

The Mauritanian

The Mauritanian is a 2021 [legal drama](#) film based on the memoir of [Mohamedou Ould Slahi](#),^[5] a [Mauritanian](#) man who was held from 2002 to 2016 without charge in the [Guantanamo Bay detention camp](#), a United States military prison. The film was directed by [Kevin Macdonald](#) based on a screenplay written by M.B. Traven, [Rory Haines](#), and [Sohrab Noshirvani](#), adapted from Slahi's 2015 memoir *Guantánamo Diary*. It stars [Tahar Rahim](#) as Slahi, and also features [Jodie Foster](#), [Shailene Woodley](#), [Benedict Cumberbatch](#), and [Zachary Levi](#) in supporting roles.

The Mauritanian was released in the United States on 12 February 2021 by [STXfilms](#). In the United Kingdom, where all cinemas were closed due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), the planned cinema release was cancelled and the film was premiered on [Amazon Prime Video](#) on 1 April 2021.^[1] It received mixed to positive reviews, with critics praising Macdonald's direction, its cinematography and performances of the cast (particularly of Rahim and Foster) but criticised its screenplay. At the [78th Golden Globe Awards](#) the film received two nominations; [Best Actor – Motion Picture Drama](#) (for Rahim), with Foster winning [Best Supporting Actress – Motion Picture](#). At the [74th British Academy Film Awards](#) the film received five nominations, including [Best Film](#), [Outstanding British Film](#), and [Best Actor](#) (for Rahim).

Plot

In November 2001, [Mohamedou Ould Slahi](#) is in [Mauritania](#), two months after the [September 11 attacks](#). A Mauritanian policeman tells Mohamedou that Americans want to have a talk with him. Mohamedou agrees to go with them.

In [Albuquerque, New Mexico](#), in February 2005, lawyer [Nancy Hollander](#) is told by French lawyer Emmanuel that a lawyer from Mauritania approached his firm in Paris on behalf of Mohamedou's family. They haven't seen Mohamedou since he was arrested three years ago and only just found out in a newspaper that he is being held by the United States at the [Guantanamo Bay detention camp](#) and is accused of being one of

The Mauritanian



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Kevin Macdonald
Screenplay by	M.B. Traven Rory Haines Sohrab Noshirvani
Story by	M.B. Traven
Based on	<i>Guantanamo Diary</i> by Mohamedou Ould Slahi
Produced by	Adam Ackland Michael Bronner Benedict Cumberbatch Leah Clarke Christine Holder Mark Holder Beatriz Levin Lloyd Levin

the organizers of 9/11. Emmanuel asks Nancy to look into it because she has a security clearance from a previous case and can ask questions he can't. Nancy agrees to check.

At a Naval Law Conference in New Orleans, Marine Prosecutor Stuart Couch is told by Colonel Bill Seidel about the Mohamedou case which Seidel wants him to prosecute. Seidel says that Mohamedou fought with Al-Qaeda in the 90s and then recruited for them in Germany, and says it was Mohamedou who recruited the terrorist who flew Stu's friend's plane into the tower.

Nancy and Teri (her fellow lawyer) fly down to Guantánamo to meet Mohamedou. Mohamedou agrees to hire them as his lawyers. Meanwhile, Stu tells his team to go through all the intel reports they have to corroborate the story against Mohamedou.

Nancy finds out something through Mohamedou's letter which she received from him while Stu looks at the MFR (Memorandum for the Record), showing exactly what happened. The letter and reports talk about enhanced interrogation methods (i.e., torture) and other maltreatment including sexual assault upon Mohamedou by the Guantanamo guards as ordered by General Mandel. General Mandel also threatened the arrest and rape of his mother. Thus, to save his mother and to get the torture to stop, Mohamedou gave false confession about being a terrorist. Stu withdraws from Mohamedou's prosecution in disgust.

In December 2009, at trial Mohamedou testified over video link to the court. In March 2010, Mohamedou got a letter informing him that his case was successful, and the judge has ordered him to be released. Text is shown telling us that it would be another 7 years before he actually was released, because the government appealed. His mother died in 2013 so he never saw her again. He was finally released in 2016, having spent 14 years in prison without ever being charged.

