

PORTRAYAL OF THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT: EGYPTIAN,  
JORDANIAN, AND LEBANESE CINEMA BETWEEN 2010-2018.

A Master's Thesis

by

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April 2018

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Bilkent University 2018



*To my world, my mother,*

*Nilgün Nazzal*

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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences of  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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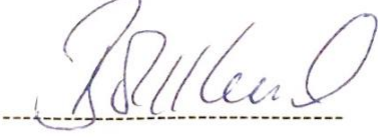
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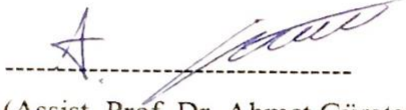
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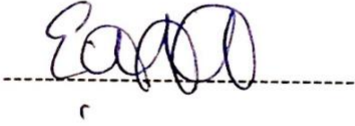
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## **ABSTRACT**

PORTRAYAL OF THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT IN EGYPTIAN,  
JORDANIAN, AND LEBANESE CINEMA BETWEEN 2010-2018.

Nazzal, Seda

M.A., in Media and Visual Studies  
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bülent Çaplı

April, 2018

This study scrutinizes the documentary portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by its neighboring countries Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Which participated in International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, International Dubai Film Festival, and Doha Tribeca Film Festival from 2010-2018. The research aligns with these three countries as there has been a shared history since 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel. Along with the Israeli government's denial of the right to return to their homeland, which had conveyed the Palestinians into different parts of the world as refugees. Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon had been the foremost host for the Palestinian refugees since then. Therefore, it is substantial to take a glimpse into the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from their point of view through documentaries. This analysis aspires to examine the political structure of the documentaries. Then, furthermore draw a pattern of how its neighboring countries portray the Palestinian experiences and prominent themes of Palestinian

documentaries some of which are exile, trauma, struggle, and loss. With the framework that will analyze how the six documentaries that I have picked have a concern to create a political consciousness and encourage a local and global support for the Palestinian cause.

Keywords: Documentary, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

## ÖZET

LÜBNAN, MISIR VE ÜRDÜN SİNEMASINDA FİLİSTİN-İSRAİL ÇATIŞMASI

(2010-2018).

Nazzal, Seda

M.A., in Media and Visual Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bülent Çaplı

Nisan, 2018

Bu tez, Filistin-İsrail çatışmasına komşu olan Lübnan, Mısır ve Ürdün'ün gözünden, 2010'dan bu yana Amsterdam Uluslararası Belgesel Film Festivali, Dubai Uluslararası Film Festivali ve Doha Tribeca Film Festivali'ne katılan, Filistin-İsrail çatışması konulu belgesellerin sunumunu ele almaktadır. İsrail Devleti'nin kuruluşundan bu yana, Filistinliler yurtlarından sürgün edilmiş ve İsrail devleti tarafından geri dönüş hakları reddedilmiştir. Birçok Filistinli hala ülkelerine geri dönecekleri günün umuduyla yaşamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın kapsamı, ortak tarih ve yaşanmışlıklar nedeniyle bu üç ülke üzerinden oluşturulmuştur. Lübnan, Mısır ve Ürdün, 1948'den bu yana Filistinli mültecilere ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Bu sebepten ötürü Filistin-İsrail çatışmasına bu üç ülkede çekilen belgesellerle incelemek büyük anlam taşıyor. Bu analiz, belgesellerin politik yapısını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Daha sonra, komşu ülkelerin sürgün, travma, mücadele ve kayıp olan temalarını Filistinli belgesellerin nasıl canlandırdıklarına dair bir



örnek çiziyorlar. Bu çalışmanın kapsamı, ele almış olduğum altı belgeselin nasıl bir yerel ve uluslararası politik bilinç ve toplumsal seferberlik yaratığına dayanıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Belgesel, Filistin-İsrail Çatışması, Lübnan, Mısır, Ürdün

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADFF	Abu Dhabi Film Festival
DELP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DFFF	Doha Tribeca Film Festival
DIFF	Dubai International Film Festival
IDFA	International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam
MENA	Middle Eastern and North African
PELP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Palestinian-Israeli Conflict**

Firstly, before setting the parameters of this thesis, it is essential to provide a background on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict plays a vital role in understanding the history of the Palestinian national trauma and the documentaries produced.

Until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine was part of the Ottoman empire. As the World War I, came to an end, followed by the dissolution of Ottoman Empire, the British had occupied all of Palestine and brought Palestine under the British mandate through the Skyes-Picot Agreement until 1947. During the mandate period, there had been many controversial promises made by the British to both the Palestinians and the Jews some of which was the Balfour Declaration (1917), as it publically articulated and pledged the creation of a national home for the Jews living in Palestine (Tahhan, 2017). Such a promise brought tensions between Arab and Jewish groups that led to riots in Palestine between 1920-1921. Coupled with 1929 Hebron massacre and the 1936-1939 Arab revolt in Palestine.

However, the commencement of World War II that brought massive costs and violence led the British to hand the Palestinian issue over to the United Nations. On

November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted for the partition of Palestine and approved the British Mandate of Palestine to be the homeland and be a haven for the Jews. Nonetheless, the Palestinian leaders rejected the partition. In short, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict came to be known as a dispute that welded between two national identities who claimed ownership over the same territory. Several attempts have been made for a two-state solution. This solution would entail the creation of the Palestinian State alongside the existence of Israel. Such a solution brought further disagreement concerning the final shape of Palestine and the lands that it will hold. May 15, 1948, turned to be an unforgettable date for the Palestinians as the Israeli State was created. This day came to be known as “Nakba,” which is an Arabic notion that means “great disaster” or “catastrophe” noted as the day of collective trauma of the Palestinians (Nevel, 2017,46).

After all, with the establishment of Israel resulted in the Palestinian catastrophe, which led to the expulsion and dislocation of at least 750,000 Palestinians to distinct geographical locations as refugees along to the destruction of more than 400 rural and urban communities (Nevel, 2017; Peled, 2016). The Nakba had disrupted the Palestinian’s world violently and unsettled a form of collective trauma resulting in extreme emotional distress. Such an event was too traumatic for the Palestinians to absorb (Peled, 2016, 162). Importantly, the Nakba had marked a new era for the Palestinians, as their lives were changed irreversibly by violent uprooting and disarray (Sa’di,& Abu-Lughod, 2007,114). After the loss faced in the wars of 1948 and 1967, Palestinians have failed their struggle to obtain an independent state to protect their identity.

While talking about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it is also requisite to elaborate on the Palestinian right of return. The Palestinian right of return is one of the predominant and frequently occurring themes in the six documentaries examined for the scope of this study along to the other films produced throughout the history as it served for the Palestinian national narrative of struggle (Khalidi, 1994, 29).

The right of return is the cornerstone of international law. It is referred to the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland Palestine, who in 1948 and 1967 fled or were forced to flee. Such an expulsion was a result of the Israeli State assuming that the Palestinians that were displaced were a threat to the maintenance of a sustainable Jewish state. In reality, without expelling the Palestinians out of their homeland, it was not feasible or possible to establish current areas that they hold, as it was not included in U.N. Partition Plan (AFSC, 2008). As a result, the Israeli forces drove the Palestinians out. Notwithstanding, the UN General Assembly called for the return of the Palestinian refugees back to their homeland with the Resolution 194 and Resolution 237 in 1948 and 1967. Albeit, Israel today continues to violate the international law and does not accept the Palestinian refugees' and their descendants right to return to the homeland from which they got displaced. The right of return has been one of the predominant issues that prevent the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Mohamed, 2017).

Importantly, not only did Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon become a second home for the Palestinians since their expulsion from their homeland in 1948, as the Palestinians played an active role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Israel gaining independence resulted in the outbreak of a civil war that included the five Arab league countries; Egypt,

Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan to invade Palestine in 1948 which came to be known as the Arab-Israeli War. Such an effort resulted in the Israeli victory and them gaining additional territories beyond the partition borders (Stein & Swedenburg, 2005, 10). It was an attempt for the Arab League to forestall and prevent the formation of the Jewish state in Palestine. During this attack, the Egyptians gained territories in the south, and the Transjordan took Jerusalem's Old City, but the Arab forces in a short while were halted from Israel. Egypt seized control of Gaza while Jordan took control of West Bank. Importantly, Egypt and Jordan did not only control over Gaza and West Bank, the Palestinians living in those areas were subjected the Egyptian and Jordanian rules (Spangler, 2015, 8). Fast forward to 1967 to Six Day War. Israel wrested Gaza and West Bank that Egypt and Jordan were controlling (9). This event became known as the “Naksa” which means “the setback” referred to the additional displacement of Palestinians because of Israel seizing control over the West Bank and Gaza (Hudson, 2017, 23). Once again proves the essential role that Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon played in the Palestinian history since 1948 till today.

After having provided a summary of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict which was necessary to set the fundamentals of what Palestinian-Israeli conflict means, as I will be elaborating on this notion throughout the study. Additionally, knowing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will give the readers a better sense of why the Palestinian cinema is described as accented, diasporic, and traumatic. I will also provide a detailed explanation of the Palestinian cinema. Even though the cinematic identity of films produced about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can vary, there are specific Palestinian characteristics and features that all films that cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict hold. Therefore, looking

carefully and analyzing the Palestinian cinema is essential to understand how other nations make use of those accepted Palestinian characteristics and how they further add their narrative and voice into the films. However, this study will not necessarily deal with the Palestinian depiction of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It is just that Palestinian cinema is essential to understand the portrayal of the films produced in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Since the Palestinian cinema since the beginning holds a vital role in these countries.

## **1.2. Structure and Methodology**

This section will elaborate on the methods used to collect the information for this study and further lay out the structure of this study. Since the beginning, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been a subject of extensive literature and film production that targeted to a mass audience.

Firstly, the reason why the scope of this study focused on Palestine's neighboring countries had been due to its shared history, as stated above. Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon since Nakba in 1948 had been a second home for the Palestinian refugees. According to the statistics of the UN with the 1948 war, "the numbers of Palestinian refugees were as follows: Lebanon 100,000 refugees, Syria 750,000 refugees, Transjordan 700,000 refugees, Egypt 7,000 refugees, Iraq 4,000 refugees" (Chen, 2009, 43). Generations after generations, the number of Palestinian refugees living in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon increased drastically. The Kingdom of Jordan is the most significant host of the Palestinian refugees. Jordan's total population is of 9.5 million, but around 6 million of

these are only Jordanian with the 3.5 million being Palestinian guests. Additionally, unlike any other Arab host country, Jordan was the only country to grant full citizenship rights to the Palestinian refugees (Ramahi, 2015, 4). The status of being a refugee in Egypt and Lebanon differs from that of Jordan. The offerings of Egypt and Lebanon had been limited regarding the fundamental rights and public social services. Despite the limited offerings Egypt and Lebanon continue to host a considerable sum of Palestinian refugees. In short, the Palestinians did have an impact on living in Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese society.

Secondly, this thesis had been framed from 2010-2018 intentionally to examine the correlation between the beginning of the Arab Spring and its effects in film production in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. To better comprehend, how different factors could have influenced the overall film production. In fact, an event like the Arab spring, which resulted in regime change is an important variable to consider while framing this thesis. One might accentuate that Jordan and Lebanon were not countries that had been affected by the Arab spring. Nevertheless, the impact of Arab Spring in Jordan and Lebanon often neglected in academic and policy analysis of the Arab Spring. Therefore, this thesis will take into consideration and further elaborate on how the constraints within Arab Spring affected the Jordanian and Lebanese cinema.

After the Arab Spring, there has been a decrease in film productions in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, which further brought the insight of why the traditional paradigm in the film industry in the Middle East is starting to change from countries like Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon to nations like U.A.E. and Qatar. Importantly, the government of U.A.E. and Qatar are providing different incentives to facilitate media ecosystem by

attracting a diverse range of media companies and filmmakers. When this is the case, the profound filmmakers of Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon make use of such an opportunity that U.A.E. and Qatar are providing (Piane & Youssef, 2013, 2).

Thirdly, rather than cinematic films, the choice of genre for this study had been documentary. As documentaries, have always been the closest way to relate and present life intrinsically. This affiliation has been the best method by far to accommodate personal essay of the storytellers. Even though capturing the truth has been a convoluted task, compared to other genres of films, documentary films tend to crystallize reality due to its authenticity and aesthetic nature compared to different styles. As Bill Nichols accentuates "authenticity" as the power of documentary cinema's claim to the actuality of the events and happenings, to be reflected in a realistic manner that proceeds on a real spatiotemporal scale (Salazar, 2015, 49). The subject of this study best suits into the documentary film genre, as it is the most reassuring method. As documentaries are the closest way to delineate the feelings of diaspora, exile, trauma, and helplessness.

Fourthly, in the three film festivals DTFF, DIFF, and IDFA the six documentaries were found. Which are *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* (2010), *Gaza Surf Club* (2016), *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* (2013), *This is My Picture When I Was Dead* (2010), *Crayons of Askalan* (2011), and *A world not Ours* (2012). Importantly, these six documentaries were the only ones that met my set criteria while settling for the films. The standards were that firstly, the films had to be of the documentary genre. Secondly, those documentaries had to be directed by an Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese. Thirdly, the documentaries were to be produced on a time scale between 2010 and 2018. When this was the case, finding the six documentaries was difficult without any option left for a

third choice.

It is essential to understand why this study is framed around the three film festivals; Doha Tribeca Film Festival, Dubai International Film Festival, and International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. Films that are submitted to film festivals hold a global standing. As Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong (2011) accentuates on how film festivals provide opportunities for smaller films and new directors to gain a comprehensive festival recognition (7). Worldwide attention is even more critical for documentaries produced about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to make their voice heard. After all, without film festivals, documentaries produced by new directors on local bases are not very easy to learn. Film festivals make it possible for a sensitive subject like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to manifest their thoughts easier in a non-threatening atmosphere (Roy, 2016, 10).

Not only this, film festival holds the importance of bringing critical new cinemas, which otherwise would be forgotten. Through film festivals, specific films can receive recognition and praise transnationally for their ability to transcend the local issue on a different culture. In this case, the film, the filmmaker, and the country in which the film is portrayed gain the recognition of the global audience (Nichols, 1994, 16).

Additionally, the unfamiliarity and the discovery of something new through the lens of the camera has always been a significant incitement for the festivalgoer. International film festivals offer new visions and unique opportunities to look in that culture from a new window. That is why it is not wrong to describe a festival like a museum or tourist sites, by giving a short glimpse to the filmmaker's culture. It is also



important to note, how E. Ann Kaplan (1994) cites in her book the substantiality in looking over other cultures. After all, the critics from a different culture can pay attention to different aspects, and meanings that someone from the same culture would not.

Additionally, film festivals have the power to bring people together in a time where technological developments force people to be further apart from each other. As Preskill and Brookfield (2009) articulate that film festivals “disseminate alternative information, and encourage collaboration and engagement,” which creates a bond and solidarity (199). In a short amount of time, festivals can bring people together, provide entertainment, and stimulate critical thinking and reflection (Roy, 2016, 9). Therefore, the scope of this study had been framed on the three film rather than other forms of commercial film distribution.

Moreover, the festivals that will be analyzed are not of random selection. A reason why I have focused on International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, Doha Tribeca Film Festival, and Dubai International Film Festival compared to other festivals is that they serve and provide a broader array of films about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Meticulous effort has been put forth to find film festivals that included participants to qualify the criteria mentioned above.

In fact, in the past decades, the role of film festivals had shifted from just an “exhibition, wherein politics and regional diplomacy exerted a significant influence, to production and distribution, wherein the presence and influence of economic agents have increased” (Vallejo, 2014, 71). Additionally, even though film circuit is not a distribution network, it is essential to keep in mind that film festivals can be viewed as an alternative

for the distribution network, as several distributors use this an opportunity to learn about the release of the new films (74).

It is useful to understand the objectives of Dubai International Film Festival, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, and Doha Tribeca Film Festival before delving any further. Firstly, Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) supports the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) filmmakers to tell the Arab stories and spread the Arab culture across. With its partnership with North American Tribeca enterprises, the Doha Film Festival also runs the annual Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) (Ferabolli, 2014,173). DTFF gives much attention to DocuDays established with the aim to bring public awareness on specific topics (Van de Peer, 2013, 205).

The intention for the establishment of Doha Tribeca Film Festival had been different than the creation of specific institutes who aimed at bringing the Hollywood productions and creating a Hollywood in the Persian Gulf. For Qatar, whose primary objective was to develop Islamic art museums, national concert halls, and national theaters designed by well-known architects. The desire was to blend the “national narratives of modernity” and “modern imagined nation” that is portrayed in the film and media production (Hijort, 2013,94). The aim was to bring film appreciation into the country by developing a dynamic film industry that would nurture the global audience as well as the local people. DTFF with the motto of “film is life” wanted to bring change the hearts and minds (DTFF, 2018).

Although the film industry is relatively new for Qatar, as it is a bizarrely new country that had been in the fishing and pearl industry. Coupled with the finding of North

Field natural gas deposits recently. Despite such, the daughter of Emir of Qatar, Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani accentuated on her desire to turn Qatar into this education city after being inspired by Tribeca Film Festival in New York (Badt, 2016). Doha Tribeca Film Festival established in 2009 with a social partnership between Doha Film Institute and Tribeca Enterprises with the primary purpose to promote the understanding and awareness of cinema within this area. (Tribeca Film, 2012).

The second film festival that this study will focus is Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) which was established in 2004 with the motto of “bridging cultures, meeting minds.” Along with Dubai International Film Festival came Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF) in 2007 with the quest to bring modernity into the global metropolis that was funded by the revenues made from oil (Wong, 2011, 140).

The United Arab Emirates has performed a drastic change within the film industry. It was not until recently, where there were barely any movie theaters, besides the rundown theaters that showed Bollywood Films for the Indian population living in the Emirates (Yunis, 2010, 2). Today, in the Arab Emirates there are multiplex theaters with the absence UAE films screening. However, there has been an unprecedented investment made into the film industry by the government and the private film production companies to change this and accelerate local film productions. In the mid-2000 with the establishment of the Dubai International Film Festival, there has been an emergence of film culture, which started to take shape very rapidly. That film industry came to be the second most talked topic after petroleum (7). UAE is progressing at a very rapid pace as there exist three significant film festivals already; the Dubai International Film Festival, the Gulf Film Festival (GFF), and the Abu Dhabi Film Festival (AFF). For instance,

DIFF in a short amount of time became a festival of global fame. Despite its global repute, DIFF gives much attention to the regional film industry through the network, marketing, and financing workshops (Malamud, 2011). In the last fourteen years, the Dubai International Film Festival was highly concerned in thriving film culture within the region with bringing together participants from forty-eight countries in thirty-four languages.

Since the subject matter and the driving force of the thesis is about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict which is a matter of human rights issue. Consequently, it would be worthwhile to look over at least one festival like IDFA that has dedicated its focus on documentary films dealing with human rights issues. IDFA is a renowned international film festival that brings together documentaries together in the documentary film world. In fact, IDFA is among the most prominent international film festival with the most selection of projects that are internationally distributed (Geertz & Khleifi, 2008, 205). IDFA first appeared in 1988, as a non-profit organization with the aspiration trying to increase the genre of documentary film across Europe. In fact, IDFA from its establishment in 1988 had served as a blueprint for the film festivals that emerged within that decade (Vallejo, 2014, 69).

A typical forum at IDFA consists of fifty projects from thirty countries around the world, making it one of the world's leading documentary film festivals. In fact, 2,500–3,000 submissions are made to IDFA every year, despite such an entry request seven trusted pre-selectors make an elimination bringing two-hundred fifty films for the annual portrayal. In principle, all films submitted to IDFA have an equal chance of being selected. However, the pre-selectors do give importance to famous documentary

filmmakers whose premieres would attract attention. Additionally, films in IDFA are also chosen based on the filmmaker's ability to attract funds (Vilhjálmsdóttir, 2011, 40).

Despite the high demand for IDFA by filmmakers, IDFA must compete with at least three film festivals in Europe some of which are; Dok Leipzig (Germany), CPH Dox (Denmark) and Doclisboa (Portugal), and to the Sheffield Documentary Film Festival (UK) (Ragazzi, 2011,30). Despite the competition, IDFA stands amongst the well respected and influential documentary forums (Vilhjálmsdóttir, 2011, 42).

From this point, I will elaborate on my research. These six documentaries two from Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon will be analyzed as follows. A key focus will be on thematic analysis of the documentaries. Themes are defined as the reoccurring of specific ideas and thoughts throughout the documentary (Bradley, Curry & Devers, 2007). Subjects of the documentaries will be organized and categorized highlighting similarities that they hold and how they relate to each other.

Importantly, while examining the theme of political documentaries, it is critical and essential to take the social context of when the film had been produced into consideration. Taking the time of production into account is a crucial aspect in better understanding the current social and political context and the level of effect it had on the documentary. (Goldsmith, 1998; Tawil-Souri, 2011).

Further analysis of the documentary will be conducted over the delineation of the marginalized people and the injustices within the documentaries. Through the technique of visceral depiction political documentaries highlight the adverse circumstances and corruption that those marginalized people face. After all, according to Thomas Benson

and Brian Snee (2008), political documentaries are highly concerned about social injustices, nationalism, politics, and historical references. Followed by the unfavorable circumstances in the documentaries comes the critiques posed to the current political or social order that the documentary delineates the social and political injustices of the marginalized people (Nariman, 2006; Wayne, 2008; Sandercock & Attili, 2010).

The documentaries will further examine on how it creates a civic responsibility within the audience by creating a space that encourages the viewer to formulate critical thinking and motivate them for mobilization in public engagement. Paula Rabinowitz (1994) elaborates on how documentaries is a medium that engages with its audience. The nature and structure of documentaries encourage its viewers to take a reflexive approach. While talking about civic responsibility in political documentaries, it is essential to consider for who the films are being addressed. After all, the subject matter of the documentaries could be on local, national, and global relevance (Corner, 2008, 32). Additionally, the documentaries will examine the socio-political context of when the film had been produced. Taking the time of production into consideration is an essential aspect in better understanding the current social and political context to see how it influenced the documentary (D'Souza, 2012, 71). Therefore, using this methodology for the scope of this study will enable me to explore how the documentary film of the three nations is affected by the socio-cultural context and further affects the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

These essential points in political documentaries will serve as a benchmark for this thesis. The findings will then be presented in the form of merged analysis of the documentaries that hold similar answers points examined as stated above. Gradually,

with the data gathered, it will be used try to draw a pattern of differences and similarities that arise within these six documentaries as they portray the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, additional insight and analysis will be provided of why such similarities and differences tend to emerge within the cultural and national representations. In fact, below are the questions that I formulated that will be used as a base while drawing a pattern. How has each nation represented the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? What kind of differences arose in the documentaries of filmmakers from the same country? Are the representations of each nation distinctive or do they hold similarities in the portrayal? Do the representations of nations show change over time that may be related to the shift in the social context?

Even though the Palestinian-Israeli conflict generated dense literature that exists across a wide range of disciplines. This thesis will carve out a new space to understand the Palestinian-Israeli conflict portrayed in internationally circulated documentaries through the lens of Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. My research considers in depth the dynamics of filmmaking in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, and seeks to highlight an understanding of Palestinian-Israeli conflict from their point of view. It will further touch upon the correlation of Arab Spring while discussing Palestinian-Israeli conflict which will contribute to a gap in the literature, as scholars have not yet addressed it.

Additionally, the six documentaries that I will be examining the scope of this thesis; *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, *This is My Picture*, *When I Was Dead*, *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After*, *Gaza Surf Club*, *Crayons of Askalan*, and *A world, not Ours*, has not been the subject of any scholarly analysis before. Moreover, the four documentaries used for this study are not available online. These documentaries could only be achieved

by getting into one-to-one contact with the directors and production companies of the documentaries.

### **1.3. Theoretical Framework**

To elaborate on this, I will accentuate the vital role that political documentaries hold and in specific for the Palestinians compared to another form of film genres. Along with this line, by acknowledging the power that political documentaries. The scope of this study will examine how the six documentaries that I have picked have a concern to mobilize the audience by creating a political consciousness and encourage support on local and global dimension through documentaries.

According to Thomas W. Benson and Brian J. Snee (2008) who have profound studies on political documentaries accentuate on how political documentaries are solid communication medium to mobilize and influence the audience towards becoming a more active citizen. Political documentaries affect the audience by highlighting upon on certain aspects in documentaries to grow more visible and thus create a space for the audience to engage with the social and political dimension of it (Kahana, 2008). Henry Giroux (2011) accentuates on how political documentaries can be the answer for critical thinking and civic engagement by allowing the audience to travel through the presented socio-cultural space and become part of it. In a sense, it is like a “pedagogical weight that other mediums lack” (686). After all, documentaries fill the gap left by commercial cinema by highlighting political and social injustices from specific issues in history (Goldsmith, 1998). Gaines (2007) states political documentaries makes use of the world to change the world.



## CHAPTER 2

### POLITICAL DOCUMENTARIES AND NATIONAL CINEMAS

#### 2.1. Documentary film

Firstly, it is essential to understand and define what documentary means before elaborating the importance that it holds for the Palestinians. Bill Nichols (2010) puts forth that, developing a strict definition of what documentary means has never been an easy task as there is no precise definition of it. However, today it remains along with John Grierson's proposed interpretation of the documentary of the 1930s, which is the "creative treatment of actuality." So, documentary draws on and refers to "historical reality while presenting it from a distinct perspective" (7). However, further elaboration and clarification for Grierson's definition is needed because as Bill Nichols elaborates, the word "treatment" includes storytelling, but such stories have specific criteria that must meet to qualify as a documentary. Long story short, documentary films speak and portray real situations and real people that stems from the historical world but presented from the filmmaker's perspective and voice.

Documentary different from other film forms and photography adds the crucial element of experience that is invoked and evoked through moving image in the way of stimulation (Landesman, 2008, 33). The documentary came to be identified as a "special kind of picture" with a clear purpose dealing with life events and life people, as opposed

to imaginary characters and staged scenes with the aspiration to create one-dimensional reality (Benson & Gile, 2008, 57). The documentary goes beyond the realm as it can serve in an “analogous way to human memory,” it links the past and present in a unified whole (4). Additionally, the documentary film has been going through momentous conventional changes since its early days of “observation” and “omniscient narration” to an impression of objectivity (Landesman, 2008, 34).

As Nichols Bills (2010) elucidates, documentaries are happenings about “real people who do not play or perform roles,” instead they “play” themselves (8). Even though the presentation of self in front of a camera in the form of documentary might be interpreted as a performance, it requires further clarification. The happenings in a documentary differ from that of a screen performance or a stage. As Erving Goffman sheds light in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) that in everyday life real people present themselves in ways that differ from a consciously adopted role or fictional performance. A stage or performance actor represents a specified character and undergoes several roles by training and usage of techniques (Bills, 2010, 9). The depiction of self in everyday life is explicitly different from the performed self. Presentation of self in everyday life goes about with the reflection of the inner self through expressed his or her personality and individual traits rather than suppressing them to adapt or undergo a role. Similarly, documentaries address reality with its primary concern to capture real people being themselves without acting in a specific role (14).

Documentary film is a reproduction of the real-life events that convey a plausible proposal about the lives, events, and, situations of the past. In other words, they represent the historical world by “giving audible, visible shape” to see the historical world directly

rather than shaping the history as a “fictional allegory.” It poses a challenge to John Grierson's description of documentary as “creative treatment of actuality.”

Poststructuralist, postmodernist, and deconstructivist scholars who began to ponder the documentaries ability to perform the two most essential functions of a documentary: “represent the reality and tell the truth” (Bills, 2010, 427).

Even though a documentary’s primary concern is to present the reality in the closest way possible. Importantly, directors portraying the same subject could create different feelings and impressions on the audience. It is the “voice of documentary,” that adds the different and unique perspective in expressing the world that the director looks in (68). Voice of the documentary is the way through which the filmmaker persuades or convinces the audience through the strength of their point of view and power of their voice. In other words, the voice of the documentary is the director's attempt to transfer his or her perspective on to the happenings of actual historical world. It could be understood, as a director's way to manifest his or her point of view on certain historical issues and willingness to share with the audience (71). However, like other genres, different countries and regions have different documentary traditions (28). For this reason on, it is worthwhile to analyze how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is portrayed in documentaries of its neighboring countries by different directors. After all, it is different directors coming from different cultures that add the “voice of documentary.”

Even though, documentary film has been the closest way to achieve the truth there arise many controversies. Such, for example, Hany Abu Assad a very famous Palestinian film director known for exploring the political issues in his homeland. In one of his documentaries, Ford Transit (2002), Abu Assad tried to capture Rajai, who is a

Palestinian transit driver who transports the local people in between Israeli military checkpoints and inside the Occupied Territories with his Ford minivan. Throughout the filming, the camera was always recording as it was never unhooked from its mount, trying to document the conversations taking place between the driver and the transient passengers. Through this documentary, Abu Assad shows the diverse views of the passengers (ordinary people, politicians, and other prominent Palestinians) on a day-to-day basis on topics like the Intifada, suicide attacks, and the occupation. With this film, the audience does not only gain an insight into the life of Rajai, the cab driver but provides an understanding of the complicated situation of the region. The critical point of this documentary is that even though, Ford Transit won the Best Documentary award at 2003 Jerusalem Film Festival and participated in several film festivals including IDFA in 2002. Hany Abu Assad's film received accusations that his film as a “fraud document” (Landesman, 2008, 39).

In other words, a claim has been made that the Palestinian cab driver is a staged actor who undergoes certain humiliation, violence, and despair. However, Hany Abu Assad responded to the accusations by stating that he has a distinctive filmmaking approach that involves 100% fiction and 100% documentary. Ford Transit had not explicitly categorized into the documentary category by Abu Assad himself nor by the film festival committees. Since the film employs documentary-like feature and aesthetics, it was easy for the film to fall into such a misclassification. The main point accentuated in defining what makes a documentary becomes less of a genre indicator and more of an aesthetic strategy as the filmmaker can choose to indicate familiar notions of authenticity (Landesman, 2008, 41).

## 2.2. Political Documentary

For the Palestinian cinema, the documentary film holds different importance. As documentaries delineate the Palestinian struggle and issue of nationhood to convey their message on a global scale. In fact, Elia Suleiman a very famous Palestinian actor and filmmaker states his desire as a filmmaker that;

I do want what you see on the screen to just be a brief notion of pleasure but something that lingers. The idea is to have the images revisited. I want it to be something that also enhances the soul. I want the moment of pleasure to produce an attachment (as cited in AZ Quotes).

Elia Suleiman encapsulated the desires and expectations of Palestinian filmmakers from what they want to delineate in their documentaries. Palestinian documentaries want to tackle the different aspects and problems that the Palestinians go through. Before delving into the significance of documentary for Palestinians, I would like to take the time to elaborate on what political documentaries mean and how they evolved in history. In fact, cinema originated with documentaries. The terminology of documentary was first witnessed in the motion pictures of 1926 in Robert Flaherty's *Moana* (Benson & Gile, 2008, 3). However, a generation earlier, the first commercial films like *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1895) and *Arrival of a Train* (1895) recorded the magic of everyday life as it happened with an absence of artistry deliberately avoided. These first films lacked the concept of a “political” documentary as the films seemed to work on their own. It was not long after that the politicians had acknowledged the “potential benefits” that moving pictures held, from William McKinley at Home (1896) the politicians could quickly employ politics into films. Followed by the shots of the Lumière brothers, who desired to present the euphoria life of the city at the end of the

nineteenth century by touching upon the central tradition of realist art back in the time. While carrying the central realistic mission, documentaries had accomplished the principle of aesthetics and “representational accomplishments in photography.” For the first time with the emergence of documentaries, the moments of everyday life gained importance with the desire to preserve the experiences which otherwise would be doomed to fade in darkness (Aitken, 2013, 2).

As presented above, the short shot by the Lumière brothers did not offer any political argument but provided a scene of the president to the audience. “Film was thus absorbed into the presidential spectacle, framed in an aesthetic of factuality, which was in itself a political effect, much as the many photographs of Abraham Lincoln had been almost a half-century earlier” (Benson & Gile, 2008, 3). Later, starting in the 1920’s, the Soviet Union began to use the potentials of political documentary films. In fact, the early Russian cinema produced documentaries and historical fictions to promote and support the "Marxist ideology and the Communist State." The political documentary for the Soviets along with other nations became an essential asset for the Soviet Revolution along to the World War II (5). For instance, in 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hollywood had produced fictional films that supported the war. Moreover, Nazi Germany used documentary films as an instrument of “domination and intimidation” (6). Since the beginning, the documentaries had been a way to shape political ideologies and far-reaching method of influencing the masses. After World War II, the technological advances coupled with the development of lightweight synchronous-sound equipment which changed the art of filmmaking gave rise to cinema vérité movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (8).

Into the 1990s, the function of documentary films reclaimed in playing a role in shaping thoughts and discussions on the significant issues of the time. With the position that documentaries played in shaping beliefs and opinions, political documentaries began to carry an essential role in political campaigns. By making use of the innovative developments in digital media, filmmakers could efficiently use the potentials of advertising and for political discourses (Benson & Gile, 2008, 14). In fact, in a recent date in 2004, questions have been pondered over how the documentary films of 2004 some of which are: *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Fahrenhype 9/11*, and *Celsius 41.11* had affected or had a significant influence on the election results. The 2004 election was a hard one, as the nation was divided “with the wisdom of the 2003 Iraq invasion and the ongoing occupation” (Benson & Snee, 2008, 105). With the national security remaining a concern affecting the presidential elections substantially. Despite, the pondering going on, what is explicitly evident is the power that political documentary holds and how they can influence the political discourse of the campaign (Oberacker, 2009, 20).

Traditionally, documentaries were used by the filmmakers to “raise consciousness, recruit new members to their movements, challenge power relations, and present new perspectives on cultural issues such as race, gender, and class inequality” and shape the social conscience (Benson & Snee, 2008, 56). After the World War II, there was a shift in paradigm, when the documentary genre established “itself as a legitimate artistic form by demarcating itself from two fields: the field of power. In which the documentary served the function of propaganda, and the field of journalism, in which documentaries were conceived now as educational programs” (Ragazzi, 2015, 27). Documentaries were removed from the “wartime aim of educating the masses” and

evolved into a genre of paternalistic programs designed by the intellectual elites to educate the masses. Some of these which had been produced in the political realm functioning as propaganda are some of the most important documentaries of the 1930s and 1940s which were government commissions funded “with the objective of legitimizing governmental policies or revolutionary films” (27). Some of these films were; *Triumph of the Will* (1935) Leni Riefenstahl was glorifying Nazism, *Misère au Borinage* (1933) the working class is praised by Joris Ivens and Henry Storck, and *Why We Fight series* (1942–1945) were produced to convince the American public for the war effort.

### **2.2.1. Importance of political documentaries for Palestinian struggle.**

After providing a brief historical evolution of the political documentary in history, it is now worthwhile to look at how political documentaries are used for the Palestinian national struggle. Hany Abu-Assad, a well-known Palestinian filmmaker predominant for his film *Paradise Lost* (2005) and *Five Broken Cameras* (2011). In an interview pronounced that even though “Palestinians might not want the occupation to influence the production of the film, in the end, it does influence the film” (as cited in Haider, 2010). Contemporary Palestinian resistance film production all share a prominent theme, and that is the national struggle while living under occupation or in the diaspora. Through films, the Palestinians want to “stereotype the non-violent Palestinians” by highlighting their non-violent resistance form by reaching to the international audience. Significant in this context, Palestinian films not only contribute to the Palestinian resistance through their content but through the portrayal of the potential impact of the



conflict they seek to gain the support of the global audience and call them into the struggle. However, it is essential to note down that the Palestinian resistance would gain more momentum if their film productions are circulated to the international market for broader awareness. Nonetheless, often distribution of films for Palestinian filmmakers does not work efficiently (Adler, 2017, 6).

Political documentaries can efficiently influence changes socio-cultural, political and historical landscapes. Belinda Smaill (2007) articulates that political documentary elicits empathy. As she concludes that emotions are an inseparable part of the political documentaries that affects both the mind and body. It means, above all, emotions contribute to modes of documentary performance and reception. When talking about emotions in the documentary it is not only sadness that is part of emotions, it could be anger, outrage, hope, apathy or pleasure (6). A political documentary is a powerful tool and holds an indispensable role as a communication medium in influencing and moving its audience that should be understood. Additionally, the “pervasive” and “influential” characteristics of political documentaries with its ability to mobilize the youth is a sturdy stand whose power should not be undervalued (Souza, 2012, 3). In short, political documentary plays a crucial role not only in anticipating or shaping the thoughts of the viewers but the promise lies within its competence in the “imperative to imagine them in practice” rather than only portray them as radical alternatives (Salazar, 2015, 47).

Throughout the world, documentary has been a way to bring the voice of the marginalized people or as a tool of resistance. As Martijn van Gils & Malaka Mohammed Shwaikh (2016) accentuate how Palestinian documentary films are non-violent resistance against the Israeli authorities. In fact, the Palestinians are not the only one to use political

documentaries in the form of “non-violent resistance.” For instance, currently in India “where hegemonic discourses of fascism, fundamentalism, and greed are increasingly prevalent,” political documentary becomes a compulsion to be the voice of resistance (Souza, 2012, 43). Since 1947 in India, documentaries in the form of short clips had been filmed based on the wish of the state to promote “responsible citizenships” (17). The documentary films have been an alternative to the mainstream Bollywood cinema trying to mobilize the people.

As mentioned above, for Palestinians, documentaries are a method to fight without weapons (van Gils & Mohammed, 2016,445). A documentary is a non-violent tool for a nation who lacks the military capability to resist against Israel, who would otherwise fail as there is a deficiency to fight against the Israeli troops (446). Despair leaves behind civil forms of struggle and the cultural resistance in the way of films to bestow into the Palestinian liberation efforts in the global context (Brashest, 2015, 170). Therefore, documentary films have been a form of resistance and mobilization that the Palestinians use for their national struggle and a way to reach out to the international community.

Since documentaries deal with real events, real people, and actual problems and narrate the viewers about reality through the quality of truth and authenticity (Bondebjerg, 2014, 14). It is through the documentaries that the Palestinians want to communicate their story and make themselves visible and heard, whose voices have been historically suppressed (Van Gils & Shwaikh, 2016, 443). Documentaries are essential to the cultural memory and Palestinian resistance culture (444). Palestinian films challenge the “mainstream orientalist discourses” by depicting on the “humanitarian” aspect and

focusing on the “ordinary” and “every day” which is “permeated by the extraordinary of the occupation” (445). For this reason, on, the role of documentaries for Palestinians are different than any other form of genres.

Documentaries since the beginning of the Palestinian cinema has been a form of resistance by producing an “unconscious” attempt to create documents to keep the case alive. Films are an essential form of protest at the cultural level with inherent political potential. In fact, the first Palestinian film was a documentary which was about King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia’s visit in 1935 to Palestine based in Jaffa, proving how documentaries since the beginning played an essential place for the Palestinians. Nevertheless, for Palestinians producing documentaries and fictional films are not easy, prominently if they are acquiring the funds from Europe. As the institutes in Europe expect the filmmakers to create films that address to the global audience also rather than only directing them primarily to a Palestinian audience (Van Gils & Shwaikh, 2016, 445).

Despite the fund challenges that Palestinians face, the documentaries produced since the beginning of the First Intifada 1987 captured the attention of the West. Intifadas are known to be the two Palestinian uprisings against Israel that took place in the form of demonstrations along with non-violent boycotting (Vox, 2015). It was during the early years of the First Intifada when many documentaries were produced. However, not all films had been produced by the Palestinians, as many young Palestinians had been introduced to the process of making films as fixers and translators by working with the Western crews. In short, Intifada had a crucial impact on the development of local and global media in the Occupied Territories as well as in the shaping of the Palestinian national identity.

This was important, as the pendulum of Palestinian film production can go global and bring the global audience into the national struggle. Small and divided Palestinian nation's cinema is impressively lively not only in Palestine but it exists in different parts of the world with international support from other filmmakers, students, and activists in many different countries (Shwaikh, 2016, 445, 178). To conclude, the Palestinian cinema aims to document the Palestinian national struggle cinematically to foster the Palestinian national identity, and a means to present counter-narrative to Zionism and Israel (Alexander, 2010, 321). The Palestinian film history different than other cinemas as in that its cinematic representation is defined by its struggle for self-determination since its cinema had emerged under the condition of conflict (327).

### **2.2.2. Issues of National Identity**

Before I delve into talking about the Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese cinema; I would like to bring an emphasis on to the challenges that come forth with national identity in the Middle East. Contemporary Arab cinema characterized as a nomadic cinema. As Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (2015) define Middle Eastern region as an area of "migration," "movement," and "diasporisation" that continues to be the case today (1). Historically the heterogeneous nature along with the demographic shifts within the region created the intertanglement of national identities. The diasporic nature of the Middle East played a crucial role in the lives of the filmmakers, thus making the nationality of the filmmaker's complex. The film industry in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon holds a hybrid identity and acts as a cross-cultural bridge. That is to say, the films produced in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon may belong to multiple

identities at the same time due to the Palestinians living in different parts of the world as a result of forced expulsion from their home country (Khatib, 2008, 16). In the sections to be covered, while comparing the magnitude of Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese cinema, it is possible that the numbers provided could include films that have been produced by Palestinians living within those countries.

A critical side-note that should be taken into consideration while talking about the scope of this thesis came with the bewilderment caused by the complex nature that appeared while categorizing the nationality of the films submitted to the film festivals. Whether the films presented, have to be considered as Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, or Lebanese. The challenge arose while framing the documentaries into a specific nationality. Is the film categorized per primary source of funding, the nationality of the director, or the location of production?

Like the notion of national cinema, national identity cannot be defined by a specific definition as it is a multidimensional concept that is interrelated with culture, memory, society, and politics. In the past decades, with the transnational cinema gaining credence the films produced did not have a strict national boundary as productions existed across countries and cultures. A further challenge occurs with the multiculturalism of the film crew. For instance, the director could be French, and the cast is comprised of several other nationalities this, therefore, brings a challenge while pinning films down to a country or region. However, distinguishing the nationality of a film seems to be further challenged and convoluted when it is carried into the Middle East (Nol Carrol & Jinhee Choi, 2006).

The question I want to pose is concerning to what constitutes a national cinema? What are the conditions for a mode of film “or a specific range of textual practices” to be classified as national cinema? Is there a fixed benchmark or coined definition while categorizing countries into the national cinema? According to, Andrew Highson (2011), there is no single agreed discourse of national cinema, and for that reason, it has been appropriated in a variety of different ways by different people. In general terms, there are some general guidelines to what the national cinema could comprise by establishing a conceptual correspondence between the “national cinema” and “the domestic film industry.” Some of the questions that could be used to understand what national cinema could mean are as follows; “where are these films made, and by whom? Who owns and controls the industrial infrastructures, the production companies, the distributors and the exhibition circuits? Second, the possibility of a text-based approach to national cinema; “what are these films? do they share a common style or worldview?” (36). Third possibility with the consumption and exhibition; “which films audiences are watching, and particularly the number of foreign high-profile- distribution within a particular nation state” (37).

The notion of national cinema had been a “mobilized strategy of culture” in a way to resist against the dominant mainstream cinema (Highson, 2011, 38). It means that this notion of national cinema is used prescriptively of what national cinema could be rather than describing precisely of what national cinema is. Within this discourse, there is no singular definition of what national cinema is rather through descriptions a definition is formulated. Nol Carrol and Jinhee Choi (2006) in their book, further accentuate on how the simplest way to define national cinema could be discerned and identified by its

“nation of origin” (310). In other words, national cinema refers to films that are “produced within a certain nation-state.” Territorial boundaries are essential and play a crucial role in defining the national cinema, as the national cinema is the product of the happening within those territories.

However, as Jinhee Choi (2006) further argues that this method of defining national cinema based on filmmaking location could be challenging. He further accentuates that national cinema is not based on its site of shooting but instead on the ownership of the product. It leaves a modified territorial definition of national cinema to be found on the nationality of the films production studio or company. Further difficulties emerge in defining national cinema through territorial account. Co-production in film productions or co-production among corporation is yet another challenging aspect in determining the ownership of a film and pinning them into a single agreed nationality. In short, the definition of national cinema is somewhat problematic and not explicit by nature and a multidimensional concept (40).

While talking about such challenges, it is worthwhile to keep in mind the problematic and challenging nature of the Palestinians as living under occupation, and diasporic communities have resulted in Palestinians to flee into different parts of the Middle East, but mostly to Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Thus, this led to a complex and contradictory process which makes the task of defining the nationality of the filmmakers in those countries strenuous. Determining the nationality of films produced in Jordan and Lebanon with filmmakers with Palestinian parents who have never been to Palestine before is a challenge. The contradiction with the Palestinian filmmakers must be

accepted. Therefore, for the scope of this study an Egyptian, Jordanian, or Lebanese can be defined based on the territorial boundaries in which they have spent a lengthy sum of years regardless of coming from a Palestinian background. After all, the understanding of national identity is intertextual and undergoes change and process.

