

39 Diverse Projects by Arab and International Talents Selected for the Doha Film Institute's 2020 Spring Grants

- 39 projects from the MENA region and beyond, with six projects from Qatar
- 18 projects helmed by women filmmakers
- Four newly granted countries – Colombia, Haiti, Bangladesh, Tanzania – appear in this year's selection
- One VR short project granted for the first time

Doha, Qatar; 30 June 2020: An impressive slate of 39 projects by first-and-second-time filmmakers from around the world and established names from the Arab world have been selected for the Doha Film Institute's (DFI) Spring 2020 Grants cycle. With 30 projects from the MENA region, including six helmed by Qatari filmmakers, the programme continues in its mission to nurture a new generation of creative talents and support the development of original and compelling content. Highlighting the central role of women in cinema, 18 of the chosen projects are by talented female directors.

Out of the nine projects from beyond the MENA region, Diane Bouzgarrou and Thomas Jenkoe's ***The Last Hillbilly***, was one was confirmed at Cannes parallel section France's Association for the Diffusion of Independent Cinema (ACID) earlier this year for its special 2020 programme. Moreover, four first-time grantee countries entered the programme this year – Colombia, Haiti, Bangladesh, Tanzania – and one Virtual Reality (VR) short project - Razan AlSalah's ***The Greatest Wait (After the Last Sky)***, which masterfully explores a virtual return to Palestine and an aesthetic of land reclamation within virtual space - was granted for the first time. Underlining the programme's role as a key contributor to the region's creative industries, three projects are by established MENA filmmakers: Adil El Fadili's ***My Dad Is Not Dead***; Shawkat Amin Korki's ***The Exam***; and Dalila Ennadre's ***Jean Genet, Our Father of Flowers***.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of DFI, said: "Over the last nine years, the Doha Film Institute's Grants Programme has supported powerful stories and moving storytelling across a broad spectrum of issues and perspectives and has evolved into a key initiative for the next generation of filmmakers from the Arab world and beyond. The programme echoes our core mission to amplify important voices of our time and help talent realise their creative aspirations, to develop and support world cinema while fostering cultural diversity.

"We proudly look towards past and future grant recipients as an extension of DFI's ever-lasting commitment to the development of independent cinema and are delighted to see the inclusion of new countries covered within this cycle. It is a testament to the programme's growing acclaim among outstanding young filmmakers globally who entrust their creative vision to our funding initiatives," she added.

2020 Spring Grants Recipients

Feature Narrative – Post-Production:

- ***Gaza My Love*** (France, Germany, Portugal, Palestine, Qatar) by Tarzan Nasser and Arab Nasser details how the discovery of an ancient Greek statue at the bottom of the Gaza sea disrupts the life of an old fisherman—challenging him to approach the woman he secretly loves.
- ***The Gravedigger*** (Somalia, France, Germany, Qatar) by Khadar Ahmed tells the story of Guled and his family who must summon the strength to stay together during difficult times.
- ***My Dad Is Not Dead*** (Morocco, Qatar) by Adil El Fadili follows Malik, a young boy who finds himself alone after the abduction of his father by the police and is determined to find his father.
- ***The Exam*** (Iraq, Germany, Qatar) by Shawkat Amin Korki tells the story of Rojin and her sister Shilan, who cheat on a college admissions exam to avoid a forced marriage.
- ***Amparo*** (Colombia, Sweden, Germany, Qatar) by Simon Mesa Soto is about a single mother that struggles to keep her family together in 1990s Colombia after her son is drafted by the army.
- ***Freda*** (Haiti, Benin, France, Qatar) by Gessica Fabiola Geneus is a compassionate story of a Haitian family within the context of the socio-political crisis in Haiti.
- ***Ghosts*** (Turkey, Qatar) by Azra Deniz Okyay follows four characters from very different walks of life, who are thrust together through a web of drug trafficking in the ghettos of Istanbul.
- ***Rehana Maryam Noor*** (Bangladesh, Singapore, Qatar) by Abdullah Mohammad Saad is about a stubborn medical professor, who embarks on an extraordinary journey to seek justice for her student, young daughter and perhaps, for herself.
- ***Tug of War*** (Tanzania, South Africa, Germany, Qatar) by Amil Shivji follows a runaway Indian-Zanzibari bride who forms a strong bond with a young communist in 1950s British colonial Zanzibar.
- In ***White Building*** (Cambodia, France, China, Qatar) by Kavich Neang, Samnang faces the demolition of his lifelong home in Phnom Penh coupled with pressures from family, friends and neighbours.

Feature Documentary – Post-Production:

- ***Our Choices*** (Syria, France, Qatar) by Salah Al Ashkar follows the director, as witness and protagonist of an impossible revolution in Aleppo.
- ***Jean Genet, Our Father of Flowers*** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Dalila Ennadre is a dialogue between the living and the dead—an invitation to hold these worlds together, between deaf humanist revolt and poetic elegy.
- ***Speedboats*** (Italy, France, Qatar) by Yuri Ancarani depicts the story of an alternative society under the canals and palaces of the Venetian lagoon.
- ***The Last Hillbilly*** (France, Qatar) by Diane Bouzgarrou and Thomas Jenkoe is a portrait of a “hillbilly” family told through the words of one of their own.