Finally, footage of the real Mohamedou arriving back in Mauritania is shown. Texts are shown, telling us Mohamedou lives in Mauritania and got married in 2018 to an American lawyer. They have a baby son, Ahmed, but haven't been able to live together as a family and are hoping a country will grant them protection and citizenship. Nancy and Teri are still lawyers working against injustice, and we see footage of Mohamedou giving them necklaces with their names in Arabic.

	Branwen Prestwood-Smith
Starring	<u>Jodie Foster</u> <u>Tahar Rahim</u> <u>Shailene Woodley</u> Benedict Cumberbatch
Cinematography	<u>Alwin H. Küchler</u>
Edited by	<u>Justine Wright</u>
Music by	Tom Hodge
Production companies	<u>30West</u> <u>Topic Studios</u> <u>BBC Film</u> Black Sheep Pictures Convergent Media Oak Street Films SunnyMarch Wonder Street
Distributed by	<u>STXfilms</u> ^[a]
Release dates	12 February 2021 (United States) 1 April 2021 (United Kingdom)
Running time	129 minutes ^[2]
Countries	United Kingdom ^[3] United States
Languages	English French Arabic
Box office	\$7.5 million ^[4] ^[3]

Cast

- Jodie Foster as Nancy Hollander

- Tahar Rahim as Mohamedou Ould Slahi
- Shailene Woodley as Teri Duncan
- Benedict Cumberbatch as Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Couch
- Zachary Levi as Neil Buckland
- Saamer Usmani as Arjun
- Corey Johnson as Bill Seidel
- Denis Menochet as Emmanuel
- David Fynn as Kent
- Walter van Dyk as District Court of Columbia Judge

Production

The film was announced in November 2019. Kevin Macdonald signed on as director, with Benedict Cumberbatch, Jodie Foster, Tahar Rahim and Shailene Woodley cast to star. In December 2019, Zachary Levi joined the cast of the film.^[6] Filming began on 2 December 2019 in South Africa.

The film was originally known as *Guantánamo Diary* in its early development stages,^[7] and as *Prisoner 760* during production,^[8] before being described as untitled in post-production.^[9] In November 2020, the title was revealed to be *The Mauritanian*.^[10]

Release

In August 2020, STX Entertainment acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film. STX International will release the film in the United Kingdom and Ireland and pre-sold the international distribution rights at the American Film Market in November 2019.^[9] The film was released in the United States on 12 February 2021 in theaters, with a digital demand release following on 2 March 2021.^[11]



Director Kevin Macdonald, pictured in 2010

Reception

Box office

As of 1 April 2021, the film had made \$835,724 domestically and \$2,500,000 internationally, for a global total of \$3,335,724.

Released alongside *Judas and the Black Messiah*, *Land* with limited expansion of *Willy's Wonderland* on 12 February 2021. *The Mauritanian* made \$163,789 from 245 theaters, and \$179,778 over the four-day President's Day weekend.^[12] In its second weekend of release the film made \$137,072 from 287 theaters.^[13] In its third weekend, the film took in \$120,192, a decline of 12.3% from the second. In its fourth weekend, the film made \$90,004.

Critical response



Rahim was nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Motion Picture Drama, while Foster won Best Supporting Actress.

Review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes reports that 75% of 217 critic reviews were positive, with an average rating of 6.6/10. The website's critics consensus reads: "*The Mauritanian* takes a frustratingly generic approach to a real-life story that might have been inspirational in other hands, but Tahar Rahim's performance elevates the uneven material."^[14] According to Metacritic, which sampled 35 critics and calculated a weighted average score of 53 out of 100, the film received "mixed or average reviews".^[15]