Lina Khatib (2008) accentuates in her book that Lebanon and Jordan have been among those countries of ambivalence regarding an identified identity. The notion of “Jordanian” and “Lebanese” continue to be a contested notion of national identity that continues till today. How is a Lebanese or a Jordanian defined? As the intertangement in the Arab world and diversifications tend to make this question complexed that cannot be answered in a direct answer (1). Therefore, it is not very possible to make a sharp cut in trying to classify a filmmaker’s nationality strictly on the place of birth, his or her place of residence, or based on the sources of funding that the filmmaker receives.

That being the case, in such hybridity, it is difficult to draw a distinctive line on national boundaries in defining film as Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese or Palestinian. It is inevitable not to pose the question of how a person is defined as Jordanian or Lebanese? What it contextually means to be a Jordanian or Lebanese. Since much of Jordan’s and Lebanon’s population are people with Palestinian roots. I bring emphasis by drawing attention that for the scope of this study I will be taking the nationality of the director as a parameter to place a documentary within particular national identity.

Importantly, understanding an individual’s identity means examining the dynamic roots by tracing the threads back to its origin. As Stuart Hall points out, “identity has become a ‘moveable feast’: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways



we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us” (Hall, 1992, 277). In other words, individuals undergo specific influences and they consciously or subconsciously adapt and become embedded resulting in a multifaceted identity (Bascuñan-Wiley, 2017, 5). An individual’s identity is greatly influenced by the ideology, culture, and politics within a community. Diasporic individuals go through hybridity in nationalism which could be understood or interpreted as cultural coexistence.

A crucial point that should be accepted while trying to define national cinema is Highsons argumentation that there always exists this cross-cultural movement including filmmaking that comes with globalization and consumptions that turned more transnational. Considering this the films produced within the borderlines of nation states could be hardly considered as “autonomous cultural apparatuses” (2000, 73). Despite such a challenge, for the scope of this study, I will accept the films directed by Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese nationality as part of the cultural apparatuses.

Since the breaking-point of this thesis is looking at the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the scope of the three national cinemas, it is worthwhile to define and delve into what constitutes the national cinema. Importantly, identifying national cinema is further necessary for this study since Arab countries are ethnically diverse and are not as easy to locate. I conclude by drawing attention that for the scope of this study, I will be taking Andrew Higson’s possibility to define national cinema; “where are these films made, and by whom?” I will take the nationality of the director as a parameter to place the documentary within a precise identification and representation of that film.

### **2.3. Palestinian Cinema.**

Even though, the scope of this thesis is not the Palestinian portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, it is essential to understand the distinct characteristics and features of the Palestinian cinema to further understand how the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese cinema portray the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. After all, despite the nationality of producers or directors, there are specific, unchanging features and ingredients when the filmmaker intends to cover the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

After talking about the importance of documentaries for the Palestinian cause and struggle, it is now essential to bring all that under the umbrella of Palestinian cinema. Although the Palestinian population had been so diffused into different parts of the world with their films originating from different places, it is hard to define Palestinian cinema with one definition. What is explicit, despite the dispersed Palestinian population is that they try to delineate a collective identity, an identity on the past and lived memories which is going under constant threat of existence (Alawadhi, 2013, 17). Part of the difficulty in defining the Palestinian Cinema within one context comes from the diasporic nature of Palestinians living in different parts of the world.

The Palestinian films present a collective identity a constant attempt to represent their damaged identities in form of a cultural memory (Dabashi, 2006). Before delving any further in trying to define what Palestinian cinema is, it is essential to situate the Palestinian cinema regarding its historical context. Between 1948 and 1967, George Khleifi (2001) emphasizes it as it as a “silent period” as no Palestinian film production was taking place within Palestine or in exile. The revival of documentary cinema came in

refugee camps in the aftermath of the 1967 Naksa, which aimed to document the events of the period, constructing and shaping the traumatic history in Palestinian cinema within the circles of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The first film unit was established in 1968 by the Fatah, the PELP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and the DELP (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). Initially, the Palestinian cinema began almost exclusively in the form of documentary with political content (Hudson, 2017, 1). Due to the living standards in refugee camps and being exile with the lack of infrastructure, funding, and equipment the Palestinian cinema had conveyed to other Arab countries (Friedman, 2010, 2).

In 1973 the filmmaker Mustafa Abu-Ali commenced the Palestine Cinema Group in Lebanon, who claimed to be the Avant-Garde of Arab cinema strived to unite the filmmakers under one umbrella. The group's primary objectives were self-representation and documenting the life and struggle of Palestinians (Friedman, 2010, 3). Despite the ambitious aims of the group, it was short-lived when Israeli forces in 1982 invaded Beirut, forcing them for relocation to Tunis after the PLO headquarters were destroyed. However, the PLO continued facing difficulties as their film archive was “lost, either destroyed in battle or confiscated by the Israeli Army” (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008, 3).

The turmoil situation in Palestine created a diasporic nature within the Palestinian population which led them to diffuse into different life experiences. Therefore, the Palestinian cinema should not be limited in defining strictly based on the location of the filmmaker or the director's nationality or place of residence, as the Palestinian cinema is encapsulated in hybridity (27).

With the end of the first Intifada 1990s, the Palestinian Cinema, as well as the Arab Cinema was undergoing a “New Wave” within cinema. It was in early 1990's when the Palestinian and the Arab filmmakers diffused their films with a higher international cinematic awareness with managing to maintain both regional and cultural specificities in the films produced (Khoury, 2007, 22). Although Palestinian filmmakers may use cinematic techniques of Europe, the films remained still entrenched within the Palestinian culture and history. Today Palestinian cinema is increasing, as more films are produced and distributed locally and globally about Palestine and its citizens that live-in diaspora.

Importantly, with this new wave, Palestinian cinema had been less concerned about where the films were being produced instead the emphasis was given to the narration. This shift attempted to extract Palestinian narrative through the story of the life of actual people and real place, rather than accentuating on the repetitive theme of destruction. It was a way to bring substantial symbols for Palestinians. For instance, focusing on the importance of land or olive trees is a symbol of the Palestinian nationality and identity (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008, 4). It is not facile to discuss the Palestinian cinema regarding a specific genre or style, what is explicit in thematic focus is the political desire and dream to have a free Palestine and national self-determination. Palestinian cinema is composed of mostly documentaries produced in the diaspora, in the refugee camps of Jordan and Lebanon which came to be known as Palestinian Revolution Cinema (Ginsberg & Lippard, 2010, xlvi). It was, “in exile that “resistance was formulated, that the ideology of armed struggle and revolution which was asserted as a method to overcome processes of victimization” (Schulz, 2003, 2).

From this point, I would like to take a moment and pose the most controversial question of what Palestinian cinema is or what constitutes a Palestinian film? Is it the director that makes the film Palestinian? Do Palestinian filmmakers who have lived and raised in diaspora count as Palestinian filmmakers as well? Must the funding for the film come primarily from Palestinian sources? These are just a few of the several questions that blur the definition of what is framed as the Palestinian film. Indeed, these queries have been confounding both film scholars and film industry regarding the existence of a Palestinian national cinema. Livia Alexander (2005) is among one of the film-scholars who proclaims that there is no Palestinian cinema regarding the traditional sense of a national cinema that “relies primarily on funding and government support from one particular country” (as cited in Hudson, 2017). Additionally, the notion of “national,” alone, is no longer sufficient to define a Palestinian cinema “whose financial, production, and distribution processes, as well as directors and film content, are in transnational, marginal, hybrid spaces” (Hudson, 2017, 2). The bewilderment on how to classify films that are of Palestinian origin in film competitions and festivals further demonstrates the strain of terminology in this case.

Although the national government supports no film industry in the West Bank and Gaza, the notion of “national” continues to be an ultimate driving force in shaping the Palestinian cinema. However, classification of the Palestinian cinema does not necessarily fit into the cinema with traditional standing nor a conventional definition of a national cinema (Alexander, 2005,2). This problem goes beyond in just defining what Palestinian cinema is.

Elia Suleiman, a Palestinian filmmaker, faced nationality difficulties in United

States Academy Awards in 2011. Suleiman's film *Divine Intervention* (2002) was denied an Oscar, as the Academy stated the films were to be submitted by the government of the film-makers home country and during that time the Academy did not accept Palestine as a country. Even though the Academy denies such claims, it cannot be denied that three years after, the public helped pave the way in the nomination of Eli Suleiman's film *Paradise Now*, with the Academy settled on listing "Palestinian Territories" as a country's film of origin (Hudson, 2017, 3).

It is worthwhile to note that, filmmakers concede the problematic and challenging nature of the Palestinian Cinema. As the Palestinian citizens face much trouble living under occupation and diasporic communities along to the limitation and complications that arise as films must be produced in the complex and contradictory process and thus makes the task of defining the Palestinian cinema strenuous regarding an assigned territory. However, one characteristic of the Palestinian cinema without doubt like other cinemas that had been developed in exile and displacement emphasize on the thoughts of lost "nature-and-nation unity" with a dream of a utopian homeland (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008, 30).

### **2.3.1 Palestine as accented, diasporic, and traumatic cinema.**

Throughout the literature, Palestinian cinema is described and defined by three keywords; accented, diasporic, and traumatic. However, it is essential to understand accented, diasporic, and traumatic in the context of the Palestinian cinema.

Firstly, it is crucial to define what "accented" means before contextualizing it to Palestinian case. According to Oxford Dictionary, accented is defined as "spoken with or

characterized by a particular accent.” An important aspect that should be touched upon while elaborating on the Palestinian cinema is its exilic and diasporic cinema which is categorized as “accented cinema” by Hamid Naficy (2001). Before, discerning “accented cinema” it is worthwhile to see how Naficy defines exile since he uses that notion to elaborate on the meaning of “accented cinema.” He refers to external exiles: individuals who left their home country with or without consent and “maintains an ambivalent relationship with their previous and current places and cultures,” with the desire to return to their home one day (12).

It is important to note that people who live in exile and diaspora produce different films than those who live under occupation. Although defining accent of any given cinema is not absolute and convoluted, it depends on a variety of situational factors that affects the meaning. With a closer glance, Hamid Naficy (2001) elaborates on the concept of “accented cinema” by some common characteristic that all accented cinema shares. Some of these are the themes of the imagined homelands with the director of the film being tied to exile (40). While defining “accented cinema” Naficy (2001) includes the position of the director in relation to his or her homeland and the methods that he or she chooses to use to convey and create accented films along with common themes. The notion of accented cinema has been useful for “defining films of exiles and displaced persons worldwide.” In the case of Palestine, accented cinema has been a concept used to define the character of the entire cinema (41). Usually, scholars categorize films as Palestinian without elaborating of what constitutes the Palestinian cinema or film (Hudson, 2017, 15).

As Hamid Naficy highlights, the Palestinian cinema is an example of a unique

cinema in the world as it is structurally exilic and “made in the conditions of internal exile in an occupied Palestine or under the erasure and tensions of displacement and external exile in other countries” (Naficy, 2006, 91). In both the accented cinema and the Palestinian cinema, the director holds great importance as they occupy numerous positions of being a writer, director, producer, and sometimes even the actor.

It is also essential to draw attention to the critical distinction between the Palestinian accented films and other forms of accented films in other countries. Different from the Algerian and Turkish accented cinema, which are predominantly filmed in single country such as France and Germany. Palestinian films, on the other hand come from ninety-one diverse and heterogeneous countries including Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, and the United States (Nacify, 2006, 96). Even though the Palestinian cinema is typically and structurally exilic, it is not an unpretentious task to systematically identify the characteristics and qualifications of a film considered as Palestinian.

Secondly, the word “diaspora” is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary, as the Greek term meaning “dispersion.” Historically this word had been used for the first time to describe the status of the Jewish history in the sixth century B.C. When Babylon’s forced the Jews out from Israel resulting in a subsequent scattering of the Jewish people to different parts of the world. Since then the term diaspora is used to refer to the people living outside of their homeland or natal country. As Helena Schulz (2003) points out on the paradox with the historical usage of the word “diaspora.” With the establishment of the State of Israel and the with the objective to create a home for the Jews, diaspora started to be used for the dispersed Palestinians living as refugees in different parts of the world (1).



Careful attention should be given to the terms “exile” and “diaspora” as they are used interchangeably, especially in the Palestinian case. Exile represents the movement itself from the homeland. On the other hand, the diaspora is the life away from the homeland. Additionally, both exile and diaspora begin with “trauma, rapture, and coercion,” with people scattering into different parts of the world. Exile can be individualistic or be collective. Diaspora, on the other hand, is collective in both its “origination” and its “destination” (Naficy, 2001, 14).

Although a definition had been provided above, it is essential to note that the notion of “diaspora” is complex and problematic by nature. In the past, it has been used to describe one unique case the Jewish example. However, today it is used to describe many other cases. The term “diaspora” started to face complications when this word had been used as a metaphor to point the mobilization of people in a global condition in which migrants are (Cohen, 1997, 5). Diaspora relates to the group of people who had been dispersed out of their homeland by force or necessary conditions to at least two other countries (Schulz & Hammer, 2003, 8). It is important to note that not everyone living outside of their home country is deemed as living in a diaspora community. Robin Cohen (1997) puts forth some of the characteristics of what is the diasporic community is:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. Collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, and achievements;
4. An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate (26).

The third way that the literature describes the Palestinian cinema is traumatic. Trauma is indescribable in its impact on individuals. Both Freud and psychological theories of trauma draw on how trauma is an existing repressed memory and even after a period of latency the repressed memories tend to surface out with the possibility of disturbing and damaging the experiences of the present and affect an individual's behavior (Meek, 2010, 5). Just as it is stated by Gaylyn Studlar and David Dessler (as cited in Khatib, 2008, xix):

For one to be healed, one must recall the memory of the trauma which has been repressed by a sense of guilt. Otherwise, a 'faulty' memory or outright amnesia covers the truth, which lies somewhere deep in the unconscious. The more recent the trauma, the more quickly the memory can be recalled; the more severe the original trauma, the more completely it is repressed. In this respect, cultures can be said to act like individuals – they simply cannot live with the overwhelming guilt. Like individual trauma, cultural trauma must be 'forgotten', but the guilt of such traumas continues to grow. However, as Freud notes, the mechanism of repression is inevitably flawed: the obstinately repressed material ultimately breaks through and manifests itself in unwelcome circumstances.

In the Palestinian case, the notion or concept of trauma refers to the national trauma that the Palestinians have suffered rather than the trauma of individual experiences. Coping with Palestinian historical narrative has been a hard convoluted one. One of the reasons was the absence of a national story, which was the result of the exilic condition as the Palestinians have replaced their historical approach by being a refugee that does not lend itself in the formation of a Palestinian history (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008, 2). Gertz and Khleifi use the term "trauma" to refer to Nakba (1948) and Naksa (1967). As stated above, Nakba which means "the disaster" that refers to the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland with the establishment of the State of Israel. While, Naksa means "the setback" which refers to the additional displacement of Palestinians because of Israel seizing control over the West Bank and Gaza (Hudson, 2017, 23). Just

like Hany Abu-Assad, an internationally known Palestine director had articulated in an interview with Sabah Haider in 2010, on how trauma is a theme for most Palestinian films as it is beyond being trauma, it is “psychological trauma, physical trauma, and unconscious trauma; it’s all one big thing. Even after we get our rights back, we still must recover from that trauma” (Haider, 2010).

The trauma in Palestinian history affects its films, as it tries to confront the trauma by forming the account through a continuous historical approach leading from the past to present and the future. This feeling of trauma excavates for Palestinian filmmakers to retell stories of war. Trauma has been as a result of the Nakba in 1948, as the Palestinians were expelled from their homeland. This is an unforgettable form of trauma for them with part of the trauma insisting on the right to return. Additionally, Palestinian history resembles other histories of displacement and exile, in which their everyday existence is in a continuous nostalgia with dreaming of a “nature-and-nation unity” and the “utopian homeland” (Meek, 2010, 3). Palestinian history along with histories of exile, diaspora, and trauma that could be understood regarding melancholy.

Trauma cannot be left in the past quickly, as it continues to remain as a living event or experience that is entirely present rather than solely being in the memory since the past replaces the present. The more problematic the present is, the more trauma will be retrieved in the form of nightmares and flashbacks. Which makes it a vicious cycle that is hard to break free from and forget the initial trauma (Haider, 2010). Trauma does affect the content of film just as the film theorist E. Ann Kaplan (1993) accentuates on how “trauma produces new subjects” (6). In this case, cinema for the Palestinians became a tool to effectuate a national reconciliation and to serve a role for national therapy.

### **2.3.1. Limitations in the Palestinian cinema.**

From this point on, I will elaborate on the limitations that the Palestinian cinema faces that prevents the marginalized Palestinians to reconcile their traumatic feelings. Palestinian cinema faced many difficulties, some of which is the production and distribution of films within the Occupied Territories. Such restrictions and limitations imposed to the Palestinian society had a significant impact on the cinema and their way of living. These limitations are governed by physical barriers such as the Separation Wall, inspection checkpoints, and concrete roadblocks. In fact, in 2007 Israel began to refer the Palestinian residents living in West Bank whose registered address was Gaza Strip as the “illegal aliens” even if they had their registered papers (36). Miriyam Aouragh (2011) elaborates how “curfews have a particularly paralyzing effect on the society” (3). When Israel applies curfews militarily they happen without any early warning resulting in the business, government offices, schools, hospitals, and pharmacies to close and become inaccessible. Curfews can be imposed at midday via loudspeakers telling everyone to return home, and the city soon turns into a ghost town.

Several other factors affect the Palestinian cinema. One of the perceivable but at the same indiscernible fact is that Palestine is not a free nation. For instance, free movement is and has always been a big problem for Palestinians. As Nadia Abu-Zahra and Adah Kay (2013) articulate in their book, how the Israeli Border police were training young Jews on using M16s (semi-automatic rifles) and hunt down any Palestinian workers without the “movement permits” (2). Living in an occupied territory is unutterably hard as there are separate permits that the Palestinians must carry around. For

instance, a worshiper who wants to attend Friday prayers in Jerusalem holds on a different permit than a cleric. Even the medical permits differentiate between physicians and ambulance drivers. In short, freedom is insufficient in Palestine, as Israeli police can stop anyone who they believe is an Arab in West Jerusalem and demand for an ID check. After all, Israeli polices hold power to detain anyone who does not have their ID or who cannot prove their identity (10).

The restrictions that the Palestinians must face are not limited to movement. Israel regulates and controls what comes in and out of the Palestinian territory. According to the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights (2017), Israel limits the import that comes into Gaza and almost wholly prohibits the exports that go out of Gaza. Israel claims that this is a way to prevent Hamas from acquiring weapons resulting in a crackdown on food, medicine, and other goods (Hamze, 2016). Which also brings limitations on the import of equipment that is essential for filming. Nahed Awwad a Ramallah based filmmaker and recipient of the New Horizons award in Al-Jazeera International Documentary Film Festival in an interview with Kamran Rastegar (2004) accentuated on how she had to borrow a camera from her friend; while she was filming two of her documentaries and used a simple editing software on her computer.

Another difficulty that arises with the limitations imposed by the Israeli government is censorship. Censorship of cinema in Israel is very conventional as it exists both officially in Israel's legislation and unofficially in "various forms of self-censorship" (Friedman, 2011, 64). There is a censoring body, the Council for Review of Films and Plays also known as the Israeli Theatre and Movie Censorship Board that regulates films. Even though the censorship of theater abolished in 1989; the board

continues to regulate censor for films today. Distinct from other censorship board in Israel there is also IDF military censor, whose primary goal is maintaining the security and inspect all forms of publications and films in Israel (65).

For instance, in 2003 the Censorship Board banned the Palestinian-Israeli director Mohammed Bakri's documentary *Jenin, Jenin* (2002), which articulates the Israeli army's invasion of the refugee camp in Jenin, West Bank. The Israeli board of censors banned the documentary accenting that it is one-sided propaganda and that the documentary contains potentials for political incitement. The distorted presentation of events could lure the public to think that Israeli soldiers have committed war crimes (Steele, 2002).

To enumerate my point with a different example, Israeli government banned the peace workers' entry into the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli forces broke their cameras and transferred the Palestinians back to their cities who were using cameras against the Israeli occupation to reveal the Israeli inhuman practices, which according to Israel was performed for security measures (Alraee, 2014, 24). All this was to film the Palestinian documentary the *Five Broken Cameras* (2011) by Emad Burnat, which won the Oscar for the Best Documentary Feature (2013). This documentary outlines on how the Israeli forces broke the five cameras, used by Burnat, to film peaceful demonstrations held in the West Bank. In a different case, a Palestinian filmmaker Rashid Masharawi (2005) asserted in an interview with Kamran Rastegar, how difficult it was for him to make his first Palestinian short fiction film under the Israeli occupation as they were not allowed to make films before the first Intifada under Israeli law. He further accentuates on how he did many maneuvers to shoot the film. As he used his Palestinian friend, who

had working permit in Israel for the production to be under his name. Rashid Masharawi further used his other German friend, to pretend it was his film and not the Palestinian Rashid's film. Rashid took many maneuvers secretly to shoot this film (as cited in Rategar, 2015).

As a result of such constraints in movement, the Palestinian society had to make a shift towards the television industry rather than going to cinema theaters. Restriction of movement in Palestine has a significant impact in the lives of the Palestinians, as it affects from where a person can live, to the amount of visit a person can pay to the family members (Sela, 2014, 31). When this is the case, the Palestinians try to meet their entertainment need through televisions. Compared to other technological devices the penetration of TV in Palestine is relatively higher. In fact, due to such constraints television industry has turned to be part of the traditional culture substituting it for the cinema theaters. However, the Palestinian television culture is somewhat new as to regional and international television stations, as it was only after the Oslo Accords in 1994 when TV was born in Palestine. In fact, Palestinian TV has suffered from a different kind of a problem, and that was despite all the efforts at creating television stations, whether state-run or private, they did not produce quality local programming (33).

Although international and regional funds have made available to Palestinian filmmakers. It could be said that almost no funding had been flowed from the Palestinian authority, local NGOs, or the private sector to the television industry. Instead, the external funding was employed for making documentaries or features that try to tell the Palestinian narrative (Kuttab, 2014). It once again confirms how documentaries hold an indispensable role in Palestinian national struggle as the international funds are all

reserved for a specific purpose. Through such documentaries, the Palestinians can resist against Israeli occupation and reach out to the global audience.

