

‘Yalda, A Night for Forgiveness’ Inspires Cinematic Debate at Ajjal Film Festival

Doha, Qatar; November 17, 2020: The 8th Ajjal Film Festival, presented by Doha Film Institute (DFI), virtually hosted the renowned Iranian documentarian and filmmaker Massoud Bakhshi, whose latest feature *Yalda, A Night for Forgiveness* casts an inquisitive portrait of the forces of society, culture and mass media.

Making its MENA Premiere, winner of the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize for Drama at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, *Yalda, A Night for Forgiveness* (France, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Lebanon, Iran/2019) is the story of Maryam, a young Iranian woman who is sentenced to death for murdering her much older husband, Nasser. In front of millions of viewers on live television during Yalda – a Zoroastrian celebration that marks the beginning of winter – Maryam must plea for her life, with her fate firmly in the hands of the victim’s daughter.

Inspired by an actual top-rating Iranian reality television show, the film artfully explores themes of forgiveness and judicial justice torn between the age-old "eye for an eye" principle and contemporary Iranian society.

At an online press briefing, Massoud Bakhshi said: “The film’s universal themes of forgiveness, sympathy and humanity go beyond borders, making it accessible to audiences everywhere – particularly in today’s world they hold up as essential values that transcend our personal differences. Artists carry a certain responsibility to break these walls through authentic storytelling that reflects the realities of the world.”

“Probably the most important aspect of the film was our collaboration with an NGO run by a group of courageous women in Iran, who specialise in social justice cases. We donated the film’s proceeds from the national release to their organisation – effectively leading to the release of two inmates and making a real-life impact.”

Yalda, A Night for Forgiveness skilfully unwraps the cultural and societal layers of Iran through class struggle, media obsession and gender roles that extend a complex audience experience that is certain to mesmerise, provoke and entertain.

For up-to-date information and ticket reservation, visit: www.dohafilminstitute.com/festival.

2020 Ajjal Film Festival’s Official Partners include: **Katara Cultural Village Foundation** – Cultural Partner; **Qatar National Tourism Council** – Principal Partner; **Novo Cinemas**, **Ooredoo** – Strategic Partner, **Msheireb Properties**, **Lusail**, **Qatari Diar** – Signature Sponsors.

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Note to Editors:

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

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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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