Leaf Arbuthnot, writing for *Tatler*, described the film as 'excellent', praising in particular the performances of Foster and Rahim as 'impeccable'.^[16] *The Hindu* praised the performances of the cast, specifically of Foster, saying; she elevates the legal drama to a whole new level.^[17]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>AARP Movies for Grownups Award</u>	4 March 2021	Best Supporting Actress	<u>Jodie Foster</u>	Won	[18]
<u>British Academy Film Award</u>	April 11, 2021	<u>Best Film</u>	Adam Ackland, Leah Clarke, Beatriz Levin and Lloyd Levin	Nominated	[19]
		<u>Outstanding British Film</u>	Kevin Macdonald, Adam Ackland, Leah Clarke, Beatriz Levin, Lloyd Levin, Rory Haines, Sohrab Noshirvani and M. B. Traven	Nominated	
		<u>Best Actor in a Leading Role</u>	<u>Tahar Rahim</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	M.B. Traven, Rory Haines and Sohrab Noshirvani	Nominated	
		<u>Best Cinematography</u>	<u>Alwin H. Küchler</u>	Nominated	
<u>Casting Society of America</u>	15 April 2021	Outstanding Achievement in Casting - Studio or Independent Feature - Drama	Nina Gold, Christa Schamberger (location casting)	Nominated	
<u>European Film Awards</u>	December 11, 2021	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Tahar Rahim</u>	Nominated	[20]
<u>Golden Globe Awards</u>	February 28, 2021	<u>Best Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama</u>		Nominated	[21]
		<u>Best Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture</u>	<u>Jodie Foster</u>	Won	
<u>Heartland Film</u>		Truly Moving Picture Award	<u>Kevin Macdonald</u>	Won	
<u>London Film Critics' Circle Awards</u>	February 7, 2021	<u>Film of the Year</u>	<i>The Mauritanian</i>	Nominated	[22]
		<u>Director of the Year</u>	<u>Kevin Macdonald</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Actor of the Year</u>	<u>Tahar Rahim</u>	Nominated	
<u>Women Film Critics Circle Awards</u>		<u>Best Actor</u>		Nominated	
		<u>Best Female Action Hero</u>	<u>Jodie Foster</u>	Nominated	

Notes

- a. In the United Kingdom, STXfilms' international arm STXinternational was to release *The Mauritanian* on 1 April 2021. As cinemas were closed in the UK in April due to the COVID-19

pandemic, the film skipped theatrical release and was instead released on Prime Video as an Amazon Original.^[1]

