

# Edut 710 – Documenting as an Act of Resistance

Stephen Naron and Ohad Ufaz in Conversation  
with Marianne Windsperger (June/July 2024)

## Abstract

The [Edut 710 project](#) is the largest documentation initiative in Israel to interview survivors of the Hamas massacre of 7 October 2023 and make the recordings available on an online platform. Marianne Windsperger invited the filmmaker and co-founder of this project, Ohad Ufaz, and Stephen Naron, Director of the [Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies](#), to talk about this documentation initiative. The German version of this interview has been published in a special issue of the journal [Zwischenwelt. Literatur/Widerstand/Exil](#) commemorating 7 October 2023.

## Voices from the testimonies

*“I didn’t do anything. I survived. I was busy surviving.”*  
(Iris Ganor)

*“Never in my life and I’m not a little girl,  
I’ve never been that scared in my life.”*  
(Ayala Avraham)

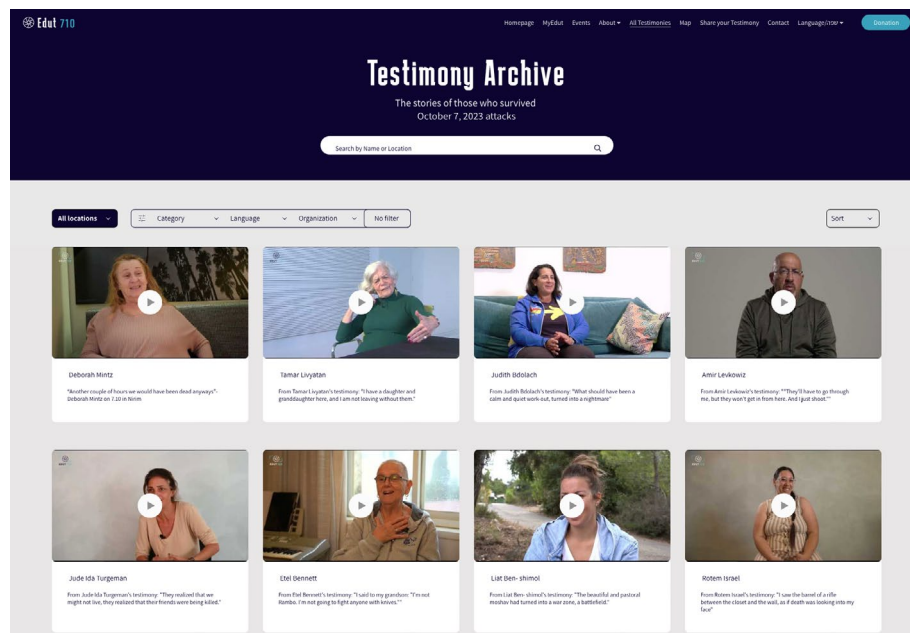
*“They literally came to kill, like Nazis, to burn.”*  
(Erez Arieli)

*“As the day goes, we get a darker and yet darker picture.  
And the uncertainty.  
The uncertainty, it was the worst thing to go through.”*  
(Ester Taranto)

*“In short, there was chaos inside the room until everything went quiet.  
It got so quiet that it was unnerving because I can’t hear the girls.”*  
(Eitan Cunio)

*“I had already told the kids, I had told them everything.  
I told them they would probably come,  
the terrorists would probably get here and we,  
I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t let them get in.”*  
(Adam Berdeshevsky)

*“Because I live here in the region,  
I’ve always told everyone that,  
this is the safest place in the country  
and I was sure, really, the safest in the country.”*  
(Olga Chagin)



