



## Press Release

# World Premieres of Four DFI-Funded Films at 2013 Toronto International Film Festival

*Line-up includes films supported by DFI's co-financing arm and grants programme*

**Doha, Qatar; September 2, 2013:** Four films funded by Doha Film Institute (DFI), Qatar's independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation that promotes global filmmaking, are set to debut at the 2013 edition of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

The films are Mohamad Malas's ***Ladder to Damascus***, screening in TIFF's Contemporary World Cinema section; Jasmila Žbanić ***For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*** in the Special Presentation section. Both films were co-financed by DFI. DFI grant recipients Néjib Belkadhi's ***Bastardo*** and Mais Darwazah's ***My Love Awaits Me by the Sea*** screen in the Contemporary World Cinema and Discovery sections, respectively.

Abdulaziz Al Khater, Chief Executive Officer, Doha Film Institute, said: "It is truly rewarding to see the films DFI has chosen to support make significant strides in the international festival circuit. Their presence at TIFF underscores Qatar's role in fostering creative talent from around the world, as well as supporting a new generation of Middle Eastern filmmakers who will in turn lend momentum to the region's burgeoning film industry."

Mohamad Malas, widely recognised as one of Syrian cinema's contemporary auteurs, confronts the question of the role of cinema in times of turmoil in ***Ladder to Damascus***, a searing drama that employs its own unique visual language. Shot in Damascus just months after the outbreak of the 2011 insurgency, *Ladder to Damascus* weaves fiction and documentary with elements of the fantastical. It is a captivating window into the psyche of ordinary Syrians as they grapple with a historic upheaval.

In Jasmila Žbanić's ***For Those Who Can Tell No Tales***, an Australian tourist discovers the silent legacy of wartime atrocities when she arrives in a seemingly idyllic town on the Bosnia and Herzegovinian border with Serbia. A meditative tribute to the endangered memory of the Višegrad massacre, in which approximately 3,000 people were murdered early in the Bosnian War, the film confronts the viewer with the true scope of the Višegrad atrocities. Part drama, part essay film, *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* is an important historical document, through which we witness its troubling revelations.

Nejib Belkadhi's spellbinding ***Bastardo***, a combination of film noir and magic realism, follows a downtrodden orphan, now grown, who takes on the thugs who control his ghetto. A contemporary allegory of the corrupting nature of power, set in a ruthless Tunisian neighbourhood, *Bastardo* is peppered with mysterious, larger-than-life characters – some of whom have supernatural powers.



Mais Darwazah's *My Love Awaits Me by the Sea* is a poetic, first-person essay film that chronicles the filmmaker's first-ever visit to her homeland of Palestine, charting an exquisite journey to the seafront of Jaffa. Inspired by artist and writer Hasan Hourani's wondrous reveries, the film contemplates the meanings of belonging, affiliation and love, and is a voyage of discovery, encounters, reckonings and inward drifts guided by Hourani's drawings and poems.

Paul Miller, Director of Film Financing, Doha Film Institute, said: "It's really very promising to see these films have their world premiere screenings at such a prestigious platform as TIFF. The recognition the filmmakers will receive will have a substantial positive impact on their future careers. These films are a testament to the DFI's success in nurturing and promoting emerging and established cinematic talent."

The annual Toronto International Film Festival, now in its 37<sup>th</sup> edition, is one of the leading film festivals in the world, bringing together filmmakers and film fans to celebrate the diverse and growing landscape of world cinema.

**-ENDS-**

**About Doha Film Institute:**

Doha Film Institute (DFI) is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation established in 2010. It organically supports the growth of the local film community by enhancing industry knowledge, cultivating film appreciation and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar.

DFI's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films, educational programmes, film screenings, the Ajyal Youth Film Festival and the Qumra Doha Film Festival.

With culture, community, education and entertainment at its foundation, DFI serves as an all-encompassing film hub in Doha, as well as a resource for the region and the rest of the world. DFI is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

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