

## Doha Film Institute announces 2021 Spring Grants for 32 film projects by Arab and international filmmakers

- 14 projects helmed by women filmmakers including Academy Award® nominated Farah Nabulsi, and award-winning documentarian Hala Alabdalla
- 32 diverse projects from 13 countries that stand out for their bold themes and inspiring approach to storytelling
- Three new projects from Qatar are part of 28 films from the Middle East and North Africa region, including animations and television series

**Doha, Qatar; June 09, 2021:** The Doha Film Institute (DFI) today announced the recipients of its 2021 Spring Grants cycle that supports first- and second-time filmmakers from around the world. A total of 32 film projects by emerging and established filmmakers from the Arab region and globally have been selected for the Institute's leading financing initiative, which supports new voices in cinema and the development of universally resonant stories.

DFI's Spring Grants 2021 recipients covers a wide range of film productions that include feature, documentary, short film, and TV series with 28 projects from the Middle East and North Africa, including three from Qatar, underlining its role as a strong advocate of powerful Arab cinema and emerging talent. Four film projects in this cycle are from the non-MENA region representing France, India and Mexico.

Two projects are by directors who have proved their mettle with their first films - **Farah Nabulsi**, whose film ***The Present***, supported by DFI, was nominated for the 2021 Academy Award® for Best Live Action Short and won the Best British Short BAFTA®; and documentary filmmaker, producer, and scriptwriter **Hala Alabdalla**, whose intense documentary ***I Am the One who Brings Flowers to her Grave*** gained critical acclaim at several international film festivals including Venice. Reflecting the growing prominence of Arab women in film, 14 projects are helmed by women filmmakers that represent the bold new energy of creative talent in the MENA region.

**Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of DFI**, said: "The founding objective of our Grants programme is to build a new collective of important voices who bring diversity and depth to the medium of cinema and encourage cross-cultural exchange and dialogue. Our aim is to identify new talent, support globally acclaimed stories and develop a strong ecosystem that nurtures powerful and moving storytelling to help emerging filmmakers realise their creative aspirations.

"The Spring Grants cycle this year once again features a slate of captivating projects chosen for their creative story-telling approach and thematic brilliance that will resonate with audiences worldwide. The programme continues in its mission to amplify new talent and contribute to the development of independent cinema. We have supported more than 640 films from 70 countries to date and are now recognized internationally as an unparalleled development and financing entity for Arab cinema, a huge achievement for all of us at DFI and in Qatar."

The Spring 2021 Grant recipients are:

**MENA: Feature Narrative - Development**

- ***Al Baseer – The Blind Ferryman*** (Switzerland, Qatar) by Ali Al-Fatlawi about Ayoub, who finds his way around the southern Iraqi marshes despite lacking eyesight, until one night he gets lost and meets a mysterious woman.

**MENA: Feature Documentary - Development**

- ***My Father Killed Bourguiba*** (Tunisia, Qatar) by Fatma Riahi, a personal quest by the director in the history of her father who wanted to be part of the 1987 military coup to overthrow the Tunisian regime.
- ***Yalla Parkour*** (Sweden, Qatar) by Areeb Zuaiter narrates the story of Ahmad's passion for the sport of freedom, which drives him to break through the borders of his besieged city of Gaza.

**MENA: Feature Experimental or Essay - Development**

- ***Chasing the Dazzling Light*** (working title) (Syria, Qatar) by Yaser Kassab, is the story of Yaser, who on realising that his father who lives in Aleppo had an unfulfilled dream of becoming a filmmaker, decides to make a joint film with him.

**MENA: Feature Narrative – Production**

- ***Inshallah a Boy*** (Jordan, Egypt, France, Qatar) by Amjad Al Rasheed, narrates the story of Nawal, who after the death of her husband, must save her daughter and home in a society where having a son is a game-changer.
- ***The Teacher*** (Palestine, UK, Qatar) by Farah Nabulsi in which a Palestinian teenage boy discovers his teacher is involved with the darker side of resistance and feels emboldened to seek revenge for the death of his brother.
- ***Tunis-Djerba*** (Tunisia, France, Qatar) by Amel Guellaty which features Alyssa, 19, and Mehdi, 23, who use their imagination to escape their unpromising fate by entering a contest in the South of Tunisia that may allow them to flee away for real.

**MENA: Feature Documentary – Production**

- ***Bye Bye Tiberias*** (France, Belgium, Qatar) by Lina Soualem, about Palestinian actress Hiam Abbass, who left her small native village Deir Hanna in Galilee 30 years ago to follow her acting dream in France.
- ***Concrete Land*** (Jordan, Qatar) by Asmahan Bkerat, takes an intimate look at the lives of a nomadic Bedouin family in their struggle to hold on to its traditional life under the pressures of urbanization.
- ***Suspended*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Myriam El Hajj, recounts Lebanon's past four years of turmoil through three characters from three different generations – each fighting to survive.
- ***The Day of Wrath: Tales from Tripoli*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Rania Rafei, a hybrid film mixing fiction and documentary to shed the light on five moments of uprising during different historical eras of the city of Tripoli.

#### MENA: Feature Narrative - Post-Production

- ***Soula*** (Algeria, France, Italy, Qatar) by Salah Issaad, the tale of a young single mother, who is rejected by her family in the name of honour; trying to survive, she finds herself caught up in a spiral of violence.
- ***Under the Fig Trees*** (Tunisia, Switzerland, France, Qatar) by Erige Sehiri is about Melek and her friends, who spend their summers working the fields to save up for their studies, future weddings, or to help their families.

