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2012

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2013  
SUNDANCE  
FILM FESTIVAL

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Telluride  
Film Festival

IDFA Competition  
for Feature-Length  
Documentary  
idfa 2012

"Potent enough to alter the way you see the world"

Kenneth Turan, LOS ANGELES TIMES

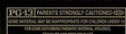
"Mesmerizingly cinematic... Jaw-dropper movie"

Manohla Dargis, NEW YORK TIMES

# THE GATEKEEPERS

A FILM BY DROR MOREH

A SONY PICTURES CLASSICS RELEASE. A PRODUCTION OF DROR MOREH PRODUCTIONS, LES FILMS DU POISSON, CINEPHIL IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH MAC GUFF, WILD HEART PRODUCTIONS, ARTE FRANCE, IBA, NDR, RTBF. WITH THE SUPPORT OF CNC, MEDIA RÉGION ÎLE-DE-FRANCE, PROCIREP, ANGOA, THE RABINOVICH FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS-CINEMA PROJECT CO-PRODUCER ANNA VAN DER WEE. ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS YAËL FOGIEL, LAETITIA GONZALEZ. CAMERA AVNER SHAHAF. SOUND AMOS ZIPORI. SOUND MIX DAVID GILLAIN. SOUND DESIGN ALEX CLAUDE. PRODUCTION DESIGNER DORON KOREN. ORIGINAL MUSIC AB OVO. JÉRÔME CHASSAGNIARD. RÉGIS BAILLET. EDITOR DRON ADAR. PRODUCERS DROR MOREH, ESTELLE FIALON, PHILIPPA KOWARSKY. DIRECTOR DROR MOREH.



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YLE

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VP

NRK

# THE GATEKEEPERS

A film by Dror Moreh

Produced by:

Dror Moreh Productions

Les Films du Poisson

Cinephil

Wild Heart Productions

And

MAC GUFF

Produced in cooperation with:

NDR, ARTE, IBA, RTBF, Radio Canada

With the support of:

CNC, MEDIA, PROCIREP, ANGOA, Ils de France,  
The Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts - Cinema Project

In Association with:

YLE, DR, NRK, UR, RTS, VPRO



## **One-liner**

For the first time ever, six former heads of the Shin Bet, Israel's secret service agency, agree to share their insights and reflect publicly on their actions and decisions. Intimately interviewed, they shed light on the controversy surrounding the Occupation in the aftermath of the Six Day War.

## **Short Synopsis**

For the first time ever, six former heads of Israel's domestic secret service agency, the Shin Bet, share their insights and reflect publicly on their actions and decisions.

Since the Six Day War in 1967, Israel has failed to transform its crushing military victory into a lasting peace. Throughout that entire period, these heads of the Shin Bet stood at the center of Israel's decision-making process in all matters pertaining to security. They worked closely with every Israeli prime minister, and their assessments and insights had—and continue to have—a profound impact on Israeli policy.

THE GATEKEEPERS offers an exclusive account of the sum of their successes and failures. In the process it sheds light on the controversy surrounding the Occupation in the aftermath of the Six Day War.

## **Synopsis**

It seems inevitable that Israel's security forces play an inordinate role in the national discourse. Two of these forces—the Army and the Mossad—are already the stuff of legend. Ever since the Six Day

War, however, the internal security force known as the Shin Bet has come to dominate the discussion among Israel's policy makers. Israel's crushing victory over its neighbors in 1967 left it in control of a vast, hostile population living under Occupation. Dealing with that population—in times of calm and times of violent uprising—was the Shin Bet's responsibility.

The Gatekeepers tells the story of the Shin Bet, perhaps the most active and certainly the most secretive of Israel's security forces, and it tells it from the perspectives of its leaders who, more than anyone, received the trust of the country's political elites. In a series of candid interviews, they talk openly about the major events that marked their tenures. At their most intimate, six former heads of the Shin Bet muse publicly about the morality of torture and terrorism, arrests and assassinations. The citizens they swore to protect may have been safer as a result of their actions, but was the country any closer to peace?

In a style reminiscent of *The Fog of War*, their confessions are illustrated with archival footage and chilling computer animations based on photographs taken at the events. These offer a window into the moral dilemmas they faced as they unfolded. The audience is left pondering whether they or their governments would have responded any differently

If Israel lies at the heart of the global War on Terror, the Gatekeepers' confessions challenge the conventional wisdom of how that war should be waged, whether in Gaza or Guantanamo, Palestine or Pakistan. Theirs is the ultimate cautionary tale of what happens to people and nations alike when they try to answer violence with violence.

## **Director's Note**

In "The Gatekeepers" I go to the heads of the Shin Bet, the people with the power to shape history from behind the scenes. Living in the shadows, they have never spoken about their work in front of a camera before.

The idea to do this movie came to me while I was working on my previous film, *Sharon*. From my discussions with the prime minister's innermost circle of advisors, I learned how the critique of some of these Gatekeepers influenced Sharon's decision to disengage from Gaza.

I went to each of the Gatekeepers and asked them to tell me their life stories. I wanted them to share their unique perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict. I was startled, but also thrilled, when they agreed. This gave me an unprecedented, intimate opportunity to enter the inner sanctum of the people who have steered Israel's decision-making process for almost half a century.

The Gatekeepers were generous with their time and information. Some were better storytellers than others, but they each had a story to tell in their own distinct voices. They were there at all the most important junctions in the history of the State of Israel since the Six Day War.

Day after day, while interviewing them, I found myself staring in disbelief at these anonymous soldiers. Their stories and testimonies were often overwhelming. I couldn't help but ask myself how far I would have gone if confronted with the same life-or-death dilemmas that they dealt with on a day-to-day basis. I still do.



