

London Has Fallen (2016)

Rated R. Running time: 1 hour 39 min.

Our content ratings: Violence 5; Language 2; Sex/Nudity 1.

Our star rating (1-5): 2.5

*The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done;
they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.*

Psalm 58:10

In director Babak Najafi's follow-up, almost three years later, to [Olympus Has Fallen](#), the once disgraced Secret Service agent Mike Banning (Gerard Butler) is still guarding President Benjamin Asher (Aaron Eckhart), but seriously considering resigning so he can spend more time with his wife and soon to be born child. The scene of action, as the title indicates, has moved to London where the British PM has died under mysterious circumstances that will bring virtually all of the world's heads of states to the city for the official funeral in Westminster Abbey.

In the scene that opens the film we learn that all of the above is part of an elaborate plot to exact vengeance for an American killing by drone two years earlier in Pakistan. Arms dealer Aamir Barkawi (Alon Moni Aboutbou) had been presiding over the elaborate festivities for his daughter's wedding when his palatial compound was bombed. His daughter and other relatives died in the blast, but he escaped, thenceforth spinning his complicated, and one must assume, elaborately expensive, scheme. By identifying himself with "the righteous," the presumably Muslim Barkawi could easily have agreed with the psalmist. Indeed, the villain does say, "Vengeance must always be profound and absolute."

However, as we will see, his evil machinations will fulfill the words of still another psalmist, "the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands." (Psalm 9:16b) Our intrepid hero Mike Banning will be the instrument by which Barkawi will ensnare himself, though neither know it when the Banning arrives at the airport near London with the President and Secret Service Director Lynne Jacobs (Angela Bassett) aboard Air Force One. The latter is especially apprehensive about the trip because of the lack of time for making proper security measures. Everyone is assured that London will be the most secure place on earth, a claim that we know full well will soon prove to be hollow.

The action picks up quickly when many of the Bobbies and supposed M 15 agents around Westminster Abbey start firing on the dignitaries, Germany's female Chancellor being one of the first to die amidst the hail of bullets. A series of aerial shots show a key bridge, Westminster Abbey, and other buildings being blasted. There seems to be more damage inflicted on the city by our villain in one day than all of Goering's bombers did during the London Blitz!

Manning shoots a number of bad guys while keeping the President's head down. There are chase/attack scenes through the streets of the city, and overhead as well when the Americans unsuccessfully try to return to Air Force One. Forced to the ground when the three helicopters are hit by missiles fired from rooftops, our heroes rush through the streets to a safe house, and so on,. Swarms of murderous goons seem to be everywhere, greatly assisted by the terrorists' disrupting London's power grid. Manning dispatches with guns, knives, and his bare hands close to a platoon of thugs along the way. Back in Washington DC Vice President Trumbull (Morgan Freeman) and the generals monitor the situation, finally managing to establish a satellite hook-up with the Presidential party and their London counterparts.

The action is exciting, even though special effects geeks have

complained that the various explosions are not very real. I prefer to complain that the plot itself is not very real, as well as the concern that the cartoonish violence leads us to accept gruesome deaths of the bad guys. But then, this casual acceptance of brutal violence is a staple of this genre. During the course of the film's relatively brief 99 minutes the action is so intense that all doubts and qualms are thrust aside.

But when you walk out of the theater question must arise, "How in the world could a Pakistani, no matter how wealthy, possibly sneak over a thousand of his minions into the ranks of the London Police Department, Scotland Yard, and M 15 so that it is mainly his agents that are guarding the streets on the fateful day? Just think of all the paper work and the security investigations of the applicants that their employment would have entailed! Similar doubts often have arisen when I've watched one of those horror stories that involve elaborate mechanisms—a large bed onto which spikes descend; a shower that turns into an execution chamber; a series of traps in tunnels and rooms beneath an old mansion—none of it believable, serving only for clever plot devices. Thus this film, and others of its ilk, belong to a special fantasy category far removed from reality. There are lots of people who love this escapist fare, so if this film does well, we can expect another *Fallen* film. My candidates—how about Los Vegas, Vice Capital of the US; or maybe better, Hollywood itself, perpetrator of these money-wasting spectacles.

The film with a few discussion questions will be in the March 2016 issue of VP.