



BEFORE YOUR EYES (MIN DIT)

Directed by Miraz Bezar

"The film has moments, especially toward the end, that so transcend the material as to make the journey doubly worthwhile."

– Jay Weissberg, *Variety*



**Turkey, Germany | 2010 | Drama | Turkish and Kurdish with English
Subtitles | 101 min. | 1:1.85 | Dolby Digital**

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Film Movement Press Contact:

Claire Weingarten | 109 W. 27th Street, Suite 9B | New York, NY 10001
tel: (212) 941-7744 x 208 | fax: (212) 941-7812 | claire@filmmovement.com

Film Movement Theatrical Contact:

Rebeca Conget | 109 W. 27th Street, Suite 9B | New York, NY 10001
tel: (212) 941-7744 x 213 | fax: (212) 941-7812 | rebeca@filmmovement.com

SYNOPSIS

Ten year old Gulistan and her brother Firat live in the heart of Turkish Kurdistan. Tragedy strikes when their parents are shot down by paramilitary gunmen before their very eyes. Traumatized and orphaned, Gulistan and Firat try to care for their infant sister, but their money soon runs out and they're forced onto the street.

It is there that Gulistan meets the part-time escort Dilara. Accompanying her on a hotel call one day, Gulistan is shocked to recognize Dilara's client as the murderer of her parents, and she devises a method of revenge.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER – Youth Prize – San Sebastian International Film Festival 2009

WINNER – Special Jury Prize – Ghent International Film Festival 2009

WINNER – Jury Prize – Antalya Film Festival 2009

WINNER – Grand Prix of European Cinema – Febiofest New Prague 2009

WINNER – Best Director, Best Actress Senay Orak, Best Music Mustafa Biber – Istanbul International Film Festival 2010

WINNER – Best Film – Med Film Festival 2010

WINNER – Children's Film Award – ALE KINO Polish Film Festival 2010

Winner – Audience Award – The Movies That Matter Film Festival 2011

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

During the civil war of the 90s in Turkey, the Kurdish provinces were declared in a state of emergency and put under military control. Amnesty International claims that over 18,000 politically active Kurdish and Turkish citizens were killed or disappeared during that time. While countries like Argentina and Chile have faced their cruel past, Turkey still stands at a crossroads. **BEFORE YOUR EYES (MIN DÎT)** is an attempt to bring light into this dark past.

– Miraz Bezar

BIOGRAPHIES & FILMOGRAPHIES

Miraz Bezar
Director & Writer

Miraz previously directed several short films, which have been screened at festivals worldwide, such as Montreal, Oberhausen, Istanbul, Munich, Aix-en-Provence, Hamburg, Valladolid, Florence and Berlin. *Berivan* was awarded Best Short in Nürnberg and *Duri* won the prestigious IFSAK Award in Istanbul. *Berivan* was also selected as part of a "New European Realism" touring package which included films by Mike Leigh and Wolfgang Becker.

Miraz was born in 1971 in Ankara, Turkey. After the military coup in 1980, he immigrated with his family to Germany. He graduated in Cultural Studies at the Berlin Humboldt University and started acting in Off Theatre groups. He studied directing at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin (DFFB). Miraz currently resides in Berlin.

2009 Before Your Eyes (Min Dît)
2001 Fair Game (Freiwild) (Short)
1998 Duri (Fern / Far Away) (Short)
1996 Berivan (Short)
1994 The Needle (Die Nadel) (Short)

COMMENTS BY THE DIRECTOR

DIYARBAKIR, CITY FULL OF WOUNDS

The film was entirely shot on location in Diyarbakir. It is the largest city in Turkish Kurdistan and grew into a regional metropolis through the constant influx of domestic refugees from surrounding rural areas. During the civil war in the nineties, the city grew from 300,000 to 1.5 million inhabitants. This city is known for its rich culture, but has also been the focal point of the paramilitary's counterinsurgency drive that culminated in thousands of cases of the abduction and killing of Kurdish activists. I moved to Diyarbakir in autumn 2005 and discovered a city in which people managed to shut out incredibly violent pasts and cover up scars left on them by their traumatic experiences. Diyarbakir is a city full of wounds that remain unaddressed. It's a city full of people who continue to lead ordinary lives even though they often suffered extreme violence in their childhood.