References

1. Warner, Sam (19 February 2021). "Benedict Cumberbatch's new movie skips cinemas for Amazon release in the UK" (<https://www.digitalspy.com/movies/a35558608/benedict-cumberbatch-the-mauritanian-amazon-release-uk/>). *digitalspy*. Retrieved 21 February 2021.
2. Rooney, David (12 January 2021). "The Mauritanian: Film Review" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/the-mauritanian-film-review>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210217212227/https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/the-mauritanian-film-review>) from the original on 17 February 2021. Retrieved 12 January 2021.
3. "The Mauritanian (2021)" ([https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Mauritanian-The-\(2021\)#tab=summary](https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Mauritanian-The-(2021)#tab=summary)). *The Numbers*. Archived ([https://web.archive.org/web/20201012131132/https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Mauritanian-The-\(2021\)#tab=summary](https://web.archive.org/web/20201012131132/https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Mauritanian-The-(2021)#tab=summary)) from the original on 12 October 2020. Retrieved 1 April 2021.
4. "The Mauritanian (2021)" (<https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/rl3395388161/weekend/>). *Box Office Mojo*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201012131132/https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/rl3395388161/weekend/>) from the original on 12 October 2020. Retrieved 7 August 2021.
5. "'The Mauritanian' Is Based On Guantanamo's 'Forever Prisoners' " (<https://www.npr.org/2021/02/11/966757182/the-mauritanian-is-based-on-guantanamos-forever-prisoners>). *NPR.org*. 11 February 2021. Retrieved 20 September 2021.
Rose, Steve (26 March 2021). "'We don't live in a world of goodies and baddies, do we?' The true story behind The Mauritanian" (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/mar/26/we-dont-live-in-a-world-of-goodies-and-baddies-do-we-the-true-story-behind-the-mauritanian>). *the Guardian*. Retrieved 20 September 2021.
"'I had a lot of offers to play a terrorist or the French boyfriend'" (<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/film/i-had-a-lot-of-offers-to-play-a-terrorist-or-the-french-boyfriend-1.4518766>). *The Irish Times*. 21 March 2013. Retrieved 20 September 2021.
Brown, Hannah (6 May 2021). "Kevin Macdonald tells the 'Post' about the man behind 'The Mauritanian'" (<https://www.jpost.com/j-spot/kevin-macdonald-tells-the-post-about-the-man-behind-the-mauritanian-667479>). *The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com*. Retrieved 20 September 2021.
Utichi, Joe (11 January 2021). "Jodie Foster Says 'The Mauritanian' Reflects The Residual Effects Of America's Post-9/11 Transformation" (<https://deadline.com/2021/01/the-mauritanian-jodie-foster-stx-entertainment-interview-news-1234664138/>). *Deadline*. Retrieved 20 September 2021.
"'My characters are drawn to doing the right thing': Jodie Foster on The Mauritanian and 55 years in Hollywood - CBC Radio" (<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/tuesday-march-2-2021-jodie-foster-rodney-barnes-and-more-1.5931659/my-characters-are-drawn-to-doing-the-right-thing-jodie-foster-on-the-mauritanian-and-55-years-in-hollywood-1.5932063>). *CBC*. 2 March 2021. Retrieved 20 September 2021.
6. Kit, Borys (27 December 2019). "Zachary Levi Joins Jodie Foster, Benedict Cumberbatch in Drama 'Prisoner 760' (Exclusive)" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/zachary-levi-joins-drama-prisoner-760-1265025>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20191227185352/https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/zachary-levi-joins-drama-prisoner-760-1265025>) from the original on 27 December 2019. Retrieved 27 December 2019.

7. Busch, Anita (11 April 2016). "Benedict Cumberbatch Comes Aboard 'Guantanamo Diary' As Producer" (<http://deadline.com/2016/04/benedict-cumberbatch-producer-on-guantanamo-diary-zero-gravity-1201735673/>). *Deadline*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170916070727/http://deadline.com/2016/04/benedict-cumberbatch-producer-on-guantanamo-diary-zero-gravity-1201735673/>) from the original on 16 September 2017. Retrieved 22 January 2021.
8. D'Alessandro, Anthony (1 November 2019). "Jodie Foster, Tahar Rahim & Shailene Woodley Board 'Prisoner 760', STX Launching At AFM" (<https://deadline.com/2019/11/jodie-foster-shailene-woodley-prisoner-760-movie-afm-1202774707/>). *Deadline*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20191102145728/https://deadline.com/2019/11/jodie-foster-shailene-woodley-prisoner-760-movie-afm-1202774707/>) from the original on 2 November 2019. Retrieved 2 November 2019.
9. D'Alessandro, Anthony (3 August 2020). "Jodie Foster, Tahar Rahim & Shailene Woodley Legal Thriller Stateside Rights Go To STX" (<https://deadline.com/2020/08/prisoner-760-jodie-foster-shailene-woodley-acquired-by-stx-1203002497/>). *Deadline Hollywood*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200805233442/https://deadline.com/2020/08/prisoner-760-jodie-foster-shailene-woodley-acquired-by-stx-1203002497/>) from the original on 5 August 2020. Retrieved 3 August 2020.
10. Davis, Clayton (23 November 2020). "Jodie Foster, Tahar Rahim Make Late Entry Into Awards Race With STX Films' 'The Mauritanian' (EXCLUSIVE)" (<https://variety.com/2020/film/awards/the-mauritanian-oscars-jodie-foster-tahar-rahim-oscars-release-1234838153/>). *Variety*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201123193628/https://variety.com/2020/film/awards/the-mauritanian-oscars-jodie-foster-tahar-rahim-oscars-release-1234838153/>) from the original on 23 November 2020. Retrieved 23 November 2020.
11. "The Mauritanian | Official Movie Website | In Theaters Now, On Demand Everywhere March 2" (<https://www.themauritanian.movie/wheretowatch/>). *The Mauritanian: Watch At Home | STX*. Retrieved 1 March 2021.
12. Ramos, Dino-Ray (14 February 2021). "'The Mauritanian', 'The World To Come' And 'Willy's Wonderland' Enter Specialty Box Office Fray" (<https://deadline.com/2021/02/the-mauritanian-the-world-to-come-willys-wonderland-enter-specialty-box-office-1234693749/>). *Deadline Hollywood*. Retrieved 22 February 2021.
13. Ramos, Dino-Ray (21 February 2021). "'Blithe Spirit', 'Silk Road' And 'The Violent Heart' Post To Specialty Box Office Board; 'Promising Young Woman' Crosses \$5M" (<https://deadline.com/2021/02/blithe-spirit-silk-road-the-violent-heart-promising-young-woman-specialty-box-office-1234697965/>). *Deadline Hollywood*. Retrieved 21 February 2021.
14. "The Mauritanian (2021)" (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_mauritanian). *Rotten Tomatoes*. Fandango Media. Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20210212190727/https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_mauritanian) from the original on 12 February 2021. Retrieved 28 December 2022.
15. "The Mauritanian Reviews" (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/the-mauritanian>). *Metacritic*. Red Ventures. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210215115200/https://www.metacritic.com/movie/the-mauritanian>) from the original on 15 February 2021. Retrieved 2 March 2021.
16. Arbuthnot, Leaf (9 April 2021). "The Mauritanian review: Jodie Foster shines in this excellent Guantanamo procedural" (<https://www.tatler.com/article/the-mauritanian-review>). *Tatler*. Retrieved 11 April 2021.
17. Arbuthnot, Leaf (9 April 2021). "'The Mauritanian' movie review: Jodie Foster elevates legal drama to a whole new level" (<https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/movies/the-mauritanian-movie-review-jodie-foster-elevates-legal-drama-to-a-whole-new-level/article34698868.ece/amp/>). *The Hindu*. Retrieved 1 June 2021.

