10TH OF MAY 2025

# PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE CINEMA RETROSPECTIVE

SOLIDARITY SCREENINGS GLASGOW AT
FALASTIN FILM FESTIVAL

## THE PALESTINE FILM UNIT (PFU)

- Set up by Fatah in 1968 in Amman (Jordan) to photograph and film the Palestinian political, military and societal activities taking place around them
- Came into prominence after al-Naksa ('6-Day War') in which the Zionists defeated the Arab states
- Existed alongside the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) filmmaking group within the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation)
- Later became the Palestine Cinema Institute
- Produced films until the exile of the PLO from Beirut in 1982
- Over 100 films were made during this period, mostly documentaries and shorts

*FIRST LOGO OF THE PFU*

# PRACTICE OF THE PFU

- Collaborative in every step
- A revolutionary development on Third Cinema
- Portrayed Palestinians as active resistors to imperialism
- Embedded in the armed struggle: ***"Camera in one hand, gun in the other"***

*FROM PALESTINE IN THE EYE (1976)*

# REVOLUTIONARY CURATION - MASS LINE

- Films were screened to Palestinian and Arab audiences in refugee camps, villages and towns, and military bases
- In response to criticism by the audience, the PFU would re-edit the films
- Films also circulated through Arab and international film festivals, and were screened by Palestine activists in Eastern and Western Europe, Japan, and the US
- Palestinians had not represented themselves in film in the same way they did in art and literature until the PLO

*HANI JAWHARIEH, TRAINING CAMP, JORDAN, 1969*

# INSTITUTIONALISED THIRD CINEMA IN A STATELESS NATION

- Third cinema originated in Latin America in the 1960s
- Most third cinema flourished after seizure of state power (e.g., Algeria & Cuba)
- In Vietnam third cinema was also created within a national liberation struggle, however, they had an established state
- Palestinian third cinema was unique as it was institutionalised within a national liberation movement of a stateless people

1982 - Zionist invasion of Beirut, the archive of films, footage, and other materials that the PLO filmmakers had been building was stolen and kept in the IOF ‘archives’

While filmmaking did not completely end in 1982, it no longer included the collection of shared material that was a defining feature of earlier production, film production within the PLO diminished greatly during this time

