



Israeli fund support for Eyal Sivan documentary sparks row

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A storm has erupted in Israel after an important fund announced its intention to back a documentary by Eyal Sivan, a fierce opponent of the country's policies.

The Paris-based Israeli film-maker's documentary *Jaffa* is to receive support from the Cinema Project, a division of Tel Aviv's Joshua Rabinovitch Cultural Fund.

But the backing for Sivan, who has taken a strong line against the policies of the State of Israel, has come under fire from numerous critics from the far right to the social-democratic left.

Sivan has an international reputation for his documentaries, including *The Specialist*, a review of the Eichmann trial; and *Route 181* (made with Belgium-based Palestinian director Michel Khleify), a politically-inspired travelogue following the borders originally traced by the UN in 1947 to separate Israel and Palestine.

He has always been a vocal, unabashed critic of Israeli policies not only in his films but in all of his public appearances.

He has strongly defended his stance, taking legal action against French Jewish philosopher Alain Finkelkraut who called him 'anti-semitic'.

Sivan has been teaching at the Sderoth Film Academy for the last three years, dividing his time between Paris and the embattled southern town which was the target for Palestinian rockets launched from the Gaza Strip.

He applied for support for his latest project initiated by Channel 8 (a cable channel specialising in documentaries), from the Cinema Project and the Jerusalem Cinematheque.

Once the intention of the Cinema Project to use public funds to back Sivan's picture came out in print, a general outcry exploded all over the media, though very few of the reactions, if any, had anything to do with the film to be made.

And Sivan takes an independent line on his criticism of Israel. Unlike many of his European and Palestinian colleagues who refuse to have their films shown in Israel, he has always insisted that on the contrary, they should be exhibited on every occasion and allow their voice to be heard everywhere.

Cinema Project leaders are worried the vociferous protest, which reached the Parliament and the Ministry of Culture (requested by some of the protesters to assume the right of veto for any future film project) may influence the Fund's Board of Directors, whose approval is needed in order to allow the project to go ahead.

'The project should be judged only on its own merits' they claim, 'judging it before it is even launched, is nothing short of McCarthyism'.

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