

## Seven diverse films supported by the Doha Film Institute selected for the 46<sup>th</sup> Toronto International Film Festival

- *Latest co-financed project Huda's Salon by acclaimed two-times Oscar Nominated Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu Assad to world premiere in the festival's Platform segment*
- *Line-up includes three world premieres with films from the Middle East, Africa and Asia*
- *Selection puts the spotlight on emerging talent from the Arab world and international*

Doha, Qatar; **September 08, 2021:** Seven films supported by the Doha Film Institute (DFI) through its grants and co-financing programmes have been selected for the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) taking place between 9-18 September 2021.

Continuing to support and showcase Arab and international films to global audiences at leading film events, the selection at TIFF builds on the strong showing of DFI-supported films at the Cannes, Venice, Locarno and Sarajevo film festivals earlier this summer. Two films will mark their world premieres in the festival's TIFF Docs and Discovery segments, three films from the Middle East screen in the Contemporary World Cinema category dedicated to international emerging directors, one film will feature in the festival's Special Events category and one will have its world premiere in the Platform segment.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: *"We are incredibly proud to be presenting new voices in Arab and world cinema to film lovers at one of the world's largest publicly attended events. The selection includes compelling and innovative stories from the region and beyond and are moving portrayals that exist within a space of true artistic discovery and deep-felt humanity."*

*The diverse range of DFI supported films selected for TIFF this year is a testament to our commitment to shed light on stories that transcend borders and present unique perspectives. We hope these films receive the acclaim and attention they deserve."*

### Films to screen at TIFF:

***Huda's Salon*** (Palestine, Egypt, Netherlands, Qatar) by two-times Oscar Nominee Hany Abu Assad and co-financed by DFI, screens in the festival's Platform section and is also nominated for the Platform Prize. The film tells the story of Reem who visits Huda's hair salon. What starts as a lovely domestic drama, shifts hard when Reem is betrayed by the stylist and thrown into a dangerously compromising situation with only one way out: spying on her own community. The Institute had previously collaborated with Hany Abu Assad on his feature *The Idol*, a fictionalized version of the life of Mohammed Assaf who won the 2013's Arab Idol singing competition.

***Memoria*** (Thailand, Colombia, Mexico, France, Germany, Qatar) directed by Qumra Master and Palme d'Or winning Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul and co-financed by DFI, screens as part of the festival's Special Events category. Winner of the Jury Prize at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival, the film invites viewers into the life of Jessica who, ever since being startled by a loud 'bang' at daybreak, is unable to sleep. In Bogotá to visit her sister, she befriends Agnes, an archaeologist studying human remains discovered within a tunnel under construction. Jessica travels to see Agnes at the excavation site. In a small town nearby, she encounters a fish scaler, Hernan. They share memories by the river. As the day comes to a close, Jessica is awakened to a sense of clarity.

Mohammed Abugeth and Daniel Carsenty's feature documentary, *The Devil's Drivers* (Palestine, France, Lebanon, Germany, Qatar) will world premiere in the festival's TIFF Docs line-up. A 2018 Spring Grantee the documentary follows two Palestinian cousins who smuggle undocumented workers into Israel. Spanning from the easy-going days of 2012 to the unbearable hardships during the Third Intifada, audiences will follow the cousins' struggle for independence in a world getting more dangerous day-by-day.

Tanzanian filmmaker Amil Shivji's *Tug of War* (Tanzania, South Africa, Germany, Qatar) will also mark its world premiere in the festival's Discovery segment. Recipient of Spring Grants 2020, the film is an adaption of the Adam Shafi's Swahili novel 'Give and Receive'. The story follows Denge, a frustrated and rebellious young man who meets Yasmin, a young Indian-Zanzibari girl in the middle of the night as she is on her way to be betrothed to a man three times her age; sparking a series of missed opportunities for the forlorn lovers.

Fall Grants 2018 recipient Mounia Akl's *Costa Brava Lebanon* (Lebanon, France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Qatar) screens in Contemporary World Cinema, a category dedicated to presents cinema by emerging voices from around the world with a focus on non-English language art house films. The film follows the free-spirited Badri family who have escaped the toxic pollution of Beirut by seeking refuge in the utopic mountain home they have built. However, when the government inaugurates a landfill outside their fence, everything they escaped catches up with them.

Also screening in Contemporary World Cinema is *Whether the Weather is Fine* (Philippines, France, Singapore, Germany, Indonesia, Qatar) by Carlo Francisco Manatad. Recipient of the 2020 Fall Grants, the film follows Miguel after he wakes up in the chaos of Typhoon Haiyan, which destroyed Tacloban—a coastal city in the Philippines, in November 2013. Rumours of another incoming storm are spreading like wildfire, and Miguel roams the ravaged city with the two women in his life, his mother Norma and his friend Andrea.

Alongside Akl and Manatad, Khader Ayderus Ahmed's *The Gravedigger's Wife* (Somalia, Finland, France, Germany, Qatar), is another DFI supported film selected to the Contemporary World Cinema category. A Spring Grants 2020 recipient, the film follows Guled and Nasra; a loving couple living in the outskirts of Djibouti with their teenage son Mahad. However, they soon face difficult times as Nasra urgently needs an expensive operation to treat chronic kidney disease.

As well as in-person screenings, the festival will also have digital and outdoor premieres to accommodate film enthusiasts who aren't able to travel to Canada.

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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.

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