



Doha Film Festival 2026 to Open with Sara Ishaq's Award-winning Yemeni Feature 'The Station'

- *Cannes Critics' Week title makes its MENA premiere in Doha, following five prizes at Final Cut in Venice*

Doha, Qatar; 23 September 2026: Doha Film Institute (DFI) today announced that Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026 will open with the MENA premiere of *The Station* (Al Mahattah), the acclaimed debut feature from Yemeni-Scottish filmmaker Sara Ishaq, taking place from 19–27 November 2026 in Doha.

A bold and deeply human story of resilience, sisterhood and solidarity, *The Station* unfolds inside a women-only petrol station in war-torn Yemen — a rare sanctuary where women gather for fuel, conversation and moments of respite from the realities surrounding them. When Layal's younger brother faces enlistment, she is forced to reconnect with her estranged sister to save him.

Produced by Screen Project (a Ta Films company), in co-production with Georges Films, One Two Films, KeplerFilm, BarentsFilm, Setara Films and The Imaginarium Films, involving Yemen, Jordan, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Qatar, *The Station* is a powerful example of the distinctive, courageous cinema that DFI has championed in its commitment to supporting authentic stories and voices.

A recipient of DFI's grants programme, *The Station* won five awards at Final Cut in Venice 2025, including the La Biennale di Venezia Award for Best Film in Post-Production, before making its world premiere in Competition at Cannes Critics' Week in May 2026. Its selection as DFF Opening Film continues DFI's long-standing commitment to nurturing promising talent from the region and bringing their stories to audiences around the world.

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, CEO of Doha Film Institute and Director of Doha Film Festival, said: “*The Station* embodies the spirit of cinema we believe in at Doha Film Institute — stories rarely heard that cross borders and remind us of our shared humanity. Sara Ishaq has created a film of extraordinary courage and tenderness, transforming a story rooted in Yemen into one that speaks to audiences everywhere. In opening Doha Film Festival 2026 with *The Station*, we are opening a space for dialogue, connection and a deeper understanding of the world through the power of film.”



Directed by Sara Ishaq and written by Ishaq and Nadia Eliewat, the film stars Manal Al-Mulaiki, Abeer Mohammed, Rashad Khaled, Saleh Al-marshahi, Fariha Hassan, Randa Mohammed, Fatima Muthanna, Amal Esmail and Shorooq Mohammed.

Sara Ishaq, director of *The Station*, added: "The world of *The Station* distills what I love and cherish about Yemen into a fragile utopia, constantly overshadowed by turmoil beyond its walls. At its core, this film is about people in all their complexity, contradictions and humanity. It is an ode to the people of Yemen, who have endured years of war with dignity and strength"

Producer, Nadia Eliewat said: "In this time of uncertainty in our beloved region, our ability to come together and support our own narrative is vital. *The Station* is a testament to that solidarity. The film received invaluable support from Doha Film Institute, and to now celebrate it here, together, at Doha Film Festival, is a truly special moment for all of us."

The selection reinforces Doha Film Festival's role as a meeting point for distinctive voices from Qatar, the Arab world and the global film community. Through its year-round support for filmmakers, DFI continues to bridge cultures and enables audiences to experience the world through perspectives that challenge, move and inspire.

Sara Ishaq's debut short documentary *Karama Has No Walls* (2012) earned nominations for an Academy Award® and a BAFTA New Talent Award. Her follow-up personal documentary *The Mulberry House* (2013) premiered at IDFA. Since 2015, Sara has led film training in Yemen - first through Comra Academy and now through Setara Films - to nurture Yemen's emerging filmmaking talent amidst ongoing war. Between 2022-2026, Sara ran the International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk in Amsterdam.

The Station will launch the 2026 festival with a story that is deeply rooted in place and universal in its themes — a reminder that even in the most difficult circumstances, cinema can create a space for connection, dignity and hope.

Taking place from 19–27 November 2026, Doha Film Festival brings together filmmakers, audiences and industry voices from the region and beyond to honour original storytelling and important voices in film. For more information, visit www.dohafilm.com.

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