

Press release

Powerful stories from Syria, returning grantee filmmakers, emerging and established MENA directors have strong presence in Doha Film Institute's Spring 2015 Grants line-up

- 25 projects selected to receive grants with 23 by first and second-time filmmakers from MENA and around the world
- Represented MENA countries include Algeria, Libya, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia and UAE
- Mai Masri and Merzak Allouache receive funding in newly introduced criteria for established MENA directors
- Filmmakers from Singapore and Slovenia receive grants for first time
- Submissions for next funding round opens July 18

Cannes, France; May 16, 2015: Topical themes of exile, the aftermath of war, coming of age and the importance of family feature prominently in the Doha Film Institute's Spring 2015 session of its grants programme, whose recipients were announced today at the Cannes Film Festival.

Twenty-five projects – comprising 14 narrative feature films, 5 feature documentaries, 1 feature experimental film and 5 short films – will receive funding for development, production or post-production.

This round's selection also highlights the strength of submissions from first- and second-time feature filmmakers from the MENA region along with a strong group of short films receiving grants, reflecting the Doha Film Institute's dedication to supporting emerging new talent.

After expanding the grants criteria to include established filmmakers from the MENA region for the category of post-production, this cycle also sees Mai Masri (Palestine) and Merzak Allouache (Algeria) awarded funding for their respective new projects – Masri's **'3000 Nights'**, a narrative feature about a newlywed Palestinian schoolteacher who gives birth to her son in an Israeli prison and Allouache's **'Madame Courage'**, a narrative feature about an unstable and lonely teenager, living in a slum in the suburbs of Mostaganem, Algeria.

Former grantees Leila Hotait Salas (**'Crayons of Askalan'**) and Nejib Belkadhi (**'Bastardo'**) are also returning with new projects. Hotait Salas' narrative feature **'Stolen Skies'**, is set against the demonstrations in Cairo in 2011 about a woman who remembers her Lebanese lover from 30 years ago and Belkadhi's narrative feature **'Retina'**, is about a Tunisian immigrant forced to return to his country to take care of his autistic son.

Gulf representation in the short films includes **Fahad Al Kuwari's** **'One of Them'** from Qatar and Amal Al-Agroobi's **'Under The Hat'** from the UAE. Qatari feature film, **'Sahaab'** by Khalifa Abdullah Al Muraikhi marks the first Qatari feature awarded for a production grant and is a project which recently participated in Qumra – the first edition of the Institute's new industry platform dedicated to the development of first- and second-time filmmakers.

In the feature documentary category, stories from or about Syria and its ongoing civil war and set against a backdrop of political, social and emotional turmoil form the subject matter of several projects selected for grants including Boutheyna Bouslama's '**Seeking The Man With the Camera**' (Tunisia, Switzerland, France, Qatar), Ziad Kalthoum's '**Beirut Rooster**' (Syria, Lebanon, Qatar) and Noura Kevorkian's '**Batata**' (Lebanon, Qatar).

In the feature narrative category, regional projects from Algeria, Lebanon and Palestine span a variety of genres and cover a range of subject matter such as modern-day life in the Middle East, lost love and immigration; projects include Muhannad Lamin's '**Tin Hinan**', Lidia Terki's '**Paris The White**', Firas Khoury's '**Alam, The Flag**' and Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya's innovative genre film '**Film Kteer Kbeer**'.

Five projects from outside the MENA region have received funding, including grants for filmmakers from Singapore ('Apprentice' by Junfeng Boo) and Slovenia ('Houston, We Have a Problem' by Ziga Virc) for the first time.

The new-wave of filmmaking coming out of Argentina, a story of familial secrets between sisters and a moving documentary about orphan children in Swaziland form an eclectic selection of projects chosen from the rest of the world by filmmakers Francisco Varone ('**Road To La Paz**'), Manu Gerosa ('**Between Sisters**') and Aaron and Amanda Kopp ('**Liyana**').