So far, I have refined on how the Israeli government posed restrictions on the Palestinian society that affected the cinema industry. Now it is worthwhile to give a closer look at how the Palestinian government brings limitations into the cinema. It could be inferred from the accounts of Palestinian writer-director Sweilem Al-Absi who pronounces that “cinema in Gaza is like writing on rocks with your fingers,” he adds on to say the difficulty is not the only shortage of funds, equipment, and studio facilities that is the difficulty for filmmakers in Palestine. Since the rule of the Islamist Hamas party in 2006 “cultural censors are fraying the already threadbare local movie industry” (Al-Mughrabi, 2011). For instance, in the case of the Palestinian director Khalil al-Muzzayen “Masho Matook” (“Something Sweet”) portrays the interaction between the Israeli troops and children playing soccer in Gaza.

Even though the film was submitted to the Cannes Film Festival, the local screening was rejected by Hamas due to the scene where the “Israeli soldiers appreciatively eye a comely Palestinian woman who breezes past them” (al-Maghrabi, 2011). Further, in the film, there was a scene where the Palestinian woman was smiling and looking at the Israeli soldier which is found to be inappropriate and unreal by the Culture Ministry director Mustafa al-Sawaf claiming that a Palestinian woman would never do this.

It is essential to note that the primary goal of Hamas is to fight for the “recognition of the legitimate rights of Palestine” (Harub, 2010, 15). The Islamist



ideological frame shapes Hamas, and through these values, the movement seeks as an inspiration to mobilize the people. “Resistance” is an essential notion for Hamas, which could be encountered from its establishment name in 1987 as “the Islamic Resistance Movement.” The tensions between Palestine and Israel along with the constraints that the Israelis had placed on the Palestinians created a different impact in the Palestinian society and resulted in mixed reactions. This portrays how censorship does exist both by the conservative Hamas and the Israeli government.

Although the political makeup of the Gaza strip is not the central focus of this study, it is still essential and worthwhile to analyze the relationship between politics and cinema. Importantly, the two of the six documentaries that this thesis; *Gaza Surf Club* (2016) and *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* (2010) focus on Gaza directly, therefore providing a political background is essential to understand the documentaries better.

#### **2.4. National Cinemas**

From this point on, the following sections will seek to outline the broader socio-political and historical context of the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese cinema which will be necessary for setting the background for the six documentaries that will be examined. Drawing historical map is relevant to understand the general context better and establish a more comprehensive framework while framing the national discourse of Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As I firmly believe that, understanding or looking at a national cinema in its historical context is significant to discern the present.

Before taking any step further, I would like to give a brief articulation on Arab Spring and its effect on the society and culture before talking about the national cinemas.

In fact, several scholars articulate that the Arab Spring is considered as a culture war. However, by culture war Watenpaugh does not touch upon Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilization." It is a different understanding, with the Arab Spring different activists and artists were responding to the happenings by the arts that they produced (Watenpaugh, 2016, 251). For instance, with the fall of the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, the society and culture flourished once again with the proliferation of art, culture, and literature. For that reason, on Arab Spring is not only encountered and accepted as a political revolution but at the same time a cultural revolution. With the cultural revolution, the Egyptians had the urge to express themselves through creative forms and means.

In fact, videos have been one of them. Videos had been a predominant driving force during this cultural revolution. The videos produced were appealing for both the local and global audience, which focused on different dimensional problems of Egypt. However, mainly the videos tried to shed light upon the positive and negative aspects of Egypt. Through this way it is hoped that necessary changes will be taken. Along to the video production, music has also been a strong part of the cultural revolution. The Egyptians were using music as a medium to bring awareness to certain social problems. One of these problems had been Nile Project which aimed to overcome environmental challenges through works of the musicians (Zakzouk, 2016). In short, with Arab Spring there not only appeared a paradigm shift regarding to film productions but also a shift occurred in the mindset of the society, as the local people started to overcome problems through the usage of art in form of videos and music.

### **2.4.1. Egyptian cinema.**

To begin with, Egypt also known as the “Hollywood on the Nile” since the beginning has dominated the Arab cinema with holding an impressive “well over 3,000 feature films made since the mid-1920s by around 400 directors” (Armes, 2010, 7). The success of Egyptian cinema began with featuring the actuality, which attracted the attention of the foreign tourists and local elites. The success received from these films led to the establishment of several famous studios in Egypt in 1936 (Ginsberg &Lippard, 2010, xxvii). It makes sense why the Egyptian cinema tends to stand out from the rest of the Middle Eastern cinema.

Furthermore, cinema culture has been an inseparable part of the Egyptian history. In 1896, few months after the screening of Lumière brother in Europe it was shown to an “exclusive Egyptian audience” in Alexandria (Shafik, 2003, 10). Presenting films in theaters was a common tradition that by 1908 as there was already five film theaters in Cairo and Alexandria. Historically speaking, Egyptian Cinema has always been very active. It was only after the Six Day War in 1967, which weakened the public Egyptian film industry but on the other hand, strengthened the private side of the Egyptian film sector (14).

With the advent of sound, Egyptians developed a keen interest towards art in the form of musical theater which added a unique touch and feel to the Egyptian Cinema. In other words, Egyptian film industry was making benefit off the popular Egyptian songs and singers in the films which are widely known all over the Arab countries. The commercial exploitation of the popular songs has hampered the development and

competence of other Arab Countries (Armes, 2010, 24). In the light of the musical films, genres of melodrama and farce have been some other factors that brightened the Egyptian film industry. Along with this, the successful nationalist-oriented entrepreneurs played a vital role in the formation, development, and success of the national production in Egypt (13). The films produced in Egypt go beyond the borders of Egypt by reaching throughout the Arab World. To such an extent that the Egyptian films with its high consumption by other Arab Countries induced the audience to acquire the Egyptian dialect, which turned as an advantage over its competitors from Tunisia, Algeria, and Syria for in the distribution of the films to other Arab regions. Additionally, nowhere outside of Egypt in the Middle East is there any sufficient support for locally produced films without taking into consideration state aid, foreign co-production, or external funding (8).

Egyptian Cinema which is perceived as the oldest cinema in the Middle East, since the Nakba in 1948 had a great interest in the Palestinian cause and struggle. It was not only political support but support through films, as many Egyptian fictional films produced about Palestine. One of these had been *A Lady from Palestine* (1948) directed by Mahmud Thou Alfaggar, about a young Palestinian woman who fell in love with an Egyptian Pilot whose plane fell on to a Palestinian village. Followed by the film *The Land of Peace* (1957) which was about a group of Egyptian fighters who decided to carry an offensive attack against Israel. A Palestinian family hosted the Egyptian fighters, who then fell in love with the daughter of the Palestinian family and later gets married to her. In fact, this is the first film to be filmed within the Occupied Territories of Palestine

(Alraee, 2014, 26). These are just two of the several films produced about Palestine by the Egyptian cinema.

Haven seen the historical cinematic transition of Egypt. It is now worthwhile to give a closer look at how the Arab Spring has changed the existing paradigm in Egypt. The scope of this study is not necessarily to focus on the Arab Spring directly, but rather to evaluate the preliminary outcome of Arab Spring. In other words, how regime change along with economic constraints affected the cinema sector in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. In short, through analyzing Arab Spring and its effects on Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan, I will try to understand how it could have affected the number of film production.

When talking about Arab Spring, the shifted strategic balance is usually what has been focused, while the cultural aspect is neglected and overlooked. In fact, an event like the Arab spring, which resulted in several regime changes is an important variable to consider while framing this thesis. In 2010, specific countries in the Middle East and Africa went through a wave of political change with unrest sweeping across the region. The protests or so-called the “Arab uprising” had its roots into different factors. Shortly it could be summed into issues of “systematic violation of human rights, suppression of political opposition, the gathering of wealth and power, poverty, government corruption, high unemployment, and, the refusal of the Arab citizens to accept the current status quo” (Schwartz, Martini, Kaye, 2013, 1).

As Engy Aly (2016) enunciates that in twenty years a decline had been marked in the quality of films produced in Egypt, however in the last decade in addition to the quality, the number of films had dropped drastically. During the 2013 Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) the top hundred Arabic films were to be screened. Out of the

hundred films that were screened thirty-five of it was compromised of Egyptian films that were produced between the 1940s and the 1960s, while only three from the 1990s and onward. Importantly, those years the Egyptian government heavily funded the film industry as it was profoundly believed that having high-quality films coupled would be a prestigious return for Egypt.

However, in the last Cairo Film Festival on November 2017, which is also known as the region's oldest film festival is languishing without any Egyptian film in the opening nor the official competition. In Cairo Film Festival there was “hundred-seventy-five films from fifty-three countries in eight sections,” but not even one film was Egyptian (Missori, 2017). Youssef Rizkallah director of Cairo Film Festival accentuated that “Egyptian non-commercial movies are in crisis” with the absence of a state fund for new films, he stressed on how the Egyptian filmmakers were now moving to Abu Dubai for financial reasons in addition to attending the new Festival of Gouna (Ibrahim, 2015).

This was reasonable and profitable for both the Egyptian filmmakers and film production companies in Abu Dubai. A significant problem that Dubai had was in the absence of infrastructure and an educated population who could service and use the investments and film funds granted by the government-owned Abu Dhabi Media Company to produce films (Yunis, 2010, 7). It makes Dubai highly dependent on importing skilled and creative filmmakers from different countries as the UK, US, and Canada, and the Levant countries. The oil-rich nations use their film funds and expensive film facilities to attract successful filmmakers to prompt their regional film industry.

The glory days of the “Hollywood on the Nile” did not continue with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011. Egypt has long sustained a Golden Age powered by the

mighty Studio Misr, but the film industry suffered a devastating blow with the outbreak of Egyptian revolution. Seven years after the disastrous effects of the revolution Egypt is recovering slowly (Monks, 2016).

The producer and executive board member of Egypt's Chamber of Cinema, Sherif Mandour pronounced how after the revolution, the people were even afraid of going to the film theaters as it was not secure (Monks, 2016). However, the difficulty was beyond just being able to go to the film theaters as "Egypt, Lebanon and Syria have stalled or dried up," concerning the film industry (Kamin, 2015). Intishal Al Timimi, director of Arab programming for the Abu Dhabi Film Fest, explained that in Egypt compared to Lebanon and Syria the cinema did not dry up entirely instead of seeing forty films a year it is now about ten to fifteen films (2013).

Additionally, after the Arab Spring, the Egyptian government posed certain limitations and constraints. Despite this, the Egyptian government is also taking initial steps to bring the Egyptian cinema back to its old days. For instance, the Egyptian government has made strokes by increasing funding for filmmakers "from twenty million Egyptian Pounds (\$1.11million) to fifty million (\$2.77 million) per year," to regain pre-eminence. Despite the increase in government incentives, on the other hand, filmmakers are in big debt. Mohammad Mashish; an Egyptian producer, asserts that "most production companies owe growing debts and are not capable of settling them" (Mouni, 2016). With the Arab Spring, Egypt lost its film industry to its new rivals Morocco, Algeria, U.A.E, and Qatar who stole the light of the Egyptian cinema. Notwithstanding, this Sherif Mandour pronounces that Egyptian cinema is hopeful that it will thrive again since Egypt

has an advantage over its rivals as the Egyptian dialect is the only dialect that could be understood in all twenty-two Arab countries (Monks, 2016).

In short, the Arab Spring had created a gap for other opponents to fill in, while Egypt and Lebanon were busy dealing with the residuals of Arab Spring. As mentioned above, Egypt had established itself as the leading media ecosystem in the whole Middle East with its indigenous actors, directors, and other artists coupled with the vibrant music industry. Lebanon kenneled for its “deep talent pool,” TV shows and commercials had faced time of turmoil. The rise numerous film festivals in the region some of which are; Gulf Film Festival (GFF), Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF), Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF), and Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) emerged. With the primary objective to promote “the creation of local Arabic content” (Youssef &Piane, 2013, 11).

I want to conclude with a question. Livia Alexandra who “argues that there is no Palestinian cinema in the traditional sense of a national cinema that relies primarily on funding and government support from one particular country” (Hudson, 2011, 2). If according to Livia Alexandra (2005) national cinema is interpreted as having domestic funds. Then what happens to Egypt who is going through such economic shortages and constraints. It is worthwhile to question if according to Livia Alexandra Egypt is still considered national cinema in the traditional sense, as the government cannot fund its filmmakers as they are moving to Dubai for better opportunities. Which further brings the question what does it mean for a national cinema to be in the traditional sense when there is no one explicit definition of a national cinema.

#### **2.4.2. Jordanian cinema.**



Jordan has been the home of the Palestinian cinema, as it was born in exile in 1969 when the Palestinians were seeking refuge in Jordan. The development and progression of the Palestinian cinema continued to prosper in Beirut, Lebanon where the Palestinians found shelter with the departure of PLO members from Jordan in 1970 (Geertz & Khleifi, 2005, 12).

Although, the Palestinian cinema was born in Jordan. Jordan had never been a country that was solid in its film industry. As the Jordanians never held an incitement for national film production as other national cinemas felt more thrilling for them. According to a research conducted in 2008, Jordanians are mostly interested in Hollywood blockbusters and Egyptian films compared to films. After all, the desire of what the audience wants to see on the big screen does affect the overall film industry and the number of film theaters. In fact, the lack of film culture confronted from the decline of movie theaters in Jordan. The expansive start in the film industry had reversed itself. In the 1920s there were about thirty-two film theaters that were in Jordan, but by 2008 there was only twenty-two film theater. The decline in the number of film theaters can be associated with the lack of film culture in Jordan (Dabis, 2011).

To enumerate my point better, it was during the 1950s and 1960s when the Palestinian pioneer Ibrahim Hassan Sirhan produced the first two feature films, and between 1958-2008 a total of only twelve films had been produced in Jordan making Egypt the center of Arab film world (Malamud, 2011). Since 1968, ten films had been provided by the Jordanian cinema about the Palestinian question (Alraee, 2014, 28). It indicates approximately the ten of the twelve films had been produced during the years

ranging from 1958-2008 were about the Palestinian cause. Importantly, it wasn't until 2007, when the first feature-length Jordanian documentary *Recycle* by Mahmoud Massad that was shot on video and later transferred to a 35mm film. In fact, Fadi Haddad, a Lebanese director, and writer utter the deficiency of film culture in Jordan. "It cannot be ignored that Jordan had no film scene before the early 2000s which are, of course, a fundamental reason why film has not been part of the daily life of Jordanians" (Dabis, 2011).

The film culture in Jordan was considerably delayed and never reached a momentum of Egypt regarding the film industry. Not only, was there a delay in the dynamic of film production in Jordan but film culture has been absent in Jordan. For instance, until 2003, Jordan rather than focusing on the enlargement of its cultural film industry and infrastructure had been a country solely providing settings. In other words, Jordan was the "prime location for a Middle Eastern backdrop" for other film productions (Chapman, 2012). Some of the most memorable cinematic films that the scenes are shot in Jordan are the well-known films; *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *The Hurt Locker* (Ginsberg & Lippard, 2010, 221). Country's unique landscape, with its deserts, beaches, forests, and mountains had attracted many international filmmakers into Jordan.

Importantly, it is not only the beautiful landscape of Jordan that makes the place appealing. The low cost of the production crew along with the free trade agreements with the movie powerhouses of the United Kingdom and the United States makes this country a suitable base for production. Additionally, Jordan is in the "Arab realm that is considered both progressive and liberal given the status of its neighboring countries," this

further attracted the filmmakers into this region. (Chapman, 2012). As Jordan being politically more stable prides itself regarding its secularity with leaving creative opportunities for its filmmakers with little or no censorship and has been a reason that attracted the international filmmakers.

However, in the past few decades, Jordan had a different mindset as they wanted to build and enhance a Jordanian film culture, even if they continued to promote their authentic film locations to outsiders. Royal Film Commission of Jordan took this responsibility with the foremost objective to reach the widest audience possible with the desire that the Jordanians will be able to expand their horizon in cinematic knowledge. Which could be obtained by meeting diverse cultures from all around the world and through organizing international screenings abroad to promote the local Jordanian industry and culture (RFC, 2017, 2).

It was not until recently starting from 2003 onwards when the understanding of cinema in Jordan began to change. Cinema and film culture is now perceived as a crucial cultural vector that is essential both for societal identity and openness. In 2003 when Royal Film Commission- Jordan (RFC) was established and chaired by Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein. The fundamental objective was to promote “internationally competitive Jordanian film industry.” In fact, the Royal Film Commission of Jordan is providing screenings and workshops that are wide open and free of charge to develop and bring emphasis on the importance of film and freedom of expression. Since its establishment, the Royal Film Commission has been providing access to a film library which is a comprehensive and valuable film library. That consists of films over from fifty-nine countries coupled with two thousand five-hundred books related to various dimensions of

the audiovisual field to tackle filmmakers artistic and technical aspect (RFC, 2017, 6). With the formation of Royal Film Commission, Jordan began to create a film culture. Additionally, the filmmakers are vigorously trying to fuel the emergence of a film culture notwithstanding the times that the society is distracted by other problems, and art being pushed to the background (4).

With the paradigm shift in the development and growth in the film industry of Jordan, there occurred further progression within the country's film infrastructure. After such progress, Jordan on average had started producing four to five films, which is a drastic advancement for Jordanian film industry. In 2007, for instance, Jordan saw the production of ten feature films, three which obtained international awards. A country like Jordan whose film culture and industry are not as strong and firm as that of Egypt and Lebanon was the first country in the Arab World to establish the primary graduate school offering a Master in Cinematic Arts under the name of Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts in 2008. Men and women all over from the Middle East and North Africa flock to Jordan to learn cinematic techniques from World's most talented filmmakers in a two-year program (Chapman, 2012).

From this point on, I want to elaborate on Arab Spring and its interaction with the Jordanian cinema. One might accentuate that Jordan and Lebanon were not countries that had been affected by the Arab spring, as the impact of Arab Spring in Jordan and Lebanon neglected in academic and policy analysis of the Arab Spring. Jordan, politically more stable country as part of its cultural heritage and owing it to its constitutional monarchy. Despite being a politically more stable country, Jordan exists in a very turmoil neighborhood, surrounded by states whose problems easily spill over into the kingdom.

Notwithstanding the steps that Jordanian leaders took to manage and control the uprising, the Islamist movement inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood's radical stance in Tunisia and Egypt rejected the government's efforts and boycotted two parliamentary elections (Helfont & Helfont, 2011, 89).

Additionally, the domestic protest movement with Jordan's leftist pan-Arab nationalist political parties with an affiliated group of Muslim Brotherhood continued. These political outbursts and violent demonstrations have rocked Jordan's stability creating many public criticisms against the government to the point that confrontations had been taken between the government forces and the demonstrators. Long story short, the dissent and regression in the Hashemite Kingdom has reached to unprecedented level interrupting its peaceful history (Helfont & Helfont, 2011, 91).

To a substantial degree, there has been new competent into the media market of the Middle East. Post Arab Spring did not only leave the Arab countries with a regime change but left economic constraints, which not only resulted in fewer film production but resulted in a paradigm shift. Since states like U.A.E. and Qatar started to provide different incentives to facilitate media ecosystem development by attracting a diverse media companies and other famous filmmakers resulting in well-known filmmakers from Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon to consider these opportunities (Ginsberg & Lippard, 2010, xxxv). Now "power is shifting from established ecosystems in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria to the Gulf, to governments who are taking a more pro-active role in facilitating media ecosystem development" (Youssef & Piane, 2013, 2).

The UAE is a strong but entirely new rival for within all media dimensions; film,

television, print and other media platforms. In 2007, with the founding of Abu Dhabi Media Company (“ADMC”) in Abu Dhabi City, which immediately did its first cooperation with the Hollywood studio Warner Bros. This cooperation was aimed at co-financing several feature films along to allocating to the areas of film financing and video game development. In spring 2008, the formation of a joint venture with the Bertelsmann subsidiary Arvato was announced. “This joint venture is to produce and distribute digital entertainment content for the Arab region” (Stützle & Ritlewski, 2009, 2). Abu Dhabi is not only entering the film industry along to its active participation in other forms of media mediums, but it is emerging as the New Hollywood by taking over this status from Egypt who had this role for a century long.

One might question why the Gulf Countries are emerging as part of media ecosystem when historically speaking they had no film culture, background, or infrastructure. However, one should not underestimate the substantial benefits that media industry can generate and contribute between 1.2% to 1.4% of the overall GDP in a typical country. Additionally, such direct benefits of having a media industry further bring a multiplier effect leading a range of more indirect benefits some of which are “employment growth within supporting industries, technology and knowledge transfer, and increased tourism” (Youssef &Piane, 2013, 6). In the social and cultural aspect, media industry also adds vibrancy to the city, which further enhances the “livability” of the city along with the quality of the residents. It is now better understood why Qatar accompanied by the United Emirates are fostering the development of a media industry to enhance their culture and produce separate economic and social benefits (7).

This resulted in the most important and largest film industry in the Arab world,

the Egyptian Cinema to fragmentize. The current political climate had an adverse effect on Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan to the point that filmmakers had to produce low-budget films that appeal more to a “third-class audience to rejuvenate and thrive the economy (Ibrahim, 2015). In short, it could be understood how the Arab Spring had transformed not only the quantity of film production solely but also the quality.

### **2.4.3. Lebanese cinema.**

Firstly, I would like to draw attention on to the Lebanese films produced regarding the Palestinian struggle before conveying onto the historical evolvement of the Lebanese Cinema. It is worthwhile to mention that the Lebanese cinema, similar to the Egyptian and Jordanian cinema had produced several films supporting the Palestinian cause. Historically ten documentaries and five fiction films had been produced concerning the Palestinian struggle (Alraee, 2014, 28).

As Lina Khatib (2008) articulates Lebanese cinema is a “small cinema” that its magnitude “does not constitute an industry in the common definition of the word” (1). It was not until the 1960s that the Lebanese commercial filmmaking gained momentum with the “disruption caused by the nationalization of film production in Egypt” (Armes, 2010, 7). The nationalization of the Egyptian film industry furnished an opportunity for the Lebanese cinema to gain strength. Even though this has been the case, the Egyptian studios have always managed to produce more feature films compared to any other countries in the Middle East. For instance, during 1960-1975 when the Egyptian studios were producing seven-hundred twenty features. During the same time frame, the Lebanese studios were only able to create hundred-five features (10). Even though, I

have provided numbers to compare the magnitude of these two film industries it is worthwhile to pose the question is it the quality of the quantity that shapes the film industry?

