A film by Leila Sansour

Professor Avi Shlaim
President Jimmy Carter
Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Malala Yusafzai
Fadi Ghandour
Mary Nazzal Batayneh
Dr Nabil Qaddumi
Patriarch Michel Sabbah
Professor Avi Shlaim
Raja Shehadeh
Widad Kawar
Luay Abu Ghazaleh

OPEN BETHLEHEM

OUR AMBASSADORS
WORKING TO SAVE BETHLEHEM

A GUIDE TO THE PROJECT

A film by Leila Sansour
About The Film

“One of the most remarkable and moving documentaries I have seen. The tragedy of Palestinians encapsulated in the life of one town - Bethlehem. See the film then go to Bethlehem and see for yourself.”

Support the Distribution of the Film and Become a Friend of Open Bethlehem

Open Bethlehem is a cinematic diary of the film maker as she chronicles the building of the wall in her home town of Bethlehem offering viewers an intimate look inside the city and its life between past and present. Most screenings have been followed by discussions and Q&As, allowing the team to invite audiences to join the network of ambassadors for Bethlehem.

By building this network, Open Bethlehem hopes to work effectively to promote advocacy and support for an open Bethlehem affirming the identity of the city as a thriving Palestinian centre and a powerful voice for Palestine.
Open Bethlehem was first screened at the Royal Geographical Society in London in September 2014 at an event hosted by author and broadcaster Lord Melvyn Bragg and attended by 750 guests.

The film has since screened at more than 100 cinemas and venues in the UK and the Middle East, gaining wide critical acclaim and reaching an audience of 100,000+ viewers.
“Absolutely Essential Viewing”
Edinburgh Reporter

“A ninety-minute epic that transcends politics and normal cinema”
Daoud Kuttab - Middle East Monitor

“Undeniably Potent and Poignant”
Radio Times

“Powerful”
Time Out London

“Rarely does one see a film that combines biography with political activism that is of such high artistic caliber”
Raja Shehadeh

In 2016, Conversation singled out OPEN BETHLEHEM as one of 5 films that would help you understand the modern Arab World
Since 2005, Open Bethlehem has worked to compel greater international engagement with the city. The film is a roaming invitation for viewers to become citizens of Bethlehem. Audience members can apply to join the network and acquire a symbolic Bethlehem passport which constitutes a pledge to promote the city’s interests and act as ambassadors.

The passport is a beautifully crafted object with the star of Bethlehem and the image of St George, patron saint of Palestine.

Coinciding with the launch of the passport, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland issued the following statement: “As Presidents of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland we wish to convey our support for the people of Bethlehem and particularly for the aims and work of the Open Bethlehem Project. We view the barrier being built around Bethlehem as a grave injustice to its people, a serious threat to its economic life and social fabric, and an affront to all Christians”.

First launched in 2005 by Leila Sansour and former mayor of Bethlehem Dr Victor Battarseh.
As a result of our audience outreach appeal, the screenings in 2015 brought 2000 new ambassadors for Bethlehem. Many of those ambassadors have shown inspiring initiative. They have helped us screen the film, educated their networks, started business projects in Bethlehem and established tour operations that continue to bring visitors, allowing them to explore Bethlehem and make links with its people and institutions.

"Open Bethlehem is a nonviolent attempt to save a city that belongs to many in the world. It is unconscionable that Bethlehem should be allowed to die slowly from strangulation."
Archbishop Desmond Tutu

"I strongly recommend this film, it will not just inform you about the tragedies of Bethlehem but will inspire you, by the courage of Leila and her friends, to believe in yourself and your voice and become part of this movement."
Malala Yousafzai

"The mission of Open Bethlehem has a poignant resonance for the Middle East today. This is why I am so proud to receive a Bethlehem passport."
Avi Shlaim

"Open Bethlehem is an admirable project"
President Jimmy Carter

Our Ambassadors
The Production

**Funders:** Private individuals, donations and grants (WorldView, Dubai Film Festival, Tipping Point Film Fund, Development and Peace, Caritas Canada, Trocaire, Lush Charity Pot, Iris O’Brien Foundation, Trust Greenbelt and more)

The film is produced by Planet Bethlehem in co-production with Iambic Dream Films

**Co-producers:** Jumana Al Husseini, Nicholas Blincoe, Deborah Burton

**Executive Producer:** Waël Kabbani

[Image: Car and Bethlehem background]
What’s next?

The iconic status of Bethlehem provides us with an opportunity to capture the attention of millions around the globe and present to them the aspirations and challenges faced by all Palestinians. This is what we intend to do next through a tour of the USA and further screenings in European cities. The challenge we set ourselves is to do it on a big scale.

In North America, our aim is to reach a minimum of 350,000 viewers via cinema, DVD and VOD release + audience discussions, in order to create at least 10,000 new ambassadors for Bethlehem.
Help us gain New Ambassadors for Bethlehem

“When I heard about the idea of a passport for Bethlehem, I could not possibly walk away.”
Della Shenton, founder of 5th Gospel Retreat