

## About AFAC

The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture - AFAC was founded in 2007 through the initiative of Arab cultural activists as an independent foundation to support individual artists, writers, researchers, intellectuals, as well as organizations from the Arab region working in the field of arts and culture. Since its launch, AFAC's programs have steadily expanded to cover cinema, documentary film, documentary photography, visual and performing arts, music, creative and critical writings, research on the arts, entrepreneurship, trainings and regional events. Based in Beirut, AFAC works with artists and organizations all over the Arab region and the rest of the world.

## Our Vision

AFAC strives to build a flourishing cultural and artistic scene across the Arab region that contributes to establishing open and vibrant societies, where young and seasoned voices engage with each other in the wake of the massive transformations being witnessed by the region.

In such a context, AFAC seeks for works of art and culture to contribute to the following goals:

- Take advantage of the grey areas and collapse of self-evident certitudes in our region to spur fresh thinking and innovative visions of the future.
- Search for tools to bear witness to the hopes and hindrances our region is living through, with techniques that go past traditional documentation to create new forms of experimentation in writing and ways of dealing with the image.
- Rediscover the complexity and diversity of our societies, and search for marginalized narratives in both the near and distant pasts.
- Promote engagement between Arab societies and their diasporas, especially after such a large number of Arab artists have become refugees or been forced into exile across the world, which has reflected on them personally and the art they produce, as well as on the various societies they are now working in.
- Expand the space for civic engagement through the offerings of intellectuals, artists, researchers and civil society organizations; a space for dialogue, questioning, critical reflection, and tolerance.

## How We Work

AFAC follows three core principles in its work:

1. **Autonomy:** AFAC is keen on diversifying its funding sources allowing us autonomy to work towards realizing our vision.
2. **Transparency:** AFAC adheres to transparency at every stage of work, beginning from the grants application forms which are accessible and open to all, up until the selection process itself, which is the responsibility of a committee of jurors chosen annually for each category.
3. **Dynamism:** AFAC carries out periodic evaluations of its work, taking into consideration deliberations between jurors, social and political changes, and the new creative genres that accompany them, which allow us to be constantly prepared to evolve or modify our programs.

## Strategic Areas of Work

Supporting the production of cultural and artistic work lies at the core of AFAC's work. Since our inception, numerous changes have taken place in our funding programs in response to the needs, gaps, and emergence of new forms of expression and storytelling. The fund for supporting novelists has transformed into encouraging other genres of creative writing, while the support for documentary filmmaking has expanded, adding a dedicated program for enhancing documentary photography.

The support that AFAC offers is not restricted to cultural and artistic work; it extends to cover research on the arts, to secure appropriate channels of distribution and to guarantee the sustainability of pioneering cultural organizations in the Arab world, whether by way of financial support or through training and mentorship. In accordance with this, AFAC's work is divided into five strategic areas: providing grants, developing training programs, building and sharing knowledge, broadening the pool of supporters for the arts, and cultivating appreciation for and engagement with contemporary arts and culture productions by connecting them with audiences.

- **Grants:** AFAC offers close to two hundred grants every year through open calls to submit applications. These grants are spread over eight programs: Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Documentary Film, Music, Creative and Critical Writings, Training and Regional Events, Cinema, and the Arab Documentary Photography Program.
- **Training and Mentorship:** In addition to the grants, AFAC sets up programs that offer training and mentorship to develop missing skills and practices, as is the case with the Arts and Culture Entrepreneurship, the Writers' Room, and the Arab Documentary Photography programs.
- **Knowledge Building and Sharing:** AFAC's extensive database includes more than 22,000 applicants and 2,458 funded projects, which has made it into a considerable source of information on cultural trends, modes of artistic production, social impact, geographic contexts, and all the relevant statistics. AFAC shares this information through reports, info-graphics, grantees' stories and studies that it commissions.
- **Broadening the Pool of Supporters for the Arts:** AFAC is committed to strengthening philanthropy for the arts, and to working with the private sector to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship in the field of cultural and artistic production. Our aim is to expand and diversify sources of funding for artists, writers, intellectuals and researchers, as well as organizations that present artistic and cultural content.
- **Building Audiences:** AFAC seeks to cultivate appreciation for and engagement with arts and culture production to reinforce the transformational power of creative expression.

## Board of Trustees

AFAC is privileged to have an esteemed Board of Trustees made up of the following members:

Dr. Nabil Qaddumi, Dr. Suzanne Wettenschwiler, Amr Ben Halim, Hani Kalouti, Oussama Rifahi, Mona Khazindar, and Rania Ashur.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



2025 was a year of strategic consolidation and forward movement for AFAC, defined by programmatic maturity, diversification of funding streams, and regional expansion. Building on nearly two decades of leadership in cultural support, AFAC strengthened its role as both funder and convenor, advancing a vision of sustainable cultural ecosystems grounded in independence, equity, and collaboration.

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## Strategic and Programmatic Expansion

The launch of the EU-funded Ecologies of Culture marked a defining institutional milestone — the first time an Arab cultural organization has been chosen to lead an EU-funded, multi-country program. More than a grant initiative, Ecologies of Culture embodies AFAC’s commitment to reframing culture as an essential agent in addressing interconnected global challenges, from climate and gender justice to digital transformation. Its three components — Creative Placemaking, Creative Labs, and Creative Caravans — establish a new model for collaboration across artistic, scientific, and civic fields, positioning AFAC at the forefront of regional cultural innovation..

In parallel, AFAC’s flagship capacity-building programs — the Arab Documentary Photography Program (ADPP), the North Africa Cultural Program (NACP), and The Cultural Atelier in Yemen — consolidated their influence and extended their regional reach. Together, these programs deepened institutional resilience within fragile contexts, expanded access to training and mentorship, and strengthened the connective tissue between independent cultural actors and local communities. By embedding long-term accompaniment, peer learning, and localized expertise, these initiatives have reinforced AFAC’s position as a cornerstone institution in the Arab cultural ecosystem, one that builds capacity not through short-term aid, but through durable, knowledge-driven partnerships.

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## Grantmaking and Sectoral Trends

Returning to a more ambitious funding posture, AFAC awarded a total of \$3,294,186 in grants across eight core programs. The composition of applicants and grantees signals meaningful shifts in the region’s

creative landscape. Women applicants constituted a majority for the first time and maintained parity across both cycles, while 14% of applications came from collectives or teams—an indicator of growing collaborative practice. Jury reflections across disciplines converged on recurring themes: identity, memory, and resilience in the face of displacement, conflict, and erasure. These insights, gathered through AFAC’s juror statements, continue to make AFAC’s open calls an observatory of artistic and social dynamics in the Arab world.

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## Regional Expansion and Advocacy



AFAC strengthened its on-the-ground presence across the region, conducting field visits to Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and the KSA, while also participating in panels and festivals from Paris to El Gouna. The KSA trip in May established the first institutional entry points for future programming in the Gulf.

Advocacy and thought leadership also remained integral to AFAC’s mission; through curated speaking engagements and editorial contributions, AFAC’s Executive Director positioned the institution as a credible voice on issues of cultural sustainability, indigenous philanthropy, and the role of the arts in civic life.

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## Institutional Capacity and Governance

AFAC’s team expanded to 17 members in 2025, reflecting the scale of operations and the need for specialized expertise in communications, partnerships, and program management. Internal governance was fortified through updated anti-harassment bylaws, an enhanced code of conduct, and the development of guidelines related to the ethics of fundraising that safeguard artistic independence while engaging a broader donor base.

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## Fundraising and Development

Despite ongoing political instability and economic uncertainty across the region, 2025 marked a year of consolidation and renewed confidence in AFAC’s resource development trajectory.

Throughout the year, AFAC maintained close dialogue with its core institutional partners, resulting in several multi-year commitments that provide essential stability in a shifting funding environment.

In addition to maintaining and securing public as well as multilateral partnerships, AFAC made important steps toward deepening its regional footprint. Furthermore, fundraising efforts were undertaken at many levels, including expanding the donor pipeline, diversifying future revenue streams, and designing a structured individual giving framework to be launched in 2026.

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GRANT MARKING

AND JUSTICE

2025



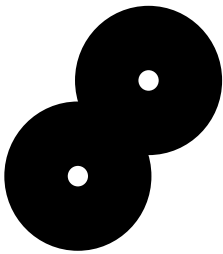
“

AFAC’s grant played a foundational role in the development and realization of EXILE. It was the first institutional support the project received, providing both financial resources and symbolic validation at a critical early stage. Beyond its financial impact, AFAC’s support gave the project visibility and credibility, which helped attract major international partners and co-producers. In a challenging political climate, AFAC’s trust enabled the project to remain bold, independent, and uncompromising in its artistic and political vision.

**Mehdi Hmili (Tunisia) | Exile  
(Documentary Film)**

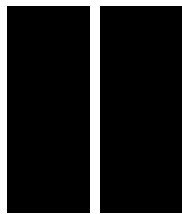
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# Core Grant Programs



