

# PRESS KIT

**A documentary film by JWM Productions, LLC**

**Directed by Rachel Goslins**

**Produced by Jason Williams, William Morgan,  
Rachel Goslins and Christine S. Romero**

**Music by Philip Glass**

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**[besathepromise.com/press](http://besathepromise.com/press)**

# AWARDS



# FILM FESTIVALS AND SCREENINGS



At the Washington Jewish Film Festival, film subject Johanna Neumann talks about life in Albania during the Holocaust, with Producer Jason Williams, Director Rachel Goslins, Producer/Editor Christine S. Romero

## 2017

### FEBRUARY

Temple Beth Elohim

### MARCH

Woodlands Community Temple  
Rehoboth Beach

### APRIL

Community Synagogue of Rye  
Temple Sinai

### MAY

Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia

### JUNE

Central Queens Y

### AUGUST

Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia  
Temple Israel (Memphis, TN)

### SEPTEMBER

University of Arizona

### DECEMBER

National Council of Jewish Women, Peninsula  
Section

## 2018

### FEBRUARY

Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center

### APRIL

Congregation Beth Ohr

### MAY

Memphis Jewish Community Center

To arrange a screening at your festival, school, or organization, contact [besa@jwmprods.com](mailto:besa@jwmprods.com)

# PREVIOUS YEARS

## Film Festivals and Screenings 2016

Kansas City Jewish Film Festival  
Austin Film Festival  
HOME (UK)  
Menorah Film Club (Manchester, England)  
Temple Israel (Massachusetts)  
Temple Beth Am (Massachusetts)  
North Shore Jewish Center  
Loyola Balkan-American Club  
University of Winnipeg  
Temple Beth Hatfiloh (Washington)  
Jewish Film Festival of Sarasota-Manatee  
Albanian-American Islamic Center  
Harvard (sponsored by the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program, Harvard Hillel, and the Center for Jewish Studies)  
Jewish Heritage Museum  
University of Kansas Hillel  
Temple Beth Hatfilo  
Kaplen JCC  
New Brunswick Islamic Center  
Lakeview Schools  
  
Temple Hatikva  
Jacksonville  
The Astor Room  
University of Utrecht  
Temple Israel Adult Education  
DePaul University  
Princeton Book Club  
Falmouth Jewish Film Series  
Bet Am Shalom Synagogue  
St. Paul United Church  
Notre Dame de Namur  
Shalom Film Festival (Indonesia)  
Hadassah of Indonesia  
Center for Religious Dialogue, Stockholm  
Sinai Free Synagogue  
Brown University  
Congregation Ohev Shalom  
Temple Israel

## Film Festivals and Screenings 2015

Wimbledon Film Club  
3 Faith Forum  
Broadway Cinema (United Kingdom)  
George Mason University  
Harrow Day Limmud  
Jewish Holocaust Centre (Australia)  
Congregation Beth Torah  
Cherry Hill Volvo Jewish Film Festival  
Agudath Israel  
JCC Manhattan  
Chester Beatty Library (Ireland)  
Hampton Synagogue  
Omaha Jewish Community Center  
Holocaust Memorial Center (Macedonia)  
Or Shalom Film Society (Canada)  
Jewish Arts & Film Festival (Stamford, CT)  
White Memorial Presbyterian Church (Raleigh, NC)  
FFF Holocaust Education Center (Canada)  
University of Agder (Norway)  
Bradford National Media Museum (UK)



