



**Locarno Film Festival**  
CONCORSO CINEASTI DEL PRESENTE  
OFFICIAL SELECTION

# RED PATH

*LES ENFANTS ROUGES*  
A film by Lotfi Achour



# RED PATH

(LES ENFANTS ROUGES)

SOCIAL ISSUES, CHILDREN, MOURNING

ARABIC | TUNISIA, FRANCE, BELGIUM, POLAND | 97'

*Written by* Natacha de Pontcharra and Lotfi Achour.

*Directed by* Lotfi Achour.

*Production Companies* APA: Artistes Producteurs Associés,  
La Luna Productions, Versus Production, Shipsboy.

*Producers* Anissa Daoud, Sébastien Hussenot, Lotfi Achour.

*Co-producers* Jacques-Henri Bronckart, Gwennaëlle Libert,  
Joanna Szymanska, Edyta Janczak-Hiriart.

*DOP* Wojciech Staron.

*Editing by* Ewin Ryckaert, Malek Chatta.

*Protagonists* Ali Helali, Yassine Samouni, Wided Dabebi, Jemii Lamari  
Latifa Gafsi, Salha Nasraoui, Younes Naouar.





A person wearing a red hoodie is sitting in a field of tall, dry grass. In the background, there is a line of trees with dark trunks and sparse foliage. The scene is somewhat desaturated, giving it a somber or dreamlike quality.

### *SYNOPSIS*

Mghila Mountain, Tunisia, November 2015. When a jihadist group attacks two very young shepherds, 14-year-old Ashraf is forced to take a macabre message back to his family. Traumatized and trying not to lose his mind, Ashraf finds himself confronted with the powerlessness of his elders, abandoned by the authorities. Inspired by true events, *Les Enfants Rouges* is a dreamlike plunge into the wounded psyche of a child and his incredible ability to overcome trauma.







## LOTFI ACHOUR

Born in Tunis, Lotfi Achour is an author, director, and producer. After his baccalauréat, he enrolled at the Faculty of Law and Economics in Tunis, where he studied economics. After a family tragedy, he realized that he wanted to become an actor and, at the age of 21, began his training at the Grenoble Conservatory and studied theater and cinema at the Sorbonne Institute of Theatrical Studies.

Lofti Achour has produced over 25 theatrical works. His latest show was co-produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company for the London 2012 Olympic Games. In the cinema, he has directed 3 short films that have won dozens of awards, including *La laine sur le dos*, which was nominated in the short film category at the 69th Cannes Film Festival.

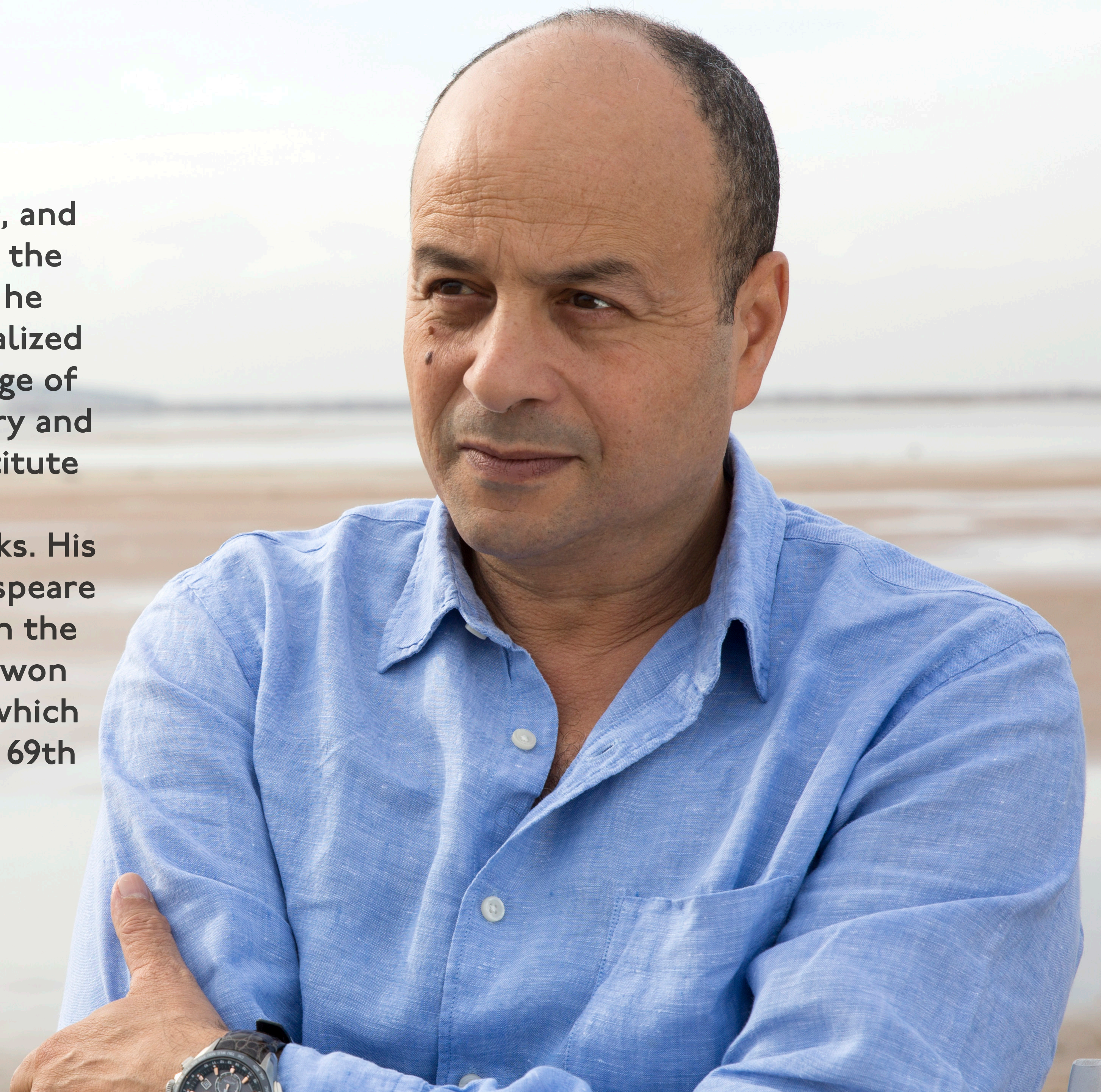
ORDYURE, short film, 2006.

PÈRE, short film, 2014.

LA LAINE SUR LE DOS, short film, 2016

BURNING HOPE, feature film 2016

ANGLE MORT, short film, 2022





## DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

The film starts with a card from which we learn that the film is set in a central region of Tunisia, in November 2015. What is the political context in Tunisia at the time of the film, both in urban cities and in the countryside?

*Indeed, the film is inspired by a real event which took place in November 2015. A terrorist group beheaded a young 16-year-old shepherd and gave the head to his 14-year-old cousin to bring back to the family.*

*It was probably one of the most traumatic terrorist crimes for Tunisians and one that is truly inscribed in our collective memory. Firstly because it affected children and also because of the cruelty of the crime.*

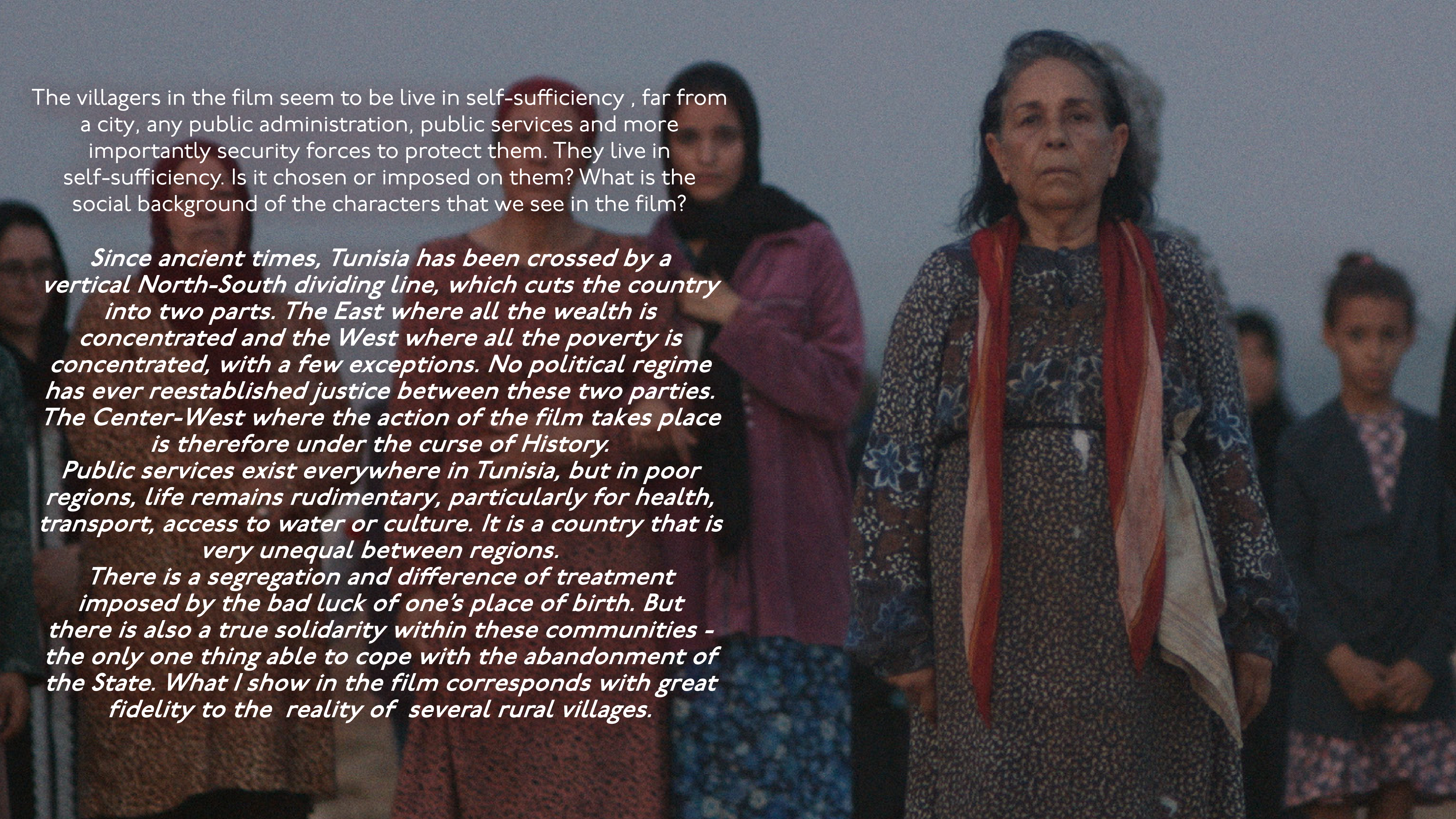
*Tunisia in 2015 was dominated by a coalition between the Islamist movement and figures from the old regimes that preceded the revolution (Arab Spring - 2011.) It was a sort of "stability deal" blessed by the Europeans and the Americans between two mafia groups: the old and the new, who reorganized the political power and the wealth of the country, abandoning the population to themselves.*

