

# Houston Palestine Film Festival celebrates 13 years of Palestinian films

[Nicolas Sawaya](#) April 16, 2019



The 2019 edition of the [Houston Palestine Film Festival \(HPFF\)](#), which is sponsored in part by the [Houston Arts Alliance \(HAA\)](#), marks its 13th anniversary with a lineup of award-winning features and shorts focusing on Palestine. The festival will run for two consecutive weekends: screenings on April 26 and 27 will be at the [Museum of Fine Arts Houston](#), while those on the second weekend – May 3 and 4 – will occur at the Rice University Media Center.

HPFF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization consisting of a volunteer board

of directors who are dedicated and passionate about keeping Palestinian cinema alive in Houston. It was founded in 2007 to bring an honest and independent view of Palestine, its diaspora, culture and political travails through the art of film.

We offer the Houston community an opportunity to learn about the many different perspectives of Palestine through a diverse selection of short films, features, and documentaries. For 13 consecutive years, we have partnered with the broader community to bring a wide variety of Palestinian films to Houston as a way to reach diverse audiences and to make the film festival accessible to the general public; as such, all of our screenings are open to the public. The short films, features, and documentaries we select each year are screened in partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH), Rice University, and recently, the University of Houston (UH).

Capernaum | Official US Trailer HD (2018)



This year's festival will open with Alexandra Dol's documentary "[Beyond the Frontlines: Tales of Resistance and Resilience from Palestine](#)," which won the Sunbird Award for Best Documentary Film at the 2017 Palestine Cinema Days Festival. The film features Palestinian psychiatrist Dr. Samah Jabr who thoughtfully explores the psychological wounds of war and occupation borne by a resilient people intent on resisting. Alexandra Dols and Dr. Samah Jabr will both be present post-screening to engage the audience in a Q&A session. The opening weekend will also feature Nadine Labaki's "[Capernaum](#)", the winner of the 2018 Grand Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and a finalist for the 2018 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. An emotionally gripping movie that is sure to generate passionate discussion about a myriad of social issues, "Capernaum" tells the story of Zain (starring Zain al-Rafeea), a young boy who sues his parents for the "crime" of giving him life.



Poster for the film "Naila and the Uprising" by Julia Bacha, produced by Just Vision.

The second weekend will open with Samira Badran's animated short "[Memory of the Land](#)." This will be immediately followed by Bassam Jarbawi's first feature "[Mafak](#)" (*Screwdriver*), a fiction film that deals with the physical and emotional turmoil faced by former Palestinian prisoner Ziad (starring Ziad Bakri) upon being released from Israeli jail. The final day of the festival will begin with Baha Abu Shanab's short "The Living of the Pigeons," followed by Julia Bacha's feature "[Naila and the Uprising](#)," the winner of the 2018 Special Jury Prize at the It's All True Film Festival, which explores the life of non-violence resistance leader Naila Ayesh and recounts the various stories of a community of women who played an essential role in the First Intifada in the late 1980s. Finally, the festival will close with Wisam Al Jafari's short "Congratulations for the New Wall Paint," followed immediately by a screening of Zelda Edmunds' "[Imprisoning a Generation](#)," a powerful documentary that chronicles the detention and imprisonment of four Palestinian children (ages 11-14) under the Israeli military system. Zelda Edmunds will be present post-screening to engage the audience in a Q&A session.

Twitter users can follow live discussions, news, and information at HPFF's official [Twitter page](#) and via the hashtag #HoustonPalestineFilms or on the festival's official [Facebook page](#). Snapchat users can find us at hpff19 and Instagram users at [houstonpalestineff](#).

*Disclaimer: The author is speaking on behalf of HPFF in his capacity as a member of the Executive Committee. The opinions and views expressed by the author do not reflect in any way the positions of ExxonMobil, BDS Houston, or any organization other than HPFF that the author is affiliated with.*

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