

Find Hope and Resilience Through 13 Diverse Feature Films at the 8th Ajyal Film Festival

- *For the safety of all participants, the majority of Ajyal 2020 events and screenings will run online*
- *Eclectic film selection includes three Doha Film Institute Grants supported films*

Doha, Qatar; 07 November 2020: The hybrid edition of the 8th Ajyal Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute (DFI) from 18-23 November, will present an inspiring selection of 13 thought-provoking feature films from across the globe online to offer participants a safe event experience. The hybrid event format expands the spirit of Ajyal into an inclusive virtual space for immersive creative expression and community.

Delivering inspirational stories of hope, resilience and courage using powerfully creative narratives, the selected films will be assessed across three distinct juries – Mohaq, Hilal and Bader. Each jury is presented a selection of carefully curated feature and short films to analyse and deliberate on films in their respective categories, awarding Best Film prizes accordingly.

Three feature films screening in competition are supported by the Doha Film Institute, underlining the Institute's commitment to unlock creative voices and support quality film productions and reinforcing Qatar's continued focus on promoting distinctive and compelling narratives of universal resonance.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: "Our carefully curated programme of international feature films inspires our youth to reflect, build important connections, and find a deeper understanding of the shared human experience. With their powerful narratives and diverse storytelling techniques, each of the films instils lasting messages of hope and resilience across generations and ultimately inspires a sense of unity among our young jurors who are joining us virtually from across the globe. Despite the challenges of this year, Ajyal continues to provide a nurturing space where youth are empowered to reach beyond physical differences to find their innate creative voice."

In competition in the Mohaq segment for jurors aged 8 to 12 are ***Dino Dana*** (Canada/2019) by J.J. Johnson, ***Microplastic Madness*** (USA/2019) by Atsuko Quirk and Debby Lee Cohen, ***Turu, The Wacky Hen*** (Spain, Argentina/2019) by Eduardo Gondell and Víctor Monigote, and ***Bikes*** (Spain/2019) by Manuel J. García.

Ajyal Jurors aged 13 to 17 in the Hilal category will watch and evaluate ***My Favorite War*** (Latvia, Norway/2020) by Ilze Burkovska Jacobsen, ***Sun Children*** (Iran/2020) by Majid Majidi, ***The Reason I Jump*** (UK, USA/2020) by Jerry Rothwell, and ***The Wolves*** (Mexico/2019) by Samuel Kishi.

Ajyal's Bader Jurors, aged 18 to 25, will choose a winner from **200 Meters** (Palestine, Jordan, Qatar, Italy, Sweden/2020) by Ameen Nayfeh, **An Unusual Summer** (Germany, Palestine/2020) by Kamal Aljafari, **Father** (Serbia, France, Germany, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia/2020) by Srđan Golubović, **Gevar's Land** (France, Qatar/2020) by Qutaiba Barhamji, and **Yalda, A Night for Forgiveness** (France, Germany, Switzerland, Luxemburg, Lebanon, Iran/2019) by Massoud Bakhshi.

The Mohaq Selection:

- **Dino Dana** follows Dana Jain, a feisty 10-year-old palaeontologist in training, who sees dinosaurs in the real world, completing an experiment that asks where all the kid dinosaurs are.
- Making its MENA premiere, **Microplastic Madness** is an inspirational and optimistic look at the local and global plastic pollution crisis as told through a refreshing urban youth point of view with an emphatic "take action" message.
- In **Turu, The Wacky Hen**, a hen unable to lay eggs finds her life changed when she is sold to a music teacher.
- **Bikes** is a free-wheeling animated adventure for children and adults that teaches the importance of friendship, teamwork, and the need for green transport in building a more sustainable future.

The Hilal Selection:

- **My Favorite War** is a personal, animated documentary about the director's life growing up in Latvia during the Soviet era 1970-1990.
- **Sun Children** made its debut at Venice earlier this year and spotlights the resilience and creativity of youth through the lens of child labour to inspire lasting societal change.
- An adaptation of the book by Naoki Higashida, **The Reason I Jump** explores the experiences of nonspeaking autistic people around the world.
- In **The Wolves**, two children emigrate to the US with their mother. Their days pass in a tiny flat waiting for her to come back as they hold on to the hope of visiting Disneyworld.

The Bader Selection:

- In **200 Meters**, which premiered at Venice this year, a Palestinian father trapped on the other side of the separation wall is trying to reach the hospital for his son.
- Everyday family life, or neighbours going to work, **Unusual Summer** captures fleeting moments of poetry whereas, in the background, the daily choreography of Ramla, located in today's Israel, comes to the surface.
- **Father** is the story of a man whose children are taken away because of poverty, setting him on a journey from his village in the south of Serbia to the capital city, out of protest, dignity and desperation to become a hero.
- **Gevar's Land** follows the labour-filled days of Gevar, a Syrian refugee, whose small garden on the outskirts of a housing project became his "raison d'être", or rather, "a reason to do". The DFI-grant recipient film questions the idea of territory, which often goes hand in hand with the need to erect borders.

AJYAL FILM FESTIVAL 2020

مهرجان أجيال السينمائي ٢٠٢٠

**THE SHOW
GOES ON**

**يستمّر
GOES ON**

**العرض يستمر
GOES ON**

- In *Yalda, A Night for Forgiveness*, 22-year-old Maryam is accused of killing her husband and is sentenced to death. The only person who can save her is Mona, Nasser's daughter.

Online ticket sales start on 4th November via: www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival.

2020 Ajyal Film Festival's Official Partners include: **Katara Cultural Village Foundation** – Cultural Partner; **Qatar National Tourism Council** – Principal Partner; **Novo Cinemas, Ooredoo** – Strategic Partner, **Msheireb Properties, Qatari Diar** – Signature Partner.

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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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