PALESTINIAN CINEMA INSTITUTION

مؤسسة السينما الفلسطينية

## PLO: CINEMA AS A POLITICAL WEAPON

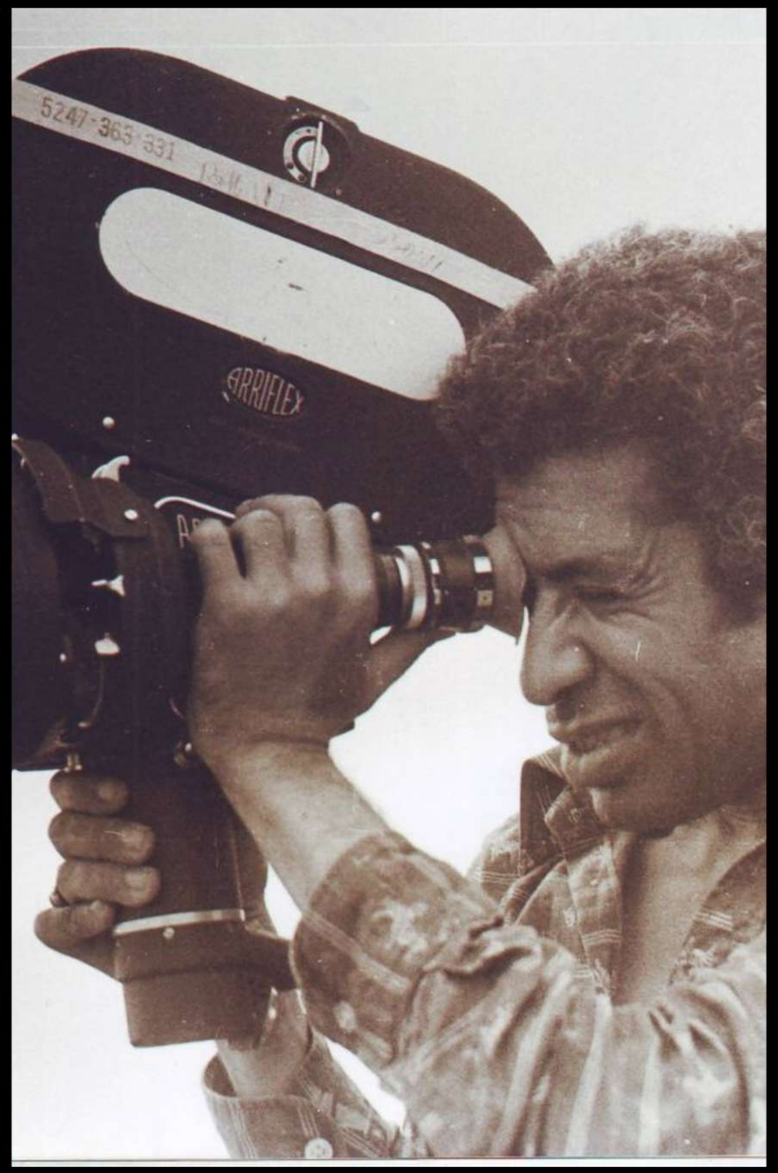
- Film was put under the aims and purposes of the national liberation movement
  - Armed struggle was always portrayed as the way for Palestinian liberation
  - Heroism, martyrdom, and sumud (steadfastness)
- Making the struggle irresistible
- The PLO became a refuge for Arab filmmakers
- Connecting Palestinians in exile and in the homeland

## INTERNATIONALISM

- International and other Arab filmmakers went to Palestine
- Solidified relationships with allies around the world
- A liberated Palestine = a liberated Arab nation

*HANI JAWHARIEH, PALESTINIAN IMAGES CA. 1977*

*SAMIR NIMIR AND KHADIJEH HABASHNEH, CA. 1979*




*KASSEM HAWAL*

*MUSTAFA ABU ALI AND HANI JAWHARIEH, 1974*

الإعلام العسكري
AL-AQSA FLOOD IN FILM

# CHILDREN WITHOUT CHILDHOOD

**KHADIJAH HABASHNEH, 1980**

Depicts life of children in Beit al-Sumud (House of Steadfastness), established by the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), highlighting the roles of educators, caregivers, and protectors as essential parts of the resistance.

Content notes: Description of death, torture and rape threats. Depiction of distress, grief, violence, children's corpses.

# THEY DO NOT EXIST

**MUSTAFA ABU ALI, 1974**

Salvaged from the ruins of Beirut after 1982, Abu Ali covers conditions in Lebanon's refugee camps, the effects of "israeli" bombardments, and the lives of fedayin (guerrilla fighters) in training camps.

Content notes: Depiction of grief, aerial bombardment, destroyed buildings, obscured corpses. Description of the death of children.

# PALESTINE IN THE EYE

**MUSTAFA ABU ALI, 1976**

An homage to the cinematographer Hani Jawhariya of the Palestine Film Unit. The film reflects on his life through interviews with family, colleagues, and his own cinematography, including the moment of his martyrdom while filming for the Unit in 1976.

Content notes: Depiction of grief, a Zionist air raid, and injuries.

# SCENES OF THE OCCUPATION FROM GAZA

**MUSTAFA ABU ALI. 1976**

Shot by a French news team, the footage was edited by Abu Ali in Lebanon to produce one of the earliest films on the occupied territory in Gaza.

Content notes: Brief description of death and violence. Depiction of distress, grief and the sound of explosions.

# GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How did you find watching the films? How do the political content and the artistic quality compliment each other? Share your thoughts!
2. What is the importance of past movements (such as the PFU and Nae Pasaran) to current struggles. How can these influence us now?
3. One of the PFU's missions was to elevate societal understanding of liberation. How can we deepen our understanding further after watching these films? What do we do after the festival?