**“This documentary is irreplaceable in order to show the values and virtues of our nation.”**

**~ Prime Minister Sali Berisha**

# PREVIOUS YEARS

## Film Festivals and Screenings 2014

Mobile Jewish Federation  
Pinner Synagogue  
Virginia Peninsula Jewish Film Festival  
Edinburgh Filmhouse Holocaust Memorial  
Central Massachusetts Jewish Film Festival  
Bristol Multifaith Forum's Holocaust Memorial  
Denver Baha'i Center  
Cincinnati Jewish & Israeli Film Festival  
Greensboro JF Film Festival  
Rutgers Center for Middle Eastern Studies  
Christ the King School  
Dallas Holocaust Museum  
Islamic Center of Boston  
Holocaust Film Series  
Geneva International Jewish Film Festival  
Peace Islands Institute  
Foundation for Intercultural Dialogue  
Nashville Film Festival  
Betham Jewish Film Series  
New Jersey Jewish Film Festival  
Detroit Holocaust Memorial Center  
Jewish Federation of Reading  
Center Street Cinema  
Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County  
Agudas Israel Synagogue  
World Without Genocide  
John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University  
St. John's Episcopal Church & the Center for Religious Understanding  
Reel & Meal  
Jackson Shalom Club  
CSU Fresno  
30 Days of Peace Alpena  
Reel Civil Rights Film Festival  
Macalester College  
Albanian Film Festival  
Film Festival of Western Connecticut  
Utopia Film Festival  
JW3 Jewish Community Centre London  
Osher Marin JCC  
Center for Interfaith Cooperation

## Film Festivals and Screenings 2013

Washington Jewish Film Festival  
Miami Jewish Film Festival  
Atlanta Jewish Film Festival  
Denver Jewish Film Festival  
Beaufort International Film Festival  
Atlanta Jewish Film Festival  
Seattle Jewish Film Festival  
Houston Jewish Film Festival  
Ventura County Jewish Film Festival  
East Bay International Jewish Film Festival  
Pioneer Valley Jewish Film Festival  
Jewish Film Festival of Eastern Connecticut  
Jewish Motifs International Film Festival  
Lenore Marwil Jewish Film Festival.  
South East European Film Festival  
Jüdisches Filmfestival Berlin & Potsdam  
Ann Katz Film Festival  
Edmonton Jewish Film Festival  
Portland Jewish Film Festival  
Dallas Jewish Film Festival  
Youngstown Jewish Film Festival  
2013 Jewish Eye Film Festival, Israel Premiere  
Bucharest Jewish Film Festival  
Holocaust Center Kristallnacht Memorial  
Rutgers Jewish Film Festival  
Florida Atlantic University  
UK Jewish Film Festival

## Film Festivals and Screenings 2012

USHMM Screening for Prime Minister Sali Berisha  
San Francisco Jewish Film Festival  
Islamic Society of North America Film Festival  
Heartland Film Festival  
Aspen Film Fest  
Calgary Jewish Film Festival  
13th Festival of Albanian Film

## TECHNICAL INFO

86 minutes, Color/B&W, English w/subtitles, USA 2012  
Exhibition Format: HDcam, HDcamSR, Blu-Ray, Stereo and Dolby E  
Production Format: HD 1080p

## SYNOPSIS – VERY SHORT

Sixty years after the war, a Muslim Albanian must fulfill a promise made to the Jewish family his father rescued during the Holocaust.

## SYNOPSIS – MEDIUM

**BESA: The Promise** is the never-before-told story of Albania – a small European country which opened its borders to shelter Jewish refugees, even as it endured a brutal Nazi occupation. It's witnessed through the prism of two men joined together in a remarkable and unexpected quest: Norman H. Gershman, a renowned Jewish-American photographer determined to record the bravery and compassion of the Albanians; and Rexhep Hoxha, a Muslim-Albanian toy shop owner who sets out to return three precious books to the last surviving member of the Jewish family his father sheltered sixty years before. When these two men meet, an extraordinary and utterly unexpected personal drama is set in motion – one that bridges generations and religions...uniting fathers and sons...Muslims and Jews.

## SYNOPSIS – LONG

More than seven years in the making, **BESA: The Promise** is the untold story of the men and women of Albania – almost all of them Muslims – who faced down the Nazis armed only with their traditional honor code of *besa* and saved the lives of nearly two thousand Jews.

This tale of heroism was nearly lost forever in the communist decades that followed World War II.

It's a story that's brought to light through the contemporary prism of two men joined together in a remarkable and unexpected quest.

One is Norman H. Gershman, a renowned Jewish-American photographer who is determined to record the bravery and compassion of the Albanians. The other is Rexhep Hoxha, a shopkeeper from Tirana, Albania, who asks Norman to help him locate a Jewish family his Muslim parents sheltered during the war. This family, he tells Norman, entrusted his father with three Hebrew books, books that – under the ancient Albanian code of *besa* – must now be returned.

The journey that unfolds is extraordinary. With its thoroughly researched history and its profoundly emotional storytelling style, **BESA: The Promise** challenges some of the most fundamental assumptions about the presumed enmity between Islam and Judaism and eloquently reminds us of the power of good people to transform the way we view our world.