No one understands the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians better than these six men. When they speak, leaders listen. Perhaps the time has come for the Gatekeepers to address the people at large, and not just the inner circles of decision-makers.

I hope this film initiates that dialogue.

*Dror Moreh*



## **BACKGROUND DETAILS ON THE GATEKEEPERS**

**Avraham Shalom (1980 - 1986)** began his military career before the State of Israel was founded. He fought in the Palmach, the pre-state underground paramilitary group that formed the basis of the IDF, and then moved to the Shin Bet just as it was being founded. In 1959-1960, he was part of the team of Mossad and Shin Bet operatives that tracked and kidnapped an Argentine citizen, Ricardo Klement, better known as Adolf Eichmann, and brought him to justice in Israel. Following the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, Shalom was appointed head of the Shin Bet's Security Desk. In 1980, he became Head of the Shin Bet.

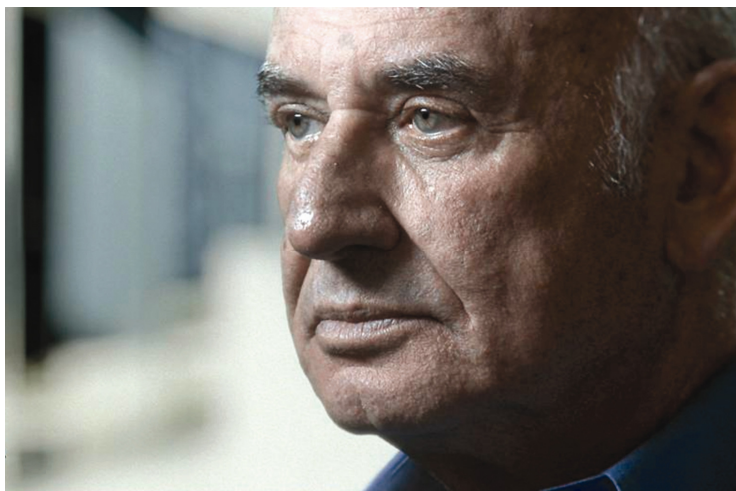


Shalom's turbulent tenure was rocked by terrorism from Palestinians and, increasingly, from fundamentalist Jews who opposed all concessions in the country's quest for peace. A "Jewish Underground" composed of radical West Bank settlers opened fire on the Islamic College of Hebron, killing three students, and planted bombs in the cars of leading Palestinian officials, permanently maiming the mayors of Ramallah and Nablus. When Shalom eventually caught the "Underground," he uncovered a plot to blow

up the Dome of the Rock, an act which would have unleashed the fury of the entire Arab world against the State of Israel.

By the early 1980s, Shalom was one of the most influential security figures in Israel, though this eventually led to his downfall. In 1984 he ordered the summary execution of two terrorists captured alive after hijacking the 300 bus from Tel Aviv to Ashkelon. A front page newspaper photo of one of those terrorists being taken off the bus in handcuffs led to an official investigation. Shalom remained taciturn throughout, and refused to divulge the full story of what happened, even after senior Shin Bet officials resigned in protest. According to Shalom, the incident was handled with the full consent of the highest levels of government. Prime ministers Yizhak Shamir and Shimon Peres supported Shalom, but the public outcry eventually forced his resignation in 1986.

**Yaakov Peri (1988 - 1995)** would have fit right in to a John Le Carré novel as a foil to the enigmatic Smiley. Suave, debonair, a true ladies' man, he could have easily followed a career in music and, in fact, he played trumpet for Jerusalem's Voice of Israel Orchestra.





Born in Tel Aviv in 1944, Peri entered the Hebrew University upon his release from the IDF. He completed his studies at Tel Aviv University with a joint degree in Middle Eastern Studies and Jewish History. He was recruited by the Shin Bet in 1966, and was trained as a field officer in the Arab sector. In 1987, following the 300 bus incident, he was appointed deputy director of the Shin Bet, and the following year Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir selected him as its head.

The crisis facing the Shin Bet at the time was how to cope with the Intifada, an unprecedented mass uprising in the Occupied Territories. Peri, who had spent years studying and working in the Arab sector, was instrumental in setting up a vast network of informers and collaborators in the early years of Israel's occupation. Yet despite all this, the sudden eruption of the Intifada came as a complete surprise to him and other senior members of the Shin Bet.

During his tenure, allegations were made about "exceptional practices" at the Shin Bet's Gaza City interrogation facility. Though an official investigation acquitted Peri, the agents who ran the facility claimed that they had been hung out to dry in order to avoid another public scandal so soon after the 300 bus incident.

Peri left the Shin Bet in 1994. During his six years in office he instituted the conceptual changes necessary to deal with a new political reality in the Middle East, in the wake of the Intifada and Oslo Accords. As a confidante of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, he took part in the delegation that negotiated security agreements with the Palestinians. Despite his position as a spymaster, no one questioned his integrity or fairness.

**Carmi Gillon (1994 - 1996)**, who succeeded Peri as Head of the Shin Bet, comes from an aristocratic Israeli family. His grandfather was the only Jewish justice to serve on the Supreme Court of the British Mandate of Palestine, his father was a State Attorney, and his mother was Deputy Attorney General. Nevertheless, he was also one of the people least prepared to head the Shin Bet, and his brief tenure was marked by its greatest debacle—its failure to protect Prime Minister Rabin from an assassin's bullet.



