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Abu Dhabi's SANAD Fund for Arab Filmmakers Announces Application Deadlines for 2011

SANAD, the Abu Dhabi Film Festival's fund for filmmakers from the Arab world, announced today this year's application deadlines. The current cycle of applications closes on February 15, 2011. The next SANAD application cycle begins on February 16 and ends on July 1, 2011.

Launched in April last year, SANAD provides Arab filmmakers with support for their feature-length narrative or documentary projects. Each year, SANAD issues two open calls for applications and awards a total of US\$500,000 in development and post-production grants.

In 2010, SANAD awarded development and post-production grants to 27 productions, 11 of which were debut features. Altogether, 20 narrative and seven documentary films received SANAD grants.

"We are proud that, by means of SANAD, we are able to lend a hand to some of the region's most talented filmmakers, both newcomers and veterans. Independent Arab cinema seems to be coming into its own and we have been witnessing a remarkable transformation that has encouraged filmmakers and audiences to move away from timeworn formulas to explore new directions. It's a trend we have been thrilled to come across and share with audiences at the Festival," said Peter Scarlet, the Festival's Executive Director. "

Five SANAD post-production projects were shown at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival 2010 (October 14-23). *Here Comes the Rain*, by Bahij Hojeij (Lebanon), won the Festival's Black Pearl award for Best Narrative Film from the Arab World as well as the award for Best Director at the Oran International Arab Film Festival 2010 in Algeria. *OK, Enough, Goodbye*, by Rania Attieh and Daniel Garcia (Lebanon), won the Black Pearl award for Best Narrative Film by a New Director from the Arab World. *Qarantina*, by Oday Rasheed (Iraq/Germany), and *Sun Dress*, by Saeed Salmeen (United Arab Emirates/Syria), were both selected for the Festival's New Horizons / Afaq Jadida competition. *Qarantina* received a Special Jury Award at the Oran International Arab Film Festival 2010. Mohamed Al-Daradji's new film *In My Mother's Arms* (Iraq) was screened as a work-in-progress.

The international film community has embraced SANAD (a word that connotes *support or help* in Arabic) as a much-needed boost for Arab filmmaking and the fund's selection panel was impressed by the quality and quantity of submissions. 127 films from twelve countries were submitted during SANAD's first application cycle, with dozens of submissions arriving in the first couple of weeks alone.

SANAD is an integral part of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival's commitment to independent, auteur and original filmmaking in the Arab world. Much more than just a film fund, SANAD is dedicated to providing year-round support and advice to grant recipients. The SANADLab works closely with SANAD grantees, running workshops and panel discussions, and scheduling meetings with film experts and mentors for them during the Festival.

"SANAD grant winners benefit from support that goes well beyond funding. The Festival provides an international platform, while the SANADLab helps new talent to make the most of their potential by providing a range of networking and training opportunities. It was a great pleasure to see some of our post-production projects going on to international success after being shown in Abu Dhabi. With a further six SANAD-funded films due to come out in 2011, audiences have a whole host of new films by Arab filmmakers to look out for this year," said Marie-Pierre Macia, head of SANAD.

SANAD-funded films to be released in 2011: *Death For Sale* (Faouzi Bensaïdi, Morocco/Belgium/France); *In My Mother's Arms* (Atia Al-Daradji and Mohamed Al-Daradji, Iraq/UK); *In the Last Days of the City* (Tamer El Said, Egypt/UK); *Mohammad Saved From the Waters* (Safaa Fathy, Egypt/France), *My Brother* (Kamal El Mahouti, Morocco/France) and *On the Plank* (Leila Kilani, Morocco/France).

"SANAD is the culmination of our efforts to foster the development of the new cinematic voices coming out of this region. Both part of Abu Dhabi's bold cultural vision, SANAD and the Festival actively encourage artistic independence, which is essential for the progress of the burgeoning local and regional cultural landscapes," said Eissa Saif Rashed Al Mazrouei, the Festival's Project Director.

In 2009, prior to the launch of SANAD, the Festival supported the post-production of three feature films: *Son of Babylon*, *We Were Communists and Port of Memory*. After its world premiere in Abu Dhabi, *Son of Babylon*, by Iraqi director Mohamed Al-Daradji, won numerous awards at festivals around the world and was chosen as Iraq's official entry for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar®. Following the film's international success, Al-Daradji returned to Abu Dhabi to pick up *Variety's* Middle East Filmmaker of the Year Award at the Festival last October. *We Were Communists*, by Maher Abu Samra (Lebanon/France/United Arab Emirates), won the Festival's award for Best Documentary by an Arab Director or Related to Arab Culture in 2010. In November 2010, Kamal Aljafari's *Port of Memory* (Palestine/Germany/France/UAE) and *We Were Communists* were screened at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York as part of *Mapping Subjectivity: Experimentation in Arab Cinema from the 1960s to Now*, a special program on which the Festival partnered with MoMa and ArteEast.

To find out more about SANAD, including rules and regulations, please refer to the Abu Dhabi Film Festival website:

www.abudhabifilmfestival.ae/en/sanad/about-sanad

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

The Abu Dhabi Film Festival (formerly the Middle East International Film Festival) was established in 2007, with the aim of helping to create a vibrant film culture throughout the region. The event, presented each October by the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) under the patronage of its chairman H.E. Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, is committed to curating exceptional programs to engage and educate the local community, inspire filmmakers and nurture the growth of the regional film industry.

As the only festival in the region where works by Arab filmmakers are represented equally in competition with those by major talents of world cinema, the Festival offers Abu Dhabi's diverse and enthusiastic audiences a means of engaging with their own and others' cultures through the art of cinema. At the same time, a strong focus on the bold new voices of Arab cinema connects with Abu Dhabi's role as a burgeoning cultural capital in the region and marks the Festival as a place for the world to discover and gauge the pulse of recent Arab film.

The Press Office is at your disposal for any questions and further information. Email press@adff.ae or call +971 2 556 4000 to find out more.

General press materials including pictures, biographies and press kits are available on: <http://www.abudhabifilmfestival.ae/en/press/press-center/>
Password: pressadff2010

Pictures taken at the 2010 edition of the Abu Film Festival can be downloaded from our FTP server. Site: <ftp.abudhabifilmfestival.ae> Username: adfffilm4
Password: CbF@532