

# Israel Palestine

On Swedish TV 1958–1989

From the makers of  
*The Black Power Mixtape 1967–1975*  
and *Concerning Violence*

Written and directed by Göran Hugo Olsson

Narrated by Pernilla August

Editor: Britta Norell  
Assistant Director: Emilia Mellberg  
Sound Design: Micke Nyström  
Music: Gary Nilsson  
Graphic Design: Malmsten Hellberg  
Research and Mastering: John Olsson

Producer: Tobias Janson  
Executive producer: Melissa Lindgren  
Project Managers SVT: Lars Säfström, Ingemar Persson  
Co-production executive Film i Väst: Jenny Luukkonen

Produced with support from  
The Swedish Film Institute / Juan Pablo Libossart,  
Nordisk Film & TV Fond / Karolina Lidin,  
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In collaboration with YLE / Erkki Lyttinen, DR / Anders Bruus.  
A co-production between SVT / Asta Dalman, Axel Arnö,  
Film i Väst / Kristina Börjeson, Tekele Productions / Miia Haavisto,  
Marja Pihlaja, Ström Pictures / Monica Hellström  
and Story / Tobias Janson.

International sales Reservoir Docs / Anaïs Clanet,  
Frédéric Corvez, Irène Cadavid

*Archive material doesn't necessarily tell us what really happened. But says a lot about how it was told*



### Short synopsis

During the years 1958 to 1989, the Swedish public broadcaster SVT's reporting from Israel and Palestine was unique. Their reporters were constantly present in the war-affected region, documenting everything from everyday life to international crises.

This extensive treasure of footage makes up the material for Göran Hugo Olsson's new film, where footage of the rise of the Israeli state is interwoven with the Palestinian struggle for independence. News coverage with Yasser Arafat and interviews with Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban during a visit to Sweden are parts of exclusive archive material that has not been shown since first broadcast.

Combined, they tell the story of a changed media landscape and give us tools to understand a conflict that has affected our time like few others.

### Long synopsis

*Israel Palestine on Swedish Television 1958-1989* is the definitive cinematic account of the background to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through unique and immersive footage, for long buried in the vaults of the Swedish Television archives. Challenging and changing the conventions of how history is written, the film demonstrates how one country's media perceived one of the world's longest conflicts.

There is no other search entry that gives an equal amount of hits when searching the SVT archives as "Israel/Palestine". No other specific topic has been given a comparable amount of resources to be followed and reported on. By looking back in history, we are trying to understand one of the worst conflicts of our time. During the years 1958 to 1989 there was a public-service monopoly in Sweden, and the public broadcaster SVT's reporting from Israel and Palestine was unique. Their reporters

were constantly present in the war-affected region, documenting everything from everyday life to international crises.

This extensive footage makes up the material for the archive film maestro Göran Hugo Olsson's (*The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975, Concerning Violence*) new film, where footage of the rise of the Israeli state is interwoven with the Palestinian struggle for independence. SVT follow Prime Minister Tage Erlander and his younger colleague Olof Palme on an official visit to Israel in 1963, a country they see as a social democratic ideal society. David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir receive them. The world-famous Israeli leaders show off their modest homes with impressive book collections. Strong ties are bound between Sweden and Israel, and to a large extent this is through the Swedish Social Democrats and the Israeli Labor Party.

Swedish Broadcast company SVT, hold the intention to be neutral in reporting. Not that very insert should carry "both sides" but in the larger perspective convey different aspects of the turmoil and conflicts. But it is evident that the first ten years the perspective is overwhelmingly praise for the wonders of Israel. After the Six Day War in 1967 this begin to change. And in 1969 the word "Palestinian" appears for the first time. And during the next ten years or so much of the reporting is focusing on the "Palestinian Question". In the 80's much of attention is enshrouded in disillusion by the complex war in Lebanon.

Reportages with Yasser Arafat and interviews with Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban during a visit to Sweden are parts of an exclusive archive material that has not been shown since first broadcast. Combined, they tell the story of a changed media landscape and give us tools to understand a conflict that has affected our time like few others.

