

FIRESIDE STUDY

Bombarded with tragic imagery

Film: Gaza Tragedy

Editor: Sedat Çiçek

Introduction:

Like Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*, this short film is a cry of pain. Turkish editor Çiçek takes the distressing photographs of fighting in Gaza and hurls them at us with such force that we must either switch off or reflect deeply. This is a film less about religious politics than it is about a search for meaning in an image-saturated world. Watch it with caution.



Key issues:

Responding to the cry

It doesn't take long to reach exhaustion with this short film. "Too much! Enough! STOP STOP!" were my immediate responses. Like some horrific nightmare, the images move by so quickly that it's not possible to absorb or study each photograph individually. And *this*, I think, is where its value lies as a short film.

Many would argue that modern news media has desensitised us to the horrors of war. I agree, and propose that *Gaza Tragedy* pushes us so far over the line in this direction that it actually makes us think again about what's going on. This is not entertainment; this is not gratuitous violence on screen; this is the horrific reality the people of Gaza live with; so distant from the calm world of suburban Australia where I sit to view it. This is a cry of pain to the world.

Deconstructing the cry

There *is* order in the madness, which divides roughly into three essential parts:

1. **Opening big picture** - scenes of bombing and firing, no human faces at all
2. **The human cost** - scenes on the ground of people affected, progressing from sadness to terrible injury to death. In this section, which makes up the bulk of *Gaza*, the scenes of personal horror and destruction mount to an obscene level. The music changes from the reflective mood of Hans Zimmer's cinematic score, to the relentless lament of Israeli singer Chava Alberstein.
3. **Closing glimmer of hope** - a handful of images at the end depict peace and unity.

What is most striking is the proportion of images of *horror* compared to those of *hope*. There is a deep truth artfully articulated here: pain, suffering and horror can be overwhelming, while hope is usually quiet, small and lowly – almost an afterthought.

The cry for meaning

In submitting this short film to Campfire, editor Sedat Çiçek made a point of saying, "I want to let you know that I didn't use any ideology photographs... I didn't use symbol and flag." *Gaza Tragedy* is beyond politics, it is an existential wail that anyone can relate to, most simply stated in one word: WHY?!

The people we see suffering appear to ask the question. The music we hear asks it as well. The final tune is in fact a rendition of a Jewish Passover song, which, translated, says: "How much longer will the circle of terror continue? Chase and be chased, beat and be beaten, when will this madness end?"

Suggested questions:

- How did you respond to *Gaza Tragedy*? How much did you watch?
- There's a good argument to suggest that this piece should not be shown, that it adds nothing to the 'problem of the Middle-East' as it is often seen from the distant West. Do you agree?
- The opening quote "From a meaningless life to a meaningless death..." echoes the lament from the book of Ecclesiastes ("meaningless, utterly meaningless"). Given the situation in Gaza is deeply rooted in the politics of religion, how do we make sense of this from a spiritual point of view?
- The final glimmers of hope depict peace. What *can* bring about lasting peace on earth, if anything?
- What is *your* hope?