Shot in Albania, Bulgaria, Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States, the documentary features in-depth interviews with survivors and rescuers, never-before-seen archival footage, an exquisite series of animations, and a powerful and moving original score by one of America's foremost living composers, Mr. Philip Glass.

**BESA: The Promise** was underwritten by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Financial supporters include the Eye Contact Foundation, JWM Productions, the Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation and the Righteous Persons Foundation.

**“Through the eyes of Norman H. Gershman, we can see that beyond our individual identities and desires, there is a common core of self, an essential humanity whose nature is peace, whose expression is thought, and whose action is unconditional love.”**

**~ Madame Jehan Sadat**



## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

Working on this film for the past 5 years has been a journey that has affirmed my faith in human decency and courage, albeit one with some unexpected turns in the road and a nerve-wracking home stretch. With the magnetic Norman Gershman as our guide and our muse, we started out making a film about a forgotten history of interfaith friendship and bravery, interviewing WWII survivors from Albania about their past. Along the way we stumbled across Rexhep Hoxha and were pulled decisively into the present by his modern-day quest.

Going from a historical story to a vérité one is not without its dangers. We followed our hearts – and Rexhep – without really knowing whether there would be an ending to our film. By the final days of shooting, as Rexhep moved towards the unknowable culmination of his decades-long search, we were as nervous and invested as he was. The film had become almost incidental to the larger responsibility of bearing witness to the sacrifice and dedication of Rexhep, his family and all of the people who trusted us with their stories along the way. What happened next left all of us breathless.

This film represents the reason I make documentaries. I could not have scripted anything remotely this moving and profound. The fact that Rexhep's story not only really happened, but that we had the privilege to discover and document it is one of those rare gifts from the documentary gods for which I will be forever grateful.

**~ Rachel Goslins**



**Director Rachel Goslins with  
Director of Photography Neil Barrett  
and Norman H. Gershman**



# CREATIVE TEAM

## JWM Productions, LLC

JWM Productions specializes in innovative, immersive and character-driven films and storytelling. Started in 1996 by two multiple Emmy Award-winning filmmakers, Jason Williams and Bill Morgan, JWM Productions has made over 300 hours of thought-provoking and engaging television series, docu-soaps, specials, shorts, ob-docs, commercials and documentary films.

Today, JWM ranks among the world's leading independent producers of factual entertainment.

### Jason Williams – Producer



Jason Williams is the multiple Emmy Award-winning President and co-founder of JWM Productions, LLC. His films have engaged such diverse subjects as marine technology, ancient history, current affairs, natural history and anthropology. His productions have taken him to more than forty countries, six continents and several war zones.

He has been published on the OpEd page of the *New York Times*, profiled in the journal *Current Anthropology*, and featured – for his documentation of archaeological sites in post-invasion Iraq – on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*.

### William Morgan – Producer



Bill Morgan is the Managing Director and co-founder of JWM Productions. In the last sixteen years, he has executive produced more than 200 hours of documentary programming that, collectively, have aired on almost all major US and overseas cable and broadcast networks. He first partnered with Jason Williams on the landmark series, *Time Life's Lost Civilizations*, which won the 1996 Primetime Emmy Award for Factual Programming.

Bill Morgan's prior work experience was gained in The National Geographic Society's television division. While at National Geographic, he worked on over 100 segments for National Geographic *Explorer* and on National Geographic Specials for PBS and NBC.



### **Rachel Goslins – Director, Producer**

Rachel Goslins' most recent feature documentary, *'Bama Girl*, premiered at SXSW in 2008 and aired on IFC. Her first short film, *Onderduiken*, was about her family's history in Holland hiding from the Nazis during WWII. She has made films for National Geographic, Discovery, PBS, A&E and History. She was also the Director of the Independent Digital Distribution Lab, a joint PBS/ITVS project focused on distributing independent films online.

Rachel is presently Executive Director of the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities.

