

‘The Zone of Interest’ wins Oscar award for best international film

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Online Desk: The harrowing Holocaust drama “The Zone of Interest,” which explores questions of complicity while depicting the mundane lives of a Nazi family in their home adjacent to the Auschwitz death camp, won the Academy Award for best international film.

“Our film shows where dehumanization leads, at its worst,” writer-director Jonathan Glazer said. “Right now we stand here as men who refute their Jewishness and the Holocaust being hijacked by an occupation which has led to conflict for so many innocent people. Whether the victims of October the 7th in Israel, or the ongoing attack on Gaza, all the victims, this humanization, how do we resist?”

Glazer’s reference to Israel’s war in Gaza came after pro-Palestinian protesters snarled traffic around the Dolby Theater as the Oscars kicked off.

In her review, The Associated Press’ Jocelyn Noveck wrote that Glazer “has found a way to convey the evil of Nazism without ever depicting the horror itself. But though it escapes our eyes, the horror assaults our senses in other, deeper ways.”

Glazer said he hopes the film will draw attention to current conflicts in the world. “All our choices are made to reflect and confront us in the present. Not to say, ‘Look what they did then,’ rather ‘look what we do now,” he said.

Sandra Hüller, one of the film’s stars, wept as Glazer’s hands shook while reading his acceptance speech.

Hüller plays Hedwig, the wife of Rudolf Höss (Christian Friedel), the bloodthirsty commandant of Auschwitz. The film was the United Kingdom’s submission to the Oscars.

In the film, the couple and their children go about their daily routines — living in a home just on the other side of a stone wall from the gas chambers. Höss spends his work days overseeing the “processing” of trainloads of people, most sent directly to their deaths. Then he comes home, where he and Hedwig share meals, celebrate birthdays, read their kids bedtime stories and make vacation plans.

Glazer adapted the screenplay loosely from the 2014 Martin Amis novel of the same name, but chose to depict the real-life commandant. Aiming for a chilling meticulousness, the director pieced together the Höss family history and built the set for their home some 200 yards (183 meters) from where the real one once stood.

“The Zone of Interest” is also up for best picture, which made it the favorite to win in the international category. The film was nominated for five Academy Awards, including best sound, which it won; best director, which Christopher Nolan received for “Oppenheimer;” and adapted screenplay, which went to Cord Jefferson for “American Fiction.” Hüller was nominated for best actress for “Anatomy of a Fall,” but the award went to Emma Stone for “Poor Things.”

Last year the winner of best international film was “All Quiet on the Western Front,” a German-language film set in World War I.

Also nominated for best international feature were “Society of the Snow” (Spain), “The Teachers’ Lounge” (Germany), “Io Capitano” (Italy) and “Perfect Days” (Japan).

