

Eight Films Supported by Doha Film Institute Selected to 77th Venice Film Festival

- Award-winning documentary filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi's 'Notturmo' vies for top award, the Golden Lion, as part of main competition; film to screen at Toronto after its Venice premiere alongside 'Gaza Mon Amour' from Venice's Horizon selection
- Qatari short 'Under Her Skin' by Meriem Mesraoua selected to the official shorts film competition
- Six Arab films selected to screen in a reduced programme of 60 films from across the globe

Doha, Qatar; 30 August 2020: Eight films supported by the Doha Film Institute (DFI) have been officially selected to participate at the 2020 Venice International Film Festival, from 2 to 12 September. Set to be one of the first major international festivals held since the coronavirus pandemic began, the Venice Film Festival will feature a lineup of 60 films only and new outdoor screening locations.

The diverse line-up of DFI-supported films selected to the festival comprises exciting works from emerging and established filmmakers including six from the Arab world, one from Italy, and one from Turkey. Of the eight projects, five films screen in key sections at the Festival, including official competition, Horizons, Critics Week and Venice Days and three projects are selected to the Festival's industry and market initiatives.

The only documentary filmmaker to win the Golden Lion in 2013, Italian director, cinematographer, producer and screenwriter Gianfranco Rosi returns to Venice with his fifth documentary **Notturmo**, co-financed by the Institute, which is an immersive portrait of those trying to survive in a war-torn Middle East and a mesmerising vision of a region on the verge of change.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: "We are deeply proud to support projects that were selected to an exclusive selection at the first international film festival of this year since the pandemic. To be considered amongst the 60 films in this year's reduced lineup speaks to the compelling visual content and storytelling techniques of each of the eight projects. More so, this is the first major physical market event for three of the DFI-supported titles. They are moving portrayals that exist within a space of true artistic discovery and deep-felt humanity. I congratulate the exceptional directors and teams behind these cinematic productions on their journey at the prestigious Venice Film Festival and beyond."

Notturmo (Italy, France, Germany, Qatar) by Gianfranco Rosi is part of the 18 feature films selected for the main competition, known as Venezia 77. Shot over the course of three years between Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Lebanon, **Notturmo** follows different people from near war zones in the Middle East, trying to restart their everyday lives. It is a study of how borders have changed the destiny of people. The moving documentary carries us into a world where human beings are squashed in the middle of conflict and leaves us there to discover how strong we can truly be. Following its world premiere at Venice, the film will also screen at the Toronto International Film Festival in September.

Gaza Mon Amour (Palestine, France, Germany, Portugal, Qatar) by twin brothers Tarzan Abunasser and Arab Abunasser is competing in the Orizzonti official section (Horizons), which runs parallel to the main competition and is dedicated to films that represent the latest aesthetic and expressive trends in international cinema. A satire on love and desire, and an affirmation that life continues amidst the absurdity of living, the film will also screen at this year's Toronto International Film Festival. DFI previously supported the brothers' first feature film, **Dégradé**, which was selected to compete in the International Critics' Week section at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival.

Azra Deniz Okyay's feature debut **Ghosts** (Turkey, Qatar) will compete in the festival's prestigious Critics Week Programme. A roaring tale of the contemporary generation, the film follows four characters from very different walks of life, who cross paths through a web of drug trafficking in Istanbul. It is the first Turkish film since 2018 to feature in the Venice programme.

In **200 Meters** (Palestine, Jordan, France, Germany, Italy, Qatar) by Ameen Nayfeh, part of the parallel programme Venice Days, 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.

Premiering in the Orizzonti Short Films Competition, Meriem Mesraoua's **Under Her Skin** (Qatar, Algeria, France) follows a young girl in Algeria that slowly regains control over her actions and projected image to the world. Meriem's previous short **Our Time Is Running Out** screened at the 2017 Ajyal Film Festival and is a recipient of the DFI Grants programme. She is currently developing her first feature narrative, **The Other Wife**.

Razan AlSalah's experimental VR film, **The Greatest Wait** (Palestine, France, Canada, Qatar) is among the international projects selected for the 2020 Venice Gap-Financing Market initiative. The film follows Zei, a 3rd generation Palestinian refugee, who returns to her ancestral home Haifa through virtual reality, the only way she can see Palestine. Final Cut in Venice, which runs as part of the Venice Production Bridge, will feature Salah Al Ashkar's **Our Choices** (Syria, France, Qatar). It chronicles the siege of Aleppo in 2016 by Bashar al-Assad's forces and is shot from within the city by Al Ashkar - simultaneously witness and protagonist. Also part of the workshop is Ely Dagher's first feature **Harvest** (Lebanon, France, Belgium, USA, Qatar) about a young Palestinian woman, who struggles to fit back into old family dynamics whilst details of her life abroad weigh heavy on her. Dagher's 2015 film **Waves '98** won the short film Palme d'Or at Cannes.

- END -

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

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام

DOHA FILM INSTITUTE

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:

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