

THE MASSAKER BEHIND A FILM

A documentary inspired by the killings at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps is ready for screening

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Directors Monika Borgmann, Hermann Theissen and Lokman Slim have mixed feelings of relief and emptiness now, after their documentary film *Massaker* (Massacre), into which they threw three years of their lives, is finished and ready for screening.

"We did the research in 2001 and began shooting the film in April 2002 until August of the same year. The editing was done in 2003 and post-production and sub-titling at the beginning of 2004. The film was finished in June 2004. It was really a long process," Borgmann related.

The German director added that, "on the one hand, we feel empty because during the last three years we were completely immersed in it. On the other, we feel relieved as we can now move on to with something different."

Massaker is a documentary on the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, in the suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, in September 1982 where around 3,000



Monika Borgmann and Hermann Theissen at the Dubai International Film Festival

PHOTO: S NAIR

civilians, composed mostly of women, children and elderly people were killed.

Borgmann said the film was not only about the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, which happened 23 years ago, but also about individ-

ual and collective violence.

"All three of us (directors), have our own private reasons for doing the film. I have been campaigning against different forms of violence. Lokman (Slim) was in Beirut during the massacre. His par-

ents' house was near the camps, but he was extremely shocked that despite the proximity, nobody knew about the violence that happened," Borgmann narrated.

She added that the film was

even more critical in the sense that the victims were Palestinians, Israelis and Lebanese. The German director also noted that mentioning the massacre remained somewhat of a taboo in Lebanon where no one talked about responsibility for the atrocity.

"It's not really difficult to find people during the research. It's more difficult to make them talk," she said.

In producing the film, Borgmann disclosed, the three of them had to take the role of listeners. "We were neither judges nor accomplices. We just tried to build trust with our subjects and to listen to them. They needed to talk, which became like a therapy for them. And we think that it was the first and last time that they ever told their stories," she said.

The six perpetrators of the massacre, who acted under orders, appeared in the documentary but their identities remained masked. *Massaker* is one of the documentary films featured in this year's Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF).