

Press Release

Doha Film Institute selects 29 film projects from 16 countries for Spring Grants 2017

- *Over 80% of the projects from the Arab World*
- *4 projects from the GCC region including 2 by Qatari directors*
- *19 projects helmed by women directors with significant number of coming-of-age stories of female protagonists*
- *Filmmakers from Bahrain, Indonesia and Somalia receive grants for the first time*

Cannes, France/Doha, Qatar; May 22, 2017: The Doha Film Institute today announced that 29 film projects from 16 countries have been chosen for its Spring Grants 2017, which supports regional and international first- and second-time filmmakers, as well as established Arab directors for short and feature-length films.

In addition to two films from Qatari filmmakers, the grantees include 24 projects from the MENA region, and have been chosen from Angola to Indonesia, bringing powerful new cinematic voices from across the world. With the 2017 Spring Grants cycle, the total number of projects supported by Doha Film Institute's Grants programme now stands at over 340.

The line-up includes 14 feature-length narrative films, 8 feature documentaries, 2 feature experimental or essay films and 5 short films – that will receive funding for development, production or post-production. The Spring 2017 cycle marks the 14th session of the DFI grants programme, dedicated to supporting new cinematic voices from the MENA region and around the world.

Announcing the projects at Cannes Film Festival, Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "Our grantees represent the core of the Doha Film Institute's mandate to support emerging filmmakers and contribute to the development of the regional and international film industry. The new grantees cover a broad range of subjects and represent some powerful new voices in cinema from the Arab region and beyond, highlighting the remarkable leaps in creativity by our emerging filmmakers, and their innovative and bold approach to story-telling."

She added: "Stories of hope, self-discovery, women empowerment, tales of family life and of life in conflict zones are highlighted in the selections this Spring. This year's Grants projects are even more special for the large representation of women directors as well as themes that focus on coming-of-age stories of central female characters. We are honoured to be a part of the creative journey of talented filmmakers from across the world, and in enabling them to accomplish their dream projects."

There are four projects each from Algeria and Egypt, three from Tunisia and two each from Lebanon, Iran, Morocco, and Palestine. One project each comes from Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Portugal, Somalia, Syria, France and Indonesia. Of the 29 projects, 19 are helmed by women directors, including **Nothingwood** (France, Germany, Qatar) by Sonia Kronlund that has been selected for screening in the 2017 Directors' Fortnight at Cannes.

Four films are from the GCC region including two shorts by Qatari directors – **Last Day at Home** by Noor Al-Nasr and **The Black Veil** by A.J. Al Thani. Two projects have been nurtured by Doha Film Institute-led initiatives; **A Man on Fire** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Ibrahim Harb, and **Days of Grace** (Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar) by Saleh Nass, were both part of the 2016 DFI Producers Lab, with the latter also mentored at the 2017 Hezayah Screenwriting Lab, organised in partnership with TorinoFilmLab. The GCC projects, apart from films by Qatari directors, are **Days of Grace** and **Soaring Over Mayhem** (Kuwait, Qatar) by Abdullah Al-Wazzan.

The animation projects selected for this cycle include **Inside Me** (Egypt, Germany, Qatar) by Halla Tarek, and **Night** (Palestine, Jordan, Germany, Qatar) by Ahmed Saleh.

Films that portray powerful female character leads include: **Ava** (Iran, Canada, Qatar) by Sadaf Foroughi; **Sofia** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Meryem Benm'Barek; **Disappearance** (Iran, Qatar) by Ali Asgari; **Inside Me** (Egypt, Germany, Qatar) by Halla Tarek; **Papicha** (Algeria, France, Morocco, Qatar) by Mounia Meddour; and **The Seen and Unseen** (Indonesia, Netherlands, Australia, Qatar) by Kamila Andini – all six of them feature narratives – and **Amal** (Egypt, Lebanon, France, Germany, Denmark, Qatar) by Mohamed Siam; and **Tiny Souls** (Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar) by Dina Naser - both compelling documentaries.

The two established directors from MENA who will receive post-production funding are Annemarie Jacir for **Wajib** (Palestine, UAE, France, Switzerland, Norway, Colombia, Qatar) and Amal Ramsis for **You Come from Far Away** (Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar).

Submissions for the next funding round open July 18 and close July 31, 2017. Funding is available to projects by first and second-time filmmakers from around the world, with an emphasis on support for filmmakers from the MENA region. Certain categories of funding are reserved for MENA and Qatari filmmakers. Post-production funding is available to established filmmakers from the MENA region.

The recipients of the Spring Grants 2017 are:

Feature Documentary/Development

- **A Man on Fire** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Ibrahim Harb about a man on the pursuit for self-fulfillment within the civil defence department, placing savings lives in Lebanon's geo-political context.

Feature Documentary/Production

- **Immolations** (Algeria, Canada, Qatar) by Meriem Achour Bouakkaz, an intimate encounter with people who have attempted to set themselves on fire as a cry of distress against the infinite difficulties of simply finding their place in the sun.
- **Nation's Hope** (Somalia, UAE, UK, USA, Sweden, Republic of the Congo, Qatar) by Hana Mire, covering a season in the lives of Somalia's National Women's basketball squad, as veteran coach Suad Galow leads the team of fearless young women against both rival teams and Al-Shabaab.
- **On the Crossbar** (Tunisia, France, Qatar) by Sami Tlili about the Tunisian football team, whose improbable journey in 1978 intertwined with the worst crisis the country had known since its independence.
- **Mnemosyne** (Egypt, Qatar) by Shaza Moharam, a feature experimental/essay that depicts Shaza returning to her hometown of Alexandria, with a quest to recover from her childhood amnesia, only to find that the city itself is losing its memory

Feature Documentary/Post-Production

- **Amal** (Egypt, Lebanon, France, Germany, Denmark, Qatar) by Mohamed Siam, about an angry Egyptian teenager, who seeks her place and identity in a male-dominated society
- **Nothingwood** (France, Germany, Qatar) by Sonia Kronlund about Salim Shaheen, the most prolific and popular actor-director-producer in Afghanistan. Passionate about cinema, he tirelessly makes Z-grade movies in a country that has been at war for over 30 years.
- **The Normal Way** (Tunisia, France, Qatar) by Erige Sehiri, in which five train drivers are torn between their loyalty to the old Tunisian railway company and the fresh personal aspirations they can finally express in the wake of the revolution, while on a road trip.
- **Tiny Souls** (Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar) by Dina Naser, which portrays the changes in Marwa's life, as she goes from childhood to adolescence within the walls of the Al Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, reflecting its effect on her reality and future.
- **You Come from Far Away** (Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar) by Amal Ramsis, an experimental/essay; Imagine your father is a Palestinian who fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Imagine you have a family, but were raised without parents.

Feature Narrative/Development

- **Days of Grace** (Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar) by Saleh Nass, about a young Syrian man, who has only a few days left in Beirut to find a way to avoid a dangerous journey back to a war zone.
- **Don't Tell a Soul** (Lebanon, UK, Qatar) by Nour Wazzi, in which Faris must uncover the truth, when a dead body turns up and his relatives go missing

Feature Narrative/Production

- **Abou Leila** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Amin Sidi-Boumédiène about two childhood friends who travel through the Algerian desert looking for Abou Leila, a dangerous terrorist on the run.
- **Papicha** (Algeria, France, Morocco, Qatar) by Mounia Meddour about Nedjma, who refuses to submit to fear during the Algerian Civil War by fulfilling her dream of putting on a fashion show.
- **Sofia** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Meryem Benm'Barek, which is set in Casablanca and charts the life of 22-year-old Sofia, the only daughter in a rather traditional family. While having dinner with her siblings, she discovers she is about to give birth.
- **The Translator** (Syria, Jordan, France, Qatar) by Rana Kazkaz and Anas Khalaf in which a political refugee returns illegally to Syria and risks everything to free his brother from the regime, as the Syrian Revolution begins.
- **Weldi** (Tunisia, France, Belgium, Qatar) by Mohamed Ben Attia, about a father who is confronted by his own reality and has to question himself and his choices.

Feature Narrative/Post-Production

- **Ava** (Iran, Canada, Qatar) by Sadaf Foroughi about an Iranian seventeen-year-old girl who challenges the strict rules of her traditional upbringing and learns that her mother broke the rules as a young woman as well.
- **Disappearance** (Iran, Qatar) by Ali Asgari about a young couple with just a few hours left to solve a severe problem, while their relationship is heading for a crisis.
- **Joint Possession** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Leila Kilani, in which Pharaonic real estate projects surround the Mansouria, a land-locked family estate that is up for sale and coveted by Amina and her heirs.

- ***Our Madness*** (Portugal, Angola, France, Mozambique, Qatar) by João Viana in which a child helps a woman who seeks her husband all over Mozambique. When they finally find him, the child is killed.
- ***The Blessed*** (Algeria, France, Belgium, Qatar) by Sofia Djama; set in Algiers, a few years after the civil war, it follows Amal and Samir, who have decided to celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary at a restaurant, but the mood turns dark and becomes more volatile as the night wears on.
- ***The Seen and Unseen*** (Indonesia, Netherlands, Australia, Qatar) by Kamila Andini about Tantra, who becomes very sick and falls into a deep sleep, forcing his twin Tantri to go beyond words to communicate with him.
- ***Wajib*** (Palestine, UAE, France, Switzerland, Norway, Colombia, Qatar) by Annemarie Jacir about Shadi, who returns to his hometown to help his father hand-deliver his sister's wedding invitations. As the estranged pair go house to house, the details of their fragile relationship come to a head.

Short Narrative/Production

- ***Inside Me*** (Egypt, Germany, Qatar) by Halla Tarek, about a young Egyptian girl, silenced by society, who goes on an adventure to discover her own voice fighting an evil monster.
- ***Last Day at Home*** (Qatar) by Noor Al-Nasr, in which his last day at home becomes a boy's first day of an adventure.
- ***Night*** (Palestine, Jordan, Germany, Qatar) by Ahmad Saleh, in which a mother, who has been unable to sleep since the disappearance of her son, meets a storyteller whose tales can heal sleepless souls.
- ***Soaring over Mayhem*** (Kuwait, Qatar) by Abdullah Al-Wazzan about two brothers, who struggle to survive as they arrive at manhood in the brutal terrain of war-torn Syria.
- ***The Black Veil*** (Qatar) by A.J. Al Thani, where a woman attempts to finally escape, in order to gain freedom from the oppression she has been living under.

The Doha Film Institute Grants Programme supports the development, production and post-production of projects by first- and second-time directors from the MENA region for feature-length projects. Short films receive only production funding. Established MENA directors can also apply for post-production funding for feature projects. The Grants supports first- and second-time non-MENA directors with post-production funding. The next cycle of funding opens on July 18, 2017.

For more information about eligibility and submissions, please visit

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

The full directory of past grant recipients is available at:
<http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/financing/projects/grants>

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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

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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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