As Roy Armes (2015) enunciates, the proliferation in the Lebanese Cinema was solely in quantity rather than quality. Lebanese Cinema was not able to add something unique to its essence and formulate a Lebanese identity that was different from the Egyptian and the Western productions. Since the Lebanese films were of Egyptian dialects (7). Lebanese cinema suffered from its films being “Egyptianization,” which was mimicked as a strategy to be successful. “Egyptianization” in the Lebanese cinema began with Gamel Abdel Nasser’s decision to nationalize cinema in Egypt followed by the revolution in 1952. Nationalization of cinema in Egypt resulted in the Egyptian producers and directors to leave to Lebanon and to make films there. Luckily, it was a time when Lebanon was politically and economically stable. That resulted for the Lebanese support to be geared towards the Egyptian filmmakers resulting a mix of Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese dialect that led in this “unintentional farcical effect on the audience” (Khatib, 2006, 23). Additionally, the effects of “Egyptianization” could be further encountered from the number of films produced by Egyptians in Lebanon. Between 1963-1970, hundred films had been produced in Lebanon, and of these hundred films, fifty-four of them were in the Egyptian dialect (24).

Despite the fact, that Lebanon was not able to become an opponent for the Egyptian film industry, it was in Beirut in 1971, that the first International Film Festival was held in the Arab World. It is essential to take into consideration some of the factors that could have affected the Lebanese cinema's slow development. The abrupt outburst of



the civil war in 1975 brought other underlying issues along to the demographic changes which had affected Lebanon substantially (Armes, 2015, 23). With the arrival of the Palestinian refugees who “organized themselves as a state within a state in Lebanon” led the different armed militias to fight. The Palestinians were concerned for their nationalism and fought for it. On the other hand, the Lebanese Muslims had radical reform in their agenda by ripping off Lebanon from Western influence. At the same time, other Christian groups in Lebanon were fighting for different political reforms and Arab identity. Importantly, this civil war also referred as the Lebanese Civil War did not remain within its domestic arena as the U.S.A, Israel, and Syria intervened militarily accompanied by the final assistance provided by Iran and Iraq (Armes, 2010, 8).

In fact, the Lebanese Civil War cannot be detached from the Arab-Israeli conflict, as both the Palestinians and Israelis played a vital role in the conflict. In short, the outbreak of the civil war had a stupendous effect on why the Lebanese Cinema compared to Egyptian cinema fell back regarding its film production. The economic shortages that the government had affected the film production, which had led them to acquire foreign funds from European sources. That makes it explicitly clear why the Egyptian cinema could produce films far more than everyone else in the Middle East (Khatib, 2008, 9).

Additionally, the civil war not only resulted in the Lebanese cinema to fall behind but brought devastating effects to the already existing “Lebanese commercial filmmaking structures, as studios and cinemas were destroyed and film-makers scattered” (Armes, 2010, 9). The civil war made the Lebanese cinema go through two different phases since its eruption in 1975. The first phase is the wartime phase which is marked as a

troublesome period for filmmakers as they struggled to make films and to distribute them. The second phase right after the war, when the film houses were “haunted by the war.” Even though Beirut has been characterized as the “Paris of the Middle East” and Lebanon hall-marked as the “Switzerland of the Orient” things began to change with the Civil War (Khatib, 2006, 8). In fact, it was not until 1998 when Lebanon began to produce films on a mass scale screen in international film festivals screening, but even the mass scale was considered limited compared to Egypt (Khatib, 2008, xvi).

Sadly, the renaissance in Lebanese Cinema did not last very long as the dream of a free Lebanon had started to fade away with the assassination of Lebanon’s ex-Prime Minister Rafic Hariri on February 14, 2005. Hariri’s assassination led to a period of turmoil, as Lebanon had to undergo a wave of change in political and social dimension. The killing of Rafic Hariri has sparked the Cedar Revolution which is also referred as the Beirut Spring. Thousands of Lebanese people went onto the streets to protest the assassination of Hariri and demand the “withdrawal of Syrian troops from the Lebanese soils.” These protests and tensions resulted in civil casualties of more than 1000 people coupled with the destruction of the infrastructure in Lebanon (Khatib, 2008, 12). This all led to the government officials to step down and new elections to take place in May 2005. However, tensions continued to grow further when a year later Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers right at the Lebanese-Israeli border which triggered Israel to take action and attack Lebanon for 33 days. Even though the scope of this study is not based on the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, it is worthwhile to understand the background when talking about the Lebanese portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The conflict between Hezbollah and Israel had further deepened the internal

divisions in Lebanon. May 2008 was an unforgettable date for Lebanon as they had witnessed the worst sectarian fight since the outburst of the Civil War. Within ten days there were more than 80 people killed with at least 200 wounded along with Hezbollah militants taking over most parts of Beirut. These events brought back the traces of the civil war in 1975 resulting the Lebanese cinema to reshape. The Lebanese cinema was now more concerned with war themes and the theme of loss. Lebanon experiencing civil war created a similar perspective to that of the Palestinians. Lebanese believe that it is through the films that they could achieve “will to myth,” to make the nation “recognize the necessity of healing” (Khatib, 2008, xviii). Similarly, to the Palestinian cinema, in the Lebanese cinema, the war theme tends to take a vital role in the “country’s artistic representations” (Khatib, 2006, 21).

The Civil War both sparked subject matters for filmmakers but it also destroyed the Lebanese film industry. Today, a problem within the Lebanese Cinema is that the films in the status of “urban myth” as they are left hidden due to the lack of distribution. The produced films are left unseen or never encountered by the public. The limitation in the distribution of the Lebanese films was not only locally. For instance, the Lebanese films both in International Film Festivals and Arab Film Festivals have a short life of screenings and are not released in cinemas or on video afterward (Armes, 2010, 14).

Additionally, distribution is not the only problem the Lebanese cinema has, as finding funds for filmmakers in a state of absent government funding is troublesome. The traces of the war could be further encountered from the government's deficient support financially to the film sector which resulted in a brain drain of Lebanese filmmakers who left the country to work or study abroad with more opportunities. In addition, to the

problem of distribution, came with the dilemma in foreign funding. The European audience is used to watching more of experimental and art house films. Which in a way indirectly places an expectation from the Lebanese filmmakers for their films to appeal to the European audience. The challenge is that the films that filmmakers make for the European audience are not always received well in Lebanon as the Lebanese audience is not used to this particular cinema language (Alraee, 2014, 41).

From this point on, I will be looking at the Lebanese cinema and its interaction with the Arab Spring. Between 2011 and 2013. After all, with the Arab Spring, more than one million Syrian refugees had fled to Jordan and Lebanon which led to harsh economic constraints, vast budget deficits, and economic austerity. All these factors triggered protests and riots throughout the two countries (Alsoudi, 2015, 41). In countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya the political upheaval has both opened opportunities for the cultural sphere but also brought “deep domestic divisions over cultural policy.”

(Schwartz, Martini, Kaye, 2013, 3). Arab artists and writers in the Middle East have the potential in shaping the ideological framework and influence public debates. This is not or has not been limited to the Middle Eastern case, as the cultural programs have played an influential role as a medium for societal change. This has been the case since the Cold War when President Eisenhower used cultural programs as a critical way to break through the Iron Curtain that brought isolation between the communist people of the Soviet Union and the West (4)

## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYSIS OF THE DOCUMENTARIES

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter will proceed by outlining a detailed synopsis of the six documentaries of which are; *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After*, *Gaza Surf Club*, *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, *This is My Picture When I Was Dead*, *Crayons of Askalan*, and *A world not Ours*. Importantly, in addition to providing an elaborative synopsis, I will further put forth an interpretation of the documentaries which is necessary in better understanding the documentaries.

After presenting a detailed synopsis and interpretation of each documentary. The scope of this chapter is to examine the political content and how these documentaries as a powerful communication medium portray the stories of the marginalized people by exploring its formal political structure. Sengupta (2006) foregrounds political documentary film creates a bond and acts as a catalyst. After all, political documentaries have the power to affect and shape the formation of political consciousness within the audience. It is believed that through political documentaries the audience witnessing real people and real situation evokes certain thoughts and feelings of empathy which can stimulate political consciousness (7).

From this point, I will elaborate the main techniques and features that are within

the examination and analysis of political documentaries, and for this study, the analysis of certain points will be taken as benchmark and groundwork for the six documentaries that I have picked for the scope of this study.

Firstly, political documentaries are highly concerned about the theme. The theme is considered the focal point of the director; therefore, the thematic analysis of the documentaries is essential in understanding the message that the director wants to deliver to the audience. Themes are defined as the reoccurring of specific ideas and thoughts throughout the documentary (Bradley, Curry & Devers, 2007).

Importantly, while examining the theme of political documentaries, it is critical and essential to take the social context of when the film had been produced into consideration. Taking the time of production into account is a crucial aspect in understanding the current social and political context and the level of influence it had on the documentary. Additionally, examining the socio-cultural context of the documentary with the specificity of time, place and social institutions can help the audience to better connect with what they are watching (Goldsmith, 1998; Tawil-Souri, 2011).

After all, the historical context and the current forces do play an essential role in shaping the nation. In this respect, examining the social setting is necessary to understand the theme and further see how the current social and political factors played a role in the development of such a documentary subject (Kennedy, 2007,13). Additionally, examining the theme of the political documentaries are essential as it is the way to draw messages from the politically charged excerpts and “use to persuade audiences and encourage them to reflect on what they are seeing” (D’Souza, 2012, 72).

Furthermore, according to Benson and Snee (2008), one of the foremost concerns of political documentaries is the delineation of social and political injustices that the marginalized people must go through. The social issue along with the political inequalities are portrayed through the experiences and grievances of the marginalized people.

In fact, the social and political injustices of the marginalized people are presented through the technique of visceral depiction. Through visceral depiction political documentaries highlight the negative circumstances and corruption that those marginalized people must face due to the social and political injustices. The political documentaries first pinpoint the social and political grievances. Then through the technique of visceral depiction, the film demonstrates how the injustices and unfavorable circumstances have affected the lives of the marginalized people (Nariman, 2006; Wayne, 2008; Sandercock & Attila, 2010). All the grievances and the adverse situation in political documentaries are followed and centered on critiquing the current or dominant social order, ideologies, and institutions (Benson & Snee 2008, 72).

In addition to the visceral depiction, shared narrative is also used to highlight the marginalized people. A shared narrative is another notable dimension that is part of the political documentaries. Nariman (2006, as cited in D'Souza, 2012) verbalizes that shared narrative similar to the understanding of the participatory citizenship tries to illuminate the civic responsibility of the audience. By creating a space that encourages the viewers to formulate critical thinking and stimulate public engagement (Giroux, 2011; Bowles, 2006; Sandercock & Attili, 2010).

In political documentaries, a shared narrative is unfolded through the narration or the voice of the filmmaker and those participating in the film. Through a shared narrative, the filmmaker aims to draw attention and encourage critical thinking about the pertinent issues which otherwise would be left untold.

That is a way to encourage the audience to reflect on to the situation that they are watching. In a way, it is changing the dichotomy of passive watchers to be active and reflexive with what they are watching. Paula Rabinowitz (1994) accentuates that documentaries could be used as a medium to engage with its audience, as the nature and structure of documentaries encourage its viewers to take a reflexive approach. Documentaries are beyond solely on social politics as it functions as a call to action.

Through the self-reflexive technique, the audience becomes much more attentive and aware of the things presented to them. Instead of imposing particular ideas or preaching the audience through the cinematic technique of juxtaposition. The audience is left free to interpret and make sense by themselves. For this reason, self-reflexivity in the form of civic responsibility is an effective way to encourage viewers to question in multiple ways. This self-reflexivity is tied back to the point of creating political consciousness and encouraging participatory citizenship on local and global dimension. After all, cinematic viewing is a collective deed which creates a shared experience that may help promote alternative thinking and mobilize the audience to act (Ginsberg, 2016, 39).

For Palestinians, films are not only limited to the portrayal of the marginalized lives. Gaining the support of the global audience along to obtaining the backing of other



Palestinians living in the diaspora is substantial. Through films, Palestinians want to have an influence on “world opinion in favor of their cause” (Kennedy, 2007,13). Through such political documentaries, the aim is to create a national and political consciousness for both the local and global audience. In fact, this is one of the core components that should be considered while looking at political documentaries. Benson & Snee (2008, as cited in D’Souza, 2012) elaborates on how political documentaries has the power to develop a sense of “participatory citizenship” by demonstrating the problems that are affecting the society. It is assumed that such films ignite a feeling of citizenship within the individuals and thus create a bridge between the marginalized people and the community engagement.

It is worthwhile to examine how political documentary and the matters within the film are being addressed. The documentary could be on local, national, and global relevance (Corner, 2008, 32). A local approach within political documentaries is targeted for the local and national audience, which makes the audience to better relate to what they is displayed on the screen due to the shared background, location, and culture. However, this does not limit a locally targeted documentary to be carried to the international audience. A documentary produced for global aspect is aimed at a broader set of the audience, as the topic is being addressed at a more comprehensive and broader scale by touching upon different countries, cultures, and people through references. A political documentary being on global relevance presents a benefit in that it can have comparative purposes. In other words, the audience can critically reflect what is exposed within a global context and discern “their gravity or potential of their situation” (D’Souza, 2012, 77).

After, presenting the benchmark that will be used to examine the structure and content of the political documentaries. It is essential to take a moment and touch upon the comparison part. The scope of this study is comparative, as it will be contrasting the differences and similarities in Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. After examining the political structure of these documentaries, I will put forth a detailed account of the parameters within which the collected data can formulate a pattern of differences and similarities within the outlined framework of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In fact, below are the questions that I worded that will be used as a base while drawing a pattern. How has each nation represented the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? What kind of differences arose in the documentaries of filmmakers from same nation? Are the representations of each nation distinctive or do the different nations hold similarities in the portrayal? Do the representations of nations show change over time that may be related to the change of the social context?

### **3.2. Egyptian Documentaries**

#### ***3.2.1 Gaza-strophe, the Day After (2010).***

*Gaza-Strophe, the Day After* participant of International Film Festival had been directed by Samir Abdallah, whose nationality has been used to indicate the cinematic identity is born in Copenhagen, Denmark to an Egyptian father. The directors Samir Abdallah and Kheridine Mabrouk went to Gaza on January 20, 2009, following the Israeli military incursion accompanied by Palestinian Human Rights delegations. The

documentary extensively documents the shattered lives and dreams of those Palestinians in 2008-2009 offensive operation against the Gaza Strip. By shedding light on to the traumatized lives of the Palestinians who not only lost their land with having to undergo such tragic attacks, but they also had to witness their loved one's heart-stopping in front of their eyes. Further destruction was made to mosques, water and power plants, lands, and even cemeteries denoting on to the irony how even the dead Palestinians cannot rest in peace in their tomb.

Tightly framed shots of devastations outline the immobilized lives of the Palestinians. The documentary rendered over the ruins of Palestinian lives and homes through close framing shots to accentuate on how the Israeli planes demolished the lives of the Palestinians. Through this moving and harrowing documentary, the audience has a better grasp on the social inequalities that they face.

Additionally, through interviews with the Palestinians, the documentary reinforces how the offensive attacks were so intense that the Palestinians initially thought an earthquake was happening. Operation Cast Lead resulted in a death toll of at least 1,417 Palestinians of which were mainly young children, women, and older adults. The audience is shewed with different methods and weapons that the Israeli forces used during the offenses. In addition to cluster bombs and nails, sadly the usage of white phosphorus was commonly used. White phosphorus is a chemical that burns the body of the victim so terribly from the inside necessitating amputations.

Along with the human loss, the documentary also tries to touch upon the loss of olive trees, for some those olive trees are the only thing left behind from their elderly family members. As it is stated above, Gertz & Khleifi (2008) elaborate in their book the

importance that land and olive trees hold, which are an accepted symbol for Palestinian identity (4). Olive trees that grow under poor conditions denote the Palestinians attachment to their land and symbolize the Palestinians resilience and resistance.

Despite all this trauma that came with the catastrophic attack, the documentary delineates how the Palestinians try to rebuild their world by suppressing their pain, their tears, and the loss of their loved ones. The Palestinians continue to wear “burden of hope” through poetry, songs, and drawings. The directors Abdallah and Mabrouk caught a small girl sitting on a rock as she drew the horrors that she had witnessed. She drew how her mother was drowning in blood with a plane shooting missiles and killing her in just a nanosecond. Next to mother figure, the little girl drew herself whipping the blood off her mother’s face and holding her mother's hand tightly. By exposing these, Abdallah and Mabrouk wanted to portray how art in the form of drawing has been a way to ease and mitigate the pain of the Palestinians for all age group. In fact, this drawing of the small girl had been the cover picture of the film poster.

### **3.2.2. *Gaza Surf Club* (2016).**

*Gaza Surf Club* participant of both International Documentary Film Festival and Dubai International Film Festival had been directed by German Philip Gnadl and Egyptian born Mickey Yamine. For the scope of this study, I will be taking the nationality of Mickey Yamine as the base for the national identification. Yamine was born and grew up in Cairo, Egypt and then in his later years moved to Germany. This documentary revolves around the dreams of surfers in a place like Gaza, trapped between Israel and Egypt controlled and ruled by the conservative party Hamas. Despite

the limitation, surfing has become the dream in an area which has been described as “the world's largest open-air prison” by an American anti-war activist Noam Chomsky (Aftab, 2016).

This film takes the audience on to a unique journey of enthusiastic surfers in Gaza as they present a formidable resilience to the beleaguered society and oppression from the Israeli government. The protagonist of the documentary is a 23-year old Palestinian called Ibrahim, whose dream is to build a surf club that would facilitate as a meeting place for the youth in Gaza. To accomplish this dream, Ibrahim wanted to desperately go to Hawaii and receive training on surfing by attending workshops, in hope to transfer on what he learns to the people living in Gaza. However, a predominant obstacle that gets in between Ibrahim’s dream is that he solely cannot leave Palestine.

However, surfing in Gaza is a little different than the typical surfing in California or Hawaii. Surfing does not fit into the Arab context and practiced differently from that in the West. In fact, putting surfing aside, swimming has never been part of the traditional culture for the Palestinians. In the West, surfing tends to be more of an individual sport, but in the context of Gaza, as portrayed in the documentary, it is practiced as a community sport as if it was football. As a community, the people in Gaza enjoy the waves and laugh together (Aftab, 2016). Despite the established traditional culture, it is unique to see a surf club in Gaza.

Additionally, there also exists the story of a fifteen-year-old girl Surfer who has an incredible passion for surfing. Despite the conservative community in Palestinian society being against women surfers, regarding that surfing is not for women and considered to be shameful. Sabah’s father had been the extraordinary source of support

for her daughter and created all the opportunities for his daughter to surf. In this documentary, surfing has been an expression and symbol of freedom, reminding the audience how the unadulterated human right has been something that the Palestinians had been longing for so long.

This documentary interweaves everyday life with a unique story that captures dreams, passion, and scarcity. Even though the film focused on surfers, *Gaza Surf Club* still captures bombed-out remains of the city that had been assailed by rockets and airstrikes. In fact, this is what the documentary accentuates, despite all the obstacles and restlessness, surfing on the waves had been a political act for the future, by resisting the current state. Additionally, it could be encountered how *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* and *Gaza Surf Club* uses either art or sports to mitigate the feelings living under occupation.

### **3.3. Jordanian Documentaries.**

#### **3.3.1 *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* (2013).**

*My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* (Habibi Beyestanani End Al-Bahr) is a documentary narrating the story of the director Mais Darwazah, who for the first time returned to her homeland Palestine. After residing her whole life in Amman, Jordan where she found refuge with her family. This documentary has been a participant of several Film Festivals all over the world some of which are; Dubai International Film Festival (Arab premiere) and Doha Tribeca Film Festival, which are the two film festivals examined for the scope of this study.

In this documentary, Darwazah the director and producer of the film follows a lover she never met before, Hasan Hourani. Darwazah fell in love with Hasan Hourani's idea, and life, a man that she will never meet since Hasan drowned in Jaffa. Hasan Hourani was a Palestinian artist, who went beyond the constraints of living under the Occupation with his illustration, poetry, and way of life. In 2003 Hasan left his home in Ramallah, Palestine escaping the confines of "The Wall" with some friends to relax and breathe in the forbidden waters city of Jaffa since the Palestinians are forbidden to access the sea. As Hourani saw his nephew struggling in the water, and although he couldn't swim, he went into the water to save him, but unfortunately, they both died (Weissberg, 2013). Upon Hourani's death, Darwazah decided to go to Palestine for the first time to the seafont city of Jaffa, where Hourani and his cousin lost their lives.

Although Darwazah does not include these details in her narration, she does speak of Hourani in her documentary as a lover whom she will never truly meet. Through her genuinely first-person essay film, Darwazah hopes to answer the mysteries of "how do you return to a place that only exists in your mind?" "How do you keep fighting for life when you are surrounded by so much death" (Elsigrany, 2016). In her documentary, she tries to shed light on to these thoughts by touching upon feelings of nostalgia, affiliation, love, sense of belonging, longing in a fragmented land, and a life engulfed by years of constant struggle.

Mais Darwazah strived to keep her documentary simple. Through this simplicity, Darwazah attempts to portray her first time return to her homeland after spending her whole life in diaspora away from where she calls home. In her documentary, the people she talks with are not historical experts in the academic sense; they are ordinary

Palestinian people who have lived the history themselves. Confirming how Mais Darwazah profoundly focuses on ordinary people, their lives, and their dreams. She lets reality and people speak for themselves. Mais Darwazah has explicitly turned against the tendency to swamp everything with question and commentary, as she allows the people to express their emotions freely without much interference or shaping towards a specific direction.

With love for Hasan Hourani and being influenced by her mother Ghayda Ajalyaqeen, Darwazah throughout her documentary tells the stories of what freedom and sea means. In the film, the audience hears the voice of Darwazah's deceased mother stating how the "sea is a world that is unique, in its colors, waves, anger, and tranquility. No one can influence it; it influences others." In fact, this is what Darwazah is accentuating throughout her documentary. The sea should not be involved in political concerns, as it can lead to political divisions forcing the Palestinians to live in the absence of sea with only hearing the waves of the sea from the separation walls or barriers between Israel and Palestine.

Being inspired by the sea, Mais Darwazah uses simple illustrations of charcoal, pencil, and watercolors to depict her emotions and feelings. As the documentary's opening sequence is the drawing process of Darwazah (Rothe, 2013). Similarly, to the film *Gaza-Strophe, My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* uses drawings and art as an indispensable part of the film to mitigate certain traumatic emotions. Additionally, both these documentaries used the simple hand-made drawings as their film posters.

*My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* highlights the Palestinians yearning and longing for the non-replicable past. Although at times the Palestinian documentaries can fall into



the melancholic categories due to its sensitive subject, this documentary attempted to make a shift to this perception by adding additional layers of intelligence, humor, and poetry.

