

Doha Film Institute Announces Record 42 Global Projects for Fall Grants 2019 Cycle

- *29 countries represented with 35 projects from the Arab world reaffirming DFI grants as a programme of choice for emerging filmmakers*
- *8 new projects from Qatar including two TV series*
- *Women filmmakers champion 20 projects, and 10 returning Grantees*

Doha, Qatar; 28 January 2020: An unprecedented slate of **42** projects by first-and-second-time, and established MENA filmmakers from around the world and emerging names from the region have been selected for the Doha Film Institute (DFI) Fall 2019 Grants cycle – the region’s leading film funding programme that cultivates the next generation of voices in film. Underlining the important role of Arab women in filmmaking, **20** of the chosen projects are by talented female directors including Qatari nationals.

The DFI Grants programme has evolved as a key initiative for identifying new cinematic voices and talent and discovering universally resonant stories. The programme is focused on supporting the region’s filmmakers to realise their storytelling aspirations by elevating original voices in cinema, promote creative interaction and provide creative support throughout the filmmaking cycle to establish a robust film ecosystem in the Arab world.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute, said: “The Institute’s Grants programme is a unique resource for the next generation of filmmakers from the Arab world and beyond. It is a manifestation of a shared vision, ours and that of the filmmakers we support, to tell bold stories through films that help us understand what it means to be human. With a record **42** recipients, the latest programme cycle also highlights the Institute’s broadened reach - both regionally and globally - and its recognition among emerging filmmakers who entrust their creative vision to our funding initiatives.”

“Covering all genres and experimenting with narrative styles, the 2019 Fall Grants recipients are pushing the boundaries of world cinema and adding to its diversity. Each project – from Mexico to India and the Dominican Republic to Romania, tells an important story that is specific to its local context but also universal. Many of the stories originate from women filmmakers who represent a powerful creative force in the Arab world and are a testament to the ever-growing talent pool that exists in our region.”

The Fall 2019 Grants covers a wide range of film productions, including feature, documentary, short film, and TV series. Among the **42** projects selected for the Fall 2019 Grants cycle are the next recipients of the TV series grants including two projects by Qatari talent. Highlighting its role as a champion of Arab cinema, **35** selected projects represent powerful emerging voices from the MENA region, including **seven** by Qatari directors. **Seven** projects in post-production stage, helmed by international filmmakers have been

chosen, representing, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, , Switzerland, India, Romania, Italy, Ukraine and Argentina,.

Fall 2019 Grants Recipients:

Feature Narrative – Development:

- ***In A Dream You Saw A Way to Survive and You Were Full of Joy*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Remi Itani follows Layal, a young Lebanese girl, whose pregnancy leaves her feeling increasingly disconnected.
- ***The Return of The Jerboas*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Amira Géhanne Khalfallah is set in the year 2000, forty years after the explosion of the nuclear bomb ‘Gerboise Bleue’ in the Sahara, when a young doctor lands in a village inhabited by the blind.
- ***Vanishing*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Lucien Bourjeily tells the story of single mother Rita, who juggles family and work when the disappearance of her domestic worker draws her into an investigative journey with unexpected consequences.
- ***81'*** (Qatar) by Dawood Al-Anwari, Ali Al Ansari is based on a true story about the underdog Qatari youth team’s historic splash at the ‘81 FIFA Youth World Championships in Australia.

Feature Documentary – Development:

- ***The Flower Men*** (Yemen, Qatar) by Yousra Ishaq tells the story of an ancient Yemeni tribe that is split by a bitter war threatening their homeland.
- ***Handala, The Boy Without A Face*** (Lebanon, Germany, Qatar) by Mahmoud Kaabour follows a treasure hunt based on a sketch of a young refugee that has been circulating around the world for over fifty years.
- ***The Voice of The Wild*** (Algeria, Qatar) by Dalel Ziour mixes images of daily life in the Sahara, personal archives and stories to recount the story of the Tuareg people and the history of one of the most influential bands of Tuareg blues of all time—Tinariwen.

TV Series – Development:

- ***Meskoun*** (Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Qatar) by Hicham Lasri is the mysterious story of Lotfi, who drowns during an illegal emigration attempt only to reappear a month later, buoyed by the souls of the seven people that drowned alongside him.
- ***Al Zubara*** (Qatar) by Hamad Al Mansouri is a futuristic take on Qatar where Jassim Mohammed sets out to avenge his brother’s murder.
- ***Life of Abdulla*** (Qatar) by Abdulla Al-Abdulla follows Abdulla through every dramatic moment as he pushes himself and his team to develop a high-end fragrance line worth of securing shelf space among the best boutique brands in the world.

Feature Narrative – Production:

- **Mehdi** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Yassine Qnia is Mehdi's story, who tries to make his relationship work by inviting Sarah to come back to his mother's place.
- In Soudade Kaadan's **Nezouh** (Syria, Lebanon, France, Qatar) a bomb falls on Zeina's house only to open a window to a new life.
- **Omar La Fraise** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Elias Belkedar is about a crook on the run in the streets of Algeria.
- **Queens** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Yasmine Benkiran follows 23-year-old Zineb, who escapes from prison in the hopes of giving her child a brighter future, and kidnaps her daughter and another hostage on a perilous road trip that flourishes into a deep friendship.
- In **Behind Closed Doors** (Qatar) by Hend Fakhroo, six-year-old Leila wakes up one day to find her mother gone. After weeks of struggle, her small family settles into an emotional equilibrium, only to have the mother suddenly return.

