

“cahier africain”, Synopsis

It all started with a small school exercise book. But instead of being full of vocabulary, the pages were checkered with the courageous testimonies of 300 Central African women, girls and men. They reveal what Congolese mercenaries did to them between October 2002 and March 2003 in the wake of armed conflict. On their own initiative, they gathered together their testimonies in this book to record the crimes committed against them.

As a result of rape, **Amzine**, a young Muslim woman, gave birth to a child. Looking at her now 12-year-old daughter **Fane** is a daily reminder of the suffering she entrusted to this book. **Arllette**, a Christian girl, has agonised for years due to a gunshot to the knee that did not want to heal. After a successful surgery in Berlin, she holds on to hope for a pain-free existence.

cahier africain is a long-term observation that begins accompanying its protagonists in the village of PK 12 in 2008. But while they try to master their difficult daily lives with confidence – and while, in The Hague, the legal prosecution of crimes committed during the last war is still in progress – the next war breaks out in the Central African Republic. Amzine, Fane and Arlette must once again face a maelstrom of violence, death and expulsion. At their side, the film bears witness to the collapse of order and civilization in a country torn apart by civil war and coup d'états.

Remarks by the director

cahier africain is a personal film. On a research trip and by chance, I came upon this book, which led me to seven years of filming. We visited and accompanied the people who described their suffering and shame in it. Today, the book – along with thousands of other pieces of evidence of war crimes – is locked in the vault at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The fate of the women and their children begotten by force is a tragedy the world turns a blind eye on. It's estimated that, in the Central African region in recent years alone, more than 100,000 women have been violated during armed conflict. By way of comparison, after the Rwandan genocide approximately 20,000 children were brought to life with this background. The film was originally dedicated to the difficult attempts of women to regain a foothold after experiencing violence. However, the renewed outbreak of war in the Central African Republic abruptly rewrote the script.

Director's remarks (short version)

On a research trip and by chance, I came upon the “cahier”, which led me to 7 years of filming. We accompanied the people who described their suffering in it. Today, the book – along with other evidence of war crimes – is kept at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The film originally focussed on women attempting to regain a foothold after experiencing violence. However, the renewed outbreak of war in the Central African Republic abruptly rewrote the script.

Short Logline

Filmed over 7 years the film bears witness to the collapse of order and civilization in the Central African Republic, a country torn apart by civil war and coup d'états.