

“Our Cinema Gives Voice to Palestinians,” say Tarzan and Arab Nasser on the making of ‘Once Upon a Time in Gaza’

Doha, Qatar; November 27, 2025: “We are artists and cinema is our tool to deliver the voices of Palestinians,” said directors Tarzan and Arab Nasser, at a media briefing at Doha Film Festival, where their film ***Once Upon a Time in Gaza*** screened in the International Feature Competition programme.

“The making of this entire film was a miracle,” they said, thanking the producers who pushed the work forward. “Cinema is the voice, the picture, the representation of humans. We are tired of the image of the victim and of Palestinians constantly having to justify their humanity. We are telling you the story [*and our question to the world*] is do you want to take action or not?”

The directors said they did not change the script, although it was locked before October 2023. “People know Gazans only as numbers, even as history repeats itself. But Palestinians have a history of struggle and of ambition. The war did not start on 7 October; the siege officially began in 2007, and there were eight wars since then, all micro genocides that prepared the ground for today.”

Describing that Palestinians in Gaza are living in a jungle, they said “cinema doesn’t change reality. It asks a question that does not provide an answer. But you cannot deny that you have heard the voice. For us, cinema is a dramatic archiving of history.”

Producer Rani Massalha said it was important to make this film “because it showed a different side, a humanitarian side and a real image that has been always stereotypically portrayed.”

Set in Gaza in 2007, the film traces the fate of a young student, a charismatic dealer, and a corrupt cop, their lives colliding in a story of violence, revenge and inevitable tragedy.

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