

## **Film Review of *Paradise Now*, published in yallabina.com - April 2006**

Nothing is as impressive and humbling as a vital and clear message expressed in dramatic form through characters just as human as you and I. Commentators can criticize to their heart's content, but regardless of everything *Paradise Now* is a factual representation of Palestinians that is unmatched by any other work of Art – or politics for that matter.

The movie takes us into the lives and psyches of Sa'id and Khaled (played by Kais Nashef and Ali Suliman respectively), two young men living in the West Bank town of Nablus. Like most of their country men, they are poor, hopeless, and desperate. Together they decide to advance their national cause and sign up to await their turn as human weapons, martyrs to be praised and honored after their passing. The time has come and the real action, physically and mentally, starts when their operation doesn't go quite as planned.

The real star behind this phenomenal work is Nazareth-born Dutch-airplane engineer-turned-filmmaker Hany Abu Asaad who wrote and directed *Paradise Now*. Abu Asaad skillfully cast his characters. Nashef is an excellent physical match to his character but it is Ali Suliman who stands out as an actor and delivers a real and powerful performance.

*Paradise Now* does what politicians, non-governmental organizations, journalists, and activists are unable to do (or at least not with similar impact). It attaches faces and personal stories to what we only read about in the papers. Instead of defending the right to resist occupation through human bombs, it makes you understand human bombs. It tells every viewer it could easily be him or her that chooses to resign such a life that is not worth living.

*Paradise Now* tells everyone that finds Palestinian bombers to be inhuman that there's a perspective missing. This missing knowledge is the reality of the situation on the ground; the astronomically different conditions under which Palestinians and Israelis live; the absolute imbalance of power and control, and the fact that Israelis can, if only the world wasn't watching, extinguish the entire Palestinian population overnight.

This may not be the perfect screenplay or the ideal representation of the Palestinian cause, but it most definitely is the closest anyone ever came to effect change in world public opinion regarding the Middle East conflict. That reason alone is enough for this humble reviewer to bow his hat in respect and admiration (as if that matters at all after a Golden Globe Award and an Academy Award nomination).