### Production facts

*Israel Palestine on Swedish TV 1958-1989*  
Documentary  
2024  
Duration: 200 min  
World premier: Venice International Film Festival  
Country of production: Sweden / Finland / Denmark  
Language: English, Hebrew, Arabic

written and directed by  
Göran Hugo Olsson

Narrated by  
Pernilla August

Producer  
Tobias Janson

Co-producers Sweden  
Asta Dalman, Axel Arnö/SVT  
Kristina Börjeson/Film i Väst

Co-producers Finland  
Miia Haavisto, Marja Pihlaja/  
Tekele Productions

Co-producer Denmark  
Monica Hellström/Ström  
Pictures

Editor  
Britta Norell

Additional Editing  
Göran Hugo Olsson

Assistant Director  
Emilia Mellberg

Sound Design and Mix  
Micke Nyström

Music  
Gary Nilsson

Graphic Design  
Stefania Malmsten  
Malmsten Hellberg

Online and mastering  
John Olsson

Executive Producer  
Melissa Lindgren

In collaboration with  
YLE/Erkko Lyytinen  
DR/Anders Bruus

The Swedish Film Institute/  
Juan Pablo Libossart,  
Nordisk Film & TV fund/  
Karolina Lidin,  
The Finnish Film  
Foundation/Eero Tammi,  
AVEK/Mikko Peltonen and  
the Creative Europe MEDIA  
programme.

International sales Reservoir  
Docs, a label of Urban Sales  
/ Anaïs Clanet, Frédéric  
Corvez, Irène Cadavid





### **Director's statement**

This is by far the most painful film that I - we - have ever done and five years in the making, it has unfortunately become heartbreakingly timely. While the material has been an absolute delight to work with, beautiful images with incredibly interesting characters mixed with human testimonies and geopolitical events—the course of history becomes increasingly agonising. We have really tried to show respect to both the originators of the footage and the participants, with the perhaps outmoded intent to promote notions such as peace and understanding.

- People ask me if the project or I changed after October 7. But it hasn't. I still dislike both Hamas and Netanyahu as much as I did a year ago, says Göran Hugo Olsson.

### **Director's biography**

Göran Hugo Olsson was born in 1965 in Lund, Sweden. He pursued his education at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm, following

initial film studies at Stockholm University.

A documentary filmmaker, cinematographer, and inventor; he created the A-cam, the world's smallest Super-16 film camera, and the D2, the only uncompressed digital camera. Olsson founded and edited the short documentary TV programme Ikon on SVT, and before that, he worked on SVT's Elbyl series. He co-founded Story AB and served on the editorial board of Ikon South Africa, a platform dedicated to the creative documentary scene in South Africa for the SABC. From 1999 to 2002, Olsson was a Film Commissioner at the Swedish Film Institute. His career has taken him around the globe, creating films, commercials, informational films, and music videos. Olsson's work has been celebrated at major film festivals, with a win at the Sundance Film Festival in 2011, a Berlin Panorama win in 2014, and multiple Guldbagge Awards in 2012 and 2015. His contributions to the field have earned him a place as a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

### **Director's filmography**

1992 Kl:k  
1994 The Night of the Gypsies  
1998 Fuck you, Fuck you very much  
2004 Back  
2008 Am I Black Enough for You  
2011 The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975  
2011 Independent Lens, tv series  
2014 Concerning Violence  
2016 Fonko  
2017 That Summer  
2018 May 68  
2018 England 79  
2019 Arena, tv series  
2023 La société du spectacle, co-directed with Roxy Farhat

# Story

## Tobias Janson, producer

Tobias Janson, born in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1973, is producer and CEO at Story, a leading Swedish documentary production company with offices in Stockholm and Gothenburg. His filmography includes award-winning, widespread and critically acclaimed feature-lengths such as *Hypermoon* (Grand Prix winner, Festival de Film Européen, Paris and Best Documentary Award at Docufest, Kosovo), *A House Made of Splinters* (Co-Producer, 2022 Sundance World Cinema Directing Award, Academy Award Nominee, Best Documentary) *Idomeni* (2020 Swedish Film Award nominee, Best documentary), *Lucky One* (2019 Eurimages Audentia Award winner), *The Distant Barking of Dogs* (Co-Producer - First Appearance Award winner at IDFA, McBaine Award winner at San Francisco FF, 2017/2018), *That Summer* (Telluride and Berlinale, 2017/2018), *Kiki* (Sundance World competition and Berlinale Teddy Award winner; 2016), *Fonko* (London IFF and Rotterdam 2015/2016), *Concerning Violence* (Sundance World competition and Berlinale Cinema Fairbindet Award winner, Best Swedish Documentary Award winner 2014), *Belleville Baby* (Berlinale premiere and Best Swedish Documentary Award winner 2013), *At Night I Fly* (Sheffield Special Jury premiere and Best Swedish Documentary Award 2011) *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* (Sundance World Editing Award and Berlinale premiere 2011).

## Story AB

was founded in 1998, producing creative documentary films for cinema, television and online distribution. The company is run by five award winning documentary filmmakers and two producers and office. Story also produces and represents additional talented filmmakers connected to the company.