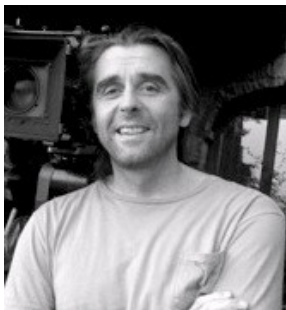
### **Christine S. Romero – Editor, Producer**



Christine S. Romero is the Editor and Producer of **BESA: The Promise**. Her film career spans more than three decades. Credits include award-winning independent documentary films and programs for PBS, NBC-TV, Discovery, National Geographic Channel, History and multiple international networks. In addition, she has edited and produced for organizations including the National Park Service, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and many others. Among awards for editing are several Cine Golden Eagles and the International Television Association

award for Best Editing (*Remembering Manzanar*).

### **Neil Barrett – Director of Photography**



Neil Barrett is a British cinematographer who has worked on over thirty broadcast documentary films for National Geographic, BBC, PBS, Discovery, History, NBC, ABC and CNN. His work has won several awards, including a Columbia Dupont award for excellence in journalism and the Edward R. Murrow award for a documentary on the civil war in Liberia. His films have been shown at the Sundance, Tribeca, Toronto, Fullframe, SilverDocs, Jackson Hole and Los Angeles Film Festivals. Two of his feature documentaries – *Kicking it* (2008) and *Everything's Cool* (2007) – have been released theatrically in the United States.

## Philip Glass – Composer



Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Philip Glass is a graduate of the University of Chicago and the Juilliard School. In the early 1960s, Glass spent two years of intensive study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and while there, earned money by transcribing Ravi Shankar's Indian music into Western notation. By 1974, Glass had a number of innovative projects, creating a large collection of new music for The Philip Glass Ensemble, and for the Mabou Mines Theater Company. This period culminated in *Music in Twelve Parts*, and the landmark opera, *Einstein on the Beach*, for which he collaborated with Robert Wilson. Since *Einstein*, Glass has expanded his repertoire to include music for opera, dance, theater, chamber ensemble, orchestra, and film.

His scores have received Academy Award nominations (*Kundun*, *The Hours*, *Notes on a Scandal*) and a Golden Globe (*The Truman Show*). *Symphony No. 7* and *Symphony No. 8*—Glass' latest symphonies—along with *Waiting for the Barbarians*, an opera based on the book by J.M. Coetzee, premiered in 2005. In the past few years several new works were unveiled, including *Book of Longing* (Luminato Festival) and an opera about the end of the Civil War entitled *Appomattox* (San Francisco Opera). The English National Opera, in conjunction with the Metropolitan Opera, performed Glass' *Satyagraha* in London, April 2007, and the Metropolitan Opera presented the work in April 2008. Glass' latest opera Kepler premiered with the Landestheater Linz, Austria in September 2009 and he is currently working on an opera about Walt Disney that will premiere at the Teatro Real in Madrid in 2013.

His *Symphony #9* was completed in 2011 and received its premiere in Linz, Austria on January 1, 2012 by the Bruckner Orchestra with a subsequent U.S. premiere in New York at Carnegie Hall on January 31, 2012 as part of the composer's 75th birthday celebration. *Symphony #10* has been completed this spring and will receive its European premiere in France in the summer of 2012.

## Tom Schmidt – Art Director



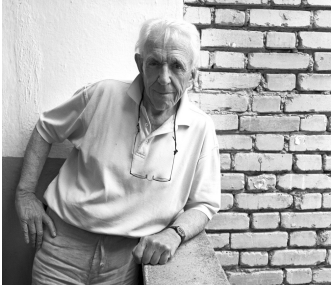
Tom Schmidt is Art and Animation Director for Percolate Digital. He and his wide and varied crew have created unique and memorable animation and VFX for everyone from Discovery Channel to ESPN to Imagine Entertainment.

Before that, Tom shepherded the world's first digital delivery of news graphics for television stations around the world, as Graphics Director for Associated Press Television. He has won numerous awards.

Currently (and usually), he is somewhere in the hills, pedaling his bicycle.

## MAIN CHARACTERS

### Norman H. Gershman



Norman Gershman (b: 1932) is an American fine-art photographer. In 2002, Norman first heard the unique story of Albanian bravery during WWII: that the entire country, including the government, refused to collaborate with the Nazis, even while under brutal occupation. To share this story with the world, Norman established the Eye Contact Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation promoting peace and unity, and serves as its Executive Director. His book of portraits of Righteous Albanians, *BESA: Muslims Who Saved Jews In WWII*, was published in 2008.