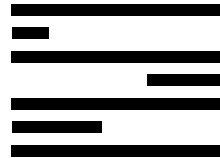
## Performing Arts

**CALL:**  
Open Feb. 1 | Close April 4  
219 applications  
from 24 countries



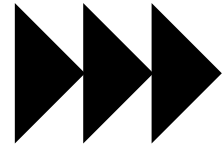
## Visual Arts

**CALL:**  
Open Feb. 1 | Close April 4  
379 applications  
from 32 countries



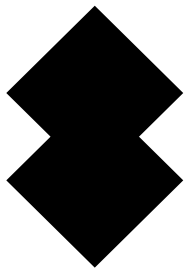
## Creative and Critical Writings

**CALL:**  
Open Feb. 1 | Close April 4  
289 applications  
from 29 countries



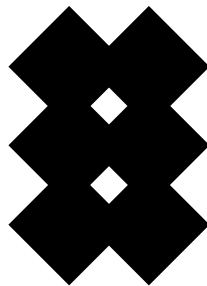
## Documentary Film

**CALL:**  
Open Feb. 1 | Close April 4  
263 applications  
from 32 countries



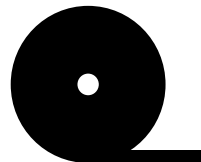
## Training and Regional Events

**CALL:**  
Open Apr. 15 | Close June 13  
372 applications  
from 30 countries



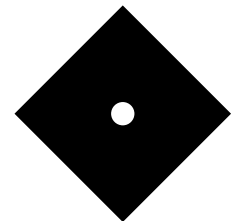
## Music

**CALL:**  
Open Apr. 15 | Close June 13  
350 applications  
from 32 countries



## Cinema

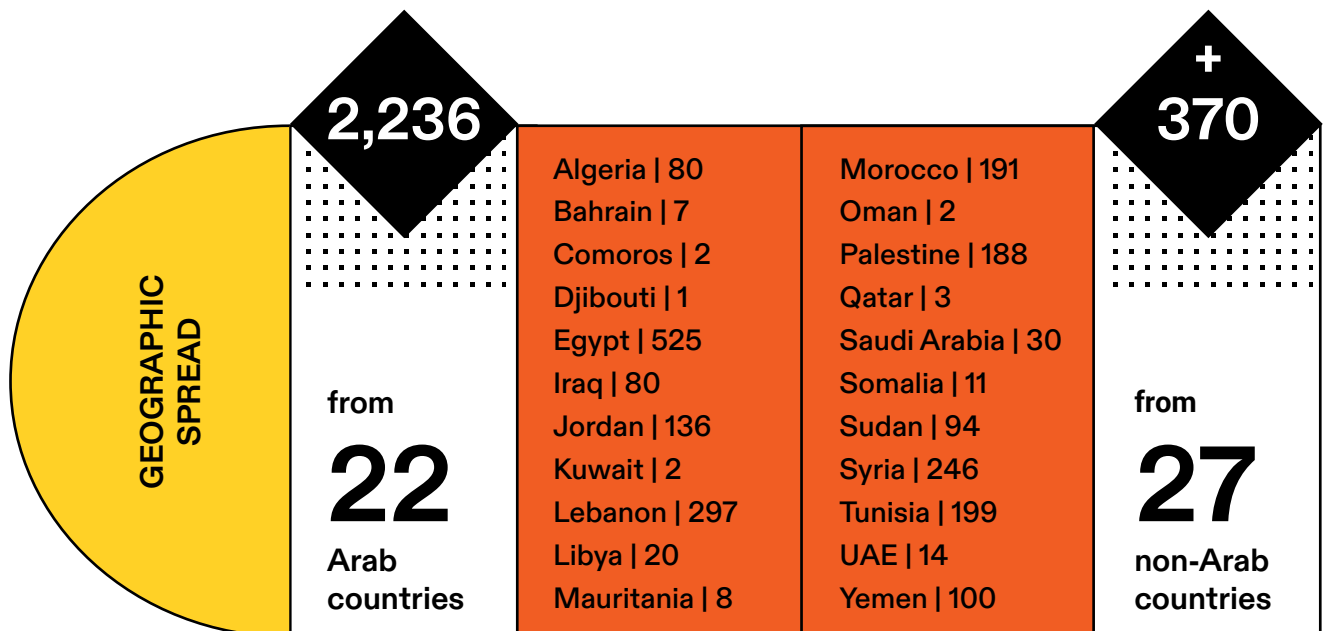
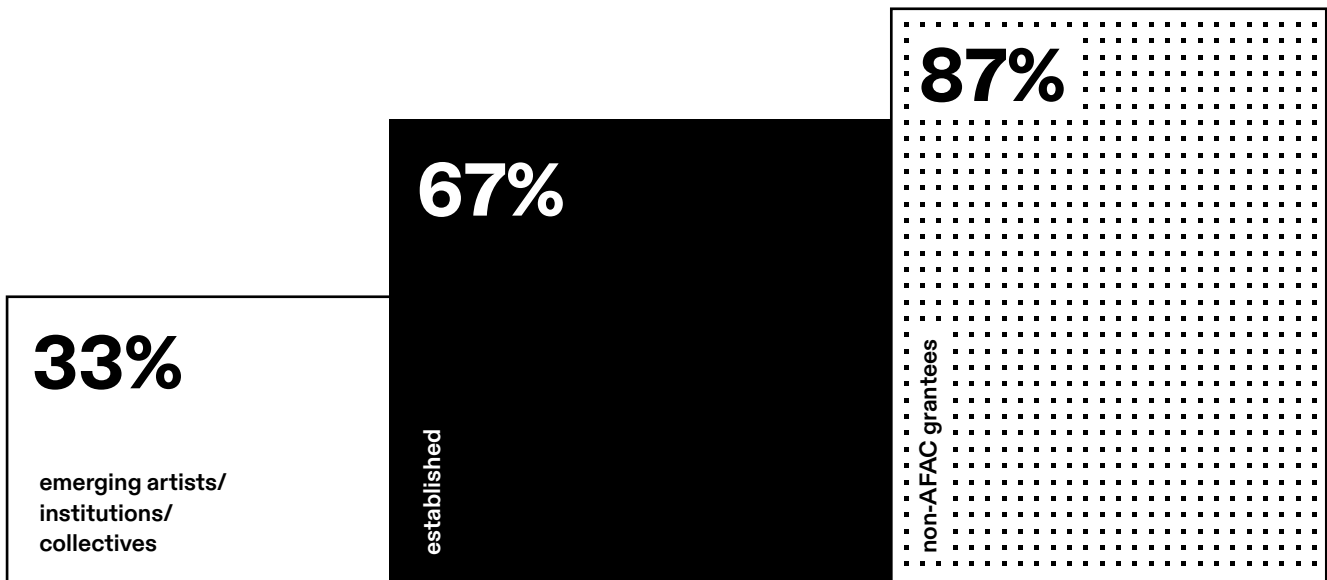
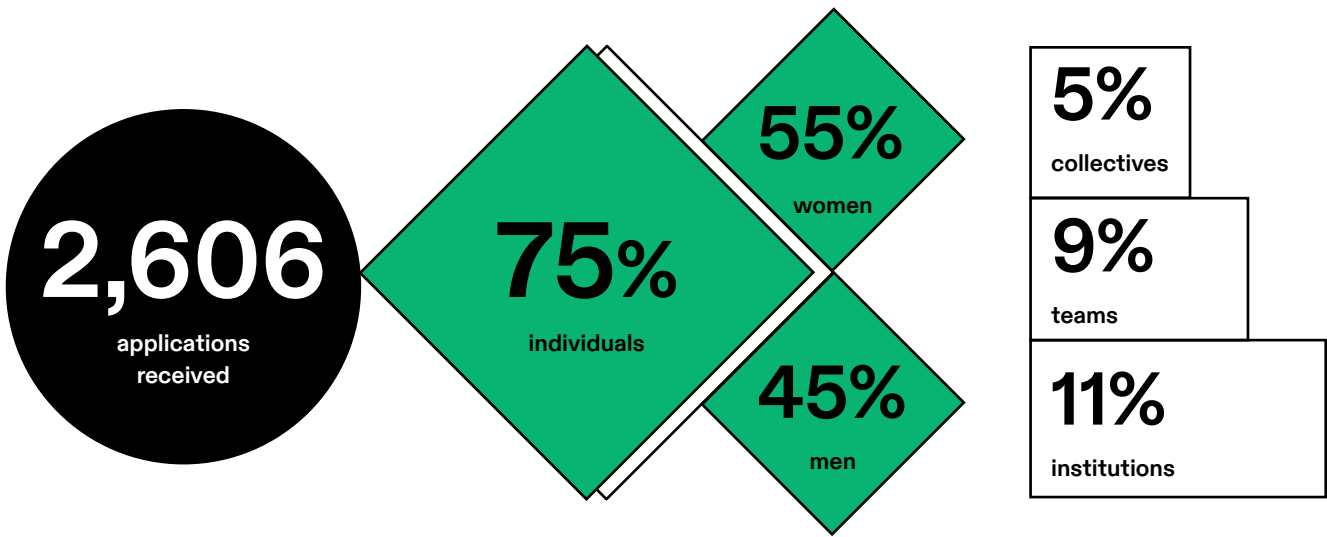
**CALL:**  
Open Apr. 15 | Close June 13  
456 applications  
from 36 countries



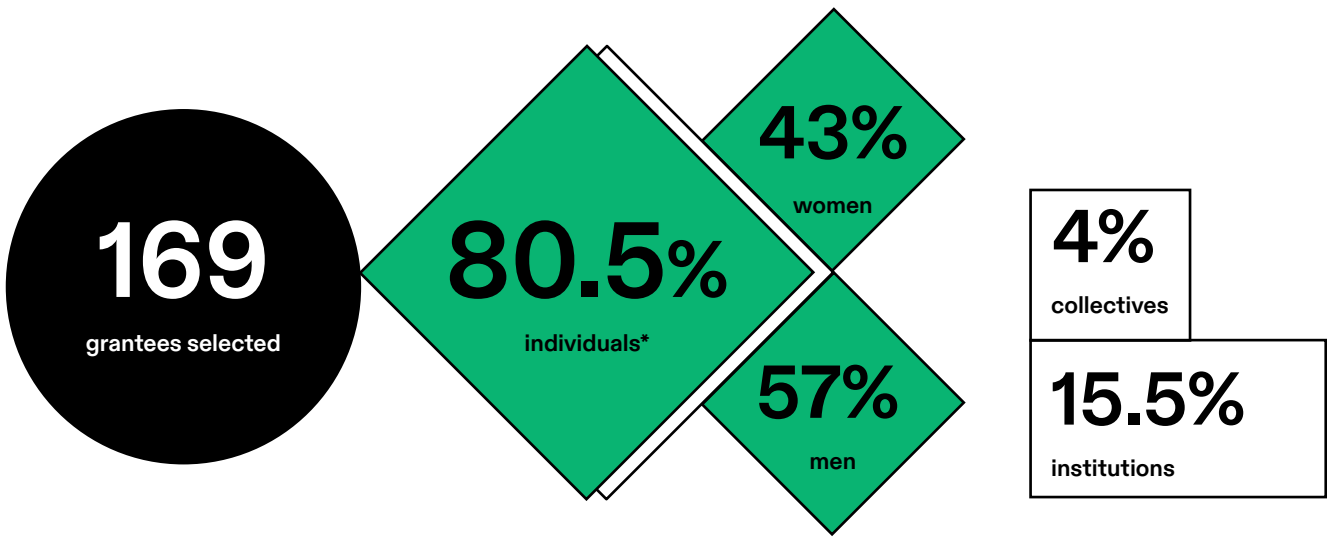
## Arab Documentary Photography Program

**CALL:**  
Open Jul. 12 | Close Sep. 24  
278 applications  
from 24 countries

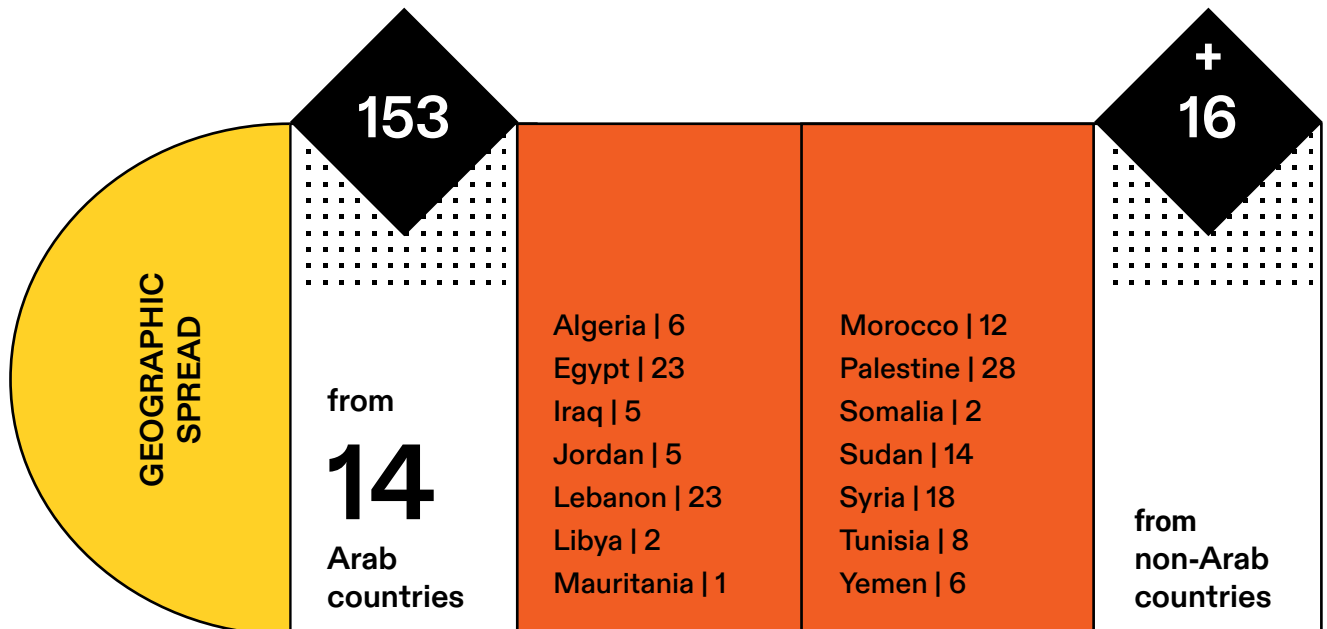
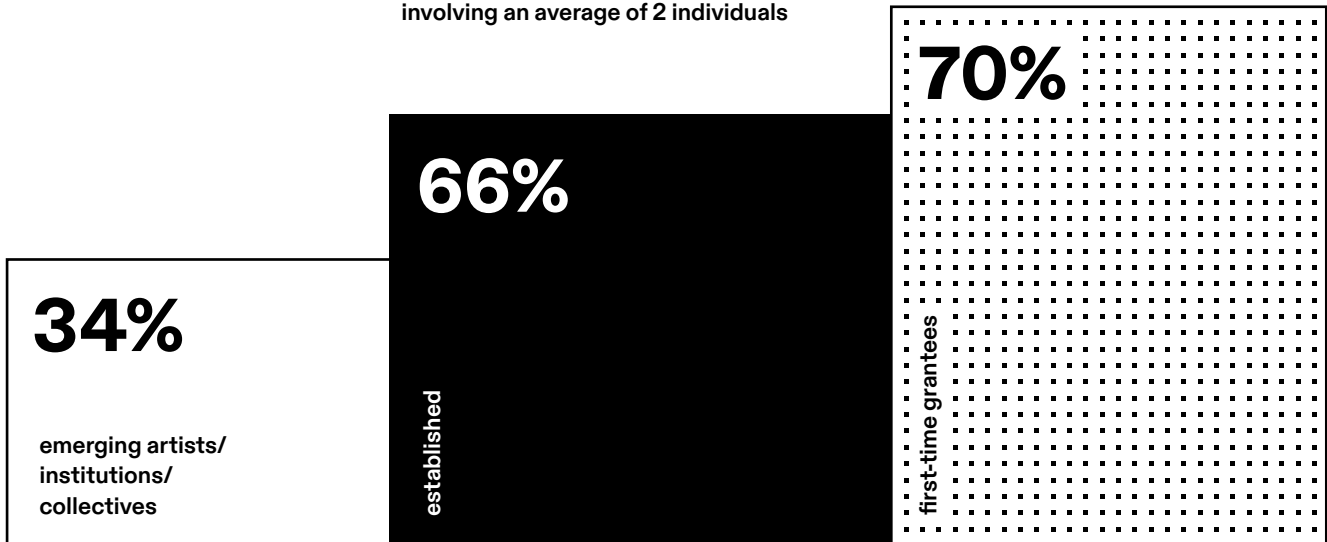
# Application Statistics



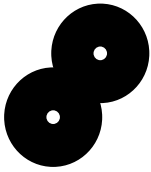
# Grantee Statistics



\*This percentage includes 12 teams, each involving an average of 2 individuals



**Performing Arts**



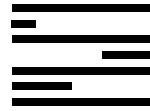
**22**

**Visual Arts**



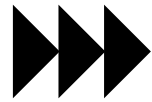
**24**

**Creative and Critical Writings**



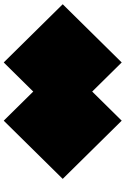
**22**

**Documentary Film**



**20**

**Training and Regional Events**



**20**

**Music**



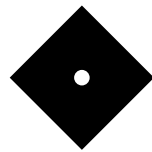
**20**

**Cinema**



**25**

**Arab Documentary Photography Program**



**16**

## **AFAC at a Glance 2007-2025:**

**25,512**

**applications received**

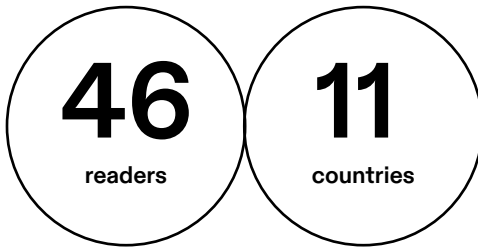
**2,649**

**projects supported**

**\$43.1**

**million allocated in grants**

# Readers 2025



Algeria  
Egypt  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Lebanon  
Libya

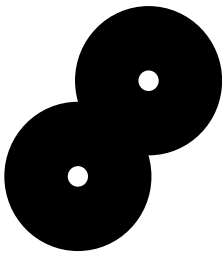
Morocco  
Palestine  
Sudan  
Syria  
Tunisia

**44%**

previous  
AFAC  
grantees

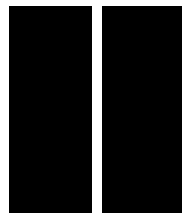
**72%**

women



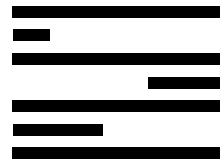
## Performing Arts

Abdullah Al-Kafri (Syria)  
Asmaa Houry (Morocco)  
Chrystelle Khodor (Lebanon)  
Sahar Assaf (Lebanon)  
Omar Abusaada (Syria)



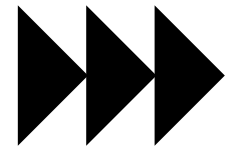
## Visual Arts

Rayya Badran (Lebanon)  
Jumana Manna (Palestine)  
Malak Helmy (Egypt)  
Amin Alsaden (Iraq)  
Toleen Touq (Jordan)  
Randa Maroufi (Morocco)



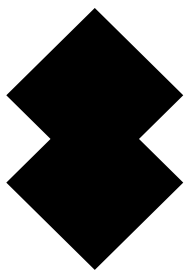
## Creative and Critical Writings

Abdelaziz Baraka (Sudan)  
Mansoura Ez Eldin (Egypt)  
Faris Lounis (Algeria)  
Golan Haji (Syria)  
Raji Bathish (Palestine)  
Umer Al-Dulaimi (Iraq)



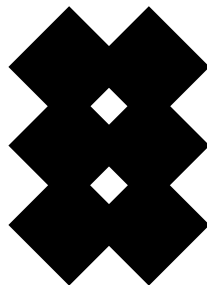
## Documentary Film

Djamel Kerker (Algeria)  
Liwa Yazagi (Syria)  
Amal Ramsis (Egypt)  
Kais Kassem (Iraq)  
Rula Nasser (Jordan)  
Raed El Rafei (Lebanon)



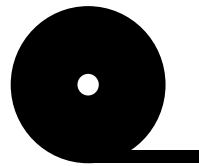
## Training and Regional Events

Chaimaa Ramzi (Egypt)  
Dayna Ash (Lebanon)  
Ghita Khaldi (Morocco)  
Omnia Shawkat (Sudan)  
Rana Yazaji (Syria)  
Ola Salamah (Palestine)



## Music

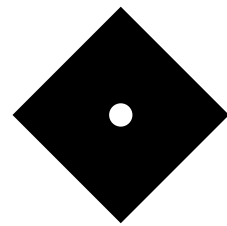
Yacine Boulares (Tunisia)  
Youssra El Hawary (Egypt)  
Widad Mjama (Morocco)  
Makram Aboul Hosn (Lebanon)  
Soumia Idba (Morocco)  
Tareq Rantisi (Palestine)



## Cinema Shorts and Features

**Cinema - Features:**  
Ameer Fakhreddine (Syria)  
Carine Doumit (Lebanon)  
Mehdi Barsaoui (Tunisia)  
Nazih Bahraoui (Morocco)

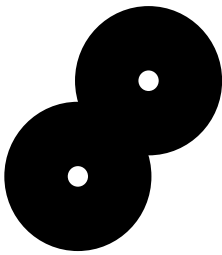
**Cinema - Shorts:**  
Ali Alyasery (Iraq)  
Amal Saadallah (Tunisia)  
Heba Othman (Egypt)  
Laila Abbas (Palestine)  
Mohammed Farid (Egypt)  
Rachel Aoun (Lebanon)



## Arab Documentary Photography Program

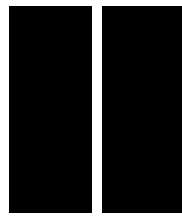
Elsie Haddad (Lebanon)  
Houari Bouchenak (Algeria)  
Tamara Abdul Hadi (Iraq)  
Sumeja Tulic (Libya)  
Mehdy Mariouch (Morocco)  
Rita Kaban (Lebanon)

# Jurors 2025



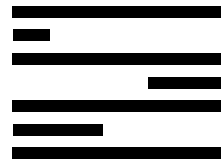
## Performing Arts

Lobna Mlika (Tunisia)  
Fadi Abi Samra (Lebanon)  
Mohamad Al Rashi (Syria)



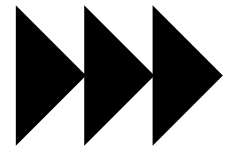
## Visual Arts

Amena Menia (Algeria)  
Yasmine Nachabe Taan (Lebanon)  
Benji Boyadgian (Palestine)



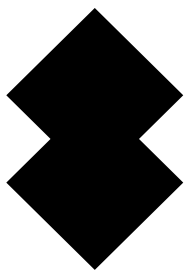
## Creative and Critical Writings

Nisrine Elzahre (Syria)  
Ismail Ghazali (Morocco)  
Mohamed Shoair (Egypt)



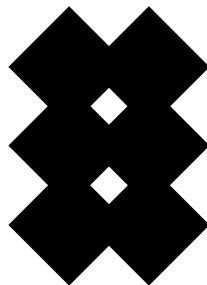
## Documentary Film

Gladys Joujou (Lebanon)  
Laila Aoudj (Algeria)  
Marouan Omara (Egypt)



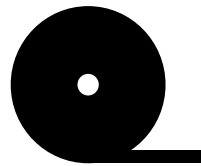
## Training and Regional Events

Fatima Cherif (Tunisia)  
Samar Dudin (Jordan)  
Chaima Ramzy (Egypt)



## Music

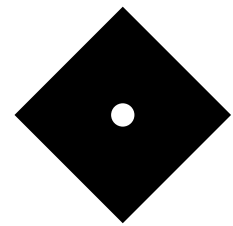
Noma Omran (Syria)  
Raed Yassine (Lebanon)  
El Mehdi Nassouli (Morocco)



## Cinema Shorts and Features

Cinema - Shorts:  
Muhammad Taymour (Egypt)  
Nour Ouayda (Lebanon)  
Ahmad Elayyad (KSA)

Cinema - Features:  
Hania Mroue (Lebanon)  
Karim Moussaoui (Algeria)  
Nidal Al Dibs (Syria)



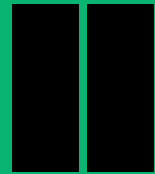
## Arab Documentary Photography Program

Heba Farid (Egypt)  
Rula Halawani (Palestine)  
Sabiha Çimen (Turkey)

# Jury Statements

Drawing on their deliberations, jurors record their observations and recommendations on the applications reviewed. These reflections offer an annual assessment of the arts and culture landscape, highlighting key trends, developments, and innovations. They serve as a reference for applicants, grantees, cultural practitioners, and the broader community. Below are excerpts from some of our jurors' statements for this year:

“ Across the board, most applicants engaged with the shifting political realities of the region with great dignity and reserve, responding to conditions of genocide, war, displacement and migration. Two recurring themes, identity and archives, point to an urgent need to confront the systemic erasure of collective memories, the destruction of material culture and the dissolution of the social fabric of the Arab world caused by decades of imposed imperial wars. Many of the proposed projects wrestled with unresolved colonial, racial and patriarchal legacies and strove to confront hegemonic discourses, foregrounding lived experience and resurfacing historical events and figures in order to assert agency over the narrative.”



## Visual Arts Jury



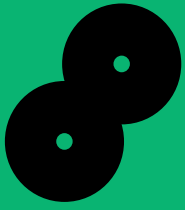
## Creative and Critical Writings Jury

“ Many submissions demonstrated a keen interest in documentary methods that look into historical, social and cultural layers of the region, aiming to preserve memory and engage with the present in all its political, social, human and cultural complexities and transformations. This “history from below” approach connects the creative self’s restlessness with its human and historical situatedness. Projects addressing urbanism were particularly striking, highlighting an expanding awareness of the ways authoritarian systems shape the city—politically, environmentally and aesthetically. ”

“ Many of the selected projects are debut films. The directors come from diverse backgrounds, generations and levels of experience. Some works are deeply personal. Others are rooted in current events. What they all share is a distinctive worldview and a commitment to exploring issues that resonate both locally and globally. This selection highlights bold, singular voices that are deeply engaged with the urgent questions of our time. ”



## Documentary Film Jury



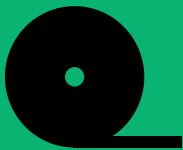
## Performing Arts Jury

“The projects highlighted a need to promote artistic activity beyond major urban centers and out to villages, rural areas and regions marginalized by authorities. Another key observation was the challenges artists face in finding venues—rehearsal spaces, small theaters and cultural centers—for their work, an issue that needs to be addressed to ensure the continuity of artistic practice in the region.”

“The submissions showed the emotional and artistic engagement of Arab artists in the diaspora with current issues in the Arab world. While the jury acknowledges this rooted and interactive awareness, it likewise commends the participation of the younger generations, hoping that they will continue applying for production grants, as we all await—and need—their contributions.”



## Music Jury



## Cinema Jury

“The jury committee was particularly interested in projects that broke with convention, posed bold questions about contemporary social and political realities, and explored memory and documentation in creative, unconventional ways. These trends reflect a vibrant and experimental Arab cinematic landscape, one that seeks to imagine new spaces for engaging with reality and its burdens.” - **Cinema Short Films Jury**

“The committee sensed a strong desire among filmmakers to break free from the constraints of prevailing norms, both in form and content, and to engage directly with the sanctity of governing concepts and institutions, whether the state, the homeland, the family, religious institutions, or any dominant intellectual system.” - **Cinema Feature Films Jury**

“Serving as jury members for the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture is both a pleasure and an act of responsibility. Each application stands as a testament to the courage and creative persistence of artists and cultural workers across the region—people who continue to imagine, document, and create amid violence, displacement, and erasure.”