Carmi served in Israel's Armored and Artillery corps before sustaining an injury in the War of Attrition. Upon completing his service, he studied Political Science at The Hebrew University. It was there that he was first recruited by the Shin Bet. He spent the first part of his service working for its Security Desk, charged with protecting Israeli installations overseas, including embassies, El Al offices, and other facilities. In 1982 he was appointed head of the Jewish Desk, and was involved with the capture of the Jewish Underground and of Yonah Avrushi, who threw a grenade at a Peace Now demonstration in Jerusalem in 1983. At the time it was the most serious attack by Jews against Jews in modern Israel's history.

Gillon left this position in 1987 to study at the National Security College. Upon graduating, he assumed several senior positions in the Shin Bet, while simultaneously studying for an MA in Political Science and Public Administration. He later served as head of the Shin Bet's Northern Command, overseeing operations in Lebanon.

In March 1994, Gillon was handpicked by Yaakov Peri to succeed him. During his brief tenure, he shifted the organization's focus to Jewish terrorism, especially from the right. This new direction posed a serious challenge to Gillon. It required him to conduct surveillance on Israelis who had never committed a crime, but whom he suspected of preparing to launch the most severe attacks against the state and its leaders. Exacerbating the problem was the fact that these people, mostly idealistic settlers with extensive military training, had the support of many prominent politicians.

Despite numerous successes in the war against Jewish terrorism, this was also where Gillon confronted his greatest failure. He had long warned that extremists would attempt to kill Prime Minister Rabin in order to hinder the peace process, but Israel had never faced political assassinations before, and most people were skeptical of his assessments. They were wrong. On 4 November 1995, an assassin managed to slip through the "sterile area" surrounding the prime minister and shoot him from close range. Gillon immediately took responsibility for the fiasco and handed in his resignation, but this was rejected by acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Ironically, this enormous failure was followed by one of Gillon's greatest successes. In January 2006, the Shin Bet assassinated "The Engineer," Yahya Ayyash, a Palestinian terrorist who had

masterminded some of the bloodiest attacks on Israeli civilians in recent memory.

The following day Gillon resigned, still overwhelmed by the aftershocks of the Rabin assassination.

**Ami Ayalon (1996 - 2000)** was an outsider, brought to rehabilitate the Shin Bet in the aftermath of its most dismal failure—its inability to protect Prime Minister Rabin from an assassin's bullet. As a young boy, Ayalon was raised on a kibbutz, where he excelled in soccer, even though he was thought to be "too short." Friends sometimes say that because he was so short he felt a need to overcompensate by being in top physical shape.



Unlike his predecessors, Ayalon came to the Shin Bet directly from the military, where he was a decorated officer. As a young commando in 1969, he received the IDF's highest honor, the Medal of Valor, for his role in the fabled Green Island Raid against an Egyptian military installation. Though he was severely wounded in the assault, he returned to his Naval Commando unit and eventually became its commander. During the late 1970s and early 1980s he personally led teams of divers in numerous raids against Palestinian

installations along the Lebanese coast. In 1992 Ayalon was made head of the Navy, with the rank of Major General.

The Shin Bet's reputation was in shambles following the Rabin assassination, so Prime Minister Peres decided to bring in an outsider to help restore public confidence. Ayalon was his top choice for the position. Not only was he a beloved war hero; he was also a resilient and stubborn commander, with a reputation for being a straight-shooter. Forthright and even sharp-tongued, he would "tell it like it is," regardless of whether he was addressing his subordinates or his superiors. Most of all he was a hard-edged veteran of Israel's elite Naval Commandos.

Ayalon's main goal as Head of Shin Bet was to increase security around the country's leadership. Until Rabin's assassination, Israel had been a very open society with relatively free access to politicians among all sectors of the population. An assassin's bullet changed all that. The country's leaders suddenly became targets and required layer upon layer of protection. Ayalon was charged with implementing this.

During Ayalon's five-year tenure, he waged a relentless war against terror under three very different prime ministers: Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Ehud Barak. Yet though he is considered to be the most left-wing head of the Shin Bet, it was actually Labor Prime Minister Ehud Barak for whom he reserved his sharpest criticism. When the Camp David talks collapsed in 2000, conventional wisdom assumed that Barak had offered Arafat everything, and that it was only the Palestinian leader's intransigence that prevented them from reaching a peace treaty. Ayalon shattered this myth, claiming that Barak had arrived



unprepared and hectored Arafat, instead of negotiating with him. Ayalon also claims that the Intifada was not planned by Arafat. He believes it was a popular eruption of longstanding frustration among the Palestinians.

**Avi Dichter (2000 - 2005)** is a chameleon, who is just as comfortable in Palestinian society as he is in Israeli society. Upon completing his military service in Sayeret Matkal, Israel's legendary commando unit, Dichter joined the Shin Bet and was stationed in its Southern Command, responsible for the volatile Gaza Strip. By 1992 he was head of the Southern Command, overseeing some of the Shin Bet's most brazen operations, including the assassination of "The Engineer" in 1995. He served for a short time as head of the Shin Bet's Security Desk, following the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin. In May 2000 his former commander in Sayeret Matkal, now Prime Minister Ehud Barak, promoted Dichter to the position of Head of the Shin Bet, succeeding Ami Ayalon. Shortly afterward the country erupted in the bloody al-Aqsa Intifada.



Dichter's military training served him well. Convinced of the justice of his cause, he could be cold and ruthless, but as someone who was comfortable mingling with the Arab population he also

appreciated the value of HUMINT (human sources of intelligence). He was successful under Barak and flourished under Ariel Sharon, when the latter became prime minister. Both he and Sharon were pragmatists, and Dichter was never forced to justify his preferred strategies, no matter how diplomatic-or how forceful—they might be. This leeway was invaluable, given the extreme violence of the Second Intifada. Although Israel suffered many casualties, it was spared many more because of Dichter and the vast array of techniques he employed to combat terrorists and stem terrorism.