**Windsperger:** Could you describe the project Edut 710 – how did it start and what is your aim?

**Ufaz:** So Edut 710 was established – so just the first thought about it – already during the attacks on 7 October 2023. I then was part of a group of volunteers – not all of them were professionals – that were documenting the protests against the government all around Israel. So, what we would call the more democratic or liberal part of the Israeli society. But it was and is a big thing – we were there with video, photo and camera operators, there were also drones filming from above, so all kinds of methods of documentation. It was a people’s movement of documentation and I as a filmmaker, a documentary film maker – was trying to support these volunteers to edit and process the material and to express their own views. Because what they did initially was to feed their recordings into the global media channels. So, on 7 October, we were ready to document the protests. And on that day, we understood that the story had changed. But there were all these people with cameras, with their ambitions, their will to make a difference, who now had to stop and think. Some of them wanted to go directly to the people who had survived the attacks, directly to them in the hotels and emergency shelters where many of them were staying. The idea was to help people with this opportunity to give testimony. And since I am dealing with testimonies and the ethics of testimony-giving already for a long time, I asked them to wait and not to push. Because we saw so many journalists and documentary filmmakers who simply rushed with their cameras and microphones to the places where the victims of the attacks had been sheltered. Journalists unpacked their cameras and microphones and interviewed people before they even understood what exactly was happening. And I learned that we have to be sure not to cause any harm – or that we at least have to minimise the harm. Because documentation can cause harm. In this situation, we didn’t want to further hurt the people who were already hurt. Some of them were already broadcasting or transferring their testimony or their experience or their feelings during the day – from the safe rooms, from the shelters. There were hundreds that were already using social media in order to express what they went through. And again, from what I’ve learnt and experienced, this is not a good way to express what you went through as a victim. Someone who has become a vic-

tim needs the experience of being heard, needs a listener. You can't count on social media in this respect. The crowds have no obligation to listen. And that's why it was important to me from the very beginning that we feel committed to the tradition of listening in the sense of the Fortunoff Archive, i.e. listening through research, through filming, through the close connection with Dori Laub. In this sense, I also see myself as a student of Dori Laub, and other founding figures of the Fortunoff Archive like Lawrence Langer and Geoffrey Hartman. I had many conversations with Stephen Naron, the head of the archive regarding the unique interview methods that were developed in the Fortunoff testimonies. I learned those methods directly from Laub and started teaching them since in 2018 he visited the college where I teach. We were practising these interview methods in Israeli society. Students went into their communities and documented the stories of their parents, neighbours and friends. All of this has led me to the conclusion that this is the right method, the right approach to the events of 7 October. In this way, we can be there for the victims or for the people who survived, and also for everyone else who witnessed these brutal events. And then, we can be there for them to bring their own perspective, their own words and experiences to the world. On the one hand, we can carry out a very important documentation project for Israeli society, for Jewish and non-Jewish society, for the societies that were hurt by these attacks. Because it was a huge terrorist attack with a great and lasting impact on history. And we are now caught up in the spirals of violence that have been perpetuated since then. Our mission was to document and communicate the stories of the people of 7 October. It is important that we understood that eyewitness interviews have changed. Holocaust survivors often kept silent and did not speak about their experiences for up to thirty years, then Dori Laub and others came along, and only then was the silence broken. We knew that we had to document immediately and directly, because on the battlefield of the media and politics, the victims must fight for recognition by telling their stories. Finding recognition and making your voice heard, this is what it's all about. We know that people who have experienced violence – no matter what kind of violence – that these people sometimes lose their belief in their own story, in what happened. I have found this in many Holocaust testimonies, you hear the witnesses talk about how incredibly cruel it was, what happened in front of their eyes, and that they could hardly believe their eyes.

**Windsperger:** And what I know from my work with testimonies is that in this immediate phase after a catastrophe, there is still no language for what has happened. And these early testimonies, the interviews, but also literature, diaries, these early first-person documents provide a language for talking about what happened.

