



## Naila and the Uprising Discussion Guide

Director: Julia Bacha, Creative Director of Just Vision  
 Creators: Just Vision  
 Year: 2017  
 Time: 76 min

**You might know Just Vision from:**  
 My Neighbourhood (2012)  
 Budrus (2009)  
 Encounter Point (2006)

### FILM SUMMARY

In just the past decade we’ve witnessed the rise of resistance movements fronted by strong women like Black Lives Matter, which was founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, and the Chilean student protest movement led by Camila Vallejo. Three decades prior, the world witnessed the first Palestinian intifada, fueled by Rabeh Diab, Naila Ayesh, Zahira Kamal, Azza Al-Kafarneh, Naima Al-Sheikh, Terry Boullata, and thousands of Palestinian women engaged in a nonviolent struggle for their political and social rights. Continuing their award-winning documentation of Palestinians and Israelis working to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine, Just Vision and director Julia Bacha reveal the untold story of the critical role women played in the civil resistance movement of the late 1980s in *NAILA AND THE UPRISING*.

Using impressionistic animation, incredible archival materials of on-the-ground activism, and new reflective interviews with the women who were there, the filmmakers explore how Naila Ayesh, a young activist in Gaza, navigated the dangers of political activism while raising a child, all the while living under Israeli military rule and her own society’s restrictive social mores. A year before the uprising, Naila is pregnant and detained indefinitely in Israeli prison, tortured for days and restricted from seeing a doctor, even when showing signs of a miscarriage. She is released after her husband and longtime partner in activism works with two Israeli journalists to bring the story to the headlines. The ordeal deepens her resolve, and when the uprising breaks out she joins a clandestine network of women who would come to fuel the most vibrant nonviolent mobilization in Palestinian history.

An incredible recontextualization of a revolution, *NAILA AND THE UPRISING* highlights how women bravely challenged the Israeli military’s control of Palestinian life by not only handing out leaflets to inform people of boycotts, marches, strikes, and other political actions, but also starting women-run health clinics and instituting pop-up schools to replace an education system shut down by the army. Their incredible efforts culminated in the world role recognizing Palestinians on the world stage for the first time.

## FILM THEMES

**NAILA AND THE UPRISING** rebrands the first Palestinian intifada as a valiant nonviolent movement spearheaded by righteous, strong-willed women, despite the back-channel Oslo process usurping their role.

### THE FIRST INTIFADA: A WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The dominant narrative of the First Intifada, shaped by the mainstream media's incident-by-incident reporting at the time, largely recalls groups of young men throwing stones at Israeli jeeps, military reprisals, and political machinations. This narrative fails to recognize the pivotal nonviolent women's movement at the heart of Palestine's struggle for freedom and the deliberate, strategic nature of their organizing. **NAILA AND THE UPRISING** utilizes archival evidence and new interviews with the women who were on the ground in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, to re-contextualize the rebellion as a women's movement.

### NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

The spark for the First Intifada occurred when an Israeli truck crashed into a station wagon carrying Palestinian workers in Gaza, killing four. Many Palestinians interpreted the incident as retaliation for the killing of a Jewish Israeli in Gaza several days before. But the seeds of an uprising were long in the making: Palestinians had endured twenty years under military occupation, but had been planting the seeds of revolutionary self-sufficiency through community organizing and grassroots activism for years. When Palestinians poured into the streets on December 9, 1987—and sustained the momentum for nearly four years—it was a result of two decades of parallel institution-building and grassroots organizing.

### GOVERNANCE WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

As depicted in the film, many of the politically active women with whom Nayla Ayesh organized found themselves in negotiations with Israel, where Palestinians were recognized for the first time on the world stage. Undermining their efforts, a series of secret meetings between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators—all male—were hosted by Norway, resulting in the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords between Palestinians and Israel. The Accords spoke in principal about the elements and conditions for a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, but sidelined gains made at the grassroots level while dismissing the work done by Naila and her cohorts, metaphorically leaving them out in the rain as the new regime attempted to move on without them.

### A DIVIDED NATION

Since the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which terminated the British Mandate of Palestine, the region has been fragmented, shaped by recurring war, and marked by structural inequality premised on hierarchical ethnic and religious identities. The first intifada, which began in 1987, was but one of many in an unfolding history of resistance movements that has worked to achieve equal rights and self-determination for everyone in the region.

**“The First Intifada was not only a vibrant, strategic and sustained nonviolent civil resistance movement; for months, it was led by a network of Palestinian women who were fighting the dual struggle for national liberation and gender equality.”**

Julia Bacha

**“We can't be free as women unless we are in a free country. And even if we're free of the occupation, we can't know freedom as long as we're subjugated in our own society.”**

Sama Aweidah, Activist



## FILM FACTS:

- Just Vision's *NAILA AND THE UPRISING* had its world premiere in 2017 at America's largest documentary film festival, DOC NYC. The film went on to screen at other internationally renowned festivals, including IDFA, the Dubai International Film Festival, the Human Rights Film Festival, London, and FIFDH.
- In 2012, Julia Bacha, together with Co-Director Rebekah Wingert-Jabi and Executive Producer Ronit Avni, accepted a Peabody Award for best storytelling for Just Vision's short film, *MY NEIGHBOURHOOD*, about a Palestinian teenager growing up in the heart of East Jerusalem. The film was broadcast by Al Jazeera and published online by *The Guardian*.
- Within *NAILA AND THE UPRISING*, the filmmakers used a specific style of animation—called UnderCamera animation, in which everything is created by hand—in order to create a subtle visual experience that brings viewers closer to the story by inviting them to use their own imagination to fill in the blanks.
- Just Vision, the organization behind *NAILA AND THE UPRISING*, has been creating documentaries about Palestinians and Israelis working for freedom, dignity, and equality since 2003.
- At the heart of *NAILA AND THE UPRISING* is Naila Ayesh, who was pivotal in organizing women during the uprising and served as the general director of the Gaza-based Women's Affairs Center from 1996 to 2013. She continues her work organizing women throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
- Following the release of *THE WANTED 18*, a documentary project on nonviolent resistance during the First Intifada on which Just Vision served as impact producer, Julia Bacha was awarded a coveted 2015 Guggenheim Fellowship to develop *NAILA AND THE UPRISING*, which was originally conceived as a multi-media project.
- The First Intifada was a Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank that lasted from December 1987 until September 1993, with the signing of the Oslo Accords. The uprising pushed forward with general strikes, an economic boycott of Israeli products, a refusal to pay taxes, and other hallmarks of nonviolent civil resistance, though the discipline and unity of the first two years eventually eroded.

## WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Donate** to [Just Vision](#), the organization behind *NAILA AND THE UPRISING* whose goal is to increase the power and reach of Palestinians and Israelis working to end the occupation and build a future of freedom, dignity, and equality for all.
2. **Stay informed.** Read [Local Call](#), a Hebrew news site advancing civic awareness and activism aimed at ending the occupation and fostering values of pluralism and equality (Local Call can be read in English at [+972](#)).
3. **Support** groups like [Inclusive Security](#), whose mission is to increase the participation of all stakeholders—particularly women—in preventing, resolving, and rebuilding after deadly conflicts.
4. **Advocate** for international women's rights and gender equality. Groups like [UN Women](#) and [HeForShe](#) invite people from around the world to stand together to create a bold, visible force for gender equality.

## We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

**Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.**