Doha Film Festival 2026 International Competition Filmmakers Call for Stronger Support and Spaces for Independent Films

- *Directors Hugo Salvaterra, Sompot Chidgasornpongse, Rafael Manuel, Tala Hadid and Asmahan Bkerat address the media in Doha*
- *15 narrative and documentary features compete for US$185,000 in awards across five regions*

Doha, Qatar; November 25, 2026: Filmmakers **Hugo Salvaterra**, **Sompot Chidgasornpongse**, **Rafael Manuel**, **Tala Hadid** and **Asmahan Bkerat** shared insights on their films in competition at Doha Film Festival 2026. They emphasized the importance of authentic cultural representation and connecting independent cinema to audiences.

Doha Film Festival's International Feature Film Competition brings together 15 titles which include 13 MENA premieres, the World Premiere of Rabab Khamis's documentary ***Sama***, 11 Doha Film Institute-supported projects, and 7 films directed by women, all competing for US$185,000 in awards.

Sompot Chidgasornpongse's ***9 Temples to Heaven,*** which is Thailand's submission for Best International Feature at the 99th Academy Awards, follows a family's one-day pilgrimage across nine temples after a prophecy warns of their elderly mother's impending death. "Even though the film is set among Thai traditions, rituals and Buddhism, the film, is in its essence about our shared humanity and about people trying to do their best for their loved ones and family," said Chidgasornpongse.

Tala Hadid's *Bardi* follows horsemen bound by the centuries-old Tbourida ritual across central Morocco. "It is a deep honour to have the support of the Doha Film Institute ,and to screen my film in Qatar. ***Bardi*** was shot in Morocco but it resonates deeply here in Doha and across our region in the belief that our bodies carry memory and tradition, and that memory is something that can be transmitted across time," said Hadid.

Rafael Manuel's *Filipiñana* won the World Cinema Dramatic Special Jury Award for Creative Vision at Sundance and is the Philippines' entry for Best International Feature Film at the 99th Academy Awards. The film follows a 17-year-old worker at an exclusive country club outside Manila who uncovers unsettling truths beneath its pristine surface. "With ***Filipiñana***, I aimed to offer an alternative representation of both the beauty and the structural violence shaping the Philippines. Screening the film in Doha is especially meaningful given the large Filipino community in Qatar," said Manuel.

Hugo Salvaterra's *My Semba* which won the Feature Film Competition Award at the International Film Festival Innsbruck, is about three siblings raised in Luanda, Angola who must confront old loyalties to save the man who gave them a home. "In this era of growing AI and saturated digital spaces, having physical spaces where we congregate, show cinema and build a hub in the Middle East is vital. I hope after watching the film, audiences walk away with the curiosity to come and visit Angola, a country that is only 50 years old and striving to define its collective identity, because at its heart, ***My Semba*** is about a search for identity that we all share as human beings," said Salvaterra.

Asmahan Bkerat's ***Concrete Land*** chronicles a Bedouin family on the outskirts of Amman facing displacement and changing surroundings over eight years. "This film talks about the pain and structural violence that displacement causes, and I really want people to watch this film and be able to understand that nobody chooses displacement, that nobody chooses eviction, and it's a violence that can affect lives in so many different ways," said Bkerat.

The International Feature Film Competition line-up also features Muayad Alayan's ***Conversation with the Sea***, Zou Jing's ***A Girl Unknown***, Auguste Bernard Kouemo Yanghu's ***House of the Wind***, Alessandra Sanguinetti's ***The Illusion of an Everlasting Summer***, Manuela *Martelli's* ***The Meltdown***, Mohanad Yaqubi's ***Revolutionaries Never Die***, Rabab Khamis's ***Sama***, Sara Ishaq's ***The Station***, Hosam Abu Dan's ***Thirteen in Gaza*** and Alexander Murphy's ***Tin Castle***.

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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