

## Jagmohan Mundhra's 'Shoot On Sight' in trouble

London-based Indian filmmaker Jagmohan Mundhra, who has made biopics like 'Provoked' in the past, has now been accused of distorting facts in his 'Shoot On Sight', which is based on the July 2007 London bombings.

The film opened in London last week and the director stands accused of exploiting the tragic killing of the innocent Brazilian bystander Jean Charles de Menezes. The Brazilian was mistaken for a terrorist and shot dead by the police at a tube station a week after the bombings.

But the filmmaker is unfazed and says the Menezes' family is being incited into causing trouble.

'I'm used to my biopics getting into trouble. I'm sure you remember the problems that were caused by Bhanwari Devi when I made the film 'Bawandar' on her gruesome gang-rape. More recently, after 'Provoked' about domestic violence, I went through a similar ordeal,' Mundhra told IANS.

'And now my film on Congress president Sonia Gandhi has been put on hold on the Congress party's request until the general elections. I hope we can eventually make the film without them breathing down our backs with litigation.'

Mundhra says the allegation that he has exploited the real-life tragedy in 'Shoot On Sight' is totally unfounded.

'The relatives and family of Menezes are being provoked into making these statements. None of these protesters has actually seen the film,' he asserted.

'It reminds me of what happened with Salman Rushdie after he wrote 'The Satanic Verses'. Not too many had actually read the novel when a fatwa was passed against him. So I don't know what they are protesting about. Also, the flak from the British press includes statements on how 'Shoot On Sight' is like a TV drama. I don't take that as an insult. I've great respect for the TV medium.'

Mundhra admits 'Shoot On Sight' had a lower opening in London than his earlier biopic 'Provoked', which had Aishwarya Rai in the lead role of a battered Punjabi wife.

'That's because 'Provoked' featured Aishwarya, a known international name,' said Mundhra.

'Shoot On Sight' has internationally acclaimed actors like Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri.

'Naseer has brought his own amazing insights into the role. And if Amitabh Bachchan had played the part as I had planned he'd have imparted his own gravitas,' said Mundhra.

The film unfolds the turmoil in the life of Tariq Ali (Naseeruddin Shah), a Muslim police officer at Scotland Yard, who is asked to track down suspected suicide bombers involved in the July 7 bombings.

About Naseer refusing to dub the Hindi version of 'Shoot On Sight', he said: 'I respect his decision. But I also have to respect my producer's decision. They need to earn back their money.'

'And what is wrong with Brits talking in Hindi? Didn't Robbie Coltrane argue Aishwarya's case in Hindi in 'Provoked'? What about all the Japanese characters in the 'World War II' epic 'Tora Tora Tora' speaking in English? And in 'Devdas', we heard the characters talking in Hindi when they were all speaking in Bengali in the novel.'

Mundhra added: 'Cinema is all about suspension of disbelief. It's also at the end of the day a commercial venture. My Indian producers need to make back their money when they release the film on Sep 19. And I'd rather have British characters making themselves comprehensible to audiences in Rajasthan and Bihar than be linguistically correct.'

*Subhash K. Jha* ( © IANS / India eNews)