



## Doha Film Festival 2026 International Short Film Competition Unveils 22 Inspiring Films with 2 World Premieres and 19 Middle East and North Africa Premieres

- Selection includes 2026 Cannes Short Film Palme d'Or winner and Best short Film from the Orizzonti Section of the 2026 Venice International Film Festival
- Qatari short *Light to Ashes* by Nadia Al Khater to compete for top honours
- Powerful stories of identity, displacement and belonging from Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Tunisia, Somalia and Qatar represented in the programme

**Doha, Qatar; 14 October 2026:** Doha Film Institute (DFI) has announced 22 films for the International Short Film Competition at Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026, taking place from November 19 to 27. Spanning cultures, continents and cinematic approaches, the selection of 2 world premieres and 19 MENA premieres bring together emerging and established filmmakers whose distinctive perspectives illuminate personal experiences, collective histories and the complexities of a changing world.

The selection includes *For The Opponents* by Federico Luis, winner of the Short Film Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival 2026 and *A Few Moments of Happiness* by Shaden Safieddine Tazi, winner of the Best Short Film in the 2026 Venice Film Festival Orizzonti section, alongside a rich cross-section of international cinema and compelling stories from the Arab world. From the realities of life in Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan and Yemen to the Peruvian Amazon and rural Indonesia, the selected films reflect the vitality of short-form filmmaking as a space for experimentation, discovery and urgent storytelling.

The competition will be evaluated by an international jury comprising French-Moroccan producer **Karim Aitouna**; Malaysian filmmaker **Amanda Nell Eu**, director of *Tiger Stripes*, which received the Cannes Critics' Week Grand Prize and was supported by Doha Film Institute; and Swiss-Rwandan actress and filmmaker **Kayije Kagame**. Bringing together diverse creative practices and international perspectives, the jury will deliberate on the selection to recognise outstanding achievements in short-form cinema, assessing the films' artistic vision, originality and storytelling.

**Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Festival Director and CEO of Doha Film Institute, said:** "Short films give filmmakers the freedom to take creative risks, challenge conventions and bring fresh perspectives to the screen. They are a powerful reminder that cinema does not need to be bound by scale to leave a lasting impact. At Doha Film Festival, we champion this spirit of bold experimentation and discovery.

"This year's International Short Film Competition celebrates the diversity and creative power of independent cinema. The selected films are deeply rooted in their communities



while speaking to experiences that transcend borders and we look forward to welcoming these voices to Doha.”

**Films Selected for the 2026 International Short Film Competition are:**

- ***A Chronicle of the Lost*** (India) by Soumya Mukhopadhyay, follows a migrant labourer cycling through Calcutta past the shuttered jute mills where he once worked, reading aloud an imagined letter to the wife he left behind in his village.
- ***A Few Moments of Happiness*** (France/UK/Lebanon) by Shaden Safieddine Tazi follows a young filmmaker in Paris who begins obsessively recording on her phone when war breaks out in Lebanon, creating a visual diary of exile as her homeland collapses on screen.
- ***A Few Things Happening By A River*** (France/Portugal) by Daniel Soares is about teenagers floating down a river and playing dead for social media. One of them drifts away unnoticed, past delivery workers, holidaymakers and families too absorbed to see the tragedy passing by.
- ***A Sweet Day*** (Iran) by Omid Abdollahi is about a young woman granted a rare conjugal visit with her imprisoned husband, sets out to make something tender of the prison's harsh, indifferent rooms.
- ***Another Day Shall Come*** (Palestine/Lebanon/Qatar/France) by Aida Kaadan is set against the genocide in Gaza as Palestinians living inside Israel face silencing and erasure. The director answers with an open call for anonymous voice messages from across the 1948 borders.
- ***Faux Bijoux*** (France/Lebanon) by Jessy Moussallem, tells the story of Mireille, who tells young Johnny he is auditioning for a film. The people waiting for them are not casting directors, and the role on offer is hers.
- ***Forgotten Spaceman*** (Afghanistan/UK) by Elham Ehsas, draws on archival fragments and Afghan music to trace the journey of Afghanistan's first and only astronaut, who travelled into space in 1988, only to discover that home could remain farther away than the stars.
- ***Ghazal-e Sorkh*** (Iran/UK/France) by Maryam Tafakory, is an essay film that uses archival material, rhythm and verse to revisit the 1976 boycott of the Shiraz Arts Festival, when international artists stayed away in protest.
- ***Imagine Me Like a Country of Love*** (Netherlands/Yemen/Qatar) by Thana Farooq returns to Yemen through family archives, altered landscapes and fragmented memories after nearly a decade away, exploring what remains of home when the place remembered has changed.
- ***In Another Palestine*** (Peru/Germany) by Yaela Gottlieb is set in a village named Palestine, 164 kilometres from Tarapoto in the Peruvian Amazon, where children swim in its Jordan River on their way to Jerusalem.



