

# Film Notes: Season 2025–26

9th April 2026

## Palestine 36

Cert 12A | 2h 0m

Country: Palestine / UK / France, 2025

Director: Annemarie Jacir

Stars: Hiam Abbass, Kamel El Basha, Yasmine Al Massri, Saleh Bakri, Karim Daoud Anaya, Jeremy Irons, Robert Aramayo

Language: Arabic and English (with English subtitles)



### Synopsis

Mandatory Palestine, 1936. As Palestinian villages organise against British colonial rule amid rising tensions and accelerating change, Yusuf drifts between the slower rhythms of his rural home and the charged streets of Jerusalem, pulled into a widening revolt that will reshape lives and futures.

### Context and Craft

Jacir frames the story as historical drama with an ensemble sweep: personal stories threaded through a broad political moment. Rather than centring only leaders or headline events, the film uses Yusuf as a connective figure between village and city, ordinary life and organised resistance, allowing the period to unfold through shifting relationships and competing pressures. Formally, the film leans on period detail and a grounded, observational style, with critics noting a tendency toward clear, explanatory beats designed to orient viewers in a complex history. This is balanced with vivid scenes of daily life under strain. It's also a film that has sparked discussion about how cinema handles contested history. Some critics have praised the film's urgency and its attempt to foreground a chapter often under-taught in Britain, while other commentators have argued that certain portrayals compress, simplify, or skew the historical record.

### Critical Reception

- “Emotionally stirring... heartfelt... if rather stolidly paced and sometimes pedagogically conveyed.” — *The Guardian*
- “Prescient... strong ensemble work, with one notably caricatured antagonist performance.” — *Variety*
- “Broad primer on a complex period, with attention to the political machinery on all sides.” — *BFI Sight and Sound*

### Conclusion

*Palestine 36* plays as both human drama and historical reckoning: a big-cast, big-canvas film that tries to make the beginnings of the 1936–39 revolt legible through one young man's movement between worlds. For audiences, its impact may hinge on that balancing act, between immersion and instruction, story and history, especially given the real disagreements over interpretation that the film has provoked.