### **3.3.2. *This is my Picture When I was Dead* (2010).**

This documentary is an experimental political film participant of both International Film Festival Amsterdam (2010) and Dubai International Film Festival (2011) directed by Mahmoud Al Massad who was born into a Palestinian family in Jordan in 1969. Massad's documentary puts forth the life of a PLO lieutenant's son after the assassination of his father in Athens, Greece 1983. The title of the documentary foretells, Bashir Mraish, the son of the PLO lieutenant Mamoun Mraish, who was four years old and took a bullet as his father got assassinated in the car and both pronounced as dead.

*This is my Picture When I was Dead* revolves around two focal points. Firstly, Bashir is trying to learn more about his father's life through his father's Palestinian friends and comrades, who informs him about the history and objectives of PLO and his father's struggle for the Palestinian cause. With this knowledge, the audience becomes informed about the importance of the Palestinian cause and how it can surpass the family values.

Through a combination of historical archival footage and photos of Bahir's father, Al Massad sheds light on to the 1978 Israeli Coastal Road massacre. In addition to archival footage of Yassir Arafat's death in 2004 and Hamas winning over the Fatah in 2005. Al Massad also attempts to bring focus on to the different aspects of the

Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which in fact plays an essential role in Jordan, as one-third of the population in Jordan is composed of the Palestinian refugees.

Secondly, the focal point revolves around Bashir, who seeks to pave a path to himself after he learns in detail his father's objectives and motivations in life. Bashir being considerably inspired by a teacher, who once said, "if your father's weapon was a gun, yours is a pen." Bashir followed his father's footsteps through the drawings he made, which had been something he enjoyed doing since his childhood. This documentary tries to capture how art and drawing have been a method to resist against the Israeli Occupation and premeditate the Palestinian cause.

With this mindset, Bashir became a PR exec and drew political cartoons in the theme of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Notwithstanding the path that Bashir perused, at times he had to go through certain stipulations and censorships in the illustrations that made. Leaving Bashir psychologically defeated and discontent with his work and life.

### **3.4. Lebanese Documentaries**

#### **3.4.1. *Crayons of Askalan* (2011).**

*Crayons of Askalan* directed by a Lebanese-Spanish filmmaker Laila Hotait Salas, which participated in more than twenty film festivals. One of which is Doha Tribeca Film Festival. Salas's nationality will be used to indicate the cinematic nationality of the documentary.

*Crayons of Askalan* is an attempt to recreate a reconstruction of Zuhdi Al Adawi; a Palestinian artist convicted fifteen years of imprisonment in 1975 at the age of just

fifteen. In this documentary, the audience is presented with the usage of art as a means of resistance similar to *Gaza-Strophe*, *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, and *This is my Picture When I was Dead*. Despite, being imprisoned in the notorious high-security prison Askalan, Israel. Zuhdi uses art to express his emotions. Through the documentary, the audience does not only encounter the injustice of imprisoning a young fifteen-year-old Palestinian but also highlights the solidarity of the Palestinian inmates. The Palestinian inmates in the film backed Zuhdi to survive mentally through this tangled phase by smuggling in crayons to appease and tranquilize Zuhdi's emotions.

Through these crayons, Zuhdi could distress himself by the drawings that he made, which is brought to life by partially animated sequences. The audience witness' how for Zuhdi and other Palestinian inmates drawing was the best way to communicate their thoughts during their time of imprisonment. The documentary also accentuates on how the imagination of an imprisoned person is the most valuable asset he can have. The audience sees this asset through a fifteen-year-old prisoner who uses his imagination to escape his confiscated life and the bars of the prison. The director manifests on how after all everything finishes in a person's mindset and that it is up to a person to change the circumstances that they are embedded.

*Crayons of Askalan* records no dramatic action, instead freedom is continually fragmented living an imprisoned life. In fact, it could be interpreted that the director Laila Hotait Salas is making a parallel comparison of living in prison and living in occupation, as there is not much difference regarding limitations and constraints. Despite, such restraints living under occupation or in prison, the Palestinians make it explicitly clear that they will continue to resist and fight for the Palestinian struggle.

Summing-up, this documentary does not have a voice over and even much dialogue. The audience can hear the thoughts of Zuhdi very briefly through a vocalization. In fact, an absence of voice-over drives a different aesthetic in narrating the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as it is not very common for such political documentaries whose subject matter is Palestine to lack a narration. In this case, the audience is left with a site of a young wasted life who is imprisoned and alienated from the rest of the Palestinian family and community.

### **3.4.2. *A World Not Ours* (2012).**

*A World Not Ours* directed by the filmmaker with Palestinian origin Mahdi Fleifel, who grew up in the refugee camp “Ain El-Hilweh” in Lebanon in which the documentary is narrated. Being a participant in both the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam.

This documentary sheds light on to a Palestinian community dreaming of a lost homeland in the Palestinian refugee camp in South Lebanon “Ain El-Hilweh” which means sweet spring in Arabic. In fact, the name of this refugee camp is ironic. As there exists nothing sweet for Palestinians living in the diaspora with stifled hopes to return to their home country one day. Additionally, the audience is presented with a feeling of Russian doll or so-called Matryoshka doll, due to the case of the existence of culture within another culture.

In 2010, Mahdi Fleifel the director of the documentary returned to the place he was born and grew up “Ain El-Hilweh” after moving out and residing his life in UAE and Denmark. Fleifel, who now would visit this camp during the summer, returned with his

camera in his hand to visit his family members and friends, who continue to dwell in this refugee.

In fact, the documentary does not only include scenes from 2010, as there was footage from family videos of more than twenty years. Mahdi Fleifel's father throughout his life had the urge and compulsion to record his life and his friends. He even continued to document his life even when he left Ain El-Hilweh for Denmark. Mahdi Fleifel's father would record his family and his life and send the video to his family who was in the camp with the hope of "right to return to their home country." With his visit, Mahdi witnesses that nothing had altered for his loved ones as they continue being in a stateless community who are continuing to reside in the refugee camp still longing for the memories of a homeland and the lost years. Through the layers of the documentary, there is a confrontational conveyance of information of what it means to live in diaspora due to the Israeli occupation. Fleifel walks the audience through history and memories with an ingratiating voice-over that lightens the appalling history. It is clear Mahdi Fleifel had been influenced by the famous directors Woody Allen and Martin Scorsese as it could be encountered from Fleifel's hybrid style between humor, compassion, and emotion (Bradshaw, 2014).

Additionally, in the documentary Mahdi makes usage of the footages as a paralleling of interiority and exteriority. The life inside the refugee camp is paralleled to the life outside of the refugee camp in UAE and Denmark. The camera was like a mirror as it created this self-reflexivity while comparing the opportunities that he had and how misfortunate his friends and relatives were as they continued their lives in the refugee camp in Lebanon.

Additionally, an interpretation could be made from Fleifel's portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There is alienation in many different aspects through twisting maneuvers that Fleifel makes. The alienation that the Palestinians face is the result of being away from their land and home country, alienation from their family, and alienation from the people of the nation (Lebanese people) due to living in a refugee camp. Through the maneuvers of the director, many underlying emotions are invoked and reminds the audience the forgotten yet the essential value of freedom. In fact, the valuable importance of freedom is stressed constantly through the repetitive images and words linking to the understanding of living freely.

### **3.5. Analyzing Political documentaries**

#### **3.5.1. Socio-Cultural contextualization.**

I want to begin by positioning the films into their historical-political contextualization the documentaries. As stated above, the historical context and the political forces do play an essential role in shaping the nation. In this respect, examining the social context is necessary to comprehend and relate to the theme and how the social and political factors did play a role in the development of the specific documentary (Kennedy, 2007,13).

Importantly, this section which is allocated for the identification of the socio-cultural context with the specificity of time and place. Will be based on the country of the filmmakers rather than taking the specificity of time and place of where the films are being produced. Afterall, since this is a comparative study, it would not give a variation

of difference all the documentaries produced in Palestine except for the two. Therefore, I will be examining the specificity of time and place of the filmmaker's country (Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon) as it is substantial and essential in better discerning the particular influences and difficulties that arose with the production of films.

The first context I will be looking over will be Egypt. To begin with *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* premiered first in 2010. This documentary took the specificity of the time and place of the happenings in Palestine, Gaza. The filmmakers, Samir Abdallah and Kheridine Mabrouk entered Gaza to document the shattered lives and dreams of those Palestinians as soon as the last ceasefire had been announced. In fact, starting from 2010, Middle East had been a place of turmoil as riots and demonstrations were taking over stability. Egyptian activists were inspired by the successful uprising in Tunisia, which led to a spillover effect from Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution to Egyptian Revolution of 2011. Like in Tunisia, the popular uprising took millions of Egyptians into Cairo's Tahrir Square with the same objective to protest poverty, unemployment, government corruption and president Hosni Mubarak who had been in power for several decades (Bakr, 2010, 57).

The second Egyptian documentary *Gaza Surf Club* was first premiered in 2016, which means that this documentary similar to *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* had gone through the bloody Egyptian Revolution while it was been filmed. However, different from *Gaza-strophe, the Day After*, *Gaza Surf Club* had been produced after a regime change. In short, after eighteen days of mass riots and demonstrations, President Hosni Mubarak stepped down from power and left his position as president of Egypt in 2011. By handing over his authority to military's ruling body, Armed Forces Supreme Council.

The following August Mubarak went on a trial being accused of ordering the killing of demonstrators (McGreal & Shenker, 2011).

Concisely, I will try to articulate on the substantial events that should be taken into consideration for *Gaza Surf Club*. For instance, in 2012, Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi became the president followed by life imprisonment decision for the ex-President Mubarak. Later in 2013, more than fifty people had been killed on the streets while protesting President Morsi's decision on "stripping the judiciary of the right to challenge his decisions" (BBC News, 2017).

Later that year, as stated by Kareem Fahim (2013) the warnings of Army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi the citizens took an active role and started the demonstration in the streets calling him to quit. Hundreds of civilians were killed in the protests, in addition to the destruction churches that had been damaged in the wave of attacks. Due to such assaults and the bomb blast in Mansoura, which led to a death toll of twelve people further urged the governments to declare the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. In 2014, new adaptations had been made on to the constitution banning political parties based on religion (The New York Times, 2013).

A brief articulation had been rendered over the substantial events that should be considered for the specificity of time and place of the two Egyptian documentaries. It could be encountered how the political context in Egypt had faced drastic changes, after all, there existed a regime change in addition to the death of several civilians.

From this point, onward, I will be focusing on the Jordanian social and political context. The first documentary is the Jordanian film *This is my Picture When I was Dead*.



This documentary had first premiered in 2010, which was not quite a calm year for Jordan either as riots and demonstrations took all over the country. The national Parliamentary elections in 2010 finalized with predictable election results, as the pro-government loyalists swept the election. The most prominent opposition group, the political arm of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Action Front boycotted the electoral results claiming that it was unfair. This claim of unfairness was beyond a case, as violence erupted in different cities and towns of Jordan. Internal division and economic issues coupled with perpetual ethnic tensions and religious tensions started to heat up in Jordan. It is important to note that, the ethnic demography of Jordan is composed of refugees due the warfare in its neighboring countries (Alsoudi, 2015,41).

In fact, the demographic population through numbers is as follows. "Palestinians (fifty percent), followed by ethnic Jordanians (thirty percent) and Iraqis (twenty percent), with smaller numbers of Assyrians, Armenians, Chechens, Circassians, Mandeans, Syrians and migrant workers from Egypt, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines" (Tobin, 2011). When this is the case, it is inevitable for the society not to pose the question of who is Jordanian? Further bringing the problem if one needs to be ethnically Jordanian to be considered as Jordanian? (3). Such a division and bewilderment brought ethnic divisions and state inclusion within the society. That is a substantial context especially for the scope of this thesis, as I have been challenged with the same question of how a Jordanian should be defined?

In the second Jordanian documentary, *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, which had its first premiere in 2013 at the Toronto International Film Festival. The director Mais Darwazah explicitly stated that she spent more than eight years to produce her

documentary and more than three in attempting to write her story (Purkiss, 2015). Close to the end of filming her documentary, the Syrian Civil War outbreak in March 2011, in fact, Darwazah shares the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War as she narrates her documentary. The disastrous eruption of the Civil War in Syria affected Jordan drastically. For instance, Irbid located in Northern Jordan and nearby Ramtha on the border with Syria had served as a frontline for Syrian refugees since the outbreak of the Civil War in Syria.

There have been several other spillover effects on to Jordan from Syria. Managing the Jordanian border is challenging as there exists more than forty crossing points that are used by refugees fleeing from the Civil War. Initially, the Jordanians with a sense of tribal loyalty did sustain the Syrian refugees at first. However, Syrian refugees being the second wave of refugees millions of Palestinians arriving into the country in the past decades brought further economic constraints and limitations. A strain on jobs, local resources, and housing led to the rise of prices for everything due to the influx of the Syrians led to the Protests. These protests took all the Kingdom of Jordan causing further tensions between Syrian refugees and Jordanians (Malik, 2014).

Importantly, among the Syrians who flee into Jordan are thousands of Palestinian refugees who had been seeking refuge in Syria since 1948. Before the Civil War erupted in Syria, an estimation of 560,000 Palestinian refugees was living. Now those Palestinian refugees from Syria turned to be refugees for the second time resulting in further vulnerability and fragility of Palestinians (Bolongaro, 2016). To maintain stability, Jordan had to regulate official non-admittance policy in 2013, which thus had to turn away Palestinians coming from Syria whose Jordanian documents have expired.

Undocumented Palestinians from Syria cannot legally live in the refugee camps that have been established for the Syrians (Todras, 2014).

It could be seen how the outbreak of the Civil War in Syria exceedingly affected the Syrians, Palestinians, Jordanians, and Lebanese. The Civil War is an essential socio-cultural context that is worth taking into consideration while examining documentaries of Jordanian production. It could be seen how 2010-2013 had not been stable for Jordan. It is also important to consider that Mais Darwazah while filming *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* (2013) did go through a longer socio-cultural context and could have faced a higher level of influence and impact from the Syrian Civil War compared to *This is my Picture When I was Dead* (2010). Since it took Darwazah more than eight years to finish the documentary.

Lastly, I will be covering the specificity of time and place for Lebanon during the production of the two documentaries. To begin with, *Crayons of Askalan* had its premiere in 2011. In 2011, the Lebanese government collapsed after Hezbollah and allied ministers resigned and President Najib Mikati had been appointed as Lebanon's new prime minister (Robertson & Husseini, 2011). Along with this development, in the upcoming months, thousands of Syrian refugees had started to flow into Lebanon to seek refuge from the outburst of the Syrian Civil War. A country like Lebanon which is already in a weak and vulnerable state had been negatively affected by economic, political, and social constraints as a result of the regime change and influx of the Syrian Refugees. The arrival of Syrian refugees in Lebanon had created similar impacts into the society like that in Jordan; decrease of security, regression of economy, increase of demographics, and complicated politics (Cherri, Gonzalaez & Delgado, 2016). Additionally, Lebanon like

Jordan is the second biggest country to host the Palestinian refugees, which foretells how the influx of Syrian Refugees in addition to the existing refugees in Lebanon brought further difficulties.

The second documentary that is contextualized in the Lebanese setting is *A World Not Ours* premiered in 2012. *A World Not Ours* went through the same socio-political effects with what of *Crayons of Askalan* went through. Additionally, there has been the assassination of Lebanon's police intelligent Brigadier-General Wissam al-Hassan. The killing of al-Hassan took the doubts pointing towards the Syrian agents of President Bashar al-Assad. In fact, such uncertainties in society are enough to create tensions and stability. According to studies conducted, Lebanon is the country who had been affected the most by the influx of Syrian refugees regarding to the politics and security. As Lebanon got divided into two sects: those who are in opposition to Syria and those who support Assad. Along to such division, a series of distressing events took place between 2011-2015 which includes twenty-nine suicide bombings and assassinations, which led to the death toll of 205 and injuring 1,796 (Cherri, Gonzalaez & Delgado, 2016).

After providing a socio-cultural contextualization of each documentary. It is critical to note that since the onset of uprisings with the Arab Spring which began in Tunisia in 2011, the cinema's role in the Palestinian struggle has gained even a further significance and meaning for the Palestinian cause (Ginsberg, 2016, 39).

### **3.5.2. Theme.**

In this section, after examining the socio-political context of the documentaries, which was necessary to comprehend better and infer the themes of the documentaries. I

will be considering the highlighted themes of the documentaries that are used to persuade the audience (Kennedy, 2007,13).

A common theme that could be depicted within the six documentaries; *Gaza-strophe, the Day After, Gaza Surf Club, My love Awaits Me by the Sea, This is My Picture When I Was Dead, Crayons of Askalan*, and *A world not Ours* of three nations without doubt is the theme of loss and living in oppression. The stories within these six documentaries shed light on to the notion of loss. This notion of loss has taken different forms within the documentaries, as it could be a loss of their loved ones, the loss of their lands, loss of the years living in the diaspora, or loss of their happiness. As Gertz and Khleifi (2008) articulate in a persistent manner, such forms of loss return the traumatic memories (105).

In these six documentaries, a common aspect is that the notion of loss is not portrayed through the emphasis of the pre-1948 past. Instead, the loss and trauma are displayed from the current life of the Palestinians living in Palestine and refugee camps. However, it is important to note that in the Palestinian case, the loss of the past is the loss of the present, as the trauma of war, deportation, and limitations from the past reverberates to the present as nothing had changed from the past to present. After all, the loss that the Palestinians face has its roots to 1948 Nakba. The audience of the documentaries confronts the surfacing of the past indirectly with the present.

Although, this notion of “loss” and living in oppression followed by injustices these six documentary films accentuate on hope for a future revival. Despite all the hardships outlined in the documentaries, hope is always deep down there existing in

every heart of the Palestinian with the dream of the right to return to their home country. Another shared theme is the notion of freedom. All these six documentaries cover the challenging and constrained circumstance of the Palestinians trying to touch upon the forgotten yet essential value of freedom and everyday life to the audience. Freedom to have access to the sea of Jaffa, freedom to surf freely, freedom to live, freedom to live in your home country, and freedom to travel.

For instance, Egyptian documentary *Gaza Surf Club*, Jordanian *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, and Lebanese *Crayons of Askalan* all start the documentary with the sea sparkling, the sun shining, accompanied with the sounds of the waves. In all these three documentaries, the sea has been an inspiration for them. In fact, the sea for the Palestinians symbolizes freedom, freedom without chains, without occupation, without limitation. Remembering and reminding the audience the “wholeness of the lost paradise” and dreams (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008, 137).

Another similarity that is worth mentioning is that these six documentaries; *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After*, *Gaza Surf Club*, *My love Awaits Me by the Sea*, *This is My Picture When I Was Dead*, *Crayons of Askalan*, and *A world not Ours* accentuate on the ordinary aspect of every day life which highlights the value of storytelling. None of the six documentaries that had been scrutinized for this study uses an expert opinion to bring further insight into the subject matter. As it is a technique that is often used to reassure trust for the audience by the facts presented. The interviews with the marginalized people turned against the tendency to swamp everything with questions and commentary. Instead, the directors of the documentary films allocated space by allowing the people

share their thoughts, dreams, and hopes more freely rather than limiting them into a narrow question.

Additionally, the six documentaries that has been examined does not use intellectual montage and decoupage instead the verité style of documentaries had been put forth. This way the people speak for themselves and for the reality that they witness. This technique had been used by the six documentaries from three different countries to accentuate on the ordinary people and everyday experiences along to their emotions. The desire for an ordinary everyday life is touched upon many times within the six documentaries. The Palestinians want a natural, mundane everyday life with its continuity that is not interrupted by happenings. Importantly, the theme of everyday life is not limited in the delineation of these six documentaries. It has been a major reoccurring theme for the Palestinian cinema.

Despite its simplicity of concept, every day needs to be interdisciplinary and relate to different ideological phenomena to better understand and dig out the interlaying differences due to its polemical nature. Everyday life arises several multiplicities in the way it is analyzed and interpreted. For instance, the way Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Michel De Certeau (1988) approach to everyday life is contrasting. For instance, De Certeau discerns every day as the social space that is open for productivity, invention, and creation through art forms allowing the subjects to create their space. Importantly, for De Certeau, every day is not a degraded space despite the alienation, daily routines, and rules, but instead, it is a space for creativity, which the banal and tedious realm of life can overcome. De Certeau does not put forth the class struggle, alienation, nor the inequality

that the subjects face on their everyday basis as a reason to fight for equality. Instead, he is more concerned with problems of production and resistance (7).

On the other hand, Lefebvre (1991) faces a disenchantment with the everyday reality as various activities along with the social structure lead the individuals to be more prone to alienation and emancipation. It is also worthwhile to mention how Lefebvre classifies everyday life in the industrialized world as this degraded and routinized schedule, which could be understood as the remaining time left from specialization to individuals (12).

Henri's definition of every day is the type of every day that the marginalized Palestinians desire, as it has been described within the six documentaries. Ben Highmore (2012) in his book *Everyday life* that Lefebvre coveted that "every day" should be something outside the bureaucratic and political experience. However, in modernity, this idea creates conflict, as every day is exceedingly shaped by the routines and disciplines of the political government.

In Palestine as it had been encountered in *Gaza-strophe, the Day After, Gaza Surf Club, My love Awaits Me by the Sea, This is My Picture When I Was Dead, Crayons of Askalan*, and *A world not Ours* that there are moments when the continuity of everyday life is interrupted by the terrorization. For Palestinians, the perception of everyday life can be dramatically devastated in just a few nanoseconds and never return to its old state. Since 1948, for the past seventy years, this had been the case for the Palestinians. As they are living in constant fear of their life, loved ones, home, and land. In fact, the six documentaries from the three nations depict how this longing for every day is the most simple and ordinary entity that they ask for in hoping to bring incitement for them.



In its simplest and broadest form, everyday life is ambivalent and obscure with its custom character of being “ordinary,” “boring,” and “natural.” Every day is the dynamic process that is incorporating the unknown or the unfamiliar into normality. However, the transition is so natural that individuals do not notice such a process as it feels instinctive. In short, this is the desire of the Palestinians to have an ordinary and natural life without having to be in a state of unknown and unfamiliarity. Palestinians no longer want to unveil and discern the dynamics of extraordinariness in their every life they want the ordinariness without the extraordinariness.

