MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2026
Official Selection

The Guardian
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JW Films
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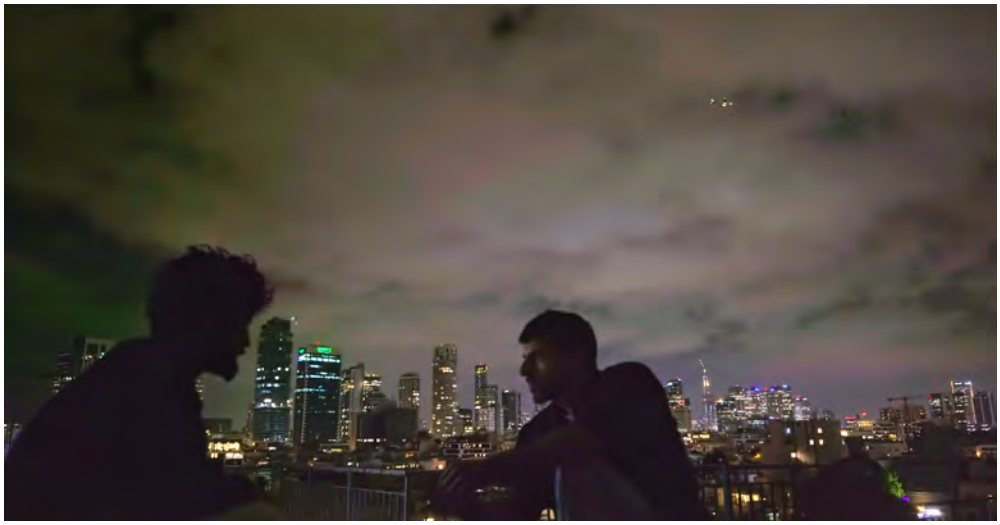
Placeholder Films
and
Unseen Hand
Executive Producer
Jonathan Glazer

NAZA

A film by
Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor



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Synopsis

In secret conversations on the rooftops of Tel Aviv at night, the systems behind Israel's calculated mass killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza are revealed by the people who designed and operated them.

Directors' note

We made this film out of a sense of obligation to use our position as Israeli filmmakers and journalists to examine the systems behind the mass killing of Palestinian civilians for which our country is responsible. While filming members of Israel's military on rooftops at night in Tel Aviv over the past three years, we found ourselves asking the very questions that were asked by our grandparents' generation and throughout the 20th century: how does one group of people allow the total dehumanisation of another? What do the inner workings of such a system look like?

Many of the revelations in the film were published almost immediately as we learned of them, in the months following the October 7th attacks, by The Guardian (one of NAZA's producers), in collaboration with reporting partners +972 Magazine and Local Call. The film lets us explore something deeper than we could in our investigative journalism alone: not only the words being said but also those that are not said, the silence. It is up to all of us to break that silence.

Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor

An interview with the directors

What was your motivation behind making this film?

Our critique of the Israeli state has always focused on crimes that are systemic. In the film No Other Land, we spent five years, together with Basel Adra and Hamdan Ballal, documenting the army destroying Palestinian homes in order to paint a larger picture of a system of occupation and ethnic supremacy aimed at the removal of Palestinians from the West Bank. In NAZA, we are similarly connecting the dots of a system, gathering the testimonies of two dozen intelligence officers and soldiers and depicting the military systems used to perpetrate what a UN commission and the world's leading human rights groups have described as a genocide.

Our focus is therefore not on sporadic war crimes committed by rogue soldiers who disobeyed orders. It is on the orders themselves, the policies, the accepted practices, the language and logic that make those practices possible, and the people who operate within them. The system and its cogs.

This matters in part because the question of genocide is inseparable from the question of intent. Intent is often treated as something hidden in the minds of political or military leaders. But systems also reveal intent: through the rules they create, the targets they authorize, the risks they accept, and the patterns they repeatedly produce. By depicting those systems through insider testimony, we hope the film can contribute something meaningful to this discussion, and help achieve accountability and justice for the grave crimes Israel has committed in Gaza.

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When did you decide you would be making this film, and how did it come about?

In late 2023, following the Hamas October 7th massacre, we watched how our country's leadership, with the support of mainstream Israeli media and large segments of the public, normalized genocidal ideas about Gaza's population: that there are no innocent civilians living there, only "human animals" unworthy of life.