## Training and Regional Events Jury

# THESE APPROACHES TO ARTISTS UNRAVELS

What does one do when one's identity and the history that comes with it is being destroyed, torn apart? For many of the 169 projects selected for support in 2025, the answer has presented itself via a turn to culture as an act of defiance or resistance, as means of holding on to the history that surrounds us. This act of holding on is a way of asserting agency, a way of resisting against forms of domination both big and small.



Some projects seek to **affirm identity, by sparking dialogue and offering alternative spaces for listening and sharing narratives often left untold.** The Performing Arts project *Les Bonnes (The Maids)* by black Lebanese actress Lama Amine blends theater and lived experience to challenge societal perceptions and prompt dialogue on race, the exploitation of labor and identity. Another Lebanese project, multi-channel video installation *A Conversation With* by Sirine Fattouh supported under Visual Arts, is based on games of backgammon filmed between the artist and seven people living in exile who were originally

from Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. By staging this intimate activity, the project explores personal stories of exile, memory and identity. In *Condemned to Dream*, a documentary film by Ashtar Muallem from Palestine, the filmmaker returns to Ramallah, her home, to document what may be the final chapter of her parents' theater. As she revisits the place where she grew up and talks to her family, she reflects on how the theater shaped her identity as a woman and an artist. The film captures a continuing struggle to create and live under occupation and the determination of those who refuse to be silenced.

Other projects **sift through the past, attempting to preserve collective memory.** Other projects sift through the past, attempting to preserve collective memory. In Documentary Film, *Disappeared* by Anas Zawahri from Palestine showcases five Syrian women who, by memory and body, live accompanied by ghosts of their forcibly disappeared sons, doing simple daily actions, to keep their memory alive. In Music, Libya





on the Oud: Mapping Libya's Musical Identity by the Libyan House for Oud Studies preserves and celebrates Libya's diverse musical heritage through seven original Oud compositions by virtuoso Hisham Errish. The project combines artistic production and research to revive and document Libya's rich musical traditions. Another Music project, *Toward an Open Archive of Jebala Music: Preserving a Peripheral Soundscape* by Hicham Chami, seeks to preserve a historically marginalized and largely undocumented sound archive by digitizing and cataloging approximately 6,000 recordings of Jebala music from northern Morocco. In Visual Arts, *Experiments in Archival Commons* is a research-driven, commission-based exhibition that uses artistic strategies to reinterpret the archive of the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center as a shared commons, shaping narratives on Palestinian creative labor, the politics of memory and the evolving role of cultural spaces as sites of cohabitation and resistance. The Performing Arts project *Reviving the Gaddoon Cultural Dance* by the Somali Academy of Science, Culture and Arts seeks to revitalize Somalia's Gaddoon, a folk dance on the verge of disappearance, by fusing its traditional movements with contemporary Afrobeat. The project aims to bridge cultural heritage with contemporary practice, empowering young

dancers and preserving Somali identity. In Training and Regional Events, *Espinyat Music: The Memory of Chemama*, a project by Teranim from Mauritania, aims to preserve the Espinyat music genre through training and the release of an album.

2025 saw an increasing number of projects that strive to reclaim and reappropriate spaces, whether private, public or in between. The documentary film *A City Without Doors - When Life Stirs* by Eyad Aljarod from Syria follows residents of a city caught between survival and collapse, as they navigate destruction and attempt to reclaim their sense of place. From the silence of the ruins, new rhythms begin to take shape, turning absence into a space for rebuilding both walls and memories. In Visual Arts, *Another Space* by Saja Quttaineh and Rawan Joulani from Palestine is an exhibition that explores one of the largest urban projects in the city of Ariha. By tracing the changes that have been done to the urban landscape by Israel, the project provides an in-depth visual reading of how globalization, real estate investment and urban politics are affecting the Palestinian landscape. This reading aims to raise questions about identity, belonging and the imagined urban space in comparison to reality. Another Visual Arts project, *Buyut Min Haneen*



*(Homes of Longing)* by Sahar Mohammed from Sudan, is a multimedia art project exploring identity, memory, and displacement through Sudanese Nubian architecture. Blending photography, poetry, and oral histories, it honors disappearing homes and the women preserving them by creating an intimate, immersive tribute to resilience and belonging. Under Creative and Critical Writings, *Reclaiming Urbanism* by Urbegony from Syria is a collective editing and publishing initiative that seeks to reconnect people with their cities in contexts marked by decades of authoritarian rule and the violence of imposed urban plans. It generates critical knowledge on urban transformations and unsettles official narratives in the pursuit of spatial justice — framing the city as a site of political and cultural struggle.

**Gender and Diversity** permeates across many of the projects selected for support. *Mektoub* by Karima El Aidaoui and Omar Shokor from Morocco is a solo performance questioning how free one truly is when choosing to marry. Through movement and music, it explores women's emotions around age, marriage and societal expectations in Moroccan culture, prompting reflection on how these constraints shape their identities and future paths. From Egypt, the documentary film *Green Island Girls* by Rogena



Tarek follows two parents who are trying to provide for their four daughters. But as the family struggles to make ends meet, the two parents begin to face a series of difficult questions that trouble the future they would have liked to provide for their children. Should they marry the girls off early? Have them drop out of school and take up work? *Green Island Girls* follows the family as it navigates these questions and the uncertain future they entail. In Creative and Critical Writings, *Wonderful Women* by Karima Ahdad from Morocco is a collection of unconventional stories of people, mostly women, from various walks of life. The stories are united in their subjects' relentless search for identity and meaning in a society navigating the divide between tradition and the lure of modern freedoms and individuality. In Cinema, the film *The*



*Night Of* by Bane Fakhri from Lebanon tells the story of Raja, who hooks up with Hadi, a closeted classmate. When the police catch them in the act, Hadi manages to pass as straight, while Raja is unfairly targeted and left permanently scarred by the experience.

Addressing global challenges, some of the selected projects tackle the **climate crisis and its impact on local communities**. The documentary film *The Salt of the South* by Rami Jarbouy from Tunisia is set in Gabes, a coastal oasis seared by industrial pollution from a nearby chemical complex, where a family of fishers must find ways to carry on. For Fathia, a clam harvester, that means protecting her family and her community from the complex harming the habitat they depend on. But for her son, Fadhel, whose ability to continue fishing has been destroyed, that has meant seeking refugee status in Europe. The Visual Arts project *Red Solaris* by Mira Adoumier and Nour Ouayda from Lebanon is a speculative video work exploring gardens as sites of colonial and ecological control and exploitation. In Training and Regional Events, another



Lebanese project, *The Fall of Dropping Water* by Reem Rizk, is an interdisciplinary public program that critically interrogates the weaponization of water as a complicit strategy in humanitarian and environmental collapse. Another Training and Regional Events project from Lebanon, *The Land and its Keepers* by Reef Association, is a residency program that brings together filmmakers and environmental advocates to engage with a multidisciplinary panel and conceptualize film projects. It examines destructive practices versus nature's wisdom, indigenous efforts and land struggles. Under Music, *Currents Between Us* by Egyptian musician and producer Tarek Alazhary is a sonic journey exploring the emotional and environmental impact of climate change staged via a dialogue between oud, harp, accordion and strings. In Cinema, the film *Solastalgia* by Yosr Gasmi follows Aurora-Hela, a shepherdess living at the foot of the Fellaria Glacier, which is now irreversibly melting and on the verge of disappearing. After years away from her hometown in southern Tunisia, she returns for an unusual family rite: the burial of her father's amputated limb. This journey sharpens her awareness of the global climate crisis. Back in Italy, she joins a collective theatrical ritual.

The year 2025 saw more projects that seek to **engage**

**with children and youth**, addressing their challenges and/or involving them in social issues. The Performing Arts project *Scooby* by Bozour Theater for Culture and Arts in Palestine is an initiative that uses theater and language, particularly Fusha Arabic to offer Palestinian youth a space for expression and creativity and support them to develop life skills such as participation and leadership. In Visual Arts, *Box of Wonders* by Joumana Ismail from Syria is a series of short animated films designed for children affected by wars across the Arab region. The series celebrates the resilience and joy of children living in challenging environments. In Music, the project *Melodies of Childhood* by Mahmood Alhendi seeks to produce children's songs inspired by Yemeni heritage, chants, stories, and traditional children's games. Under Training and Regional Events, *Little Readers* by Safaa Alnabahin from Palestine is a community-based initiative that will organize reading circles for children in Gaza.

PROFESSIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

AND

PROFESSIONAL

SUPPORT



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It is quite self-explanatory, but AFAC’s grant made everything possible. I was able to afford peace of mind, space for inspiration, without wasting all my energy running after funds. It has also provided a path, a push, a sense of validation for my work, its importance and the need for it to see the light.

**Teddy Tawil (Lebanon) | TEDTEDTED (Music)**

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## Arab Documentary Photography Program

The Arab Documentary Photography Program (ADPP) is dedicated to supporting unconventional, impactful, and non-stereotypical visual documentations of social issues and relevant stories from across the Arab region. Structural challenges persist, but the growing impact of documentary photography in reshaping narratives continues to gain momentum. Through each ADPP cycle, AFAC and its partners renew their dedication to advancing and sustaining the work of documentary photographers in the region. This commitment was further demonstrated by the creation of the ADPP Alumni Fellowship in 2024, designed to accelerate the careers of past recipients by providing ongoing support, dedicated resources, and regional and international exchange opportunities between established and emerging photographers.

The 10<sup>th</sup> ADPP cycle photographers convened in their third and final workshop in Cairo in February 2025, to finalize their projects. These were in turn published

on the ADPP website and disseminated via a press release.

Following the launch of the program's 11<sup>th</sup> cycle in February with the announcement of ten emerging photographers to participate in the mentorship track, a first workshop was held in April, followed by a second (online) workshop in November. During this time, monthly meetings were held to share updates and work through challenges encountered. The third and final workshop for the 11<sup>th</sup> cycle will take place in Beirut in February 2026. Four new mentors have joined the program, two of whom are ADPP alumni: Heba Khalifa, a multidisciplinary artist working across photojournalism and painting; Zied Ben Romdhane, a documentary photographer focused on social and political narratives; in addition to Newsha Tavakolian, an acclaimed photojournalist and Yasmine Eid Sabbagh, whose work bridges archival practice, collective memory, and visual storytelling. Furthermore, ADPP alum Lina Khalid was brought onboard as production assistant, and represented a good addition to the team, as she could bridge between her management role, her role as previous grantee and as a photographer.





is set to be released in early 2026. Samar Abu Elouf (Palestine) has also advanced with her photobook project *Faces from Gaza: Life Before the War*, and is finalizing a first draft despite the challenges posed by the situation in Gaza and Samar's exile to Qatar.

Mentors Eric Gottesman and Randa Shaath have provided ongoing guidance and follow up for the Fellowship projects. In addition, other experts have advised the Fellows, offering targeted support when needed.

## North Africa Cultural Program

Now in its second cycle, the North Africa Cultural Program (NACP) held a capacity-building workshop for 15 grantee organizations of the NACP National Cultural Opportunities Fund in Tunisia in July.

Representatives of entities from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia explored governance, financial and fundraising models, meaningful programming development, and impact measurement tools. The workshop gave them the space to rethink the significance of their work, the common strengths and challenges within the region's cultural sector, and the effect of global shifts on their communities and practices.

In October, the NACP team at AFAC went on a field visit to Egypt, meeting with grantee institutions from Cairo to Alexandria and Al Minya working across film, literature, theatre, archiving practices, and more. The visits focused on the progress of supported projects and highlighted an exciting mix of approaches, each with its unique vision.

Seeing activities such as festivals, exhibitions, and



The 12<sup>th</sup> cycle call for submissions launched on October 10 and closed on December 10, 2025, with the results foreseen to be announced in April 2026.

