

# SYRIA FILM FESTIVAL / 2016



Toronto, November 4 - 6  
Isabel Bader Theatre and Jackman Hall

## SYFF 2016 Programming Note

Following on the heels of our successful, sold out first year, the Syria Film Festival returns this year with a full three nights of thought-provoking films, special guests and engaging discussions. Judging by the steep increase in the number of films made about Syria from last year to this year, we can say with certainty that a greater number of filmmakers worldwide have focused their lenses on Syria and the conflict.

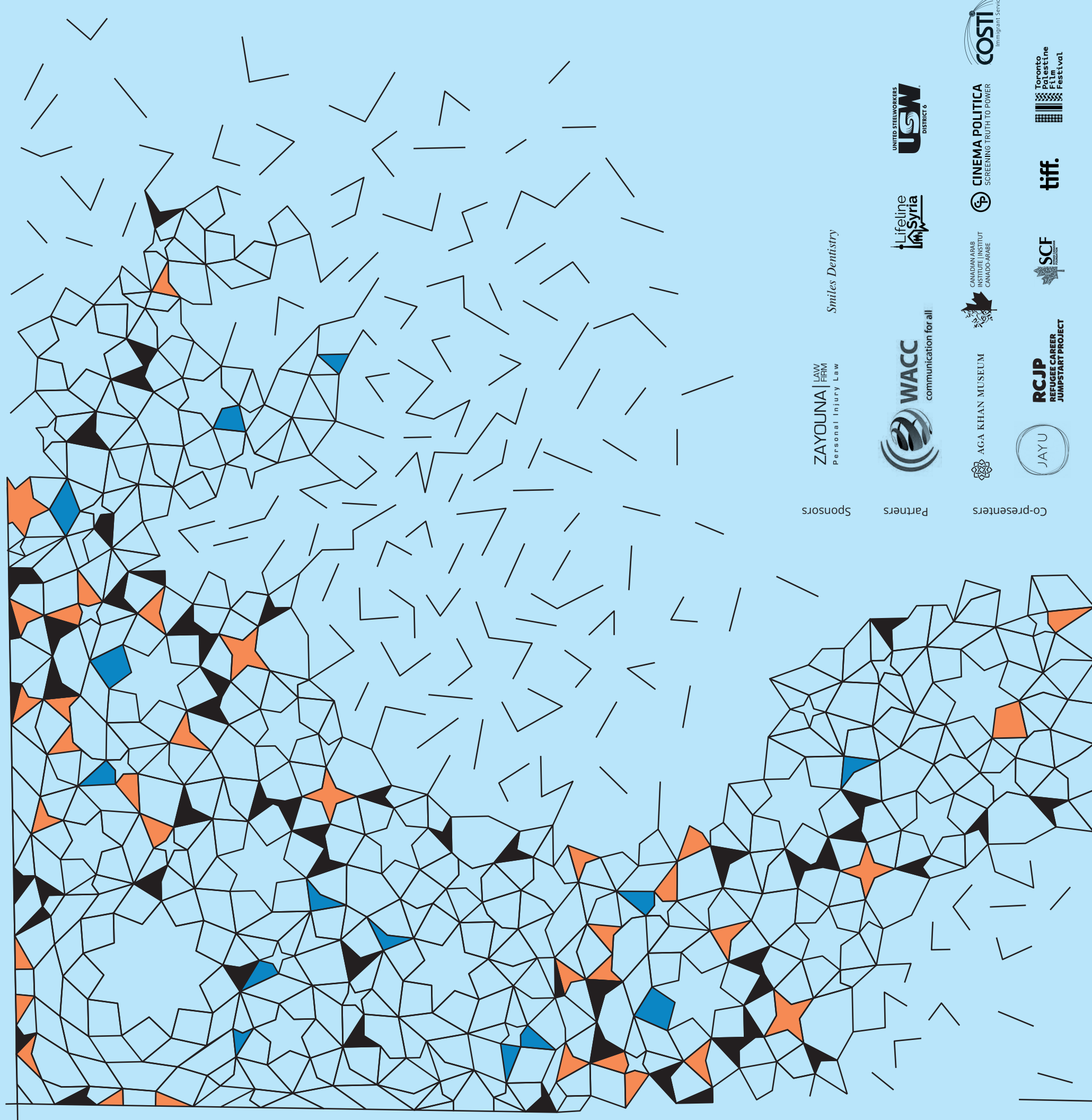
As the Syrian war approaches a near apocalyptic crisis level, Syrians have been escaping the terror of war in all directions. This year's program highlights the stories of Syrian refugees and their attempts to find safety and a new life in various corners of the world, including films from Canada, Jordan, Turkey, Germany, and South Africa.

