

Synopsis
The Billboard From Bethlehem

The Billboard from Bethlehem, a one-hour documentary Bruce A. Barrett, a billboard company owner turned film maker, writer and director, was named best documentary at the ReelHeART International Film Festival (RHIFF), last June in Toronto, Canada, and made its Israeli premier as part of the Tel Aviv Spirit Film Festival last September. It's garnered several awards since then, and has been making the rounds among church groups and other organizations that push for peace.

The documentary stars The Combatants For Peace, a coalition of former Israeli Defense Force Fighters and Palestinian Resistance fighters committed to nonviolent action and an end to the 40-year occupation of the West Bank.

The film tells the story of Barrett, an American billboard company owner, who convinces Israeli and Palestinian fighters — The Combatants for Peace — to recruit Israeli and Palestinian children to paint a giant peace mural billboard inside the West Bank of Palestine.

The completed sign then travels to a mosque, a synagogue and a church before being posted on a busy American highway. The film offers insight into the history of the conflict, the dynamics of the fighting, and a vision for a just and lasting peace, its promoters said.

The film opens as Elik Elhanan, an Israeli soldier, tells of the murder of his 14-year-old sister by Palestinian suicide bombers. Compounding the tragedy is the news from Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian fighter, as he recalls the murder of his daughter by Israeli soldiers on patrol outside her school in the West bank.

Enters Barrett, the co-owner of Barrett Outdoor Communications Inc., whose contact with Combatants for Peace inspires a vision to paint a billboard and make a film inside the West Bank.

The documentary then weaves a tale of billboard design with eight combatants' stories of personal transformation: How they grew up, how they engaged in violent action against their enemy, and how they became soldiers of nonviolence.