



Outside the Law

(Hors-la-loi)

Autumn
Season
2011

Release: 2010 France/Algeria
Cert (UK): 15
Runtime: 138 mins
Directors: Rachid Bouchareb

Cast: Jamel Debbouze, Roschdy Zem, Sabrina Seyvecou, Sami Bouajila



Bouchareb is a humanist with a strong feeling for personal tragedies and people caught up in the tides of history. His [London River](#), for instance, is an affecting story of a British widow and an elderly Malian migrant worker brought together in the wake of the 7 July 2005 bombings. The movie sets out to be even-handed in the apportioning of blame without trying to defend France's intransigence and the failure to recognise the humiliation and spiritual deprivation involved in colonialism

The still highly controversial colonial war that France fought in Algeria from the mid-1950s until the granting of independence in 1962 has only been patchily reflected in the cinema. It figures significantly in the background in films as different as Alain Resnais' *Muriel* and Michael Haneke's *Hidden*, and in 1966 there was *Lost Command*, a Hollywood version of Jean Lartéguy's French bestseller *The Centurions* about a battalion of Indo-China veterans reassembling for another bitter colonial conflict in Algeria. The only truly memorable movie is the Marxist *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), set in the early days of the revolution, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo and initiated by Yacef Saadi, a leader of the FLN (National Liberation Front). Banned in France for several years and regarded as one of the greatest political movies ever made, *The Battle of Algiers* was shown by the Pentagon to all senior officers and civil advisers going to Iraq and Afghanistan to show "how to win a battle against terrorism and lose the war of ideas".

Now we have Rachid Bouchareb's gripping *Outside the Law*, the centrepiece of a loose trilogy covering the North African experience from the 1920s to the present. Five years ago Bouchareb made the powerful [Days of Glory](#) (aka *Indigènes*) about the North Africans recruited to fight for La Patrie during the second world war and the way they were used, humiliated and cast aside when the war ended. The film concluded with an account of how pensions to African veterans were frozen when the countries attained independence; this so moved President Chirac that immediately after the premiere he set about changing the law. *Outside the Law* has also attracted the attention of French politicians, but this time they're followers of President Sarkozy attacking it for alleged distortions of history

'It's a big, bold film defined by a reserved passion, a stately style and strong performances from its three leads' Time Out

'The performances of Jamel Debbouze, Roschdy Zem and Sami Bouajila – all of whom appeared in Bouchareb's *Days of Glory* – are excellent, though it's Debbouze, as a pimp and cabaret-club promoter in Paris, who is the most gustily bracing..... It might have spent more time developing its female characters – they are silenced here almost as effectively as Algerian people were before decolonization.' Telegraph

Nominated at Cannes and for best Foreign Film