

PRESS RELEASE

FOCUS ON EGYPT AND IRAQ AT THE ARAB FILM FESTIVAL ZÜRICH 2018

Zurich, November 6, 2018 - The fourth edition of the Arab Film Festival Zurich will once again present a wide selection of films from the Arab world at Filmpodium Zurich from November 15 to 18, 2018, and numerous filmmakers are expected to attend. This time, the focus will be on Egypt and Iraq, with panel discussions about filmmaking in these two countries.

For the fourth time, the Arab Film Festival Zurich is dedicated to contemporary filmmaking in the Arab world and will screen nearly 40 feature films, documentaries and short films from 15th to 18th November 2018 – with additional screenings continuing thru mid-December. These films provide insight into Arab culture and thinking. In many countries where the Arab Spring has failed, there is not only disillusionment; citizens and artists are engaging with their new realities, often criticizing the social and political situation. Many new voices, especially female ones, are making themselves heard, including Yasmine Chouikh (Algeria) with her award-winning opening film *Until The End of Time* or Eliane Raheb (Lebanon) with *Those Who Remain*, a documentary about religious conflicts in a Lebanese mountain village near the Syrian border.

Focus on Egypt and Iraq

The fourth edition of the Arab Film Festival will also focus specifically on current filmmaking in Egypt and Iraq. For a long time, Egypt was *the* Arab film nation and supplied the Arab world with countless film and TV dramas and musicals. Even in contemporary Egypt, however, the need for more critical and realistic films is great. With *Kiss Me Not* by Ahmed Amer, the festival will screen a comedy in which an actress refuses to perform a kiss on screen, triggering political and religious discussions. The film is a satirical exploration of changing mores in Egypt and contains many scenes from classic Egyptian cinema, which was far more tolerant than today's religious climate. Kamla Abu-Zekri's *A Day for Women* paints a beautiful female-skewed portrait of gender roles in the context of a public swimming pool opening in Cairo. *Amal* is a stirring documentary by Mohamed Siam, who followed the personal and political development of Amal, an Egyptian teenager, from 2012 to the present day. *Amal* is a carefully crafted long-term study that is equally moving and persuasive as a portrait of a teenager coming of age and as a profile of a country in crisis.

The situation of filmmakers in Iraq is quite different. Due to the precarious political conditions, only very few films can be realized, and the topics that are chosen often reflect the worries and fears of the

population. This also goes for *The Journey* by Mohamed Jabarah Al Daradji, who explores the motives and origins of terrorist acts.

Panel discussions will be held about both countries, with filmmakers commenting on the current situation.

The following guests have confirmed their presence at the festival: Joud Said (*A Man and Three Days*, Syria), Widad Shafakoj (*17*, Jordan), Nidhal Chatta (*Mustafa Z*, Tunisia), Ahmed Amer (*Kiss Me Not*, Egypt), Mahmoud Kamel (*Out of Order*, Egypt), Eliane Raheb (*Those Who Remain*, Lebanon) and Sami Al Kaftan (Actor *Zaman: The Man from The Reeds*, Iraq).

The festival as a forum for discussion

The Arab Film Festival Zurich is organized by the International Arab Film Festival Zurich (IAFFZ) and the Filmpodium of the City of Zurich. The first edition of the festival in 2012 was well received by the public. Since then, the biennial Arab Film Festival Zurich has been presenting a representative selection of current films from various Arab countries. For this year's festival, several films were specially subtitled in German to facilitate the local audience's engagement with Arab culture beyond the – often negative – coverage in the media.

Additional screenings of festival films will take place at Filmpodium after the festival weekend until mid-December 2018. A selection of films will subsequently be presented in several Swiss cities.

Detailed information regarding the festival and its film program is available on the following websites:

www.filmpodium.ch

www.iaffz.com

Pictures and press kits

Please find film stills and links to trailers etc. in the press area on our website www.iaffz.com.

Interviews with filmmakers

Many filmmakers will be visiting the festival to present and discuss their work. Journalists interested in conducting interviews are kindly asked to contact the press office.

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