**Ufaz:** Yes, absolutely. We also have these experiences within the communities. Unlike some journalists or other documentation initiatives, we work very closely with those affected. The first version, the first version of the interview – we see ourselves in the tradition of the Fortunoff Archive – goes to the interviewers and the survivors themselves, they are the first viewers and listeners. The owners of the first copy of the interview are the survivors, their families and their communities. And what happens then within the communities: they watch the interview – with full concentration. Sometimes these are interviews of 45 minutes, an hour or even longer. These interviews are different from Holocaust testimonies: they are not as long, but they are extremely hard to watch, they tell the story of a day or a few days around the events. Now that the war is still going on and so many people can't go to their homes, many hostages still remain missing – so, now that the aftermath of the events is still

going on, the interviews are getting longer, but they are still being watched with a lot of attention by the communities – I think for exactly the reason you mentioned: they need to understand how the attacks took place right there in their kibbutz, in their village and their immediate neighbourhood. They are trying and struggling to find the right words. I think it's just like you said. It's about sharing a common language. There are also some trauma theories about this, but I'll leave these discussions to the trauma experts. They have to express their experiences in words, which of course can never come close to what they experienced – and that's a good thing. Unlike the Holocaust testimonies archives, such as the Fortunoff Archive, we insist on publishing the interviews. At Edut 710, video editing experts and language editors are part of the team. We have recorded over 1,000 interviews so far, 350 of which we have already been able to publish in a short and a long version, because we have found a way to turn these many minutes into meaningful five-minute videos that are more accessible and which in turn bring people to listening or watching the long version of the interview. And there is something else that we see as a legacy of the Fortunoff Archive: we can only start publishing the interview after the second permission by the survivor or the person providing the testimony, not all of them are survivors. So we ask for a consent or release form at the beginning of the interview, after the interview the interviewees receive the full version, as well as the abridged version and the accompanying text with background information – we have the interviewees check and approve all of this again. Some people ask us to keep their interviews for the archive only and that's OK, of course. We only publish if we have the interviewees' consent twice.

**Windsperger:** The Fortunoff Archive, which has already been mentioned here several times, is a partner of the Edut 710 Archive? Why is this documentation initiative important and where do you see the links to the Fortunoff Archive?

**Naron:** That's right, we are partnering with Edut 710. We have a longstanding relationship with Ohad Ufaz, who has directed a number of really wonderful films that have been broadcast and screened internationally, including my favorite, *The Boys from Lebanon* (2008). His latest film, which is nearing completion, *The Listener*, tells the story of one of the Fortunoff Archive's founders, Dori Laub. It's a wonderful film that depicts his work at the archive, his influence on the methodology and focus on empathic listening. The film uses multiple excerpts from testimonies from the archive, but also follows Dori around towards the end of his life and gives you a picture of this wonderful human being devoted to listening to those who have suffered. Ohad, and his fellow filmmaker Micha Livne, were invited to become Laurel Vlock filmmakers in residence at the Fortunoff Archive in 2023. Since then, the film has progressed, and we keep in touch, organize screenings, etc. Shortly after October 7, Ohad told me that he was working as part of a group of filmmakers, journalists and scholars, who were recording testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the massacre. He felt, from the beginning, that the Fortunoff Archive, and Laub's work, should serve as a model for the grassroots movement and documentation project he was helping to build in Israel. This effort would give birth, at a remarkably rapid pace, to Edut 710. Of course, there was no question that we would provide whatever advice and support we could to Ohad and Edut 710. Although, and we discussed this on several occasions, just how much the experience of the archive could and could not inform the work of an organisation like Edut 710. After all, the Fortunoff Archive is dedicated to recording testimony from survivors who experienced mass violence decades prior. Edut 710 is doing field work right now, recording testimonies with victims of mass violence merely days and weeks following the traumatic events. It's

clear that our methodology and attention to the needs of the witness can inform their work, but there are limits, this is something entirely different. Still, we see Edut 710 as a clear redefinition and reapplication of the same very Jewish tradition to collect and record, to document events, that has occurred after episodes of anti-Jewish violence throughout history, from Kishinev to the Holocaust. Moreover, as an archive dedicated to preserving and making accessible audiovisual testimony of a sensitive nature, we certainly can provide some insights about the future use of this collection, when it will certainly serve as an essential source for historical research, once the war ends (and it will end), and the history of this terrible period is written.

**Windsperger:** Ohad, can you perhaps tell us a bit more about the background of the employees and volunteers involved in Edut 710?