Perhaps the most controversial of these was his policy of targeted assassinations. Modeled largely after the successful attack on Yahya Ayyash, these increased in number under Dichter, with the full support of the Sharon government. At the same time Dichter expanded the role of intelligence gathering to preempt attacks and was one of the initiators of the Separation Wall, believing that it would hinder terrorists from reaching their targets in Israel.

**Yuval Diskin (2005 – 2011)** still has vivid memories of the 1967 Six Day War, even though he was just a young boy at the time. What he remembers most is his fear of what might have happened if Israel lost that war. As a young man he served in the IDF's Shaked Reconnaissance Unit, rising to the rank of Deputy Company Commander.



He joined the Shin Bet in May 1978 and was appointed Coordinator for the Nablus District. There, in the alleys of the refugee camps, he learned about the harsh realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During Operation Peace for Galilee he served in Beirut (1982) and Sidon (1983). In August 1990, he was appointed Director of the Department for Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Espionage at the Arab and Iranian Affairs Desk.

Diskin's attitudes to the conflict changed even before the signing of the Oslo Accords, as a result of his participation in security talks with the Palestinians. From 1993 to 1997, he was deeply involved in establishing clandestine links with the leaders of the Palestinian security services, as well as with Jordanian and Egyptian intelligence.

In May 1997, he was appointed Director of the Central Command of the Shin Bet (Jerusalem and West Bank Region), a position he held until June 2000. During these turbulent years, the military wing of Hamas carried out a string of suicide attacks intended to foil the peace process. Diskin headed the operation that destroyed Hamas military infrastructures throughout Judea and Samaria. In July 2000, he was appointed Deputy Director of the Shin Bet. He became Head of the Shin Bet in May 2005.

While serving as Deputy Director of the Shin Bet, he worked with his counterparts in the IDF to create an integrated counter-terrorism doctrine to thwart terrorist attacks, particularly the suicide bombers known as "ticking time bombs." He is believed to be the person who initiated and perfected the doctrine of "targeted assassination."

Upon retiring from the Shin Bet in May 2011, he has drawn attention from the Israeli and international media for his sharp critique of the current government's policies toward the Palestinians.

## **Director Dror Moreh**

Dror Moreh began his career as a D.O.P and became one of Israel's leading cinematographers. He shot a number of feature films, including:

- ***Urban Feel*** (Berlin official competition, 1998),
- ***Desperado Square*** (Winner of the **Best Film Award** at the Montpelier Film Festival).
- and many more ...

Moreh has also worked as a D.O.P for many award-winning documentaries in Israel, including ***One Shot, Asesino***, and ***Underdog: A War Movie***. During that time, he also directed several projects. Moreh began working as fulltime director several years ago. His projects include:

- ***The Gatekeepers***: A feature-length documentary revolving around intimate dialogues with six former heads of the Shin Bet, Israel's secret service.
- ***The Rose***: A 6-part documentary series about the murder of a young girl.
- ***To Be Mayumana***: A documentary film portraying an Israeli dance group heading to New York for their world premiere.
- ***Under Cover***: A 4-part docudrama about undercover police officers.
- ***Sharon***: A feature-length documentary about the reasons why Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, considered the "Father of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories," agreed to implement the Gaza Disengagement Plan. The film was selected for the official **Panorama** program at the 58<sup>th</sup> Berlin Film Festival..



- ***Occupational Hazard***: A documentary film portraying an Israeli journalist's journey into Iraq during the Second Gulf War.
- ***Caesarea: From the Dream to Reality***: An animated short on the history of Caesarea, produced with a budget of \$1,500,000.

## **Technical Information**

95' | Hebrew | English/French subtitles | Israel, France, Germany, Belgium | 2012

## **Main Credits**

Director	Dror Moreh
Producers	Dror Moreh, Estelle Fialon, Philippa Kowarsky
Co-Producer	Anna Van Der Wee
Executive Producers	Yaël Fogiel, Laetitia Gonzalez
Camera	Avner Shahaf
Editor	Oron Adar
Sound	Amos Zipori
Sound Design	Alex Claude
Production Designer	Doron Koren

## **Festival Screenings**

**Jerusalem Film Festival (World Premiere, July 2012)**

**Toronto International Film Festival (International Premiere, September 2012)**

**Telluride Film Festival**

**New York Film Festival**

**IDFA 2012 – Feature Length Competition (European Premiere)**

**Sundance Film Festival**

## LES FILMS DU POISSON

Over 15 years of activity, Les Films du Poisson, founded by Yaël Fogiel and Laetitia Gonzalez, has displayed a strong commitment to an exacting kind of cinema, which has earned both popular and critical success and won a string of international awards – five César awards (notably for Best First Film and Best Producer), Best Director and Caméra d'Or in Cannes, Jean Vigo and Louis Delluc Awards. Since 2006, under the guidance of producer Estelle Fialon, the company has strongly developed its production of documentary films, for both television and the cinema.

Filmography of recent documentaries:

***The Gatekeepers*** by Dror Moreh. Broadcasters: ARTE, NDR, IBA, RTBF, YLE, DRTV, RTS, Radio Canada, SVT, NRK, VPRO, UR. Festivals: Jerusalem, Telluride, Toronto, New York, IDFA 2012. US distributor : Sony Pictures Classics

***Summer Growing Up*** by Blaise Harrison. Broadcaster: ARTE. Festivals: Directors' Fortnight in Cannes, Festival Dei Popoli (Best Documentary Award), Cinemed, Dok Leipzig, RIDM Montréal, Vendôme 2011 ; Visions du Réel, Indie Lisboa, Krakow, Doxxs! 2012.

