Award-winning films take centre stage in the Ajyal Competition at Doha Film Festival 2026

- *Ajyal Film Competition's youth jury explore thought-provoking storytelling*

Doha, Qatar; November 25, 2026: The films showcased at the Ajyal Film Competition at the Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026 feature bold emerging voices from across the world who challenge perspectives and deepens empathy.

The competition is judged by a youth jury of over 100 Doha residents aged 16 to 25 who debate and select the winners of the Best Feature Film and Best Short Film Awards.

The filmmakers presenting their works in the Competition at Doha Film Festival have already earned critical acclaim internationally, and expressed appreciation for how Ajyal brings together young voices to evaluate cinema on its craft, urgency, and human truth.

Among the titles presented at the Ajyal Film Competition is ***Summer Meadow***, co-directed by Naël Khleifi and Lisa Debauche, a poignant drama on exile and belonging set in the French Alps for which actress Manal Issa won the Pardo for Best Performance at the 79th Locarno Film Festival.

"When you grow up in a place you are constantly reminded you don't belong, telling these stories isn't a choice - it's a reality. So, it was important for us to give another point of view and bring Manal's own reality and lived questions into the story," said Khleifi.

Tamara Todorović's ***Nobody Said Anything*** which premiered in competition at Cannes and won the Heart of Sarajevo for Best Narrative Short Film in 2026, brings sharp tension as a children's game spirals out of control. "Awards are not something that defines you as an artist, but they definitely give you credibility and recognition. Festivals such as this are vital because audiences actually get to experience short films in a cinema together." said Todorović.

Domenico Singha Pedroli's ***Typhoon Mambo*** examines memory and grief as a woman interacts with an AI version of her late husband. "Participating in festivals and winning awards can open doors, but we shouldn't let it influence our creative expression too much. My goal is to create meaningful stories that connect cultures and languages to capture something universal and deeply human," said Domenico Singha Pedroli.

Oscar-qualified short ***We Were Here*** (India) by Pranav Bhasin is also screening at the Ajyal Short Film Competition and follows a group of elderly men feeling left behind by rapid change. The film won the Audience Award at SXSW 2026, Best Live Action Short and Best Comedy Short at Palm Springs ShortFest 2026, and the Canal+ Prize at Clermont-Ferrand 2026.

Features also screening at Ajyal include ***Ben'Imana*** by Marie-Clémentine Dusabejambo, winner of the Caméra d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival 2026,as well as ***Gabin*** by Maxence Voiseux, ***Out of School*** by Hind Bensari, and ***We Are Aliens*** by Kohei Kadowaki.

Short films in the lineup include ***As a Cure*** by Dorothea Sing Zhang, ***The Bird's Placebo*** by Rami Jarboui, ***Boomerang Atomic*** by Rachid Bouchareb, ***Boundaries*** by Seun Yee, ***Intersecting Memory*** by Shayma' Awawdeh, ***The Kalgan Horse*** by Zichen Zhao, ***Prisoner of Love*** by Yumna Marwan, ***Threads of Support*** by Olya Korsun, and ***Vegetare*** by Adrià Expòsit-Goy.

The Ajyal short films will screen Thursday, Nov 26 at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) Auditorium at 5:30 PM and 8:30 PM. For tickets and more information, visit www.dohafilm.com or purchase tickets in person at the DFF MIA Box Office, which opens approximately one hour prior to each event's start time.

Key Partners of Doha Film Festival include Katara, Media City Qatar | 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.

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