

Doha Film Institute Announces 34 Diverse Projects for 2018 Spring Grants Cycle; Expands Programme to Cover TV and Web Series

- *14 Spring Grant projects helmed by women filmmakers; 4 projects by Qatari directors*
- *Films from 5 countries – Afghanistan, Brazil, Bulgaria, China and Montenegro - supported for the first time*
- *29 countries represented with 28 projects from the Arab world*
- *Expanded Grants programme to include development support for TV series and production support for web formats*

Doha, Qatar; May 13, 2018: An impressive range of 34 projects by first and second-time filmmakers from across the world, including four from Qatar have been selected by the Doha Film Institute for its Spring 2018 Grants cycle that aims to nurture the new generation of creative talents. Underlining the important role of women in filmmaking, 14 of the chosen projects are helmed by talented female directors.

Additionally, the Institute has announced the expansion of its Grants programme, to cover TV and web series by scriptwriters, producers and directors from the Middle East and North Africa region.

The announcement, which reflects the Institute's commitment to support the development of emerging forms of entertainment and innovative content, was made on the sidelines of Cannes Film Festival 2018 by Fatma Al Remaihi, Chief Executive Officer. She also announced the recipients of the 2018 Spring Grants cycle covering feature, documentary and short film projects by emerging talents from across the world.

Fatma Al Remaihi said: "The recipients of the 2018 Spring Grants cycle bring to the table a diversity of original stories that reflect modern-day realities as well as innovative narrative threads. Our grantees represent the core of the Doha Film Institute's mandate to support emerging filmmakers and contribute to a culture of storytelling. The new grantees represent some powerful new and established 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 presenting our stories. The diversity of submissions for this cycle has been exceptional, with over 380 submissions received, and we chose the 34 projects for their ability to push cinematic boundaries and engage with audiences anywhere in the world.

She added, "We are marking a new chapter in our support with the expansion of our Grants programme to include TV and web series – both of which have gained traction in

the region. This underlines our continued commitment to support Arab talents and the evolving forms of creativity and new possibilities, allowing them to tell their stories to the world. We hope this will further drive the creation of original and compelling content from our region”.

The TV fiction and creative documentary series development grant aims to assist independent screenwriters/producers from the MENA region in developing original serialised content intended for international audiovisual markets, while the web fiction and creative documentary series grant will support independent MENA directors/producers in financing the production of original serialised content for the web.

2018 Spring Grantees:

Among the 34 projects selected for the Doha Film Institute's Spring Grants cycle are 14 projects helmed by women filmmakers and 10 returning grantees. While four projects are by Qatari talents, there are 24 films by Arab directors from the MENA region. Six projects are chosen from outside the MENA region with five countries supported for the first time. In addition to two films from Afghanistan, this cycle includes films from Brazil, Bulgaria, China and Montenegro.

Awarded film ***Long Day's Journey into Night*** (China, France, Taiwan, Qatar) by Gan Bi is premiering in Un Certain Regard at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, underlining the quality of films supported by the Doha Film Institute.

Feature Narrative - Development:

- ***Arabic Translator*** (Iraq, Italy, Germany, Qatar) by Ali Kareem Obaid, about Hassan, an Iraqi student, who starts working as a translator for Arabic-speaking refugees to stay in Germany. The job will lead him into an inner conflict, as his past and present collide.
- ***Behind Closed Doors*** (Qatar) by Hend Fakhroo, an intimate and visceral look at an Arab family from three different female points of view, all centering around the father figure. Hend had earlier received a DFI Grant for her short *The Waiting Room*.
- ***Longer Will Be the Night*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Latifa Said depicts Nora's search for justice, when her native country Algeria decrees compensation for women abused during the 'Black Decade', a bloody and brutal civil war in the 1990s, she must seek witnesses to compensate for the medical certificate she lacks as proof.

Feature Documentary - Development:

- ***Gevar's Land*** (Syria, France, Qatar) by Qutaiba Barhamji, a profound exploration of how an uprooted Syrian refugee finds a natural affinity with the new land he toils.

- **Heights** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Faiza Yakoubi documents young Rohingya refugees fleeing persecution in Myanmar and endeavouring to overcome the hardships of everyday life in Kuala Lumpur.
- **The Kingdom of Malika** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Hassen Ferhani tells the story of Malika, who lives alone in the middle of the Sahara Desert. She runs a restaurant, a stopover for many truckers and occasional tourists on the Trans-Sahara highway, crossing from Algeria to Mali. A previous DFI Grant recipient, Ferhani's *Roundabout in My Head*, his first feature earned multiple awards including the Grand Prix and GNCR Prize Special Mention at FID Marseille 2015
- **The Cave** (Syria, Denmark, USA, Qatar) by Feras Fayyad, depicts a group of female doctors who establish a subterranean hospital in order to save the lives of victims of chemical and conventional weapons during the Syrian civil war. Feras has previously directed **Last Men in Aleppo**, which was nominated for the Academy Award.

Feature Narrative – Production

- **200 Meters** (Palestine, Jordan, France, Germany, Qatar) by Ameen Nayfeh, in which a Palestinian man, living on the West Bank and separated from his hospitalised son by the wall, must embark on a harrowing journey to see him. A distance of 200 meters becomes a 200-kilometer odyssey.
- **Adam** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Maryam Touzani narrates the story of Samia, eight months pregnant who has decided to give up her child for adoption. When she knocks on Abla's door, a hard-working widow, both their lives will change forever.
- **Girl Made of Dust** (Palestine, Lebanon, France, Germany, Denmark, Qatar) by actor Hiam Abbass tells the story of 10-year-old Ruba who escapes into her imagination to save her family when living in a Lebanese village where the ravages of war draw closer every day.
- **Harvest** (Lebanon, France, Belgium, USA, Qatar) is by DFI grantee Ely Dagher and depicts a young woman, who suddenly returns home after a long absence and finds herself reconnecting with the familiar, yet strange life she had once left. Dagher's *Waves '98*, supported by DFI, had won the Palme d'Or at the 2015 Festival de Cannes.
- **My Little One** (Morocco, Belgium, France, Qatar) by Kadija Leclerc is about Sarah, a Belgian woman of Moroccan descent, who adopts a little girl in Morocco. But when the Belgian authorities deny her child's visa, it is the beginning of an arduous ordeal for both of them.
- **The Last Queen** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by returning DFI grantee Damien Ounouri is set in Algiers, at the beginning of the 16th century. After the death of her husband, a queen must stand up to the most fearsome pirate.
- **Tlameess** (Tunisia, France, Qatar) by Ala Eddine Slim is the story of 'S', a young Tunisian soldier who deserts the army, and his meeting with 'F', a pregnant woman. Slim's first feature, *The Last of Us*, supported by DFI, won the Luigi De Laurentiis Award for First Feature and Prize for the Best Technical Contribution at the Venice Film Festival 2016 Critics' Week

Feature Documentary – Production

- ***Children of the Famine*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Reine Mitri, a previous recipient of a DFI grant, is a look into the death from hunger of an estimated 200,000 people in Mount Lebanon, between 1915 and 1918. There is no memorial for them. Few photos remain, and ruins emerge from oblivion.
- ***Plastic Flowers*** (Syria, Germany, Sweden, Qatar) by Amer Almatar is about a family's difficult search to discover the fate of their son and brother, a journalist abducted to the jails of Daesh in August 2013.

Feature Narrative – Post-Production

- ***Haifa Street*** (Iraq, Qatar) by Mohanad Hayal depicts a vindictive sniper on Haifa Street in Baghdad, who shoots a man in broad daylight, preventing anyone from retrieving the body under the threat of gunfire. Hayal had earlier received a DFI Grant for the same film in its development stage.
- ***Joana, Imagination Is a Form of Memory*** (Brazil, France, Qatar) by Flávia Castro is about 14-year-old Joana, who returns to Brazil with her family after a childhood spent in France. As she struggles to adapt to her new reality, fragments of her past resurface.
- In ***Long Day's Journey into Night*** (China, France, Taiwan, Qatar) by Gan Bi, Luo Hongwu returns to Kaili, the hometown from which he fled 12 years earlier. As memories of an enigmatic and beautiful woman resurface, Hongwu begins his search for her. Past and present, realism and dream, all combine in a profoundly visual and highly innovative film noir ballet.
- In ***Sister*** (Bulgaria, France, Qatar) by Svetla Tsotsorkova, the lie of a teenage girl destroys the world of her elder sister. Struggling to regain her sister's trust, she finds out the truth about their mother.
- ***You Have the Night*** (Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Qatar) by Ivan Salatic is about Sanja, who returns home following her stay aboard a cruise. In an attempt to understand the people around her, she embarks on yet another journey.

Feature Documentary – Post-Production

- ***Facing the Dragon*** (Afghanistan, USA, Qatar) by Sedika Mojadidi follows two unconventional Afghan women, one a member of parliament and the other a journalist, as the international community withdraws from their country's fragile democracy.
- In ***Freedom Fields*** (Libya, UK, USA, Netherlands, Canada, Qatar) by Naziha Arebi, at the new dawn of a nation once cut off from the world, a dynamic group of women from fractured sides of the revolution come together. Their dream, to form the first Libyan women's national football team. Arebi had earlier received a DFI Grant for the same film in its development stage.

- **Midnight Traveler** (Afghanistan, USA, Qatar) by Hassan Fazili follows an Afghan family on the run from the Taliban, with refugee-director Fazili offering an unprecedented first-person perspective on a geo-politically complex issue.
- **The Devil's Drivers** (Palestine, Germany, Qatar) by Mohammed Abugeth and Daniel Carsenty, depicts two Bedouin cousins smuggle Palestinian migrant workers through the Negev desert, chased by the Israeli army; in an intimate portrait of men living on the edge.

Shorts

- **Gubgub** (Qatar) by Nouf Al Sulaiti is about an adventurous young girl, who goes crab-hunting with her father and brother. Discouraged when her father undervalues her accomplishments, she sets out to win his approval.
- **The Unlucky Hamster** (Qatar) by Abdulaziz Khashabi, is an animation in which Fluffy, a cute hamster in a pet shop dreams of a new home. But when someone finally decides to buy him, his dream quickly turns into a nightmare.
- **Lemon Hart** (Qatar, France) by Sara Al-Thani has a troubled young girl retell her tale of courage and the fear she endured at the hands of her stepfather.
- **Brotherhood** (Tunisia, Canada, Qatar) by Meryam Joobeur, is about Malik, an 18-year-old with flaming red hair, who returns to his small village in Tunisia after fighting in Syria and must confront a complicated relationship with his father.
- **Burn the Bird** (Palestine, Qatar) by Zahed Bata is about grief-stricken Samaa and her son Mohye, who set out in the middle of the night to bury her beloved parrot, inadvertently triggering buried feelings from a previous tragedy.
- **How My Grandmother Became a Chair** (Lebanon, Germany, Qatar), an animation by Nicolas Fattouh, is a whimsical story of transformation and discovery, as an ageing woman turns into a chair and finds companionship in the most unlikely of places.
- **Prisoner and Jailer** (Libya, Qatar) by Muhannad Lamin – a returning DFI grantee - is an animation – and a stirring tragedy based on actual events that asks the question, what happens when the prisoner becomes the jailer?
- Another animation, **Rest in Piece** (Syria, Germany, UAE, Qatar) by Antoine Antabi shows Midyan, who is escaping his war-torn home country, and is forced to eat his last and dearest belongings. But what will become of him after this strange supper?
- An experimental, **1001 Stars** (Lebanon, France, Qatar) by Valentin Noujaïm, is about a father who only speaks Arabic, his wife only French, while their son speaks both. A mysterious visit by The Unknown one night, will change the way they communicate forever.

Development, production and post-production funding is available for first- and second-time directors from the MENA region for feature-length projects. Short films from the MENA region are eligible for production funding only. Established MENA directors can apply for post-production funding for feature-length projects. Post-production funding is also available for first- and second-time filmmakers from around the world for feature-

length projects. In addition to the Grants Programme, the Doha Film Institute also supports film production through its Qatari Film Fund and co-production initiatives.

-ENDS-

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.

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