

# ‘The Village Next to Paradise’ Review: Somali Family Drama Doubles as a Potent Portrait of Life in the Shadow of War

In his Cannes-history-making feature, Somali filmmaker Mo Harawe portrays an ambitious family living under the threat of drone strikes and death.

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Mo Harawe’s debut feature *The Village Next to Paradise* is a haunting offering. The film, which premiered at [Cannes](#) in the Un Certain Regard section and is the first Somali film to ever screen on the Croisette, presents a compelling narrative of one family’s survival in a sleepy Somali town. But it’s the devastating backdrop against which their drama plays out that lingers long after the credits roll.

The siren wails of drones soundtrack each scene of Harawe’s film, which opens with footage of a real-life report of a United States drone strike on Somalia. Since the U.S. began using drones in the East African country in the early 2000s, Somalis have suffered at the hands of an enveloping and ravenous counterterrorism operation. According to data from the New America foundation, there have been more than 300 documented uses of drones resulting in hundreds of known civilian deaths.

