



# MOTHERLAND

[ANA YURDU]



**30. Venice  
International Film  
Critics' Week**



*"...a human drama so intense and powerful,  
that it will leave you gasping for air."*

*"...unsparing and devastating...strikingly genuine,  
carefully realized and incredibly moving story  
of a woman's lonely struggle."*

*"...a tour-de-force testament  
to the current state of Turkish cinema,  
always fresh and highly inventive..."*

–Ohad Landesman  
FIPRESCI - International Federation of Film Critics

*"...a female portrait of rare intensity..."  
"...a film that is complex and brave...with uncommon depth."*

–Mariella Cruciani  
National Union of Italian Film Critics

*"...a dark and deep core..."  
"...Senem Tuzen's film is a wonderful surprise..."  
"The intelligence of Motherland lies in its disturbing ambiguity..."*

–Quinlan, Rivista di Critica Cinematografica

*"...a new twist on the subject of mother-daughter relationships..."*  
–Cineuropa

*"It is today's Turkey in its most profound sense."*

–Luca Pellegrini  
Venice Critics' Week

## **festivals & awards**

72nd Venice Film Festival, Critics' Week

22nd Adana International Film Festival

### **Best Script**

### **Best Cinematography**

### **Best Actress**

**SİYAD Best Film** (Turkish Film Critics' Association)

**FİLM-YÖN Best Director** (Turkish Directors' Association)

31st Warsaw International Film Festival

**FIPRESCI Award (International Critics' Prize)**

**NETPAC Award (Best Asian Film)**

Reykjavík International Film Festival

31st Haifa International Film Festival

56th Thessaloniki International Film Festival

Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Brisbane

### **Best Script**

**UNESCO Award**, nominee

16th Tbilisi International Film Festival

**Golden Prometheus (Best Film)**

19th Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival

21st Gezici Festival on Wheels

39th Göteborg International Film Festival

**Ingmar Bergman Int'l Debut Award** nominee

16th Black Movie Film Festival, Geneva

8th Bengaluru International Film Festival

## **upcoming festivals**

21st Vilnius International Film Festival, Lithuania

23rd Sguardi Altrove International Film Festival, Milan  
opening film, main competition

21st Turkey/Germany Film Festival, Nuremberg  
main competition

15th Boston Turkish Film Festival  
main competition



## **synopsis**

Nesrin is an urban, middle-class woman recovering from a divorce. She's quit her office job, abandoned her house in Istanbul, and come to the village house of her deceased grandmother to finish a novel and live out her childhood dream of being a writer. When her conservative and increasingly unhinged mother turns up uninvited and refuses to leave, Nesrin's writing stalls and her fantasies of village life turn bitter as the two are forced to confront the darker corners of each other's inner worlds.





production company  
ZELA FILM

co-production company  
TWO THIRTY FIVE

in association with  
UCM



**cast**

Nesrin.....ESRA BEZEN BİLGİN  
Halise.....NIHAL KOLDAŞ  
Emine.....FATMA KISA  
Halil.....SEMIH AYDIN  
Habibe Aba.....HABİBE DOYGUN



director  
SEDEM TÜZEN

original screenplay  
SEDEM TÜZEN

producers  
OLENA YERSHOVA  
ADAM ISEBERG  
SEDEM TÜZEN

co-producer  
NIKOS MOUTSELOS

associate producers  
AVRAHAM PIRCHI  
SEVİL DEMİRCİ

director of photography  
VEDAT ÖZDEMİR

sound recorder  
GÜRKAN ÖZKAYA

art director  
METİN ÇELİK

editors  
ADAM ISEBERG  
YORGOS MAVROPSARIDIS

sound designer  
VALIA TSEROU

sound mixer  
LEANDROS NTOUNIS



### **director's biography**

Senem Tüzen was born in Ankara in 1980 and holds a degree in cinema from the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts Academy of Istanbul. She directed a number of short films that have been awarded worldwide. In particular, her short *Unus Mundus* won the Turkish Film Critics Association's Best Short Award in 2009. The same year, her short *Milk & Chocolate* was nominated for the same prize. Besides directing, she also works as an editor, cinematographer and producer. *Ana Yurdu* ('Motherland') is her first full-length film.