**Ufaz:** There are many volunteers. Some of them are retired, have worked for many years and are now volunteering their expertise. There is also a volunteer, for example, who was in the army for years. So there are also many people who do documentary photography and documentary filming as a hobby. Interviews with witnesses have to be filmed in a very simple way. The filmmakers, but also the scientists and historians among us, have to leave their egos out of it. It's not about doing 'our research' or 'our film'. That is important. Scientific research, films and other projects can only be added in a second phase. We are here to document. First and foremost for the people and the mission of the project. It's the simplest thing we can do. It's not a film. It's not a journalistic project. A testimony, a video interview – a fixed frame, that's the legacy of the Fortunoff Archive – as simple as possible, the survivor is at the centre and no interventions. What we teach ourselves and what we have learnt from the Fortunoff Archive is above all listening.

**Windsperger:** Perhaps you could describe the interview method in more detail?

**Ufaz:** Dori Laub's and the Fortunoff Archive's method of structuring eyewitness interviews was to ask the survivor to tell a few things about themselves. Who is he/she? So first we meet the person. Then we ask him/her to describe the days before the attack – or to use Dori Laub's words: "when the skies were still blue." And we ask very specifically about 6 October, when Simchat Torah was already being celebrated in many households and in many places – in many kibbutzim, too, there were celebrations on this eve. Only then do we ask the interviewees to describe the processes and events on 7 October, from the morning until the evacuation and arrival in a safe place. For this, we also consulted with Israeli trauma experts, because we knew that the methods would have to be different than with Holocaust survivors. So we adopted the idea of the structure from the Fortunoff Archive – the beginning of the narrative is before the events and the end is after the interviewee is safe. And at the same time, we had to be much stricter, because we are not yet in a post-trauma phase, we are still in the middle of it. People want to give their testimony now. The battle for the media had already begun during the attacks. And those affected joined in, because today everyone can join in, not just journalists. I can broadcast my experiences and people have done that, even if they were in the middle of a battlefield or trying to save themselves. I assume that you and other people have seen these clips too. But the trauma is there, the war is still going on, thousands of people have been evacuated and the hostages are still not all free. So we face different challenges than Dori Laub and the Fortunoff Archive, because they tried to get in touch with the survivors 30 years after the Holocaust and ask them about their personal experiences. And this generation was less self-focussed. They were more ideologically connected to various political movements or religions. Today, we are used to talking a lot about ourselves on facebook, instagram, we share pictures in digital photo albums, etc. By the way,

not everyone does. Not everyone, however. Some people, especially those who have a social role in the communities concerned, we have to address directly: How do you feel? How did you experience the events? We avoid exerting pressure, we don't want to trigger people or cause harm – if the initiative comes from them, then it's OK. We learnt that from Dori Laub and the Fortunoff Archive. People have to gain agency over their stories. We hardly had to intervene or ask questions because it was a very condensed event and people can remember and tell their stories – sometimes they barely stop to breathe. Even if some people are hesitant to start talking before they begin their story, they get more and more into the narrative flow and relive their story very intensively. Normally we don't need to ask questions, but if we have questions to complete the picture and see more clearly, we try the best we can to save that for the end of the interview, when they have already told us about how they escaped the immediate events and are in a safe place. And that is something we have learnt: Some of them are still emotionally in the safe room, in the shelter, so in the end we have to accompany them to a safe place outside of the immediate events. That is the structure of the testimony. So, you don't have to be a filmmaker to conduct interviews, but you have to understand the concept of listening. I also don't think you need to be a therapist or psychologist to do this.

**Windsperger:** How do people who want to testify come into contact with you? Initially, the interviewers came directly to the victims, the survivors – has that changed? Do people now also approach you via the online platform? How does the contact work?

