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**FILM INDEPENDENT WELCOMES 26 INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS
FOR THE 2023 GLOBAL MEDIA MAKERS LA RESIDENCY**

Filmmakers from 15 countries – Angola, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen – take part in a six-week residency in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (June 5, 2023) – Film Independent, the nonprofit arts organization that produces the Film Independent Spirit Awards, announced today the names of the 26 filmmakers, selected from 15 different nations, to participate in the 2023 Global Media Makers (GMM) LA Residency, being held in person in June. GMM, presented by Film Independent and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is an innovative mentoring initiative and cultural exchange program that builds bridges and fosters relationships between American filmmakers and industry professionals with international filmmakers from diverse regions of the world.

This marks the eighth successful residency organized by Film Independent since 2016. The selection process for the residency was highly competitive, attracting a diverse pool of media makers, including, for the first time, filmmakers from Angola, Libya, Namibia, South Africa and Yemen. With an emphasis on promoting cultural exchange and fostering international collaboration, the chosen participants represent a rich tapestry of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

Since its launch, more than 150 filmmakers have participated in the LA Residency, hailing from 21 countries: Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Fellows participate in filmmaking tracks focused on screenwriting, directing, creative development and documentary filmmaking, where they develop their current projects with a team of U.S. Mentors. The program also provides master classes, industry sessions, field trips, cultural engagement and networking opportunities.

“As we welcome this group of 26 filmmakers to our eighth edition of Global Media Makers, it is exhilarating to see our vision for the program crystallized in a global community of filmmakers,” said María Raquel Bozzi, Senior Director of Education & International Initiatives. “To date, more than 150 Fellows continue to make long lasting bonds with their peers as well as with over 400 American filmmakers who

have engaged as mentors. With new countries like Angola, Libya, Namibia, South Africa and Yemen added this year, we have built a strong network of artists spread across more than 20 countries on three continents.”

The residency facilitates networking opportunities, allowing the filmmakers to connect with key players in the film industry in the U.S. More than 450 U.S. Mentors from the entertainment industry have supported the program, including acclaimed filmmakers and key industry executives such as Priya Amritraj (VP Film and TV Hyde Park); producer Mollye Asher (*Nomadland*); Effie Brown (CEO Gamechanger); Eric d’Arbeloff (Co-President and Co-Founder of Roadside Attractions); Jay Duplass (*Togetherness*, *Room 104*); Elissa Federoff (President of Distribution, NEON); Jamila Kerr (VP TV Bad Robot Productions); Laura Kim (EVP of Film Marketing, Participant); Alix Madigan (*Winter’s Bone*); Diana Ossana (*Brokeback Mountain*); Alan Poul (*Tokyo Vice*, *The Eddy*); Peggy Rajski (*Trevor*); Justin Simien (*Dear White People*); Lulu Wang (*The Farewell*), Ron Yerxa (*Little Miss Sunshine*) and more.

Other filmmakers working with the program this year include Amman Abassi (*Dayveon*); Ruth Atkinson (Script Consultant); Nicole Jefferson-Asher (*Self Made*); Wendy Calhoun (*Justified*); Ellie Foubmi (*Our Father, the Devil*); Javier Fuentes-León (*The Best Families*); Rodrigo Garcia (*Nine Lives*, *Albert Nobbs*); Ted Hope (*The Savages*); Lisa Leeman (*One Lucky Elephant*); Laura Nix (*Walk, Run, Cha-Cha*); Jessica Sharzer (*A Simple Favor*); Avril Speaks (*Jinn*); Rebecca Sonnenshine (*The Boys*); Robin Swicord (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*) and more.

The program has a track record of success, with alumni going on to achieve international recognition and accolades, with their films premiering at top international film festivals, including Sudanese Fellows Mohamed Kordofani and Amjad Abu Alala’s *Goodbye Julia* (Cannes 2023), Nepalese Fellows Rajan Kathet and Sunir Pandey’s *No Winter Holiday* (Sheffield DocFest 2023), Egyptian Fellow Ayten Amin’s *Souad* (Cannes 2020, Berlin and Tribeca 2021), and Lebanese Fellow Myriam Sassine’s *Costa Brava* (Orizzonte Venice and TIFF 2021).

To date, more than 3,000 participants have been served through 37 workshops and events held in Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, as well as virtual programming in Burkina Faso and Iraq. 59 short films have also been produced through grants, and collaborative VR and iPhone workshops. 38 grants have been awarded to residency alumni who foster a culture of community building and mentorship in their countries.

The 26 filmmakers selected to the 2023 GMM LA Residency with projects at different stages of development are:

Angola

Writer/Director/Producer: **Fradique Bastos**

Project: *Hold Time for Me*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: A photographer searches for a biologist who disappeared thirty years ago after she joined a secret expedition to find a new capital for Angola.