*The Islamist party included among its leaders people ideologically and politically very close to jihadist movements responsible for political assassinations in 2013 and terrorist crimes against soldiers.*

*Through its complicit links with terrorism, this party could exploit these groups and use them as leverage, when it wanted, to further consolidate its power by sowing fear.*





A group of women in traditional Tunisian clothing, including patterned dresses and headscarves, standing in a row. The woman in the foreground is wearing a blue patterned dress and a red headscarf. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

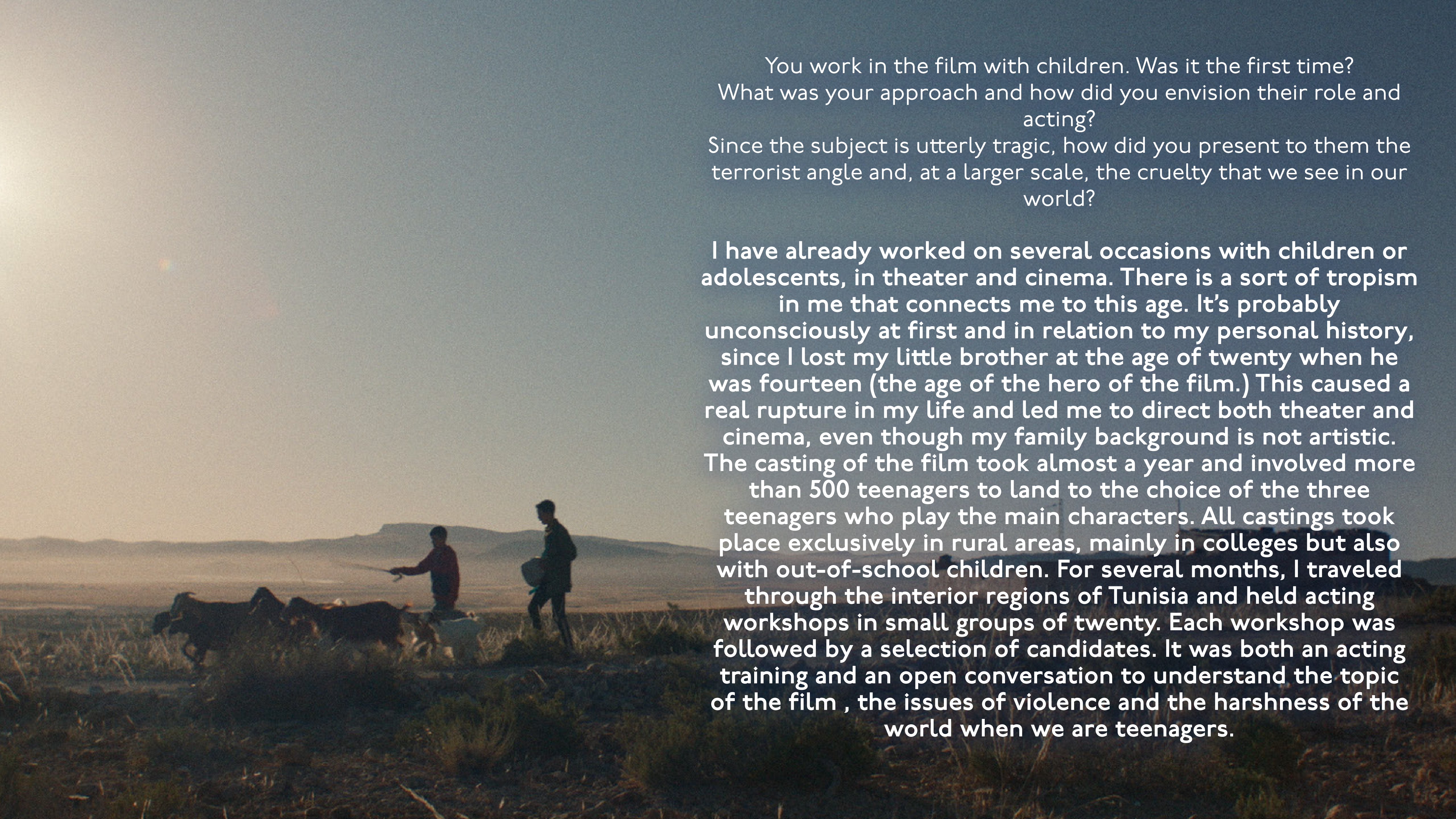
The villagers in the film seem to be live in self-sufficiency , far from a city, any public administration, public services and more importantly security forces to protect them. They live in self-sufficiency. Is it chosen or imposed on them? What is the social background of the characters that we see in the film?