Each of the films we have selected tells a story of migration and the struggle to redefine oneself in a new environment. Our opening night film "After Spring" offers a window into the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. Our carefully chosen night of short films on the second day of the festival presents a selection of personal stories from around the world, told in a variety of formats. We close the festival with "The Crossing," a film that follows a group of Syrian friends as they make the dangerous journey across the sea to safety. Taken together, the films in this year's program produce a strong picture of resilience in the face of upheaval and uncertainty.

It is our hope that in the near future we can present a festival of films that focuses on stories of reconstruction and a free, democratic Syria.

Aisha Jamal  
Head of Programming

**SYFF Programming Committee:** Maher Azem, Nour Bishouy, Lucius Dechaseay, Mason Harahet, Aisha Jamal, Lana Qadouni, Jasmin Valjas, Sahal Zreik



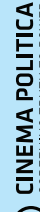
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# SYRIA FILM FESTIVAL / 2016

**OPENING NIGHT** Friday Nov 4  
7:00pm **Isabel Bader Theatre**



## Syrian Eagles (Short)

Abdo Almosli came to Canada as a privately sponsored refugee. A professional soccer player in Syria, he continues his passion for the sport by spending his weekends coaching a ragtag team of Syrian newcomers called "The Syrian Eagles."

Directed by Aisha Jamal & Lucius Dechausay



## After Spring (Feature)

Residents of the UN-run Zaatari camp in Jordan. Weaving together the stories of two refugee families, international aid workers and camp administrators, the film presents a layered portrait of a place many have only encountered in news headlines. The film ultimately centers on various efforts to raise the next generation of Syrians – the children – in a place that was never intended to become their permanent home.

Directed by Steph Ching & Ellen Martinez



## Nouran (Short)

Nouran is a young woman in love. When the uprising swallows her lover, she embarks on a different path. "Nouran" presents a poetic portrait of the evolution of a young Syrian artist now living in the diaspora.

Directed by Nouran Al-Chalati



## My Aleppo (Short)

Fleeing from the ancient city of Aleppo, a young family is trying to establish itself anew in South Africa. Full of longing and nostalgia for their former hometown, the family uses technology to keep alive their ties to loved ones left behind.

Directed by Melissa Langer



## Suleima (Short)

"I'd rather die than see them arresting someone without trying to help." Living by her words, the strong and passionate Suleima is willing to take to the streets and risk ties to her immediate family to support the uprising in her native Damascus.

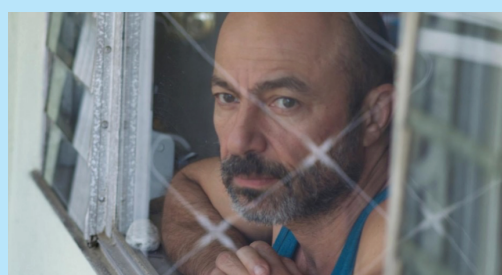
Directed by Jalal Maghout



## Transit Game (Short)

To help support their families, eleven-year-old Palestinians Saad and Nada spend their days selling newspapers on a remote road in north Lebanon. When a Syrian man finds himself stranded on this same road, Saad offers to take him to a nearby service station. Their brief encounter provides a glimpse into their shared fate as exiles of two different conflicts.

Directed by Anna Fahr



## Jihad in Hollywood (Short)

Jihad Abdo used to be a well-known actor back home in Syria. Now living in Hollywood, California, the re-named Jay Abdo has had to deliver pizzas, drive a taxi and work in a flower shop before landing his break-through audition. With a short appearance by Werner Herzog, "Jihad in Hollywood" portrays an artist who won't give up no matter how hard the going gets.

Directed by Genie Deez

**CLOSING NIGHT** Saturday Nov 6  
7:00pm **Jackman Hall**



## The Crossing (Feature)

Thousands of desperate Syrians have risked their lives on overcrowded, ill-suited boats in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean and find refuge in the European Union. This unique film follows a group of friends over a number of years, from their departure in Egypt, to their time on the dangerous journey to their new lives in various European countries. What emerges is a rare glimpse into the totality of the experience, making it painfully clear that for many Syrian refugees no part of re-establishing yourself is easier than the other.

Directed by George Kurian



## No Place Like Home (Short)

Neighboring Turkey has taken in the largest number of Syrian refugees but offers them no welfare or support. This short documentary focuses on the children of a Kurdish Syrian family, as they are forced to put aside their childhood and join their parents in the struggle to make a living.

Directed by Beston Ismael