

# VARIETY

## Montpellier Film Festival Unveils Arab Films and Docs in Expanded Industry Strand (EXCLUSIVE)

By [Nick Vivarelli](#)  
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Courtesy Cinemed

The Montpellier Mediterranean Film Festival’s [Cinemed](#) industry section has teamed up with Beirut-based cultural nonprofit Aflamuna on a new initiative, under which 10 film and doc projects from a wide range of Arab countries will soon be unveiled to prospective partners.

The new program, called Cinemed and Aflamuna Professional Encounters, features 10 Arab works in development that reflect a slew of themes relevant to the region, including political turbulence, societal changes, female empowerment and climate change concerns.

Emerging Arab directors and producers will take part in the curated Cinemed Meetings event, which runs Oct. 24-26 in Montpellier, France, after pitching their projects on Oct. 24.

The initiative, which is supported by France’s national film body CNC (Centre National du Cinéma et de l’Image Animée), started last year with a series of meetings and is now moving to the next level.

“After the success of the first edition of Cinemed and Aflamuna Encounters that took place last year, we are more than confident of the relevance of our collaboration,” said Christophe Leparc, artistic

director of the Montpellier Fest, in a statement. Leparc, who also serves as managing director of the Cannes' Directors Fortnight, added that "Aflamuna is well-established in the Arab film community, while Cinemed boasts a vast network of producers, crew members and French and European institutions which are potentially interested in discovering new projects – fiction and documentary — from the Arab world."

Last year "all our professional guests were extremely positive about this new initiative that makes sense, according to their feedback," Leparc further noted. "We are taking a step forward with 10 projects selected this year, most of which have not yet been presented on coproduction platforms."

Below, find the Cinemed and Aflamuna selected projects and synopses.

**"Ayin Hara," by Yasir Kareem – Clare Fog, producer – Clear Fog Films (Iraq/Italy) – Fiction**

*In a future marked by desertification and drying of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Iraq, Dunia is tasked with finding the last island with water protected by an old Jinn. Failure means a lifelong imprisonment with no chance of escape until her eventual demise.*

**"Edition 96," by Ahmad Naboulsi – Zeina Badran, producer – Spotless Mind Films (Lebanon) – Fiction**

*While reclaiming her narrative and reexamining the choices that fueled her obsession with the sport, Suzanne, the Lebanese tennis champion, walks down memory lane, unfolding the most intense chapters of her life. She recounts her struggle to break free from the control of her husband/tennis trainer and her fight against religious extremism and harassment on tennis courts during the Lebanese Civil War.*

**"Guard Down" by Sami Tlili – Imed Marzouk, producer – Propaganda Productions (Tunisia/France/Egypt) – Fiction**

*A boxing world champion must return to his village to attend a ceremony during which he is expected to receive his rewards. The trip turns out more complicated than expected.*

**"House Number 7" by Rama Abdi – Hazar Yazji, producer (Syria) – Documentary**

*After leaving their homes, trying to escape their abusive families, gender discrimination, and in pursuit of basic human freedoms, three girls meet and rent rooms in an old Damascene house in Bab Touma neighbourhood, a known refuge for marginalised groups of youth and one of the most liberal places in Syria. But their peace begins to be increasingly disrupted due to events that occur outside their home.*

**“My Mother and I” by Dilpak Majeed – Marwa Tammam, producer – Patchwork Productions (Iraq/Egypt) – Documentary**

*In a war-ravaged village, a woman in her seventies defies societal expectations and clings to her isolated life alongside her sheep, with whom she shares an exceptional bond. But when her mother falls ill, she sets out on a journey to rediscover her own courage amidst the challenges of loss, isolation, and the pursuit of a new beginning.*

**“Rainbows Don’t Last Long” by Mayye Zayed, director and producer – Cléo Media (Egypt) – Fiction**

*A separated young couple, Ghada, 35, and Khaled, 36, realize that their only daughter Salma, 8, has an incurable disease that will cause her to lose her eyesight very soon. Before her world gets increasingly dark, Khaled decides to make his daughter’s wish come true—to swim with the colorful fish in the Red Sea.*

**“Shaken” by Alhasan Yousef – Maria Castillo, producer (Belgium/Syria) – Documentary**

*In the heart of a land scarred by suffering and conflict, Shaken embarks on an emotional and transformative journey, unfolding the harrowing tale of Syria and its people since the pivotal year of 2011. This cinematic work delves into the various forms of agony the Syrian people have endured, from the bonds of dictatorship to the ravages of war, the desperation of forced immigration, the horrors of political imprisonment, and the rise of a reborn revolutionary spirit.*

**“Souraya Mon Amour” by Nicolas Khoury – Jana Wehbe, producer – The Attic (Lebanon) – Documentary**

*Excerpts from the film Little Wars, and personal archives intertwine with virtual zoom meetings of the present to show the dynamics of the relationship between Souraya Baghdadi and her late husband, the famous Lebanese filmmaker Maroun Baghdadi through the presence of Maroun in her life but especially his absence.*

**“The Land Beyond” by Nadine Salib – Hala Lotfy, producer – Hassala Films (Egypt) – Fiction**

*Yam’s simple wish to find the unknown river that her late mama once said would bring back her lost voice, uncovers a big secret that puts her relation to her father to test. And then turns everything around, in the land known to be paradise, into utter madness.*

**“Ya Balady” by Dessil Mekhtigian – Mia Bendrimia, producer – Nazar Films (Egypt/France) – Documentary**

Dessil, a filmmaker on a quest for her Egyptian identity and femininity, is reunited with her former ballet teacher now renowned Balady dancer Amie Sultan and enters her world as she fights for UNESCO recognition of the dance as intangible heritage. Their intertwined fate unfolds amidst obstacles and personal transformations.

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