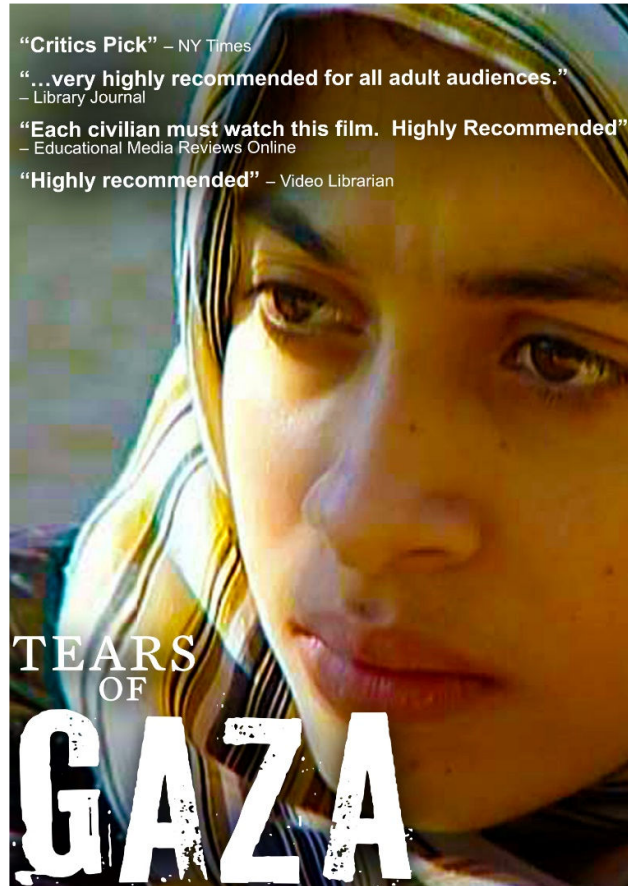


TEARS OF GAZA

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”
Desmond Tutu



A FILM BY
VIBEKE LØKKEBERG
Produced by Terje Kristiansen

85 mins / Color / 2010 / Arabic, English Subtitles



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PREMIERES AND AWARDS

2011 Jerusalem Film Festival
2011 Toronto International Film Festival
Winner of the Human Rights Award (Public Liberties and Human Rights Award) 2011 Al Jazeera International Documentary Festival
2010 Gaza Film Festival: Best Film
2011 Göteborg International Film Festival: Audience Award
2011 Thessaloniki International Documentary Film
2011 Monaco Charity Film Festival: Best Feature Documentary, Children of War Foundation Awards
2011 The Norwegian Documentary Film Festival, Volda: Audience Award
2012 Durango Independent Film Festival: Audience Award: Best Documentary, Jury Commendation
2012 Al Ard Palestinian Film Festival: Best Documentary

FILM FESTIVALS

Abu Dhabi Film Festival
Doha Tribeca Film Festival, Qatar
IDFA – International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam
Gaza Film Festival
Göteborg International Film Festival
Thessaloniki International Documentary Film Festival
Hong Kong International Film Festival
Filmfest DC, Washington DC
Aljazeera International Documentary Film Festival
London Palestine Film Festival
Monaco Charity Film Festival
The Norwegian Documentary Film Festival, Volda
DOXA Documentary Film Festival
Festroia International Film Festival
Transilvania International Film Festival
Cinema City International Film Festival
Melbourne International Film Festival
Exile Film Festival
Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival
Nordox – Nordic Documentary Film Festival
Festival des Libertés
Middle East: What Cinema Can Do
Ramdam Festival
Viva Palestina Film Festival
Durango Independent Film Festival
Al Ard Palestinian Film Festival

INTRODUCTION

(Excerpt from the Jerusalem Film Festival program guide)

It is difficult, apparently impossible, to make an objective film about the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, a conflict that arouses visceral reactions not only among the rival sides. Vibeke Lokkeberg's documentary does not pretend to objectivity. Rather, it tries to sketch a picture from inside Gaza during and after Israel's Operation Cast Lead. We do not see combatants, only children and parents who lament their horrible situation; children and parents on whom the bombings left not only physical but psychological scars; human beings who lost not only their property but also those closest to them. *Tears of Gaza* moves from situations captured by Palestinian photographers during the War itself, to the aftermath and the repercussions of the fighting on the souls of the children of the Strip — a lot of desperation and rage, and not much hope.

