Doha Film Festival 2026 International Feature Jury backs Authentic Storytelling, Bold Cinema and the Human Spirit

- *Acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Naomi Kawase leads the five-member jury alongside Adam Bessa, Dora Bouchoucha, Kamal Aljafari and Gianfranco Rosi*
- *15 narrative and documentary features from five regions are competing for US$185,000 in Awards*

Doha, Qatar; November 20, 2026: The Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026, International Feature Film Competition Jury, led by acclaimed Japanese filmmaker **Naomi Kawase**, shared their collective commitment to celebrating bold, authentic storytelling.

Joined by fellow jurors French-Tunisian actor **Adam Bessa**, Tunisian producer **Dora Bouchoucha**, Palestinian filmmaker **Kamal Aljafari** and Italian documentary filmmaker **Gianfranco Rosi**, Kawase emphasised the jury's focus on experiencing unheard voices through the competition's films.

The competition features 15 narrative and documentary titles featuring bold, distinctive voices from across the Arab world, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.
Of the eleven Doha Film Institute-supported films in the competition, seven are directed by women, reflecting the festival's commitment to supporting important voices in independent cinema

Kawase emphasised the vital role of independent cinema in an era of streaming and automation. Speaking about her assessment criteria to the competition films, she said: "What is truly important to me is watching work that comes from each filmmaker's deep passion - films that could only have been made by that specific director."

Fellow jurors echoed the urgency of protecting bold, unconventional filmmaking against generic standardisation of cinema. Dora Bouchoucha highlighted the duty of festivals to support challenging and distinct cinema, adding: "I don't think creativity can be replaced by AI. It can be used as a tool, but the story has to come from the filmmaker."

Gianfranco Rosi emphasised the need to confront today's realities with fresh cinematic language: "Especially in times like these, it is vital to have films with the courage to face the uncertain world we are living in and find new ways to express it."

Highlighting the regional strength of this year's selection, filmmaker Kamal Aljafari praised the balance of artistic flair and connection to reality, particularly across the Palestinian films in competition: "Doha Film Festival always supports Palestinian cinema, Arab cinema and cinema from the region, and I am truly pleased with the films we have this year."

Actor Adam Bessa noted how the diverse backgrounds of the five jurors will enrich their deliberations, while reflecting on the place of AI in modern filmmaking: "The idea is how humans can control the tool rather than be controlled by it. Audiences will always need the human impact touch."

The 15 film International Feature Film Competition line-up spans seven titles from the Arab world: ***Thirteen in Gaza*** (Palestine/Qatar), ***Sama*** (Palestine/France/Qatar***), In Conversation with the Sea*** (Palestine/Netherlands/KSA/Qatar), ***Revolutionaries Never Die*** (Palestine/Belgium/Qatar), ***Concrete Land*** (Jordan/Palestine), ***In Bardi*** (Morocco/France/USA/Qatar), and ***The Station*** (Yemen/Jordan/France/Germany/Netherlands/Norway/Qatar), alongside ***In House of the Wind*** and ***My Semba*** (Angola/Qatar) from Africa. ***9 Temples to Heaven*** (Thailand/Singapore/France/Norway/China/HongKong/Indonesia/Qatar***), In A Girl Unknown*** (China/France), and ***Filipiñana*** (Singapore/UK/Philippines/France/Netherlands/Qatar) from Asia. The films ***The Meltdown*** (Chile/USA/Spain/Mexico), ***The Illusion of an Everlasting Summer*** (USA/Argentina), and ***Tin Castle*** (Ireland/France) are from the Americas and Europe.

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.

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