- ***Journey to Heaven*** (Indonesia) by Kenny Gulardi, follows Sulastri and a group of villagers unable to afford the journey to Mecca who undertake a local hajj ritual in a cave, guided by a spiritual leader.
- ***Khufu*** (Egypt/France/Sweden/Canada) by Mahmoud Assi, centres on Khufu, a family camel who collapses before the Pyramids, leaving 14-year-old Sayed to confront an impossible choice: sell him for meat or abandon him by the Wall of Carcasses.
- ***Light to Ashes*** (Qatar/France) by Nadia Al-Khater follows a young warrior-poet who, after losing his family in a sandstorm, must confront the ghosts of his past to find them.
- ***Nothing Happens After Your Absence*** (Sudan), by Ibrahim Omar, follows the director's return to his home village to screen films and organise a football tournament with teams named after great directors, until war erupts across Sudan.
- ***Obscura*** (Indonesia/Netherlands) by Timoteus Anggawan Kusno, follows gallery workers haunted by nostalgia for a place they have never known. After stealing a colonial landscape painting, they drive towards the sea as the image begins to take hold of them.
- ***Somewhere I Belong*** (Tunisia) by Youssef Handouse, follows a man who returns to his hometown after years away, hoping to find the familiarity of home, only to discover how profoundly time has changed both the place and its people.
- ***The Day I Smoked a Cigarette With My Father*** (France/Belgium/Egypt) by Sameh Alaa and Robin Vouters is set in Cairo in 1964, where 12-year-old Alaa recognises his father in a cheering crowd in the street below, home from prison without warning and not entirely welcome.
- ***For The Opponents*** (Mexico/Chile/France/UK) by Federico Luis, won the Short Film Palme d'Or at 2026 Cannes Film Festival. Set in the tough neighbourhood of Tepito, it follows a young boy pursuing the great Mexican dream of becoming a boxing champion.
- ***The Wind Between Us*** (Netherlands) by Ali Asgari, tells the story of Arman, who travels to the Netherlands after years in an Iranian prison to meet his six-year-old son for the first time. Father and son must find a way to connect despite sharing no common language.
- ***To the North*** (Palestine) by Amer Nasser follows Firas, who returns alone to northern Gaza in 2025, after 471 days of war, during a brief ceasefire to recover his sister and her family from beneath their collapsed home.
- ***We Are Entitled to Love Autumn*** (Sweden/Palestine/Tunisia) by Amani Jaafer is about Mohamed, a Palestinian asylum seeker in Sweden, who uses an AI chatbot to improve his Swedish. What begins as practice becomes a late-night lifeline, drawing him into grief, memory and exile.



- ***Whispers of a Burning Scent*** (Somalia/Austria/Germany) by Mo Harawe centres on a wedding musician confronting his crumbling marriage, his stepchildren’s judgement and his own guilt on the day of a crucial court hearing.

The three-member jury will acknowledge excellence in short-form filmmaking with prizes including the Best Film Award (US\$20,000), Best Director Award (US\$12,000), Best Performance Award (US\$7,000) and a Special Mention Certificate.

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.dohafilm.com](http://www.dohafilm.com).

**-END-**