



NOVEMBER 13-15

PROGRAM

2015



SYRIA FILM FESTIVAL '15

A NOTE ON BEHALF OF THE PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE:

It is with great enthusiasm that we present the first edition of the Toronto Syrian Film Festival. In an effort to create a diverse and compelling program, our selection committee has watched over 60 films about Syria from filmmakers around the world. Given the current Syrian political situation, it comes as no surprise that themes of conflict, displacement and loss have emerged in this year's program. Our final selection is a collection of short and feature length films that range in style and form to capture the varied and complex narratives of a people living in crisis.

Taking into account perspectives that are too often missed by mainstream media, our program pays particular attention to the plight of those most vulnerable in armed conflict - refugee women and children. Our two feature films "Not Who We Are" and "Queens of Syria" are documentaries that present strong female protagonists, each grappling with their own versions of a life in exodus. Sometimes their stories are difficult to watch because added to their struggle is the gendered nature of their experience; however, sometimes their stories are able to inspire, casting hope on what is generally a dark situation.

A BIG THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS AND PARTNERS



DR. BASEM GHADBAN, DDS
GENERAL AND COSMETIC DENTISTRY
BLESSSED SMILES DENTISTRY



CREATIVE HOUSE



SvrianExpatriates



FEATURE FILM **FIFTY FEET FROM SYRIA**

Hisham Bismar, a successful Syrian American hand surgeon living a comfortable life in the US, decides he cannot continue to watch online images of wounded Syrian refugees flow across international borders. He decides to fly to Turkey to help the victims of Syria's revolution from across the border. 50 Feet From Syria is a snapshot in time that captures the human cost of the Syrian civil war.

WARNING: THE FILM IS VERY GRAPHIC IN NATURE AND DISPLAYS INJURED/SEVERED BODY PARTS.

Co-presented by: **hotdocs**  **OUTSPOKEN. OUTSTANDING.**

The short films in our program are a mix of documentary, fiction, animation and experimental storytelling to present a cross-section of relevant experiences inside and outside of Syria today. The films "Morning Fears, Night Chants" and "Goal to Syria" use documentary and animation to portray the triumphs of two unlikely heroes as they navigate the frontlines of conflict. Meanwhile, "Growing Home" and "Hide and Seek" document reality in two contrasting and perhaps conflicting ways to capture daily life in the Syrian refugee camps. Finally, "Diaspora" and "50 Feet from Syria" bring these narratives home to North America, highlighting the efforts of the Syrian diaspora as they struggle to help those affected by the conflict overseas.

DAY THREE

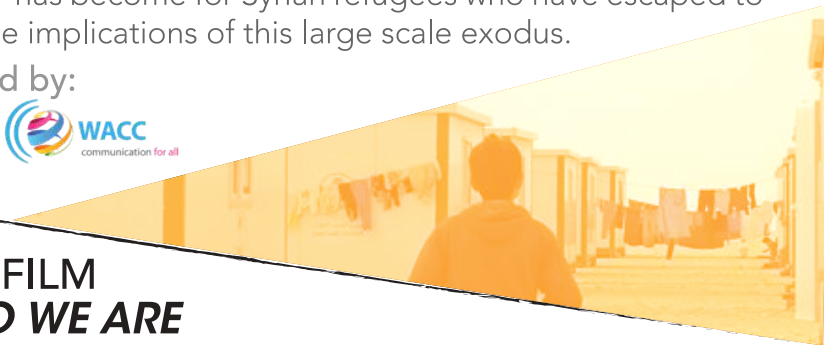
7:30PM

SHORT FILM **DIASPORA**

This screening will be followed by a Q&A with Anders Gatten from "Diaspora"

Through the lens of the media, Anders Gatten explores what the idea of 'home' has become for Syrian refugees who have escaped to Jordan and the implications of this large scale exodus.

Co-presented by:
DIASPORA  **WACC**
communication for all



We hope our selected films present new voices and understandings behind the complicated Syrian situation of today.

Aisha Jamal & Maya Annik Bedward
SYFF Programmers

FEATURE FILM **NOT WHO WE ARE**

The stories of five Syrian women lead us through the "refugee experience" as it impacts every aspect of their lives. Although these women come from different socio-educational backgrounds, they share the uncertainty of an unstable situation in Lebanon. They share their experiences of displacement and loss, and in the process, their strength and resilience shines through.

Co-presented by:
 **reel**  **Lifeline**  **TPFF**
awareness HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL FAIRLAWN

DAY ONE

7:30PM

Our opening night screening is followed by a Q&A with Syrian-American actor Jay Abdo.

SHORT FILM **GROWING HOME**

Amid Syria's refugee crisis that has displaced 9 million people, a Syrian barber struggles to maintain normality in the infamous Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan.

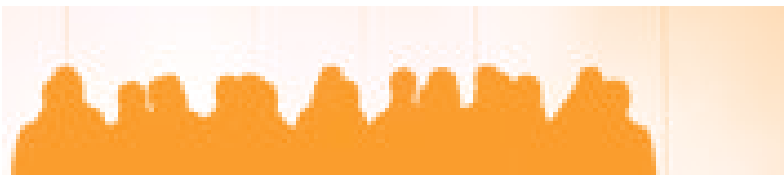
Co-presented by:



FEATURE FILM **QUEENS OF SYRIA**

A moving portrait of fifty Syrian women living in exile in Jordan, who come together to create and perform their own version of Euripides' Ancient Greek drama "The Trojan Women." The play's narrative provides a vivid mirror of their own experiences in the stories of a queen, princesses and ordinary women like them from another time, uprooted, enslaved, and bereaved by the Trojan War.

Co-presented by:



DAY TWO

7:30PM

This screening is followed by a Q&A with Dr. Hisham Bismar and Skye Fitzgerald from "50 Feet from Syria"

SHORT FILMS **GOAL TO SYRIA**

A short animation depicting the heroism of the Civil Defence volunteers, a Syrian humanitarian rescue organization.

Co-presented by:

Ali Mustafa
Memorial Collective

MORNING FEARS, NIGHT CHANTS

The film tells the story of an unlikely revolutionary. A young, sheltered woman no longer shares her parents believes and cannot settle for the regime's narrative of the war. Amongst the youth of the revolution, she finally finds a purpose. She decides to "defect" from her family, and joins the revolution -- singing songs of courage and freedom in support of the demand for change.

Co-presented by:



HIDE AND SEEK

A Spanish film crew travels to Lebanon to shoot a "Hide and Seek" game in a Syrian refugee camp, blurring the lines between themselves and the 'actors' in this experimental documentary.

Co-presented by:

