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Paradise Now Paper Assignment

The 2005 film *Paradise Now* follows two best friends and their psychological struggle in Palestine. Hany Abu-Assads movie explores the emotional, social, and political factors that lead protagonists Said and Khaled to commit a suicide bombing. *Paradise Now* illustrates various themes of desperation and hopelessness, driven by apartheid pressure from Israel. As the conflict intensifies between Israel and Palestine the two young men deal with internal struggles and external pressures which highlight the impact of occupation, oppression, and the loss of hope on these individuals and their impoverished communities. The culmination of anger and sadness driven by the humanitarian crisis in Palestine drives Said and Khaled to take revenge on a regime, on behalf of their resistance group.

Paradise Now begins with opening scenes of Said and Khaled living in Nablus, working as auto mechanics at a garage shop for pennies on the dime. After an altercation with the owner, Khaled is fired, and the film cuts to a scene of the two friends smoking Hookah overlooking the city. A distinct scene happens where a child brings them coffee, however, neither Said nor Khaled have any money to repay the child, displaying their poverty-stricken life. The introduction of the film portrays a community and economy that has been devastated by the ongoing blockades and embargoes by the Israeli government. The film's early stages introduce Suha, the female daughter of a Palestinian Resistance martyr. Her presence in the film represents a bridge between the two protagonists, as she is the mediator between the two later in the movie.

The introduction to *Paradise Now* displays a somber and stagnant mood of Palestine; it tries to invoke a feeling of compassion in the viewer by showing how poverty-stricken and claustrophobic the West Bank feels to its citizens, with a bleak outlook for the future.

The film then progresses into the homes of Said and Khaled, displaying the various dynamics of family and tradition in Palestinian communities. Throughout this segment, there are multiple mentions of previous conflicts that have shaped the region and their sense of dread for the future such as the Nakba and First Intifada. These historical events establish the background for *Paradise Now* and the motives behind the Palestinian Resistance. The character Jamal, a messenger and prominent religious leader in the Palestinian guerilla organization, is then introduced. He visits both men at their homes and explains that they have been chosen for a very important mission. In the eyes of both friends, they believe it is better to die as a martyr than to live as victims in the Israeli occupation which has brought them nothing but pain. The main ritual in this movie involves death and beyond, this is appealing to the young men as a better alternative to a life of subjugation and humiliation at the hands of apartheid.

The next morning, Said and Khaled are bathed and purified, while also being shaved to appear Israeli. The two don suits and are given the cover story of heading to a wedding in Tel Aviv. In a scene reminiscent of the Last Supper, the men sit at a table and feast for the last time with the leader of the guerilla group. In the dark room, a singular light is placed overtop Said and Khaled displaying them as the light or hope for retaliation against their oppressors. In one of the most emotional scenes of the movie, Khaled and Said stand in front of a man with a camera and explain their reasoning for the events that are going to take place. They express that the only answer to the injustices of the occupation is through martyrdom, which will be in the name of Resistance. It is also said in this testament that Israel views partnership and equality under the

same democratic system for Palestinians as suicide for the Jewish state. In this scene, however, a distinct moment happens when the men behind the camera are eating pita bread, Khaled abruptly reminds to tell his mother in the video that bread is half off at the market the next day. This scene is implemented purposely to highlight the humanity still left by these soon-to-be suicide bombers. The next morning, the two men sneak through a hole in the border wall into Israeli territory to meet with their Israeli coconspirator. Surprisingly a group of Israeli soldiers arrive in a truck and block access to the collaborator who is named "Abu-Assad." Hany Abu Assad is the director of *Paradise Now* so this raises some unanswered questions. It is common for directors to be in films, but to play themselves brings about a conflict of interest as he may want to be seen as a Palestinian hero or feel included in the fight against occupation. Nonetheless, it is odd and frankly a bit offensive to paint yourself as an associate of Palestinian guerilla groups when there has been zero collaborative work in real life, almost as a way to boost an individual name instead of the cause.

