

Golda (film)

Golda is a 2023 biographical drama film directed by Guy Nattiv and written by Nicholas Martin. The film depicts actions of Golda Meir, the 4th Prime Minister of Israel, during the Yom Kippur War. It stars Helen Mirren, Camille Cottin and Liev Schreiber.

It received its world premiere at the 2023 Berlin International Film Festival on February 20, 2023. It was released in the United States by Bleecker Street and Shivhans Pictures on August 25, 2023 and was released in the United Kingdom and Ireland by Vertical Entertainment and MetFilm Distribution on October 6, 2023. The film received a Best Makeup and Hairstyling nomination at the 96th Academy Awards.

Plot

In October 1973, the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad receives intelligence implying that Egypt and Syria are preparing to commence a military campaign against Israel, which it promptly relays to the Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir. Meir is dismissive of the intelligence, noting her inability to initiate a counter-plan without the support of her defense minister, Moshe Dayan, who is equally skeptical.

On 6 October, on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, Meir's inner circle informs her that Egypt has amassed a large force opposite the Suez Canal, concluding that hostilities would begin by sundown. Although realizing her tardiness in preparing adequately, Meir refuses to make a pre-emptive move, instead ordering a partial mobilization to face the threat. Nevertheless, she is surprised when the attack begins early. Dayan, who is sent to inspect the Golan Heights on the Syrian border, is horrified to discover that Syria has launched a thorough attack against the ill-prepared Israeli troops. Dazed, he attempts to resign; Meir talks him out of it but loses confidence in him.

Between 7-8 October, with Egypt and Syria making gains into Israel, Israeli Defence Force chief of staff Lieutenant General David Elazar proposes to relieve Israeli fortifications in the Sinai Peninsula using the 162nd Division led by Major General Avraham Adan. Despite opposition from Mossad chief Zvi Zamir, the plan proceeds, but the Egyptians defeat the Israeli

Golda



Theatrical release poster

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Directed by | <u>Guy Nattiv</u> |
| Written by | <u>Nicholas Martin</u> |
| Produced by | <u>Michael Kuhn</u> <u>Jane Hooks</u> <u>Nicholas Martin</u> |
| Starring | <u>Helen Mirren</u> <u>Camille Cottin</u> <u>Liev Schreiber</u> <u>Lior Ashkenazi</u> <u>Dvir Benedek</u> |
| Cinematography | <u>Jasper Wolf</u> |
| Edited by | <u>Arik Lahav-Leibovich</u> |
| Music by | <u>Dascha Dauenhauer</u> |
| Production companies | <u>Piccadilly Pictures</u> <u>Big Entrance</u> <u>Embankment Films</u> |

force. The next day, with the Syrian offensive having slowed, Dayan proposes an air strike on Syrian capital Damascus to put pressure on Egypt. However, with a shortage of planes, the Israeli Air Force is unable to proceed. In response, Meir asks United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to provide surplus jets, to which he reluctantly agrees, though he expresses that it is problematic for the United States to increase its support for Israel in light of the 1973 oil crisis.

On the fifth day, amidst increasing tensions, Major General Ariel Sharon proposes an operation to cross the Suez Canal using the 143rd Division to challenge the Egyptian Second and Third Armies. Zvi informs Meir that the Egyptian 4th and 21st Divisions would cross the canal in two days, leaving Egyptian capital Cairo undefended in the event of an attack. According to the intelligence, the Egyptians cross the canal, are met with resistance from Israeli tank forces led by Lieutenant General Haim Bar-Lev, and are defeated.

On 15 October, Sharon's forces cross the canal at an undefended point called the "Chinese Farm". They are ambushed by Egyptian units but maintain their positions. Meanwhile, Elazar prepares to barricade the Third Army by cutting off Suez from Cairo, which would accordingly force Egypt into negotiations. Concurrently, Kissinger pays a private visit to Meir and urges her to accept a ceasefire. Meir proceeds with her plan anyway, which finally forces Egypt into talks.

By the twentieth day, both sides agree to the further diplomatic talks and to exchange prisoners of war, effectively concluding the conflict. However, Zvi privately informs Meir that military intelligence chief Major General Eli Zeira had neglected to properly monitor signals intelligence from the Egyptian side, which allowed Israel to be attacked unawares. Although appalled, she chooses to bear the blame, rather than reveal the existence of the listening system. Despite the victory, the conflict's intensity inflicts an emotional toll on the aged Meir, who is stricken with cancer.

One year later, in 1974, Meir testifies before the Agranat Commission about her conduct in the war. She states off-the-record that despite her initial uncertainty, she genuinely felt war was certain. Four years later, on 8 October 1978, a bedridden Meir dies watching footage of her meeting with Egyptian president Anwar Sadat a year earlier.

The film's epilogue reveals that the commission cleared Meir of any wrongdoing and that she lived to see the signing of the Camp David Accords, the first formal measures of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Cast

- Helen Mirren as Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel
- Camille Cottin as Lou Kaddar, private secretary to Golda Meir

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| | <div>Lipsync Productions</div> <div>Qwerty Films</div> |
| Distributed by | <div>Bleecker Street</div> <div>ShivHans Pictures</div> <div>(United States)</div> <div>Vertical Entertainment</div> <div>MetFilm Distribution</div> <div>(United Kingdom and Ireland)</div> |
| Release dates | <div>February 20, 2023</div> <div>(Berlinale)</div> <div>August 25, 2023</div> <div>(United States)</div> <div>October 6, 2023</div> <div>(United Kingdom)</div> |
| Running time | 100 minutes ^[1] |
| Countries | <div>United States</div> <div>United Kingdom</div> |
| Language | English |
| Box office | \$6 million ^[2] ^[3] |