We quickly understood, through speaking to Palestinians and Israelis, that these ideas were being translated into military actions. Making a film about that system and its inner workings felt like the right thing to do when such grave crimes are being committed by people in our own society and in our name. The film shows, we believe, that the slaughter of civilians in Gaza was not simply a byproduct of war, as it was often framed by media outlets, but a premeditated, calculated and intentional action, stemming directly from Israeli decisions.

We also knew we would need to publish our findings in real time. In late 2023, Yuval began writing investigative reports about the Israeli army - examining its AI-based targeting systems and plans for forced population transfer in Gaza - published by Local Call and the Israeli-Palestinian independent media outlet +972 Magazine, often in partnership with the Guardian. Other news organisations including the New York Times and Washington Post later reported on, and confirmed the existence of, the same systems. The film builds on some of these investigations.

Laura Poitras has often said that documentary film is an art form, and connected to, but distinct from journalism. Why did you feel the need to revisit your work as investigative journalists as documentary filmmakers, and how did you choose the specific form and film language – visually and structurally?

Every decision in cinema, from the positioning of the frame to the structure and the edit, is about what is not seen or heard as much as it is about what is seen or heard. Cinema allows you to examine silence alongside speech, presence alongside absence, a city being constructed alongside a city being destroyed. In the film we look at the city of Tel Aviv, Israel's liberal hub, while another city, Gaza, 44 miles (60 km) away, is being destroyed. Gaza is present through its absence. This form allows us to depict violence indirectly, in the hope that it might break through the numbness and inaction of too many people who are already used to the many direct images of violence.

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When discussing his film The Zone of Interest, Jonathan Glazer, our executive producer, explained his thinking on the ethics of representation by saying that the victims may be out of sight in his film but they are "never out of mind". We were influenced by this idea when making NAZA and developing its visual language. The film is looking at the Israeli side, at Israeli houses, at Israeli actions - but it never lets go of its reason for being: the slaughter in Gaza and what it is that makes it possible.

When editing the film we knew that we would want to retain the power of the "documentary moment" that unfolds in front of the camera. This was particularly challenging in a film based on testimonies that needed to be anonymized. This is why we left a lot of space for silences, for questions and answers, trying to structure the film more as a dialogue, a pursuit of truth through cinema, rather than a journalistic montage of talking-heads.

What, besides possible security concerns, appealed to you about nighttime interviews on rooftops as the location for your film?

It felt like the only option for the film. The reality in Israel-Palestine has always been dark, but since October 7th, we have been engulfed in total darkness and dawn is nowhere in sight. Our film is a reflection of the time it was made in.

Darkness is seen as an enabler of crimes, actions that need to be kept secret because of their atrocious nature. But darkness is also an enabler of honesty, people say things when it's dark they would not have said when it's bright, and some of the most intense, revealing moments of the film happen when the lights are out. Without honesty about what happened in the dark we won't be able to move into the light again.

Your interviewees illustrate their testimony about the hi-tech applications used in Gaza with decidedly low-tech, hand-drawn, pen-on-paper diagrams. How and when did you settle on this striking formal choice?

In order to kill other human beings, people often need to represent them in a way which diminishes their humanity, turning them into numbers or statistics, viewing them as dots on a screen, or casting them simply as 'NAZA', a military acronym in Hebrew which is euphemistically translated as 'collateral damage'. By asking these soldiers to draw by hand the systems they used, we felt we would not only be gaining important insight into how they worked, but also insight into the way individuals involved in remote mass killing view and represent their victims, insight into the gaze of the perpetrator.

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Why does your camera move from the interview setting into the skyline and details of everyday life seen through windows or on the streets?

Every night at 8pm, millions of Israelis gather around their televisions to watch the news. It is a kind of national ritual. The film, which observes the city of Tel Aviv almost as if under surveillance, examines these rituals and asks what role they play in producing conformity.

As we hear about the way in which mass surveillance of an entire society in Gaza fueled the mass killing of that very society, we turn the lens back onto Tel Aviv, interrogating the city as a bubble in which ordinary life continues while people are being killed sixty kilometers away.

Israel's main military headquarters is located in the heart of Tel Aviv. Many of the people leading the bombing campaign in intelligence units come from Tel Aviv and are considered to be Israel's social and intellectual elite, those in opposition to Netanyahu. The film is a testament to the role they played, a reminder that to commit an atrocity of such scale, all parts of society need to take part.