Feature Experimental or Essay – Post-Production:

- ***Aleph*** (Croatia, USA, Qatar) by Iva Radivojević is a travelogue of experience to find that place of connection, clarity, understanding across language, geography and experience.

Feature Narrative - Production:

- ***LABAN: The False Prophets of Johann Sebastian Bach*** (Lebanon, France, Georgia, Germany, Qatar) by Daniel Joseph details how a tiny musical village slips into absurd chaos in 1920s Lebanon after realizing they don't officially exist.
- In ***Hounds*** (Morocco, France, Belgium, Qatar) by Kamal Lazraq, a father and son struggle to survive from day to day in the working-class suburbs of Casablanca - until one night they are asked to carry out an abduction.

Feature Documentary - Production:

- ***In the House of My Father*** (Morocco, Belgium, Qatar) by Rachida El Garani is the story of a Moroccan-Belgian family seen through the lens of their oldest daughter.
- ***Land of Women*** (Egypt, Denmark, Qatar) by Nada Riyadh is about a group of teenagers from a conservative village in the south of Egypt, that rebel against the traditional roles forced upon them.
- In ***The Curious Mr. Daoud*** (Algeria, Qatar) by Sid Ahmed Semiane, writer Kamel Daoud's camera, installed in his quiet home, records his innermost thoughts while the country is in turmoil—amid the revolutionary *Hirak* Movement.

Feature Narrative – Development:

- Set in the summer of 1958, ***Night in a Glass of Water*** (Lebanon, France, Qatar) by Carlos Chahine follows a six-year-old boy who is abandoned by his mother.
- In ***The Storms*** (Algeria, France, Qatar) by Dania Reymond-Boughenou, supernatural events begin to multiply around Samir—a print news reporter who is covering the phenomenon.

Feature Documentary – Development:

- ***Big Boys Don't Cry*** (Egypt, Germany, Qatar) by Muhammad Mustapha is a story of two men, two performances, two realities, and two unmaskings.
- ***The Nablus Runner*** (Algeria, Palestine, France, Switzerland, Qatar) by Haïcha Ladrouz retells how, despite imposed restrictions on movement, a passionate long-distance runner strives to complete a marathon in one of the smallest territories in the world.

Short Narrative:

- ***A Proposal*** (Qatar) by Nadia Alkhater is about a young Qatari man seeking approval from a council in order to marry his foreign fiancé.

- ***Body and Soul*** (Qatar) by Ala'a Hamash recounts a journey in search of the true meaning of serenity.
- ***Revenge Knows Nothing*** (Qatar) by Abdulla Al Janahi and Abdulaziz Khashabi combines two stories on the horrific effects of human injustice on its victims—human or otherwise.
- In ***Smile You Deserve It*** (Qatar) by Ibrahim Albuainain, two farmers face distinct challenges and despite their contrasting tools and capabilities, a genuine smile makes all the difference.
- ***The Day Vladimir Died*** (Lebanon, Germany, Qatar) by Fadi Syriani follows Vladimir, an old Beirut resident, who leads a morbid life until he finds himself searching for his own obituary one day.
- In ***The Key (working title)*** (Palestine, France, Germany, Qatar) by Rakan Mayasi, the ominous sound of a key is haunting young Edina at night - but then the entire family starts experiencing the same nightmare.
- In ***The Last Displaced*** (Iraq, Qatar) by Muhannad Al Sudany, a soldier in Mosul tries to engage with a sniper who wants to take her infant from him.
- In ***Under Her Skin*** (Qatar, Algeria, France) by Meriem Mesraoua, Sarah must abide by rules she does not fully understand when her mother forbids her from biting her nails.

Short Documentary – Production:

- ***Shadows*** (Jordan, Qatar) by Rand Beiruty is about a 14-year old runaway mother who fights the lurking shadows that attempt to steal the only dream that will set her free.

Short Experimental, Essay or VR – Production:

- ***The Greatest Wait (After the Last Sky)*** (Palestine, France, Canada, Qatar) by Razan AlSalah follows the story of Zei, who finds herself trapped in cyberspace in an impossible, yet eternal return to Palestine.
- ***The Shadow of the Butterflies*** (Morocco, France, Qatar) by Sofia El Khyari is set in a mysterious forest where a woman is slowly lured into a daydream as she observes butterflies.

TV Series – Development:

- ***Oddity Tales from a Strange Land*** (Jordan, Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Qatar) by Ahmad Samara is a collection of stories on the diverse ancient historical tales and mythologies spread throughout the Arab world.

Web Series – Production:

- ***The Closet Sessions*** (Jordan, Qatar) by Ahmad Satti Ibrahim is a music web series that documents and showcases the diversity of the music scene in Jordan and the wider Arab region.
- ***Traditional Qatari Songs*** (Qatar) by Aisha Al-Jaidah is a series of lovingly-animated traditional Qatari children's songs—modernised to appeal to the kids of today.
- In five-minute episodes, ***Zyara - Season Five*** (Lebanon, Qatar) by Muriel Aboulrouss, manages to engrave parts of its subjects' souls, some of their stories and most of all—their emotions.

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام

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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.

Together with the Qatari Film Fund and other co-production initiatives, the cyclical DFI Grants Programme is part of the Institute's sustainable film financing models in support of young emerging voices in Arab cinema and beyond.

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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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