- [Rami Heuberger](#) as [Moshe Dayan](#), [Minister of Defense for Israel](#)
- [Rotem Keinan](#) as [Zvi Zamir](#), [Director of Mossad](#)
- [Emma Davies](#) as [Miss Epstein](#), a typist in the [Prime Minister's Office](#)
- [Lior Ashkenazi](#) as [Lt. Gen. David "Dado" Elazar](#), the [Chief of Staff, IDF](#)
- [Dominic Mafham](#) as [Lt. Gen. Haim Bar-Lev](#), [Commander, Southern Command](#)
- [Dvir Benedek](#) as [Maj. Gen. Eli Zeira](#), [Director of Military Intelligence](#)
- [Ed Stoppard](#) as [Maj. Gen. Benny Peled](#), [Commander of the Israeli Air Force](#)
- [Ohad Knoller](#) as [Maj. Gen. Ariel "Arik" Sharon](#), [Commander, 143rd Division, IDF](#)
- [Liev Schreiber](#) as [Henry Kissinger](#), [United States Secretary of State](#)
- [Jaime Ray Newman](#) as [Henry Kissinger's secretary](#)

Production

Development

In April 2021, it was announced [Helen Mirren](#) was set to star, with [Guy Nattiv](#) to direct, a screenplay by [Nicholas Martin](#).^[4] In November 2021, [Camille Cottin](#), [Rami Heuberger](#), [Lior Ashkenazi](#), [Ellie Piercy](#), [Ed Stoppard](#), [Rotem Keinan](#), [Dvir Benedek](#), [Dominic Mafham](#), [Ben Caplan](#), [Kit Rakusen](#) and [Emma Davies](#) joined the cast.^[5] In January 2022, [Liev Schreiber](#) announced his involvement.^[6]

Filming

[Principal photography](#) began on November 8, 2021, in [London](#), [United Kingdom](#).^{[7][8]}

Casting controversy

[Helen Mirren](#) was cast as [Golda Meir](#) at the behest of Meir's grandson [Gideon](#).^[9] In January 2022, British actress [Maureen Lipman](#) and others criticized the casting choice on account of Mirren not being [Jewish](#), stating: "I'm sure she will be marvellous, but it would never be allowed for [Ben Kingsley](#) to play [Nelson Mandela](#). You just couldn't even go there."^{[10][11]} The following month, Mirren responded by saying Lipman was "utterly legitimate" to criticize her casting, and she had discussed the decision to cast her in the film with director Nattiv.^[12]

Release

In July 2021, [Bleecker Street](#) and [ShivHans Pictures](#) acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film.^[13] In August 2023, [Vertical Entertainment](#) acquired U.K. and Irish distribution rights in partnership with [MetFilm Distribution](#).^[14] It had its world premiere at the [73rd Berlin International Film Festival](#) on February 20, 2023.^[15] It also screened at the [Jerusalem Film Festival](#) on July 13, 2023.^[16] It was released in Israel on August 24, 2023, by [United King Films](#),^[17] and in the United States the next day, on August 25, 2023.^[18] The film was released theatrically in the United Kingdom and Ireland on October 6, 2023.^[14]

Golda was released for digital platforms on September 19, 2023, followed by a Blu-ray and DVD release on October 17, 2023.^[19]

Reception

Box office

In the United States and Canada, *Golda* was released alongside *Gran Turismo*, *The Hill*, and *Retribution*, and was projected to gross around \$1 million from 883 theaters in its opening weekend.^[20] It finished its run with \$4.8 million in the United States and \$6 million worldwide.^[21]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 52% of 122 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.8/10. The website's consensus reads: "Helen Mirren is typically masterful in the title role, but *Golda* never amounts to much more than a passable history lesson presented in largely underwhelming biopic form."^[22] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 48 out of 100, based on 27 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[23]

The film was described as "typical Israeli propaganda" in one review, by Ramzy Baroud, published in *Arab News* and *Middle East Monitor*.^{[24][25]}

A *New York Times* review by Amy Nicholson concluded that against the backdrop of a surprise attack on Israel, the script, by Nicholas Martin, focuses on the haunting body count rather than the righteousness of the conflict, where one is “left with a sense that the stress of those thousands of lives cut short may have killed her (Golda) too.”^[26]

Accolades

| Award | Date of ceremony | Category | Recipient | Result | Ref. |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-----------|-----------------|
| <u>World Soundtrack Awards</u> | October 21, 2023 | <u>Discovery of the Year</u> | Dascha Dauenhauer | Nominated | ^[27] |
| <u>Women Film Critics Circle</u> | December 18, 2023 | Best Actress | <u>Helen Mirren</u> | 4th place | ^[28] |
| | | Best Equality of the Sexes | <i>Golda</i> | Nominated | |
| <u>Alliance of Women Film Journalists</u> | January 3, 2024 | Grand Dame for Defying Ageism | Helen Mirren (also for <i>Fast X</i>) | Nominated | ^[29] |
| <u>AARP Movies for Grownups Awards</u> | January 17, 2024 | <u>Best Actress</u> | Helen Mirren | Nominated | ^[30] |
| <u>Cinema for Peace Awards</u> | February 19, 2024 | Most Valuable Film of the Year 2024 | Guy Nattiv | Won | ^[31] |
| <u>Make-Up Artists and Hair Stylists Guild</u> | February 18, 2024 | <u>Best Special Make-Up Effects</u> | Karen Thomas, Eva Susanna Johnson Theodosiou | Nominated | ^[32] |
| <u>Academy Awards</u> | March 10, 2024 | <u>Best Makeup and Hairstyling</u> | | Nominated | ^[33] |

See also

- *A Woman Called Golda*, a 1982 biographical TV film

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