***Modigliani's Genuine Fake Heads*** by Giovanni Donfrancesco. Broadcasters: ARTE, YLE, SVT, DR, SBS, SF. Festivals : Courmayeur 2011 ; FILAF 2012 ; nomination Globo d'Oro 2012.

***Letters and Revolutions*** by Flavia Castro. Broadcaster: RTP. Theatre release: June 2011. Festivals: Critics Award and Student Jury Prize, Festival de Gramado 2010; Critics Award and Best Documentary Award, Festival de Rio 2010; Best Documentary Award, Festival Biarritz Amérique Latine 2010; Best Film Award, Festival de Punta del Este 2011; Best Investigative Film and Best Film Award in the Portuguese selection, Doclisboa 2011, etc.

***The Place*** by Marie Dumora. Festivals : Cinéma du Réel (Virtual heritage Award), Vilnius 2011 ; FIFE 2012.

***Joann Sfar (Drawings)*** by Mathieu Amalric. Broadcaster: ARTE. Festivals: FIFA 2010 (Creation Award); Nyon, Torino, Doclisboa 2011.

Since 2006 **Estelle Fialon** joined the company to produce documentaries and short films. She works with directors like Mathieu Amalric, Catherine Bernstein, Marie Dumora, Damien Odoul, Delphine & Muriel Coulin...

## **Philippa Kowarsky - Managing Director, Cinephil**

Philippa Kowarsky graduated with an M.A. in Communication Policy Studies at City University of London. She has worked in the Film and Television industry since 1993 in various capacities, including production, development, and sales.

In 1997 Philippa established Cinephil, a sales and co-productions company that is home to numerous independent international productions. Cinephil specializes in bringing prospective partners together and seeing their projects through from inception to completion.

Current films in production include:

**Cathedrals of Culture**, a 3D TV series about the souls of prominent architectural masterpieces. The series is produced by Neue Road Movies, with internationally acclaimed director Wim Wenders serving as executive producer. Wenders will also direct the first episode, about the Philharmonie, home to the Berlin Philharmoniker. Other directors who have confirmed their participation in this project include Michael Madsen, Jiska Rickels, Victor Kossakovsky, Michael Glawogger, Norberto López Amado, and Karim Aïnouz.

**Putin's Olympics**, by Alexander Gentelev, with Saxonia Entertainment (Germany), Sasha Klein Productions (Israel), Satel Films (Austria), and MDR.

**Miss World**, by Cecilia Peck. Produced by Motty Reif, Inbal Lessner, and Cecilia Peck.

**The October War**, by Amit Goren.

**An Inside Joke: How Humor Invented the Jews**, by Jamie Kastner. Produced with Hans Robert Eisenhauer and Cinephil.

Recent films distributed by Cinephil:

**The Gatekeepers**, by Dror Moreh, with Films du Poisson (France) and Cinephil and ARTE France, NDR Germany, IBA Israel, etc. The film had its world premiere at the Jerusalem Film Festival.

**Maori Boy Genius** by Pietra Brettkelly; **One Day after Peace** by Miri Laufer and Erez Laufer; **Love Free or Die** by Macky Alston; **Six Million and One** by David Fischer; **Cinema Jenin** by Marcus Vetter; **Hitler's Children** by Chanoch Zeevi; **My Sweet Canary** by Roy Sher; **Epilogue** by Manno Lanssens; **Somewhere Between** by Linda Goldstein; **Precious Life** by Shlomi Eldar; **A Film Unfinished** by Yael Hersonski; **Budrus** by Julia Bacha; **Thieves by Law** by Alexander Gentelev; **Women of Hamas** by Suha Arraf.

Cinephil is the exclusive representative of documentary films by Amos Gitai.

Cinephil has also co-produced feature films, and distributed them and other features internationally. These include:

**Sweet Mud**, by Dror Shaul (Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, the Crystal Bear at the 2007 Berlin Film Festival, the Audience Award at the Miami Film Festival, and Israeli Academy Award for Best Film 2007.

**Someone to Run With**, based on the novel by David Grossman. Directed by Oded Davidoff. The film featured at the opening night of the Jerusalem Film Festival.

In 2010 together with Alesia Weston, then Associate Director of the Feature Film Program International at the Sundance Institute, the Israeli Film Fund, and the Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts Cinema Project, Philippa Kowarsky co-initiated and formed a screenwriters' lab for select Israeli filmmakers.

Philippa has taught Media at Israel's Open University and at the Management College in Tel Aviv.

### **Producers' contacts**

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**Jerusalem Film Festival**

Posted: Fri., Aug. 31, 2012, 4:14am PT

By JUSTIN CHANG

*Avraham Shalom in "The Gatekeepers"*

A Sony Pictures Classics (in North America) release of a Dror Moreh Prod., Les Films du Poisson, Cinephil production, in co-production with Mac Guff, Wild Heart Prods., Arte France, IBA, NDR, RTBF, with the support of CNC, Media, Region Ile-de-France, Procirep, Angoa, the Ravinovich Foundation for the Arts -- Cinema Project. (International sales: Cinephil, Tel Aviv.) Produced by Dror Moreh, Estelle Fialon, Philippa Kowarsky. Co-producer, Anna Van der Wee. Directed by Dror Moreh.

