

PRESS PACK
January 2023

MY NAME IS HAPPY
UK/ TURKEY. 2022. 82mins

BILLED CREDITS

An October Films/ Red Zed Films/ Horovel Films production

Directed by: Ayse Toprak & Nick Read

Produced by: Nick Read & Mahmut Kaya

Director of Photography: Meryem Yavuz

Editor: Anna Price

Line producer: Martin Long

Executive producers: Adam Bullmore, Monica Garnsey, Siobhan Sinnerton & Nevine Mabro

PRESS COPY

SHORT VERSION

'My Name is Happy' tells the inspirational story of teenage singing sensation Mutlu Kaya as she makes a remarkable journey from gunshot victim to fearless survivor. As she battles to heal her haunting voice, she campaigns for women's right in Turkey and beyond. Mutlu means 'happy' in Turkish.

LONG VERSION

'My Name is Happy' tells the inspirational story of a Kurdish teenager, Mutlu Kaya, from a remote community in Southeast Turkey. Aged 19, stardom beckoned when she reached the finals of Turkey's Got Talent. Days later she was shot by a man trying to abduct her. Mutlu survived, but with life-changing injuries and a bullet in her brain.

5 years later, still recovering, the reality of escalating attacks on Turkish women intrudes: her carer & sister Dilek is killed by her boyfriend, and a neighbour is murdered by her fiance. Despite her life changing injuries, Mutlu relentlessly pursues justice for her sister, supported by her ever-present family: mother Hanim, elder sister Songul & brother Hakan. She depends on them to eat, to walk, to wash.

Evoking the story of Malala Yousafzai, Mutlu turns to Tik-Tok and her 1.5 million followers to rally support, and asserts her independence by writing a passionate, personal protest song. The film ends by celebrating Mutlu's determination, as she finally records again. Mutlu means 'happy' in Turkish.

Trailer (downloadable) here:

<https://vimeo.com/769994150/e1a110e4aa>

Press/ publicity stills with caption list here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gTlibJkTZ8LgZJdig7YDxjlhS6z1Q6wj?usp=share_link

Print quality poster (IDFA version Nov 22) here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q_onJEdGblvtUE7KRU7IdCekSdZ1wBL/view?usp=share_link

Film website: www.mynameishappy.org

Social media links: [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [TikTok](#)

FILM INFORMATION

Logline (35 words)

Aspiring popstar Mutlu Kaya (Mutlu means 'happy' in Turkish) narrowly escapes an attempted femicide with her life. Despite life changing injuries, Mutlu goes in search of justice and to reclaim her voice as a singer.

Synopsis (167 words)

'My Name is Happy' tells the inspirational story of a Kurdish teenager, Mutlu Kaya, from a remote community in Southeast Turkey. Aged 19, stardom beckoned when she reached the finals of Turkey's Got Talent. Days later she was shot by a man trying to abduct her. Mutlu survived, but with life-changing injuries and a bullet in her brain.

5 years later, still recovering, the reality of escalating attacks on Turkish women intrudes: her carer & sister Dilek is killed by her boyfriend, and a neighbour is murdered by her fiancé. Despite her life changing injuries, Mutlu relentlessly pursues justice for her sister, supported by her ever-present family: mother Hanim, elder sister Songul & brother Hakan. She depends on them to eat, to walk, to wash.

Evoking the story of Mallalah, Mutlu turns to Tik-Tok and her 1.5 million followers to rally support, and asserts her independence by writing a passionate, personal protest song. The film ends by celebrating Mutlu's determination, as she finally records again.

Topic summary (197 words)

In Turkey and beyond the rate of domestic violence and femicides is escalating at alarming rates, not least as a direct cause of the pandemic lockdowns. South-East Turkey has historically struggled with issues related to a patriarchal, honour-based culture: forced marriages, underage marriages, forced suicides and a litany of abuses perpetrated against women.

Mutlu Kaya's story represents a rare beacon of hope in this seemingly tragic gloom. Not only is she a survivor. She also emerges in the film as an eloquent, passionate advocate of women's rights and gender equality in a community where it is often dangerous for women to speak out. She is also – unwittingly - a powerful role model for disability rights, never letting her limitations inhibit her dreams.

As an avid user of social media (with 1.5 million followers on TikTok), Mutlu shares aspirations in common with her contemporaries globally. To live in peace. To be loved. To

fulfil her creative ambitions to learn. To connect.

Much of her energy is channelled into singing and making music. Her lyrics express a conflicting narrative: of idealising her stunningly beautiful homeland in the Anatolian mountains while expressing her feelings of loss and longing for love.

Directors' bios:

Nick Read is an EMMY & BAFTA nominated filmmaker known for making acclaimed observational documentaries. He has shot & directed over 50 films, many of them in remote or high-risk locations (INSIDE ISRAEL'S JAILS; SLUMDOG CHILDREN OF MUMBAI; THE CONDEMNED etc). His work has won 2 Foreign Press Association awards, the Rory Peck Impact Award and the Creative Diversity Award for best documentary. His most recent feature documentary, BOLSHOI BABYLON, produced by Simon Chinn, premiered at the Toronto Film Festival, opened in 100 UK cinemas and was long listed for BAFTA & Academy awards.

Ayse Toprak recently relocated from Istanbul to London. A graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, she has an MA in Media Studies at the New School. From 2011, she worked extensively for Al Jazeera in Turkey, London and Doha, producing social and political documentaries in the Middle East. In 2016 Ayse began work on her first feature documentary, MR GAY SYRIA. To date the film has screened at over 70 international festivals including IDFA, Sheffield DocFest, MOMA fortnight, Chicago Film Festival etc. The film won 14 awards, most of which were granted for enlightening human rights.

