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# Hundreds protest as 'anti-French' Outside the Law is screened

Atrocities against Algerians is still very sensitive issue  
Bouchareb's film is strong contender for Palme d'Or

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Mark Brown, Cannes  
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Director Rachid Bouchareb (centre) poses with cast members (left to right) Roschdy Zem, Jamel Debbouze, Sami Bouajila and Chafia Boudraa during a photocall for the film *Hors La Loi* (*Outside the Law*) earlier today. Photograph: Jean-Paul Pelissier/REUTERS

There were protests from hundreds of people and beefed-up security at the [Cannes film festival](#) today for the first screening of an unflinching dramatisation of French atrocities against Algerians.

*Hors La Loi* (*Outside the Law*)

**Production year:** 2010

**Countries:** Algeria, Belgium, France

**Directors:** Rachid Bouchareb

**Cast:** Jamel Debbouze, Roschdy Zem, Sami Bouajila

[More on this film](#)

Rachid Bouchareb's *Outside the Law* is in competition for this year's Palme d'Or but it has been condemned by some politicians (even before they had seen it) as historically revisionist and "anti-French."

Earlier today, as it received its first screening, police were out in force as about a thousand people protested in Cannes, some of them members of the far-right National Front. Cinema-goers were frisked as they entered the Palais des Festivals and water bottles confiscated.

Bouchareb, a French-Algerian auteur, said he was dismayed by what he saw as an ill-informed fuss. "I'm surprised because this film is meant to open a calm debate, not a battleground. We need to lance the abscess, we need to have a calm debate about what happened so that we can move on to something else."

One central scene is a recreation of the Sétif massacre in 1945, where French soldiers and policemen are seen gunning down hundreds of innocent,

panicking Algerians. There are also scenes in Paris when Algerian suspects are beaten up and murdered by the police. It would be hard to deny that any of that took place.

But there are also scenes where you flinch at the ruthless zeal of the Algerian independence movement, the FLN.

The bloody battle for Algerian independence is still a hugely sensitive subject for some French people.

One of the most vocal politicians against the film is a deputy in the national assembly, Lionnel Luca – a member of Nicolas Sarkozy's UMP. He condemned the film as "anti-French" even before seeing it and is angry that French television channels are among the many funders of the film.

One demonstrator, a war veteran and former French senator Jacques Peyrat, today told Reuters: "What we want to make clear by demonstrating is that it is intolerable that public money from France can be used to sully the French army and France's action in Algeria."

The mayor of Cannes, Bernard Brochand, also a member of the UMP, was reported to be organising a ceremony for the French victims of the Algerian war of independence.

Bouchareb was at pains to point out that his film is a drama, albeit one centring on events that provoke painful memories. It has a Godfather or Once Upon A Time in America feel to it and Bouchareb admits he was trying to create "a sort of western."

The film opens in 1925, when an Algerian family are given three days to leave their land because a French colonist now owns it. It then follows three brothers – played by Jamel Debbouze, Roschdy Zem and Sami Bouajila – who survive the Sétif massacre and eventually end up, with their mother, in France.

One is an intellectual, one a fighter and one a wheeler-dealer. The first two become leaders in the FLN while the third pursues his dream of creating the first Algerian boxing champ.

It reunites some of the cast and crew who were in Bouchareb's Oscar-nominated 2006 movie Days of Glory, which dramatised the terrible discrimination suffered by North Africans fighting for France in the second world war. That film touched a nerve, shaming the French government into finally paying pensions to north African war veterans.

Today there was warm applause at Outside the Law's screening. It put itself firmly in the running for one of the awards to be given out on Sunday evening.

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