**Anwar Ben Badis:** My daughter, she said that, “my teacher today didn't come because her son went to the war.” So this is for a girl, third grade, something that she cannot understand. I mean, how the son of her teacher can go and make the war in Gaza against the people of my father? To explain to a kid this situation, you have to be very good parent, actually.

**Mishy Harman (narration):** Hey, I’m Mishy Harman and this is Israel Story. As you know, we are in the midst of our “Wartime Diaries” series, which is an attempt to collect slivers of life during these endlessly difficult days.

The war has been incredibly tough on parents. I mean just understanding what’s going on - factually, emotionally, politically, morally - that’s all difficult enough, so having to then also explain it to your kids is practically impossible. But if that’s a challenge that almost every parent here has felt since the start of the war, the parenting tightrope that Anwar Ben Badis has had to walk is unique.

See, Anwar’s Palestinian and is married to Sari, an Israeli Jew. They have a young daughter, Hili, who’s eight and goes to the bilingual Hand-in-Hand School in Jerusalem. So figuring out what to say, what not to say, how to balance the dueling narratives and identities, it’s all personal in Anwar’s case. It’s as if the entire conflict, with all of its barbed complexities, exists within his home.

Anwar came to our studio, in Jerusalem, for a conversation with our producers Adina Karpuj and Mitch Ginsburg. Here he is.

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Hi, my name is Anwar Ben Badis. I'm 45-years-old. I live in Jerusalem. I come from mixed family, Muslim and Christian. My mom is Christian, my father is Muslim. My mom is Arab, my father is not. He is a Berber from North Africa originally (that's why my name is Ben Badis, is Algerian name). And my wife is a Jewish woman. So this family is special. We have a kid. She is amazing, and we try our best as parents to protect her in this not easy place, offering her also the hope that the future is going to be better. My mom was born in Jerusalem, not far from here, actually, in Baka neighborhood. Her house is there, still today, but in ‘48 as you know, during the year of the Nakba, she had to move out of the house with her family to Nazareth. So I grew up in Nazareth, up north, in Galilee, till the age 17. And in 1995, I came to study my first degree in Jerusalem, in the Hebrew University, and the first thing I did is going to see the house. I remember very well. It was very, very beautiful moment. I also saw the hospital where my mom was born in Jerusalem, which is today “Little House in Baka - Boutique Hotel.” And in this street, which is today Yehuda, my mom spent 12 years in her life. And during all the years - the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s - all she told us about her stories in Jerusalem, her life in Jerusalem. So when we came back to Jerusalem to study - most of my brothers and sisters - it wasn’t really a strange place for us - the story, the places, the streets. I love this city. And when I met my wife, Sari, it was in 2009 and the meeting was a little bit strange, because I was invited with friend to a party. It was in Yehuda Street in the house next to my mother house. So entering the house I met Sari there. She has beautiful smile. And if you are in thirties, you know how to distinguish between true, real smile and just Hollywoodian one. So it was something very special. And we talked about her work, her life, and she told me that she is a daughter of a grand rabbi.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Oh.

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Yeah. And we are coming, each one with a baggage was, you know, what kind of we are, not anymore, maybe teenagers. So we came with this idea that we know exactly that this meeting can lead to something and we also were aware of the… where we are.

**Adina Karpuj:** And did you feel any contempt towards her because she was living in one of your family's homes?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** If I tell you, no, I'm lying. But you're trying all the time to discover this world. I'm not going in a relationship with someone expected, someone that you know the culture, the background, you know the family, maybe you know the language. It's new world for me, totally different. And you, you reach a point that you say, ‘OK, interesting. I'm going to discover. I'm going to dig more in this relationship to see what kind of things you can find common.’ And with time, I discovered that we are very similar, actually. Today, I always say that every relationship is a mixed relation, because people are different and similar in many things. For example, I come from very, very Marxist communist family, and when I told my father that she was born in New York, my father said, “do you remember all the demonstrations that we had, and always we were screaming that America is the head of the snake, and we na na…” Said, “I'm going to get married to this woman in New York City.” So it was shocking for my father.

**Adina Karpuj:** Was that more shocking than her being Jewish?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** He never mentioned the fact that she's Jewish.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Can you take us into your home during the early days of the war? Give us a sense of what that was like?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** If you are going to talk about October 7th for us, as a house, I say, it wasn't surprising, because we are inside the Palestinian society a lot. We know and we feel. You cannot, I mean, just be surprised and say, “wow, it was a surprise.” No. I mean, things are very, very bad since long time. Maybe not for the Israelis, but things are very bad for Palestinians. So smart people like Israelis should expect that you cannot be all the time in the good side of the thing… life is good, you can do anything you want. And the same time, there is next to you a big jail… like I mean no… “closed place,” let's call it. Jail is for bad people. And we started to listen to the news in order to see what is going on.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** Which news?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** I listened to Al Jazeera, Reshet Bet. We have Haaretz newspaper, and we have Al-Ittihad newspaper, the Communist Party newspaper, daily one. And in this time, the first reaction was, for me, is how to protect the daughter. How to protect her, how to try to find the good path in order to explain to her what's happening. It wasn't easy. It's very, very, very dangerous these days, as Palestinian in this country, to talk about October 7th. Either you accept the Israeli story and they will accept you, or you don't talk, or the third option is that you talk and you pay the price for it. But what my daughter did was her teacher, she asked the pupils in the class to draw something. How do they feel about what they hear from the news or parents, etc.? So many kids draw different things, and my daughter draw two persons on the same paper, one with hands on the ears…