It could be that our hearts become calloused to these kinds of images when seen over and over on the television screen. In the cinema hall the effect is different, and the emotional reactions sparked among the viewers will not necessarily fall easily on either side of the political divide. It will not be simple, but those of us who come to the screening free of prejudice will discover an unsettling, gut-wrenching, and simultaneously thought-provoking film.

Tears of Gaza

(Excerpt from Steve Gravestock, 2011 Toronto International Film Festival)

Disturbing, powerful and emotionally devastating, *Tears of Gaza* is less a conventional documentary than a record – presented with minimal gloss – of the 2008 to 2009 bombing of Gaza by the Israeli military. Photographed by several Palestinian cameramen both during and after the offensive, this powerful film by director Vibeke Løkkeberg focuses on the impact of the attacks on the civilian population. The film shuttles between the actual bombings and the aftermath on the streets and in the hospitals. The footage of the bombs landing is indelible and horrifying, but it is on par with much of the explicit imagery on hand. White phosphorous bombs rain over families and children, leaving bodies too charred to be identified. The footage here is extremely graphic and includes children's bodies being pulled from ruins. Recounting the horrors she has witnessed, one young girl collapses and sinks out of the frame. Years of economic embargo have left the area deprived of resources and have strained an already impoverished infrastructure. The wounded are carried to hospital for lack of ambulances, and an absence of fire trucks leaves home owners to put out fires on their own. What's immediately apparent is that decades of military activity have made the population angry, nihilistic and vengeful. As one young boy says, "Even if they give us the world, we will not forget." Løkkeberg contrasts these scenes with footage of bachelor parties, weddings and visits to the beach – social activities that epitomize daily life in Gaza during more peaceful times. *Tears of Gaza* makes no overriding speeches or analyses. The situation leading up to the incursion is never mentioned. While this strategy may antagonize some, it's a useful method for highlighting the effects of the violence on the civilian population. Similar events certainly occurred in Dresden, Tokyo, Baghdad and Sarajevo, but of course Gaza isn't those places. *Tears of Gaza* demands that we examine the costs of war on a civilian populace. The result is horrifying, gut-wrenching and unforgettable.

THE MAKING OF “TEARS OF GAZA”

The story of how the filmmakers made a film in Gaza without being allowed to cross the border.

One night 2008 while watching the news on television, Vibeke Løkkeberg saw a story about a boy crying after his father was killed during an Israeli bombing in Gaza. Although the international press was not allowed into Gaza, she had been able to follow the bombings on TV. Løkkeberg was shocked that the world media did not work to do a better job to cover the attacks on civilians in a densely populated region with no place for them to escape. It reminded her of the U.S. invasion of Iraq which was reported from a distance. The public was not allowed to see any war footage – the damage, violence and victims of the attacks.

Seeing the boy crying made Løkkeberg angry. She felt rage because of the devastation and the killing of innocent women and children. Løkkeberg decided then that she needed to break through the wall of silence. She wanted to get to know the people of Gaza and meet the women and children who are the victims of war. Løkkeberg felt that the population was being stigmatized as terrorists, yet these were ordinary man, women and children like her own family.

She went straight to the phone and called the director of Freedom of Expression Organization, Bente Roalsvik. She had seen the same little boy on TV. They agreed to do something. Vibeke Løkkeberg wrote the script for her film, and one week after the attack on Gaza, The Freedom of Expression Organization funded a trip for her and producer Terje Kristiansen to Israel to start the film.

However, the Israeli government did not allow them to enter Gaza. Instead they traveled to the West Bank with a Palestinian guide and then to Egypt where they took a 6-hour taxi ride through the Sinai Desert till they arrived at Rafha on the Gaza border. As they arrived, a bomb fell very close to their taxi. Initially they thought that their car was hit. Instead, a tunnel leading into Gaza had been targeted and destroyed. The bombing of the tunnels between Israel and Gaza can be a daily occurrence.