On their part, the 2025 Fellows have been working on their Fellowship projects. Roi Saade (Lebanon) launched his workshop and exhibition titled *Bound Narratives* in Tunis, and received positive echoes. *Bound Narratives* features photobooks, which the curator recognizes as a vital storytelling medium in the MENA region. Sara Younes (Egypt) is advancing in her documentary and children's photo book project *At a Peter Pan Moment*, and has initiated discussions with her publisher. Mustafa Saeed (Somalia) is preparing for his *Lens Through Legacy* photography festival, designed to nurture emerging photographers across Somalia and planned for January 2026. Mohammed Nammoor's project, *Attempting to Capture the Fearful City*, explores Damascus before and after the fall of the Assad regime. Through this work, Mohammed explores stereotypical and unconventional representations of fear while capturing familiar scenes reflecting his own. Salih Basheer is progressing with his project *The Return*, which documents the devastation of the war in Sudan, focusing on the humanitarian impact and experiences of loss and displacement. His book



performances in action offered valuable insight into the program's impact and the vibrant work happening across the region. Recognizing the importance of connectivity, the team also organized a gathering to give participants space to exchange ideas, and learn from one another.

In November, the team conducted a field visit to Algeria, meeting grantee organizations in Algiers and Setif, as well as with representatives from the Swiss Embassy in Algiers. The visits covered six grantee entities working across photography, music, cinema, video art, performance, and literature. Some are focused on strengthening their structures and programs, while others are collaborating on regional initiatives.

Preparations are underway for a field visit to Morocco, scheduled for January 2026.

Monthly webinars are also being designed for the 26 organizations that did not take part in the Tunis workshop. This series of webinars will be based on the latest trends in the cultural sector, the OMT (Organizational Mapping Tool) developed for the program, based on the assessment of the entities' needs.

## The Cultural Atelier in Yemen

During the past period, The Cultural Atelier in Yemen moved into **implementation and institutional**



**consolidation**—maintaining flexibility, regional exchange, and long-term impact at the heart of the program design. Building on the foundations laid in previous phases of the program—including needs assessments, two in-person workshops, and an ongoing mentorship process—this phase focused on supporting the participating civil society organizations (CSOs) through the submission of their new project proposals; evaluating and selecting projects for support; activating projects; and engaging in deeper institutional endeavors with the grantee entities.

The 16 CSOs participating in the program were guided through a structured process to refine their project ideas, from concept notes to full proposals. All 16 submitted projects received production grants totalling \$375,000, supporting institutional efforts aimed at enhancing sustainability and impact.

At the **mentorship** level, the implementation of a





tailored process continued as a core pillar of the program. 13 regional experts provided guidance to the CSOs in areas such as strategic planning, governance, donor engagement, digital development, and audience outreach. Moreover, a series of **peer exchange visits** between Yemeni CSOs and regional institutions was initiated; however, the preparatory phase faced delays due to visa and logistical challenges.

Moving forward, the AFAC team and workshops facilitator will finalize the design and development of a **third workshop (online)**, informed by the participants' feedback and the CSOs' evolving institutional needs.

In parallel, as part of the program's **knowledge-building and dissemination** component, a research paper on Yemen's creative industries is currently in development. Produced in collaboration with Your Echo (an independent non-profit organization that aims to advance educational and cultural empowerment in Yemen), the publication will present a two-layered study comprising a national sector mapping and an in-depth analysis of the film, photography, and podcasting sectors.

Furthermore, a tailored **Training of Trainers (ToT)** workshop for the enterprise development agency SMEPS is in preparation, aiming to explore how the organization's existing SME-focused training model can be adapted to address the specific needs of cultural organizations—laying the groundwork for future, sector-relevant capacity-building initiatives.

## Netflix Women in Film

Following a special screening event in Dubai in May, the five films under the Netflix Women in Film - Bring Your Story to Life initiative were submitted to regional festivals. *Of Burning Memories and Wounds* premiered at the Gouna Film Festival in November, and the five films participated in a special screening event under the New Vision section in the Red Sea Film Festival in December.

Building on the previous Women in Film initiatives with Netflix, a new program will be launched in mid-2026. Spanning 1.5 years, this new edition moves beyond theory, placing hands-on experience at the core of training. Its primary goal is to prepare emerging women filmmakers not only to understand the craft, but to practice it, gaining the confidence, skills, and networks to produce their own films.



NEW

PROGRAMS



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AFAC has been with me and this project from the very beginning. From 2020 until now, AFAC was able to provide the institutional support and networking necessary to make this project happen. I am forever grateful for the work you all do and the resources available to Arab artists, especially Palestinians. I know that without AFAC this project would never have become what it is now.

**Maen Hammad (Palestine) | Landing  
(Arab Documentary Photography Program Alumni Fellowship)**

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## Ecologies of Culture

Ecologies of Culture is a new four-year program led by AFAC, in partnership with Oxfam, Megaphone, and Echos Elektrik, and co-funded by the European Union with a budget of \$4.5M. With this program, AFAC becomes the first Arab cultural institution to lead an EU-funded project.

The program is aimed at finding ways to address the many global challenges we face — from gender inequality and climate change to digital transformation and beyond — not as isolated issues but as an “ecology” of interconnected dynamics that produce the worlds we inhabit.

At the core of the Ecologies of Culture program are a series of questions: How does culture help us better picture what is happening to our worlds, in these unknown reefs? Can it help us create new worlds? Can it be a place of coming together of scientists, journalists, anthropologists, artists, agronomists to think through this new connectivity? Can culture be reimagined as an ecology? And crucially, how can the worlds we create, the works we create stay in motion — between places, languages, and people — even when the routes between us are blocked or shrinking?

The program recognizes that the arts are not peripheral to these challenges — they are central for understanding, connecting, and reimagining how we live together.

Ecologies of Culture will support up to 58 projects across Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia through three pillars:

**Creative Placemaking:** supporting locally rooted cultural and artistic projects that center communities and shared spaces.

**Creative Labs:** fostering experimentation across sectors: arts, science, education, and bringing together artists, scientists, technologists, and professionals from diverse sectors to experiment and co-create responses to complex global challenges.

**Creative Caravans:** expanding the reach of cultural content through touring, festivals, residencies, and digital media platforms — ensuring that artistic works and stories travel across borders, languages, and communities.

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## Mapping Research

During the inception phase, a mapping research was conducted across the program’s nine target countries, resulting in a report that provided a deep understanding of the cultural ecosystem and informed the design of the grant schemes. The report identifies relevant projects, platforms, and cultural initiatives that support local efforts at the community level to address global challenges through creative processes, enhance cultural ecosystems, expand cultural access, and build cross-sector collaboration. Through engaging different research tools, including desk research, surveys, and interviews, the report uncovers trends, gaps, and needs around the typology of cross-sector partnerships and community-based cultural projects, as well as the engagement of digital platforms in content creation around cultural and global issues, and the circulation and dissemination of cultural and artistic works.

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## Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Framework

As part of the inception phase of the program, a comprehensive and adaptive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework was designed. The framework includes a detailed M&E plan, tailored reporting tools, and surveys to measure impact. It will enable AFAC and partners to track progress, ensure accountability, and generate evidence-based learning for future programming. The MEAL framework also includes 4 needs assessments surveys that will be carried out with the selected candidates under the 3 pillars. The results of the needs

assessment will enable AFAC to tailor the different capacity-building components embedded in the program along with the financial support provided.

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## Implementation

The Ecologies of Culture open call for the Creative Placemaking and Creative Labs pillars launched on September 22. The Creative Placemaking call spanned until November 21.

Although the Creative Labs open call was initially planned for a two-month period, it was decided to extend the deadline from November 21 to Dec 12, 2025.

The decision to extend the Creative Labs deadline stemmed from the great interest and curiosity around this pillar, as well as the questions we received about how to approach this cross-sectoral program. Many potential applicants were venturing into new territory, building teams across different fields, and shaping ideas that are still taking form. Recognizing the complexity and innovation this process required, the extension was more than a logistical adjustment, as it invited applicants to explore new sectors and forms of collaboration, the extension offered more time for reflection, discussion, and co-creation across disciplines.

At the close of the calls, AFAC received 204 applications for Creative Placemaking and 141 applications for Creative Labs.

The Creative Caravans open call is set to launch in January 2026.

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## Capacity-Building

Capacity-building components are embedded in all Ecologies of Culture program pillars. Based on each pillar's specificities and criteria, a capacity-building scheme will be developed and will be tailored to respond to applicants' needs. As such, under each pillar, selected grantees will be offered a set of activities which include: tailored in-person workshops; mentorship; peer-to-peer exchange and networking opportunities; webinars on key issues and global challenges; access to resources and experts.

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## Visibility

Visibility activities planned for Ecologies of Culture include content generation on global issues, regional circulation of works, and events. This includes four showcasing events with festivals in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Lebanon, two advocacy campaigns linking cultural actors with grassroots gender and climate justice initiatives, and a number of outputs that will be published and disseminated throughout the program's implementation period.



## بيئات الثقافة

### ECOLOGIES OF CULTURE

## بيئات الثقافة

### ECOLOGIES OF CULTURE

## بيئات الثقافة

### ECOLOGIES OF CULTURE

إقامات فنية • ورش عمل تركيبات فنية في الفضاء العام

إذا كانت الأماكن تُصمَّم لنا غالباً، فكيف يمكننا أن نتكهن بما يمكن أن يحدث حين نشكلها نحن بأنفسنا؟ • IF PLACES ARE OFTEN MADE FOR US, BY DISTANT LOGOS, WHAT NEW FUTURES UNFOLD WHEN WE MAKE THEM FOR OURSELVES?

تشكيل فضاءات إبداعية  
CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

residencies • workshops • public installations

ألعاب رقمية • واقع معزز • واقع افتراضي  
ذكاء اصطناعي • تركيبات متعددة الوسائط

ماذا يحدث حين يفهم الآلة البرمجية لغة البشر؟ • WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A POET BEGINS TO THINK IN CODE, AND A COMPUTER UNDERSTANDS METAPHOR?

مختبرات إبداعية  
CREATIVE LABS

gaming • AR • VR • AI • multi-media installations

مهرجانات • معارض • فعاليات متنقلة  
منصات إعلامية رقمية

كيف نضمن أن أفكارنا ومشاريعنا وحلولنا الإبداعية قادرة على الحرية والتعبير؟ • HOW CAN WE ENSURE OUR IDEAS, PROJECTS AND SOLUTIONS TRAVEL THE WORLD?

قوافل إبداعية  
CREATIVE CARAVANS

festivals • exhibitions  
touring events • digital media platforms

## بيئات الثقافة

إذا كانت الثقافة تحمل ذاكرة العواصف ... فكيف نصغي إلى أصداؤها؟

If culture carries the memory of storms, how do we listen to those echoes?

### ECOLOGIES OF CULTURE

## بيئات الثقافة

على ضفاف النهر، كيف يفسر الفن والعلم آثار السد؟

At the river's edge, how do art and science read the dam's effects?

### ECOLOGIES OF CULTURE

## بيئات الثقافة

وعندما تهاجر العوالق البانية للشعب المرجانية إلى مياه أكثر برودة ... هل تصطحب معها ذاكرة الاحترار؟

When reef-building plankton migrate to cooler waters, do they bring memories of warming?

### ECOLOGIES OF CULTURE

AUWONG AND

REPRESENTATION



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Having AFAC’s stamp on the project helped push the project forward to other grants, regionally and internally. AFAC support increased our chances of making the film with money from “our region”, which was essential in maintaining the identity of our original narrative and the authenticity of our voice as storytellers from the Arab region and as Arab producers. With so much financing on this project associated with spending requirements, the funding from AFAC gave us the liberty to choose to work with talent based on merit, not nationality; a factor that contributed to expanding our creative freedom.

**Sara Ishaq (Yemen) | The Station (Cinema)**

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## Representation

AFAC Executive Director Rima Mismar and Board Member Oussama Rifahi traveled to Abha (Aseer province) and Riyadh for an exploratory trip, during which they met with artists, philanthropists, and other cultural actors. Visits to cultural spaces, such as the visual arts space Muhay studio, Diriyah Art Futures (DAF), Cinehouse, and the Misk Art Institute, were organized.

An informal encounter with the arts and culture scene was also held at the Ahmed Mater Studio on May 10. This visit was crucial to gauge the cultural scene in the KSA from up close.

Moreover, the AFAC team continued to be present at regional and international festivals and events, participating in panel discussions and workshops and advocating for arts and culture.

