

Shooting Dogs **2005/Certificate 15**

Synopsis of the film

Shooting Dogs is based on a true story of Catholic Priest who sheltered over 2,500 Tutsis during the genocide in Rwanda. The film features Father Christopher (John Hurt) and English Teacher Joe (Hugh Dancy) and the school in which they teach. The film begins with the shooting down of the plane of the President of Rwanda which marked the beginning of the genocide. Hutu militias are formed almost immediately, and the radios begin to broadcast anti-Tutsi propaganda, spurring the genocidaires to murder their relatives and neighbours. Tutsis from the surrounding area flock to the school, which is under the protection of the U.N. whose soldiers do not stop the Hutu militia from gathering outside the gates to the school.

We see the genocide unfurl, with violence and murder on the streets through the eyes of Joe and his relationship with English-speaking student Marie (Clare-Hope Ashitey). It's immediately apparent that people he saw as friends, in particular, Francois the caretaker of the school is swayed by the centuries old ethnic divisions within the country and we see Francois become a murderer.

The title of the film refers to the action that the U.N. did take. Their mandate was to observe, rather than to stop the genocide. The corpses of those Tutsis who were murdered and left in the street were being eaten by the stray dogs. The U.N. were allowed to shoot the dogs.

The film tells of the deprivation and shortage of food, water, medicine and shelter in the makeshift refugee camp at the school. It also looks at International responses to the genocide, including the removal of all white people who had sought refuge in the school and the recall of U.N. personnel. The film culminates in Joe returning to England, and Father Christopher hiding the children from the school in his van and giving them a chance to escape. Father Christopher is shot by the *Interahamwe* but the children, including Marie, escape. The Tutsis left in the school are murdered almost as soon Father Christopher leaves.

The film ends when Joe and Marie are reunited in England.

This story is loosely based on that of Father Ćurić a Bosnian Roman Catholic priest who lived and worked in Rwanda for 10 years and stood up to the *Interahamwe* as they

murdered and persecuted Tutsis. It is based on the experiences of BBC News reporter David Belton.

When it was made and where

Shooting Dogs was made in Rwanda at the *Ecole Technique Officielle* in Kigali – exactly where the Tutsis sought shelter. Survivors of the genocide worked as extras and as part of the crew on this film.

HMDT Review

Please note that the review may act as spoilers for the film.

We recommend this film as a way to explore the events of the genocide in Rwanda. It considers the role of the International community, the roles of rescuers and how propaganda plays a large part in genocide.

The film looks at how genocide can grow from small acts. From Hutu children throwing stones and calling Marie a ‘cockroach’ to the murder of the thousands of Tutsis in the school, we see the events through the eyes of Joe (Dancy). It also considers the role of the perpetrators of the genocide and those who chose to rescue. There are many mentions and comparisons of the Holocaust throughout the film.

You can use HMDT resources to find out more about the genocide in Rwanda <http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/rwanda>, the role of rescuers <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/theme-papers/one-person-can-make-a-difference> and read a survivor testimony <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/survivor-stories>.