Fatma Al Remaihi, CEO of the Doha Film Institute, said: "Our Spring grantees demonstrate the strength of new work coming from emerging filmmakers with 23 projects awarded to first- and second-time directors and a strong selection of short films by new talents to watch."

"These grants give support to projects with diverse regional perspectives and genres, underlining the Doha Film Institute's commitment to the development of innovative new voices in cinema which is also echoed in our recently launched development platform, Qumra."

"We have funded more than 220 projects through the grants programme since it was established and I am pleased to welcome back some of our grantee alumni who are returning this session with their new films. I am also pleased to introduce in this funding round a new avenue of support for established MENA directors, which reflects an integral part of our mission to support voices from the Arab world."

Films supported in previous sessions of the grants programme are strongly represented in the Festival de Cannes this year with five grantees making their world premiere in various sections. They are: '**Waves '98**' by Elie Dagher (Lebanon, Qatar) competing in the Official Short Film Competition; '**Dégradé**' by Tarzan and Arab Abunasser (Palestine, France, Qatar) and '**Mediterranea**' by Jonas Carpignano (Italy, France, Germany, Qatar) in the Critics' Week sidebar which is dedicated to showcasing innovative works by new filmmakers; '**Lamb**' by Yared Zeleke (Ethiopia, France, Qatar) in the main world cinema showcase, Un Certain Regard; and '**Mustang**' by Deniz Gamze Ergüven (Turkey, France, Germany, Qatar) selected for the Directors' Fortnight.

Submissions for the Fall 2015 grants session will open July 18 and close August 1.

The fund is primarily for first and second-time filmmakers with the exception of the category of Post-Production which is available to established filmmakers from the MENA region.

For more information about eligibility and submission process visit:

<http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/grants/guidelines>

A full directory of past grant recipients is available to view online at:

<http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/projects/grants>

Doha Film Institute grantees for the Spring 2015 session are:

DEVELOPMENT

Feature Narrative

Seeking the Man with the Camera by Boutheyna Bouslama (Tunisia, Switzerland, France, Qatar)

An investigative documentary that follows the narrator as she seeks out Seymo, a childhood friend with whom she used to play in the streets of Homs.

Stolen Skies by Laila Hotait Salas (Lebanon, Qatar)

Against the backdrop of the demonstrations in Cairo in 2011, a woman wants to remember the Lebanese lover she had 30 years ago – but first she will need to forgive herself.

Tin Hinan by Muhannad Lamin (Libya, Qatar)

A mythical coming-of-age tale in which a young girl is forced to travel into the Sahara to find a new home, 'Tin Hinan' depicts the struggle for identity in the midst of a revolution.

PRODUCTION

Feature Narrative

1982 by Oualid Mouaness (Lebanon, Qatar)

When 11-year-old Wissam decides to tell a classmate that he loves her, his will is challenged, his courage falters and an impending war threatens to separate them permanently.

Alam, The Flag by Firas Khoury (Palestine, France, Qatar)

Tamer, a young Palestinian high-school student, takes part in the mysterious Operation Flag mission on the eve of Israel's Independence Day celebrations – a day of mourning for Palestinians.

Paris the White by Lidia Terki (Algeria, France, Qatar)

Aicha, a woman of 70, leaves her village in Algeria for the first time to go to Paris in search of her husband, who has not contacted her in years.

Retina by Nejib Belkadhi (Tunisia, Qatar)

Lotfi, a Tunisian immigrant who lives in France, is forced to return to his homeland to take care of his autistic child.

Sahaab by Khalifa Abdullah Al Muraikhi (Qatar)

When Nasser and his friends are lost in the desert, struggling to retrieve their falcon, their search turns out to be a deadly journey.

Short Narrative

Aya by Moufida Fedhila (Tunisia, France, Qatar)

'Aya' is a story about faith in God and in humanity, and of making changes and sacrifices in order to save one's soul.

