



## Here Comes Amira

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GFF hosted a red carpet event for the Arab Premiere of *Amira*

Yesterday, El Gouna Film Festival hosted a red carpet event for the Arab Premiere of *Amira* by Egyptian director Mohamed Diab. The red carpet was held at 5:30 pm at GFF's Festival Plaza. *Amira* walked the red carpet in the presence of its director Mohamed Diab, producers Sarah Goher and Daniel Ziskind, its cast members Saba Mubarak, and Tara Abboud. The event was also attended by several filmmakers, public figures,

industry professionals and celebrities, and festival guests.

The film tells the story of Amira, a 17-year-old who grew up believing she was conceived with the smuggled sperm of her imprisoned father only to face a shocking truth. The film, which is participating in GFF's Feature Narrative Competition, had its World Premiere at the 2021 Venice Film Festival, where it won three

awards. An award-winning Egyptian director, Mohamed Diab gained recognition for his debut film *Cairo 678*. His second feature, *Clash*, was the opening film of the Un Certain Regard at the Cannes International Film Festival in 2016. Currently, Diab is directing Marvel's miniseries *Moon Knight*, making him the first Middle Eastern filmmaker to helm a major Marvel project.

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# Today

## ★ Meet the filmmaker

<p><b>Amira</b> Director: Mohamed Diab Producers: Sarah Goher, Daniel Ziskind Cast: Saba Mubarak, Ali Suleiman, Tara Abboud Sea Cinema 1 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Silence of the Tides</b> Producer: Annemiek van der Hell Sea Cinema 2 3:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>Three Colors: White</b> Zbigniew Zamachowski Sea Cinema 3 5:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Costa Brava, Lebanon</b> Director: Mounia Akl Producer: Myriam Sassine cast: Geana Restom, Yumna Marwan Festival Plaza 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>The Sea Is Ahead</b> Director: Ely Dagher Producer: Myriam Sassine cast: Manal Issa, Yara Abou Haider Festival Plaza 9:15 p.m.</p>	<p><b>The Blue Inmates</b> Director: Zeina Daccache Sea Cinema 2 9:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>Shorts Competition (3)</b> <b>Khadija</b> Director: Morad Mostafa Fatma Al Zahraa Abdel Rahman</p>	<p><b>Displaced</b> Director: Samir Karahoda</p> <p><b>Ulysses Must Go</b> Director: Anna Belguermi</p> <p><b>Creature</b> Director: Maria Silvia Esteve</p> <p><b>A Dike</b> Director: Bilel Bali</p>	<p>TU Berlin Audimax 3:45 p.m.</p> <p><b>Shorts Competition (4)</b> <b>Tallahassee</b> Director: Darine Hotait</p> <p><b>Apallou</b> Director: Niko Avgoustidi</p> <p><b>Strangers</b></p>	<p>Director: Nora Longatti</p> <p><b>Katia</b> Director: Andrey Natotcinskiy</p> <p>TU Berlin Audimax 6:15 p.m.</p>
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## ★ Red Carpet

Witnessing its two final red carpets today at the Festival Plaza, GFF's Feature Narrative Competition films, *Costa Brava, Lebanon*, and *The Sea Ahead*, will walk the festival's red carpet at 5:30 pm and 8:45 pm with their screenings following at 6:30 pm and 9:45 pm, respectively.



Directed by Lebanese Mounia Akl, *Costa Brava, Lebanon* tells the story of the free-spirited Badri family, who has escaped the toxic pollution of Beirut by building a utopic mountain home...until, unexpectedly, a garbage landfill is built right outside their home, bringing the trash and corruption of a whole country to their doorstep. The film will be accompanied by two of its cast members, Geana Restom and Yumna Marwan, along with its director Mounia Akl and its producer Myriam Sassine.