Who are the interviewees in the film?

As you might imagine, NAZA has been produced in a very careful way over the last three years with tight security, because of the highly sensitive content and potentially damning evidence of our interviewees.

The interviewees in the film are 24 Israeli military intelligence officers and soldiers - all of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity. They have all been involved in the surveillance or remote killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Their appearance and voices have been digitally altered to disguise their identities.

Journalists often rely on confidential sources as a means to pursue the truth about state crimes. Still, granting confidentiality to people who, by their own accounts, have been involved in serious crimes is not something we take lightly. It was clear that the officers would not speak otherwise, fearing retaliation from the Israeli state for doing so. It is because their testimonies implicate a much larger system, and because the killing in Gaza is ongoing, that we felt an obligation to make their accounts public.

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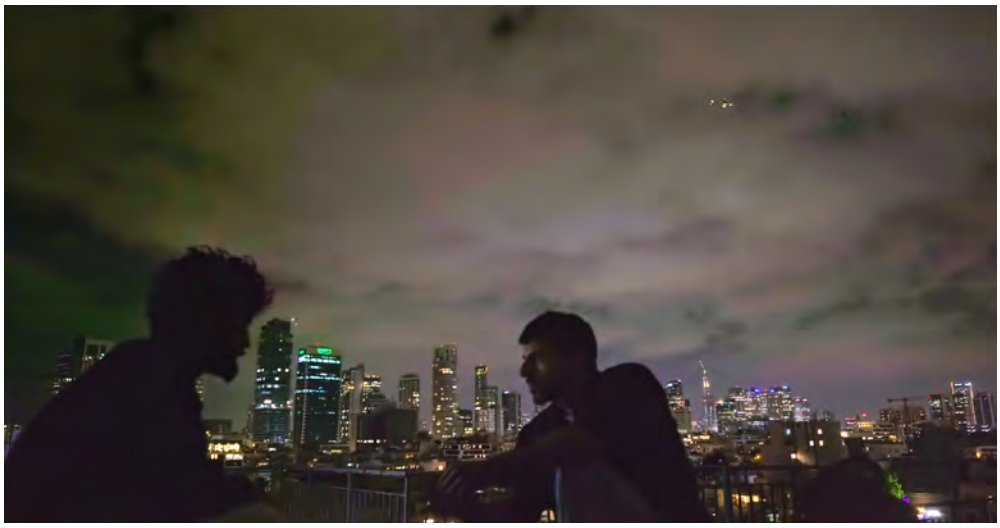

One of the interviewees in the film says that if his identity is revealed, Israel will put him in prison for exposing what the military did in Gaza. This made me think: why did these people even speak with you?

Almost all of the Israeli media has been so uninterested in the civilian consequences of Israel's bombing of Gaza that a vacuum has been created, into which it was possible to enter. Sometimes, all it took was asking the right questions.

Different people clearly had different motivations for answering those questions. Some said they came to the army shocked by the scale of the killing on October 7th, but over time came to understand that they themselves had become involved in serious crimes. These sources often spoke from a place of shame or guilt. They talked in Hebrew, and we often felt they were speaking to other Israelis, so they reckon with what they were sent to do on their behalf. Others were motivated by some kind of pride, not always in the killing itself, but in the knowledge they had acquired over years of service in secretive units, or in what they regarded as a professional accomplishment.

Our film does not dwell on their motivations. It does not follow the journalistic process of finding the interviewees, nor does it explore in depth how they wrestle with guilt, shame, pride, or responsibility for what they have done. That is a deliberate choice. This particular film is concerned only with the killing itself and with what makes that killing possible. To spend too much time on the sources' motivations for speaking, their remorse, their pride, their political opinions, would risk shifting the centre of gravity away from the victims, which is something we did not want to do.

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What were some of the challenges you ran into while making the film?

The sources involved in Israel's aerial bombing campaign of Gaza, considered one of the deadliest in modern history for civilians, serve in the country's most secretive and elite military intelligence units. We had to spend months, and eventually years, tracking down the right people, who in turn often took months before agreeing to speak in front of a camera. Militaries are built around a decentralization of duty: each officer is responsible for a part of the kill chain, while the full consequences of an operation are often dispersed across many different people, units and decisions. This is why we couldn't rely on a handful of sources to make the claims in the film and worked to find two dozen of them. We also had to work under strict security limitations knowing that the Israeli state had not authorised these people to speak to us, and they were taking a risk in doing so.

