

## The new narrative of Palestine highlighted at 9<sup>th</sup> Ajyal Film Festival

- *Changemakers Muna El-Kurd, Farah Nabulsi and Abdallah Al-Khatib discuss the power of social media and cinema in addressing misperceptions*

**Doha, Qatar; November 12, 2021:** The ninth Ajyal Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute, brought together three of the world's most influential Palestinian activists and filmmakers to discuss the subjugation and oppression of the people of Palestine.

Complemented by this year's Ajyal Art Exhibition 'We Will Not Leave', which is inspired by the El-Kurd family living in the embattled Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, the talk featured Muna El-Kurd, one of Time Magazine's Most Influential People of 2021; Farah Nabulsi, director of Oscar® short-listed *The Present*; and Abdallah Al-Khatib, director of *Little Palestine*, *Diary of a Siege*, screening at Ajyal.

Muna El-Kurd said Palestinians are calling for international support and diplomatic action "against the occupation and ethnic cleansing by Israel," and highlighted the role that social media has played in amplifying the voice of the Palestinians.

"Social media is a powerful tool that has amplified our voices; we are embracing electronic resistance to tell our truth and we want the world to put pressure on Israel to take immediate action." She said that the Ajyal Art Exhibition and the festival have "provided a platform to tell the plight of the Palestinian people to the world. Art is a noble form of resistance."

Farah Nabulsi reiterated the power of art as a communication tool that has the "power to address stereotypes and misperceptions," and acknowledged her own responsibility to speak to the people's hearts through subjects that reflect her identity. She feels social media has transformed the landscape but cautioned that "we don't know how long that window of information will last as there are sinister attempts at play."

El-Kurd said Israel has already lost the media war with young Palestinians who are "transmitting the truth, through their mobile phones to the entire world. The Palestinian narrative has changed; it is not the melodrama or crying; we simply want our houses back. A part of my house was occupied by an Israeli American who left a large posh house to come and settle in a part of my house. Palestine currently exists in a state of systemic apartheid, where a Zionist can come and take over your house, to invade it and prevent us from entering our own homes. As Palestinians, we are spreading the true narrative – about diplomacy – about our right to have our homes back."

Abdallah Al-Khatib said the Syrian regime has its own narrative, "but young people who know the truth are presenting a counter-narrative through cinema, and this has helped changed people's understanding of false narratives spread by the oppressive regime." He said he faced several challenges in the production of his film, including shooting without electricity and basic facilities, coupled with the danger of being surrounded by gunfire and missile attacks.

Farah Nabulsi said a false narrative has been spread “by the oppressor and their cronies for a long time; that is why more of us must tell our stories, and today technology gives us a vehicle to distribute our narratives. It is a gradual process but with the exponential growth in technology there can also be exponential change. We don’t need sensation or melodrama; our truth serves us more than anything else.”

Tickets for Ajyal 2021 and can be purchased at [www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival](http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival).

The seven-day festival until Nov. 13, 2021, has a diverse mix of virtual and in-person events including film screenings, interactive discussions, multi-media art exhibit, Qatar’s largest pop-culture event Geekdom, and a drive-in cinema as part of a multisensory experience for all ages.

-ENDS-

## 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:

Twitter: @DohaFilm; Instagram: @DohaFilm; Facebook: [www.facebook.com/DohaFilmInstitute](https://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. ‘Ajyal’, Arabic for ‘generations’, brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue.

Ajyal Film Festival builds on the Doha Film Institute’s history of community-based programming. Through its jury programme, youth between the ages of 8 and 25 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, while making new friends and discovering global cultures.

Twitter: @AjyalFilm; Instagram: @AjyalFilm; Facebook: [www.facebook.com/AjyalFilm](https://www.facebook.com/AjyalFilm)

For more information, please contact:

**Rania Aissaoui**

[Rania.aissaoui@bluerubicon.qa](mailto:Rania.aissaoui@bluerubicon.qa)

+974 3111 5779