website.

The Most Important Thing

- SRF frames Zakaria Zubeidi's documented role as a former leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Jenin as a matter of perspective.
- Zubeidi himself explained that armed and cultural resistance cannot be separated. The report makes no mention of this very statement.
- The Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, is not mentioned in the radio text. Almost the only thing that is highlighted is the Israeli response.
- What debunks Brunner's account can be found, of all places, on the Freedom Theatre's own website.

From David Spuler

[Susanne Brunner, head of Radio SRF's international news desk](#), begins her [report on the Freedom Theatre](#) with the call to prayer, a mosque, and laughing children. She ends with the sentence: "We are still fighting for our freedom."

In the meantime, it is primarily Israel that imposes restrictions, fires upon, arrests, and destroys. Armed Palestinian actors, on the other hand, are hidden behind terms such as "militant groups" and "resistance."

A fact becomes a perspective

In the radio segment, Brunner says the following about theater co-founder Zakaria Zubeidi:

"To Palestinians, he is a legendary former resistance fighter. To Israel, he is a terrorist."

That sounds balanced. In fact, this juxtaposition turns a verifiable biography into two supposedly equivalent opinions.

The [Freedom Theatre describes Zubeidi himself](#) as a former leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Jenin. The [European Union has listed the group on its list of](#)

[terrorist organizations](#).

Zubeidi's role is therefore not an Israeli perspective. Brunner names the man but nonetheless frames his story from both a romantic Palestinian perspective and a damning Israeli one. The commander of a terrorist organization is portrayed as a "resistance fighter."

The sentence SRF isn't reporting

The Freedom Theater notes that Zubeidi later laid down his arms and considered the armed struggle a failure. Yet [the same page also documents his refusal](#) to draw a clear line between the stage and the gun:

"I broke open the lock to the theater with the butt of my machine gun. Armed resistance and cultural resistance cannot be separated."

My own translation.

This is Zubeidi's own description, published by the Freedom Theatre. For him, culture should recount and interpret armed, religious, and political resistance.

Brunner tells only the exculpatory half of the story: "The weapons of theater are words, not guns." He fails to mention that the co-founder explicitly rejected this distinction.

That does not make the theater an armed organization. However, it exposes the distinction drawn by SRF between peaceful culture and armed struggle as misleading. Zubeidi himself viewed both as parts of the same resistance.

A War That Just Begins

The same approach characterizes the [radio report](#). Brunner says:

"One month before the most devastating war of her life begins ..."

War begins just like that. Like a storm.

The Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, is not mentioned in the radio text. There is no mention of the deliberate attacks on civilians, the murders, the hostage-takings, or the sexual violence committed during the attack, which [was documented by a United Nations investigation](#).

In [the accompanying online article](#), the Hamas attack is briefly mentioned in connection with tighter checkpoint controls. However, it does not play any discernible role in Brunner's account as a key precursor to the current phase of the war.

Zubeidi was not a Hamas commander. He belonged to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, which is affiliated with Fatah. These are different organizations. Yet the journalistic approach remains the same: the specific Palestinian terrorist is portrayed in vague, soft terms, while the Israeli response is described in the most vivid detail.

Here: children, culture, and freedom. There: soldiers, prisons, and destruction.

The Subjunctive as an Airbag

Regarding the fighting between the Palestinian Authority and armed groups, Brunner says:

"It is particularly bitter that the Palestinian Authority helped the Israelis."

The subjunctive is the airbag. Formally, Brunner keeps her distance. In terms of content, however, she lets the message hit the audience full force.

Immediately afterward, the report states that Palestinians killed each other in the fight against "militant Palestinian groups." SRF does not explain who these groups were, why the Palestinian Authority took action against them, or what violence they were responsible for.

The [Associated Press reported heavy gun battles](#) between Palestinian security forces and local armed groups. Hamas and Islamic Jihad were operating openly in Jenin. A spokesperson for the Palestinian Authority stated that the operation was intended to restore order, the rule of law, and public safety.

The [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\) also documented](#) that armed Palestinians temporarily occupied an UNRWA health center. The building was also hit by an anti-tank grenade. The fighting paralyzed medical care, waste disposal, and parts of the camp's infrastructure.

The actions of the Palestinian Authority were harsh and also affected unarmed people. They must be critically examined. But it was an armed power struggle, not merely a vague "Palestinians killing Palestinians" situation.

SRF replaces this context with a formula of betrayal: Anyone who takes action against armed groups is “helping the Israelis.” And that is “particularly bitter.”

SRF leaves the assessment to its interview subjects. The use of the subjunctive formally protects the editorial staff, while the message reaches the audience unfiltered. No other interpretation is even suggested.

Children as a Moral Shield

The Freedom Theatre has provided traumatized children with a creative space. This work can be valuable. In Brunner’s dramaturgy, however, it becomes a moral shield for the entire institution.

Behind the children’s laughter, Zubeidi’s past, the armed environment of Jenin, and the political significance of “cultural resistance” fade into the background.

Brunner also loses her journalistic objectivity when it comes to the allegations of abuse made by theater director Mustafa Sheta. She describes what he recounts in her own words as “sadistic violence” and “unbearable.” By contrast, no substantial Israeli counterargument or independent investigation is presented.

The [written SRF version](#) goes one step further. It states that the theater tackles political and social taboo topics:

“As a result, the theater itself is repeatedly targeted.”

This little word, “therefore,” implies a causal connection. Israel is attacking the theater because of its political work. This connection is not substantiated. A conjecture becomes editorial certainty.

At the end, a student declares theater to be a form of “cultural resistance” and says that the fight for freedom continues. The political slogan becomes the punchline of a public broadcaster’s report.

Campaign Journalism Through Omission

The most effective distortion doesn’t require any fabricated facts. It’s enough simply to omit the crucial facts.

Brunner mentions Zakaria Zubeidi and removes his history as a commander of a



designated terrorist organization.

She refers to a war and, on the radio, omits the attack that triggered its current phase.

She refers to “cultural resistance” but fails to mention that the theater’s co-founder explicitly did not want to distinguish it from armed resistance.

What remains is the simplest narrative: children versus soldiers, words versus guns, freedom versus occupation.

Susanne Brunner highlights only one side of the story. She removes the commander from *The Resistance Fighter*, the rifle from the theater, and October 7 from the war.

That’s not an explanation.

This is campaign journalism by omission. SRF doesn’t have to make up facts. All it has to do is remove Zubeidi’s history of terrorism, the Hamas attack, and the armed groups in Jenin from the narrative.