

MICHELE & COSTA-GAVRAS PRESENT

AMAZIGH **KATEB**
RACHIDA **BRAKNI**

LET THEM COME

A FILM BY **SALEM BRAHIMI**

PRODUCED BY MICHELE RAY-GAVRAS
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY AREZKI MELLAL "MAINTENANT ILS PEUVENT VENIR"
SCREENPLAY BY AREZKI MELLAL & SALEM BRAHIMI DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LEONIDAS ARVANTIS
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK ERIC NEVEUX WITH AMAZIGH KATEB - RACHIDA BRAKNI
LINE PRODUCER FLORENCE MASSET ART DIRECTORS MALEK OUBIENNDOUNI - SERGE BORGEL
EDITOR YORGOS LAMPRINOS SOUND JULIEN SICART - JEROME GONTHIER - KAREN BLUM
A FRANCO-ALGERIAN CO-PRODUCTION KG PRODUCTIONS - AARC - DATIAMI FILMS
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINEMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMEE
AND THE SUPPORT LA REGION PROVENCE ALPES COTE D'AZUR IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CNC
AND THE SUPPORT OF PROCIREP WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE ALGERIAN MINISTRY OF CULTURE



*The old world is dying away,
and the new world struggles
to come forth: now is the time
of monsters.*

ANTONIO GRAMSCI



LET THEM COME IN LESS THAN 30 WORDS

A Mediterranean family chronicle stabbed by History. Yasmina and Nouredine under the pressures of an all mighty mother, of a country adrift, and of islamist barbarity.

SYNOPSIS

The late 80s. Idols of the past are staggering in Algeria as in the rest of the world. Socialism is in its death throes. Algeria is importing new idols. Which one will win out? IMF-inspired capitalism? Or Afghan-style Islamism?

For Nouredine, a civil servant with literary aspirations, there is only one idol to be challenged: his mother. A lost cause. And so Nouredine will marry the beautiful Yasmina under maternal orders and have a child, Kamel.

Soon after this, everything goes wrong: first his marriage, then the whole country that stumbles into violence under Islamist pressure. Nouredine and Yasmina will try to make their way in a society that is collapsing, under absurdity and into Islamist fanaticism and barbarity: these are the 90s in Algeria, the "dark decade", 200 000 dead.

And so Nouredine learns. He learns love thanks to Yasmina and his son Kamel with whom he will reunite. He learns about resistance from his best friend Salah, a brave unionist, and from Yasmina who will never back down facing barbarity. He will learn solidarity from all those around him who refuse to live in fear or to submit to barbarity.

Nouredine and Yasmina will try to find happiness in a country that has forgotten all about happiness. And for a few moments, they'll even think they've found it: the birth of their daughter Safia will brings sunshine to their family... Happiness seems possible thanks to the love, the courage, the fraternity and the hope shared with all those at their sides -friends, family- who try to carry on.

But nothing can survive Islamist violence.



INTERVIEW

Interview conducted by Anne Ravanella for the "making of" documentary, during the post-production of the film.

SALEM

My film is above all a family chronicle, a story that would have been a simple one if barbarity had not come crashing into it, into the film and into the history of Algeria. A simple story that goes wrong.

ANNE

A simple story?

SALEM

A typically Mediterranean family chronicle suddenly stabbed by history. This is the chronicle of Noureddine and Yasmina's marriage. A marriage under pressure: the pressure of an all-powerful mother, the pressure of a country adrift, Algeria in the 1990s, and the pressure of Islamist barbarity.

This is the story of a young man Noureddine, in the late 80s in Algeria, torn between modernity and tradition, between the tradition of marriages arranged by mothers and his desire to live life freely with Karima. Finally the mother has it her way and forces onto him a marriage and a woman:

Yasmina.

It starts as a very straightforward and ordinary story but history happens and suddenly fuels this story with the events of 90s in Algeria: the so-called "dark decade", those years of Islamist terrorism that claimed the lives of 200 000 people.

Amidst the escalating barbarity, Noureddine will come to rediscover the woman he never really looked at. And this woman, Yasmina, will turn out to be far more dignified, brave and resilient than he had ever imagined.

The Emir Abdelkader once said «events shaped me, more than I shaped the events.» I like this pendulum movement between events and characters. I very much hope I remained true to these characters, to this contradictory, sensual and violent society that we have in Algeria and in the Mediterranean. Because we are more than just the dark decade.