The plot is based on a number of fractions of reality. There are numerous well-documented cases where journalists or political activists have been shot by death squads and their children left orphaned, and in some cases ended up in the streets. But *BEFORE YOUR EYES* shows you only a fraction of what you could see in Diyarbakir. Real life is much tougher there and the children are rougher and meaner. The war has deprived people of their future. They are stuck in a chaotic quagmire with little chance for development and progress. Prostitution and drug addiction are widespread, even among children. Many parents are psychologically damaged. Although the adults in *BEFORE YOUR EYES* might seem consumed by their political activism, they are still loving, responsible parents. Refraining from activism would not have made them any more responsible, and they are definitely not to blame for their children becoming orphans. As in most of our world's most difficult situations, children become innocent victims.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

None of the children in *MIN DÎT* are professional actors. Senay Orak (Gulistan) was very assertive: after I met her, Senay interrupted a casting session with 20 other girls, informing them that the role was hers and no one else's. Her determination impressed me, then later her talent. Muhammed Al (who plays Gulistan's brother Firat) impressed me with his unerring commitment to acting. He played his role as if he were playing games, completely absorbed in his performance all the way through. Filming went very well but the five-week shoot was extremely physically and mentally straining for the children. I still have regular contact with them and their families. They have become a part of my life, even now that I'm back in Berlin. But I have also come to understand that they are much too proud to ask me for support when they have to endure new hardships.

STALKING THE MAN WHO KILLED HER PARENTS

In the film, Gulistan stalks the man who killed her parents. It was a very demanding task to ask a child to reenact such a traumatic moment but Orak was amazing in her ability to grasp the character and had command over a wide array of emotions. The character Gulistan is driven by the urge to rid herself of trauma, but she is also very conscious of the consequences of her actions. Confronted with seeing his parents' killer, Firat freezes and wets his pants. Firat's reaction is actually very similar to known adult Kurd reactions towards their past aggressors. They become paralyzed, shocked into either helpless submission or an act of violence. Gulistan offers a third way of dealing with past trauma: revealing the killer to the public.

When I was in Diyarbakir in 2006, I witnessed a civil disobedience campaign that entailed a stay-at-home strike, shutting down workplaces and shops. While the adults remained indoors, the street children took over. They erected barricades, stopped cars and informed passengers about the campaign. They displayed a spontaneous idea of community organization that even went beyond adult behaviour. I found this inspiring since I do think that civil disobedience is a good way to end violence.

WHERE PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS LIVE SIDE BY SIDE

The tale of the wolf's bell inspires Gulistan to act differently toward her past trauma. This folk story was brought to my attention by my co-writer Evrim Alatas, who came across it in the works of the great Anatolian novelist Yasar Kemal. Because of its bell, the wolf can no longer harm anyone. The children's revenge against the killer at the end of the film is like a fairy tale. It is visualized wishful thinking. Gulistan has to undergo a painful process to arrive at the realization that violence cannot be an answer to violence. In *MIN DÎT*, the character of Nuri Kaya is not only a killer and torturer, but he is also a loving family man. He has obviously found a way to justify his actions, and the distorted notion of democracy that frames his mindset allows him to continue to do what he does. The system encourages killers to believe what they're doing is right. What intrigues me is how perpetrators and victims live side by side in this rather small city of Diyarbakir.

A DIASPORA KURD

There are many Kurds who would view Diyarbakir as the capital of their homeland, but I do not have this connection since I am a diaspora Kurd. But staying there for two years helped me fulfill my old longing to get to know the place that was a home to my parents and demystify my notion of it.

I had no German government funding to shoot *MIN DÎT*, only private support that allowed me to rent an HD camera and start working. Some weeks into the shoot, my funds were used up. We all were too involved to

quit. So my mother sold her house and my uncle paid the hotel bills for the crew. Upon returning to Germany with the footage, I did a rough assembly of BEFORE YOUR EYES on my own. I screened a rough cut to filmmaker Fatih Akin, who agreed to support me through his company Corazon International.

CREDITS

CREW

Director / Writer/ Producer
Co-Producers
Associate Producers
Cinematography
Editor
Sound Mixer
Set Design
Music
Costume Design

Miraz Bezar
Klaus Maeck, Fatih Akın
Saliha Kutlay, Flaminio Zadra
Isabelle Casez
Miraz Bezar
Garip OÄNZden
Pınar Soydinc
Mustafa Biber
OÄnzlem Batur

CAST

Character

Gulıstan
Firat (Gulistan's Brother)
Nuri Kaya (Paramilitary)
Zelal (Friend)
Dilara (Escort)
Mother
Father
Yekbun (Aunt)
Mıkaıl
Çekdar
Bindest

Actors

Şenay Orak
Muhammed Al
Hakan Karsak
Suzan İler
Berıvan Ayaz
Fahriye Çelik
Alıřan Önlü
Berıvan Eminođlu
Mehmet İnci
Çekdar Korkusuz
Recep Özer