

CONTACT

Donna Hardwick, ITVS 415-356-8383 donna.hardwick@itvs.org
Mary Lugo 770-623-8190 lugo@negia.net
Cara White 843-881-1480 cara.white@mac.com

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***Forever Pure* Premieres on *Independent Lens*
Monday, May 15, 2017 on PBS**

Online Streaming Begins May 16

**Israeli Soccer Club Fans Wage a Racist Campaign to Keep
Their Team Free of Arab Players**



Credit: Bernat Armangué

(San Francisco, CA) — Beitar Jerusalem Football Club, formed in 1936, is the most popular and controversial soccer team in Israel, a symbol of right-wing politics and the only club in the Premier League never to sign an Arab player. Midway through the 2012-13 season a secretive transfer by the owner, Russian-Israeli oligarch Arcadi Gaydamak, brought two Muslim players from Chechnya onto the team. A powerful bloc of Beitar fans, known as La Familia, began a racist campaign against the two Muslim players, the team’s management, and any player who supported them. Spewing hate-filled chants and unfurling banners reading “Forever Pure. No Arabs,” they created a national scandal that sent the team spiraling out of control.

Directed by Maya Zinshtein, *Forever Pure* examines the clash between personal identity, politics, money and sports, and explores how racism has the potential to destroy not only a team but an entire society. The film premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, May 15, 2017, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

For more than two decades, right-wing Israeli leaders have known that the road to victory passes through Teddy Stadium, home of Beitar Jerusalem Football Club. For years, they have sat in the East Stands, listening to La Familia chant “death to Arabs.” Beitar owner Arcadi Gaydamak spent millions to finance the club’s radical fan base, hoping to use their rabid loyalty to become Mayor of Jerusalem. To many of those fans Beitar is much more than their home club — it’s their identity, along with the racism they embrace. But Gaydamak’s bid for election fails.

Several years after losing, Gaydamak sends the Beitar squad on an unexpected tour of Chechnyan capital Grozny. One month later, he agrees to the secretive transfer of two Muslim players to Beitar Jerusalem.

Pandemonium erupts as the two young Muslim newcomers are splashed across the news media. Reviled and booed by fans, Sadaev and Kadiev find themselves surrounded by bodyguards and locked in a hotel for their safety. The team goes from the euphoria of being in first place and on track to win the championship, to losing every game as soon as the Chechens arrive. At the end of the tempestuous season, a broken and defeated Beitar Jerusalem bows to the will of its fans, purging the club of not only the two Muslim teammates but all those who supported them.

“Using a winning Israeli soccer team as her Trojan horse, Maya takes us inside the disturbing and



sometimes violent reality of national pride taken to extremes,” said Lois Vossen, executive producer of *Independent Lens*. “*Forever Pure* asks us to look at what can happen when we have zero tolerance for people with different religious beliefs. Is it patriotism or the opposite of democracy?”

Visit the [Forever Pure](#) page on *Independent Lens*, which features more information about the film. *Forever Pure* will be available for online viewing on the site beginning May 16, 2017.

About the Filmmaker

Maya Zinshtein (Director/Producer) is an Israeli filmmaker and journalist who emigrated from Russia during her childhood and now lives in Tel Aviv. She holds a BA in Cinema and French studies, and an MA in Security and Diplomacy from Tel Aviv University. She has produced several documentaries, including *Thieves by Law*, directed by Alexander Gentelev (ARTE/ZDF), the inside story of the Russian Mafia; and *Operation Successor*, also directed by Gentelev (Channel 1 Israel), about the 2008 presidential elections in Russia. As an investigative journalist for *Haaretz* newspaper she’s covered many of the ills of Israeli society and directed investigative stories for Israeli television channels.

CREDITS

Directed & Produced by	Maya Zinshtein
Produced by	Geoff Arbourne
Executive Producers	John Battsek Nicole Stott
Edited by	Justine Wright Noam Amit
Co-Produced by	Alan Maher Torstein Grude
Director of Photography	Sergei (Israel) Freedman
Cinematography by	Yaniv Linton
	Ross McDonnell
Music by	Stephen Rennicks

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens