Discussion Guide

Following are a list of questions to help focus and guide a discussion after a Living Room Reading or other intimate performances of *There is a Field*. Please feel free to choose whichever of these questions you think best suits your group, add others you think would be helpful, and organize them in whatever order you feel makes most sense!

1. What are you feeling right now?
2. What is one moment that jumped out at you most strongly, for whatever reason? Why did that particular moment jump out at you?
3. Was there a particular character you related to most strongly? (if so, which one and why?)
4. Was there a particular character you could not relate to at all? (if so, which one and why?)
5. What are some moments that reflected something about your own experience?
6. What are moments where you felt like you caught a glimpse of something you had not previously understood?
7. Was there anything that was especially difficult, challenging or uncomfortable for you in the play? If so, what?
8. Did you realize before hand (or during the reading) that the material is all documentary material—that every word in the play was actually spoken or written by Nardeen, Aseel, another family member, a friend of Aseel’s, Israeli police or judges, etc?
9. Would knowing this (or not knowing this) change your response to the play at all? What do you think about the playwright’s choice to approach the play in this way?
10. What do you think Nardeen’s central struggle was in the play? How would you characterize Nardeen’s journey?
11. Do you feel Nardeen made a “choice” by the end of the play? What was the choice and how do you feel about it?
12. There is, to some extent, a debate going on between Aseel and Nardeen throughout the play. How would you characterize the debate? What is your own opinion on the issue/s that Aseel and Nardeen are debating about?
13. What brought you to this reading?
14. Are there any questions that are lingering in your mind following the reading/performance?
15. The playwright has asked that October be a global call to theatrical action, yet, she has included no specific actions for audience members to take. What do you think she meant by “a global call to theatrical action?” Is this play a call to action? If so, in what way? What “kind” of action?
**October Events**

On Thursday, September 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon visited the Haram al-Sharif compound, site of the al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem. It was an incendiary political act in the wake of the failed Camp David summit. Sharon, the former general and defense minister who spearheaded the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and championed settlement-building in the West Bank and Gaza, was now the chair of the Likud Party and leader of the opposition. He would be the number-one beneficiary of a renewal of hostilities.

On Friday, September 29, protests began in Jerusalem which soon spread to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Over the course of that day and the days that followed, tens of Palestinian demonstrators were killed or injured by Israeli security forces. The demonstrations intensified, eventually being labeled as the Second Intifada.

Palestinians inside Israel demonstrated in large numbers in early October, in solidarity with their brethren in the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli police used live ammunition, sniper-fire, rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas against the unarmed protestors; hundreds were injured and 12 Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed, as well as 1 Palestinian from Gaza who was inside Israel. Known as “Black October,” these events marked the first time since Land Day on March 30, 1973 that such brutal force was used by Israeli security forces against Palestinian citizens.

Seventeen-year old peace activist, Aseel Asleh, from Arabeh village in the Galilee, was the youngest of the demonstrators killed. According to his parents, who were eyewitnesses, Aseel had been standing apart from the demonstration outside his village, when three policemen charged him. Aseel fled toward a nearby olive grove, pursued by the police who struck him on his back with their rifle butts. Aseel stumbled and fell in the olive grove where the trees obstructed his parents’ ability to see him. They heard the shot. According to the doctor in Nahariya hospital who examined Aseel’s body, the bullet wound in the back of his neck appeared to have come from live ammunition, fired at point-blank range.

**The Or Commission**

In November 2000, the Israeli government announced the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the October events, to be headed by Judge Theodore Or. The mandate of the Commission was to investigate the clashes between the security forces and Arab and Jewish citizens, culminating in the death and injury of Israeli citizens. The commission released its findings on September 2, 2003.

The recommendations that came out of the Or Commission acknowledged the complexity of the relationship between the Palestinian citizens and the state of Israel. The findings discussed the historical background, the years of discrimination, the
disenfranchising of the Palestinian citizens by the state. The commission chastised the behavior of the inciters, organizers and participants in the events from all sectors, and the security forces.

However, regarding accountability for the twelve Palestinian citizens who were killed, the Or Commission stated that they did not have enough information to indict. The Commission recommended that the police hold its own internal investigation of the police officers involved.

The Police Investigation Unit did nothing for a year. Then, as a starting point in their investigation, they demanded that the families of the bereaved exhume their sons and have autopsies performed, four years after the killings, long after there would be any forensic value to such autopsies. The families refused. On September 18, 2005, the Ministry of Justice’s Police Investigation Unit published their recommendations—to close all inquiries, citing lack of evidence and lack of cooperation from the families.

Initially, Israel’s Attorney General Menachem Mazuz backed the Police Investigation Unit’s recommendations, but, after intense political pressure from the Palestinian leadership inside Israel, including the families of the victims, he agreed to re-examine the findings.

On January 27, 2008, Mazuz announced at a press conference that he was supporting the Police Investigation Unit’s decision of 2005, and closed the cases.