Alumnus of the 3rd edition of CineGouna Platform, *The Sea Ahead* by Lebanese director Ely Dagher showcases the story of a young woman who goes back to her parents' house in Lebanon, leaving a bad experience behind. Feeling cornered, her anxieties resurface and lead her to find comfort in her old life in Beirut. As it walks the red carpet, *The Sea Ahead's* director Ely Dagher, producer Myriam Sassine, and its actresses Manal Issa and Yara Abou Haider will be present.



## ★ Schedule

<p><b>UNCLENCHING THE FISTS</b> Sea Cinema 2 12:15 PM</p>	<p><b>SHORT FILM PROGRAM 3</b> Audimax ( TU Berlin ) 3:45 PM</p>	<p><b>COSTA BRAVA, LEBANON</b> Festival Plaza 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>THE SEA AHEAD</b> Festival Plaza 9:45 PM</p>	<p><b>HAPPENING</b> Sea Cinema 1 9:15 PM</p>	<p><b>Short film program 3</b> Khadiga - 17 min Displaced - 15 min Hair Tie, Egg, Homework Books - 14 min CREATURE - 16 min ULYSSES MUST GO - 13 min A DIKE - 14 min On Solid Ground - 12 min</p>
<p><b>AMIRA</b> Sea Cinema 1 12:30 PM</p>	<p><b>THREE COLORS: WHITE</b> Sea Cinema 3 5:00 PM</p>	<p><b>THE CROSSING</b> Sea Cinema 1 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD</b> Audimax ( TU Berlin ) 8:45 PM</p>		
<p><b>SILENCE OF THE TIDES</b> Sea Cinema 2 3:00 PM</p>	<p><b>BIGGER THAN US</b> Sea Cinema 2 6:00 PM</p>	<p><b>SHORT FILM PROGRAM 4</b> Audimax ( TU Berlin ) 6:45 PM</p>	<p><b>FLEE</b> Arena 8:45 PM</p>		<p><b>Short film program 4</b> HIS NAME WAS CARGO - 17 min TALLAHASSEE - 22 min Apallou - 20 min strangers - 20 min Katia - 19 min</p>
<p><b>WHITE BUILDING</b> Sea Cinema 1 3:30 PM</p>	<p><b>THREE COLORS: RED</b> Arena 6:00 PM</p>	<p><b>EVERYTHING WENT FINE</b> Sea Cinema 3 8:00 PM</p>	<p><b>THE BLUE INMATES</b> Sea Cinema 2 9:00 PM</p>		

# Tomorrow

## In A Conversation on the Krzysztof Kieślowski Experience Meet Zbigniew Zamachowski

CineGouna Platform is set to host Polish actor Zbigniew Zamachowski of *Three Colors: White* by the renowned Krzysztof Kieślowski in a conversation moderated by Egyptian actress Tharaa Goubail. Zbigniew Zamachowski is a renowned film and theatre actor and musician born in Poland. He graduated from the actor's faculty of the Leon Schiller National Film School in Łódź. Zamachowski began his acting career in 1981 and in 1989 had a co-starring role in Part Ten of director Krzysztof Kieślowski's film series, *Dekalog*. Four years later, Kieślowski cast him as the lead character,

Karol Karol, in *Three Colors: White*, the second of his acclaimed Three Colors trilogy. He is a two-time winner of the Polish Film Awards for his roles in *Hi, Tereska* and *Zmróz Oczy*. Throughout his career, he starred in over 200 Polish and foreign movies.

In this conversation, which will take place at TU Berlin's Audimax hall from 10:30 am until 12:00 pm, Zamachowski will talk about his experience working with Kieślowski on *Three Colors: White*. This discussion will be part of Kieślowski's retrospective exhibition.



## CineGouna Platform Wraps Up!

After a successful 5th edition, GFF's CineGouna Platform wraps up its program with a closing ceremony, which will take place on October 21 from 5:00 pm until 6:00 pm at El Gouna Conference and Culture Center.