You mentioned before the film No Other Land, which was a collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians. NAZA is directed by the Israeli team. Why?

This film looks at our society. It is about our armed forces and the consequences of and their actions. If our Palestinian colleagues tried to call up intelligence officers, as we have done, they would likely be arrested and tortured or even murdered. The Committee to Protect Journalists documented more than 200 Palestinian journalists killed by Israel in Gaza since October 7th, while dozens were detained for lengthy periods, the majority never charged with any crime. Therefore we felt it is our unique responsibility as Israelis to use the privilege we have under this unfair system to examine it from within, and to look at the place we come from. But Israeli soldiers do not somehow possess a more truthful version of events than Palestinian victims. The truth about the horrors of Gaza was apparent to many, and in our mind should have been clear to everyone, from the very start of Israel's assault, through testimony of Palestinians in Gaza who bravely documented their own destruction, often paying with their lives. It is precisely because we live in a world that so often refused to believe the victims and minimized their testimonies, that we felt an urge to collect testimony from inside the system that was attacking them. We hope that it can make that denial more difficult, as denial allows those crimes to persist. And they continue to this day.

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What more can you say about the name of the film, NAZA? What is it meant to evoke in audiences?

NAZA is a military acronym derived from נזק אגבי (Nezek Agavi, or "collateral damage"), which is used euphemistically by Israeli intelligence to indicate the number of civilians that it expects will be killed in an airstrike. It is a testament to the fact that much of the civilian killing in Gaza was done in full knowledge and not by mistake as some have claimed.

NAZA is also a critique of the way in which framing the killing as "collateral" obscures its deliberate and calculated nature. When the lives of countless civilians are deemed to be meaningless, they can all be turned into "NAZA", and any strike can effectively be justified no matter the harm to civilians. This is especially dangerous in an era of artificial intelligence and big data, when it is possible to produce an endless stream of so-called military justifications, rendering every civilian slaughter as "NAZA", collateral damage to some target generated with the help of AI, and therefore avoiding scrutiny. This turns a cornerstone of international law, the obligation to attack only military targets, into a tool that legitimizes the slaughter it was intended to prevent.

Ex-military Israeli intelligence chief Aharon Haliva said in a leaked recording: "For everything that happened on October 7, for every one of us who died on October 7, 50 Palestinians must die. It doesn't matter now — children or not. I'm not speaking out of revenge but as a message for future generations. They need a Nakba now and then to feel the price." We think that one way the Israeli military was able to bring a genocidal vision like Haliva's into military practice, while obscuring its nature, was by defining much of the killing as 'collateral', or 'NAZA'.

Biographies

Yuval Abraham is a filmmaker and investigative journalist.

Rachel Szor is a filmmaker and cinematographer.

They are two of the four co-directors of Oscar-winning documentary *No Other Land* (2024).

James Wilson is a Best Picture Oscar-nominated and two-time BAFTA-winning film producer.

Jonathan Glazer is an Oscar-winning and two-time BAFTA-winning writer-director (*Sexy Beast, Birth, Under the Skin, The Zone of Interest*).

In 2024, Glazer and Wilson's film *The Zone of Interest* won the Oscar for Best International Film.

About Guardian Documentaries

The Guardian is a global news organisation that delivers fearless, independent journalism. Guardian Documentaries is committed to telling urgent contemporary stories with unique artistic vision. Producing, curating and commissioning films from around the world, Guardian Documentaries have won critical acclaim, including an Oscar in 2021 for *Colette* and a 2022 BAFTA Film Award for *The Black Cop*.

To watch more Guardian Documentaries, visit theguardian.com/documentaries

Credits

Directed by	**Yuval Abraham** **Rachel Szor**
Produced by	**Harry Davies** **Lindsay Poulton** **James Wilson**
Executive Producer	**Jonathan Glazer**
Executive Producers For the Guardian	**Paul Lewis** **Nicole Jackson**
Executive Producers	**Joseph Schull** **Harriet Gugenheim** **Wendy vanden Heuvel**
Co Producers	**Ekaterina Ochagavia** **Noa Yachot**
For The Guardian	**Katharine Viner** **Owen Gibson** **Betsy Reed** **Bethan McKernan**
Cinematography	**Anonymous** **Rachel Szor**
Editors	**Yuval Abraham** **Rachel Szor** **Harry Davies**
Supervising Sound Editor	**Robert Farr**
Sound Editing	**Lars Ginzel** **Benjamin Hörbe**
Additional Drones	**Mica Levi** **Rudi Zygadlo**
VFX Artists	**Clark Kimberly** **Ian Hutchinson** **Rudi H** **Swordfish** **Albert Isaac** **river**

From the Guardian

The Guardian is honoured to work with directors Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, co-producer James Wilson and executive producer Jonathan Glazer on this project.