**Adina Karpuj:** Like covering their ears…

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Covering their ears, and the other person is with the hands covering the mouth. And when the teacher asked her if she can tell who is this, so she say, “the one who is covering the ears is my Jewish friends and those who are covering the mouth are my Palestinian friends.” And I think that it's showing that she understood the dynamics between the different groups in the class, but also in the house. I mean, I didn't talk for long time. I didn't talk about the war because it's dangerous to talk as I mentioned. And her cousins in Jerusalem - Jewish cousins - they never asked her. Never. About… it's kind of… they don't want to hear. Everyone is inside his story, his… I call it bunker, and doesn't want to be exposed to the other story, which is something very, very not healthy.

**Adina Karpuj:** What’s an example of that?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** This year, during what we call it in Israel, *HaYamim Haleumi’im* - the Independence and the *Yom Haikaron*, you know, all these days. And in our school, we have also the Nakba Day, which this year, for example, it was canceled by the Ministry of Education. They decided, “no, not in your school. You just remember the Jewish side of the days.” So we decided, as family, for the first time not to participate. And it wasn't easy for Sari, because Sari decided not to go to the Jewish days, as parent, because they canceled the Palestinian. So we say, “OK, we're not going to anything this year, and we are going to a place to be far away from all this, to be… for a few days.”

**Adina Karpuj:** You mean you went out of town?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Yes. And the second day, Sari said, “I don't feel good. I need to go back to Jerusalem to be with my family.” I say, “OK,” which is something, again, challenging. You are not alone in life now, we have kid, and we need always to be careful what to do and what to say. In the end, after long, long, long discussion, we agreed that we remain far from Jerusalem for not for five days, but for three days. So always we succeed to find a way, the path, to continue, because we know that we have a beautiful daughter, that we need to protect her. We have this in mind all the time.

**Adina Karpuj:** And were there moments - since last October 7th - where you and Sari haven't been able to see eye to eye?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Um, yeah. I have a brother. He's a doctor, and now he's in Gaza. He's a volunteer doctor with ‘Doctors Without Borders.’ And when Sari heard from him that he decided to leave Haifa, big hospital in Haifa, and to volunteer in Gaza, in the same time, her brother-in-law is a soldier, also went to Gaza. And the idea of going to Gaza - Palestinian who is going to Gaza to work and to help Palestinians there, and the same time, an Israeli guy who went to Gaza in order to be a soldier there… I said that my brother is going there to help people and this Israeli guy, her brother-in-law, he went there to… and you can find the verb to use it. I mean, he went there to… soldier. Soldier is killing. So she said, “no, both of them are in kamikaze mission,” which means both of them can be killed there. And she didn't accept the fact that I say, “my brother went there in order to help people.” So this kind of approach, about the same thing, sometime can be very, very hard in our life. It’s not easy, challenging. She thinks that sometimes I am very very tough person, and I’m very cold person, because I’m very rational person. But I think this is the best way to save… to keep our relationship in good shape in these days. It’s not easy, because it doesn’t help to be very sentimental.

**Mitch Ginsburg:** And does Hili make sense of all this?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** Hili, when you ask her once, if you want to ask her, “tell me about yourself?” She always will answer you the same answer, “I am not half and half. I am also Palestinian, and also Jewish,” which is something that I am very relief as a parent to see that my daughter corrected her teacher once about this. That people are not parts. People are entire. So in today in our life, we try to encourage her to continue on this path.

**Adina Karpuj:** Does Hili ever ask like, why don't we move somewhere more peaceful?

**Anwar Ben Badis:** She… She says… I mean, she hears that from her mom and from her cousin from America. She has also cousin from my side in Austria and in Germany, all the time they say, “come here, leave it.” But I don't feel that you give up and say, “OK, yalla, we go.” No, I mean life is not a suitcase that you put it and move. So why take from her this opportunity to be in a beautiful and complicated place, but beautiful place, and to see all the sides of the place. For me, this is my country. This is my land. I'm not a visitor, and I hope for Hili, she also can move in this world. She can see different things. Sure, it's important, but it's important the same time that she knows that this place is her really home.