Said and Khaled flee Israel and return to Palestine having their plan foiled for the meantime, but the two young men are separated. Khaled returns to his group and has his vest removed, however, Said is still at large and returns to finish the job. A distinct scene occurs where Said is waiting at an Israeli bus stop with a vengeful look, leading viewers to believe he will detonate on various civilians instead of IDF soldier targets. Instead, when a child appears on screen, he hesitates to board the bus and instead runs back to Nablus and returns home. This scene shows that although Said is ready and willing to commit suicide in the name of resistance, he realizes that particular victims such as children have no say in this conflict. The filmmaker's bias is shown here more blatantly, he tries to depict these men as morally correct but simply

dealing with an ethical dilemma which is a product of their environment and the unjust conditions they reside in; which is shown by his particular restraint.

Khaled is tasked with finding Said and returning him to the guerilla organization. In his search, he once again encounters Suha, the lover of Said. As the two travel to the gravesite of Said's father where he is located, Khaled explains the events that will unfold to Suha which ultimately appalls her. She feels very strongly about the wrongness of suicide bombings and the endless cycle of violence which have plagued the community. She tells Khaled that they do not accomplish anything and justifies the actions of Israel against those yearning for peace and freedom in Palestine. After he is found, Said is then taken back to the compound after an altercation with Khaled, and *Paradise Now* begins to take a more gloomy and melancholic tone with dark colors and shadows. This change in atmosphere conveys the emotions of uneasiness and doubt about the original motives for the mission.

Khaled is visibly distraught and seen dealing with internal conflict about the bombing, he speaks with Jamal who reassures him that the mission is for the greater good and he will be rewarded heavily in Paradise. Said, who is believed to be compromised, meets with the leader of the organization, who tells him he will no longer be a part of the mission. Instead of agreeing, Said exclaims his loyalty by detailing his past and all the damage caused to his family and environment at the hands of the occupier. Then with a stern and determined look, Said is prepared to return and complete the mission, though Khaled is still visibly conflicted showing that Suha has influenced his previous notions. The two men are strapped back into their vests and head into Israel, with their collaborator Abu-Assad. The audience is then given a scenic montage of Tel Aviv, the capital of Israel, with upbeat music and the view of beautiful skyscrapers, neighborhoods, and beaches. Said and Khaled are left in awe of the beauty in the city, a stark

contrast to the run-down and destroyed neighborhoods in which they have spent their whole lives. This scene is featured in the film to show how much of an economic and social chokehold has been placed on Palestinian communities, and a final stamp to show why these men are driven to commit such a horrible act.

Said and Khaled were then found near a checkpoint, ready to carry out the intended mission. In a surprising twist, Khaled questions Said about the morality of this act and tells him that there are no winners in this atrocity. The two men end up agreeing to leave and refuse to commit such a horrible act, leaving the viewer confused. As they meet their Israeli collaborator, a shocking turn of events unfolds when Khaled is pushed into the car by Said. The door is locked, and the driver leaves. Khaled is seen banging on the window and screaming. He is seen crying as he realizes he not only was betrayed by his friend but will never be able to see him again. In the final scene of the movie, Said is seen sitting on a bus with many Israeli soldiers; the camera zooms in ever closer to his emotionless eyes and eventually cuts to white. *Paradise Now* ends abruptly and leaves viewers questioning heavily the morality of the film and what mark it leaves on the continued fight for Palestinian resistance. With no satisfying ending or aftermath of events, the film very successfully leaves viewers distraught and unnerved.

Much like the psychological turmoil the characters go through, this movie provides a different perspective to audience members which can be pretty uncomfortable to some. This movie does an incredible job of highlighting and empathizing with why these men are driven so far into a corner that they feel as though violent revenge is the only solution. The movie, like authentic Palestinian culture, is deeply intertwined with Muslim references and the Quran. However, Said and Khaled are not necessarily religious. Instead, they are ready to lay their lives down for the cause and their country, nothing more. Throughout the movie, filmmakers ensure

that the Olive tree is present in various scenes, being a symbol of Palestinian resistance and the battle for their land; this is done well to highlight the undertones of the film. In conclusion, *Paradise Now* is a challenging movie that leads the viewer to ponder the meaning and sacredness of life, while simultaneously sympathizing with those who are pushed so far into a corner they believe that death is better than humiliation and bondage.

I ___Rory Cantwell_____ (tutor's name) certify that I met with
___Caleb Palacios_____ (student's name) for ___38_____ minutes
on ___12/8/24_____ (date) in the Writing Center.

Tutor Signature

Rory Cantwell

THE TUTOR RECOMMENDED JUST COPYING AND PASTING THE TEXT