

## Doha Film Institute to present 14 films about the Arab world at 'Qatar Film Days' held as part of SPIEF 2021 in Russia

*Eight short films 'Made in Qatar' will be screened at the cultural initiative held as part of cultural showcases by Qatar at St. Petersburg International Economic Forum*

*Qatar Film Days will open on June 4 with **Gaza Mon Amour** and close on June 6 with **Notturmo***

*Qatar Film Days is curated by Culture Creative Agency (CCA) and Beat Films in partnership with DFI*

**Doha, Qatar; June 02, 2021:** The Doha Film Institute will present 14 films from the Arab world, including eight Made in Qatar films, at the Qatar Film Days, organised as part of the 2021 St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF 2021) in Russia. The film showcase is organised by the Culture Creative Agency and Beat Films under the auspices of the Qatari-Russian Center for Cooperation, to complement Qatar being honoured as 'Guest Country' at the global forum. All the 14 films are supported by the Institute during various stages of its production, and the free screenings will be held at Sevkael Port from June 4-6, 2021.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "It is our honour to present Qatar Film Days at SPIEF 21, a cultural initiative that aims to foster cultural exchange and understanding through the medium of cinema. The event is being hosted at a very important time when the need to strengthen positive conversations among cultures and communities is even more relevant. Our partnership with SPIEF 2021 builds on the strong relations we share with the cultural community of Russia. Qatar Film Days will present an inspiring platform for global audiences to engage in meaningful conversations and build cultural dialogue that strengthens human bonds and promotes solidarity."

Alremaihi will be addressing a panel discussion on the sidelines of SPIEF 2021 on the power of films to promote global cultural codes and build a universal cultural heritage. She explained: "As a medium with universal resonance, film help highlight a deeper understanding of the world we live in. They enable us, as humanity, to realise collective dreams for peace and togetherness, and become a vehicle for positive change. By facilitating dialogue on film and culture through Qatar Film Days, we are also building a stronger understanding of the cultural identity of Qatar and the wider Arab region."

Qatar Film Days is a cultural initiative that presents contemporary cinema about the Middle East and North Africa to Russian audiences, and the screenings will be complemented by an educational program of talks and discussions with special guests to create dialogue around reimagining geographical and cultural boundaries for a better future. The event builds on the active engagement by Doha with Russian film talent including the special showcase of Russian films as part of the 'Year of Culture Qatar – Russia 2018' celebration. The Institute has also welcomed renowned Russian directors such as Aleksandr Sokurov and Andrey Zvyagintsev as its Qumra Masters in addition to screening Russian short films as part of Ajyal Film Festival 2018.

Qatar Film Days will open with DFI Grantee **Gaza Mon Amour** (Palestine, France, Germany, Portugal, Qatar/ Arabic) on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2021. Directed by Tarzan and Arab Nasser, the film was screened at the 2020 Venice Film Festival and won the Toronto International Film Festival's NETPAC Prize in 2020. Set in Gaza,

the film is about a 60-year-old fisherman Issa, who is secretly in love with Siham, a woman who works at the market with her daughter Leila.

The other DFI Grants recipient feature films and documentaries to be screened include: **Nardjes A.** (France, Algeria, Germany, Brazil, Qatar/ Amazigh, Arabic, French), directed by Karim Aïnouz, it follows a day in the life of Nardjes, a young Algerian woman who finds in the protests demanding the resignation of their president also a space to claim what had been promised and stolen from her—her future.

Directed by Ali Essafi, **Before the Dying of the Light** (Morocco, Qatar/Arabic) is based on a true story. The story revolves around an independent film from 1974, *About Some Meaningless Events* by Mostafa Derkaoui, where a group of young filmmakers explored the role that the new Moroccan cinema should play in society.

**Mica** (France, Morocco, Qatar/Arabic, French) by Ismaël Ferroukhi is about 10-year-old Mica who lives with his mother and sick father in a slum in the suburbs of Meknes, which is destined for destruction.

Elia Suleiman's **It Must Be Heaven** (France, Qatar, Germany, Canada, Turkey, Palestine/ Arabic, English French) co-financed by the Institute, is another powerful film to screen at the Qatar Film Days. Selected for the Palme d'Or at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival, it won the Jury Special Mention as well as the FIPRESCI Critics' Prize. Having gained rave reviews globally, the film sees Palestinian auteur Suleiman masterfully using his penetrating gaze and expressive body language to distil the soul of Palestine through his travels to the bustling metropolises of Paris and New York.

The **Made in Qatar** films, directed by Qataris and those who call Qatar home, are:

- **Gubgub** by Nouf Al Sulaiti, where Jawaher sets out to catch crabs to win her father's approval. On her quest, she finds herself battling for a catch with Nawaf, a boy who shares her goal.
- **Al Tabbab** by Khalifa Al-Janahi is about sailors journeying to a specific spot in the ocean along with their valuables to make a pearl trade with a sea monster. However, Ali, the captain's son, who is assigned as Al Tabbab on this trip is not convinced the trade is fair.
- **Stranger** by Yasser Mustafa and Christophe Buffet portrays the security guard of an abandoned elementary school explores remains of the neighbourhood's past residents, weaving their mysteries into his own narrative. Some of his discoveries remind him of the life he has left behind.
- **Voices from the Urbanscape** by Shaima Al Tamimi and Maryam Salim presents visions of rapid urbansation in contemporary Doha, while various voices from the community express their sense of attachment and identity as a result of the city's manic paced growth.
- **Sh'hab** by Amal Al-Muftah is set in the old village of Al Wakrah, where a mischievous 8-year-old girl would do anything to spend time with her father and older brother at sea. In an effort to keep her home and safe, her mother begins to share with her the most elaborate mythological tales about falling stars.

- In ***Emsahar*** by Hassan Al-Jahni, Fatima, a tall and curly haired young girl, sleeps peacefully with her nightlight on, as an old hunchbacked mystical man wakes everyone up for Suhoor. Fatima is woken up by the drums, takes her younger brother and touches the rainbow road.
- ***Kashta*** by A.J. Al Thani is set in the beautiful quiet of the desert, where a man teaches his young sons how to track and hunt. Frustration leads to a struggle between the two brothers and their carelessness brings about sudden disaster.
- ***Fishermen*** by Obada Yousef Jarbi portrays three fishermen, who run away from the crowded city towers and lights. Every night they take their small boat to the dark, under the light of the moon, far away from everything that reflects the transformative modernity of the metropolis.

Qatar Film Days will conclude with the screening of ***Notturmo*** (Italy, France, Germany, Qatar/ Arabic, Kurdish), co-financed by the Institute and directed by Gianfranco Rosi, the only documentary filmmaker to win the Golden Lion in 2013. Shot over the course of three years between Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Lebanon, *Notturmo* follows different people from near war zones in the Middle East, trying to restart their everyday lives. It is a study of how borders have changed the destiny of people.

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#### **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 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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