



# Miners Shot Down

A film by Rehad Desai  
An Icarus Films Release

2014 / 86 minutes / South Africa / An Icarus Films Release

**“*Miners Shot Down* will come to be seen as one of the most important physical remembrances, not only of the lives of the men who were killed, but also of a shameful and cowardly chapter of our recent history.” —*The Daily Maverick***

**“An unflinching account of the 2012 massacre of 38 South African miners in the town of Marikana.” —*Variety***

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## **SYNOPSIS**

In August 2012, mineworkers in one of South Africa's biggest platinum mines began a wildcat strike for better wages. Six days into the strike, the police used live ammunition to brutally suppress it, killing 34 and injuring many more. The police insisted that they shot in self-defense. MINERS SHOT DOWN tells a different story, one that unfolds in real time over seven days, like a ticking time bomb.

The film weaves together the central point of view of three strike leaders, Mambush, Tholakele and Mzoxolo, with compelling police footage, TV archive and interviews with lawyers representing the miners in the ensuing commission of inquiry into the massacre. What emerges is a tragedy that arises out of the deep fault lines in South Africa's nascent democracy, of enduring poverty and a twenty year old, unfulfilled promise of a better life for all.

A campaigning film, beautifully shot and sensitively told with a haunting soundtrack, MINERS SHOT DOWN reveals how far the African National Congress has strayed from its progressive liberationist roots.

## **SELECTED FILM FESTIVALS**

Jury Award, One World Human Rights Film Festival Prague 2014  
Camera Justitia Award, Movies that Matter Human Rights Film Festival 2014  
Special Choice Award, Encounters International Documentary Festival 2014  
Aung San Suu Kyi Award, Myanmar Human Rights Human Dignity International  
Film Festival 2014  
Best South African Documentary, Durban International Film Festival 2014  
Human Rights Jury Award, the Amnesty International Durban Film Festival 2014  
Official Selection, Paris Human Rights Film Festival 2014  
Official Selection, Ciné Droit Libre Film Festival 2014  
Official Selection, New York African Film Festival 2014  
Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival 2014  
Official Selection, Sydney International Film Festival 2014  
Official Selection, Sheffield Doc/Fest 2014  
Official Selection, Signes de Nuit Film Festival Berlin 2014  
Official Selection, Lusaka International Music Film Festival 2014

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Rehad Desai is one of South Africa's leading documentary filmmakers. A former political exile, Desai worked as a trade union organizer and as director of a HIV-prevention NGO before entering the film and television industry as a producer/director in 1996. He has since focused much of his energy on documentary productions. Desai has directed over twenty documentaries, many of which have seen international broadcast and been accepted into numerous festivals, receiving critical acclaim. His current project, *Miners Shot Down*, is a synthesis of Desai's skills as a filmmaker and experience as an activist.

Desai currently runs Uhuru Productions, a film and TV company producing documentary and drama work. He has been the Festival Director of the Tri Continental Film Festival for the last 10 years, and is also the Conference Director of the People to People International Documentary Conference.

Selected Filmography:

*Battle for Johannesburg* (2010)

*Bhambatha: War of the Heads 1906* (2007)

*Bushmans Secret* (2006)

*Born Into Struggle* (2004)

## IN THE PRESS



*Sheffield Doc/Fest 2014: "Miners Shot Down" review (4 Stars)*

By Daniel Green, June 2014, CineVue

Though we as a society have arguably become more desensitized to depictions of conflict and violence, every now and then a film comes along that challenges this notion. Rehad Desai's distressing Sheffield Doc/Fest opener *Miners Shot Down* (2014) is one of the most recent examples. We're used to seeing running street battles in distant revolting nations on the evening news, but seemingly unprovoked massacres of ordinary civilians are another kettle of fish entirely. Depicting the horrifying shooting of 34 South African miners by police forces of the establishment in August 2012, Desai forces his audience to confront the reality that black-on-black violence is still sadly prevalent.

Six days before the shooting, South Africa's biggest platinum mines began a wildcat strike for improved wages but were swiftly rebuffed by those in power. Several stand-offs between the mine workers and armed police tragically culminated in the use of live ammunition to brutally suppress the strike, killing many and injuring many more (78 according to reports). Using the point of view of the Marikana miners through footage from the time and interviews with surviving protesters, *Miners Shot Down* follows the strike from day one, showing the courageous but isolated uprising waged by a group of low-paid workers against the combined and colluding forces of the British-registered mining company Lonmin, the ANC government and their allies in the NUM (National Union of Mineworkers). [...]

