

★★★★★
Financial Times

CRITIC'S TOP PICK
- Guardian, The Times,
RadioTimes, The Telegraph

★★★★★
Daily Mail

“All blasphemers must die...”

THE ACCUSED

DAMNED OR DEVOTED?



**SIXTY
4TH
STREET
MEDIA**

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A BROOK LAPPING AND 64TH STREET MEDIA PRODUCTION | LINE PRODUCER PAKISTAN **MOHAMMED ABID JADOON** | PRODUCTION EXECUTIVES **DOMINIC BOLTON, NICHOLAS FRANKLIN** | HEAD OF POST PRODUCTION **DOM JAMES** | COMPOSER **TONI MARTIN DOBRZANSKI** | ADDITIONAL EDITOR **KAMRAN SHAHNAWAZ** | FILM EDITOR **SAFI FERRAH** | ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS **MUHAMMAD SOHAIL RANA, RABBIA ARSHAD, MADEEHA SYED** | CO-PRODUCERS **SYED MUSHARAF SHAH, MOHSIN ABBAS** | EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FOR ZDF/ARTE **MIRIAM CARBE, MARTIN PIEPER** | EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FOR THE BBC **MANDY CHANG, HAYLEY REYNOLDS** | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **FIONA STOURTON** | PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY **MOHAMMED ALI NAQVI**

CO-PRODUCED BY :



STORYVILLE



arte

IN ASSOCIATION WITH :



Radio Télévision
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THE ACCUSED

DAMNED OR DEVOTED?

75 mins, UK/ USA/ Pakistan

“an investigative journalistic film of the rarer and more urgent kind.”

- Programming Committee, Copenhagen International Documentary Festival



LOGLINE

How the divide in Pakistan over its blasphemy law, which if broken can lead to a death sentence for those accused, is exploited for political purposes.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi, has one mission: to preserve Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which prescribe a mandatory death sentence for disrespecting The Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and life imprisonment for desecrating the Holy Quran. With millions sympathetic to his goal, Rizvi holds the state under his spell and silences anyone attempting to change the law by condemning them to death. But there's more to Rizvi's mission than just maintaining the sanctity of his faith: he's running for the highest office in the country in the upcoming elections where everyone — those that oppose him and even his followers are just pawns in his quest for absolute power.

PRESENTED AND
PRODUCED BY

BROOK LAPPING AND
64TH STREET MEDIA

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www.theaccused.com

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SYNOPSIS

“The Accused: Damned or Devoted” is a modern-day inquisition. Against the backdrop of Pakistan’s elections, this film follows the rise of powerful cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi, on a mission is to preserve the country’s blasphemy laws, which prescribe a mandatory death sentence for disrespecting The Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and life imprisonment for desecrating the Holy Quran. With millions sympathetic to his goal, Rizvi holds the country under his spell and silences anyone attempting to change the law by condemning them to death. As he pushes for more power, Rizvi decides to run for office in the upcoming general elections, and those accused of blasphemy or those who oppose the blasphemy laws- whether targeted minorities, liberals, and opposing Muslim voices - become the pawns of his ambition.

These include Patras and Asia Bibi. Two Christians who have been accused of committing blasphemy - Patras for allegedly sharing blasphemous content on social media, and Asia for allegedly uttering blasphemous words during an argument with a co-worker. Awaiting their trials, chances look grim for these two in the run up to elections, where even moderate front runner Imran Khan appears to support the Blasphemy Law. Despite Cleric Rizvi’s political strategy of crushing dissenters, brave opposing voices emerge. Narrowly escaping a lynch mob, Gulalai Ismail, who was falsely accused of blasphemy, decides to countersue her accuser and the judicial system in Pakistan becomes a battleground. With access to all sides revealing the interplay of religion and politics, “The Accused: Damned or Devoted” is a crucial election story of fledgling democracy that is not only a key ally in the global war against terror, it is also a nuclear power.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This project is the most dangerous film I have ever worked on. Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws prescribe a mandatory death sentence for disrespecting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Even Pakistanis who have criticized the law for being too harsh risk being charged with blasphemy or assassinated themselves. I refused to possibly explore this topic when I was first approached.

Then in November 2017, the Pakistani Parliament passed legislation that was considered a first step towards relaxing the Blasphemy Law. Suddenly, Cleric Rizvi, the leader of a religious political party (and a primary subject in our film) descended on Islamabad and essentially put the whole city under siege.

As I was in Islamabad at that time, in front of my eyes, I saw parliament immediately back track and rescind the legislation. Rizvi had won. My country had once again fallen prey to the political ambitions of a despot, one who was using Islam as veneer. Ultimately, I wanted to expose Rizvi - he did not speak for me or other Muslims, he only spoke for his own political ambitions. In doing so, he was also responsible for the lynching of several minorities and Muslims who had been falsely accused of blasphemy. He had to be stopped. This was what motivated me to make this film.

DIRECTOR & PRODUCER

MOHAMMED ALI NAQVI



Mohammed Ali Naqvi (Mo) is an internationally celebrated filmmaker, whose work has won over forty prestigious awards and honors, including a Television Academy Honor, two Amnesty International Human Rights Awards, and a Grand Prix from the United Nations Association Festival. He has been nominated for an Independent Spirit Award, a Cinema Eye Honor, and the UNESCO-FELLINI Prize. He is also an alumnus of top festivals including Toronto, Sundance, Tribeca, Berlin, and Busan, and an American Film Institute and National Endowment of the Arts Fellow.

Mo's non-fiction films have been called "explosive" and "chilling", and have been described as having "jaw-dropping" and "unprecedented" access. His most recent documentaries Insha'Allah Democracy (STARZ,

BBC), featuring fly-on-wall access to notorious military dictator General Pervez Musharraf and *Among the Believers* (PBS World/Netflix), despite being described as "one of 2015's most important films" were both banned in Mo's home country Pakistan. Other credits include Pakistan's *Hidden Shame* (Channel 4 UK, ABC Australia, NHK, SVT), a stark and disturbing look into the sexual abuse suffered by street children living in the city of Peshawar, Pakistan and *Shabeena's Quest* (Al-Jazeera World), about a remarkable school principal, and her quest to bring education to young girls living in the shadows of the Taliban. Internationally acclaimed *Shame* (Paramount / Showtime Networks) profiles sexual violence survivor and international human rights icon Mukhtaran Mai. *Terror's Children* (Discovery-Times) chronicles the lives of Afghan refugee children living in a post 9/11 Pakistan.

In addition, Mo has produced fiction feature films including *Big River* starring Jo Odagiri and *Kavi Raz* in production with renowned filmmaker Takeshi Kitano's production company Office Kitano, and *I Will Avenge You* starring Giancarlo Esposito and Larry Pine. Recently he directed *Happy Things in Sorrow Times*, inspired by writer Tehmina Durrani's book of the same name.

After completing a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 2001 and theatre training at the renowned New York conservatory Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute, Naqvi founded B.L.A.H Productions, an off-Broadway theatre company in New York, for which he produced, directed and acted in a number of plays. Originally from Karachi, Pakistan, Mohammed spends his time between Karachi and New York



EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

FIONA STOURTON

Fiona Stourton is a multi-award winning Executive Producer who worked for both the BBC and ITN, before joining the independent television sector.

A graduate of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, Fiona worked first in radio for the BBC Africa Service and then moved into television as a News trainee. She has worked as a producer in BBC radio and TV newsrooms and the current affairs department and as a reporter and presenter on Channel 4 News (ITN).

As an Executive Producer, Fiona's awards include International Documentary and Current Affairs prizes from the Royal Television Society, Peabody, Dupont, Golden Nymph, Monte Carlo, Amnesty International, Grierson and BAFTA and EMMY nominations.

Most recent productions include Saudi Women's Driving School for HBO and Brexit Behind Closed Doors for BBC Storyville, ZDF ARTE and a range of international broadcasters.





CO-PRODUCER

SYED MUSHARRAF SHAH

Syed Musharraf Shah is a documentary producer based in Peshawar, Pakistan. He started his film career with BBC Panorama in 2008 and later started focusing on producing feature documentaries. His credits include Emmy nominated feature documentary Among the Believers (PBS), Insha'Allah Democracy (BBC), Pakistan's Hidden Shame (Channel 4), and Shabeena's Quest (Al Jazeera). And co-directed feature documentary Genesis (Memento Production, Sweden). His non-fiction credits include Happy Things in Sorrow Times (Tehmina Durrani).

He is a recipient of the HDI Fellowship sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. embassy in Pakistan. His current projects include The Ballad of Exiled a story of displaced musicians from tribal areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan.



CO-PRODUCER

MOHSIN ABBAS

Mohsin Abbas is an award-winning Pakistani-Canadian journalist, filmmaker and press freedom activist. He has worked for many years as news/investigative reporter, producer and fixer for newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and film in Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, (South Asia) Canada and Chile. Currently he is a contributor for BBC News Punjabi Service from Canada.

Since 1994, Abbas has written and produced for Daily Pakistan, BBC World Service, CBC Canada, Deutsche Welle, New York Post, the Toronto Star, the Hamilton Spectator, The Santiago Times, Vision Television, Prince Albert Daily Herald and Pakistan's prestigious daily Dawn.



PRESS

★★★★★

“...grim tale of hatred and intolerance.”

- *Financial Times*

★★★★★

“Shocking...”

- *Daily Mail*

“Powerful stuff”

- *Asian Culture Vulture*

“horrific,”

TOP PICK - *RadioTimes*

“Sobering,”

TOP PICK - *Guardian*

“Scarily Acute portrait of how religion and politics intersect...”

WHAT TO WATCH - *The Telegraph*

“powerful film... This stark dive into Pakistan’s blasphemy laws has many more moments of horror,”

CRITIC’S CHOICE - *The Times*

“This is one of the best films to have probed the difficult relations between religion, politics and human rights.”

- *Film Inquiry*

“Level of access is amazing”

- *Chatham House Undercurrents*

“It’s an understatement to say that I was shocked watching this film,”

- *filmommentare*

FILM CREDITS

Produced & Directed by
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Executive Producer for Brook Lapping
FIONA STOURTON

Co-Producers
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MOHSIN ABBAS

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SAFI FERRAH

Additional Editing
KAMRAN SHAHNAWAZ

Composer
TONI MARTIN DOBRZANSKI

Camera
MUHAMMAD SOHAIL RANA
TAHIR MALIK
ANSER IQBAL
NEK AMAL
HAIDER ALI

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vpro

RTS Radio Télévision
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NRK