Story has a high ambition in producing both personal and inventive films. Our main resources are groundbreaking stories and the talented directors we represent. Story is today one of the most important production companies focused on documentaries and art

house films in Sweden and Scandinavia. Story specialises in feature-length documentaries with an international reach, but we also produce short documentaries, fiction films, animated documentaries and commercial work with a documentary base.

Our filmography includes (selection) *G - 21 scenes from Gottsunda* (2024, CPH:DOX), *How We Have Loved* (2024, opening film Tempo Documentary Festival), *The Society of the Spectacle* (2023, CPH:DOX), *Megaheartz* (2023, CPH:DOX), *Labor* (2023, CPH:DOX), *Hypermoon* (2023 CPH:DOX), *The Villages of Roses* (2023, Tessaloniki), *Blomster* (2023, Gothenburg FF), *Love You Bye* (2023, Gothenburg Film Festival, winner of the Angelo prize), *A House Made of Splinters* (2022, co-producer, Sundance director's award, Oscar nominated), *Always Amber* (2020, Berlinale) *Idomeni* (2020, Tessaloniki) *Lucky One* (2019, Eurimages Audentia Award at the Gothenburg Film Festival), *That Summer* (2018, Telluride, Berlinale Panorama, Gothenburg FF), *The Distant Barking of Dogs* (co-producer, 2017, First Appearance Award at IDFA, FIPRESCI Award in Thessaloniki + more), *Shapeshifters* (2017, Competition sections in Gothenburg FF and CPH:DOX), *Kiki* (2016, Sundance World Competition, Teddy Award at Berlinale, Idfa + more), *Fonko* (2015, Rotterdam and London IFF), *Concerning Violence* (2014, Sundance World Competition, Cinema Fairbindet Award Berlinale, Best documentary at the Swedish Film Awards), *Belleville Baby* (2013, Berlinale Panorama, Best Documentary at Swedish Film Awards), *After You* (2013, Best Nordic Documentary Award, CPH:DOX), *At Night I Fly*, (2011, Best Documentary at Swedish Film Awards), *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* (2011, World Documentary Editing Award, Sundance + more).

Our projects have something important to say to the audience. They all deal with burning questions in our contemporary society. Our long-time drive has been to reach a new audience by combining a captivating and fervent theme with an innovative form.

[www.story.se](http://www.story.se)  
+46 8 15 62 82  
Kocksgatan 31  
11624 Stockholm  
Sweden

Tobias Janson  
producer  
tobias@story.se  
+46 736 507 415

**Press contact Venice:**  
NOISE Film & TV  
Kai Hermann  
kai@noisefilmpr.com  
+49 152 534 509 55

Mirjam Wiekenskamp  
mirjam@noisefilmpr.com  
+31 628 652 249

# ISRAEL PALESTINE ON SWEDISH TV 1958-1989

*Interview with director Göran Hugo Olsson by Savina Petkova*

**Let's start from the origins of this mammoth project and the timeline: how long did it take to finish and what was the kernel of it all?**

- There was another film I was making five years ago, which gave me access to the Swedish broadcast company's archive, and then in that process, I discovered some images from the 60s and 70s of Israel or Palestine. Like always, when you embark on a new film, you already know, it's going to take forever, and it will be hard work, so you really have to consider whether the outcome is worth it? Will this make a great film? And would it be of interest to someone, you know? It doesn't have to be a large audience, obviously, in my case, but you have to have some audience who'd consider it as great.

**So, five years ago, you started collecting the material for what will become ISRAEL PALESTINE ON SWEDISH TV 1958-1989?**

- Yes, but collecting was easy, but we're talking about thousands of hours of footage, the problem was rejecting, you know, to pick out the pieces that you need and make sense together. I mean, we did everything we could to make a representative image of what was shown on TV in those years: we have a nature program, for instance, we have a children's program. We have a culture programme, to give a kind of sense of how this conflict was presented to Swedes back in the days [as it was evolving].

**At the very beginning of the film, a title card states that the archive shows you how something was perceived, not how something was back then. Myself, as a non-Swedish viewer, I'm curious about that holistic point of view, what was it? How would you describe the point of view of Swedish television throughout these 50 years?**

- It's a hard question to give an answer that sticks with you, because I'm not new to this kind of material, I pretty much knew what to expect. But one striking thing, if you compare today's reports and today's television, is something I've been criticized for a long time: the complete absence of dead bodies, and often television broadcasters would hide behind this, calling it personal integrity. "We don't want to expose people like that," they'd say. And that's fine, of course. But when you never see a dead person on television for a long time, and then there were the images of Alan Cody, the refugee boy from Syria, and George Floyd, those [images] changed everything. When you're confronted with the image of death like that, you realize the words describing suffer-

ing, pain, and refugees dying, mean nothing. Even during the pandemic, we didn't see a single dead body, as if death was something that we should be protected from. Also, what's happening today in Gaza is unbelievable. It's totally unbelievable. And we don't see enough of what actually goes on there. I think that in Sweden during those years on TV, they exposed more of that suffering, more of you know how humiliating it is to be killed on the battlefield and so on. You know, that's a difference that's something I was surprised by, that this has disappeared from television.