Egypt did not allow them to enter Gaza, so Løkkeberg and Kristiansen needed to find another way to tell their story. She talked to a Norwegian TV journalist stationed with the international reporters in front of Israel border to Gaza. They were covering the “Cast Lead” bombardment (the 2008 Gaza War). None of the international reporters from the world were granted permission to enter the Gaza’s strip during the attack. The journalist gave them his contacts inside Gaza including a production company that works for Reuter and many western TV stations. They were hired to work on the film.

Using Internet and phone, Løkkeberg and Kristiansen explained my ideas. Løkkeberg asked them to find the boy from the TV report, and also two more children of the same age who could tell their story. She explained that the film would not be the politics of the war. Instead it would be a feature documentary that would begin by focusing on daily life of people living in Gaza during the bombardment, and how they and society functioned during the bombardment – families living in the ruins, people getting married, families visiting the graveyard of killed family members, etc. Løkkeberg wrote down questions they would ask. She told them to shoot the subjects in close-up and keep the camera running and focused on their faces. While shooting the children, Løkkeberg wanted to keep the camera at the same height as the children’s faces. And she wanted a variety of camera angles and perspectives as they shot people moving and coming in and out of rooms. Løkkeberg wanted her film shot so that the audience would identify with the children.

Løkkeberg and Kristensen wanted to bring viewers closer to the victims in order to convince them that these are not “other people.” They want the audience to understand that the people of Gaza have the same feelings, desires and dreams as a typical family life living in the west.

The film was made over six months. The Gaza production team shot the footage, but they were not involved in the script or any of post-production. The film reflects Løkkeberg’s ideas and themes. She wanted to cater the film towards the western audience, so they would have a clear idea of what it means to be a civilian target in a war.

The children: Løkkeberg wanted to meet with the children used in the film, but Israel and Egypt did not allow her into Gaza, nor were the children allowed out. Amira, the girl seen in the last part of the film, was the only one of the children in the movie allowed out of Gaza so she could receive medical treatment. Løkkeberg with the help of a Palestinian doctor living in Norway was able to get to know her. Both Terje Kristiansen and Vibeke Løkkeberg followed Amira back to the border of Gaza to ensure that they could see her again.

It was a very dramatic journey. Løkkeberg and Kristiansen were where almost jailed at the Egyptian airport by the police for trying to bring Amira back to Gaza, as Palestinians are not allowed to return back to Gaza. However, using their Norwegian passport, they managed to enter Egypt with her. Again, they made the six hour drive through the Sinai Desert, and with the help of a bright moon, Løkkeberg and Kristiansen got Amira over the border into Gaza. The production team waited for her on the other side of the border and filmed her return. But Løkkeberg and Kristiansen were left behind. They have not seen her since.

All the material had to be smuggled out of Gaza. In Norway, the filmmakers collected the footage from Gaza. The film was edited in Oslo by Vibeke Løkkeberg and Terje Kristiansen. Christian Scanning handled the post-production sound design. Lisa Gerard and Marcello De Francisci composed the music.

Operation Cast Lead was now documented. Most of the footage showing the bombings has not been screened on western TV. The war against the civilians would be witnessed by the world. “Tears of Gaza” was invited to screen in the Toronto International Film Festival. Løkkeberg and Kristiansen had broken through the wall and all checkpoints.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Witnessing the maiming and killing of children in a war, without being able to do anything about it, is a great challenge. The short glimpses of children's faces displayed on my TV set, after they had lived through the war, was my motivation for making Tears of Gaza. A protest against all wars grew inside me. Wars are senseless, destructive, unworthy of mankind. Wars are never a solution to bilateral problems in the long run. In my films, I have always been concerned with the fate of the victims. In the Gaza–Israel conflict, there are presumably two victimized parties. A responsibility which both the USA and Europe will have to shoulder.

My hope is that this film will arouse the same feelings of protest among the audiences, and that it will bring inspiration to continue the seemingly endless struggle against poverty, suffering and war. In the film, I quote a father who sits with his phosphorous injured child: "What God do these people believe in, who can do this against children? And how can I gather the strength to forgive?"

