



The Zurich Film Festival as a Champion of the Palestinian Cause

Since the massacre carried out by the terrorist organization Hamas on October 7, 2023, the Palestinian cause has literally been on the program at the Zurich Film Festival (ZFF). And even money from individuals who, according to the Federal Criminal Police (Fedpol), are linked to the radical Islamist scene is welcome.

By Sacha Wigdorovits 

One of the “highlights” of this year’s Zurich Film Festival (ZFF) is the documentary “Naza.” Although filmed by two Israeli activists, it is anything but pro-Israel. On the contrary, it levels serious allegations against the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) regarding their actions during the Gaza War. While not the only flaw, it is the most serious one: The film is based on 24 anonymous witness statements. It is unclear whether these individuals actually belong to the Israeli domestic intelligence service Shin Bet and the IDF, as claimed in the film, or whether this is purely fictional.

Four pro-Palestinian, Israel-critical films in two years ...

However, this apparently doesn’t matter to the ZFF organizers, led by festival director Christian Jungen. For them, the focus does not seem to be on the credibility of “Naza,” but rather on the fact that the film advocates for the Palestinians and opposes the State of Israel.

This also explains why the Qatari-Palestinian-British co-production “Life Support” is also part of this year’s ZFF program. The film deals with the precarious medical care situation in Gaza’s hospitals during the war between Israel and the terrorist organization Hamas. Hamas used the hospitals, their patients, and their staff as human shields for its underground command centers and tunnels, where it held the majority of the 251 Israeli hostages it had abducted during the massacre on October 7. But, of course, Israel is to blame for the dire situation in the hospitals.

Even at the 2025 ZFF, anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian propaganda was literally part of the program. At that time, the Palestinian-American production “All That’s Left of You” and the Tunisian-French production “The Voice of Hind Rajab” were screened. Both were also films critical of Israel.



... but not a single pro-Israel film since the October 7 massacre

In stark contrast to this is the number of documentaries with a pro-Israel perspective that the ZFF has screened since the massacre of October 7, 2023: zero! Yet there has been no shortage of such films in recent years—and there isn't one now, either.

These include, for example, the German-Israeli production “Supernova: The Music Festival Massacre,” which tells the story of the murder of 360 young ravers at the Nova Festival by Hamas on October 7. The film won the German Television Award in 2024 and was screened that same year at various film festivals in Europe and the U.S.—but not at the one in Zurich.

Or the German-Israeli documentary “UNraveling UNRWA” from 2025. Using videos and interviews with Palestinians, Israelis, and UN officials, it demonstrates how the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) bears significant shared responsibility for the unresolved Palestinian refugee crisis, and how UNRWA schools have been infiltrated by Hamas teaching staff and anti-Israel Hamas war propaganda. This documentary also won an award—but it was of no interest to the ZFF organizers.

Against this backdrop, it is—to put it in Yiddish—“chutzpah” (audacity) when the ZFF, when asked about this, explains: “In general, the diversity of voices and perspectives is reflected in the breadth of our program over the years and is not measured by individual films or themes.” Yet even “over the years,” only one voice and one perspective has been seen and heard at the Zurich Film Festival: the Palestinian, anti-Israeli one.

The fact that the ZFF screens films with Jewish themes or featuring Jewish characters—as the festival organizers claim to illustrate their diversity of voices and perspectives—doesn't change anything, even with this year's selections, such as “The Housewife,” “Si Tu Penses Bien,” and “Schreckschraube”—does not change this fact. For none of these films has even the slightest connection to the war in Gaza or the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.



Co-sponsor with ties to the Islamist scene

The one-sided support for the Palestinian cause and against Israel fits well with the image of the ZFF's new co-sponsor, Gisada. This Winterthur-based perfume brand, which also adorns the jerseys of FC Basel, is owned by Arben Ademi, a North Macedonian who grew up in Winterthur. As the [online media portal watson.ch](https://www.watson.ch/story/2025/01/20/fokus-israel-und-nahost-association) [revealed in late 2025](https://www.watson.ch/story/2025/01/20/fokus-israel-und-nahost-association), the Federal Criminal Police in Bern (Fedpol) considers Ademi to be closely associated with the radical Islamist scene.

Ademi himself “vehemently” denies this, according to watson.ch. But based on Fedpol documents, the report authored by Islamism expert Kurt Pelda shows the opposite. Arben Ademi's ties to the radical Islamist scene are illustrated by intercepted phone calls and WhatsApp messages, rides given to supporters of the Islamic State (IS) in his wife's private car, and his support for a mosque frequented by Islamists.

When asked about this, the ZFF replied: “Based on the information available to us at this time, there are no ongoing proceedings or charges against the company Gisada or its owners that would preclude cooperation.” Fedpol's findings apparently carry no weight with the festival organizers. After all, as the Romans used to say: “Pecunia non olet—money doesn't stink.” And is that supposed to be any different in Zwinglian Zurich?

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