

The political censorship of *No Other Land* in the US, the film exposing Israeli criminality and violence on the West Bank: “Americans have a responsibility”

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To his credit, Brady Corbet, writer-director of *The Brutalist*, concluded his speech January 8 accepting the best film award from the New York Film Critics Circle with this comment:

“And the last thing I want to say is that it’s time to distribute *No Other Land*.”

No Other Land, which exposes the systematic brutality and criminality of the Zionist regime in its persecutions of the Palestinian population in the occupied West Bank, has won award after award from film festivals and critics’ organizations all around the world.

The documentary has won prizes at the following events: Berlin International Film Festival; Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival; Visions du Réel documentary festival (Nyon, Switzerland); Millennium Docs Against Gravity (originally Warsaw Doc Review), held in Poland; Vancouver International Film Festival; Busan (South Korea) International Film Festival; Asia Pacific Screen Awards (Australia); Montreal International Documentary Festival; Gotham Awards (New York City); New York Film Critics Circle; National Board of Review Awards (US); International Documentary Association Awards; European Film Awards; Boston Society of Film Critics; Los Angeles Film Critics Association; St. Louis Film Critics Association; Toronto Film Critics Association; Seattle Film Critics Society; Chicago Film Critics Association; National Society of Film Critics (US); Greater Western New York; and Cinema Eye Honors (New York City).

This is in addition to numerous nominations, in Chicago, the UK, Washington D.C., San Diego, San Francisco Bay Area, Florida and Austin (Texas).

Have we made our point? *No Other Land* has been almost universally, globally acclaimed, including by American festivals and critics, yet it cannot find a distributor in the United States. There is no innocent explanation for this. This is an act of censorship, encouraged or directed from the highest levels of the government, and the political and media establishment as a

whole.

To speak the truth about oppression in the West Bank is impermissible because it unavoidably points to the wider issue of Zionist crimes and, above all, to the genocide in Gaza, a critical component of the Biden and incoming Trump administrations. The reorganization of the Middle East under the direct jackboot of imperialism is the goal, and nothing can be allowed to stand in the way. The lives of 50,000 or 100,000 Palestinians mean nothing to the architects of US policy. The working class everywhere needs to take a warning from that.

As the WSWWS noted early last year, in commenting on *No Other Land*:

The film, by the Palestinian-Israeli collective of Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, recounts the brutal expulsion of Palestinian villagers from Masafer Yatta, a settlement of 19 villages south of Hebron in the West Bank.

The Israeli-Palestinian team

film everything they experience, exchange material with each other, try to spread it via social media and gain attention in the international media. They are compelled to protect themselves from the aggressive actions of the Israeli army and the fascist settler militias allied with it.

Anyone opposing the Israeli evictions of Palestinians is “mercilessly attacked. Adra’s cousin is one of those. He initially survives, but is paralyzed. In a cave, he lies on a mattress on the ground, guarded day and night by his desperate

mother,” the WSWS commented. “He ultimately dies, as the film reveals at the end.”

After the eviction of the Palestinian inhabitants, the bulldozers come and demolish everything people need to live—their houses, their furniture, lamps, electrical equipment, sheep and chicken sheds, the power supply, roads. Shocking footage shows the destruction of a modern, well-kept bathroom by a bulldozer, followed by two or three Israeli soldiers cutting the water pipe with a saw.

This is a reality that American audiences are not permitted to see. The dominance of cultural life by giant corporations, the prevalence of pro-Zionist elements in the upper echelons of the film and television world, the cowardice of distributors in the face of the new McCarthyism aimed at defenders of the persecuted Palestinians, all of this has combined to produce this disgraceful situation: a major, award-winning film has been effectively banned in the US. Authoritarian government censors could hardly be more efficient.

Even *Variety* has been obliged to take note of the scandal. A recent article noted the “accolades” that *No Other Land* has been collecting.

The timely piece, which shows the gradual demolition of houses and entire villages by the Israeli military’s bulldozers, also played in a slew of other prestigious events including the New York Film Festival and recently won the top prizes from the New York Film Critics Circle and the International Documentary Association.

The documentary, *Variety* continues, “has also been tipped as a top contender for a nomination in the Oscars documentary feature category.”

Yet, while it has been picked up for distribution in 24 countries—including the United Kingdom and France—“No Other Land” has been unable to find a bona fide distributor in the U.S.

In an interview, co-director Yuval Abraham told *Variety* that the film had distribution all over the world,

and there’s a really big demand for it in the United

States, so you would expect a big distributor to jump on board. I read it as something that’s completely political. We’re obviously talking about the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, and it’s very ugly. ... But I think the conversation in the United States appears to be far less nuanced—there is much less space for this kind of criticism, even when it comes in the form of a film.

Fellow co-director Basel Adra added that he hoped *No Other Land* received an Academy Award nomination

because it would bring more awareness. I really advise everybody in the U.S. who has heard about “No Other Land” to watch it. It’s important for people to watch it so they can understand what’s going on. And we hope people who do, don’t just watch it to feel sad or sorry for us, but to join our struggle and our movement and take action. Especially in the U.S. which, as a country, is a main player in what’s going on. Americans have a responsibility, I believe, and I hope that they watch it and move in the right direction and take any action they can in order to help us change.

No Other Land, its makers and supporters came under vicious attack from the German media and government when it carried off major awards at the Berlin film festival in February 2024. One German press account claimed that the “closing night of the Berlinale on Saturday evening in Berlin was one thing above all: shameful.” Another denounced the awards ceremony, with its numerous expressions of support for the Palestinians, in the following manner: “This has nothing to do with dialogue and nothing to do with a political event. ... it’s just embarrassing, activist and propagandistic.”

The goal was to nip the process in the bud, to intimidate critics and audiences alike, to render support for *No Other Land* illegitimate and quasi-criminal. Significantly, reflecting the widespread popular horror over the homicidal Israeli regime and its US-German-French-British backers, the documentary has continued “its remarkable awards season,” according to *IndieWire*, virtually without a pause. This provides a more accurate reading of global public opinion. And it is this growing awareness of capitalist savagery, with all its implications for social and political life, that the American film distribution system fears.



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