### Rexhep Hoxha



Rexhep Hoxha (b: 1950) lives in Albania's capital city of Tirana with his wife Bardha, son Ermal and daughter Romira, and owns a small toy store. His father sheltered the Aladjem family for 14 months during WWII, and promised to safeguard their Hebrew prayer books until they could be returned. Rexhep's quest to fulfill his father's *besa* (promise) brings a contemporary twist to the telling of Albania's remarkable history in rescuing Jews in WWII.

## RESCUERS

### Verushe Babani

Verushe was sixteen when the Jewish family came to stay with hers. She remembers her mother asking her father about his new winter coat. "He had given it to the Jewish man." Such generosity was typical of her Muslim family, but also of Albanians. "That's how they were. Everybody did it."

### Mehmet Frasheri

In May of 1943, Mehmet was a young man of 18 years. His life was far from that of a carefree teenager – the Nazis occupied his country, Albania. And yet he didn't hesitate to take charge of the Jewish family a villager pointed out to him. "The person told my father he was a Jew and didn't know where to hide. 'Come in' my father said."

### Orhan Frasheri

During the war, Orhan was a partisan who fought against the Nazi occupation. He attributes his family's willingness to shelter the Jewish families to the Albanian code of honor, *besa*. "There's a saying that an Albanian would rather sacrifice his son, than break his *besa*."

### **Vehbi Hoti**

Vehbi Hoti was six years old when Nazi trucks rumbled into his family's compound in Shkodra, Albania, intending to set up a garrison there. Shortly after, his father agreed to shelter a young Jewish girl despite the danger. The family treated her as a daughter, dressed her in traditional clothes and gave her a Muslim name. "There is an Albanian expression: *Ne bese tana* – under your given promise. Your life is in my hands."

### **Myzafer and Luleta Kazazi**

Myzafer and Luleta are siblings from a large Albanian family. Incredibly, their neighbors knew about the Jewish refugees the Kazais sheltered, sometimes assisting in hiding them as the Nazis made random sweeps through the neighborhood. The differences between the religions were never an issue, Myzafer says. "The Marvelous Allah wants people to love each other."

### **Edip Pilku**

Edip was twelve when the Jewish family came to stay in his home. The Nazis came to search the Pilku home – twice – and Edip's mother stared them down. "My mother said, 'I don't know any Jews, so you are wasting your time here and if you come here again I'll complain.' They saluted her and left."

### **Hamid & Xhemal Veseli**

Hamid, Xhemal and their older brother Refik share the distinction of having their names inscribed on the wall of Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for their roles in rescuing Jews during WWII. They quote an Albanian proverb, "Our home is our guest's house, then our house, but above all, it is God's House."

### **Leka I Zogu**

The son of King Zog grew up hearing of his father's heroism on behalf of the Jews, but knew few details. Typically modest, the Albanian king didn't talk about what he did. Everyone – Muslim, Christian and Orthodox – collectively agreed to save the Jews. That their Muslim King opened their borders to Jewish refugees is a source of great pride.

## **SURVIVORS**

### **Jasa Altarac**

In April of 1941, seven year-old Jasa Altarac and his family fled Sarajevo, Yugoslavia for Albania where they were sheltered by the Albanian families until the end of the war. In 1992, Jasa petitioned Yad Vashem to have the Toptani and Frasher families listed as Righteous Among the Nations. "There is a sense of gratitude that I owe to these people. The Albanians are good people."

### **Yeoshua Baruchowic**

As the Nazi forces rolled through Pristina, Yugoslavia, Yeoshua felt sick with fear. "I did not want to die. I had to get away." He fled to Albania, and was almost immediately surrounded by German forces. Escaping into the woods, he was discovered by an Albanian tavern owner. "He said, '*besa, besa.*' He would come back for me." The tavern owner got the soldiers drunk and sent them on their way. Yeoshua became a partisan and spent the rest of the war fighting alongside his Albanian rescuers.

### **Aron Etrogy**

Aron was a boy of ten when his family fled Sofia, Bulgaria for Tirana. His memories of the time in Albania are harshly marked by the brutality of the Nazi occupation. He saw things no child should ever see and suffered deeply, telling no one – not even his own family – until interviewed for our documentary.