ANNE

Tragedy inspires love?

SALEM

It is an enhancer for sure but love had to be there before. Lack of wisdom or lack of experience sometimes prevents one's eyes to look on the essentials. But when barbarity happens, the world becomes dry, bare. Noureddine can suddenly see what is important. Noureddine stops looking here, there, left, right... He finally starts looking in front of him and finds Yasmina..

ANNE

The dark decade, the 90s ... Isn't all this long forgotten?

SALEM

What was true then in Algeria still holds true today in the Middle East with Daesh, or in Africa with AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) or Boko Haram. We remain in the «time of monsters.» So no, the dark decade, the 90s are not long forgotten. When the Afghans were fighting against the Russians, the West supported what was perhaps a legitimate struggle. But in doing so the West funded, trained and applauded bin Laden, the Taliban, but also an army of Saudis, Algerians and other Muslim volunteers who earned valuable war-experience in Afghanistan. Then some of these people went on to Bosnia... Again, the problem was not visible. It did not take the form of terrorism at that time.

Then comes Algeria and the first opportunity to actually overthrow a country by attacking the government and the population.

Daesh is version 2.0 of the Algerian GIA (Armed Islamic Group).

The GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat) was in decline, but it reinvented itself elsewhere under the brand AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb).

What we see today is that when there is a powerful surge of radical Islam somewhere, it spawns Islamist initiatives all over. It inspires and galvanizes isolated initiatives.

Terrorist acts such as the one that killed Mr. Gourdel in Algeria or the Charlie Hebdo attack are symptomatic of this "franchised" brand of radical Islamism. A MacDonald's of terrorism of sorts.

You set up the «brand» GIA, Al Qaeda or Daesh ... and then it spreads. There is a continuous thread, - perhaps a winding, complex thread, but a real one nonetheless- that links what the world is going through today to what Algeria went through in the 90s.

So one can choose to forget the dark decade and be Sisyphus. Or one can learn from the past. What is certain is that Daesh learned from the past. And they are fast learners. How about us?

ANNE

Did the desire to make a film on all this come from the book or did you have it before you read the book?

SALEM

I had the desire and the need to explore the dark decade of terrorism in Algeria well

before I read the novel.

I am an Algerian, I now live in France but I worked in Algeria.

In Algeria, there is this moment in our history that you can find everywhere and nowhere at the same time: the dark decade.

It is a story that is not spoken. Or rarely. And every time we talk about it, we come out stunned and confused : «How could we become that? » It would be great if we could pin it on the backs of others: "Oh well! It's Saudi Arabia's fault. Ah well! Blame it on Afghanistan! »

Of course, there are foreign responsibilities here and there. Even in the West, might I add.

But one must first take a long hard look at oneself. A character in the film says this: the cop, Uncle Boualem says «those butchers, those who slaughter, they were our neighbours, they were our brothers, our sons. That's us». And we must face it: at some point it all boils down to someone making the decision to take a knife and slit a child's throat.

At the end of the edit of the documentary on the Pan-African festival, something struck me: I understood the subtext of that Algerian Festival. This celebration was in fact Algeria's need to say:

«The street is ours again. We have reclaimed the night! The dark decade had stolen the night from us.

One could not be safe at night. And here and now with a celebration, we claim it again. We dance, we cry, we laugh together, in the street. Outdoors.»

Around the same time, Michèle with whom I had a history making films in Algeria, gave me the book. She knew what she was doing of course. If I had read the novel two years before or two years later, perhaps the chemistry between the book and I wouldn't have happened. I don't know.

ANNE

A word about Arezki Mellal, the author of the novel with whom you co-wrote the screenplay?

SALEM

Michèle and I thought that working with Arezki was the only way for us to "betray" the novel, so to speak, as an adaptation requires us to, while remaining faithful to the fundamentals of the book...

Arezki, as Noureddine in the film, lived and still lives in the plain of the Mitidja. The "death triangle" as they used to call this region. Arezki worked in a State-owned printing factory that was at the heart of union struggles at that time. Although we obviously made the company look slightly different and changed its name, we shot in this very same factory and so our Noureddine works in this historically charged place.

I don't want to speak for Arezki but I think that Salah's character both in the book and in the script means a lot to him.

