

Dry Season (2006)
Mahamat-Saleh Haroun



The African state of Chad and the aftermath of its 2006 amnesty of civil war crimes serve as a setting for Mahamat Saleh Haroun's film, *Dry Season*. This film addresses the issue of forgiveness in a country torn by a long history of violence. Since the government will not render justice, the sixteen-year-old Atim is sent on a mission by his grandfather. The young man must leave his village and go to the capital city, N'Djamena, in order to find and kill the murderer of his father. Atim quickly identifies his target, but cannot pull the trigger. His enemy Nassara, is in need of an apprentice for his bakery, and takes the young man under his wing. While waiting for the right moment to avenge his father, Atim learns the ropes of baking. The film is built up on the complex relationship developing between the two men. Will Atim avenge his father's death or will the newly created bond prevent him from carrying out his mission?

Chad was a French colony until its independence in 1960 but France still plays a role, be it economical or political, in the country. Civil war erupted in 1965 as a result of the policies of François Tombalbaye, the country's first leader. The tension between the largely Muslim North and the Christian and animist South has greatly divided Chad. The country made the headlines earlier this year when the media reported a new escalation of violence. The director of *Dry Season* personally experienced the violence deeply entrenched in his country and eventually moved to France.

In order to create tension between the two main characters, the director required the actors, both non-professional, to remain apart and not talk to each other for the duration of the shooting. With minimalist dialogues, a powerful *mise en scène* and the great expressiveness of the actors, *Dry Season* explores the extreme difficulty to forgive in such a context.

Daratt was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 2006.

"Gently and quietly told, *Daratt (Dry Season)* is an unassumingly political work that unfolds with the simplicity of a parable and the gravity of a Bible story." (Manohla Dargis, *New York Times*)

Dry Season: Saturday 11/1 – 9.00 pm; Monday 11/3 – 7 pm; Thursday 11/6 – 4.30 pm

Written by Leïla Ennaili