### **Rashela Lazar**

Rashela was sixteen years old when her family fled Pristina, Yugoslavia for Albania. Separated from her parents and sisters, she spent the war living with a family whose compound was occupied by Nazis. “The floor was wooden and there was a crack between the planks. From upstairs I saw there were Germans downstairs. And I was scared to death.” In 1994, she petitioned Yad Vashem to have the Hoti family declared Righteous among the Nations for having protected her.

### **Rina Mandil Nahum**

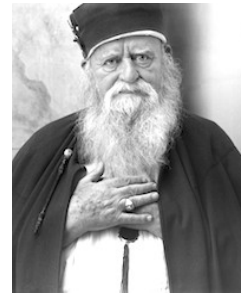
In April 1941, two-year old Rina, her brother and parents fled the Nazis in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. They were caught in Pristina and put in prison. The Italians allowed them to leave in 1942, and they fled to Albania, where the Veseli family sheltered them. “They took such a big risk to hide us. They simply extended their hearts.” In 1987, Rina and her brother petitioned Yad Vashem to declare the Veseli family Righteous Among the Nations.

### **Johanna Gerechter Neumann**

Johanna was a girl of eight when her family fled Hamburg, Germany in 1939. She spent the rest of the war being sheltered in Albania. “Albania and Denmark are the only two countries where the government actively helped the individuals to save Jews. The government did not collaborate with the Germans.” In 1997, Johanna petitioned Yad Vashem to have the Pilku family declared Righteous Among the Nations, and she has attended dozens of screenings of **BESA: The Promise** to spread the message of the film. Today, Johanna volunteers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and has written a memoir, [Via Albania](#).

**“I hope that these photos and their stories become widely known. They offer hope for a future in which Muslims and Jews can overcome their conflicts and focus on their common humanity.”**

**~ President Jimmy Carter**



## ADVISORY BOARD

**BESA: The Promise** attracted some of the leading scholars in religious studies, history and anthropology to its Board of Advisors:

Ambassador Akbar Ahmed.....Chair of Islamic Studies, American University

Dr. Janusz Bugajski.....Director of the New European Democracies Project, CSIS

Dr. John Esposito.....Director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University

Dr. Nancy Lutkehaus.....Chair, Department of Anthropology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Dr. Mordecai Paldiel.....Former Director, Righteous Among the Nations Department, Yad Vashem

Dr. Emad El-Din Shahin.....Professor of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding, University of Notre Dame

Dr. Graham Townsley.....Managing Director, Shining Red Productions, PhD Social Anthropology

Prof. Petrit Zorba.....Chairman, Albania-Israel Friendship Society, Tirana, Albania

**“The film testifies to a historic affinity of Muslims and Jews which has been substantially forgotten against the backdrop of contemporary politics. This documentary can therefore be a significant tool in overcoming those contemporary misunderstandings and prejudices.”**

**Rabbi David Rosen**



## ANCILLARY ACTIVITIES AND PROMOTION

Advance word of **BESA: The Promise** grows as it is readied for distribution to US and international markets and film festivals.

Beginning in 2007, short excerpts from **BESA: The Promise** – together with Norman H. Gershman's photographs – have been showcased at a number of important venues worldwide. These include Yad Vashem and the Knesset in Israel; the United Nations' Headquarters in New York City; and the European Union Headquarters in Strasbourg, France. (By 2012 more than 100 exhibitions of Mr. Gershman's work – each including sequences from the film – will have opened in the US, the UK, Israel, Italy, Albania, South Africa and Canada.)

A companion book of Norman H. Gershman's photographs, ***BESA: Muslims Who Saved Jews In WWII***, was published in 2008 by Syracuse University Press.

The **BESA** project has been the subject of multiple features in such outlets as Voice of America, NPR, CBS, Al Jazeera, Emel Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, the Jerusalem Post and The New York Times and CNN Sunday Morning.

In April 2012, a preview of the documentary held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC honoring the visit of the Prime Minister of Albania, Sali Berisha. On Capitol Hill, Rep. Eliot L. Engel and Rep. Mark Steven Kirk singled out our film for their support and we also received the full backing of the offices of Hannah Rosenthal (the State Department's Special Envoy to Combat Anti-Semitism) and Farah Anwar Pandith (the State Department's Special Representative to Muslim Communities).

