



Ajyal Film Festival 2018 to open with the bold, inspiring **Freedom Fields** in celebration of courage and resilience

- *A recipient of the DFI Grants Programme, **Freedom Fields** is the story of a group of women braving all odds in post-revolution Libya to play football for their country*
- *Ajyal Film Festival to also present Special Screenings of 6 highly accomplished films from across the globe*
- *Trans-adapted screenings of **Theeb** to offer a unique inclusive cinema experience for people of all abilities*

Doha, Qatar; November 5, 2018: This year's opening night ceremony of **Ajyal Film Festival**, the annual celebration of cinema by the Doha Film Institute, will present the Middle East premiere of **Freedom Fields**. The bold and inspiring documentary, based on true events, will set the stage for a diverse showcase of films from around the world celebrating courage, nobility and compassion from **November 28 to December 3** at Katara Cultural Village.

Directed by Naziha Arebi and a recipient of the Doha Film Institute's Grants Programme, **Freedom Fields** (Libya, UK, USA, Netherlands, Canada, Lebanon, Qatar/2018) is a story about hope and sacrifice. The film takes audiences on an inspiring journey through the ups and downs of three women's efforts to build a football team in post-revolution Libya, even as the country descends into civil war.

"The opening night film of Ajyal Film Festival is a powerful ode to the courage and determination of women and Arabs alike," said **Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute**. "It perfectly fits with the focus of this year's festival on global stories of people and communities who rise above the mundane to serve as an inspiration to all. "

"**Freedom Fields** comes at a time when the voices of women are being acknowledged and elevated. Beyond the underlining theme of women empowerment, it is a powerful window to our region and our people who brave odds to pursue their dreams. It is also timely in that Ajyal presents the film during the symbolic handover year of the World Cup from Russia to Qatar, a dream for our region as a whole. Ajyal proudly continues to expand the diversity and boldness of its programming with narrative, documentary and short films that inspire audiences of all ages to think deeply, act decisively, and be champions of positive change."

Filmed over five years, **Freedom Fields** shares the realities of where personal stories of passions and aspirations collide with history in a country in transition. In their struggle to gain support, respect, and even the right to play, facing the disapproval of some members of their community, the challenges that the women must overcome to achieve their dream of playing for their country are nothing short of remarkable.

The 2018 Ajyal Film Festival will present an exciting showcase of cinematic experiences in the Special Screenings programme that demonstrate the limitless possibilities of film to present perspectives, celebrate culture, and inspire people of all abilities. These include:



3 Faces (Iran/2018) by Jafar Panahi is a compelling perspective on traditions and modern aspirations. Well-known actress Behnaz Jafari is distraught when she comes across a provincial girl's plea for help after her family prevents her from studying drama in Tehran. Abandoning her shoot, Behnaz turns to Jafar Panahi to help with the young girl's problem. Together, they travel to the rural Northwest, where they encounter the endearing and generous folk of the girl's mountain village. But they soon discover that old traditions die hard.

2018 Ajyal will once again offer one of the most unique cinematic presentations in the world with the trans-adapted version of **Theeb** (Jordan, Qatar, UAE, UK/2014) by Naji Abu Nowar, a DFI-supported film that was Oscar® nominated in 2016 for Best Foreign Language Film. The screening marks the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities in a special trans-adapted screening, presented in collaboration with the Translation and Interpreting Institute of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hamad Bin Khalifa University. The inclusive presentation will provide visually impaired audiences with descriptive audio and hearing-impaired viewers and those with limited speech processing and comprehension will benefit from descriptive subtitles, enriched with information about sound effects and music.

The award-winning film is centred on young Theeb, who lives with his tribe in a forgotten corner of the Ottoman Empire. His brother tries to teach him the Bedouin way of life, but the Theeb is more interested in mischief than mentorship. Their lives are disrupted by the arrival of a British Army Officer and his guide on a mysterious mission.

Hayati (Spain, France/2017) by Sofia Escudé and Liliana Torres, explores the true story of Ossamah Al Mohsen and his son, who were tripped up by a TV reporter as they crossed the Hungarian border in 2015. The film explores the struggles of Syrian refugees who all hope to return home one day or find a new one where they are.

Our Struggles (Belgium, France/2018) by Guillaume Senez, is about Oliver, a fundamentally decent man who is more than happy to shoulder the weight of other people's problems. His wife Laura, without warning, leaves Oliver and her children one day. Juggling the daily challenges of his job and being a single parent, Oliver finds new meaning in his life with the help of his kids.

The Man Who Stole Banksy (UK, Italy, Qatar/2018) by Marco Proserpio, also a Doha Film Institute grantee project, follows a local taxi driver and bodybuilder known as 'Walid the Beast' who sees a business opportunity in Palestine in the politically divisive artwork of anonymous street artist and activist Banksy. Some local residents view it as an insult, as they believed it portrays them in a culturally insensitive way, while others hail it as high art and flock to see it.

Maya the Bee (Australia, Germany, USA/2014) by Alexs Stadermann tells the story of Maya, a little bee with big ambitions. Freshly hatched, she is eager to explore the world around her, but this appetite for adventure causes a few arguments with the overly strict Buzzlina. After some royal jelly is stolen, Maya must team up with her new friends to prevent a nasty battle.

The Ajyal Film Festival box office will open soon at the Katara Drama Theatre Box Office, and tickets will also be available online at www.dohafilminstitute.com. More details about the festival will be unveiled in the coming days.

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Note to Editors:

About Doha Film Institute:

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation. It supports the growth of the local film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. The Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films; skills-sharing and mentorship programmes; film screenings; the Ajyal Youth Film Festival; and Qumra. With culture, community, learning and entertainment at its foundation, the Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Doha Film Institute

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