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The Gatekeepers

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The Gatekeepers

Abstract

This is a film review of *The Gatekeepers* (2013) directed by Dror Moreh.

Keywords

Israel, Shin Bet, Intifada, Palestinians, Occupation, West Bank

Author Notes

William Blizek is the founding editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film* (2009).

The Gatekeepers

Directed by Dror Moreh

(Spotlight)



This documentary film was making the rounds of film festivals before it was shown at Sundance. So, it has had plenty of time to stir up feelings in Israel and around the world. And that it has done, whichever side of the fence you might be on.

The movie consists of interviews with the six former heads of Israel's behind the scenes security service, Shin Bet. Their names have only recently become public. These were the men entrusted with the internal security of Israel from the time of the Six Day War until the present. These are the men who had to deal with the suicide bombings and two intifadas. These heads of Shin Bet were in a unique position to see the workings of various policies and strategies for dealing with the Palestinians. All of them were hard-nosed individuals who took their job seriously.

Looking back on their terms as head of Shin Bet, the consensus is that Israel's approach to the Palestinians has been a mistake. It has not been successful in keeping Israel safe and it surely has not contributed to the future security of Israel. Indeed, Israel's engagement with the Palestinians has created more danger for Israel. The consensus is that Israel must open a dialogue with the Palestinians in an effort to bring to fruition a two state solution. Dividing the West Bank in ways that makes life more difficult for the Palestinians, building and protecting the settlements, and treating Israeli Arabs as second class citizens have brought Israel to an uncertain future. What makes this movie so important is that the men who come to this consensus are not radical left wingers or peaceniks, but rather men who lived the experience, made the judgments, and saw the process from their unique vantage point. It is as though Carl Rove began campaigning for a 50 percent tax rate on everyone in America who makes more than \$500,000 per year.

You might ask how such a movie is related to religion. Here we find that religion and politics in Israel do not have clear difference. It is not unfair to say that in many circumstances religion is politics. The practices of the past have satisfied a wide variety of religious extremists and hard liners. The future of this Jewish state, however, rests in policies that are rejected by many religious people in Israel.

---William Blizek