As pronounced above while giving a detailed synopsis, five out of the six films the Jordanian documentaries *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*; *This is My Picture When I was Dead*, the *Lebanese Crayons of Askalan* in addition to Egyptian *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After* makes usage of visual strategies. Art is used as a way to bring a different aesthetic and understanding to the theme that has been presented. Furthermore, art in documentaries is a form of tool that would bring visibility for the Palestinian cause in the non-violent way of resistance. Although, it is usually believed that the Palestinian film production shares common characteristics and hold on to similarities. This has been more than just for the Palestinian film production, as similarities regarding the themes and techniques could be found in Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese production.

These three nations share the usage of art and illustrations within their documentary film while delineating their themes. This usage of art in a way could be interpreted as an idea or form of resistance. Through such narrative structures, the depth of tragedy and trauma is represented. It is through this type of non-violent resistance that the notion of loss can turn into hope, fatalism into optimism, and despair into the

possibility. Importantly, for Palestinians, the discourse of resistance is not only a way to bring hope to the injustices that they face, but also a moral justification against the doings of the Israeli government. For instance, in *Crayons of Askalan*, a form of solidarity, unity, and cooperation had been formed to fight for the Palestinian cause even in prison. The small crayon was their resistance tool as it was very carefully hidden from the guardians.

The usage of art can help develop the theme and offer an alternative point of view to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As Ismay Barwell (1986) articulates how art can be expressive of emotions, which signifies that the way in which a “painting is sad would not be the same in which a person is sad, or a song cannot be sad unless its composer was sad and intended to express that sadness in her composition” (175). Art is the product of the behavior through which the feelings and emotions can be seen. However, the artwork is dependent upon the emotional state of the creator because it is the creator or composer of the artwork who chooses to express the intended emotions. Art and emotions hold a very close relation, as it has always been suggested that artworks “symbolize,” “resemble,” “imitate,” “refer to,” or “represent” emotions (176).

This explains why individuals so often content themselves with describing an artwork as “expressive.” Art is powerful as it tends to evoke emotions “in the imagination of an attentive audience” (Barwell, 1986, 177). Not only does it have the power to evoke emotions from the audience, but it can express sentiments that are hard to articulate and identify on regular bases. As emotions are naturally confusing, complex, and ambiguous, but art can help go beyond its limitations and complexity of what cannot be identified and expressed easily (180).

In fact, the five filmmakers of *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea; This is My Picture When I was Dead*, the Lebanese *Crayons of Askalan* in addition to Egyptian *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After* does not impose an over-dramatization to the audience or bombard them with heavy archival footages. They instead chose art as a method to create a space, where the viewers can experience and feel for themselves. Additionally, there is an absence in the usage of special emotional narratives, visual dramatization, the metaphorical montage of images, and dramatic music that ties with the personal voice. Alternatively, drawings of the marginalized Palestinians and children are employed. Additionally, the five filmmakers are aware of the power that art holds. Through the filmmaker's utilization of art in their documentary, they could accentuate on the parts that they wanted the audience to take with them after the film ended. Through the drawing technique, the five filmmakers offer an alternative view on articulating their thoughts and emotions. The power of drawing to elicit an emotional response was a unique technique. Jan Nals (2016) accentuates that the traumatic experiences are portrayed through new insights by suggesting solutions “to the challenges of representation of the other in a visual narrative” (29).

Importantly, the filmmakers could have used animation or got a professional to illustrate what they wanted. Instead, they chose the simple but sophisticated self-drawings to construct a dream/reality in one's mind. There was a simple desire which was to create something that was personal, intimate and homemade. After all, the Palestinians in the documentary are all seeking for a home to shelter their dreams and hopes.

### **3.5.3. Representation of the social injustices visceral depiction.**

This section will examine on how the six documentaries delineate the social and political injustices that the marginalized Palestinian face. As stated above, political documentaries are considerably concerned about how social issues along to the political grievances are portrayed through the experiences and grievances of the marginalized people as pronounced by Benson & Snee (2008, as cited in D'Souza, 2012, 72). Through visceral depiction political documentaries highlight the corruption that those marginalized people face because of the social and political injustices. By taking simple steps, I will pinpoint through the technique of visceral depiction the social and political injustices that the marginalized people face and demonstrate how those injustices and contrary circumstances affect the lives of the marginalized people.

Firstly, it is essential to define and understand what marginalized means before delving into how the six political documentaries delineate the marginalized people. According to, the Cambridge Dictionary, the word marginalized is defined as “to treat someone or something as if they are not important.” The six documentaries that I am examining for the scope of this study *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, *This is My Picture When I was Dead*, *Crayons of Askalan*, *A World Not Ours*, *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After*, and *Gaza Surf Club* has all presented the Palestinian community as the marginalized people within the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

In the Jordanian documentaries, *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, *This is My Picture When I was Dead*, and likewise in the Lebanese *A World Not Ours*, and *Crayons of Askalan* focus on longing for a home. For instance, Darwazah the director *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, had been a refugee in Jordan all her life and was forbidden to go to

Palestine, despite how much she was longing to see her home country. Just like Fleifel, the director, of *A World Not Ours* who holds Palestinian origins lived his life in a refugee camp in Lebanon longing for his home country. Similarly, both the directors Darwazah and Fleifel at one point in their life during the documentary, visited Palestine for the first time. Not being able to visit Palestine for so many years had influenced their thoughts and mindsets, as their heart was always in search of a belonging.

In *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, the director Mais Darwazah makes a narration in her documentary that “I am a refugee, I do not know where Palestine is what I only know is that it is here” pointing on to her heart. Similarly, when Fleifel visited Jerusalem for the first time through an exchange program with a Palestinian group from his school in Denmark he had witnessed different emotions. At that point, Fleifel felt like an outsider in his own home country. As he states in the documentary, it felt like he was visiting the home country of his friend because for Fleifel, Palestine was still the refugee camp Ain El-Hilweh in Lebanon.

These two directors like many other Palestinians who are living in diaspora are witnessing alienation towards to their own home country and people. Palestinians living in the refugee camps and diaspora because of the occupation is making them internally and externally alienated. In fact, what these two documentaries are depicting is “a state of depersonalization or loss of identity in which the self-seems unreal,” as stated by Daphne Simeon and Jeffrey Abugel (2006). In fact, the feeling of “unreal” from time to time is something to be expected after a traumatic event or under severe stress enhanced as a self-defense mechanism. During the time of depersonalization, the world within or the world around may feel strange and unreal as they feel detached from the sense of self (3).

Mais Darwazah, Mahdi Fleifel, and Mahmoud Al Massad director of *This is My Picture When I was Dead* had gone through a sense of alienation, isolation, and altered perception caused by living in diaspora.

As a result of feeling alienated to their own home country, these three directors started to create this utopic dream of a home within themselves and within their hearts, to cope with the longing. In fact, director Fleifel's obsession and desire to film everything was more than just a simple recording of his family history; it was a faint hope to protect the sense of belonging to somewhere. Similarly, in Laila Hotait Salas's *Crayons of Askalan*, the protagonist Zuhdi distress' himself by the drawings that he makes in prison. Zuhdi thought of drawing as the best way to express his thoughts while he was imprisoned and a way to reveal his feelings for his country. As he believed that imagination is the most valuable asset an incarcerated person can have to escape his confiscated life and the bars of the prison. Laila Hotait Salas depicts how Zuhdi just like the three filmmakers is trying to create this image of a home in his mind as he is imprisoned behind the bars.

Moreover, the directors Darwazah, Fleifel, and Al-Massad grew up in the diaspora as refugees. Such detail has been embedded in them even while filming, as they had conducted interviews in their documentary films with the marginalized Palestinians in the refugee camps. After all, spending a whole life away from your home country in refugee camps is not easy. For instance, Ain El-Hilweh, the refugee camp in Lebanon gave almost no rights to the Palestinians as they barred from working in most of the professions. Such a life makes the Palestinians feel vulnerable and useless. Such a situation leads to the collective feeling of no future because there is no work, no

education, and therefore no means even to get married. In fact, the Palestinians in the refugee camps reminds me of Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopic spaces" and "otherness."

Firstly, it is crucial to take the moment and better understand how Michel Foucault elaborates over *Of Other Spaces* (1986) before proceeding to how it could be related to the Palestinian issue. Foucault in his essay describes places that function in non-hegemonic conditions as the spaces of "otherness." He defines heterotopia over the understanding of "other," as spaces of alternate social orderings, that are associated to other areas, yet are also in contradiction to the sites to which they are part of (23). Heterotopia is a real space that exists in real societies. According to Foucault, heterotopias are found in all cultures with no universal form. Some of the examples that he puts forth that qualify as heterotopia are; prisons, cemeteries, schools, mental asylums, museums, hospitals, libraries, monasteries, and airports (25). An analysis could be drawn upon, on how the refugee camps could be understood through Foucault's notion of "heterotopia," regarding "other places."

As Maria Rusak (2014) defines in her article that, a refugee camp is a temporary settlement that accommodates housing and other basic needs of the forcefully displaced people. It is also important to note that, refugee camps are not just "physical spaces occupying a plot of land, as they are also assemblages of people and bureaucratic institutions" (11). Refugees are physicals inside a country that seek refuge, but legally and politically they are outside of it at the same moment. A camp does not belong to the state in which it is located. For instance, camps are not subject to the same laws and norms of non-camp locations in the territorial state in which the refugee camp is located.

In fact, this brings to the point that, camps in all their forms ought to be understood as “heterotopias,” as they are places outside of all places, even though they can be located (Parekh, 2017, 5).

Importantly, the refugee camps in each country differ from each other regarding how the refugee camps are integrated into the community. For instance, in Jordan, Gaza Strip, and Syria refugee camps are economically and socially integrated. Whereas, the camps in Lebanon and West Bank are disconnected proving its “heterotopic” nature. As Sari Hanafi (2006) puts forth in Lebanon and West Bank, the refugee camps emerged in the Foucauldian sense as a heterotopic place; it is an area that is economically connected but socially disconnected from the urban tissues in the region. This heterotopic place is not characterized solely for its isolation from its surroundings but by the different sets of municipal rules projected to regulate the same “spatial being.” (10)

The heterotopia functions “to exclude masses of people from the domestic and international law” (155). Foucault focuses on places which bear a “strange” relation to other (25). Similarly, such a strange relation could be labelled with the refugee camps. The forcefully displaced people are excluded in two senses; first from their original homes, and second, from the domain of the regular life where local populations live. These are spaces of otherness not as stigmatizing spatial seclusion, but rather as the “practice of diffusing new forms of urban collective life,” as suggested by the title *Of Other Spaces* (Foucault, 1967).

After having provided the crucial and necessary points of Foucault, the relation between “heterotopias” and refugee camps could be better understood. As stated above, living in refugee camps and not being part of the urban municipality regulations and



instead being regulated by informal negotiations surface different formations, which constitutes a space of tension revolving around “deviation,” “marginality,” and “contradiction.” Shortly, this is what it means to live in refugee camps, and I have tried to word the experience of living within a refugee camp of Mais Darwaza, Mahdi Fleifel, and Mahmoud Al-Massad.

The Palestinians living in diaspora and under occupation are not certain on what to be sad over. Should it be over the loss of a loved one, living in a refugee camp with no country or no land? Having to separate from your family, your country, your tradition, your freedom, your flag, and your compatriot. The story of Palestinians is the story of a marginalized community of eternal yearning trapped in a maze of memories with never-ending longings. Fleifel documents the thoughts of his close friends who at times think of blowing themselves up. That way it would at least have a contribution to the Palestinian cause.

In short, this is how the marginalized people are displayed in *A World Not Ours*. For instance, the grandfather of Mahdi Fleifel who came into the refugee camp in Lebanon at the age of sixteen now turned eighty and never left the camp. Fleifel's grandfather was sadly uttering about his dream to have an orange orchard in Jaffa and grow oranges freely without having to go restrictions and risks. They believe that after all their desire is not a scientific miracle it is as simple and as natural as breathing.

Similarly, in *Gaza Surf Club* a fisherman was complaining about the continuous problem of not being able to leave or travel. The fisherman had been in Gaza for forty-two years, since the day he was born, forget about leaving the country he was not even allowed to leave the area. The two documentaries accentuate that it is beyond where you

are but instead who you are that makes you marginalized. In other words, being in Lebanon or Palestine despite the location, the Palestinians live a prison-like life. It is like the Lebanese *Crayons of Askalan*, which delineates imprisonment of a young boy in an Israeli prison. It is not the location that marginalizes, these people being Palestinian is enough for the marginalization to happen. For instance, even though *This is My Picture, When I was Dead* proceeds in Jordan, the death of Bashir's father who was a PLO lieutenant caused the imprisonment of Bashir's whole life, as he was trapped into memories, history, and sadness in Jordan. In these six documentaries, the directors delineate the sense of being trapped into being a marginalized Palestinian and that there is no simple escape from that despite where they are. The Palestinians portrayed in the six documentaries are eagerly waiting the day when all the injustices would change. However, the sad part is as they are waiting for a paradigm shift to happen years are passing by, realizing that a whole lifetime had been lost waiting.

Furthermore, I will continue to proceed how the documentaries depict the injustices that the marginalized Palestinians face. Egyptian *Gaza Surf Club* and *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* have both focused on the hardships and adverse conditions that the Palestinians suffer in Gaza Strip. Negative circumstances in Gaza Strip is depicted with the bombardment of the Israeli forces in *Gaza-strophe, the Day After*, as well as in *Gaza Surf Club*. In *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* just like the name of the documentary, it is the days followed by the devastating bombing of the Israeli forces. The bombardment was so severe that at the first insight people thought that it was a destructive earthquake. The documentary demonstrates how the marginalized Palestinians had to witness the pouring of millions of bombs into the smallest territory on Earth accompanied with

reconnaissance planes, bombs, tanks, F16 planes to a 350-kilometer squared area, Gaza.

In Egyptian *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* the residents living in Gaza had their very basic need of water and electricity demolished by the Israeli forces, who tore down all power supply structure and water networks with bulldozers and took the life of the residents of Gaza back to the 18th century. In Gaza, everything was destroyed by tanks, bombs, and cannons. Hectare of olive trees had been slaughtered by placing mud on the broken branches so that it would not perish again. The tanks instead of using the main roads came through agricultural fields to create a more significant loss for the farmers.

Additionally, even after the attack there was a radar and surveillance camera in a balloon linked to the Israeli ground station equipped with computers. This lets the occupied forces to spy and check upon all of Gaza and its borders. It is no different than the prisoners in *Crayons of Askalan*. Even though, the documentary *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* is not about a prison, the director by providing such information implies the prison-like feeling in Gaza. In fact, the people of Gaza are no different than the prisoners in *Crayons of Askalan* instead of being in prison in Israel, the Palestinians are in jail in Gaza trapped in between bombs and no place to escape.

Furthermore, the Egyptian documentary *Gaza Surf Club* sheds light to the wrack and ruins of the devastated territory of Gaza as a result of the Israeli offensive attacks even though the focus of the documentary is the surfers. Through the blasted streets, the audience encounters young surfers going to surf, to escape the thoughts of war and reality. In fact, when the Israeli forces bombed Gaza, the surfers were terrified that something would happen to their surfboards as they would be shattered down because if

their surfboards got destroyed there would be no replacement since they cannot get surfboards across the border.

Additionally, despite their desire to surf these young surfers face constant constraints, due to surfing along to other activities in Palestine being very difficult. Surfing in Palestine is very difficult compared to other countries because swimming and surfing freely are not allowed due to constant check by the Israeli coast guards. Sadly, even at sea, the Palestinians are not free as they are in continuous check. Likewise, to the articulation to the story of Hasan Hourani who was drowned in the forbidden waters of Jaffa who had inspired Mais Darwazah to make her documentary *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*.

*Gaza-strophe, the Day After, Crayons of Askalan, My Love Awaits Me by the Sea, Gaza Surf Club, and A World Not Ours* all imply through the maneuvers of the directors that living in occupation and in refugee camps is no different than imprisoning a bird in a cage, as its freedom ends with those bars and restrictions.

#### **3.5.4. Shared narrative.**

A shared narrative is another essential dimension that is embedded to the nature of political documentaries, as it is formed through the narration or the voice of the filmmaker and those participating in the film as Nariman (2006, as cited in D'Souza, 2012). The three of the six documentaries; *Gaza-strophe, the Day After, My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, and *A World Not Ours* uses shared narrative.

On the other hand, *Crayons of Askalan, Gaza Surf Club, and This is My Picture When I was Dead* does not use the narration of the filmmaker, due to the structure of these political documentaries being different from the ones mentioned above. The

absence of a filmmaker's narration is due to that these documentaries are told more in a story format without further requiring the voice-over of the director.

In other words, it could be interpreted as that these two documentaries are enough to narrate on its own. An absence of narration could be hard for particular viewers as they believe that without a narration it is hard to keep the attention of the audience in the documentary. As it is considered that narration provides a sense of security and spur new thoughts through the prevailing usage of human voice. Through the companionship of a narrator, the audience can affirm the interpretation of the film (Nichols, 2010).

However, despite the absence of narration in these documentaries, the stories and the people within the documentaries were strong enough as it did not acquire space for the filmmaker to intervene. In fact, one of the reasons why half of the documentaries chose shared narration could be that the filmmakers were telling their personal story and their lived experiences, therefore making shared narration was the best way. However, the absence of narration in certain documentaries is a message of the filmmaker trying to bring the audience to think or see the story in a certain way without insisting certain thoughts.

For instance, in *Crayons of Askalan* with an absence of voice-over and a weak narration, the filmmaker created a space for the audience. In a way encouraging the audience to watch and think differently from the method that they are used. In fact, if there existed, a voice over, I am not entirely sure if this documentary would have been this influential in perusing its message. After all, the absence of a voiceover leads the audience to focus on small details more in-depth than they are usually.

### 3.5.5. Critiques, relevance, and civil participatory.

Importantly, although these documentaries had participated in renowned and influential international film festivals there has been very limited and in most cases, no access to the documentaries. Despite, the limited access that these documentaries had, all six of them had global relevance meaning that the global audience can critically reflect what is presented to them and have “their gravity or potential of their situation” (D’Souza, 2012, 77).

This section will cover the criticism, relevance, and global participatory together as they go together, at least for this specific case. It is solely because all these six documentaries make criticisms targeted for the global audience so that a change could be brought to the social and political injustices that the Palestinians go through. Although, the six documentaries make a criticism, what varies from documentary to documentary is the content of the criticisms that are made. However, the overall attitude towards the global audience is the same. It is both a criticism due to the frustration and at the same time a pledge of help because of the vulnerability of the situation to enhance a global support for the Palestinian cause.

Both *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* and *A World Not Ours* make similar criticisms targeting a specific country. For instance, in an interview in *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, an old lady was complaining about how she could not see her son coming from Germany as the Israeli forces have rejected him already twice. This old lady is crying out and questioning why he is not allowed to come into Palestine with a German passport or why he cannot even come as a guest. This distressed mother cannot go to

Germany either, and she is calling out to the international community to help her reunite with her son. This documentary delineates how this old lady is criticizing the German and Israeli authorities but at the same time pledging for help in a desperate way.

Similarly, in *A World Not Ours*, the audience witness the extreme passion the Palestinian refugees have for football epically during the time of World Cup, as it is believed to be the best way to forget specific pains and thoughts just like surfing had been the escape alternative from reality in *Gaza Surf Club*. During the time of World Cup, the Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are no longer stateless refugees instead they become Italians, Germans, and Brazilians. Even when the World Cup finishes the refugee camps are loaded with the flags of the nations they support. In fact, one of the reasons why certain Palestinians are so phonetic about supporting a particular team, in this case, Italy has nationalistic reasons behind. For instance, as it is elaborated in the documentary, the Italians had dedicated the World Cup to the Palestinians in the 1980s. For that reason, Palestinians feel like now it is their turn to support the Italian team back, even though this incident might have happened almost three decades ago.

Although the youth holds such a passion for football, on the other hand, the elderly living in the refugee camp in Lebanon felt discontent and infelicitous about the youth supporting certain countries during the time of World Cup. As the elderly completely accept that the nations that the youth support in the West pour their full support on Israel. As they believed that supporting those teams meant helping them besiege and starve the people in Gaza and cause forced displacement of several other Palestinians. Additionally, the elderly Palestinians are posing the question of why would a person cheer or support countries in World Cup who contribute to the commitment of

such crimes towards the Palestinians? *A World Not Ours* has two sides to the story. The youth feels excited about supporting their favorite team, while the elderly are discontent for the reasons provided above and criticizing them for supporting the Israeli government who caused all the pains for them. In both the documentaries, it could be seen that despite the criticisms that the Palestinians make there is a pledge of global participation and support as the documentaries depict the unjust and turmoil lives of the marginalized Palestinians.

In addition to the critique made to the international community, *A World Not Ours* makes criticisms to their Arab brothers and sisters to take more action. For instance, the Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are complaining that they are not treated like humans and feel despicable as they have no rights and cannot prevent themselves from asking if this is a democratic country if it is then what does democracy mean exactly? The Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon strongly believe that Lebanon should be more of an Arab brother to them.

Similarly, the Palestinians in *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* are also calling out help from their Kuwaiti, Jordanian, Lebanese, and Iraqi brothers and sisters to reach out and help the vulnerable Palestinians keep their homes by supporting them purchase their homes. It is manifested in the documentary that certain Palestinian homes are planned to be bought by the Israeli authorities by force. When this is the case, the Palestinians want their Arab siblings to prevent such a destructive act from happening. It is bestowed in the documentary that despite how much the Palestinians resist and try to keep their houses if the Israeli forces want the dwelling of a Palestinian, then resistance would not stop them.



As mentioned, the Israeli authorities, can easily find a loophole in the judiciary system and force the Palestinians out of their home.

The Palestinians calling out for their Arab brothers and sisters is not only limited to these two documentaries. In *This is My picture, When I was Dead*, Bashir poses critiques towards the censorship regulations and freedom of the press in Jordan. Bashir, the protagonist of the documentary, who works as a cartoonist, faces difficulties at the time, as he his cartoons get rejected before it can be published. Bashir could never fully comprehend why there even exists restrictions in delineating the truth in what the Palestinians are facing and how they are killed. In fact, in the film, the audience can closely witness Bashir's frustration and disappointment, as he criticizes Jordan for such censorships and restrictions rather than supporting and being beside Palestine as they fight for their cause.

Importantly, the global relevance of the documentaries is not always directly touched upon with the mention of specific countries or in the form of the critiques posed. The global relevance of the documentaries could also be encountered in different forms such as using flags during certain scenes to show the documentaries global relevance. The second documentary after *A World Not Ours* had been *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* to use flags of different nationalities besides the Palestinian one. *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* holds a scene, where a small girl is talking about how she and her family ran out of the house in desperate fear to save their lives. After the bombing was over as the girl's family returned, the family came to witness that their house was demolished. Right, that moment, the audience witness' the bright red Turkish flag waving in the air behind the

small girl as she was telling her mirthless story. In a short while, the audience learns that the Turkish authorities came into Palestine to bring aid to Gaza.