Directors' Statement (198 words)

The filmmakers began speaking with Mutlu and her family 7 years ago in 2016, soon after she returned home from hospital. At that time, she was still convalescing. We had to be patient, to find the right time to build a relationship.

In late 2020, soon after a series of widely reported and brutal cases of femicide in Turkey, and not long after the murder of her sister, we began filming with Mutlu and her family. Working with an entirely Turkish, and mainly female crew, Mutlu gifted us her trust.

Our vision was to capture the intimate and epic nature of Mutlu's story - to tell it with passion but also compassionately, through the lens of cinema, rather than conventional reportage. We hope audiences will enter her world, share her perspective, limited but not defined by her disability..... most of all to celebrate her as a survivor.

Her's is a universal story, one that reflects on escalating global issues of domestic violence and women's rights. To that end we are planning a carefully planned social impact campaign alongside the film's release, with Mutlu joining the debate, to increase pressure on governments and leaders to reduce the risks women face – daily, worldwide.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

OCTOBER FILMS

Founded in London in 1989, October is one of the most dynamic, imaginative and respected brands in the documentary sector. Truly independent and employee-owned, with offices in London, Los Angeles and New York, and a burgeoning regional studio facility in the UK, October harnesses an unrivalled community of producers and partners. Our passion for storytelling and commitment to excellence have been recognised with over 100 prestige awards, including EMMY, Prix Italia and BAFTA.

RED ZED FILMS

Founded in 2000, Red Zed is the company through which Nick Read works – developing and producing feature documentaries – alongside his freelance career. With over 70 TV credits to his name, Nick Read & Red Zed now specialise in documentaries for the theatrical market. The company's most recent productions: *The Condemned* (Grierson finalist), *Bolshoi Babylon* (Academy & BAFTA nominated) and *Against the Tides* have all been released to widespread critical and commercial acclaim at festivals, in cinemas and on TV globally.

KEY CREW BIOS:

MERYEM YAVUK (Cinematographer)

Meryem Yavuz studied cinema at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. In 2009, she was selected for Berlinale Talent Campus. Her first feature film as a cinematographer, *Two Lines* (Directed by Selim Evci, 2008) premiered at Venice Film Festival – Venice International Film Critics Week (SIC). *Debt* was awarded Best National Film Prize at Istanbul Film Festival. *Passed By Censor* (Directed by Serhat Karaaslan, 2019) won FEDEORA award at Karlovy Vary Film Festival. She was accepted into the American Society of Cinematographers Vision Mentorship Program in 2020.

ANNA PRICE (Editor)

Anna Price is a treble BAFTA-nominated film editor known for bringing clarity, resonance and creative flair to complex political and emotional narratives. She is particularly invested in giving voice to those whose stories are unacknowledged via mainstream media, as well as finding new angles on familiar themes. Her work has played at many international film festivals and includes *Tokyo Idols* (Sundance 2017); *The Trial of Ratko Mladic* (International Grierson, IDFA 2019); and the multi award-winning series *Once Upon a Time in Iraq* (BBC/PBS 2020).

MAHMUT KAYA (CO-PRODUCER)

Mahmut Kaya, based in Istanbul, is regarded as one of the most experienced local producers & fixers in Turkey. With over 20 years' experience of working with UK & US documentary crews, his credits include *Unreported World*, *CBS 60 Minutes*, *BBC This World* and multiple independent productions. He & Nick worked on an award-winning film for BBC2 about polygamy in S.E. Anatolia, where Mahmut originates from, and is currently resident. He also

acts as an official 'host' for visiting production teams, facilitating filming permissions from Turkey's Ministry of Culture.

ADAM BULLMORE (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

Adam Bullmore is Managing Director of October Films. He develops and executive produces projects through to commissioning, in particular the major international Co-Productions for which October is renowned. Productions include: This Is Football (Amazon), Walking With Elephants (Channel 4 & Animal Planet) Eight Days That Made Rome (Channel 5), Operation Stonehenge (BBC2, CBC, Smithsonian, France 5, ORF and ZDF), World War II From Space (History), The Man Who Killed Michael Jackson (C4, Zodiak, ABC and MSNBC) and Spying on Hitler's Army (C4, PBS and Foxtel).

MONICA GARNSEY (Executive Producer)

Monica Garnsey is a specialist in international documentaries filmed in hostile environments and featuring vulnerable contributors. She works with Channel 4, the BBC and PBS Frontline and was Series Editor of Unreported World for C4 between 2012 and 2017. Her work has won or been nominated for many awards: Iraq's Secret Sex Trade, which she Executive Produced for the BBC and PBS Frontline, won two News EMMYs, and is Grierson-nominated; Taliban Country, for Frontline, won best Video Journalist and was nominated for two other News Emmys in 2021; 'Return from Isis' Panorama and Frontline, was also News Emmy nominated in 2021.

SIOBHAN SINNERTON (Executive Producer)

Siobhan Sinnerton is the former Commissioning Editor, News and Current Affairs at Channel 4. Her most recent feature documentary, *For Sama*, was nominated for an Oscar and more than 30 major awards including best documentary at Cannes, BAFTA, Hot Docs, Grierson, BIFA, and SXSW. Other credits include: BAFTA-nominated *The Hunt for Jihadi John*; Rory Peck award-winner *The Battle for Hong Kong*; BAFTA; RTS award-winning *Myanmar's Killing Fields*; and the Emmy award-winning *Escape from ISIS*. Siobhan has recently joined new prodco Hidden Lights, and has agreed to act as a consultant executive producer on *My Name is Happy*.