As such, the team was present in Copenhagen, Cannes, El Gouna, Amsterdam, Cairo, Amman, Dubai, Montpellier, Paris, Riyadh, and Kuwait City. Executive Director Rima Mismar attended the Arab Economic Forum at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, where she highlighted the nuances of cultural funding in the Arab region, emphasizing the need for sustainable frameworks that address local needs and AFAC's role in nurturing ecosystems beyond financial support. She also participated in an intimate conversation titled "The Infrastructure of Cultural Ecosystems" and moderated a panel at the Misk Art Institute Creative Forum in Riyadh. The discussion centered on what makes a healthy cultural ecosystem and what is required, beyond funding, to help it thrive locally, regionally, and globally. On her part, Cinema Grants Manager Soleil Gharbieh participated in a panel at El Gouna Film Festival, titled "Not 'Fiction Feature' Struggle: Docs, Shorts, Animation". Soleil was also present at the Cannes Film Festival to attend the

launch of the Palestine Film Fund. The Palestine Film Institute launched the Palestine Film Fund in partnership with AFAC, the IDFA Bertha Fund (IBF), and International Media Support (IMS). The Fund was created to support Palestinian filmmakers—those working in Palestine and those in the diaspora—in telling their own stories, on their own terms.

## Thought Leadership

AFAC's growing role as a leader in regional cultural development extends beyond grant-making to shaping the narratives that define the arts and culture landscape in the Arab region. As part of its advocacy efforts, AFAC's Executive Director, Rima Mismar, engaged as a contributing voice in regional and international discussions on cultural sustainability, and, the importance of financial support in sustaining the role of the arts and culture in civic life.



This presence across regional and international platforms complements efforts to promote public discourse around sector challenges while highlighting AFAC's values and impact. Opinion pieces and articles featured in leading publications supported AFAC expanding its visibility among donors, policymakers, and cultural practitioners. These pieces articulated AFAC's perspective on issues such as cultural funding ecosystems, artistic autonomy, and the evolving role of philanthropy in the Arab region.

AFAC's approach to thought leadership combines editorial partnerships, media collaborations, and the amplification of published work across digital platforms. Each intervention, whether a podcast interview, a Q&A, or an authored article, reinforces AFAC's mission, to strengthen advocacy for independent artistic expression, while advancing the organization's mission of building a more equitable, self-sustaining cultural ecosystem for the region.

A group of people in a meeting, illuminated by blue light, with orange dot-matrix text overlaid.

TEAM AND

INSTANTANEOUS

STRENGTHENING

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AFAC's support was crucial to this second edition of *Dérive casablancaise*, but also relevant in the sense that it brought together artists and cultural figures from several Arab countries and the Arab diaspora in Europe. AFAC is a respected funder in the region and internationally. Its presence among the partners gave the organization greater credibility and visibility.

**Espace Darja (Morocco) |  
Dérive Casablancaise - 2nd Edition  
(Performing Arts)**

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## Expanding the AFAC Team

In response to AFAC's growing scope of work and new fundraising and development strategy, five new team members joined AFAC in 2025. Rania Berro joined as Program Manager for Ecologies of Culture. Based in Paris, Rania brings over 20 years of experience in policy analysis, advocacy, and grants management, having previously worked with OSF.

Nour Al Halabi joined as Program Coordinator for Ecologies of Culture, with a background in program coordination, stakeholder engagement, and community building.

Yara Abifakher was initially brought on as a communications consultant to support the design and rollout of AFAC's new communication strategy in line with its fundraising and development plan. She joined the team full-time in August as Communications Manager.

Dara Mouracade joined as Development and Partnerships Manager, bringing extensive experience in donor cultivation and program management.

Jessica Baliki joined the Finance Department as an Accountant, contributing her expertise to manage day-to-day bookkeeping, perform reconciliations, maintain accurate data, and ensure proper documentation.

With these new hires, the AFAC team currently stands at 17 members.

## AFAC Anti-Harassment Bylaws

In a continuous effort to maintain a safe space and environment for its constituents, team members, visitors and contractors, AFAC released updated anti-harassment bylaws.

The document was shared with all grantees, vendors and AFAC's general audience via the newsletter, and can be viewed [here](#).



# COMMUNITATIONS



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For us, AFAC has always been a safety valve, a seal of quality, and emotional and creative support first and foremost. Thanks to the AFAC grant, which was the first production grant that the film received from the Arab region, the project was treated more seriously, and we, as filmmakers, felt confident in our work, especially since the jury was made up of Arab filmmakers and experts, and as such, their evaluations are not subject to political balances or folkloric topics, but rather to the cinematic value of the project as a first criterion. This support is a great moral boost for any filmmaker because it is not attached to a festival or a development program, and AFAC is, of course, among the oldest and largest Arab support fund; thus obtaining its support holds immense moral value.

**Mohamed Rashad (Egypt) |  
The Settlement (Cinema)**

”

## New Strategy

For nearly two decades, AFAC has been a cornerstone for independent arts and culture in the Arab region. A trusted funder, collaborator, and advocate for creative freedom and cultural expression. Yet, as the regional landscape evolved, so did the need for AFAC's communications to evolve with it.

The organization has long been recognized for the credibility of its grant delivery. Communications have effectively kept audiences informed through open calls, grantee announcements, and institutional updates. This year's review highlighted an opportunity to build on that foundation by evolving from transactional to transformational engagement—shifting from simply informing to inspiring audiences, and from broadcasting messages to fostering meaningful dialogue.

Data and insights were needed to ground this shift. As such, AFAC conducted a series of audience surveys targeting donors, grantees and the general public. The findings offered a holistic view of how different stakeholders perceive AFAC's role, values and impact. Donor feedback helped shape a concise fundraising narrative, grantee responses highlighted the need for more visibility, storytelling and alumni connectivity, and public feedback revealed strong trust in AFAC's credibility but limited awareness of its broader mission. Together, these insights informed the tone, content pillars and engagement priorities of the new communications plan, which ensures AFAC's voice not only reflects what it does, but highlights what it stands for.

**Arab Fund for Arts and Culture Awards 87 Projects Over USD 1 Million**

"It is now time for Arab donors to step forward and help ensure that Arab cultural production is authored by us, for us."

**CAIRO SCENE** Cairo Scene - Sep 20, 2025



The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) has announced the results of its first 2025 grant cycle, awarding over USD 1 million to 87 projects selected from a record 1,428 applications, a 17.8% increase from last year.

Funding was distributed across Documentary Film (USD 350,000), Critical and Creative Writings (USD 160,500), Performing Arts (USD 255,500), and Visual Arts (USD 250,000). The awarded projects span more than a dozen countries across the Arab region and diaspora, addressing themes such as memory, resistance, and urban transformation.

November 2025 12:29 GMT

**MENAFN**

امريكا | اوروبا | عرب | اسيا | افريقيا | سياسة | اقتصاد | لقط وها

**بيئات الثقافة**

برنامج يمتد على مدى 4 سنوات يهدف إلى دعم نحو 58 مشروعاً في 9 بلدان

قوافل إبداعية	مختبرات إبداعية	فضاءات إبداعية
مهرجانات • معار فعاليات متنقلة منصات إعلامية رقم	ألعاب رقمية • واقع معزز واقع افتراضي • ذكاء اصطناعي تركيبات متعددة الوسائط	نشاطات فنية ورش عمل مبادرات في الفضاء العام

الاشتراك مع التحديات العالمية من خلال الفنون والثقافة

**بيئات الثقافة: برنامج جديد يسيطر تقاطع الثقافة مع التحديات العالمية**

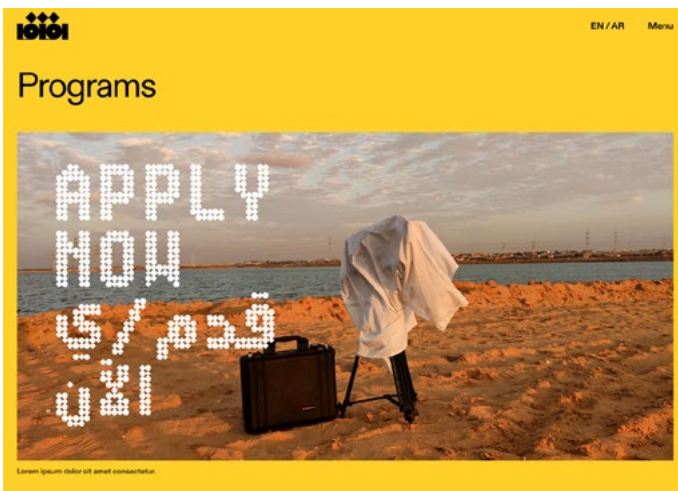
The strategy restructuring worked to align closely with AFAC's mission and impact, anchored around three key pillars:

**Community Engagement & Public Awareness** – expanding outreach to artists, youth, and the broader public, while strengthening AFAC's digital storytelling and multimedia presence.

**Cultural Advocacy & Thought Leadership** – creating space for AFAC and its Executive Director, Rima Mismar, to contribute as leading voices in regional and global discussions on arts, culture, and sustainable ecosystems.

**Fundraising, Contributions & Partnerships** – cultivating regional donors and private-sector partners to increase ownership of cultural production and support for the sector.

The next phase of the AFAC communications journey will see the launch of an uplifted digital presence, with a new interactive website and activations focused on expanding reach, influence, and engagement across audiences. As AFAC approaches its 20-year anniversary, communications will highlight its history and role in supporting arts and culture across the Arab region, as an advocate for the cultural spaces where independent voices can endure and flourish in the face of suppression, political domination, and systemic marginalization.



### Annual Open Calls

>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur. Ali viverra et morbi risus pellentesque. Augue nulla et lobortis feugiat ornare dignissim. Phasellus ut risa fringilla in egetas voluipat. Turpis id proin ultricies ut suscipit ornare at nisl pellentesque. Tincidunt nulla accusan a fringilla urna ornare aliquet loo id.

Open	Closes 04 April 2025	Open	Closes 04 April 2025	Open	Closes 04 April 2025	Open	Closes 04 April 2025
6 Days Remaining	6 Days Remaining	8 Days Remaining	8 Days Remaining	8 Days Remaining	8 Days Remaining	8 Days Remaining	8 Days Remaining



You are viewing 2,097 of the 2,097 initiatives that AFAC has supported.

Project View

Year Country Program Theme

2025 The Arab Documentary Photography Program Memory Identity Home

2025 Jordan	2025 Palestine	2025 Sudan	2025 Syria
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# AFAC in the News

Cairo Scene (Egypt)  
February 18

**10 Arab Photographers Selected for AFAC's ADPP**

Al Modon (Lebanon)  
February 19

**Arab Documentary Photography Program Grants 2025**

Cairo Scene (Egypt)  
March 11

**AFAC to Hold Gathering at Ahmed Mater Studio in Riyadh**

The Eye of Photography (France)  
March 11

**Arab Documentary Photography Program Reveals Ten Laureates**

MENAFN (Regional)  
May 27

**Netflix and AFAC Celebrate Women in Film with a Showcase at the Arab Media Forum**

Soigné Middle East (Regional)  
May 27

**Netflix and AFAC Premiere Five Arab Women-Directed Short Films at Arab Media Forum**

Palestine News Network (Palestine)  
September 10

**Ecologies of Culture: A New Program that Highlights the Intersections Between Culture and Global Challenges**

MENAFN (Regional)  
September 10

**Ecologies of Culture: A New Program that Highlights the Intersections Between Culture and Global Challenges**

Al Bayan (UAE)

September 11

**Ecologies of Culture Encourages Arab Creatives to Submit Works Addressing Global Challenges**

Circle MENA (Regional)

September 16

**Why We Need to Invest in Creative Arab Voices**

The Eye of Photography (France)

March 11

**Arab Documentary Photography Program Reveals Ten Laureates**

Zawya (Regional)

September 17

**AFAC Awards Over USD1M to 87 Projects in First 2025 Grants Cycle**

Al Modon (Regional)

September 17

**AFAC: USD 1M to 87 Projects in First Grants Cycle 2025**

Cairo Scene (Egypt)

October 17

**AFAC Opens 12<sup>th</sup> Arab Documentary Photography Program**

Cairo Scene (Egypt)

September 20

**Arab Fund for Arts and Culture Awards 87 Projects Over USD 1 Million**

Harpers Bazaar Arabia (UAE)

