

THE MOELLN LETTERS

A Film by Martina Priessner

30 years after the racist attacks in Mölln, survivor İbrahim Arslan discovers forgotten letters of solidarity. The film follows his family as they confront their trauma, shedding light on the treatment of victims of racist violence and their struggle to foster a new culture of remembrance.

PRESS KIT



TECHNICAL DETAILS

Original Title: DIE MÖLLNER BRIEFE
International Title: THE MOELLN LETTERS
Country of Production: Germany
Year of Completion: 2025
Genre: Documentary

Running Time: 96 Minutes
Format: 4K
Sound: 5.1.
Language: German/Turkish
Subtitles: English



SYNOPSIS

In November 1992, racist arson attacks in the German town of Mölln devastated the lives of İbrahim Arslan and his family. The 7-year-old boy survived the fire, but he tragically lost his sister, cousin, and grandmother. In the aftermath, the city received hundreds of letters of solidarity which were archived and forgotten about for nearly three decades.

Woven into İbrahim's poignant journey of discovery and his encounters with three of the letter writers, these long-forgotten messages create a powerful visual bridge between past and present. The film follows İbrahim and his siblings and offers a sensitive portrayal of the enduring trauma that still affects their lives today. By fighting racism and advocating for victims, İbrahim has found a way to channel his pain, while his brother Namık still struggles with the emotional scars of the past.

THE MOELLN LETTERS not only amplifies the voices of survivors and victims, but also uncovers long-forgotten letters expressing support and sympathy. This film brings forth a new perspective on remembrance – shifting the focus to the stories of the survivors and ensuring they receive the space and recognition they deserve.

BACKGROUND

Mölln was the first racist attack in reunified Germany, claiming the lives of three people: 10-year-old Yeliz Arslan, 14-year-old Ayşe Yılmaz, and 51-year-old Bahide Arslan, who tried to save the two girls. Before her tragic death, Bahide managed to save her 7-year-old grandson İbrahim Arslan from the flames by wrapping him in wet cloths. Numerous people were injured in the attack.



MARTINA PRIESSNER (Writer&Director)

Martina Priessner studied Social and Cultural Sciences at Humboldt University in Berlin and works as an independent filmmaker and author in Berlin. Her documentary film debut, *WIR SITZEN IM SÜDEN* (ZDF/Das Kleine Fernsehspiel), premiered in 2010 in the national competition at DOK Film Festival Leipzig and was nominated for the Grimme Prize in 2011.

She has received scholarships from Nipkow, DEFA, Mercator, and the Tarabya Cultural Academy. During a five-year stay in Turkey, she created the found footage film *EVERYDAY I'M CAPULING* (2013), which focused on the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul.

As an IPC-Mercator Fellow, in 2015 she produced the film *650 WÖRTER* in Istanbul, which explores migration and language. Her documentary *DIE WÄCHTERIN (THE GUARDIAN)*, developed with support from the BKM, premiered in October 2020 in the German Competition at DOK Leipzig and was awarded the Goethe Institute Documentary Film Prize.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When I met İbrahim Arslan in 2020, I already knew who he was. The racist arson attacks in Mölln had shaken me deeply when I was 23 years old. Racism, anti-Semitism, the persistence of right-wing terrorism in Germany, and the state's and societal ignorance towards right-wing extremist networks have remained central concerns for me to this day.

İbrahim is a significant voice in Germany, especially in encouraging victims to step forward and speak out. His powerful message – that those affected are the "primary witnesses of their own stories" and cannot be reduced to mere extras or objects – has played a crucial role in transforming the country's culture of remembrance.

İbrahim told me about the letters of solidarity. His disbelief and shock at the withheld solidarity were written all over his face. What he shared with me left a lasting mark. How could such an

important expression of support never reach those it was intended for? And what does this say about how victims are treated?

I couldn't shake İbrahim's words from my mind: "When we tell our stories, our trauma dissipates, because our greatest longing is to tell our stories." A few days later, I called him and proposed making a film together. The many unheard, unseen, and untold stories from the perspective of the victims and survivors form the emotional core of this film. To ensure these stories are heard, we need the power and magic of cinema, in which I have unwavering faith.

At a time when democracy in Germany faces threats unparalleled in the past 80 years, the film asks crucial questions, gives space to the personal losses of the victims, and makes solidarity visible.

CREDITS

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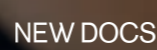
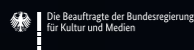
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REALFICTION

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