With: Avraham Shalom, Yaakov Peri, Carmi Gillon, Ami Ayalon, Avi Dichter, Yuval Diskin. (Hebrew dialogue)

**The brutal recent history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rivetingly recounted by some of its most prominent players in "The Gatekeepers." Granted an extraordinary level of access to six former heads of Israel's Shin Bet counterterrorism agency, first-time documaker Dror Moreh achieves a powerful and remarkably clear-eyed assessment of how state-sanctioned violence, whether pre-emptive or retaliatory, has exacted a crippling moral toll on the region and its pursuit of peace. Critical attention and high-profile festival berths should conspire to make the Sony Classics pickup a provocative must-see for the discerning and topically inclined.**



Moreh's coup lies in not only lining up the six men who oversaw Israel's internal intelligence-gathering operations at various intervals from 1980 to the present, but in getting them to speak with such unprecedented and seemingly unguarded candor about their activities. While some of their responses can be dodgy and defensive, overall there's a raw, confessional ruthlessness to the testimony here, a sense that these retired officials have few qualms about acknowledging their miscalculations in a war whose human costs have been incalculable. The potentially controversial consequences of their speaking out, particularly their frank acknowledgment of Shin Bet participation in selective assassinations, remain to be seen.

Former agency heads Avraham Shalom (in charge from 1980-86) and Avi Dichter (2000-06) describe how, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel's efforts to establish military authority over some 1 million Palestinians went almost immediately awry. Mutual mistrust, hostility and language barriers set off a vicious cycle of attacks and counterattacks, corroborated here by fascinating black-and-white archival footage of Israeli soldiers moving through Arab refugee camps. As noted by Yaakov Peri (agency head from 1988-94), the escalation of violence hindered the possibility of peaceful negotiations and resulted in numerous arrests and interrogations by Shin Bet.

While the agency eventually became a well-oiled intelligence machine, it became clear to all involved that gaining a measure of control over the frequency and intensity of terrorist activity didn't solve the essential problem of the occupation. One former head blasts various Israeli prime ministers, from Golda Meir to Menachem Begin, claiming none of them bothered to truly consider the Palestinian half of the equation. Another notes the ineffectual nature of the agency's attempted crackdown, as the onset of the first Intifada in 1987 and arrival of Hamas and Islamic Jihad merely supplanted one form of terrorism with another.

Various interviewees here stress the importance of listening to and cooperating with Palestinian intelligence. To that end, the film's most heart-rending passage addresses the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, which effectively undermined the peace process despite the signing of the Oslo Accords three years earlier. (A bitterly funny moment features TV footage of Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat and Israel prime minister Ehud Barak going through showily deferential "after you" motions at the 2000 Camp David summit.)

While no film from the narrow perspective of Israeli intelligence could purport to offer a thorough view of the conflict, what makes "The Gatekeepers" ultimately so compelling is its pervasive sense of moral ambiguity. Its subjects don't shy away from the troubling implications of counterterrorism, and they're frank in acknowledging the sense of power that accompanies the decision to take enemy lives. The film reinforces this notion with muscular, computer-generated simulations of Shin Bet bombing operations, offering a bird's-eye view of a moving target, which at times lend it the thrust and excitement of a geopolitical thriller.

The audience's moral revulsion is complicated at every turn by the satisfaction these superior tacticians take in a job well done, even the aggressive and widely criticized interrogation techniques employed by former head Carmi Gillon (holding the briefest tenure here, from 1994-96). One of the film's more cold-blooded sequences recalls Shin Bet's 1996 assassination of Hamas engineer Yahya Ayyash, using a cell phone rigged with explosives. Less laudable, logistically if not ethically, was a failed 2003 airstrike on Gaza that could have wiped out Hamas' top leadership, an episode that occasions considerable discussion of collateral damage.

Although the men were interviewed separately, their voices ultimately coalesce into a sustained chorus of despair, decrying the futility of violence as a political imperative and the cruelty and corruption of Israel since the late '60s. At one point, the docu invokes the title of Philip C. Winslow's 2007 book on the conflict, "Victory for Us Is to See You Suffer" -- a chilling reminder that, for all the Israeli forces' superior military resources, the fact that the conflict persists demonstrates the Pyrrhic nature of any victories.

The high-quality archival footage and operation simulations help the talking-head assembly play well on the bigscreen, and a brooding score rounds out the solid tech package.

<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117948142/>



## Telluride Review

5:00 PM PDT 8/31/2012 by Todd McCarthy

Director Dror Moreh's documentary tells the story of Israel's Shin Bet security agency with an inside perspective.

You can scarcely believe what you're hearing and seeing at first: Six former heads of the Shin Bet, Israel's historically secretive internal intelligence agency, telling stories out of school about secret operations, the cultivation of informers, interrogation techniques, targeted assassinations, successes and failures and the dangers posed by the Israeli far-right. The most senior of them, who believes that the future is "bleak," ends by lamenting that the nation's army is now "a brutal occupation force that is similar to the Germans in World War II." In other words, this is one hot, provocative, revelatory and astonishing documentary, one sure to provoke enthralled interest and controversy wherever it is shown worldwide. After initial festival exposure at Telluride, Toronto and New York, Sony Classics will release the film in the United States next year.

Given that the agency's motto is "The Unseen Shield" and that its only publicly known member at any given moment is its director, of whom there have been 13 over the course of Israel's history, one immediate question is: How is it that all these men jointly decided to

spill the beans about so much concerning the organization's operations and methods? A likely answer is that they are alarmed about where things are headed. It's probably no coincidence that four of them — **Ami Ayalon, Avraham Shalom, Yaakov Peri** and **Carmi Gillon** — jointly gave an interview in 2003 warning of “catastrophe” unless a two-state solution to the Palestinian issue was implemented, as the inevitable alternative would be a form of apartheid. They're no happier today.