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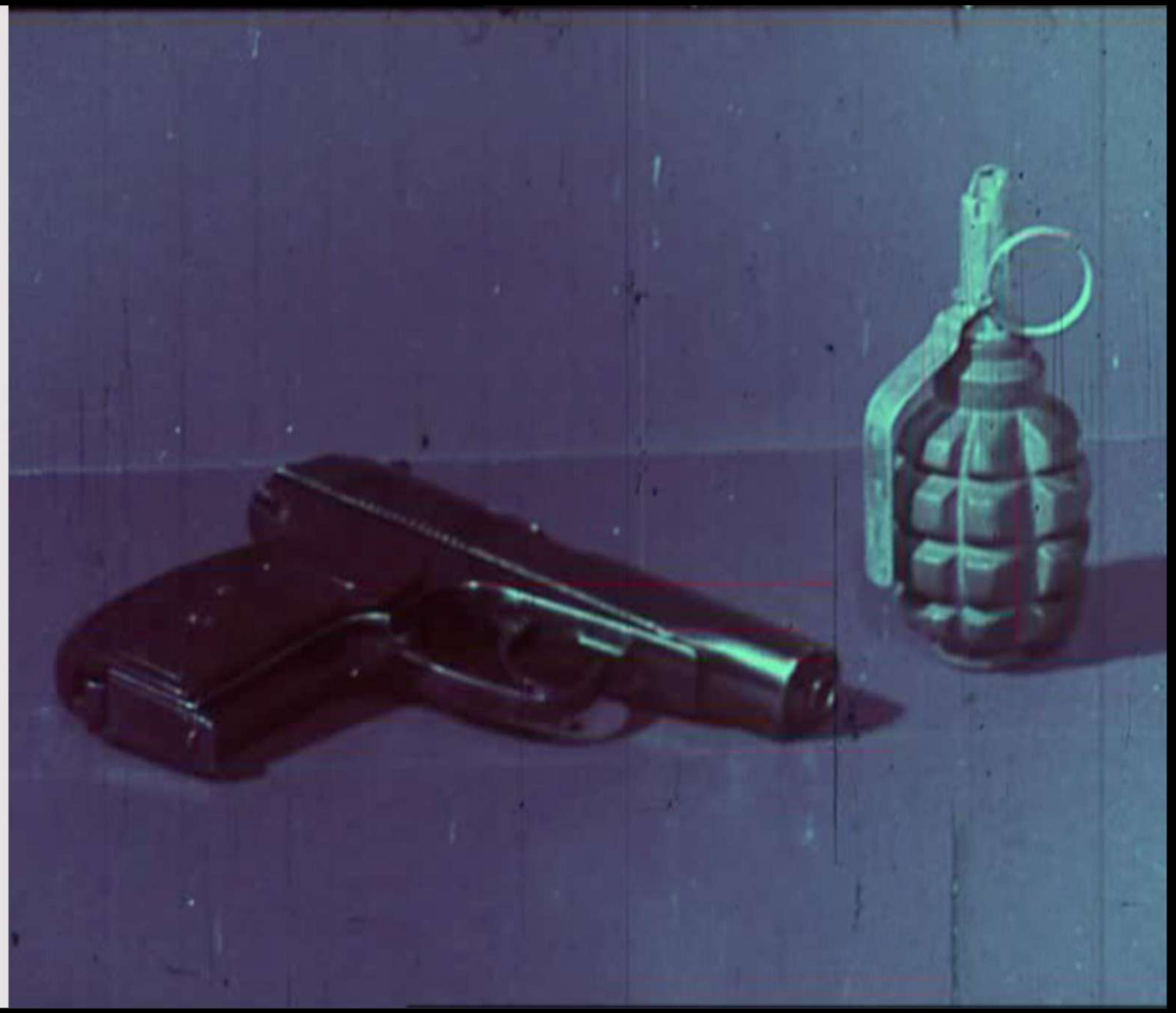
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