Feature Documentary – Production:

- **Kashkash** (Lebanon, Germany, Qatar) by Lea Najjar explores how the age-old Kash Hamam game of the Levant connects people of all religious sects and political views.
- **The People** (Morocco, Algeria, France, Qatar) by Rahma Benhamou El Madani is a picture of contemporary Algerian youth and their questions, mirroring those of protagonist and writer Kateb Yacine.

Feature Narrative – Post-Production:

MENA

- **Another Day in Baghdad** (Iraq, UK, France, Germany, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar) by Maysoon Pachachi follows Sara and her neighbours, who search for a thread of their existence in a middle-class district of Baghdad that is marked by war.
- **Mica** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Ismaël Ferroukhi is about an errand boy in Casablanca, who gets noticed and taken on by an ex-tennis champion.
- **TV Society** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Robert Cremona is about the public uproar resulting from the Arabic version of an international dating TV show.

NON-MENA

- **Liborio** (Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Qatar) by Fernando Martinez Sosa follows a Dominican peasant, who disappears in a hurricane and returns as a prophet. His community grows until something changes with the country invaded by the US Marines.
- **Lonely Rock** (Argentina, Mexico, UK, Qatar) by Alejandro TelémacoTarraf is set deep inside the Argentinian highlands where a native llama herder follows the traces of an invisible puma that is threatening his livestock.
- Tatiana Huezó's **Noche De Fuego** (Mexico, Germany, Brazil, Qatar) shines a light on life in a war-torn town, seen through the eyes of three young girls on the path to adolescence.
- **The Winter Within** (India, France, Qatar) by Aamir Bashir captures a romantic crossroad, when Nargis faces a new beginning with Yaseen – just when her husband returns.

Feature Documentary – Post-Production:

- ***Their Algeria*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Lina Soualem recounts a longstanding journey of exile and separation found within an Algerian immigrant home in France.
- ***The Disqualified*** (Tunisia, France, Qatar) by Hamza Ouni follows a 37-year-old man from a poor neighbourhood in Tunis, who dreams of being a professional actor.
- ***Mothers*** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Myriam Bakir is a portrait of the daily life of the founder of the 'Oum al Banine' (Mother of Children) association, which takes in and defends single mothers in Morocco.
- ***School of Hope*** (Morocco, Finland, France, USA, Qatar) by Mohamed El Aboudi fuses the story of a nomad tribe struggling to obtain education for their children, a young teacher and the government's indifference.
- In Karim Aïnouz's ***Nardjes A., Algiers, March 2019*** (Algeria, Brazil, France, Germany, Qatar) a popular pacifist insurgency gradually develops into revolution in Algeria.

NON-MENA

- Alina Gorlova's ***Between Two Wars*** (Ukraine, Latvia, Germany, Qatar) tells the story of a big Kurdish family from Syria, who is spread across the world due to the impacts of war.
- Dea Gjinovci's ***Wake Up on Mars*** (Switzerland, France, Qatar) follows a ten-year-old Roma boy living in Sweden, who struggles to come to terms with the mysterious Resignation Syndrome that has put his two sisters into a coma.
- ***A Rifle and A Bag*** (India, Romania, Italy, Qatar) co-directed by Cristina Hanes, Isabella Rinaldi, and Arya Rothe is about a young Indian couple fighting for their children's future.

Feature Experimental or Essay – Post-Production:

- ***An Unusual Summer*** (Palestine, Germany, Qatar) by Kamal Aljafari explores how the filmmaker's father captures an absurd choreography of characters and events with his camera – creating a snapshot of the repetitions and routines that make up their daily lives.

Short Narrative:

- Azedine Kasri's ***Boussa (The Kiss)*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) is a colourful social comedy, staging the absurd that can sometimes prevail in Eastern societies.
- ***Just Like boys!*** (Tunisia, Qatar) by Amel Guellaty follows Eya and Sofia, who use their grocery run to embark on an adventure into the forbidden woods.
- ***A Young Girl at A Window*** (Qatar) by Mahdi Ali Ali is about a French novice actress, struggling for a career break during the yellow vest demonstrations.
- In Nadia Alkhatir's ***This Is Not A Drill*** (Qatar) a young pregnant couple is torn by a fateful decision in the wake of a radioactive blast.

- **Hope** (Qatar) by Abdulla Al Jananhi follows the journey of newborn baby sea turtle Aqua, who overcomes his disability to leave the nest and explore the deep blue sea.
- **The Unlucky Hamster** (Qatar, Indonesia) by Abdulaziz Khashabi is about Fluffy, a cute little hamster who just can't catch a break! Every day he patiently waits in his cage at the pet store for someone to pick him.

Short Documentary or Experimental:

- **Children and War in Yemen: Child Soldiers** (Yemen, Qatar) by Mariam Al-Dhubhani is the impactful story of two siblings, who are recruited as child soldiers in the south of Yemen.
- **The Air and The Worlds** (Egypt, Qatar) by Rana Fouad is a contemplative journey that follows the musings of mute poet 'This Person'.
- **The Dragon Blood Island** (Yemen, USA, Qatar) by Sufian Abulohom depicts the effects of war on Socotra, a remote Yemeni Island.

First- and second-time directors from the MENA region are eligible for DFI's development, production and post-production funding for feature-length projects. Production funding is available to short films from the MENA region; development funding for screenwriters from the MENA region for TV series; and production funding to directors from the MENA region for web series. Established MENA directors can apply for post-production funding for feature-length projects. Post-production funding is also available to international first- and second-time filmmakers for feature-length projects.

- 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 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