Cinematographer-turned-director **Dror Moreh** leaves such sentiments for the very end, as he uses the frank and informed views of his seen-it-all participants to assemble a riveting history of a singular organization. Criticized for borderline torture techniques at times and blamed for not preventing the assassination of Prime Minister **Yitzhak Rabin** in 1995, the Shin Bet, ideological issues aside, seems overall to have done an impressive job, especially given that it serves a democracy, of obtaining information and thwarting what is estimated as 90 per cent of attempted terrorist attacks under circumstances as challenging as any in the world.

A key early passage puts the viewer in the position of spymaster. As overhead black-and-white surveillance coverage shows a vehicle allegedly containing terrorists making its way through urban streets, pertinent questions are posed before a decision to attack is made: Do we know who's on board and how many there are? How much time do we have? Will there be any collateral damage? Then a silent explosion is witnessed. A button has been pushed. People are dead. Someone played God.

The historical panorama begins in the aftermath of the Six Day War in 1967, when one million Palestinians came under Israeli control in the West Bank, Gaza and the old city of Jerusalem. Israel quickly took a census, which enabled it to determine who and where everyone was, laying the basis for an excellent list of potential informers. Shin Bet agents were sent in to live among the Palestinians, learned Arabic so well they could tell when code or other evasions were being used and developed a staggering network of agents and prisoners with information.

Mostly black-and-white newsreel footage provides vivid images of Palestinian towns and settlements at the time, of Israeli soldiers rounding up detainees and of the forbidding former Turkish prison in Jerusalem where allegedly “moderate” forms of physical duress kept the intelligence flowing. Even tough old bird Shalom, who headed the agency from 1980-86, adamantly favored a two-state solution from early on, although he was done in when, under his watch, two terrorists were killed by Israeli agents in the wake of a bus hijacking.

Such incidents occasion debates about the legality and morality of killing, both to prevent and punish terrorism and, in a political sense, whether the Shin Bet operated on its own or at the direction of the prime minister. Through it all, the former agency chiefs, who also include **Yuval Diskin** and **Avi Dichter**, evince a profound awareness of these

issues but, more than that, an enlightened pragmatism that, in such a job, must no doubt be applied everyday.

The Shin Bet began showing its weaknesses with the First Intifada in the late 1980s, which caught it unawares, the beginnings of bus bombings and other atrocities, the emergence of the more extreme Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements, which were much tougher to infiltrate than Fatah, and most of all with Rabin's murder, which revealed the threat posed by the Israeli far-right. One fascinating passage describes how the Shin Bet managed to catch right-wingers who were about to blow up 250 Arabs and Palestinians in buses in Jerusalem as well as to bomb the Dome of the Rock, an act which, one says, would have brought all of Islam down upon Israel.

The agency emerged from all this turmoil by shifting its priorities from field operations to hi-tech expertise, which has paid great dividends in fighting terrorism. An amazing interlude describes the 1996 assassination via cell phone of the Shin Bet's number one most wanted at the time, Palestinian bomb maker Yahya Ayyash, while another describes how in 2003 it missed, out of government timidity, nailing about a dozen top terrorists in a single action.

Still, for all the exploits and moments of success, the prevailing tone at the end is one of near-despair over the future of Israel on the part of knowledgeable patriots who have spent their lives manning the ramparts. The climactic comments of all six participants lament weak-willed leadership, an Israel that's become a "police state," and a point at which "We've become...cruel."

Ayalon, who also served as command-in-chief of the navy and member of the Knesset and comes off as the most intellectually exacting of all the participants, sums it up this way: "The tragedy of Israel's public security debate is that we don't realize that we face a frustrating situation, in which we win every battle, but we lose the war."

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/gatekeepers-telluride-review-367230>

## **The New York Times**

By A. O. SCOTT

Published: September 3, 2012

And the best documentary in Telluride this year is also the most bluntly honest. It is "[The Gatekeepers](#)," which consists mostly of the director Dror Moreh's interviews with six former heads of Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service. These men matter-of-factly talk about their work over the past decades, work that encompasses torture, spying and assassination and that includes some devastating failures of intelligence. They also speak frankly about the strategic and political consequences of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in

ways that are unlikely to please or reassure anyone with settled opinions about the Middle East. "The Gatekeepers" is a reminder that sometimes the truth hurts.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/04/movies/four-days-of-films-at-telluride.html?\\_r=4](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/04/movies/four-days-of-films-at-telluride.html?_r=4)

By MANOHLA DARGIS

Published: October 8, 2012

Mesmerizingly cinematic and politically complex, this documentary jaw-dropper movie explores, with depth and nail-biting intensity, Israel's history, present and future through the eyes of six former heads of the internal security agency Shin Bet. It's an elegant weave of talking-head interviews and archival material, including shocking images from counterterrorism missions, but mostly it's an argument for reform coming from six men whose love of their homeland is as naked as their loathing for its politicians.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/09/movies/the-new-york-film-festivals-50th-edition.html?ref=movies>

*"POTENT ENOUGH TO ALTER HOW YOU SEE THE WORLD. RIVETING FROM BEGINNING TO END, IT'S THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A COUNTRY, IF YOU WILL, TOLD BY ULTIMATE INSIDERS."*

—Kenneth Turan, **LOS ANGELES TIMES**

*"IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE A MOVIE ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST THAT COULD BE MORE TIMELY, MORE PAINFULLY URGENT, MORE CHALLENGING TO CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ON ALL SIDES OF THE CONFLICT."* —A.O. Scott, **THE NEW YORK TIMES**

## Los Angeles Times

### Movie review: 'Gatekeepers' a potent profile of Shin Bet leaders

Director Dror Moreh's documentary, featuring former heads of Israel's domestic counterterrorism agency, is more than simply eye-opening.

By Kenneth Turan, Los Angeles Times Film Critic

November 25, 2012, 8:30 p.m.

