



Doha Film Festival 2026 Announces International Feature Film Competition Jury

- *International jury of acclaimed directors, actors and producers united by a commitment to independent cinema and bold, original storytelling*

Doha, Qatar; 26 October 2026: Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026, today announced acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Naomi Kawase as Head of its International Feature Film Competition Jury, bringing together an exceptional group of cinematic voices whose work challenges perspectives, transcends borders and illuminates the human experience.

Joining Kawase on the jury are celebrated French Tunisian actor Adam Bessa, influential Tunisian producer Dora Bouchoucha, award-winning Palestinian filmmaker and artist Kamal Aljafari and visionary Italian documentary filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi. Collectively, they represent a breadth of artistic mastery spanning fiction, documentary and performance, united by a commitment to championing distinctive voices and ambitious storytelling.

The jury will decide the winning films from the 15-film line-up of international titles, featuring bold and distinctive voices from across the Arab world, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

“Independent cinema is where the most vital, courageous and transformative stories of our time find their voice. It is our responsibility to protect the creative freedom to challenge conventions, bring overlooked perspectives to the screen and build bridges across cultures,” said **Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, CEO of Doha Film Institute and Director of Doha Film Festival**. “We are immensely proud to welcome friends of the Institute who share our vision and have dedicated their lives to nurturing independent cinema. Their collective experience and artistic integrity embody the spirit of DFI and DFF: championing original voices, creating space for bold ideas and ensuring that powerful stories, find their way to audiences around the world.”

Naomi Kawase — Head of the Jury

Born and based in Nara, Japan, Naomi Kawase is acclaimed for films that blend fiction and documentary through intimate explorations of human experience. In 1997, she became the youngest recipient of the Caméra d’Or at Cannes for her debut feature, *Suzaku*, before winning the Cannes Grand Prix for *The Mourning Forest* (2007). Her film *Radiance* (2017) received the Ecumenical Jury Prize at Cannes, while her latest feature, *Yakushima’s Illusion* (2025), premiered in competition at Locarno. An experienced juror, she has served on the Cannes Competition Jury and presided over its Cinéfondation and Short Films Jury. She



founded the Nara International Film Festival and joined DFI's Qumra programme as a Master in 2016, mentoring emerging filmmakers from Qatar and beyond.

Adam Bessa

Adam Bessa has built an international career across French, European and American productions, earning recognition for performances marked by emotional intensity and nuanced characterisation. His breakthrough role in Lotfy Nathan's *Harka* (2022) earned him the Best Performance Award in the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes and Best Actor at the Red Sea International Film Festival. He subsequently starred in Meryam Joobeur's *Who Do I Belong To* (2024), which competed at the Berlinale, and Jonathan Millet's *Ghost Trail*, earning further acclaim and a César nomination. In 2026, he appeared in Asghar Farhadi's *Parallel Tales*. DFI supported all three of his films, *Harka*, *Who Do I Belong To* and *Parallel Tales*.

Dora Bouchoucha

Dora Bouchoucha is one of the Arab world's most influential film producers and a longstanding advocate for emerging filmmakers. She founded Tunisian production company NOMADIS IMAGES in 1995 and has produced and co-produced award-winning features and documentaries, including *Satin Rouge*, *Inhebbek Hedi*, *Weldi*, *Behind the Mountains*, *Souad* and *Aisha Can't Fly Away*. Her commitment to nurturing talent extends through initiatives including SUD ÉCRITURE, which she founded in 1997, and development workshops across Africa and the Arab world. She has led major regional film festivals and served on international juries, including at Berlinale and Venice. A member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, she continues to champion independent cinema.

Kamal Aljafari

Palestinian filmmaker and artist Kamal Aljafari is recognised for a distinctive cinematic practice exploring memory, history, identity and the politics of images. He studied at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne and has taught at The New School in New York and the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin, in addition to receiving a Radcliffe Fellowship at Harvard University. His feature *A Fidai Film* (2024) won the Jury Prize in the Burning Lights Competition at Visions du Réel and the Tanit d'Or at Carthage. His documentary *With Hasan in Gaza* (2025) received Best Artistic Achievement at Doha Film Festival. Both films were supported by DFI, which is also backing his forthcoming feature *Beirut 1931*.

Gianfranco Rosi

Gianfranco Rosi is the only documentary filmmaker to have won both the Golden Lion at Venice and the Golden Bear at Berlin. Known for an immersive, observational approach, he creates intimate portraits of communities shaped by complex social and political realities, often working independently as his own cinematographer. His film *Sacro GRA* (2013) became the first documentary to win Venice's Golden Lion, while *Fire at Sea* (2016), filmed



on the island of Lampedusa, won the Golden Bear and the European Film Award and received an Academy Award nomination. His documentary *Notturmo* (2020) was presented in competition at Venice, and *Below the Clouds* (2025) won the festival's Special Jury Prize. He was a DFI Qumra Master in 2018.

Through its International Feature Film Competition, Doha Film Festival continues to honour the filmmakers who expand cinema's artistic horizons and bring new perspectives to the screen. The jury's collective expertise reflects the festival's commitment to an independent cinema culture that values creative risk, cultural exchange and the enduring power of stories.

Key Partners of Doha Film Festival include Katara, Media City Qatar I Film Committee and Visit Qatar. 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.dohafilmm.com.

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