

# WALTZ WITH BASHIR

AN ARI FOLMAN FILM

## THE MAKOM VIEWER'S GUIDE



created by

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Renewing Israel Engagement

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"We are invited on a voyage of discovery into Folman's uncharted subconscious after his late-night mercy dash to a friend plagued by nightmares of being pursued by slathering hounds... The dreams, concludes Folman's friend, are connected to a time in the early 1980s when both men were teenaged soldiers during an Israeli Army mission in the first Lebanon war. It is at this point that Folman realizes that, although he knows he was present during the massacre of Palestinian refugees by a Christian Phalangist militia in August 1982 (Sabra and Shatila), he has little concrete recollection of the events. Folman then sets about gathering testimonials from friends and former colleagues to try and color in the virtually blank sheet of his memory." *The Times*, UK

### What was Israel doing in Lebanon in the first place?

In June 1982, the Israeli army invaded South Lebanon after Israel's civilians in northern towns had been bombarded by Palestinians for years from Lebanese territory. The Israeli government's original plan was to occupy a 25 mile security zone in Lebanon in order to distance the Palestinian missiles from Israel's border. This mission turned into a full scale invasion of Lebanon, and set off a spiraling of events that led to the massacre of Palestinians by a Christian Phalangist militia in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp.

### Israeli response to the Sabra and Shatila massacre

The moment Israel's connection to Sabra and Shatila became known, Israelis took to the streets in protest. Police estimates put attendance at a key demonstration at 400,000 people. This was one ninth of the Jewish population of Israel. Extrapolated out, this would be the equivalent of 34 million people in the US demonstrating their anger. (Imagine the entire population of 20 of USA's largest cities marching on Washington...)



Within two weeks, an official government enquiry was established. The **Kahan Commission** (named after the Judge at its head) was published just over four months later. It found that Israel had taken no active part in the massacre, but was indirectly responsible for allowing it to happen. Brig. General Yaron was dismissed in disgrace, as was Defense Minister Sharon. Chief of Staff Eitan was severely criticized and retired soon thereafter. Extracts from this report follow.

More than anything else, the First Lebanon War was the first time Israelis wondered whether this was a 'war of no choice'. Up until this point, every war entered into by Israel's Defense Forces had been forced upon them, as a war of 'no choice'. To this day, the significance of this distinction rumbles on...

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