

COUNTERTERRORISM

COMMUNICATION ALERT

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A Cartoon to Teach the Next Generation about the “Palestinian Cause”:

As the US government works to push the Israeli-Palestinian peace process forward, a significant obstacle to winning Arab public opinion and achieving a lasting peace is the current narrative of the conflict. The narrative of “the Catastrophe of 1948” and the resulting “Palestinian suffering” has long served as an incubator for violence and anti-American sentiment. A soon-to-be-released Arabic animated film, that aims to teach children about the “Palestinian Cause” from the viewpoint for a Palestinian refugee, may serve to further cement this narrative in a new generation of young Arabs and Muslims.



Civilians under bombardment

The Saudi-produced film, titled “The Olive Dream,” tells the story of a young girl who in 1948 witnessed her father’s death at the hands of “Zionist gangs,” who “came to take” Palestinian lands. The girl and her family are then forced off their land to the refugee camp of Jenin, where they endure the 2002 “Jenin massacre” before finally returning to their land at the end of the film. *Al-Jazeera* Arabic profiled the film in April, where it aired clips of it and interviewed its producer/director who said the “most important message” of the film is that “this is our land and we should hold on to it.” He said the film aims to introduce children to the “Palestinian Cause from a geographic and religious perspective.” One battle scene depicts a military bombardment of civilians and young men fighting back, with a song playing in the background that says “the world has become a jungle, and the promises of people are mirages” and that “death is at the door.”

Though most Arabic-produced animated films over the years have not enjoyed commercial success in the Arab world, *The Olive Dream* has been receiving increasing media attention ahead of its release because of its subject and its “high quality.” According to *Al-Arabiya*’s website, the Saudi produced and directed film has a “suspenseful” storyline and the same production values as a “Disney” animated film. From the clips I have seen, the quality of the work is closer to that of a decent Flash video than a Disney cartoon, but still better than most Arabic-produced cartoons. The producers are reportedly arranging for distribution in all Arab countries and in Turkey, with a planned release date set during the family-oriented holy month of Ramadan (between August and September). The film’s producer/director says he is working on an English version for international distribution because he sees the film as “directed at the entire world, not just Arabs and Muslims. It involves the most precious subject to the Arab heart.” Regardless of the success of the theatrical release in the Arab world, the film will most likely be later sold to a number of Arabic TV channels.

One clip from the film, showing the girl fulfilling her “Olive Dream” of returning to her land to plant an olive tree, is available on *YouTube* courtesy of the *YouTube* channel of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood. Other clips, including the battle scene, can be viewed in *Al-Jazeera*’s profile of the film, also on *YouTube*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S4iHYaXYQc&feature=related>



Girl covered in her father's blood



Civilians under bombardment (2)



The Resistance fights back