



Bold themes from the Arab world help bring communities closer through cinema, say international artists

Doha, Qatar; December 1, 2018: International artists who have worked on bold themes about the Middle East region say that cinema helps in bringing the communities together. Showcasing their films at the sixth Ajyal Film Festival, the annual cinema event hosted by the Doha Film Institute at Katara Cultural Village, talents associated with **Weldi** and **What Walaa Wants** said while the two films discuss real-world problems, they also help build dialogue, awareness and positive change. Both the films were supported by the Doha Film Institute.

Weldi (Tunisia, France, Belgium, Qatar/2018), directed by Mohamed Ben Attia is about Riadh, who is about to retire from his work at the port of Tunis. The life he shares with his wife Nazli revolves around their only son Sami, who is preparing for his high school exams. The boy's repeated migraine attacks are a cause of much worry to his parents. But when he finally seems to be getting better, Sami suddenly disappears leaving only a note behind as a clue to where he might be gone.

Mohamed Dhrif, who plays Riadh, said: "Film has a universal language that brings people and communities together, and bring joy to life. Through our film, we highlighted a real problem and raised awareness on an important topic. I believe that film helps shed light on real life obstacles."

He lauded the role of Ajyal and in its commitment to nurturing youth talent. "Cinema has a great impact on the society and it is important to focus on and promote films with good messages that help raise awareness and positive change in our society."

What Walaa Wants (Canada, Denmark/2018) by Christy Garland, is about Walaa, who is raised in a refugee camp in the West Bank, while her mother was in prison. She is determined to become one of the few women in the Palestinian Security Forces, a task not easy for a girl who has her own way of doing things. Following Walaa from 15-21 years, the film is a compelling story of a defiant young girl as she fights tenaciously to achieve her dream and find her own place in the world.

Addressing the media at Ajyal, Christy Garland said: "What attracted me to the film is the place where Walaa lives that has a lot of complexities, and chaos, and she wanted to join the security forces that needs order. She wanted to realize her dream and accomplish her ambition. I wanted to show the broader image of the occupation where Wala and her community suffers. Through the film, she inspired her generation and paved the way to other girls to join the security forces."

Christy said she chose Walaa because of her personality. "It is regular to talk about other women and artists; by talking to a police woman, I wanted to break the ice and talk about a controversial topic. Walaa, as a Palestinian, had fewer options for education and freedom of movement, so her determination inspired me. I followed her for six years to finish this film."

She added that she supports the Palestinian cause "because I lived that experience, and I know it is an occupation."

Talking about her experience, Walaa said: "I have a rebellious personality and it was very difficult to join military forces where there is order and discipline. But that was a challenge that I wanted to do,



to show my strength and resilience in facing difficulties. The message from my film is that we need to have strength and self-confidence to succeed step by step. Success needs patience to achieve our goals. Through my film, more parents are encouraging now to let their daughters enrol in the military.”

2018 Ajyal Film Festival’s Official Partners include: Katara Cultural Village – Cultural Partner; Ooredoo – Principal Partner; Novo Cinemas – Strategic Partner and St. Regis Doha – Signature Sponsor.

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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 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.

Twitter: @DohaFilm; Instagram: @DohaFilm; Facebook: www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute

About Ajyal Film Festival:

Ajyal Film Festival is an annual celebration of film designed to nurture young minds and support the development of mindful global citizens and thoughtful future leaders in a creative and educational environment. ‘Ajyal’, Arabic for ‘generations’, brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue. Through its’ jury programme, youth between the ages of 8 and 21 are given an opportunity to watch, analyse and discuss global cinema and culture, developing self-confidence, independent critical thinking skills, self-expression, and an appreciation of cinema. 6th Ajyal Film Festival takes place from the 28th of November to the 3rd of December.

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