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## **Love and Tragedy in Conflict: "Salt of This Sea"**

**By Salam Mir**  
**Salt of This Sea**

Directed by: Annemarie Jacir

Produced by: Jacques Bidou, Marianne Dumoulin, Pierre-Alain Meier,  
Annemarie Jacir, Danny Glover and Joseph Joslyn.

2008, 105 minutes

"Salt of this Sea," the debut feature film by Annemarie Jacir, was previewed at the closing night of Boston's Palestine Film Festival, which ran October 4-12 at the Museum of Fine Arts. A mixture of fiction and fact, the film tells the story of Soraya and Emad within the framework of occupation and colonialism. Whereas the Brooklyn-born Soraya travels to Palestine/Israel to connect with her heritage and claim her monetary inheritance, Emad, the young Palestinian man she meets in Ramallah and falls in love with, is waiting to leave so that he can live an ordinary life without soldiers.

The script, also written by Palestinian-American Jacir, blends the oral history Soraya knows by heart with the historical reality of Israel and the Palestinian territories. When Soraya submits the legal documents that have been in the family's safe since 1948, documents that entitle her to the family's inheritance, no bank or Palestinian official can recognize them. Undaunted, the assertive Soraya manages with the help of her newly-found lover and his friend to get the money via a humorous and plausible plot. Money in hand, they claim their right of return to Palestine, again through a humorous ruse. The crew of actors, all ordinary Palestinians dialoguing in distinct Palestinian accent, did an excellent job, perhaps because the story, landscape and history are a part of their existence.

As Soraya, Emad and his friend drive through the land – except for the last portion, the film was shot in Palestine – the beauty of the stones, hills, and sea is captured, accompanied by a

haunting score. For two nights, Soraya and Emad set up a make-shift home in a cavern, in the ruins of his old village Ad-Dawayima. In the discussion following the screening, Jacir revealed that the film is dedicated to Ad-Dawayima, one of the approximately 500 villages destroyed by the Israeli Defense Forces in the 1947-48 war. The film offers a poignant climactic scene when Soraya and Emad burn the map and other documents Soraya has cherished for years. They realize that their makeshift "home sweet home" cannot be reclaimed because the ruins are a part of the Biblical heritage, an Israeli tourist and archeological site.

"Salt of this Sea" is believably humane, humorous and tragic. What struck me more than anything in the film is that Jacir's imaginative creation is not imprisoned in lamentation over the loss; it transcends historical time, stepping to the realm of history as mythical creation. Designated by the Palestinian Authority as the official Palestinian entry to the Oscars, 2009, "Salt of this Sea," is a tour de force that celebrates Palestine and Palestinians.

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