The Boss by Rzgar Huseein Ahmed (Iraq, Qatar)

A group of boys decides to select a boss from among themselves. Then the boss becomes the group's dictator.

One of Them by Fahad Al Kuwari (Qatar)

Khalid finds himself in an enigmatic situation when he suddenly develops immunity to religious advocacy.

Under the Hat by Amal Al-Agroobi (United Arab Emirates, Qatar)

A mosque's mu'athen loses his voice and looks for a replacement in his neighbour – the young vocalist in a heavy metal band.

Feature Documentary

Batata by Noura Kevorkian (Lebanon, Qatar)

While war rages back home, a family of Syrian potato farmers works the fields in neighbouring Lebanon.

Ghosts Hunting by Raed Andoni (Palestine, France, Qatar)

Director Raed Andoni assembles an eclectic group of Palestinian ex-prisoners to rebuild the Israeli investigation centre in which they were imprisoned – a place they never in fact saw, because they were always blindfolded.

Short Experimental or Essay

The Most Pretty Dudes by Mohammad Dibo (Syria, Qatar)

In Homs, a city destroyed by war, two embattled groups negotiate to ensure their safe escape from the building they are both trapped in.

POST-PRODUCTION

Feature Narrative

3000 Nights by Mai Masri (Palestine, France, Jordan, Lebanon, UAE, Qatar)

A recently wed Palestinian schoolteacher gives birth in an Israeli prison, where she fights to protect her son, survive and maintain hope.

Apprentice by Junfeng Boo (Singapore, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Qatar)

Aiman, a corrections officer, is transferred to a high-security prison. There, he befriends Rahim, who, it turns out, is chief executioner. Can Aiman overcome his conscience and become Rahim's apprentice?

Film Kteer Kbeer by Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya (Lebanon, Qatar)

Intending to smuggle the amphetamine Captagon to Iraq in film canisters, a small-time Lebanese drug-dealer transforms himself into a film producer and, with the help of an underrated filmmaker, slyly manipulates public opinion.

Houston, We Have a Problem! by Ziga Virc (Slovenia, Germany, Croatia, Qatar)

In March, 1961, Yugoslavia sold its secret space programme to the USA. Two months later, President Kennedy announced that Americans would travel to the Moon.

Madame Courage by Merzak Allouache (Algeria, France, Qatar)

Omar, an unstable and lonely teenager, lives in a slum in the suburbs of Mostaganem.

Road to La Paz by Francisco Varone (Argentina, The Netherlands, Germany, Qatar)

Sebastián is hired to take Jahlil, a Muslim retiree, on the most important mission of his life. What begins as an inconvenient trip turns out to be a life-changing adventure.

Feature Documentary

Beirut Rooster by Ziad Kalthoum (Syria, Lebanon, Qatar)

While Syrian workers rebuild Lebanon, a country ruined by a lengthy civil war, their hometowns in Syria are destroyed during the brutal conflict there. Who will rebuild their houses?

Between Sisters by Manu Gerosa (Italy, Qatar)

Before life runs out, Ornella decides to confront her aging sister Teresa with a painful untold story – one that might change their close bond forever.

Liyana by Aaron and Amanda Kopp (USA, Swaziland, Qatar)

In Swaziland, some talented orphaned children create a fictional heroine and send her on a dangerous quest.

Feature Experimental or Essay

In My Head, A Roundabout by Lahcene Ferhani (Algeria, France, Qatar)

In the Ruisseau District of Algiers, workers and animals come together for a last dance of death: the city's main slaughterhouse is about to close forever.



-ENDS-

About Doha Film Institute:

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation established in 2010. It supports the growth of the local film community by enhancing industry knowledge, cultivating film appreciation and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. Doha Film Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films, educational programmes, film screenings, the Ajyal Youth Film Festival and Qumra.

With culture, community, education and entertainment at its foundation, the Doha Film Institute serves as an all-encompassing film hub in Doha, as well as a resource for the region and the rest of the world. Doha Film Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Doha Film Institute

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