This film has been a year in the making, and it was a pleasure to let its world premiere take place in Toronto. I started my career as a documentary filmmaker. From the 1970's on I made feature films. With this film, I have chosen to use elements of fiction and to use the theater as a venue. In contrast to TV, the cinema provides the opportunity to absorb. My hope is that this emotional approach will spur protest, and the desire for people to contribute to making a better world.

– Vibeke Løkkeberg

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

My goal for Tears of Gaza is to show how civilians, women and children are the victims of war. I want to show that now more than ever, war does not have the ability to solve bilateral conflicts.

It is necessary to show the victims' point of view in order to understand the terror that wars cause. I also want to show that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the so called "War against Terrorism" create human conflicts. The use of words like terrorist, discrimination and democracy tend to be mantras for justifying the use of violence.

We chose to concentrate on the little things in life in the areas where real people live. In order to create an identification and understanding of all wars, we focused on the destinies and emotions of people to show just how wrong it is to use violence to accomplish these means.

No journalists were allowed to enter Gaza during the bombings in 2009. Because of that, the world received a superficial picture of what really happened. If one shows how ordinary families live and suffer, people can connect to them in a far more personal way. Then one discovers how daily life, war and occupation are all tied together.

A film can be much more effective than dozens of historical and political stories of presenting these views. A documentary can cover these issues deeper and broader than the traditional media is often permitted to.

– Terje Kristiansen

DIRECTOR/WRITER BIOGRAPHY

Born 1945 in Bergen Norway

Two children – Tonje born 1975 and Marie born 1982

Married to Terje Kristiansen who also works as her producer.

Made a concept out of being a mother and making films with her family.

Løkkeberg has become one of Norway's most well-known personalities and leading feminist artists.

She is an actor, director, screenwriter and author.

- Early 1960s Started out as fashion model in Rome, Copenhagen, Paris and London in early 60'.
- 1966 Cowriter and star of the feature film **Liv** which introduced the new film style to Norway. It was selected for the Berlin International Film Festival.
- 1970 Co-writer and lead in the feature **Exit**. It was selected for DIRECTOR'S FORTNIGHT in the Cannes International Film Festival. Løkkeberg went to London and Rome. She rejected a role in **Fellinis Satyricon** and instead went home and started her individual career. Started to make controversial short films on women topics
Abortion – Fighting the right of free abortion.
- 1971 **The Child Should Have a Father** – about children born outside marriage
- 1972 **Tater** – About suppressed minorities in Norway
- 1973–75 Various short films for NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation)
- 1975 **Rain** – first short feature as writer, director and star
- 1976 **Revelation** – her first full-length feature as director, writer, star and producer. The film looked at the destiny of women over 50 and created enormous debate for months in Norway. Selected for the Berlin International Film Festival and the London International Film Festival. Received an Award at the San Remo International Film Festival.
- 1981 **Løperjenten (The Story of Camilla)** – full-length feature. It was selected for the SEMAINE DE LA CRITIQUE in the Cannes International Film Festival 1983, selected as Norway's entry for The Foreign Language Academy Award, received the Norwegian Critic's Award. **Løperjenten** was the first Norwegian film to be distributed in US and was screened at festivals all over the world. Named by many US critics as one of the ten best films of the year. Listed on the UNESCO's Heritage list.
- 1986 **Hud (Vilde, the Wild One)** with actors from Norway, Sweden and England (Terence Stamp, Niclas Grace and Patricia Hodge). Selected for UN CERTAIN REGARD in the Cannes International Film Festival. It was controversial because it dealt with incest.
- 1989 Made her debut as a an author with the novel **Leoparden (The Leopard)**
- 1991 **Måker (Seagulls)** – full-length feature
- 1992 **Through Ashes** – full-length feature from the war on Balkans shot during the war
- 1994 Published the novel **Jordens Skygge (In the Shadow of the Earth)**
- 2002 Published the novel **Purpur** – about Val d'Orcia and Pope Pius 2
- 2004 Published the novel **Letter to Heaven** – about the suppression of Indians in South America
- 2005 Appointed Cavaliere by the President of Italy
- 2008 Published the novel **Allied** – about the bombing of a small community on the west coast of Norway during WWII
- 2010 **Gazas Tårer (Tears of Gaza)**

PRODUCER BIOGRAPHY

1944 Born in Porsgrunn , Norway.

Received a Bachelor Degree from Oslo University in Literature and History of Ideas.