NAZA builds on revelations first published by the Guardian, +972 Magazine, a Israeli-Palestinian publication, and Hebrew-language outlet, Local Call. Since 2023, Yuval Abraham and Harry Davies, an investigations correspondent at the Guardian and one of the producers on this film, have worked closely together to investigate the Israeli military's use of novel technologies in operations in Gaza and the West Bank. The partnership has included groundbreaking investigations into Israel's AI-driven targeting practices in Gaza; a major 2024 project examining Israel's efforts to undermine war crimes investigations; and a 2025 investigation revealing a surveillance system that captures millions of Palestinian phone calls each day, an expansive and indiscriminate programme built using Microsoft technology.

Information about the technologies used by the Israeli military is classified, and reporting of this kind is notoriously difficult. Over a three year period, however, Abraham and Davies have undertaken painstaking work to verify information from sources drawn from across the Israeli military, as well as whistleblowers within major US technology companies that have partnered with it. Much of this reporting has drawn on the testimony of confidential journalistic sources, many of whom have direct knowledge of the surveillance of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

NAZA builds on this work; the film hears directly from some of these sources. What emerges is a disturbing portrait of the people who designed and operated systems of mass killing and destruction. Given the sensitivity of the reporting and the consequences for the sources involved, Abraham and Davies's work depended on trust built over time with source protection and rigorous information security central to their investigations. The production of NAZA has had to adopt equivalent measures to protect the identities of interviewees who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Both the voices and appearances of interviewees have been disguised.

Harry Davies, Guardian investigations correspondent and NAZA producer, said:

"While our reporting has offered a glimpse of modern warfare, it has also revealed something more specific: how Israel's expansive architecture of mass surveillance in the occupied Palestinian territories was instrumentalised in one of the most destructive aerial bombing campaigns in recent history. A system built to listen and control helped create a machine of mass killing."

Selected further reading

The Guardian and +972 Magazine

Abraham, Y. (December 2023), 'A mass assassination factory': Inside Israel's calculated bombing of Gaza | +972 Magazine

Davies, H and Mckernan, B (December 2023), 'The Gospel': How Israel uses AI to select bombing targets in Gaza | The Guardian

Abraham, Y. (April 2024), 'Lavender': The AI machine directing Israel's bombing spree in Gaza | +972 Magazine

Mckernan, B and Davies, H (April 2024), 'The machine did it coldly': Israel used AI to identify 37,000 Hamas targets | The Guardian

Davies, H, Mckernan, B, and Abraham, Y (May 2024), Spying, hacking and intimidation: Israel's nine-year 'war' on the ICC exposed | The Guardian

Davies, H and Abraham, Y (January 2025), Revealed: Microsoft deepened ties with Israeli military to provide tech support during Gaza war | The Guardian

Davies, H and Abraham, Y (March 2025), Revealed: Israeli military creating ChatGPT-like tool using vast collection of Palestinian surveillance data | The Guardian

Davies, H and Abraham, Y (August 2025), 'A million calls an hour': Israel relying on Microsoft cloud for expansive surveillance of Palestinians | The Guardian

Davies, H and Abraham, Y (September 2025), Microsoft blocks Israel's use of its technology in mass surveillance of Palestinians | The Guardian

Yachot, N. (December 2025), 'Data is control': What we learned from a year investigating the Israeli military's ties to big tech | The Guardian

Other outlets
Several other news organisations have confirmed the IDF's use of AI-driven systems in Gaza, including Lavender.

Kingsley, P, et al (December 2024), Israel Loosened Its Rules to Bomb Hamas Fighters, Killing Many More Civilians | New York Times

Dwoskin, E (December 2024), Israel built an 'AI factory' for war. It unleashed it in Gaza | Washington Post

Biesecker, M, et al (February 2025), As Israel uses US-made AI models in war, concerns arise about tech's role in who lives and who dies | Associated Press