### **director's statement**

'Motherland' is set in Turkey, where millions of people—like Nesrin, the film's main character—have grown up in modern cities after their parents migrated from traditional villages. The outlooks and expectations of many of these children are often far from the traditional and religious ways of their parents. In modern Turkey, this conflict makes it hard for some people to integrate their family's influence and that of the modern society they grew up in. This is especially true for young women in Turkey. With this film my aim has been to explore the nature of the mother-daughter relationship while examining the specific psychological complexities one faces as a daughter in Turkish society.



We are not in the busy streets of the capital city filled with youngsters but in a remote town in Anatolia, of deserted sidewalks and rundown houses. It is there that women—keepers of memories and pain—talk, wait, pray and get old. Nesrine arrives at night in this “land of mothers,” which is also the reflection of her lost “motherland”, filled with rancor, lost expectations, loves and lives left behind, hungry for a future and for sense in this suspended Turkey. It is a country that has already been explored with certain passion in an archaic “Winter Sleep” (geographically identical, humanly similar), by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, a film full of awards and prizes, in Cannes and beyond.

The creative strivings of Nesrin, a tormented woman of few words and a long gaze, are dim, almost tedious: she wants to write but doesn't know what. So is her life, in a limbo between the unstable edge of existence, like the mountains that surround her and whose profile we can barely see. She is a woman, but not a mother, because maternity escaped her.

The mothers and grandmothers surround her and try to protect her with old community rites, with

rituals of the word, of the food and prayers. She keeps her friend Emine's confessions (who also lives on the edges of life) and listens to the repeated and increasingly obsessive advices of her mother Halise. She seems incapable of any sort of rebellion, only an immersion in an evasive impulse, a few hinted escape attempts with a broken car that never appears to be fixed, and some abrupt gestures. It is the mirror of today's fluid identity of the urban population that does not embrace the values of rural life and neither does it adapt to the dangerous urban compromises.

Nesrin is a character of rough traits; one that you immediately side with, supporting her with our experiences, not only of cinema. Supporting her with our hearts. We listen to these two women, we listen to their confessions, their disturbances, we see them getting offended and clashing, crying and kissing, eventually caressing. We feel the weight of families that once were, with extraordinary glimpses of humanity.

“It's easier to be a stone than a mother,” is an old

(...continued)



saying that Halise shares with Nesrin one night at dinner. Halise adds, though, that only a mother can understand this, which places a thorn in her daughter's flesh. It's something that she had heard from her own mother, who passed away not so long ago and whose ghostly presence is felt in what was her house that now the two women occupy and continuously clean. This film tackles the transmission of experiences in a quite unexpected matriarchal community of contemporary Turkey, so distant, terribly distant—perhaps lost—from the urban "civilization." It is this sense of ancientness terribly clashing with the present that the film frames in an unforgettable way. A mother with her lost reasons and knowledge, a daughter with her hidden truths and aspirations.

It is necessary to underline the cinematography of Vedat Özdemir, focused on dark tonalities that mirror the aggravated souls of the women, that are never faintly sweetened. And Metin Çelik's art direction, that transforms the village into a human stage which the motherly and feminine souls reverberate within the interior of homes, bedrooms and kitchen with

objects and food of anthropological precision. With strong and bare images, Senem Tüzen captures this real, and not only ideal, confrontation between the mother and the daughter, between the past made up of tradition and religion, and the present, uncertain keeper of new values and new perspectives.

It is today's Turkey in its most profound sense. Where sadly, politics remain distant, although it would not be of any use.

It is a present that is unfortunately also a warden of violence. Although Nesrin almost invokes it, finds it and bares it in a terrible and suffered way, it nearly becomes an heroic gesture, certainly a tragic one, in order to affirm her individuality, her secularity, her independence. However, she does not know where to ground her feet—where to go and with whom—in her lacerated freedom.

These are the stories and ways of recounting humanity that render Turkish cinema great, and greater.

*Luca Pellegrini*  
*Venice Critics' Week*



## **development**

Motherland (Ana Yurdu) is a feature film with support for both development and production from the Turkish Ministry of Culture. While in development, juries awarded it "Best Project" at Thessaloniki Crossroads and Connecting Cottbus co-production markets as well as the Meetings On The Bridge Award in Istanbul. It also participated in the !F-Sundance ScreenWriter's Lab.



World press & sales:  
info@zelafilm.com  
+90 505 987 3894

Turkish press:  
Zümrüt Burul  
+90 536 486 6366

trailer  
youtu.be/UbGIPy6hSKI

anayurdu.com  
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Turkey, Greece | 2015 | color | 96 min | DCP | 1.85 | 5.1 | Turkish



