CANNES, France — Donald Trump’s reelection campaign called “The Apprentice,” a film about the former U.S. president in the 1980s, “pure fiction” and vowed legal action following its premiere at the [*Cannes Film Festival*](https://apnews.com/hub/cannes-film-festival). But director Ali Abbasi is offering to privately screen the film for Trump.

Following [*its premiere Monday in Cannes*](https://apnews.com/article/apprentice-trump-sebastian-stan-cannes-e6bc0f699ad88c01211ac7956a443079), Steven Cheung, Trump campaign spokesperson, said in a statement that the Trump team will file a lawsuit “to address the blatantly false assertions from these pretend filmmakers."

“This garbage is pure fiction which sensationalizes lies that have been long debunked," Cheung said.

“The Apprentice” stars Sebastian Stan as Trump. The central relationship of the movie is between Trump and [*Roy Cohn*](https://apnews.com/article/4b249accc87b36d1fa732d463b1dc960) (Jeremy Strong), the defense attorney who was chief counsel to [*Joseph McCarthy’s 1950s Senate investigations*](https://apnews.com/united-states-government-f7e7ce3eb3e74cb999776ecd41338ce0) of suspected communists.

Asked about the Trump campaign's statement Tuesday in Cannes, Abbasi told reporters: “Everybody talks about him suing a lot of people — they don’t talk about his success rate though, you know?”

But the Iranian Danish director also struck a less combative tone as he discussed the film at its festival press conference. He offered to screen “The Apprentice” for Trump and talk it over.

“I don’t necessarily think that this is a movie he would dislike," [*said Abbasi*](https://apnews.com/video/movies-roy-cohn-lawsuits-france-89cc124e67b142e6a4c0827a44467439). “I don’t necessarily think he would like it. I think he would be surprised, you know? And like I’ve said before, I would offer to go and meet him wherever he wants and talk about the context of the movie, have a screening and have a chat afterwards, if that’s interesting to anyone at the Trump campaign.”

In the film, Cohn is depicted as a longtime mentor to Trump, coaching him in the ruthlessness of New York City ***politics*** and business. Early on, Cohn aided the Trump Organization when it was being sued by the federal government for racial discrimination in housing.

“The Apprentice,” which is labeled as inspired by true events, portrays Trump’s dealings with Cohn as a Faustian bargain that guided his rise as a businessman and, later, as a politician. Stan’s Trump is initially a more naive real estate striver, soon transformed by Cohn’s education.

The film notably contains a scene depicting Trump raping his wife, Ivana Trump (played by [*Maria Bakalova*](https://apnews.com/article/maria-bakalova-7ca40d5af58d8582b2b30607c332e26d) ). In Ivana Trump’s 1990 divorce deposition, [*she stated that Trump raped her*](https://apnews.com/events-united-states-presidential-election-9a2c849efddc43bd967188fdcc6fd68a). Trump denied the allegation and Ivana Trump later said she didn’t mean it literally, but rather that she had felt violated.

That scene and others make “The Apprentice” a potentially explosive big-screen drama in the midst of the [*U.S. presidential election*](https://apnews.com/hub/election-2024). The film is for sale in Cannes, so it doesn’t yet have a release date.

After the premiere, Abbasi addressed the Cannes audience, saying “there is no nice metaphorical way to deal with the rising wave of fascism.”

“The good people have been quiet for too long,” he said. "So I think it’s time to make movies relevant. It’s time to make movies political again.”

Listing wars in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan, Abbasi, whose previous film " [*Holy Spider*](https://apnews.com/article/iran-entertainment-europe-middle-east-9a6169029e06bcfd591bacdfff4a3c6a) " depicted a serial killer murdering women in Iran, warned of trouble ahead.

“In the time of turmoil, there's this tendency to look inwards, to bury your head deep in the sand, look inside and hope for the best — hope for the best, hope for the storm to get away,” Abbasi said. “But the storm is not going to get away. The storm is coming. The worst times are coming.”

The film's premiere unfolded while [*Trump's hush money trial*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-trial-hush-money-robert-costello-b1beb56a666c398ae5393ede16c326da) continued in New York