As it wraps up, CGP will be presenting 2 US \$15,000 prizes to its best project in development and best film in post-production, while additional cash grants and awards will be given from CGP's sponsors and partners. For its 5th edition, CineGouna Platform's

CineGouna SpringBoard had a selection of 13 projects in development (8 feature narratives and 5 feature documentaries) and 6 films in post-production (2 feature narratives and 4 feature documentaries) in addition to one guest film in post-production.

CGP also presented an array of panels, masterclasses, special events, and a workshop regarding various topics such as performers' mental health, post-production, cinematic conversations, and Ancient Egypt.



## Discussing Ancient Egypt in Film

In a panel discussion titled *Depicting Ancient Egypt in Film*, set to take place at TU Berlin's Audimax hall from 12:30 pm until 2:00 pm, CineGouna Platform attempts to bring international filmmakers' attention to Ancient Egypt, this panel discussion will explore the very rich, yet untouched topic of the representation of Ancient Egypt in cinema. The masterclass will include prestigious filmmakers and Egyptologists who will raise questions around how ancient Egypt is being depicted in cinema. From historical accuracy to racial appropriation and whitewashing in casting and everything in between.

The panelists are production designer Onsi

Abou Seif, creative Mohamed El Saadi, actress Sawsan Badr, and Egyptologist Dr. Yasmin El Shazli, with the moderators being makeup artist turned filmmaker Mahmoud Rashad and GFF Co-founder and COO Bushra Rozza



## ★ Meet the filmmaker

<p><b>Costa Brava, Lebanon</b> Director: Mounia Akl Producer: Myriam Sassine cast: Geana Restom, Yumna Marwan Festival Plaza 6:30 p.m.</p> <p><b>Back Home</b> Director: Sara Shazli Producer: Marianne Khoury Cast: Nabil Shazli, Youssef Shazli</p>	<p>Sea Cinema 2 4:00 p.m.</p> <p><b>The Sea Is Ahead</b> Director: Ely Dagher Producer: Myriam Sassine cast: Manal Issa, Yara Abou Haider Sea Cinema 1 6:15 p.m.</p> <p><b>Silence of the Tides</b> Producer: Annemiek van der Hell Sea Cinema 3 6:15 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Shorts Competition (4)</b> <b>Tallahassee</b> Director: Darine Hotait</p> <p><b>Apallou</b> Director: Niko Avgoustidi</p> <p><b>Strangers</b> Director: Nora Longatti</p> <p><b>Katia</b> Director: Andrey Natotcinskiy</p> <p>TU Berlin Audimax 3:30 p.m.</p>
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## Film Director Mohamed Diab on *Amira*: I Depict Places in True Colors

Nahed Nasr

**How do you see the world premiere of *Amira* at the Venice International Film Festival, and the three most prestigious awards that the film received; the Lanterna Magica Award, the Interfilm Award and the CICT-UNESCO «Enrico Fulchignoni » Award?**

It was quite impressive to witness the warm reception by the audience where it was given an 8-minute ovation. I saw how *Amira*'s story pierced the hearts of the audience who was touched by her journey. On the other hand, the critical acclaim the film received was quite important for me. *Amira* received three awards and the jury praised all the elements of the film.

“The fundamental and difficult question is, are we the children of our nature or the children of our choices

**What does it mean to you that the film lands its Arab world Premiere at the 5th GFF?**

I was not fortunate enough to attend the previous editions of the GFF because it always coincided with my travel abroad for work commitments. But, I was closely following the international news and impressions on the festival, which were remarkably interesting. In my opinion, GFF is an outstanding success story; in a short span of time it was able to cement its name as one of the major film festivals in the region. It has made a remarkable leap in five years. This reflects the seriousness, awareness, ambition and vitality of those in charge of it, led by the Sawiris family, the artistic team, the organizers, and the support and funding bodies.

“Exploring a world you are unfamiliar with allows me to evolve and always learn new things.