The San Francisco Jewish Film Festival hosted the premiere of the film in July 2012. As word of mouth grew from earlier packed screenings, the final run at the festival sold out.

The Islamic Society of North America selected the film for screening at their August 2012 annual convention in Washington, DC, and invited the Holocaust Museum and Johanna Neumann to hold a Q&A after the film.

**BESA: The Promise** was an official selection of both the Aspen Filmfest and the Heartland Film Festival, held in October 2012. The film received a Special Jury Award from the 13<sup>th</sup> Festival of Albanian film at its international premiere, held in Tirana, Albania in November 2012. It was also screened at the Calgary Jewish Film Festival in November 2012.

In 2013, **BESA: The Promise** was not only selected for 27 film festivals, but it took home five awards, including both a "Best Documentary" and "Best Director" award from the acclaimed Beaufort International Film Festival. It was also awarded "Best Documentary" at the 2013 Jewish Eye Film Festival, where it made its Israel premiere, and at the Seattle Jewish Film Festival and the Washington Jewish Film Festival.

2014 promises to be an even bigger year for the **BESA** project. In a few short months, the number of screenings has surpassed the entirety of 2013, and it has made several major premieres. The film made its arthouse theater premiere at Center Street Cinema, a new theater in Utah.

The Holocaust Film Series not only selected it for its Australian premiere, but invited it back for an encore screening.



On Easter weekend, **BESA: The Promise** made its Tennessee premiere at the Nashville Film Festival, and received the Grand Jury Award for documentaries.

The film made its Swiss premiere at the Geneva International Jewish Film Festival, and it is scheduled to tour the country with Norman Gershman's exhibit, hosted by the Friends of Yad Vashem.

Press coverage of the **BESA** project has also been significant. Links to this coverage follow on the next pages.

**"The tradition of *besa*, is powerful, meaningful, and ever so appropriate for the current obstacles to peace that we face today."**

**~ Representative Tom Lantos**





## MEDIA OUTREACH INDEX

(online press kit includes hyperlinks)

### Social Media



[besathepromise.com](http://besathepromise.com)



[youtube.com/besathepromise](http://youtube.com/besathepromise)



[facebook.com/besathepromise](https://facebook.com/besathepromise)



[@BesaThePromise](https://twitter.com/BesaThePromise)



[vimeo.com/besathepromise](https://vimeo.com/besathepromise)



[pinterest.com/besathepromise](https://pinterest.com/besathepromise)



[besathepromise.tumblr.com](https://besathepromise.tumblr.com)

### Film Reviews & Coverage

[Huffington Post Arts](#) : “a story like no other”

[Jewish Post and Opinion](#) : “highly recommend”

[Aspen Times](#) : “a reminder of the good and righteous in people”

[CNN Newsroom](#) : “Albanian Honor Code Saves Jews in WWII”

[CNN Belief Blog](#) : “a lesson in interfaith cooperation”

[Alternet](#) : “forgotten ties and honor”

[JWeekly](#) : “riveting, revelatory and profound”

[Around The Block](#) : “absolute must see”

[San Francisco Chronicle](#) : “almost impossible to keep from crying”

[Balkan Insight](#) : “a story of human values”

[Sephardic Horizons](#) : “will restore one's faith in the power of good in human nature”

[Worcester Telegram](#): “a triumph of humanity”

[The Nation](#): “a true and untold story”

[Nashville Film Festival](#): “an inspiring work that sheds light on one of the darkest events in human history”

[Every Film](#): “shows humanity at its finest”

[Lowbacca](#): “this is one set of stories whose time is long overdue”

[Alpena News](#): “an amazing story that shows what the goodness of people can do “

[American Thinker](#): “ultimately joyful”

[Greenbelt News Review](#): “films such as Besa... remind us to celebrate our common humanity, our creativity and our complex world”

[Amos Lassen](#): “...the film challenges some of the most fundamental assumptions about the way that Jews and Muslims get along.”

[Big Movie Reviews](#): “Besa: The Promise reveals the courage and generosity of Albanians...”

[Age of the Geek](#): “It is a story about faith surviving adversity...”

[Living Through the Arts](#): “...a profoundly moving and authentic piece of art...”