18. Lewis, Hilary (8 February 2021). "AARP Movies for Grownups Awards: 'Trial of the Chicago 7,' 'Da 5 Bloods' Lead Nominations" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/aarp-movies-for-grownups-awards-trial-of-the-chicago-7-da-5-bloods-lead-nominations>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210212075222/https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/aarp-movies-for-grownups-awards-trial-of-the-chicago-7-da-5-bloods-lead-nominations>) from the original on 12 February 2021. Retrieved 12 February 2021.
19. Ravindran, Manori (9 March 2021). "BAFTA Unveils Film Nominations in Historic Year After Diversity Review: 'Nomadland,' 'Rocks' Lead Nominees" (<https://variety.com/2021/film/global/2021-bafta-film-awards-nominations-1234925403/>).
20. Roxborough, Scott (9 November 2021). "'Titane,' 'Hand of God' Among European Film Awards Nominees" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/european-film-awards-2021-nominations-titane-oscars-1235044574/>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved 10 November 2021.
21. Oganessian, Natalie; Moreau, Jordan (3 February 2021). "Golden Globes 2021: The Complete Nominations List" (<https://variety.com/2021/film/news/2021-golden-globes-nominations-list-nominees-1234896457/>). *Variety*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210203182501/https://variety.com/2021/film/news/2021-golden-globes-nominations-list-nominees-1234896457/>) from the original on 3 February 2021. Retrieved 3 February 2021.
22. Ritman, Alex (12 January 2021). "'Saint Maud' Leads London Critics' Circle Film Awards Nominations" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/saint-maud-leads-london-critics-circle-film-awards-nominations>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210113184134/https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/saint-maud-leads-london-critics-circle-film-awards-nominations>) from the original on 13 January 2021. Retrieved 13 January 2021.

External links

- Official website (<https://www.themauritanian.movie/>)
 - *The Mauritanian* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4761112/>) at IMDb
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Mauritanian&oldid=1219321243"

▪