***Amira* is undoubtedly an important step and also a milestone in your cinematic career. Why did you choose your third feature film as director and author to be about *Amira* and her world in Palestine?**

The nationality is not so important to me but the story. Years ago, I read a news story about the smuggling of Palestinian prisoners' sperm as a way to have children. This news piece inspired me and my wife, Sarah Johar, the producer of all my films, to explore how it could be turned into a drama. As a team that also includes my brother Khaled and my sister Sherine, we came up with a lot of deep ideas that turned a line in a newspaper into a Greek drama full of existential questions. That's why the movie is as universal as it is about a local Palestinian story. Anyone no matter how far away from a war zone or conflict zone can put themselves in the shoes of *Amira*.

**Choosing such a story involves a risk. What encouraged you to take this risk, and what were the most difficult stages for you?**

To make a movie about a world other than your own is quite a risk, because you will certainly be subjected to the judgments of not belonging to this society or this culture. For example, how accurate would you be in portraying the other society? Our collective decision as a team, from the first moment, was to explore this world through familiar eyes. My dear friend, the Palestinian director Hany Abu Assad, my role model, was the first person I turned to, along with his wife, producer *Amira* Diab. They were our partners in the project, from scriptwriting to filming. We also relied on Palestinian cadres in all the elements of the film, except for the director of cinematography and the editor. Through this, I hope that we have been able to contemplate and portray Palestinian society as accurately as possible.

**The film's theme touches on a very sensitive issue. How did you deal with the sensitivity of the subject?**

In any film that deals with Palestinians and Israelis, there

is a certain sensitivity about the way you will portray Palestinians. For me, I tend to depict places in true colors where gray is more than black and white. The benefits of this approach to societies are much greater than the harm. Personally, I'm a firm believer that addressing social problems and issues openly is better than ignoring their existence. Exploring a world you are unfamiliar with is a very tempting idea for me. It allows me as a filmmaker and as a human being to evolve and always learn new things.

**Was it easy to convince prominent actors such as Ali Suleiman, Saba Mubarak, Ziad and Saleh Bakri to take part in this risky film?**

Some actors were already on my mind while writing the script, like Ali Suleiman, whom I imagined playing the role from the very first moment. Also, the great credibility of Hany Abu Asaad in Palestine opened many doors for us. The spirit of independent cinema in Palestine is a great advantage despite the international competence of the Palestinian actors, which is what made veteran stars enthusiastic about the film out of their admiration for the role and not for any other considerations.

**How did you manage to reach this level of authenticity and fluidity in the dialogue, so that it appears as if it was written by a Palestinian pen?**

As usual, we co-wrote the script together, Khaled, Sherine Diab, and I, in the Egyptian dialect. We were constantly reviewing the writing with Hany Abu Assad, whose script-writing skills, as well as his wife, Producer *Amira* Diab, has contributed to the development of the script. All this, in addition to our technical notes, Sarah Johar and I, as producers, finalized the script perfectly. The last stage was the translation of the script into the Palestinian dialect, chosen from among the various dialects in Palestine. There was also a lot of flexibility in having the actors rephrase their conversational sentences to be more fluid for them. Personally, I did not feel alienated at all because the Palestinian dialect is smooth and clear.

**What about choosing Tara Abboud to play her important and difficult role of *Amira*?**

The choice of Tara Abboud came initially based on the nomination of actress Saba Mubarak, who played the role of Warda, because she had worked with her before. When I met Tara at the audition, I was fascinated by her angelic and stern facial features, as well as her natural acting. I felt like she was the girl I was looking for. Tara has a special talent and I would predict her global standing if she continued to nurture her talent. The role of *Amira*, reflects a character bewildered in answering a fundamental and difficult question; are we the children of our nature or the children of our choices? The audience's interaction with this question alone is enough for me.