"We all have our moments," says Yuval Diskin, calm, thoughtful, disturbed. "Maybe you're shaving and you think, 'I make a decision and x number of people are killed.' The power to take lives in an instant, there's something unnatural about it."



The "we" in that compelling statement refers to a very small group of individuals, the men who, like Diskin, have been the heads of Shin Bet, Israel's shadowy, super-secret domestic counterterrorism agency, the men profiled in "The Gatekeepers," a documentary potent enough to alter how you see the world.

Playing for a one-week Oscar qualifying run prior to a 2013 general release, "The Gatekeepers" is a coup for Israeli director Dror Moreh, who did what sounds impossible: He convinced all six living former heads of Shin Bet, the men who ran the agency from 1980 through 2011, to speak publicly for the first time about their work combating violence from both Palestinians and Israelis.

To call the blisteringly candid results eye-opening is not even to scratch the surface.

Riveting from beginning to end, "The Gatekeepers" works in a pair of complementary ways: as a portrait of half a dozen compelling individuals, no two alike, and as a chronological history of the state of Israel from the end of the Six-Day War in 1967 to the present. It's the autobiography of a country, if you will, told by ultimate insiders.

The noteworthy thing about the six is that, though they couldn't be more different — and, in fact, take the occasional sharp jab at each other — they are alike in a number of intriguing ways.

As befits their occupation, these speakers — Avraham Shalom, Yaakov Peri, Carmi Gillon, Ami Avalon, Avi Dichter and Diskin — are somber, serious and highly intelligent. They're impressive commanders who lack neither the confidence nor the nerve to do whatever the situation demands. Yet these men also demonstrate how soul-destroying it can be for moral individuals and societies to cope with situations that almost mandate behavior that may seem amoral or even immoral. Far from being soulless and uncaring, these complete pragmatists agonize over the right and wrong of what they've done even if they feel there was no choice.

Interestingly enough, these six men also share a belief that a Palestinian state should have been a priority, linked to a kind of disdain for Israeli politicians for not doing more to make it happen.

"You knock on doors in the middle of the night, these moments end up etched deep inside you," says Peri. "When you retire, you become a bit of a leftist."

Israel's dilemma began in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, when 1 million Palestinians came under military rule overnight. (Another superb Israeli doc, Ra'anan Alexandrowicz's "The Law in These Parts," explores this phenomenon.)

"When the Arabs surrendered, we had no enemy," recalls Shalom, adding bitingly that when terrorism began, "it was lucky for us: We had work."

Always a controversial figure, even among fellow Shin Bet leaders, Shalom was brought down by 1984's Bus 300 incident. Two Palestinians hijacked the bus from Tel Aviv to Ashkelon. They were captured, interrogated, and then, in an action that caused a huge furor, summarily executed. "We killed them with their hands tied," says Avalon, still furious.

Shalom talks reluctantly about this incident and clearly feels betrayed by the political establishment. But on one point he is immovable: "With terrorists there are no morals," he says. "In the war against terror, forget about morality."

Not all terrorists, the gatekeepers take pains to point out, are Palestinian. In 1984, Shin Bet arrested militants, members of the Gush Emunim West Bank settlers group, who came to be known as the Jewish Underground. These men were caught red-handed placing bombs on Palestinian buses in Jerusalem that would have killed hundreds and had plans to destroy the Dome of the Rock, an act that would have sparked worldwide, violent repercussions. But because of their political connections to the heart of the Israeli

establishment, the perpetrators, much to the gatekeepers' disgust, served minimal prison terms.

Though the spontaneous eruption of 1987's Palestinian Intifada caught the Shin Bet by surprise, it only emphasized the feeling, as Peri puts it, that "we should have reached an agreement and got out."

The only prime minister credited by the Shin Bet leaders with sincerely believing in a Palestinian state was Yitzhak Rabin, who signed the historic Oslo Accords with Yasser Arafat in 1993 that led directly to perhaps the film's most disturbing section, its examination of the murder of Rabin by an Orthodox Jewish assassin.

"The Gatekeepers" uses expertly selected newsreel footage throughout its length to counterpoint its interviews, and this is especially effective in putting on screen the horrific ways settler activists fomented hatred against Rabin. The interviews with Carmi Gillon, who was the head of Shin Bet during this time, are especially wrenching.

"He changed history big time," Gillon says of the assassin. "Until today. It gets worse."

The final section of "The Gatekeepers," entitled "Collateral Damage," deals with James Bond-type Shin Bet missions against Palestinian terrorists and how public revulsion against the killing of innocent bystanders led to Solomonic decisions about the power of a given bomb that have to be heard to be believed.

If "The Gatekeepers" leaves a lasting impression, it is how disillusioned these committed men are about their country's current situation. Diskin, for instance, unequivocally endorses professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz's celebrated prediction that the Palestinian occupation would turn all of Israel into an authoritarian "Shin Bet state."

Even Shalom, who speaks witheringly about the uselessness of morality early in the film, ends with an even more unsettling thought about the Palestinian occupation. "It's a very negative trait we acquired," he says, speaking slowly to allow the words to sink in. "We became cruel."

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-gatekeepers-review20121126,0,2652404.story>

Lisa Schwarzbaum's Top 10 list for Entertainment Weekly!

[http://www.ew.com/ew/gallery/0,,20326356\\_20653400,00.html?stitched#21249855](http://www.ew.com/ew/gallery/0,,20326356_20653400,00.html?stitched#21249855)

One of the top ten movies of 2012 by David Edelstein for Vulture. David Edelstein is a voting member of the NYFCC and the chief film critic for New York Magazine.

<http://www.vulture.com/2012/11/david-edelstein-top-ten-movies.html>