Salah embodies the fact that there are people who choose the struggle over comfort. They choose the right struggles, they defend the right cause in the right way at the right time. That's who Salah is. And I think you can find a lot of Salah's sense of right and wrong in Arezki.

ANNE

And how was the journey from script writing to directing?

SALEM

It was both exhilarating and cruel. It's a cruel experience to confront 4 years desiring a film to the realities of making it. You realize that the job you fantasized about is not all that you thought it was. To be more specific, the film I had very precisely designed in my mind over 4 years doesn't really exist. As you face the reality of preparing and then shooting your film, you start designing and desiring another film. A film that could not possibly be planned years ahead. It's just like human relationships: the difference between a fantasized relationship and a real one. This journey from a fantasized relationship to a real one: that's what a first film is.

ANNE

We shot on location in Marseille and in Algeria. Could you start with Marseilles?

SALEM

We had funding from the PACA region (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur region, in the South of France) and so we were required to shoot three weeks in Marseilles. The climate, certain buildings or the Marseille Nord Hospital are quite close to those one can find in Algeria. We chose a housing project called La Busserine, in the so-called "quartiers nord", the supposedly dangerous northern districts of Marseille. And indeed, two weeks before filming, the neighbourhood was in turmoil: someone in the neighbourhood had been killed. An execution, a stone throw away from the set. So people there were relieved that we weren't around to make a film about the «rough neighbourhoods» and that we were shooting there as we would in a Parisian cafe, or a street in Lyon. We were met with a lot of good will. It was very quiet really. La Busserine was the ideal place to begin the shoot.

ANNE

And Algeria?

SALEM

I made documentaries in Algeria and we had produced two feature films there with Michèle. We had known the crew for very long, and so their friendship, their warmth, their good will and their political commitment toward the subject was a great strength for me. Similarly, Leonidas Arvanitis, the cinematographer, had already worked in Algeria. So he had a sensitivity to the place, to the people. He could understand an Algerian perspective. Watch things the way we watch them, and understand our restraint. We recreated in Algeria a period that everyone remembers. This is not something disembodied, from the distant past. This is a traumatic part of very recent history. And all along the prep and the shoot we met this will to speak the unspoken. Working with the police, the army, in the factory, speaking with extras, people in the villages, people of all walks of life kept on telling us: "Tell our story. Say what we went through! So it's not forgotten!.

ANNE

And Amazigh Kateb?

SALEM

He is the front man of the band «Gnawa Diffusion». And this is his first film as an actor.

Amazigh Kateb is also the son of Kateb Yacine our greatest playwright. A literary giant. And I say this, not to flash any family credentials on Amazigh's part: what this means is that Amazigh was raised in a theatre. And deep down, he understood very well what a script and what an actor are.

When I read the novel I kept on thinking of him. And then Michele loved the interview I had made with him at the Pan African Festival: he has this mix of poetry and dryness, he has both a gentleness and a toughness just like Nouredine. If the character had been too gentle, he would have been namby-pamby. But if you make him too tough, he becomes a character to rough on the edges, who can't really «grow» alongside Yasmina. Amazigh is the perfect balance between sensitivity and a hint of Mediterranean machismo. And then of course, choosing him really made even more sense in the context of his duo with Rachida Brakni.

ANNE

Rachida Brakni seems to have this innate sense of tragedy.

SALEM

When we were shooting the scene when Nouredine finally finds her, she reminded me of Irene Papas. Rachida goes exactly where you want her to go, but always with a twist, adding more soul to it. And so she really enhances whichever direction you chose to take. Amazigh will go somewhere using sideways, unplanned paths. And it works. This is who he is. And this is how he moves. He needs to make things his own this way. Rachida won't take use any sideways: she will follow the way you suggest to her, but as you walk her through it, she shows you a hundred things you didn't know you'd find on the way. Amazigh is an encyclopaedia of all dialects of Algeria, of all the language rhythms there. During the read-throughs Amazigh played with words, tones. Rachida asked one or two questions on intents and motives, danced around them and suddenly bam! The dialog was hers.

ANNE

Can we... Do you want to go to the end of the film?

SALEM

Kateb Yacine said «Keep silent or speak the unspeakable.» The ending of the film speaks the unspeakable and then keeps silent. The ending says that when barbarity happens, even an act of love becomes barbaric. The end of the film could be in Europe in 1942... Sophie's Choice...

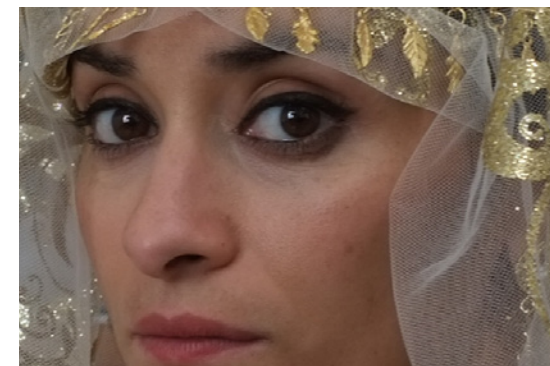
ANNE

We are in the editing room and we are talking about this film 24 hours after Charlie Hebdo.

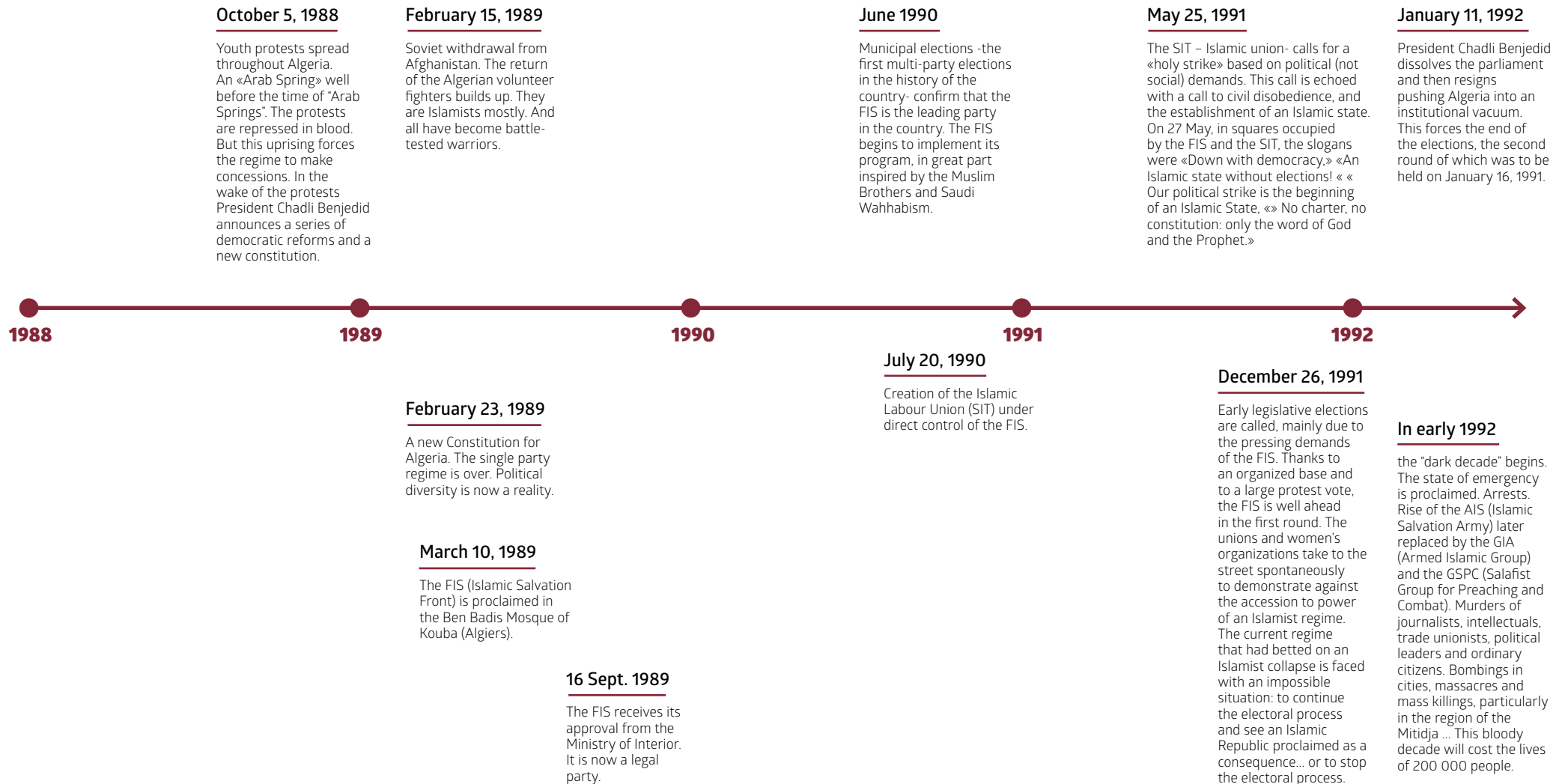
SALEM

Yesterday, with this attack against Charlie Hebdo, just as during the dark decade in Algeria, journalists were prime targets. Because they are these people who get up in the morning and say: "I will look into

the eye of barbarity but I will not let myself be defined by it.» A cartoonist will say «Where there is tragedy, I will reply with a smile, or something poetic or ironic». A journalist will say: «Where there is fear and silence, I will respond with words, with the truth, and with questions». The film pays a tribute to the great Algerian cartoonist Dilem with this sentence taken from one of his sharpest and wittiest cartoons during the dark decade «To leave is to die a little. To stay is to die a lot.»



TIMELINE OF EVENTS LEADING TO THE “DARK DECADE” IN ALGERIA



SALEM BRAHIMI

Salem Brahimi is an Algerian and French producer and director. After co-directing with Chergui Kharroubi the feature length documentary "Africa is Back" about the 2009 Panafrican Festival of Algiers, he directed in 2013 another feature documentary "Abd El Kader", co-written with Audrey Brasseur. This film mixes live action documentary with animation.

In 2014 he directed another feature film, fiction this time. "Maintenant Ils Peuvent Venir" ("Let them come") is an adaptation of the novel by Arezki Mellal with whom he co-wrote the script. The film, about Algeria's struggle with fundamentalist terrorism, stars Rachid Brakni and Amazigh Kateb and was produced by Michèle Ray Gavras and Costa Gavras.

As a producer he produced and coproduced both documentaries and fictions (among others "Mon Colonel" by Laurent Herbiet and "Cartouches Gauloises" by Mehdi Charef, both co-produced with Michèle Ray-Gavras, or "Selves and Others – A portrait of Edward Said" by Emmanuel Hamon).

Salem Brahimi was born May 10, 1972 in London. He graduated from EDHEC (1994). He is married and has two children.



AREZKI MELLAL

Born in 1949 in Algiers. Lives and works in Algeria. Arezki Mellal started in the world of books as a publisher and a graphic designer until the 90s, when he finally decided to make the jump to "the other side" of books and write.

He is an author of novels, short stories, screenplays but most of all he is a playwright. A select list of his work includes:

- Maintenant Ils Peuvent Venir, a novel, published at Barzakh (Algeria) in 2000 and at Actes Sud (France), in 2002.
- Marcelle, Denise, a spring in Limoges in «La Paix en toutes lettres», published at Actes Sud-À ciel ouvert (France).
- The Official Delegation followed by Sisao, a play, published at Actes Sud Papiers 2004.
- En Remontant le Niger, a play. Actes Sud Papiers, 2006.
- Arezki Mellal Plays: a collection of three plays, (The Official Delegation, En Remontant le Niger, L'Etoile Noire) at Barzakh Publishing, Algiers, 2008.

Film

- La dernière solution, scriptwriter of the feature film directed by Rachid Benallal, produced by Studiocom, Algiers, 2008.
- Maintenant Ils Peuvent Venir (Let them come), adapted and co-wrote the feature film screenplay, directed by Salem Brahimi, produced by KG productions.

CAST AND CREW

A film by Salem Brahimi
Produced by Michele Ray Gavras

Line producer Florence Masset
Based on the novel by Arezki Mellal
« Maintenant ils peuvent venir »

Written by Arezki Mellal and Salem Brahimi
Original soundtrack Eric Neveux
Director of photography Leonidas Arvanitis
Editor Yorgos Lamprinos
Sound Julien Sicart
Jérôme Gonthier
Karen Blum

WITH

Nouredine Amazigh Kateb
Yasmina Rachida Brakni
Mother Nouredine Farida Saboundji
Salah Mohamed Ali Allalou
Slimane Lounès Tazairt
Oncle Boualem Kader Kada
Kamel Ilyane Djebourri
Safia Inès Nouri
Leila Linda Chaib
Farid Abdelkrim Bahloul
Mère Yasmina Thoraya
Lilia Sonia Amori
Amar Zoubir Fouad Trifi