Further, in the documentary *Gaza-strophe, the Day After* calls out for an absence of an international community and a security council. In the documentary, a man outbreaks with anger and frustration after losing his family. He cannot hold himself to ask where the whole world is when people are killed in such an inhumane way in Palestine. This man further refines on how the world is just watching silently as the Israeli forces shoot small children on their heart or those small children have witness their beloved one's brain blown out in front of their eyes.

In another scene, a different middle-aged man starts off by sending his greetings to all the free people of the world and to the people whose conscience still lives on. This Palestinian man tries to accentuate that there are no battles of civilization anymore as it got something beyond that, as it is hard to call such entities as civilizations. He shuts out to the world to wake up and beware of the danger and defend the principles that the international community gives importance. Stating that after all, it was the international community who created the human rights and the United Nations Security Council.

As stated above, Henry Giroux (2011) accentuated on how political documentaries can be the answer for critical thinking and civic engagement by allowing the audience to travel through the presented socio-cultural space and become part of it. Political documentaries are valuable communication medium to mobilize and influence the audience by creating a political consciousness. The theoretical framework of this study had been to examine how the six documentaries that I have picked intends to create a political consciousness and encourage a form of local and global support for the

Palestinian cause. Along with this line, this study tried to answer the question on how the six documentaries that I picked has a concern to mobilize the audience about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by creating a political consciousness?

Above, I tried to examine the six-documentary's political structure. From the analysis, it could be perceived how the six documentaries produced by Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon all try to enhance global support for the Palestinian cause. It could be further encountered that all six documentaries recognize the Palestinians as the marginalized one in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Not only this but all these documentaries try to mobilize the viewers by presenting the experiences and emotions of the marginalized Palestinians, without taking a stand against Israel. That is to say, the six filmmakers in the scope of this study portrayed the adverse conditions through the technique of visceral depiction the injustices that the Palestinians face. By creating a space that encourages the audience to think critically and participate in public engagement. As stated above, the six documentaries had a global relevance, meaning that it was intended for the international audience. Therefore, the foremost objective of these documentaries had been to highlight a support from the international community for the Palestinian cause.

Additionally, within all the six documentaries, there are criticisms made either to the international community or their local neighbor's. Importantly, even though some documentaries directly pose objections to its neighboring countries. The documentaries still expect global participation after providing the social and political injustices that they have faced. After all, it is through this way that the filmmakers could evoke emotions within the audience and mobilize them to act and be part of the Palestinian cause.

### 3.5.6. Political reference and nationalism.

From this point on, I will be delving into how the historical reference and nationalism are portrayed within these six documentaries. After all, as Benson and Snee (2008) accentuate that political documentaries focus both on the social injustices, political reference, and nationalism. A shared object that all the six documentaries; in *Gaza-strophe, the Day After, Gaza Surf Club, My Love Awaits Me by the Sea, This is My Picture When I Was Dead, Crayons of Askalan,* and *A world not Ours* is that it makes several political references. However, these political references are not through the heavy archival footages. Instead, the political references in these six documentaries have been made through by the Palestinians during the interviews. For instance, in both *This is My Picture, When I was Dead,* and *A World Not Ours* political reference is made to Yasser Arafat. With his pictures hung in shops, houses, and buildings in Palestine.

Additionally, both *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* and *A World Not Ours* makes parallel political reference to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 Nakba, that resulted in the expulsion of more than half a million of Palestinians. Furthermore, in *A World Not Ours, Gaza Surf Club, My Love Awaits Me by the Sea,* and *Gaza-Strophe-the Day After* make use of the Palestinian flag within their documentaries in addition to the small children wearing Palestinian headbands. Importantly, in *Gaza Surf Club*, when Ibrahim, the protagonist of the film, after significant efforts left to Hawaii. He hung the Palestinian flag on the American powerboat that was used for surfing, portraying how nationalism for Palestinians has no territorial limits and that they will proudly carry their flag despite the injustices and limitations that they face.

That said, despite the injustices that the marginalized Palestinians face living in refugee camps or living in occupied territories their level of nationalism is beyond words. Through the documentaries, it could be seen that for the love of Palestine and the Palestinian cause they are willing to sacrifice anything, including their lives. In fact, this had been the case in *This is My Picture, When I was Dead*, as Bashir's fathers love for nation outweighed his dream of a family. Nation and country came first for him and believed that his primary responsibility was to take care of his country and fight for the Palestinian cause. In fact, with such a mindset Bashir's father gave up his whole life for the Palestinian cause. Likewise, in *A World Not Ours*, Mahdi's friend who felt helpless living in refugee camp at times thought of blowing himself up, thinking that at least his existence in a way would help the Palestinian cause. In short, this has been the mindset of the Palestinians and nothing could go beyond the Palestinian cause.

Furthermore, elaborating on the level of nationalism. In *Crayons of Askalan*, the documentary delineates how the prisoners articulate that the Israeli thinks that they imprisoned the Palestinian fighters in the prison of Askalan. Thus, for the Palestinians being detained was not a means to prevent them from resisting. In fact, the prisoners in Askalan believed that they are heroes fighting for the Palestinian cause, despite being stuck behind bars. Additionally, the prisoners who came to see each other during specific hours at the joint area secretly gave each other crayons, with the crayons being passed from hand to hand covertly so that they can draw and resist. Additionally, the documentary films *Crayons of Askalan*, *A World Not Ours*, and *Gaza-Strophe* made self-composed songs which have been another form of resistance to fight against the growing frustration over the injustices.

The level of nationalism is not limited to these incidents only. For instance, in an interview in *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* a young lady was explaining the director Mais Darwazah how in a checkpoint in Ramallah, for the Israeli forces to let her in, she had to say “please, let us in.” At that point, her husband angrily interrupted and stated that “you never say please, you do not say please to enter to your homeland.” Accentuating on how despite the injustices that they face, the Palestinians are not willing and will not submit to the Israeli authorities.

A similar example had been encountered from a scene in *A World Not Ours* when a friend of Mahdi was wearing a shirt with the different script on it. The Palestinian shopkeeper in the refugee camp angrily asked: “are you working for the Israeli authority?” This confusion was brought into a clarification when Mahdi Fleifel, the director of the documentary said that the writing was in Chinese and not in Hebrew. In short, such actions are enough to aggravate the Palestinians. Accentuating the level of nationalism for the Palestinians is very distinguished and that even joking or implying certain things is not admissible. It once again confirms how despite all the difficulties that the Palestinians face, they do not want to submit to the Israeli authorities and even say “please” to get through with what they want.

Following tables (Table 1, 2, and 3) will bring my findings in a more synthesized manner. Additionally, it will summarize the main points discussed above and will further delineate the similarities that the six documentaries hold.

Table 1: Theme and socio-cultural contextualization comparison of key findings.

	<b>Gaza-strophe, the Day After (2010)</b>	<b>Gaza Surf Club (2016)</b>	<b>This is My Picture When I was Dead (2010)</b>	<b>My Love Awaits Me by the Sea (2013)</b>	<b>Crayons of Askalan (2011)</b>	<b>A World Not Ours (2013)</b>
Themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom to live without fear.</li> <li>Living under occupation.</li> <li>Loss of loved ones, land, memories, olive trees.</li> <li>Alienation from the rest of the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom to travel and surf.</li> <li>Living under occupation.</li> <li>Loss of years being trapped in Gaza.</li> <li>Alienation from the rest of the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom to return to Palestine.</li> <li>Diaspora.</li> <li>Loss of years away from your home country.</li> <li>Alienation from Palestine and its traditions.</li> <li>Longing for home.</li> <li>Depersonalization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom of sea and return</li> <li>Diaspora.</li> <li>Loss of years away from your home country.</li> <li>Alienation from Palestine and its traditions.</li> <li>Longing for home.</li> <li>Depersonalization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom to return.</li> <li>Diaspora.</li> <li>Loss of years trapped in prison.</li> <li>Alienation from Palestine and the Palestinians.</li> <li>Longing for home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom to return to Palestine.</li> <li>Loss of years away from your home country.</li> <li>Alienation from Palestine.</li> <li>Longing for home.</li> <li>Depersonalization.</li> </ul>
Socio-Cultural contextualization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Popular uprisings in Cairo's square.</li> <li>Protested against poverty, unemployment, and president Hosni Mubarak.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regime change.</li> <li>In 2012, Mohammed Morsi won the presidential elections.</li> <li>Life imprisonment decision for the ex-President Mubarak.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The national parliamentary elections in 2010 was opposed by Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Action Front</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Syrian Civil War broke in 2011.</li> <li>Syrian refugees, the second wave of refugees arrived.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The arrival of Syrian refugees in Lebanon had created similar impacts into the society like that in Jordan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assassination of Lebanon's police intelligent Brigadier-General Wissam al-Hassan.</li> </ul>

Table 2: Social injustices and shared narrative comparison of key findings.

	<b>Gaza-strophe, the Day After (2010)</b>	<b>Gaza Surf Club (2016)</b>	<b>This is My Picture When I was Dead (2010)</b>	<b>My Love Awaits Me by the Sea</b>	<b>Crayons of Askalan (2011)</b>	<b>A World Not Ours (2013)</b>
Social injustices & visceral depiction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The bombardment was so severe that at the first insight people thought that it was a destructive earthquake.</li> <li>Water and electricity demolished by the Israeli forces.</li> <li>Radar and surveillance camera. Absence of freedom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The continuous problem of not being able to leave or travel outside of Gaza.</li> <li>Swimming and surfing are not allowed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Al-Massad grew up in the diaspora as refugee.</li> <li>Cannot visit Palestine.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darwazah refugee in Jordan all her life.</li> <li>Hasan Hourani who was drowned in the forbidden waters of Jaffa who had inspired Mais Darwazah.</li> <li>Cannot visit Palestine.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 years of imprisonment.</li> <li>Life in prison is no different than life in Palestine.</li> <li>Cannot visit Palestine.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fleifel refugee in Lebanon, Denmark, UAE.</li> <li>Grandfather of Fleifel who never left the camp.</li> <li>The Palestinians live a prison-like life</li> <li>Cannot visit Palestine.</li> </ul>
Shared narrative:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses shared narrative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of a filmmaker's narration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of a filmmaker's narration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses shared narrative.</li> <li>Personal story and lived experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of a filmmaker's narration.</li> <li>Almost an absence of narration within the documentary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses shared narrative.</li> <li>Personal story and lived experiences.</li> </ul>

Table 3: Critiques, relevance, political reference and nationalism comparison of key findings.

	<i>Gaza-strophe, the Day After (2010)</i>	<i>Gaza Surf Club (2016)</i>	<i>This is My Picture When I was Dead (2010)</i>	<i>My Love Awaits Me by the Sea (2013)</i>	<i>Crayons of Askalan (2011)</i>	<i>A World Not Ours (2013)</i>
Critiques, relevance, and civil participatory:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The red Turkish flag.</li> <li>Calls out for an absence of an international community and a security council.</li> <li>Greetings to all the free people of the world and to the people whose conscience still lives on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poses critiques towards the current political party in Palestine, for the situation to change, as well as the international community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bashir poses critiques towards the censorship in Jordan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criticizing Germany and the Israeli forces.</li> <li>Calling out help from their Kuwaiti, Jordanian, Lebanese, and Iraqi brothers to help the vulnerable Palestinians.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since there almost no narration within the documentary, the audience does not witness a criticism that is posed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The elderly believed that supporting World Cup teams meant helping them besiege and starve the people in Gaza.</li> <li>Poses criticisms to their Arab brothers and sisters to take more action</li> </ul>
Political reference and nationalism:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usage of Palestinian flag.</li> <li>Made self-composed songs which have been another form of resistance to fight against the growing frustration over the injustices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usage of Palestinian flag.</li> <li>Pictures of Yasser Arafat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bashir's fathers love for nation outweighed his dream of a family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political reference to 1948 Nakba.</li> <li>Usage of Palestinian flag</li> <li>Checkpoint in Ramallah, for the Israeli forces to let her in, she had to say "please, let us in."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prisoners in Askalan believed that they are heroes fighting for the Palestinian cause.</li> <li>made self-composed songs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pictures of Yasser Arafat.</li> <li>Political reference to 1948 Nakba.</li> <li>Palestinian flag.</li> <li>Mahdi's helpless friend thought of blowing himself up.</li> <li>made self-composed songs.</li> <li>a friend of Mahdi was wearing a shirt with the different script on it.</li> </ul>



## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter aspires to provide an overview of the significant aspects of this study, address its strengths and limitations, and discusses implications. As mentioned in chapter one, this study aimed to look at the portrayal of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through its neighboring countries Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Through the examination of the six documentaries, the objective was to draw a pattern on how political documentaries are portrayed by its neighboring countries.

Firstly, this study contributed to literature assessing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese documentaries since 2010-2018. An extensive literature search revealed that there had not been a similar study conducted in trying to find a pattern on how its neighboring countries tried to portray the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Additionally, the documentaries *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After*, *Gaza Surf Club*, *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*, *This is My Picture When I Was Dead*, *Crayons of Askalan*, and *A world not Ours* that I have examined for the scope of this study has not been the subject of any scholarly analysis.

This thesis gave much importance to the socio-cultural context, as a prominent indicator while examining Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon historically and the present day starting from 2010. The Arab Spring in addition to the Syrian revolution not only affected the social and political aspect of the Middle Eastern countries but it also had a significant

impact on the film industry. When talking about Arab Spring, the shifted strategic balance is usually what has been focused, while the cultural aspect is neglected and overlooked.

In fact, this could be a reason why I could only find six documentaries in three film festivals within eight years about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, when I found the documentaries, I did not have a third choice for a specific country finding two documentaries directed by an Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese was very hard. I must put forth that, initially I started the thesis with two film festivals, nevertheless when I could not find the qualifications within these two film festivals I had to take a third film festival. The criteria were that firstly, the films had to be of the documentary genre. Secondly, those documentaries had to be directed by an Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese. Thirdly, the documentaries were to be produced on a time scale between 2010 and 2018. In fact, the third film festival was settled after a long search trying to find films that would meet these standards.

However, this made me question why there have been so few documentary productions made regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Since these countries had been very supportive for the Palestinian cause since the beginning. It could be concluded that the remnants left behind, from Arab Spring led to a shift in the existing traditional paradigm. The decreased film production in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon brought a further insight of why the traditional paradigm in the film industry in the Middle East is starting to change from countries like Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon to nations like U.A.E. and Qatar. Since states like U.A.E. and Qatar started to provide different incentives to facilitate media ecosystem development by attracting a

diverse range of media companies and other famous filmmakers resulting in well-known filmmakers from Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon to consider these opportunities (Ginsberg & Lippard, 2010, xxxv). As a result, power shifted from established ecosystems in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon to the Gulf region, as the governments of U.A.E and Qatar are taking active role and giving out incentives to facilitate media industry (Youssef &Piane, 2013, 2).

Additionally, it is important to note that, half of the documentaries had been produced before the Arab Spring spread to Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. The remaining two had been produced during 2012-2013, and the last Egyptian documentary *Gaza Surf Club* was produced after all the flame of the Arab Spring had deflated with a regime change and other instabilities had settled down. To enumerate my point better, the documentaries that had been produced before Arab Spring spread extensively was the Egyptian *Gaza-strophe*, Jordanian *This is My Picture When I Was Dead*, and Lebanese *Crayons of Askalan*.

Taking into consideration the socio-cultural context and digging the deeper layers of the Political documentary films is substantial to better discern the documentary. It is vital to comprehend the historical context of any event when pursuing the deeper meaning. As the period, prior events, and attitudes of any given time will impact any topic that the audience might be presented.

Without relating with what we are watching to its historical context as well as the events that could have played a crucial role in shaping the thoughts of the filmmaker can result the audience to miss the full meaning of it. Understanding the piece of work

through its historical context can offer so much more compared to the limited amount of knowledge obtained just from watching the film.

It is inevitable not to say that documentary films are shaped by the thoughts and background of the filmmakers (Lewis, 2007). Therefore, along to the socio-cultural context, my aspiration had been to understand the filmmakers complex and impersonal stories. As understanding the filmmaker in their historical context is notable before making sense of what he produces. With the frequent usage of the concept “filmmaker,” there seems inattention given to what lies beneath a filmmaker. In its simplest and broadest form, filmmakers can unravel us into distant places, ancient times, and to different people’s way of living. In other words, it can be a medium to understand the experience of others through their point of view. After all, it is the personal experiences and historical context that is reflected in a filmmaker's production.

In fact, this had been witnessed in the analysis of the six political documentaries. For instance, although the six filmmakers are coming from three different nationalities, they hold many similarities within their documentaries. Interestingly, this thesis turned out that the six documentaries had more similarities than differences. In fact, the differences that existed was the subject of how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was portrayed, other than the subject, the techniques used, the feelings and emotions that it provoked, the references it made, the method through which the conflict was delineated were all similar.

That is to say, filmmakers going through specific life experiences and coming from certain background does play a crucial role in similarly shaping their documentaries. Considering these, I had aspired to take the history and lived experiences

of the filmmakers while examining the documentaries. After all, it is the personal experiences and historical context that is reflected in a person's documentary.

For instance, Jordanian Mais Darwazah the director of *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* gave a very similar feeling and touch with that of the Lebanese documentary *A World Not Ours*. The stories are very different and unique, but the emotions that they generate are no different. In fact, it is worthwhile to remember that similarities could be because both directors hold Palestinian roots and that they both lived in the diaspora as a refugee outside of their home country. Darwazah in Jordan and Mahdi Fleifel in Lebanon. After all, I believe that filmmakers with Palestinian origins and roots share more of the characteristics that the Palestinian cinema holds, as they are the first person witness of trauma, exile, and diaspora, as which the Palestinian cinema is described. As, the directors with Palestinian roots produce their films in exile, more with an individualistic impulse that are often related to the life experience of themselves. In other words, the exilic filmmakers are more prone to making films based on their personal experiences of diaspora and exile just as Hamid Naficy elaborates (2001, 23).

In my findings, regardless of the filmmakers' nationality and strategies of production the documentaries that had been examined in this thesis share a common thematic concern. The Palestinian desire to be free, the marginalization of Palestinian space, Palestinians living in diaspora, and the tension of belonging. These documentaries delineate the very process of searching for an identity, however at most these questions are left unclear with no explicit place of belonging proclaimed. It is important to note that the documentaries discussed in this thesis unfold a complicated relationship of distinguishing these documentaries as "national" or "cultural," due to the Palestinian

national discourses and historical narratives that is touched upon.

Despite, the cultural differences in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, there did not bring appear a change to the recounting of the collective Palestinian identity as it draws a link to living in diaspora by juxtaposing art as a form of resistance. Additionally, these documentary films do not have time and space. That means that these specific documentaries films does not revolve around the perpetual repetition of history and Nakba. In contrast, the six documentaries I have examined for the scope of this study reflect recent dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Another crucial point to relate is that the two Egyptian documentaries had been on the Gaza Strip in specific rather than taking the issue of Palestine. In fact, it makes sense why the two Egyptian filmmakers narrate their films on Gaza. As stated in the introduction, Egypt and Gaza have a historical past. Egypt had seized Gaza during the 1948-Arab-Israeli War following the establishment of Israel. Until 1967 Gaza continued to be under the power of Egypt until Israel occupied Gaza and West Bank (Hudson, 2017, 23).

It could be interpreted that, since Egypt had a historical past with Gaza and that Gaza was under the rule of Egypt, it could be said that they are more familiar with that area. Additionally, it is also essential to consider that both of the Egyptian documentaries *Gaza-strophe*, *the Day After* and *Gaza Surf Club* which I consider Egyptian by taking the nationality of one director had been co-directed by a German and French. It could be rendered, that the subject of the documentary being Gaza, already has a global appeal before even delving into the content of the documentary. Since Gaza is a well-known

place internationally due to news headlines reporting the turmoil and instability in this area. In other words, it makes the global audience to have a rough estimated idea of Gaza and the life there before even watching the documentary. When that is the case, it now makes better sense why both Egyptian filmmakers chose Gaza as the subject of their documentaries, after all, it is nothing by coincidence.

Additionally, although, the six documentaries two from Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon are political documentaries they share vital importance. The content of the documentaries did not have propaganda feel to it. Instead, the directors of the documentaries delineate and accentuate the sense of being trapped into marginalized identity and that there is no escape from that. Trying to prove that, it is not the location that marginalizes, being Palestinian is enough for the marginalization to happen because all their dreams, hopes, and memories are imprisoned. Despite, the injustices that the marginalized Palestinians feel, they do not pose a political abomination towards Israel, as by nature political documentaries can be extreme and one-sided at times.

Moving on, it is important for any study to assess the limitations of the research. One of the most significant challenges that I had faced was finding two film festivals where documentaries about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict had been submitted, by Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon since 2010-2018, as stated above. In addition to this, I faced further bewilderment while categorizing the nationality of the films submitted in the film festivals about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, or Lebanese. As Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (2015) define Middle Eastern region as an area of “migration,” “movement,” and “diasporisation” that continues to be the case today (1). This makes the the nationality of the filmmaker’s in the Middle East

complex, especially when the filmmakers have the Palestinian roots.

A further confusion that arose was while classifying films. What is the nationality of a film based on? Is it categorized by primary source of funding, the nationality of the director, or the location of production? For the scope of this study, the question of funding of the documentaries has not been the concern and standpoint, as I have taken the nationality of the director as a benchmark to identify the cinematic nationality of the documentary.

Other limitations that I had faced was the unfortunate factor that arose with the insufficient distribution of the films. Despite these documentaries participating in renowned international film festivals and aimed to draw global consciousness for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict there has been very limited and in most case, no access to the documentaries. Even though an Arabic search had been conducted as well. Interestingly, the documentaries could not be found for making purchase either. Four of the six documentaries had to be found by getting to contact with the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese directors and production companies. After a long-drawn-out process, did, the kind filmmakers were willing to show their documentaries with me.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework of this study had been on how political documentaries as solid communication medium to mobilize and influence the audience by creating a political consciousness and encourage a form of participatory citizenship. This study tried to answer the question on how the six documentaries that I have picked has a concern to mobilize the audience about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by creating a political consciousness? The six documentaries tried to mobilize the viewers by



presenting the experiences and emotions of the marginalized Palestinians by portraying the adverse conditions through the technique of visceral depiction that the Palestinians face. Intending to create a space that encourages the local and global audience to think critically and participate in public engagement.

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