

# The history and future of the Middle East on an orange peel

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Eyal Sivan, the Israeli director of the documentary 'Jaffa, The Orange's Clockwork,' was in Istanbul last week as a guest of the Documentarist, Istanbul Documentary Days to present his new film. Seeking to challenge the discrimination against Palestinians, Sivan says he believes in a common struggle for democracy by both Israelis and Palestinians

Jaffa is known as an orange brand for most people. However, fewer people know that it is the name of an old Palestinian city now part of greater Tel Aviv.

Now, in an effort to present the opposing sides of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the new documentary film "Jaffa, The Orange's Clockwork" provides a place for Arabs and Israelis to narrate their different stories through their views on the orange.

"Israeli history is based on the lie that all the Palestine region was a desert before the Jews came," said Eyal Sivan, the Israeli director of the documentary. "I try to revise the wrongly-told history of Palestine."

Sivan was in Istanbul last week as a guest of the Documentarist Istanbul Documentary Days and is also known for his documentaries and commitment to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, or BDS, a civil movement that calls for a boycott on Israel in the economic, academic and cultural spheres.

"Jaffa, The Orange's Clockwork" was screened Friday and Saturday as part of the festival. Speaking afterwards with the audience, Sivan said he was "glad to be in Istanbul."

"According to the Israeli press, I [would] have problems here beginning at the border," he said. "I didn't have any."

## Social memory

Most of the discussion at the screening revolved around social memory, a prominent feature of Sivan's documentaries, as well as current politics.

According to the director, Israeli and Turkish governments were similar in oppressing their "minorities."

"When it comes to criticizing the other's democracy, well, governments should have to come with clean hands," he said. "Until two weeks ago, there was almost no coverage on Turkey, but now we all read about the bombings of Turkish airplanes and how the Kurds are oppressed in Turkey."

However, he said, "If you discover where the airplanes come from and who trains the Special Forces, you will come out with a total different outcome."

Sivan said both governments should be partners in promoting democracy in their own homeland, "not in oppressing minorities."

## Underlying Oriental image

In the documentary, one observes that all commercial films, posters and other advertising material for

the Jaffa orange generally seem to project an Oriental image, notably symbolized by an accompanying camel.

Sivan said this Orientalism of the West was still a part of the fate of the Jews. "Jews were once not accepted in Europe. Now, Israel in the Euro Cup, in Eurovision and a member of the [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] OECD."

Sivan said the situation creates a schizophrenia both psychologically and politically for Israelis.

He also said the boycott was "not against us, it is for us." "Discrimination is not only against Palestinians but it is also against Israelis. The Israeli government should be forced to end the occupation or it will be the end of Israel."

The Israeli director said he believed in the common struggle of Israelis and Palestinians for democracy and that "trying to expose the truth and revise history in a country which lacks self-criticism" is a part of this struggle.

Like the documentary on the Jaffa orange, "I do not aim to criticize Zionism and the past only, but also revise the future."

An old Arab orchard owner tells about the good old times when Arabs and Jews used to live together in peace before the orchards were expropriated from them after 1948. Officials from the Israeli government, meanwhile, display their pride at making the Jaffa brand known worldwide.

Meanwhile, an elderly Israeli poet describes old Jaffa with happy metaphors, just like the old Arab farmer who grew up in the orchards with Jewish friends.

But when it comes to what is lost, neither can resist becoming emotional. The past gives both happiness and pain to everyone.

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