**Ufaz:** There is a variety of ways to get in touch with us. We offer our services. We do not promise healing. Sometimes wounds and injuries are reopened through interviews and the pain returns. We do not pressure anyone to share their experiences. Of course, we are in constant contact with the affected communities and try to reach people through them. In the first few months, our volunteers also went to the hotels where the survivors were staying. They were simply there to listen. Of course, we also advertised our platform and some people became aware of us through these channels. Part of our work is also field research to reach the less accessible communities. It's easy in the kibbutzim, the people there usually have a high level of education and have already come into contact with testimonies and documentation initiatives. We were actually surprised that they didn't start documenting their experiences themselves – they then asked us for help, as it would have been too much for them in their situation. In the kibbutzim there is a tradition of collecting and documenting, usually a woman who is responsible for the archive, for the memory of the kibbutz. This is less the case in cities. As the affected regions have had to deal with threats for a long time, there are also resilience centres – these have also approached us to document the stories of the survivors and bring them into the world so that their perspective and evidence of what they have experienced can be shared.

**Windsperger:** You reach a large audience worldwide via your online platform. Do you already have reports on how the testimonies are used by journalists, artists, psychologists and scientists? Is there any feedback on who works with the testimonies and how?

**Ufaz:** We are working on this outreach. We are a volunteer organisation, so we first have to take care of the funding so that our work is sustainable for the coming years. Of course, we are not yet as well known as we would like to be – but we are working on it. Sometimes it's difficult to communicate our way of working to journalists. The media are often attracted to the extremes. We want to listen to everyone. Everyone, including those who sat in a shelter for 20 hours in fear, they are also witnesses for us.

We are not only interested in the extreme experiences. So we don't produce stories for the media. We also produce for the media, but this media must have the ability to listen. The five-minute extracts on our website are also a challenge. You have to be patient. We ourselves – i.e. volunteers from the project – already have ideas about how we want to continue working with the testimonies. We want this archive to be a tool to enable creative work, be it in the medium of film or in other artistic forms. Our method of filming sometimes leads us to follow the survivors' accounts in the very sense of the word; this reliving is also known as re-enactment. One example: We were on location to film the story of a woman who told the story of her husband who, during the massacre, wanted to use the rifle of their son, who is a soldier, to protect the house and the neighbourhood. In the end it's a very sad story, an Israeli soldier thought the father of the family was a terrorist and killed him. A tragedy. She insisted that we come to her house, you could still see the broken windows, the bullet holes in the wall and she went through it all for us, relived it. She even showed us how she had to crawl on the ground when the soldiers opened fire. And how she discovered her husband's body. We could hardly follow. The need to bear witness is very strong. The impression of the actual place is of course a very important part of the testimony – to see the places where it happened, the walls that are still perforated. So yes, we are still working. Now with the anniversary, hopefully there will be even more interest in our project.

**Windsperger:** Stephen, what Ohad refers to here as “re-enactment” is also strongly linked to traumatic experiences. What can we learn about trauma from these video interviews?

**Naron:** Certainly, I would argue that you cannot understand what it feels like to experience these types of traumatic events without first-person accounts from witnesses and survivors. And, since every war and violent conflict is in the end an attack on human beings, not just remote countries, towns, or “populations,” listening to the victimized, the survivors, is the only way to break down the abstractions and distance and distill the conflict to personal human level. So yes, interviews like these can teach us a great deal about trauma, and how it is dealt with or not dealt, and the lasting impact on psyche, memory, and society. But its not the only thing we can learn. In the case of Edut 710 and Documenting Ukraine, recording interviews is embedded in an implicit goal of seeking justice. Quite literally, these materials could conceivably be used as evidence in legal proceedings against the perpetrators. But there are other forms of justice, more metaphorical, the justice that is inherent in the victims being empowered to document and write the history of their own tragedy, in their own words, unimpeded by some outside, hostile force. Like the documenters of the Holocaust, during and after the murder, in ghettos and camps, and later in the DP camps of Europe, this goal of collecting and recording is simultaneously an act of defiance, an effort to reclaim an agency which the victimizers tried to rob, and to tell their story for the world to hear, for them, for their children and for posterity, so their losses would not be forgotten, swept under the rug of history, but persist in memory and documentation.

**Windsperger:** Thank you for these nice closing words – but not yet. You also mention the Documenting Ukraine project – could you provide some more information on this? To what extent is the Fortunoff Archive involved here?

