

Announcing The

2010 Platinum Bear for Free Speech

Mohammad Bakri, Filmmaker and Actor
Presented by friends of the 60th Berlinale



19th February 17:00

Ballhaus Naunynstraße Naunynstraße 27, 10997 Berlin

www.jvp.org/freespeech

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This past month, the State of Israel has attempted to silence *Mohammad Bakri*, one of our cinema's greatest actors and documentary filmmakers, an essential figure of both Israeli and Palestinian cinema. In protest, a group of past Berlinale award winners, participants, and comrades have nominated *Mr. Bakri* for the 1st Annual **2010 Free Speech Bear Award**. On February 19th, a screening of *Mr. Bakri's* new film, *Zohara*, will be followed by a presentation of the award to *Mr. Bakri* --and a toast to free speech.

Seven years ago, after the invasion of the Israeli army into the refugee camp in Jenin, West Bank, Mohammad Bakri shot his film, *Jenin Jenin*. He was sued for defamation in Israeli court by several soldiers who were part of the invasion. He was censored by the Israeli censorship board for two years and, during the last seven years, has spent a great deal of time and money defending himself and the film. After *Bakri* won the legal suits, the soldiers decided to take the case to the Supreme Court. Recently, the State of Israel, in an unprecedented act, has decided to join the soldiers in their civil suit against *Bakri*.

In the eyes of the Israeli government, *Mr. Bakri's* sin is his daring to be both a member of the Palestinian people and a peace activist critical of Israel's brutal occupation. His film *Jenin Jenin*, a passionate documentary about Israel's military actions in Jenin, is only one of many sources of evidence that Israel committed war crimes there in 2002. Detailed reports on this issue have been published by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and Israeli soldiers who served in Jenin have publicly boasted of committing acts which amount to war crimes. This McCarthyite attempt to silence Mr. Bakri takes place against a backdrop of an urgent humanitarian crisis: the ongoing siege and imprisonment of 1.5 million human beings in a small enclave called Gaza. As long as Israel refuses to investigate its own crimes we can only salute a brave man like *Mohammad Bakri* who took his camera and tried to reveal the truth of what happened. And indeed, he revealed some terrible truths, but mostly he captured the trauma of witnesses and victims—a trauma that left Mr. Bakri's soul wounded forever.

In the face of this new attempt to silence, criminalize and bankrupt Mr. Bakri, and in protest against the ongoing brutality of the occupation, we have come together to spontaneously nominate *Mohammad Bakri* as our **2010 Filmmaker of Free Speech**, and pay due respect to his art and to Palestinian filmmaking. By this act, we are saying **No!** to cynical attempts by governments to silence great artists through dubious legal means... And saying **Yes!** to dialogue, free speech, and a lasting peace.

Signed by

The spectre of Jean Genet

A Prisoner of Love

Hany Abu-Assad, *Paradise Now*, Berlinale Competition 2005, Golden Globe 2006

Udi Aloni*, *Forgiveness*, Berlinale Panorama 2006, Woodstock Audience Award 2006

Saleh Bakri (actor), *The Time That Remains*, Cannes 2009

Simone Bitton, *Rachel*, Berlinale Forum 2009

Scandar Copti, *Ajami*, Oscar nominee, 2010

Elle Flanders*, *Zero Degrees of Separation*, Berlinale Forum, 2006

John Greyson*, *Fig Trees*, Berlinale Teddy Award 2009

Annemarie Jacir, *Salt of The Sea*, Cannes 2008

Sarah Kamens, *Kashmir Journey to Freedom*, Berlinale Panorama Opening Doc-night, 2009

Eran Kolirin, *The Band's Visit*, Cannes Prize un certain regard 2007

Guy Maddin, *My Winnipeg*, TIFF best Canadian film 2008

Juliano Merr-Khamis, *Arna's Children*, Best Documentary, TriBeCa Film Festival 2006

Oren Moverman, *The Messenger*, Berlinale Silver Bear 2009, Oscar nominee 2010

Eyal Sivan, *The Specialist*, Berlinale Official Selection special 1999, The Grimme Award 1999

Kobi Snitz (Protagonist), *Budrus*, Panorama 2010

Yusef Sweid (actor), *The Bubble*, Berlinale Panorama 2007

Yael Hersonski, *A Film Unfinished*, Berlinale Panorama 2010, Sundance Festival, World Cinema Documentary Editing Award 2010

The YesMen*, *The YesMan Fix The world*, Berlinale Panorama, Audience Award 2009

* Initiators