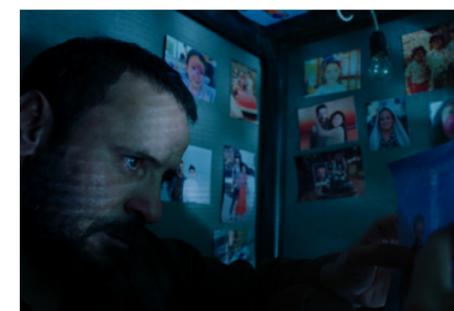
## 5 Years Questions



**Fida Kablawi**  
Filmmakers Liaison Manager

**How do you expect the Egyptian audience to receive *Amira*?**

I trust that the Egyptian audience will love *Amira*, even though they are not used to watching non-Egyptian films in cinemas except for Hollywood films. The film is fast-paced, thrilling and mysterious, and *Amira*'s story is very touching. Personally, I think the reactions by the Egyptian and Palestinian audience is what matters the most to me.



“The spirit of independent cinema in Palestine is a great advantage despite the international competence of the Palestinian actors

• I watched the festival grow from a far and year after year the reputation kept growing at an international level. I joined GFF in 2020. It was a tough year in general but within weeks the festival was able to organize yet another successful edition.

• I was part of the Jury Guest Relations team last year and this year I am managing the filmmakers liaisons. My team and I are definitely focused on ensuring a smooth and amazing experience for every guest. It's great to have a management team that's always available and guiding us.

• The secret of the GFF success comes down to recruiting the right individuals and having the proper support to succeed. The upper management team are really focused and truly dedicated to make each individual feel appreciated and valued.

• Last year at the jury dinner, after 9 days of screenings, interviews and events, my guests took the time to let me know that they had a wonderful time and how much they appreciated my work and that on its own is rewarding for me.

• I hope that GFF continues to grow and reach the level it desires in being one of the highly anticipated and respected festivals in the world (like Canne and Venice).

“ It is another piece that brings back the indelible masterpieces of Russian cinema that inspired the world industry.



## ‘Captain Volkanogov Escaped’ Film Review The Rugged Road of Salvation

In 2018 the Russian duo Aleksey Chupov and Natasha Merkulova took the world by their astonishing film *The Man Who Surprised Everyone*. The film received rave reviews worldwide, and won over 20 awards from several film festivals, including a Special Mention for its peculiar plot, wonderful cinematography and outstanding acting at El Gouna Film Festival.

This year the Russian duo made *Captain Volkanogov Escaped*, which participates in the El Gouna Film Festival Feature Narrative Competition, premiered at Venice Film Festival. It illustrates the long path of the tormented protagonist as he seeks his way for salvation. The story happens in 1938 in Leningrad (Saint Petersburg now), when the National Security Service or People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) was using brutal methods to collect evidence for any suspected conspiracy against Stalin or the government.

Captain Volkanogov was a young officer in NKVD; he witnessed many aggressive interrogations or even executions. The plot of the film took place when the phobia of conspiracy started to reach some officers in NKVD. Chupov and Merkulova in their film combine two different methods of storytelling; they are beautifully weaving all the details of reality during that era from costumes to architecture creating a wonderful

picture that takes the audience to different spacetime dimension, and on the other hand they portray metaphysical phenomena when Captain Volkanogov sees his friend and colleague after being executed, telling him that he went directly to hell. At that time, Volkanogov started to make his way out of this aggressive entity, not to carry on with his life somewhere else, but to seek forgiveness from the families of the people who lost their lives by the hands of NKVD. He believed that seeking salvation would save him from his inevitable fate of eternal condemnation in hell after his death.