**The film has a chronological structure that guides the viewer, as well as a prologue, act one and two. It could also perhaps conjure that illusion that it's an easy film to make because it's chronological. Can you tell me more about that process of rejecting footage and how you decided on what to keep and what kind of footage to include for each section?**

- That's the trick of the trade, you know. It's very hard to put that in words. Fifteen years ago, I gave up filming, because it became so accessible thanks to the cameras and everything, so there was no need for a middle class male [like myself] to go to any remote place and film and bring images back. I think all documentary films should be made from within the community. So I quit filming 15 years ago, also because my [own] community is not so interesting. But I thought I had the right or access to the images I was brought up with [on TV]. They are mine. They were made for me. They were made for the public in Sweden and me as a kid, I was part of that public. Having said that, the themes that I work on in trying to organize material, to tell a story, often come from a past that we think is still important. [As a filmmaker], you also have to leave the audience with power or responsibility to think for themselves, rather than 'designing' the documentary too much. I think that today they want more of a raw presentation, rather than something well-cooked. You know, some batter is better than the cookie! You wouldn't want to be seduced by a documentary like this.

**You mentioned that you work with more like 1000s and hours of footage at the beginning, so there's a lot available. But that doesn't necessarily mean already that you have to make a three hour or one hour and a half. So how, how did you decide on this length, and were there any other versions, or was it like the maximum that you could do within them?**

- What I found interesting in this material was the development, the process, how the history moved on, and if it were to be told in short pieces, it wouldn't seem as organic a development, it



would be a chopped-up version of history. I wanted to have a flow, [to show how] the time passes and all what happens with it, how the people change. But I wouldn't want the film to be longer than what it is now. You know, I'm definitely a filmmaker; but what I do is not to teach, but to provide images that inspire you to read or to act. And I don't care by which means, I just wanted to reach out to people, to stimulate them to think on their own and search for more information.

**And while you were making the film in the last five years, obviously, circumstances in Gaza have changed drastically. Did you notice that affecting your process when you were, let's say, finishing the film in the last year or so?**

- Yes, after October 7th last year; there was a huge difference. You can't compare. And Savina, I can't tell you how depressed, how in despair I am, I can't even talk about it. It's so depressing to spend four years plus [watching and editing all this footage] and then for it to repeat itself with 10 or 100 times more suffering. And I'm not the victim! But to see humankind being the worst beast on Earth like that... I don't know. It was really hard to watch this [footage] for four years and then see history repeat itself and amplify. Unbelievable.

**I think there's also something about the film itself that kind of changes, or has changed, because it's being shown now. It was years in the making before October 7, now it's being seen in a different way, not necessarily as an origin story, in context only to this conflict, but also as a reminder that history is not only repeating itself, but also getting worse. So it's like the present has already kind of influenced the way we're going to see this film.**

- Yes, and how do you feel about that?

**There is the basic and surface level way of looking at it as an educational tool or a tool for knowledge. But knowledge is important when people are trying to obfuscate reality by calling the conflict 'complicated. But on the emotional level, it's really devastating. I, as a viewer, find it hard to deal with my own powerlessness, but there's maybe less of that when as a filmmaker, you're putting that out there and they're starting conversations?**

- We're in the same situation. It's really annoying to me that today no one talks about peace anymore. I know it's naive [to say], and I'm the first one to subscribe to "Justice before peace", but you have to have peace as a goal. This is the goal for us [humankind]. It must be understanding, coexisting, and then we have to have justice to enable that. And it's not only in Israel or Palestine, it's in Ukraine and Russia, and it's in everyday life in Sweden and everywhere else. I hope that the film will contribute to a narrative that the goal is peace, not sacrifice. I mean, it's not worth it. You know, killing 20 kids in a school, what is worth it? You know, is it? So could we maybe delay the bombing? Could we maybe have a ceasefire in Ukraine? What would happen? I hope, naively, that this film could be a contribution to the narrative that maybe we should aim for peace.

**Peace is a way of dealing with two irreconcilable forces, with ambivalence.**

- When I was growing up in the 70s, where I was, it was not uncommon for people to have paper money boxes collecting money for an ambulance in Israel and Palestinian people at the same time. So I think it's possible to hold two [conflicting] ideas at the same time. I never acknowledged or thought that coexistence would be an impossible thing. I never had that feeling growing up, so we made the film in the spirit of coexistence.