Head of Culture Ministry for 35 years.

1968 Starts film career with student documentaries.

1970 Became cinema manager and continues to be in the exhibition industry.

1997 Built and Operated an Imax Theatre 1997 in Oslo, Norway.

1973 to Present – Produces Vibeke Løkkeberg's, his wife, films.

1984 Produced and directed the prize winning feature film, The **Headman**

1985 started The NorWay Film Development Co (NFDC NFDC co-financed films including **Unbearable**

Lightness of Being, Mosquito Coast (Saul Zaentz) and **Pathfinder** (John M.Jakobsen). Co-produced

Mio my Mio (Astrid Lindgren), and produced **The Wild One** and **Seagulls** (dir. Vibeke Løkkeberg)

Beside producing, he also focuses on sound design, editing and screenwriting.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Tears of Gaza (Gazas tårer)

Norway, 2010, in Arabic with English subtitles, 82 min. Format: 16:9

Production Company: Nero Media

Financed by: Norwegian Film Institute, The Freedom of Expression Foundation (Fritt Ord), Oslo and Nero Media.

Director and Writer	Vibeke Løkkeberg
Producer	Terje Kristiansen
Actors:	The People of Gaza
Three Children	Amira Razmia Yahya
Original Music	Marcello De Francisci Lisa Gerrard
Cinematographers	Yosuf Abu Shreah Mwafaq al Khateeb Saed al Sabaa
Editors	Torkel Gjørsv Anwar Saab Svein Olav Sandem
Foley Mixer	John Sanacore
Sound Recording Mixer	Christian Schaanning
Supervising Sound Editor	Christian Schaanning
Foley artist	Alex Ullrich
Music Scoring Mixer	Marcello De Francisci
Online Editor	Dylan Richard Hopkin
Colorist	Ghislain Rio



Producer Terje Kristiansen and Director Vibeke Løkkeberg

Tears of Gaza – Film Review

10:16 PM PDT 10/14/2010 by Kirk Honeycutt, AP

Vibeke Lokkeberg's "Tears of Gaza" raises the question: Can any filmmaker do a film about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without antagonizing someone? Lokkeberg's film deals with the 2008 to 2009 bombing of Gaza by the Israeli military. Her strategy is to focus on the horrific impact this has on civilians, and mostly children and women at that. In other words, how war affects the innocent. Lokkeberg, a Norwegian actress, author and filmmaker, has scrubbed away all context, political or otherwise. This could be any war descended on an urban population.

Soldiers expect death and destruction; they've trained for it. Civilians don't know how to react to dead children and bombed homes. "Where can I get forgiveness from?" moans a man who has lost a child.

"Tears of Gaza" is gut wrenching to watch — perhaps the ultimate anti-war film — but will the word "Gaza" in the title stop people? Films, whether docs or features, don't generally talk about war from this perspective. Now we have a film that does, but Middle Eastern politics may contaminate it. The Arab world may embrace the film, especially coming from a Westerner, and Israel and its supporters may shun it. So a compelling film about war will not be as widely seen, as it should.

The film opens in Norway theatrically in November and could get play dates elsewhere in Europe but in North America it will undoubtedly play only festivals. The response at those festivals will be interesting to watch.

On one hand, the film is pretty rough and disorganized, like war itself. Lokkeberg says she wants to view war through the stories of three young people but these stories swiftly get lost.

A little Palestinian boy stands at the seashore, recalling past visits to the beach with his father, now dead, "murdered" as he puts it. Tears come to him. He says he wants to become a doctor so he can treat those injured by the Israelis.

Two other girls tell of their tragedies and injuries too, but the film keeps cutting to footage shot by several Palestinian cameramen during the bombings. After years of deprivation and economic embargo, Gaza clearly lacks the infrastructure and resources to deal with the carnage.