[T]he sheer unwillingness to negotiate projected by those opposed to the strike proved to be incendiary. Using controversial techniques such as 'kettling' (seen in this country during the student protests of 2010 despite being ruled lawful by the European Court of Human Rights in 2004), battle-ready gunmen harangued the largely illiterate miners, whose only desire was to speak to those in charge face-to-face in order to return to work. As one interviewee explains, mining was not a calling but rather the sole option available to some of the region's poorest, uneducated black citizens. Exploiting this lack of schooling, a Lonmin representative is shown waving a piece of paper in front of one of the protest's ringleaders, who has already explained that he is unable to read. Such *Catch-22* scenarios are common, we're told, as is the use of excessive force in quashing civil unrest.

Uncompromising in its chilling depiction of the extremities of police brutality, Desai's laudable *Miners Shot Down* serves as a vital reminder that, for all his impossible achievements, even the late Nelson Mandela could not mend all of South Africa's social fractures. A dramatic example of this comes with the outrageous sycophancy of NUM founder Cyril Ramaphosa, a close friend of Mandela and now Deputy President to Jacob Zuma, who appears unwilling to criticise the National Union despite their inability to act in time to prevent the massacre. This corruption of Mandela's legacy is expertly exposed by Desai, himself a former political exile and a passionate voice in dissident South African filmmaking.



# art for humanity

The Art Of Human Rights

By Zimasa Magudu, September 10, 2014, *art for humanity*

South Africa's first post-apartheid Massacre, that is what Cape Town born filmmaker Rehad Desai's *Miners shot down* documentary looks into.

It has been two years since the country's deadliest act of police violence since the end of apartheid where 34 miners of Lonmin Platinum Mine in Marikana South Africa were brutally killed by police while striking for better wages in August 2012.

*Miners Shot Down* is an eye-opening and thought-provoking documentary by South African director Rehad Desai that gives a detailed, uncensored and profoundly moving look into the Marikana Massacre using the point of view of the miners. The documentary looks closely at the six days of the strike leading up to the massacre and subconsciously forces the audience to take a closer look not only at the way the miners were cold bloodedly and intentionally killed by police but also at the relationship between the trade unions and the African National Congress which is the country's ruling party.

"I couldn't ignore it, it was much too big, much too dramatic and upsetting for me. I had to do something for these miners. I just felt that I had to give them a voice," said Desai. "If authority strikes in such a brutal fashion, artists have to pick a side and indicate which side they are on."

The documentary tells a heartfelt and convincing story using the Lonmin security footage, South African Police Services footage, snippets from the still ongoing Farlam Inquiry as well as interviews from lawyers, politicians and strike leaders to trace the six days of the strike before the Massacre.

In the detailed encounters of the days leading up to the arguably un-called for Marikana Massacre it becomes evident that the shooting was somewhat premeditated or rather expected as four mortuary vans were booked to be on standby on that day and ironically, ambulances were denied entry until an hour after the shooting.

The documentary also highlights the effects of the conflict of interest that rose after founder of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) Cyril Ramaphosa

became a BEE partner of London Mining consortium and who termed the strike as a "criminal act" in an email when no violent acts had occurred. The war of turf between NUM which was once unrivalled and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) is revealed in this documentary and we are shown how NUM fell out of favour with the miners hence AMCU became their only hope. Cyril Ramaphosa is shown in a before-and-after manner where we are first reminded of him with the help of archived footage as a unionist pioneering for union justice and the after is played out with him now being a multi-millionaire businessman who is in the board of the platinum mine that members of the union he founded are ironically striking against. It becomes much clearer why Ramaphosa plays safe and avoids going deep with his answers in his interview in the documentary.

What also stands out or rather raises questions is the refusals of individuals who are central in the massacre to be interviewed, individuals including president of South Africa Jacob Zuma, former police minister Nathi Mthethwa, police commissioner Riah Phiyega, NUM Secretary General Frans Baleni and the Lonmin executive.

Desai highlights the violation of human rights of the miners and the dialogue that many see for the first time in the documentary where the miners are communicating with the police takes away the argument that police put forth saying the miners were charging towards them with weapons and they acted in self-defense.

Miners Shot Down does more than just document the massacre but it also gives identity and dignity to the miners and the families and makes one question the state that our country is in 20 years into its democracy.

## FILM CREDITS

Film Title: *Miners Shot Down*  
Country: South Africa  
Year: 2014  
Feature running time: 86 minutes

Director: Rehad Desai  
Photography: Nic Hofmeyr, Shadley Lombard, Jonathan Kovel  
Sound Recordist: President Kapa  
Editors: Menno Boerema, Reuben van der Hammen,  
Kerryn Assaizky, Megan Gill, Steen Johannessen  
Original Music: Philip Miller  
Producer and Script: Anita Khanna, Rehad Desai  
Consulting Producers: Brian Tilley, Bhek Peterson, Helle Faber

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