The filmmakers dig into the tormented Russian society during this era. Perhaps the Russian couple managed from the first scene to express their direct inclination towards this era when the film opens on camera showing a group of young men playing volleyball inside a beautiful hall in some sort of a medieval palace, which happened to be NKVD headquarter in Leningrad. The close shots that show the ball hitting a beautiful chandelier and stuck between its crystals, are a clear example of how the couple portrays the recklessness of the authority at that time towards the monarchy’s heritage whatever or whenever it is. *Captain Volkanogov Escaped*

is yet another cinematic piece by the Russian filmmaker couple that brings back our minds the indelible masterpieces of Russian cinema that inspired the industry around the world for decades. From the great filmmaker/film theorist Sergei Eisenstein, to Andrei Trakovsky, Nikita mikhalkov and his brother Andrey Konchalovskiy, Russian cinema is best known for its rich illustration of life and the depth of human experience.

“ The filmmaker digs into the tormented Russian society



“ The film premiered in September at the Venice International Film Festival.

“ All contemporary acting methods are mixed with drama therapy, which are methods that open the horizons of the actor

Ahmed Malik



## A TAKE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF ACTORS BREATHE, TALK, PERFORM

Mina Habib

Within the panels and workshops conducted during the 6th day of the El Gouna Film Festival, Audimax Hall at the TU Berlin, in cooperation with MEDFest Egypt, hosted a session entitled Breathe, Talk, Perform: A Take On Psychological Well-Being Of Actors on Tuesday.

The panel discussed performing actors’ mental health, a prevalent issue in the MENA region and internationally.

The session was moderated by Anas

Bukhash, Emirati entrepreneur and presenter of the AB Talks program on his YouTube channel. The panel discussion gathered on stage, actor Ahmed Malik, the writer Mariam Naoum, actress Mai El-Gheity, actor Mohamed Farrag and Dr. Nabil Al-Qot, who specializes in the field of psychiatry, patient management and training of colleagues and students, in addition to being a board member of the Association of Evolutionary Psychiatry, and the American Therapy Association collective psychological.

Maryam Naoum spoke about the role of social media platforms, «Sometimes some groups of the fans project their lives on some actresses and actors. This projection stems from the occurrence of a psychological issue, which happens due to the lack of self-confrontation with the weakness caused this projection. Thus it is reflected through undesirable comments or misplaced on social media.”

From his side, actor Ahmed Malik stressed on the importance of a psychological balance between the actor’s practical and personal life, “All contemporary acting methods are mixed with drama therapy, which are methods that open the horizons of the actor”.

In another context, actress May El-Gheity spoke about the significance of the general wellbeing of actors, «Actors in film and drama industries suffer from working hours exceeding 16 working hours. In addition to the lack of understanding or acceptance that the artist is a human being who gets sick and tired and needs rest and treatment in order to be able to inspire the character he/she performs.”

Mohamed Farrag spoke about the importance of the actor’s awareness of the psychological and mental effort required to prepare for the character, “I think that the actor’s awareness and passion for the character he plays, especially the more complex character, must include being aware that the actor is engaged in a psychological war between his real character and the character he plays.”

## Landing Its World Premiere at GFF: Sara Shazli Is Back Home

On October 19, 2021, El Gouna Film Festival held a red carpet event at 8:30 pm in the Festival Plaza for Egyptian director Sara Shazli’s *Back Home*, followed by the film screening at 9:15 pm. Landing its World Premiere, the film screened within the Feature Documentary Competition. The film was accompanied by its director Sara Shazli, producer Marianne Khoury, and protagonists Nabil Shazli and Youssef Shazli, together with a plethora of filmmakers, celebrities, and public figures. *Back Home* was

Showcasing how Sara’s plans were turned upside down to the global pandemic and how she finds herself stuck in her childhood home, *Back Home* documents the filmmaker’s relationship with her father and family as a whole. Sara Shazli is an Egyptian film director. She studied Directing Fiction at EICTV. Between her studies, she worked as an archivist at the French Cinematheque in Paris on Youssef Chahine’s archives. Her films include *Isabel* (2020), winner of the Best Short Film Award at Cairo International Film Festival.



