

## 9 films supported by the Doha Film Institute to take the spotlight at 74<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival in July

- *Memoria* by Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul to compete for the Palme d'Or, marking the Institute's fifth co-fi film selected for 'In Competition', a first for a regional film organization
- Four films included in 2021 Official Selection with one In Competition and three in Un Certain Regard
- Diverse films from Arab and international talent selected to screen in Official Selection and all parallel programming segments at the prestigious festival
- Feature films by rising Arab voices Ely Dagher and Yassine Qnia and human rights activist Abdallah Al-Khatib to screen in 'Director's Fortnight' and 'ACID' sections respectively
- Line-up includes historic first official selection for a Bangladeshi film at Cannes

**Doha, Qatar; June 15, 2021:** Nine films supported by the Doha Film Institute (DFI) have been selected to the 74<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival, which returns to its full glory this year from July 6 to 17. Apart from the rich selection, DFI has also achieved a first for a regional film organisation with its fifth co-financed film selected for the official 'In Competition' segment.

***Memoria*** (Thailand, Colombia, Mexico, France, Germany, Qatar) directed by Qumra Master and Palme d'Or winning Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul, co-financed by DFI, joins 23 other films in the In Competition section vying for the prestigious Palme d'Or. Starring Tilda Swinton and Elkin Diaz, it is also the first Spanish-language film by the director.

Films co-financed by DFI that were 'In Competition' in the past include Asghar Farhadi's ***The Salesman*** in 2016; Nadine Labaki's ***Capharnaüm*** and ***The Wild Pear Tree*** by Nuri Bilge Ceylan in 2018; and Elia Suleiman's ***It Must Be Heaven*** in 2019.

**Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute**, said: "We are truly honoured that films supported by our Grants and co-financing initiatives have been selected to the prestigious festival, which showcases the very best in global cinema today. From supporting world cinema by auteurs to partnering in the cinematic journey of emerging talent from the Arab world and beyond, we focus on building a diverse bouquet of high-quality films that captivate global audiences with their powerful storytelling."

She added: "We are exceptionally proud of *Memoria*, which marks the collaboration of two Qumra Masters, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Tilda Swinton, who mentored our emerging talents in 2018. It is delightful to watch an industry forum by the Doha Film Institute connecting great minds to create compelling cinema. What is also inspiring is to see the evolution of Arab talent, who we had previously collaborated with on their short films and are now ready to present their skills in the full-length feature narrative format that impressed the selection committee of this year's Festival."

The Festival's *Un Certain Regard* segment includes three films supported by DFI: ***Freda*** (Haiti, Benin, France, Qatar), directed by Gessica Gênéus, and the recipient of the Spring Grants 2020; Fall Grants 2019 recipient and Qumra 2020 project ***Noche de Fuego*** (Mexico, Germany, Brazil, Qatar), directed by Tatiana

Huezo; and Spring Grants 2020 recipient **Rehana Maryam Noor** (Bangladesh, Singapore, Qatar), Bangladesh's first-ever film in Official Selection, directed by Abdullah Mohammad Saad.

Two films supported by DFI are part of the 2021 *Quinzaine des Réalisateurs* (*The Directors' Fortnight*) segment: Lebanese director Ely Dagher returns to Cannes with his first feature **The Sea Ahead** (Lebanon, France, Belgium, United States of America, Qatar), a Qumra 2021 project and 2018 Spring Grant recipient, following the success of his 2015 short film *Waves '98*, also supported by DFI, which won the short film Palme d'Or. Also selected is Fall Grants 2019 recipient **A Brighter Tomorrow** (France, Qatar) by Yassine Qnia, whose first short film *Don't Be Tight* was screened at many festivals. He lives in Aubervilliers (France) which also serves as the setting of his film.

The 2021 *Semaine de la Critique* (*International Critic's Week*) programme includes these DFI-supported films: Spring Grants 2020 recipient **Amparo** (Colombia, Sweden, Germany, Qatar), the debut feature by Simón Mesa Soto, whose graduation film *Leidi* had won the short film Palme d'Or in 2014 and his subsequent short film, *Madre* was nominated for the Palme d'Or in 2016. The other selection is **The Gravedigger's Wife** (Finland, Germany, France, Qatar), a recipient of the DFI Spring Grants 2020, the feature film debut by Khadar Ayderus Ahmed.

The *ACID Programme in Cannes 2021* will screen DFI Qumra Project, a feature documentary, **Little Palestine, Diary of a Siege** (Lebanon, France, Qatar) directed by Palestinian human-rights activist Abdallah Al-Khatib. The film had its world premiere at the 2021 Visions du Reel documentary film festival in Switzerland.

#### In Competition- Official Selection

In **Memoria**, ever since being startled by a loud 'bang' at daybreak, Jessica (Tilda Swinton) is unable to sleep. In Bogotá to visit her sister, she befriends Agnes (Jeanne Balibar), an archaeologist studying human remains discovered within a tunnel under construction. Jessica travels to see Agnes at the excavation site. In a small town nearby, she encounters a fish scaler, Hernan (Elkin Diaz). They share memories by the river. As the day comes to a close, Jessica is awakened to a sense of clarity.

#### Un Certain Regard- Official Selection

Based on a true story, **Freda** is about the eponymous protagonist who lives with her mother, sister and little brother in a popular neighbourhood of Haiti. The precariousness and violence of their daily life pushes them to do everything they can to escape their situation in the hope of finding a better life.

**Noche de Fuego** is set in a mountain town, where corn and poppies grow, the girls sport boyish haircuts and have hiding places underground to escape the threat of being stolen. Ana and her two best friends grow up together, affirming the bonds of their friendship and discovering what it means to be a woman in a rural town marked by violence.

**Rehana Maryam Noor** is about a 37-year-old assistant professor in a private medical college, who struggles to keep the harmony between her work and family as she juggles the complex roles of a teacher, doctor, sister, daughter and mother. Her life starts to spiral out of control with two incidents that leave a searing impact on her.

#### Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (The Directors' Fortnight)- Independent Parallel Section

In feature narrative, *The Sea Ahead*, after a long time gone, Jana, a young woman, suddenly returns to Beirut. She finds herself reconnecting with the familiar yet strange life she had once left.

*A Brighter Tomorrow* follows thirty-something Mehdi who is a safecracker. He and his mates are just trying to get by, but robbery isn't paying like it used to. Day to day Mehdi tries to be a good son to his mother, and a good father to his one-year-old son to win back his ex, Sarah.

#### **Semaine de la Critique (International Critics' Week)- Independent Parallel Section**

*Amparo* is about a single mother who struggles to free her teenage son after he is drafted by the army and assigned to a war zone in 1998 Colombia. She is thrown into a race against time in a society ruled by men, corruption and violence.

*The Gravedigger's Wife* is the story of Guled and Nasra, a loving couple living in the outskirts of Djibouti city with their teenage son. However, they are facing difficult times: Nasra urgently needs an expensive surgery to treat a chronic kidney disease. Guled is already working hard as a gravedigger to make ends meet: how can they find the money to save Nasra and keep the family together?

#### **The ACID Programme**

An intense documentary, *Little Palestine, Diary of a Siege* is set in the district of Yarmouk in Damascus, Syria, which sheltered the largest Palestinian refugee camp in the world from 1957 to 2018. When the Syrian revolution broke out, the camp was besieged. Gradually deprived of food, medicine and electricity, Yarmouk was cut off from the rest of the world.

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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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