*Since ancient times, Tunisia has been crossed by a vertical North-South dividing line, which cuts the country into two parts. The East where all the wealth is concentrated and the West where all the poverty is concentrated, with a few exceptions. No political regime has ever reestablished justice between these two parties. The Center-West where the action of the film takes place is therefore under the curse of History.*

*Public services exist everywhere in Tunisia, but in poor regions, life remains rudimentary, particularly for health, transport, access to water or culture. It is a country that is very unequal between regions.*

*There is a segregation and difference of treatment imposed by the bad luck of one's place of birth. But there is also a true solidarity within these communities - the only one thing able to cope with the abandonment of the State. What I show in the film corresponds with great fidelity to the reality of several rural villages.*





You work in the film with children. Was it the first time?  
What was your approach and how did you envision their role and acting?

Since the subject is utterly tragic, how did you present to them the terrorist angle and, at a larger scale, the cruelty that we see in our world?

I have already worked on several occasions with children or adolescents, in theater and cinema. There is a sort of tropism in me that connects me to this age. It's probably unconsciously at first and in relation to my personal history, since I lost my little brother at the age of twenty when he was fourteen (the age of the hero of the film.) This caused a real rupture in my life and led me to direct both theater and cinema, even though my family background is not artistic. The casting of the film took almost a year and involved more than 500 teenagers to land to the choice of the three teenagers who play the main characters. All castings took place exclusively in rural areas, mainly in colleges but also with out-of-school children. For several months, I traveled through the interior regions of Tunisia and held acting workshops in small groups of twenty. Each workshop was followed by a selection of candidates. It was both an acting training and an open conversation to understand the topic of the film , the issues of violence and the harshness of the world when we are teenagers.



The film is a fiction inspired by real facts. When did you come up with the idea of this film and what were the reasons for you to do it ?

*Like all Tunisians, I discovered this crime announced by the family through social networks, I immediately felt that this was a very special crime that would mark us all very deeply. Something in the form of the crime joined certain mythological images, such as those of the Cephalophores - these decapitated holy martyrs who walked carrying their heads.*

*In the film, the hero carries his cousin's head and crosses the mountain with it. The figure of the severed head exists very strongly in many cultures and myths. I initially rejected the idea of making a film inspired by this story as it seemed so terrible to me. And with my producer and artistic partner, Anissa Daoud, we wrote another project, a comedy, which I finally abandoned because the story of these two young shepherds haunted me.*

*In 2018, with the screenwriters Natacha de Pontcharra, Doria Achour and Sylvain Cattenoy, we started writing the script for Red Path. Between the Covid years and all kinds of difficulties making this film, it ultimately took us more than five years to complete it. It's terribly long.*











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