

Ajyal 2024 opens with a poignant cinematic call for human understanding

- *Ajyal 2024 amplifies 'Voices from Palestine' with films, discussions and a specially curated exhibition*
- *Announces preparations for 2025 Doha Film Festival, curated to echo the dreams and aspirations of filmmakers and creative storytellers from near and far*
- *In a compelling gesture of resistance, over 90 young jurors in Gaza watched 'Made in Qatar' films and voted for their favourites*
- *Event opened with "Sudan, Remember Us" by Hind Meddeb, a tribute to the power of youth to make a positive difference*

Doha, Qatar; November 16, 2024: The 12th edition of Ajyal Film Festival, presented by the Doha Film Institute (DFI), opened on a poignant note, underlining the role of cinema in delivering the human struggles of the world to foster human understanding.

The theme of this year's Ajyal, **'Moments that Matter'** resonates powerfully as the region witnesses unprecedented human suffering, highlighting how every moment can carry the weight of a lifetime.

Opening Ajyal 2024, in the presence of over 600 young jurors from across the world, as well as distinguished guests and talents associated with the films, **Her Excellency Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater, Minister of Education and Higher Education**, praised the resilience of women in Sudan and expressed solidarity with the suffering, particularly of the children, and the resistance of the people in Gaza.

She presented an honorary award to a child from Gaza, Mahmoud Ajour, who was brought to Doha for medical treatment after losing both hands. The award serves as a symbolic recognition of the courage and hope of all children in Gaza who continue to endure the horrors of war while striving for survival and a brighter future.

In her moving address, **Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Chief Executive Officer of Doha Film Institute and the Festival Director** reflected on the journey of Ajyal since its inception in 2013, and unveiled plans for the 2025 Doha Film Festival. She said it will "echo the dreams and aspirations of filmmakers and creative storytellers from near and far, as we mark the next chapter of our cinematic journey."

Recalling how Doha Film Institute took the momentous decision to pause Ajyal last year following the events in Gaza, she said: "The horror and sheer scale of destruction and massacres was mind-numbing tragedies that heartbreakingly continue to this day, and have expanded to Lebanon. Despite the cancellation, we organised and curated films and discussions to present the 'Voices from Palestine' programme"

“Witnessing the catastrophe in Gaza taught us that every moment matters, for it could be the last. It also made us see the fundamental truth that we have the ability to channel the power of cinema to do good. We decided to confront the catastrophe and dared to imagine holding Ajyal in Gaza itself. It unfolded in three stages with 90 young jurors in Gaza watching films made in Qatar, with their votes to be announced on the closing day. They join over 550 other young Ajyal jurors from around the world to empower youth through cinema.”

The opening ceremony was attended by distinguished guests including HE Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al Kawari, Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library; Sheikh Abdulaziz H. Al Thani, Director of National Museum of Qatar, HE Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani, Chairman of Media City Qatar; Hamad Ali Al-Khater, Chief Operating Officer of Hamad International Airport, and Eng. Jassim Mohamed Al Khori, CEO of Media City Qatar, and several high-ranking diplomats.

Other prominent guests included cultural leaders and artists from Qatar; Palestinian actors Saleh Bakri and director Mohamad Bakri; Turkish actors Esra Bilgic and Birkan Sokullu; Sudanese musician Mustafa the Poet; Palestinian musician Anees, and Tunisian director Hind Meddeb, among others.

The ceremony was followed by the screening of ***Sudan, Remember Us*** (Tunisia, France, Qatar), directed by Hind Meddeb, a Doha Film Institute-supported documentary that captures the fight for freedom by young people through words, poems, and chants.

Ajyal 2024 continues through November 23 with screenings and events across various locations including Katara Cultural Village, Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, Lusail, and VOX Cinemas Doha Festival City. Tickets are available online at www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival.

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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 Arab film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar and the region. 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.

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', builds on the Institute's history of community-based programming, and brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue. 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.

Doha Film Institute:

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