## **News Outlets**

[Albania News: BESA - La Promessa](#)  
[BBC: Besa exhibition remembers Muslims who protected Jews](#)  
[CBC Radio: Albania's Besa](#)  
[CBS News: The Righteous](#)  
[Christian Science Monitor: Albania's Untold Story](#)  
[CNN: BeliefBlog - Albanian Muslims Saved Jews from Nazis](#)  
[HuffingtonPost: Righteous Among Nations - Muslims who save Jews from the Holocaust](#)  
[IslamTimes.org: Besa - When Muslims Saved Jews](#)  
[Jerusalem Post: Muslim Saviors](#)  
[JewishInfoNews: How Muslims saved Jewish lives during the Holocaust](#)  
[John Batchelor Radio Interview](#)  
[New York Times: Around Town - Norman Gershman in Conversation](#)  
[NPR: The Muslims Who Saved Jews](#)  
[Pittsburgh Tribune: Besa Exhibit](#)  
[Radio Free Europe: Besa Exhibit opens in Pristina](#)  
[StLouisPublicRadio: Interview with Norman Gershman](#)  
[The Jewish Chronicle Online: Muslim Heroes of the Holocaust](#)  
[The Muslim Observer: Houston Besa Exhibit](#)  
[VOA: Muslims Save Jews in Untold WWII Story](#)  
[WashPost: The Faith Divide - When Muslims Saved Jews](#)  
[WSJ: "God's House" Chronicles Muslims who saved Jews](#)  
[Jewish News One: Interview with Jason Williams](#)  
[Wicked Local](#)  
[Saudi Aramco World](#)  
[Ensuring the Holocaust Never Happens Again – SwissInfo](#)  
[The Jerusalem Post: UK Faith leaders sign anti-hate declaration during screening of \*BESA: The Promise\*](#)  
[Winnipeg Free Press](#)  
[Flatland KC](#)  
[Cape Gazette](#)

## **Features**

[Diplomat Online: Muslims who saved Jews](#)  
[Emel: When Muslims Saved Jews](#)  
[Australian Albanian Islamic Society](#)

## **Blogs**

[Inside Islam: Islam, Besa and Pastunwali: A Seamless Integration](#)  
[JewishWeekly.com: Ode to Albanian Heroes](#)  
[MuslimPresence.com: Besa - Muslims Who Saved Jews](#)  
[Positive Islam Blog: Muslims Who Saved Jews During WW2](#)  
[Pub Secrets Blog: When Muslims Saved Jews](#)  
[straight.com: BESA photo exhibit shines a compassionate light](#)  
[Pinner Shul](#)

## **Exhibitions**

[Hebrew Union College: Besa Exhibit](#)  
[Jewish Historical Society New Haven: Besa Exhibit](#)  
[Museum of Tolerance: Besa Exhibit](#)  
[Soho Photo Gallery - Besa Exhibit](#)  
[The Aspen Institute: Featuring Norman H. Gershman](#)  
[USCSB: Presentation by Norman Gershman and Film Screening](#)  
[Yad Vashem: Besa Exhibit](#)  
[Yad Vashem: Upcoming Besa Exhibits](#)  
[Nat'l Catholic Center for Holocaust Information](#)  
[Charlotte JCC: Besa Exhibit](#)  
[The Uniter](#)

## **Exhibit Reviews**

[Albanian American Civic League](#)  
[Art Daily Blog: Soho Photo Gallery - Besa Exhibit](#)  
[Leeds University Union: Lost Stories of the Solidarity](#)  
[National Catholic Center for Holocaust Education: Besa Exhibit](#)  
[StLouis Jewish Light: Besa Exhibit Review](#)  
[Syracuse University Press Review](#)  
[VancouverBC: Besa exhibition essay](#)  
[Upstander Connection](#)

## **Exhibit Press Releases**

[92 St Y: Press Release - Norman Gershman in Conversation](#)  
[AMSET: BESA PR](#)  
[JCC of Greater Pittsburgh](#)  
[Jewish Federation of Santa Barbara Besa Press Release](#)  
[UN Press Release: Besa Exhibit](#)

## **Learning Guides & Solidarity Campaigns**

[Muslim Rescuers Teachers Guide](#)  
[Missing Pages: Besa \(website\)](#)  
[Missing Pages: Besa](#)  
[Albanian-American Jewish Relations](#)