September 26

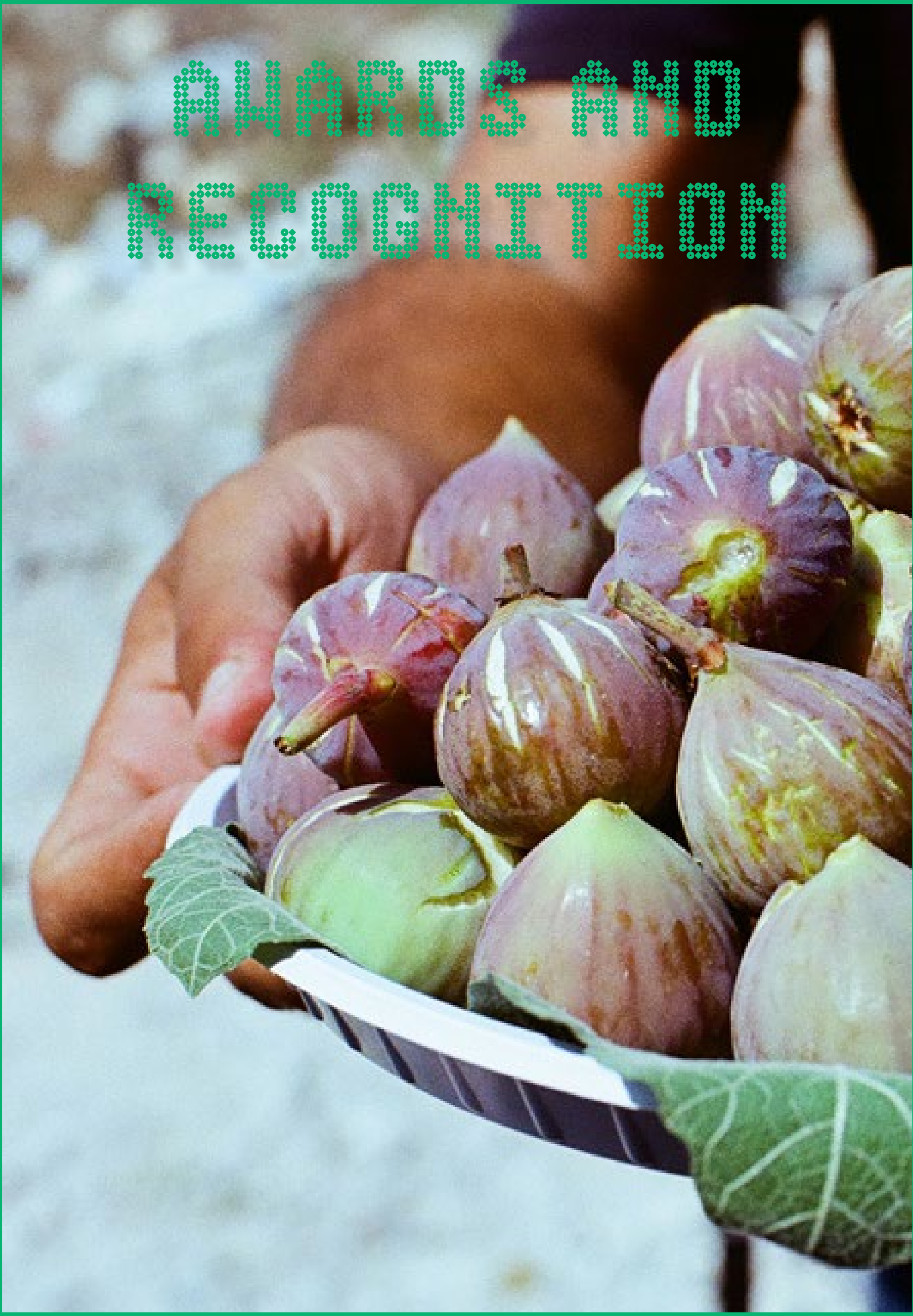
**AFAC Launches Ecologies of Culture**

The Eye of Photography (France)

October 24

**The Arab Documentary Photography Program (AFAC) and its Support for Arab Photography**

# AWARDS AND RECOGNITION



“

I am deeply grateful to AFAC for giving me the space to dream and develop. The grant allowed me to explore new methods and formats that I wouldn't have been able to try otherwise.

**Heba Khalifa | ADPP Fellowship | Egypt**

”

79 ENTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL  
FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

**3 International Film**

**Festival Rotterdam**

**2 Berlin International Festival**

**4 Copenhagen**

**International**

**Documentary Festival**

**2 World Press Photo Awards**

**3 Cannes Film Festival**

**2 Locarno Film Festival**

**2 Sundance Film Festival**

**11 Red Sea Film Festival**

**4 Venice International**

**Film Festival**

**2 D-CAF**

**5 Toronto International**

**Film Festival**

**10 El Gouna Film Festival**

**8 International Documentary  
Festival Amsterdam**

**13 Cairo International**

**Film Festival**

**1 Annecy International**

**Animation Festival**

From across the Arab region, the artists, writers, filmmakers, photographers, and performers we have supported are moving audiences and making their marks, gaining acclaim and recognition.

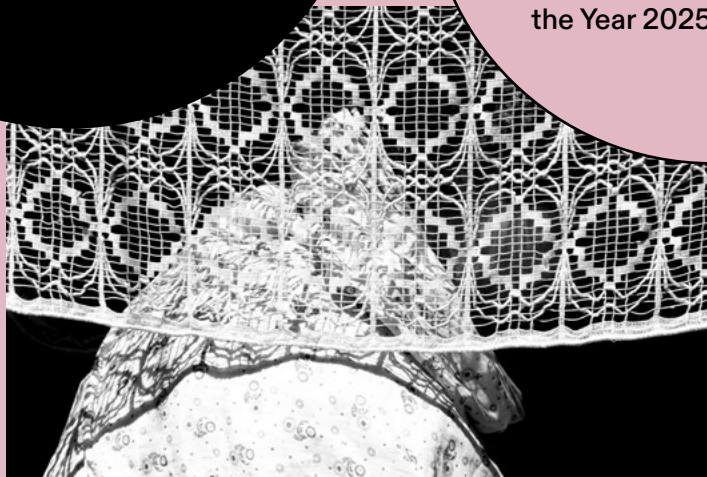
Four documentary films were part of the Copenhagen International Documentary Festival (CPH:DOX): *Sudan, Remember Us* by Hind Meddeb (Tunisia), *My Sweet Land* by Sareen Hairabedian (Jordan), *The Brink of Dreams* by Nada Riyadh and Ayman El Amir (Egypt) and *To a Land Unknown* by Mahdi Fleifel (Palestine). Additionally, the film in the making *House No. 7* by Rama Abdi from Syria was selected for CPH:FORUM.



Three films screened at the International Film Festival Rotterdam: *Shapes of Normal Human Beings* by Salim Mrad (Lebanon) – world premiere; *Where the Wind Comes From* by Amel Guellaty (Tunisia); and *Happy Holidays* by Scandar Copti (Palestine).

Three films took part in the Cannes film festival: *Aisha Can't Fly Away* by Morad Mostafa (Egypt) in the Un Certain Regard section; *L'mina* by Randa Maroufi (Morocco) in the Semaine de la Critique section; and *Life After Siham* by Namir Abdel Messeeh (Egypt) in the Acid Cannes section.

Two ADPP alums, Samar Abu Elouf and Mosab Abushama, won World Press Photo 2025 Awards for their compelling visual storytelling amid conflict. Samar also won the World Press Photo Award of the Year 2025.



Two films held their world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival: *Khartoum* by Anas Saeed, Rawia Alhaj, Ibrahim 'Snoopy' Ahmed and Timeea Mohamed (Sudan) and *Where the Wind Comes From* by Amel Guellaty (Tunisia).



*All This Death*, a short animated film directed by Fadi Syriani and produced by Jana Wehbe, held its world premiere at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival. The film was also nominated for the Sony Future Filmmaker Awards in the Animation category.

This year's D-CAF festival featured three performances: *Story Of...* by Laila Soliman (Egypt), *15Km of Resistance* by Mehdi Dahkan (Morocco) and *ECHO* by Ossama Helmy-OzOz (Egypt).

Two films participated in the Berlin International Film Festival: *The Settlement* by Mohamed Rashad (Egypt), and *Khartoum* by Anas Saeed, Rawia Alhaj, Ibrahim 'Snoopy' Ahmed and Timeea Mohamed (Sudan). *Khartoum* won the Peace Film Prize and received an honorable mention from the jury of the first Amnesty International Film Award.



Four films held their world premieres in various sections of the Venice International Film Festival: *Cotton Queen* by Sudanese filmmaker Suzannah Mirghani, and *Roqia* by Algerian director Yanis Koussim (Critics' Week section); *My Father and Qaddafi* by Jihan K from Libya (Out of Competition - nonfiction section); and *Do You Love Me* by Lebanese filmmaker Lana Daher (Giornate Degli Autori - Venice Days section).

The 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) featured five films: *Palestine 36* by Annemarie Jacir (Gala Presentations section); *Flana* by Iraqi director Zahraa Ghandour (TIFF Docs section); *Sink* by Jordanian director Zain Duraie (TIFF Discovery section); *Ambush* by Jordanian filmmaker Yassmina Karajah (TIFF Shortcuts section); and *Irkalla – Gilgamesh's Dream* by Iraqi director Mohamed Al-Daradji (TIFF Centerpiece section).

El Gouna Film Festival featured ten films in its line-up: *The Settlement* by Mohamed Rashad (Egypt); *Where the Winds Come From* by Amel Guellaty (Tunisia); *Life After Siham* by Namir Abdel Messeeh (Egypt); *Of Burning Memories and Wounds* by Soha Belal (Egypt), funded through the AFAC and Netflix initiative, 'Women in Film - Bring Your Story to Life'; and *Ambush* by Yassmina Karajah (Jordan). Another five AFAC-supported films in the making took part in the GFF CineGouna Funding platform: *Disappeared* by Anas Zawahri (Syria); *The Salt of the South* by Rami Jarboui (Tunisia); *American Dream* by Amir El Shennawy (Egypt); *Concrete Land* by Asmahan Brekat (Jordan); and *I Am One of Them* by Nadim Suleiman (Syria).



The Cairo International Film Festival opened in November, with 13 AFAC-supported films featuring in various sections: *Souraya, Mon Amour* by Nicolas Khoury (Lebanon); *Exile* by Mehdi Hmili (Tunisia); *Looking for Ayda* by Sarra Abidi (Tunisia); *Flana* by Zahraa Ghandour (Iraq); *The Last Miracle* by Abdelwahab Shawky (Egypt); *First the Blush then the Habit* by Mariam Alferjani (Tunisia); *Habibi Hussein* by Alex Bakri (Palestine); *Do You Love Me* by Lana Daher (Lebanon); and *Life After Siham* by Namir Abdel Messeeh (Egypt). Four other films in the making took part in the “Cairo Film Connection” for projects in progress: *The Side Effects of Trusting Life* by Ahmed Ghossein (Lebanon); *All that the Wind Can Carry* by Maged Nader (Egypt); *The Color of Our Time* by Haydar Helo (Iraq); and *The Day of Wrath* by Rania Rafei (Lebanon).

Two films premiered at the Locarno Film Festival: Mehdi Hmili’s *Exile* (Tunisia), and *Irkalla – Gilgamesh’s Dream* by Mohamed Al-Daradji (Iraq).



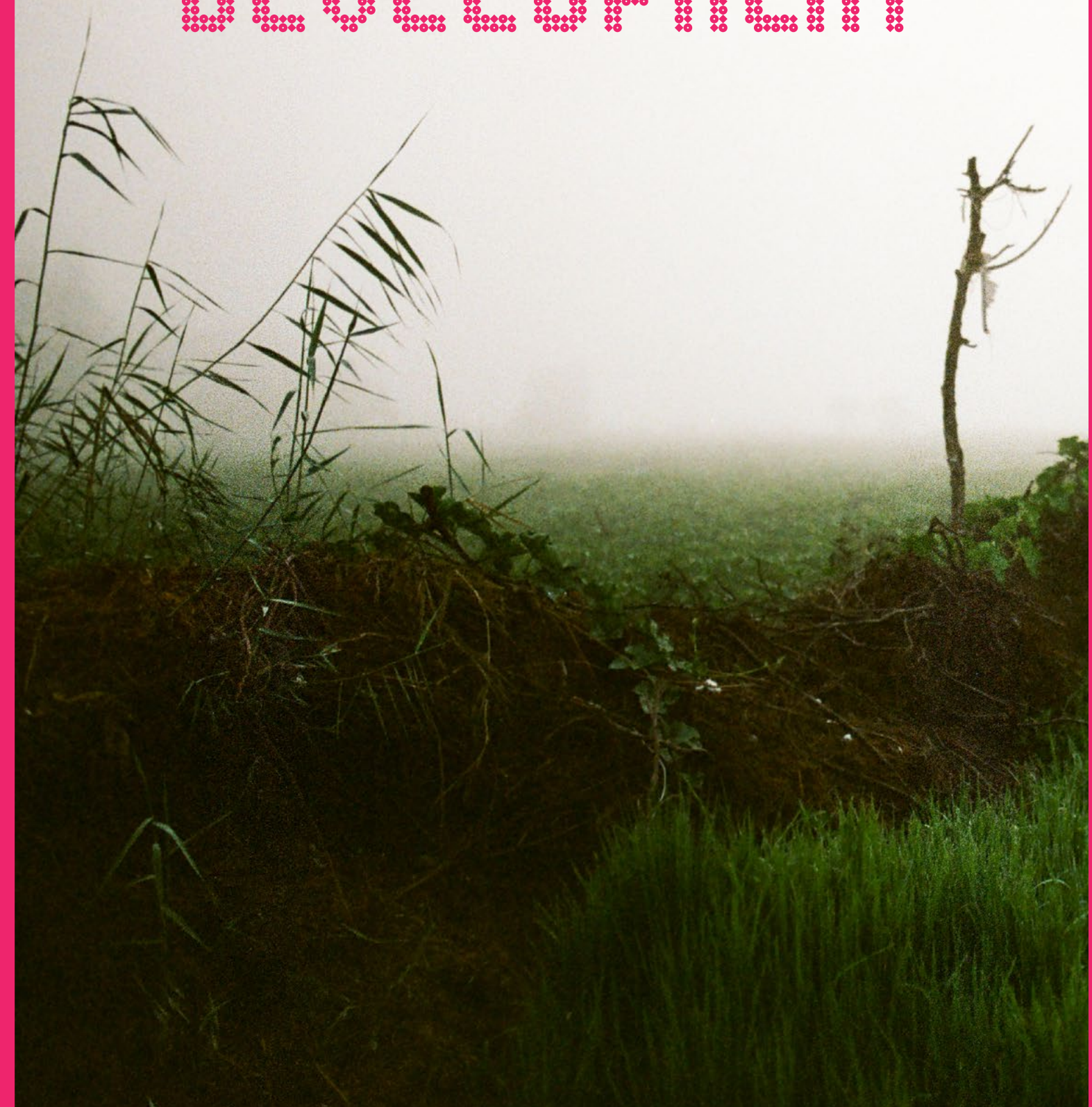
The International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) showcased eight films: *Flana* by Iraqi director Zahraa Ghandour (International Competition section); *Cinema Kawakeb* by Jordanian director Mahmoud Al Massad (Paradocs section); *Do You Love Me* by Lana Daher (Lebanon), *L'Mina* by Randa Maroufi (Morocco), and *Life After Siham* by Namir Abdel Messeeh (Egypt) under the Best of Fests section; *Checks and Balances* by Algerian director Malek Bensmail (Dead Angle: Institutions section); and *My Name is Khalil* by Bilal Alkhatib (Palestine) and *Flying Like a Bird* by El Mahdi Lyoubi (Morocco) in the Forums section.



FUNDRAISING

AND

DEVELOPMENT



“

AFAC support helped shape the project from the ground up, making it possible to start production with confidence and build a committed team around it.

**Rima Alhamedd | Cinema | Syria**

”



Despite ongoing political instability and economic uncertainty across the region, 2025 marked a year of consolidation and renewed confidence in AFAC's resource development trajectory. Building on long-standing partnerships while opening new regional pathways, AFAC focused on strengthening the foundations needed to sustain its work over the long term and support artists and cultural institutions with continuity and independence.

Throughout the year, AFAC maintained close dialogue with its core institutional partners, resulting in several multi-year commitments that provide essential stability in a shifting funding environment. The Open Society Foundations reaffirmed their partnership with a total pledge of \$6 million, including \$500,000 disbursed this year, followed by \$1.5 million across 2025-2027 and an additional \$1 million in 2028. The Ford Foundation renewed its support with a commitment of \$700,000 over two years, continuing its long-standing investment in artistic freedom and cultural production in the Arab region. These phase commitments strengthen AFAC's ability to plan and deliver programs with confidence and strategic depth.

Public and multilateral partnerships also continue

to play a central role. AFAC's collaboration with the Norwegian Embassy in Lebanon for the Documentary Film and Arab Documentary Photography Programs was renewed for an additional two years, alongside ongoing partnerships with UNESCO for the Cultural Atelier Program (2024-2026), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for the North Africa Cultural Program (2019-2027), and EuropeAid for the Ecologies of Culture Program (2025-2029). These partnerships support both the artistic production and long-term capacity building across multiple countries and cultural fields.

In parallel, AFAC made important steps toward deepening its regional footprint. A new partnership with the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF) was formalized, providing \$30,000 annually over three years to support AFAC's music program. This collaboration signals growing engagement from Gulf-based cultural philanthropies and reflects increased recognition of AFAC as a trusted regional partner.

Looking ahead, AFAC also invested in expanding its donor pipeline and diversifying future revenue streams. Exploratory engagements were initiated with a range of regional and international partners, including cultural foundations and philanthropic platforms in Europe and the Arab region. Following



an exploratory mission to Saudi Arabia, AFAC submitted proposals to several national cultural bodies, positioning the organization as a partner for large-scale cultural capacity-building initiatives aligned with national strategies.

A major milestone this year was the design of Friends of AFAC, the organization’s first structured individual giving framework. Conceived as a long-term platform rather than a one-off campaign, Friends of AFAC aims to mobilize Arab and diaspora philanthropy through tiered circles of giving that invite supporters to become active partners in sustaining artistic freedom and cultural sovereignty. Preparations are underway for a flagship public-

facing campaign in 2026, which will formally launch the initiative.

Across all fundraising efforts, AFAC remains guided by clear ethical principles. As funding sources diversify, the organization continues to uphold its commitment to independence, transparency, and artistic integrity, ensuring that every partnership aligns with its mission and values.

Taken together, these efforts strengthen AFAC’s capacity to navigate uncertainty, deepen its regional anchoring, and sustain its support for artists and cultural institutions across the Arab region in the years ahead.



# FINANCES



“

Where would we be if we couldn't imagine a different world and how could we even imagine it without the worlds AFAC creates and has been creating? The spaces carved out of rubble.

**Alia Mossallam | Training and Regional Events | Egypt**

”

**TOTAL  
ALLOCATIONS  
\$5,721,778**

**OVERHEADS**

**\$638,051**

**FUNDRAISING AND  
COMMUNICATIONS**

**\$401,465**

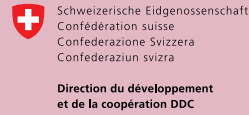
**GRANT  
ACTIVITIES**

**\$4,640,806**

# Photo Credits

- p. 4: Ali Zaraay, *Crawling on the Dust*, ADPP, Egypt, 2024
- p. 5: Lena Osseyran, *Unity of Breathing*, Performing Arts, Lebanon, 2023
- p. 6: Khalid Alarabi, *Dear Home*, ADPP, Sudan, 2025
- p. 6: Annemarie Jacir, *Palestine 36*, Cinema, Palestine, 2022
- p. 7: Ali Zaraay, *Crawling on the Dust*, ADPP, Egypt, 2024
- p. 17: Rami Jarboui, *The Salt of the South*, Documentary Film, Tunisia, 2025
- p. 17: Sahar Salah, *Homes of Longing*, Visual Arts, Sudan, 2025
- p. 18: Mosab Abushama, *Tadween*, ADPP, Sudan, 2024
- p. 19: Mosab Abushama, *Tadween*, ADPP, Sudan, 2024
- p. 19: Nour Ouayda and Mira Adoumier, *Red Solaris*, Visual Arts, Lebanon, 2025
- p. 19: Mohamed Rashad, *The Settlement*, Cinema, Egypt, 2020
- p. 20: Saja Quttaineh, *Another Space*, Visual Arts, Palestine, 2025
- p. 20: Rogena Tarek, *Green Island Girls*, Documentary Film, Egypt, 2025
- p. 21: Yaqeen Yamani, *In Flow with Water*, ADPP, Palestine, 2024
- p. 23: Ali Zaraay, *Crawling on the Dust*, ADPP, Egypt, 2024
- p. 24: Roi Saade, *Bound Narratives*, ADPP Alumni Fellowship, Lebanon, 2025
- p. 24: Sadiq Al-Harasi, *What Do Fathers Leave Behind?* ADPP, Yemen, 2024
- p. 24: North Africa Cultural Program workshop, Tunis, July 2025
- p. 25: The Cultural Atelier in Yemen peer visits, Amman, 2025
- p. 25: North Africa Cultural Program workshop, Tunis, July 2025
- p. 26: The Cultural Atelier in Yemen workshop, Amman, 2025
- p. 26: Netflix Women in Film screening in Dubai, May 2025
- p. 27: Hashim Nasr, *On War and Displacement*, ADPP, Sudan, 2025
- p. 30: Roba Alfarouna, *Address Not Found*, ADPP, Palestine, 2025
- p. 32: Lara Kobeissi, *Nazar*, Performing Arts, Lebanon, 2022
- p. 34: AFAC visit to KSA, May 2025
- p. 34: Cinema Grants Manager Soleil Gharbieh at Cannes, May 2025
- p. 35: Mosab Abushama, *Tadween*, ADPP, Sudan, 2024
- p. 37: AFAC retreat (April 2025) and team photo
- p. 38: Fares Zaitoon, *Grey is the New Green*, ADPP, Egypt, 2025
- p. 44: Rabab Chamseddine, *But We're Nearing the Pomegranate Season*, ADPP, Lebanon, 2025
- p. 48: Amel Guellaty, *Where the Wind Comes From*, Cinema, Tunisia, 2022
- p. 48: Sadiq Al-Harasi, *What Do Fathers Leave Behind?* ADPP, Yemen, 2024
- p. 49: Zain Duraie, *Sink*, Cinema, Jordan, 2024
- p. 50: Yanis Koussim, *Roqia*, Cinema, Algeria, 2024
- p. 50: Mohamed Al-Daradji, *Irkalla, Gilgamesh's Dream*, Cinema, Iraq, 2024
- p. 51: Namir Abdel Messeeh, *Life After Siham*, Documentary Film, Egypt, 2020
- p. 51: Zahraa Ghandour, *Flana*, Documentary Film, Iraq, 2024
- p. 52: Ali Zaraay, *Crawling on the Dust*, ADPP, Egypt, 2024
- p. 54: Rabab Chamseddine, *But We're Nearing the Pomegranate Season*, ADPP, Lebanon, 2025
- p. 55: Rabab Chamseddine, *But We're Nearing the Pomegranate Season*, ADPP, Lebanon, 2025
- p. 55: Maryam Al-Khasawneh, *Lowest Point on Earth*, ADPP, Jordan, 2025
- p. 56: Ali Zaraay, *Crawling on the Dust*, ADPP, Egypt, 2024

## Institutional Donors:



## Donors from the Private Sector:



## Individual Donors:

AFAC is grateful for the generous contributions of individual donors.

## Programs' Partners:



AFAC is registered in Lebanon under decree 6388 dated 24 September 2011, as the Lebanese branch of the foundation AFAC, registered in Zug, Canton of Zug, Switzerland on 23 June 2006, under article 80 of the Swiss Civil Code. Previously, AFAC was registered in Jordan as the Jordanian branch of the foundation AFAC, under registration number 2099, dated 11 April 2007. AFAC is audited yearly by PricewaterhouseCoopers in Zurich, Switzerland.



AFAC ARAB FUND FOR  
ARTS AND CULTURE  
الصندوق العربي  
للثقافة والفنون

## More About AFAC

Website: [www.arabculturefund.org](http://www.arabculturefund.org)

Facebook: [afac.grants](https://www.facebook.com/afac.grants)

Twitter: [AFAC1](https://twitter.com/AFAC1)

Instagram: [afac.fund](https://www.instagram.com/afac.fund)

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