

# CAIRO CONSPIRACY

**Sweden-France (2022)** 126 minutes

**Director:** Tarik Saleh

**Cast:** Tawfeek Barhom (Adam)  
Fares Fares (Colonel Ibrahim)  
Sherwan Haji (Soliman)



**Screening 28th February 2024 at Swindon Art Centre**

## Synopsis

Adam, the son of a fisherman, is given the chance to study at a prestigious university in Cairo. Shortly after his arrival, the institution's Grand Imam suddenly dies, rendering him a pawn in the power struggle between Egypt's religious and political elite.

## Reviews



The pleasing two-step between the straightlaced recruit and his dishevelled, jaded handler allows for lighter moments as tensions mount. Adam could not be less like James Bond, but he is a blank slate and a good student. This lack of experience allows him to infiltrate a radical group of Islamists and hoodwink higher-ups. His success, however, places him in increasing jeopardy as the new election looms. This is a man's world and all the worse for it. When women do appear on screen, they, like Adam, are pawns in a bigger game.

A deserving winner of the Best Screenplay at Cannes last year, this nail-biting drama is offset by Barhom's terrific wide-eyed performance. The gorgon's knot of political and religious machinations adds distinctive hues to a genre piece with shades of *All the President's Men* and *The Name of the Rose*.

*Tara Brady, The Irish Times*

Director Tarik Saleh has a sharp eye for the quotidian detail of organised religion. (An early scene finds Adam's hometown Imam hoovering the mosque.) He is good too at conjuring the jitter of downtown Cairo, where the student is summoned to meet his handler. But the film's biggest coup is the common thread it finds in both worlds: military back-rooms and holy offices alike are filled with the ambitious jostling for position.

If the story can sometimes feel over compressed, Saleh reserves a chilly clarity for the suggestion of an ongoing pact between Egyptian generals and clerics, mutually invested in the status quo. He also gives the best line to Adam, left to voice the bitter truth of what he learns of faith and government: "Does it matter what I believe, sir?"

*Danny Leigh, The Financial Times*

## Film Facts

- *Cairo Conspiracy* won Best Foreign Film for the César Awards.
- It won Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival 2022.
- The film was shot in Turkey and Sweden.

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