#### Non-MENA: Feature Narrative – Post-Production

- ***Shame*** (Mexico, Qatar) by Miguel Salgado, follows Pedro, who is becoming an adult and is forced to hurt the things he loves. He watches how those affected by his actions suffer but his shame keeps him silent.
- ***Tropic of Violence*** (France, Qatar) by Manuel Schapira is the first film shot in Mayotte, the 101st French department, which follows the destiny of slums orphans.

#### MENA: Feature Documentary - Post-Production

- ***Guardian of the Worlds*** (France, Tunisia, Qatar) by Leïla Chaïbi is about Hassan who works in the Jellaz cemetery in Tunis. Though the only man at work, he is kept company by a tribe of compelling characters - thousands of spirits and one special woman.
- ***Octopus*** (Lebanon, Sweden, Qatar) by Karim Kassem, in which a filmmaker arrives to work on his new film and is faced with a colossal explosion that changes his life.
- ***Escape*** (France, Qatar) by Katia Jarjoura follows five young Syrian artists, all forced to flee their country, recounting their broken story and their personal revolution through their artistic practice.
- ***Omar Amiralay - Sorrow, Time and Silence*** (France, Syria, Qatar) by Hala Alabdalla which tells the story of Syrian director Omar Amiralay who dedicated his life to his country and to cinema through 40 years of political commitment and documentary filmmaking.

#### MENA: Feature Experimental or Essay - Post-Production

- ***The Tokyo Reel*** (Palestine, Belgium, Qatar) by Mohanad Yaqubi, is an open invitation to discover the restored digital scan of a lost 16 mm film reel found in the outskirts of Tokyo, which was made by a film collective that collaborated with several Japanese solidarity movements with Palestine.

#### Non-MENA: Feature Documentary - Post-Production

- ***Untitled Vinay Shukla Project*** (India, Qatar) by Vinay Shukla, a raw and timely film that offers an intimate portrait of the frontlines of truth in India.
- ***Zona Norte*** (Mexico, Qatar) by Javier Ávila which depicts the travails of a person who no longer belongs in any country and only carries the guilt of failure. The streets of Tijuana are the only home.

#### MENA: Short Narrative in Development – Qatar

- ***Civilization of Equality*** (Qatar), an animation by Ibrahim Albuainain in which animals from different habitats sing in harmony calling for equality and peace.
- ***Mary*** (Qatar) by Abdulaziz Khashabi and Abdulla Al-Janahi, follows a 65-year-old housewife who lives in her house with her beloved 70-year-old husband, Robert, and their lazy cat.

#### MENA: Short Narrative - Production

- ***Chained Prey*** (Egypt, Qatar) by Esmail Zalat, is about an Indian falcon, Raja, who lives a life of prestige at his falconer's house in the Arabian Gulf and faces the threat of losing his secure lifestyle forever.
- ***Field of View*** (Lebanon, France, Qatar) by Hussen Ibraheem, features a boy who defies his father's views on the concept of manhood while on a bird hunting trip.
- ***Two or three things I don't know about her*** (France, Algeria, Qatar) by Sabrina Idiri Chemloul, is about Lila, an 18-year-old girl living in Brest (France), and has recently decided to wear the veil, to the dismay of her family.
- ***Sandogi [My Treasure Chest]*** (Qatar) by Noor Alkuwari about reconnecting with your inner self to find your way.

#### MENA: Short Documentary - Production

- ***Ship of Fools*** (Germany, Lebanon, Qatar) by Alia Haju, which is set amid the tumult of Beirut, when Alia meets the madman Abu Samra, and their shared insanity helps them make sense of Lebanon.

#### MENA: TV Series in Development

- ***Dar El Malika*** (Algeria, Qatar) by Lotfi Bouchouchi, which narrates the story of Malika and her daughters who find themselves almost destitute after the tragic death of her husband. They are forced to leave their house of the posh districts of Algiers for an old, ruined house in heart of the Casbah.
- ***Hajj Quichotte*** (Morocco, Qatar) by Hicham Lasri is about an old cart driver who is forced to use a three-wheeled engine, when authorities seize his horse. He discovers a modern world he doesn't know and decides, after an accident, to run away to make up for his past.
- ***Under This Roof*** (Lebanon, UAE, Qatar) by Areej Mahmoud, is an anthology about the tireless fighting spirit of people living under the house rules of one of the most corrupt countries on earth, Lebanon. Each episode follows a different character as they fight for dignity and for survival.

First- and second-time directors from the MENA region are eligible for DFI's development, production and post-production funding for feature-length projects. Production funding is available to short films from the MENA region; development funding for screenwriters from the MENA region for TV series; and production funding to directors from the MENA region for web series. Established MENA directors can apply for post-production funding for feature-length projects. Post-production funding is also available to international first- and second-time filmmakers for feature-length projects. In addition to the Grants, the Doha Film Institute also has a co-financing initiative to invest in film production through strategic partnerships on projects that are culturally relevant and commercially viable.

- END -

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام

DOHA FILM INSTITUTE

#### **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:**

Twitter: @DohaFilm; Instagram: @DohaFilm; Facebook: [www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute](http://www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute)