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29 Recipients of Doha Film Institute's 2023 Spring Grants cycle announced at Cannes Film Festival

- *29 inspiring projects by Arab and international filmmakers from 18 countries highlight DFI's commitment to promoting independent voices in cinema.*
- *Four projects by Qatari and Qatar-based talent along with 12 projects from women filmmakers and 10 returning filmmakers.*
- *More than 750 films from 75 countries have been awarded DFI's Grants, the region's longest-serving film development initiative that supports first-and second-time filmmakers globally.*

Cannes, France; May 19, 2023: The Doha Film Institute underlined its commitment to nurturing emerging voices in cinema from across the world today at Cannes Film Festival 2023 with the announcement of the recipients of its 2023 Spring Grants cycle. A total of 29 films from 18 countries have been selected for the current cycle of the Middle East region's longest-serving film development initiative that has supported over 750 diverse projects from 75 countries to date.

Awarded in two cycles – Spring and Fall, the Institute Grants programme has evolved as one of the flagship film funding initiatives focused on strengthening a vibrant creative ecosystem and supporting emerging voices from all over the world to help them realise their cinematic aspirations. The Grants support projects including feature and short narratives, documentaries and experimentals as well as TV series.

In addition to Qatar, recipients of the 2023 Spring Grants include film projects from Algeria, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Lebanon, Mongolia, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan and Tunisia.

Recipients include 12 women filmmakers and 10 returning grantees along with four projects from Qatar-based talent, underlining the Institute's commitment to supporting important voices and the continued evolution of independent cinema from the region and beyond.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: "We are on a mission to discover and promote original and independent voices in cinema, and have had the great privilege of supporting the most powerful and important voices from the region and beyond through our Grants programme. Our Spring Grants 2023 reinforces our continued commitment to filmmakers globally who have once again impressed us with the diversity and depth of the original themes they are exploring in their stories. This current cycle of projects was chosen from hundreds of compelling submissions, and we are proud to bring these soulful stories to global audiences."

The 2023 Spring Grants recipients are:

MENA – Feature Narrative – Development

- ***Kohl & Cardamom*** (Egypt, Sweden, Qatar) by Fady Atallah is set in a small Egyptian town in the late 1980s, where 14-year-old Abdullah faces a nerve-wracking challenge when he agrees with his father not to cause trouble for five days in return for being able to attend a concert by the then-rising superstar Mohamed Mounir.
- ***Rabies*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Sandra Tabet is about a History professor who obsesses over the unresolved Lebanese civil war while struggling to mend her fragile relationship with her son.
- ***To Bled or Not to Bled*** (France, Algeria, Qatar) by Azedine Kasri follows Dali, who wants to live the Algerian dream but a chance meeting with a woman changes everything.

MENA – Feature Narrative – Production

- ***A Quarter to Thursday in Algiers*** (Algeria, France, Belgium, Qatar) by Sofia Djama depicts a risky mission given by three friends disillusioned with the demonstrations that shake the city of Algiers.
- ***Aïcha*** (Tunisia, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar) by Mehdi M. Barsaoui explores how far one can go to break free from their past.
- ***Aisha Can't Fly Away Anymore*** (Egypt, Tunisia, Qatar) by Morad Mostafa is about Aisha, a Somali caregiver living in Cairo, who witnesses the underworld of African migrants' society and the tension between the different groups.
- ***La mer au loin*** (France, Qatar) by Saïd Hamich Benlarbi is about 27-year-old Nour who emigrated illegally to Marseille and lives off petty crime with friends leading marginal lives, and partying hard.

MENA – Feature Narrative – Post-Production

- ***Back to Alexandria*** (Switzerland, France, Qatar) by Tamer Ruggli is about Sue, who returns to Egypt to meet her estranged mother, Fairouz, an eccentric aristocrat. This surprising journey, leading her from Cairo back to Alexandria, allows Sue to become the empowered woman she ought to be.
- ***East of Noon*** (Egypt, Netherlands, Qatar) by Hala Elkoussy is a fable about musician Abdo, who rebels against his elders, seeking freedom through his art in a confined world outside of time.

Non-MENA – Feature Narrative – Post-Production

- ***Banel & Adama*** (France, Senegal, Mali, Qatar) by Ramata-Toulaye Sy is set in a small village in northern Senegal, where Banel and Adama's love challenges traditional customs, disrupting their community.
- ***Excursion*** (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Norway, France, Qatar) by Una Gunjak highlights the contemporary life of a teenage girl whose seemingly little lie leads her into a storm of expectations, condemnation, and social dogmas.
- ***Lost Country*** (France, Serbia, Luxembourg, Croatia, Qatar) by Vladimir Perišić is about a 15-year-old who must accept the unacceptable—that his mother is an accomplice of the regime's crimes.
- ***The Women*** (Myanmar, Singapore, France, Norway, South Korea, Qatar) by The Maw Naing is about a young Burmese woman who moves to the big city to work in a garment factory to support her family.
- ***Ze*** (France, Mongolia, Netherlands, Germany, Qatar) by Lkhagvadulam Purev-Ochir is about a teenage shaman who falls in love with a girl, shattering his fragile existence in modern Mongolia.

MENA – Feature – Experimental/Essay – Development

- ***Tell it to Bridges*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Ali Hammoud follows a quest for a forever home which leads to one being lost and the other not entirely found.

MENA – Feature Documentary – Production

- ***I Am One of Them*** (Poland, Qatar) by Nadim Suleiman is about a Syrian immigrant who shoots a film about a Polish nationalist, and becomes an excuse to bring the two together, setting them out on a faraway trip to discover their identities.

MENA – Feature Documentary – Post-Production

- ***The Language of Fire*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Tarek Sami highlights that while a nomad is free from accountability, immobility must be accounted for.

Non-MENA – Feature Documentary – Post-Production

- ***Ozogoche*** (Ecuador, Qatar) by Joe Houlberg is about the migration of the Cuvivi bird to the Ecuadorian highlands, which ends in collective suicide as they plunge into the Ozogoche Lakes
- ***Rising Up at Night*** (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Belgium, Germany, Burkina Faso, Qatar) by Nelson Makengo documents how plans to build the largest power plant on the Congo plunge 17 million people into darkness and insecurity.

MENA – TV Series – Development

- ***Dyounf (Guests)*** (Palestine, Qatar) by Saleh Saadi is about a family of five that runs a guesthouse in their Bedouin village in Occupied Palestine while living in a turmoil of relations, identity, and career.
- ***Halaa'*** (Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar) by Amal Al Muftah is an anthology of Middle Eastern crime stories that explores the complex ironies of human morality.

MENA – Web Series – Production

- ***The House That My Mother Built*** (Sudan, Qatar) by Alyaa Musa introduces eight women from across Sudan as they share their astonishing encounters with the inhabitants of the households they took refuge in during Sudan's revolution in 2019.

MENA – Shorts – Narrative – Production

- ***Autumn*** (Qatar) by Aisha Al-Jaidah is a romantic tragedy of the captivity of ambitious thoughts under short roofs.
- ***The Experiment*** (Qatar) by Abdulla Alhor is set in a prison in a Middle Eastern city where a Qatari researcher must win a promotion challenge to prove that his rehab experiment works.
- ***The Day I Smoked a Cigarette with My Father*** (Egypt, France, Qatar) by Sameh Alaa is set in 1964, when 12-year-old Alaa and his three siblings prepare to welcome their father who is returning from prison.

MENA – Shorts Documentary – Production

- ***Playground*** (France, Qatar) by Mohamed Mesbali narrates the story of a Palestinian computer scientist who reconstructs the killing of hundreds of children in Gaza during the summer of 2014 in a video game.

MENA – Shorts – Experimental/Essay – Production

- ***No Reaching Hand*** (Qatar) by Batla Aldosari follows a young woman through a series of disturbing events as she tries to find her true self.
- ***L'mina*** (France, Morocco, Qatar) by Rande Maroufi is set in a former mining town in Morocco, which declines in its fortunes until all mining is ceased in 2001.
- ***The Grocery List*** (Bahrain, Qatar) by Taqwa Ali is about a young man who rebels against his mother after she rejects a bottle of milk of his choice.

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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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