Instead neighbors bravely rush to fallen buildings emitting fire and smoke to rescue helpless victims. A pathetic hose makes do as few fire trucks exist. Broken and dead bodies are pulled from rubble. Children emerge with mangled limbs or holes in their heads. Sobbing women clutch their faces and beat their sides.

Cars are found to transport the wounded to overwhelmed hospitals. Phosphorous bombs shower people with tiny blobs of fire that ignite flesh.

A father cradles a young daughter who happily eats her food. Then he lifts her clothes to show the scarred flesh. In a hospital, the staff pulls up the clothes on children's corpses to show bullet wounds that come from close range. These children were executed, the staff insists, as the camera bears witness.

Back in the present, a bachelor party and then wedding doesn't lack for cheer but the bridegroom feels sadness. His immediate family is all gone and he is helplessly broke. On the day of his wedding, he sees no future for himself.

Children and a few adults tell their tales of terror to the camera. A woman looks for clothes to buy for her daughter at a street market but says the goods, which come through tunnels to Gaza, are too expensive.

It's not clear but presumably Lokkeberg acquired the war footage while she herself shot the sequences in the aftermath, when things returned to "normal." Only there is no normal.

Extreme trauma is in everyone's face. These are beaten, fatalistic, vengeful people. They curse their opponents but even these curses ring hollow.

Lokkeberg eventually finds her way back to her protagonists as the film concludes. The boy repeats his desire to become a doctor and a girl says she wants to become a lawyer to "defend my homeland."

The remainder of these lives will be lived in response to the bombings. The bridegroom without parents or money and the children who desire to somehow rescue their remaining relatives and neighbors from suffering. Wars have a way of never ending. This is the strongest single idea one takes away from the emotionally devastating "Tears of Gaza."

Venue: Toronto International Film Festival



Posted: Mon., Sep. 20, 2010, 5:20pm PT

Tears of Gaza

Few antiwar films register with the disturbing immediacy and visceral terror of “Tears of Gaza,” Vibeke Lokkeberg's extraordinary docu set amid the 2008–09 Israeli bombing of Gaza. Almost purely observational, “Tears” doesn’t take sides as much as obliterate politics: The wounded parents carrying maimed children are not in uniform, and the bullet holes in the 2–year–olds did not arrive by accident. Fest play will be strong, and while the film will be a tough sell, the controversy could help the film find an audience in limited theatrical and ancillary play.

By John Anderson

The cinematography is the most remarkable aspect of “Gaza,” which includes profiles of children left fatherless or orphaned by what had been retaliatory strikes against Hamas bombings of southern Israeli cities. Lokkeberg’s lensers (who include Yosuf Abu Shreah, Saed Al Sabaa and Marie Kristiansen) provide footage in Gaza never shown by Western media: babies being dragged like rag dolls from the rubble of burning apartment buildings; kids with gaping abdominal wounds; blindings, amputations and burns (shown to cover about 50% of one 3–year–old girl’s body) caused by phosphorous bombs, which only burn hotter if doused with water. The inherent cruelty of so much of the action, committed against civilians with very little infrastructure, services or commercial goods, much less equipment to fight fires, comes through loud and clear.

The camera crew, whose ability to shoot in Gaza is a little mysterious considering the Israeli clampdown on press during that particular offensive, seems to be everywhere. The viewer may wonder if the filmmakers had an uncanny ability to know where to shoot, or if there was so much violence that a camera couldn't miss it. In any event, what’s shown is a revelation, except of course in Gaza.

Lokkeberg interviews some adults, but she focuses on children, such as Amira, who suffered hideous injuries, and whose virtual soliloquy on a Mediterranean beach serves as a mournful coda to a film of symphonic suffering. And Yahya, who speaks of his murdered father with tears in his eyes, wants to grow up to help people, he says. But the viewer wonders how his already evident hatred of Israelis “and those who help them” will grow as he does.

Production values are good overall, but the cinematography is the standout. Pic makes limited but effective use of Lisa Gerrard and Marcello De Francisci's stirring music.