**Naron:** As you noticed, Edut 710 is not some outlier. The Fortunoff Archive is the oldest, still active project of its kind, a grassroots effort, mostly made up of volunteers, documenting the personal experiences of survivors of the Holocaust using video technology. The fact that we have been doing this since 1979 and have consis-

tently taken an innovative and thoughtful approach to this delicate work, means that we attracted over the years by many different organisations seeking to find their own best practices for documenting mass violence, civil and human rights abuses, using audiovisual testimony. We have served as a model for many organisations, for instance, the USC Shoah Foundation, History Makers,<sup>1</sup> Densho,<sup>2</sup> and many others. Documenting Ukraine is just the latest example, albeit the connection is more organic due to the leading role our faculty Advisor Tim Snyder has taken. Launched in March 2022, right after the full scale invasion, Documenting Ukraine started as a research project at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) here in Vienna, where Snyder is a permanent fellow. Drawing inspiration from the Fortunoff Archive, among many other sources, the project seeks to create a record of the Russo-Ukrainian War, by capturing the human experience of the war in a multitude of forms and formats – including oral history and audiovisual testimony. Documenting Ukraine funnels resources to people in need working on the ground in Ukraine, scholars, journalists, public intellectuals, artists, and archivists – all of whom are running personal and institutional projects to establish the historical record and intellectual reflection and artistic interpretation. Ultimately, the materials collected and produced through these projects will be housed in a complex, transdisciplinary archive, and we are working with Dr Katherine Younger, another Permanent Fellow at IWM, who oversees this enormous effort to provide advice on what this future archive might look like, and how decisions made today, methodological, bibliographic and archival in nature, will inevitably impact how useful this archive will be for the future generations that will need it. Honestly, every day I wish that our archive and experience would be somewhat less relevant, as a kind of inverse reflection of the world becoming a better, safer place, but sadly it seems the opposite is true. I fear that it won't be long until the next initiative knocks on our door.

## LINKS

Edut 710 – Historical Testimony Database of the Events of 7 October 2023:

<https://www.edut710en.org/>.

Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies: <https://fortunoff.library.yale.edu/>.

The Listener by Ohad Ufaz: <https://fortunoff.library.yale.edu/film/the-listener/>.

Documenting Ukraine: <https://www.iwm.at/documenting-ukraine>.

1 The History Makers – The Digital Repository for the Black Experience, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/>

2 Densho – Preserving Japanese American stories, <https://densho.org/>



**Ohad Ufaz** is co-founder and head of documentary and film in Edut 710, filmmaker, film scholar and chair of communication department at Oranim College in Kiryat Tiv'on in Israel. His dissertation entitled 'Camera of Encounter. On the question of documenting and bearing the Other's testimony in film' was defended at the Hebrew University in 2021. Since 1997, Ohad Ufaz has produced numerous films, including 'The Boys from Lebanon' (2008) and 'Going Dutch' (2002) and most recently 'The Listener' (together with Micha Livne), a film about Dori Laub.

Email: [ohad\\_o@oranim.ac.il](mailto:ohad_o@oranim.ac.il)

**Stephen Naron** is Director of the Fortunoff Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University and Visiting Research Fellow at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI). His research interests include the history of testimony, archival methods and theories, and memory studies. Since August 2021, he has headed the European Outreach Office of the Fortunoff Archive at the VWI in Vienna.

Email: [stephen.naron@vwi.ac.at](mailto:stephen.naron@vwi.ac.at)

Quotation: Edut 710 – Documenting as an Act of Resistance. Stephen Naron and Ohad Ufaz in Conversation with Marianne Windsperger (June/July 2024) in S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation. 11 (2024) 2, 122–130.

[https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0224/con\\_ousn01](https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0224/con_ousn01)

S:I.M.O.N.– Shoah: Intervention. Methods. DocumentatiON. is the semi-annual open access e-journal of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) in English and German.

ISSN 2408-9192 | 11 (2024) 2 | <https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0224>

This article is licensed under the following Creative Commons License: CC-BY-SA  
(Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives).