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Bobby Sands film defended for its 'insight' into suicide bombers



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By
Arifa
Akbar

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British director Steve McQueen poses during a photocall for his film 'Hunger' at the 61st Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France. [Full insight into the minds of suicide bombers](#) Getty Images

Friday May 16 2008

A controversial film documenting the final weeks of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands has been defended by its makers at the [Cannes Film Festival](#) as a useful insight into the minds of suicide bombers.

'Hunger', a 96-minute film by [Steve McQueen](#), tells the tale of Sands, who died on hunger strike at Maze prison. The film has drawn criticism for creating a hero out of a terrorist.

But [Jan Youngusband](#), executive producer of the film, said the harrowing story merely exposed the mentality of someone ready to die for a cause, such as the [London](#) suicide bombers.

"You look at suicide bombers and wonder what it is that drives them to kill themselves in their attempt to make the world better. This is a very contemporary issue, destroying your body for something you believe in," she said.

"We look at terrorists and we think 'aren't they horrible, they are blowing us up'. But we have to ask 'What is our role in that?' We are not without responsibility."

The gritty drama, the directorial debut for Turner-Prize-winning artist McQueen, focuses on the last six weeks of Sands' life. Jailed for possessing a gun, he became an icon in the Republican movement when he died in 1981 at the age of 27 after 66 days on hunger strike -- a protest at prisoners losing their political status.

Sands became an MP 25 days before he died; his death prompted several days of riots in nationalist areas of [Northern Ireland](#) and drew 100,000 people to his funeral.

Some have suggested the film's release is likely to rekindle bitter feelings in [Belfast](#). Sands' family have been invited to see the film but have declined the offer of a personal screening.

McQueen, whose recent work includes a series of postage stamps bearing the faces of dead soldiers who had served in [Iraq](#), said: "The body as site of political warfare is becoming a more familiar phenomenon. It is the final act of desperation; your own body is your last resource for protest."

The film's [Dublin](#)-born writer, [Enda Walsh](#) (best known for 'Disco Pigs') spent several weeks interviewing Sand's fellow prisoners and prison guards.

Its makers say the story draws a parallel between IRA prisoners in the Maze, and those currently in [Abu Ghraib](#) prison and [Guantanamo Bay](#). (© Independent News Service)

- Arifa Akbar

Comments



The article doesn't say Sands was a suicide bomber, but like suicide bombers he gave his life for a cause. Sands would have also killed for his cause, but he had the opportunity to do something more effective. As for the coalition not being oppressors, tell that to the thousands/ten of thousands (we will never know) of innocent victims of coalition violence. The British forces would also argue that they were never oppressors. Resistance is Resistance and the more desperate people are the more desperate their actions get. I am sure suicide bombers in Palestine get huge support as is seen at their funerals. John and Jer have made silly points.

Posted by emmet | 19.05.08, 02:15 GMT

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Bobby Sands was not a suicide bomber. Dying on hunger strike is nothing like going out to kill people by blowing yourself up.

And trying to compare the Maze to Abu Grabi is not reasonable. The `coalition` is not an oppressor in Iraq.

Posted by John from Tokyo | 18.05.08, 03:40 GMT



That someone could compare the hunger strikers to suicide bombers is both baffling and saddening.

Bobby Sands was supported by the people as evidenced in his election as an MP, as were other strikers and by the huge turnout for his funeral - one of the largest ever seen and rivalling those of Parnell, Collins or others.

Posted by Jer | 17.05.08, 11:36 GMT

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