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France's Cinemed Festival Unveils First Major Syrian Cinema Focus Since Fall Of Assad Regime

By [Melanie Goodfellow](#)

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The Return
Cinemed

EXCLUSIVE: France's Montpellier Mediterranean Film Festival, also known as [Cinemed](#), has unveiled a major focus on young Syrian cinema across its 15-year conflict for its upcoming 47th edition which kicks off next week.

It marks one of the first major retrospectives devoted to Syrian cinema as the country attempts to rebuild following the ousting of President Bashar Al-Assad in December 2024, after more than a decade of deadly armed conflict initially sparked by his brutal suppression of the 2011 pro-

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The two-day focus will gather some 20 feature-length and short works made by young, mainly exiled Syrian filmmakers about their country during the conflict years.

Fiction features include Meyar Roumi's 2023 feature *The Return*, about a Syrian historian living in exile in Marseilles, who travels to Damascus to retrieve the remains of his younger brother, who was shot as freedom fighter, and move them to the north in accordance with ancestral traditions.

Rana Kazkaz and Anas Khalaf's political thriller *The Translator*, starring Ziad Bakri as a Syrian exile living in Australia who returns home when his brother is taken into custody by the Assad regime in 2011, will also screen.

The program includes a trio of feature documentaries: Ziad Kalthoum's *Taste of Cement* (2017), about Syrian refugees working in construction in Beirut; Yaser Kassab's personal portrait of life in exile, *Chasing the Dazzling Light* (2023), and Anas Zawahiri's *My Memory Is Full Of Ghosts*, about life in the rebel city of Homs after its destruction by the Assad regime, which lay siege to its population from 2011 to 2014.

"Cinemed is pleased to bring together all these young Syrian filmmakers whose talent and inventiveness deserve to be encouraged," commented Cinemed Director Christophe Leparc, who is also the managing director of Cannes Directors' Fortnight. "We have discovered incredible films that we will be delighted to share with the public."

The focus also gathers 20 short films capturing different Syrian realities – in exile, or in the country – over the course of the conflict.

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They include Rand Abou Fakher's *So We Live*, about a family trying to go about their lives as bombs explode outside; Ameen Abo Kassem's *As We Cross To The Other Side Of The Garden*, reflecting on

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Elsewhere in the festival, Syria also has a strong presence in its 4th project project incubator event with Maghout's animation *Recordanza*, about a young Syrian writer seeking a fresh start in Berlin, and Hanna Karim's documentary *Adieu Alep*, following a filmmaker's attempt to reconnect with his native city of Aleppo after many years away.

The event will kick-off on October 22 with a conference, in partnership with France's National Cinema Centre (CNC), exploring the evolution of Syrian cinema since the 1970s; how it continued to exist over the course of the 15-year war, and the challenges facing its once flourishing film industry and wider cultural sector as it rebuilds.

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"The fact that the CNC has taken the opportunity of our programming to bring together international institutions... reinforces our role as a major platform for Mediterranean cinema and its development," said Leparc.

CNC President Gaëtan Bruel welcomed the Syrian focus and said he hoped the conference would be constructive in helping the Syrian film industry to move forward.

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which will be devoted to the means we can collectively use, with our partners in the region, to support its reconstruction and work with Syrians to establish a solid and sustainable model for local creation and creators on site or those in the diaspora.”

Full film program:

Fiction Features

- The Return, Meyar Al-Roumi (2014)
- The Translator, Rana Kazkaz, Anas Khalaf (2021)

Documentaries

- Taste of Cement, Ziad Kalthoum (2017)
- Chasing the Dazzling Light, Yaser Kassab (2023)
- My Memory Is Full Of Ghosts, Anas Zawahri (2024)

Short Films

- Wardé, Qutaiba Barhamji (2016)
- Hevi, Mohammad Shaikhow (2018)
- So We Live, Rand Abou Fakher (2020)
- Our Room, Safa Mekdah (2021)
- Two Pieces Of Memory Diala Al Hindaoui (2022)
- Return, Ghiath Al Mhitawi (2022)
- Back, Yazan Rabee (2022)
- Happy Land, Nour Khair Alanam (2022)`
- Amygdala, Osama Hafiry (2023)
- Locus Cordis, Alhasan Yousef (2023)
- 3350 KM, Sara Kontar (France)
- As We Cross To The Other Side Of The Garden, Ameen Abo Kassem (2023)
- Fish Dance, Rama Abdi (2022,)
- A City Drowned With Details, George Ashkar (2024)
- As I Was A Tree, Jalal Maghout 2024)
- Overnight, Madonna Adib (2025)

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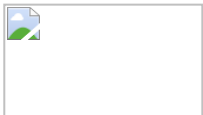


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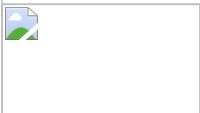
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