

Doha Film Festival Spotlights Powerful Regional Narratives with 'My Father and Qaddafi', 'The President's Cake'

Doha, Qatar; November 25, 2025: The Doha Film Festival (DFF) continues to captivate audiences with its selection of authentic stories, hosting resonant discussions following the regional premieres of *My Father and Qaddafi* and *The President's Cake*.

The tight-knit family behind *My Father and Qaddafi* – director Jihan, her mother Baha, brother Rashid, and niece Danya – delved into the film's exploration of the 1993 disappearance of Jihan's father, Mansur Rashid Kikhia, a Libyan diplomat and peaceful opposition leader whose body was found 19 years after he vanished.

"This is a personal film, because he is my father first. There were many ways to tell the story – but this is the one I chose," Jihan stated.

Jihan expressed gratitude for the festival's support: "To be hosted and validated by Doha, to see them make such a genuine and beautiful effort, I'm honoured and grateful. Doha Film Institute (DFI) has offered some of the most pure, genuine support I've had."

Mother Baha, whose resilience shines onscreen, shared, "I was raised to be happy and believe in God's will. I can face everything, because I always have hope."

Meanwhile, Rashid voiced his deep admiration for his sister's dedication. "Jihan did something I didn't have the capacity or time to do. For that, I'm very grateful."

The film arrived at DFF after its acclaimed world premiere at the Venice Film Festival, where it became the first Libyan film to be presented in 13 years.

DFF also hosted a press briefing for *The President's Cake*, an international feature competing at the festival, bringing together director Hasan Hadi and 11-year-old first-time actress Banin Ahmad Nayef.

Set against the pressures of 1990s Iraq, the film follows a child selected by chance to supply a birthday cake for the nation's ruler amidst war and food shortages. Of Nayef's candid lead performance, Hadi shared: "She was very shy. But we wanted the child actors to know, there's no right or wrong – we welcomed happy accidents."

Hadi, who was born and still lives in Iraq, said his own introduction to film came through smuggled tapes: "When I grew up in Iraq, cinemas were shut. There was a ban on exporting movies to Iraq. We would rotate VHS tapes among ourselves."

Speaking of abundant obstacles, Hadi lauded DFI's vital role in elevating his film's position through its grants programme. "Doha Film Institute's support gave us the credibility we needed. Their stamp of approval was invaluable."

The Doha Film Festival, being held until November 28, 2025, marks the bold next chapter in Doha Film Institute's mission to nurture regional talent and champion urgent and authentic stories in cinema. For more information, visit www.dohafilm.com.

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