Bangladesh

Writer/Director: **Mahde Hasan**

Project: *Sand City*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: In a web of fantasy, ritual, and repressed sexuality, a young man and woman from Dhaka intersect through the unstable element of “sand”.

Writer/Director/Producer: **Maksudul Hossain**

Project: *Safa*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: Young and impulsive Safa struggles to keep her paraplegic mother alive in lower middle class Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Egypt

Director/Producer: **Asmaa Gamal**

Project: *My Dream to Fly*

Type: Documentary Feature

Logline: A group of young men live their late friend's dream of participating in world-class stunt sports by racing cheap Chinese motorcycles in the slums of Cairo.

India

Director/Producer: **Sourav Sarangi**

Project: *Fair-Home Fairy-Tales*

Type: Documentary Feature

Logline: An aging puppet artist reflects on her family's war-torn history in Myanmar and India by reliving stories of the past through her handmade puppets.

Writer/Director: **Nishant Roy Bombarde**

Project: *Zero Mile*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: Imprisoned for a hate-crime during the sectarian dispute of the nineties, an upper-caste Indian woman confronts her prejudices after falling in love with a lower-caste girl.

Writer/Director/Producer: **Pankaj Johar**

Project: *Catching Them Young*

Type: Documentary Feature

Logline: At a school for ancient Indian spirituality and philosophy, the new batch of students are forced to choose between a liberal or radical religious practice.

Jordan

Producer: **Heba Abu Msaed**

Project: *Karama*

Type: Episodic Series

Logline: A prophesied young woman disrupts two centuries of peace in Karama City as the powerful try to prevent it.

Lebanon

Writer/Director: **Estéphan Khattar**

Project: *Summer 58*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: Amid Lebanon's conflict, a fragile aspiring actor strives for a coveted television role. Unexpectedly, he discovers an unlikely source of guidance and support in a fearless militia fighter.

Libya

Writer/Director: **Abdullah Al-Ghaly**

Project: *El Bastardiya*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: When violence and chaos erupt in Libya, three ordinary young friends from Tripoli are gradually transformed into murderers.

Namibia

Writer/Director/Producer: **Vickson Hangula**

Project: *Nangula*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: Amid the Namibian liberation struggle, a nurse fulfills her dream of motherhood when she harbors a young wounded enemy soldier from a ruthless guerilla fighter.

Nepal

Producer: **Kedar Bhusal**

Director: **Rajeela Shrestha**

Project: *A Place Where Rhododendrons Bloom*

Type: Documentary Feature

Logline: Unable to be supported by their parents, two young Hindu boys from a rural village are sent to a Buddhist monastery in Kathmandu to become monks.

Writer/Director: **Suraj Paudel**

Writer: **Sailesh RC (LSM)**

Project: *Where the Rivers Run South*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: When the patriarch of a family faces his demise, he goes on a journey to find a suitable heir for three generations of women.

Pakistan

Writer/Director: **Sana Zahra Jafri**

Project: *Scattered Rain*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: When Zainab's childhood traumas resurface, she embarks on a maddening journey to seek revenge against her abuser who is on his deathbed.

Saudi Arabia

Writer/Director: **Maha Al-Saati**

Project: *A Town We Used to Know*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: When a family faces eviction from their home by a company claiming their land, they turn their anger against one another.

South Africa

Producer: **Dominique Jossie**

Writer/Director/Producer: **Yolanda Mogatusi**

Project: *Thula Thula*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: When her teenage daughter is abducted and forced into an early marriage, a timid young mother fights against the customs of her village to get her daughter back.

Producer: **Khosie Dali**

Writer/Director/Producer: **Imran Hamdulay**

Project: *Pieces*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: After the loss of her husband, Salma struggles to raise her teenage sons while building a career as a politician in post-Mandela South Africa.

Producer: **Quinton Fredericks**

Writer: **Jason Staggie**

Project: *Risk*

Type: Episodic Series

Logline: When a disillusioned college student creates an edgy game called Risk, he and his friends are forced to confront society and themselves, spawning an entire social movement.

Turkey

Writer/Director/Producer: **Elif Sözen**

Project: *Veha*

Type: Narrative Fiction

Logline: After the sudden death of her father, Meral returns to her village in Turkey from Germany with her six-year-old son and a plan that she hides from everyone.

UAE

Writer/Director: **Mohammed Al Otaiba**

Project: *Karama*

Type: Episodic Series

Logline: A prophesied young woman disrupts two centuries of peace in Karama City as the powerful try to prevent it.

Yemen

Director: **Mariam Al-Dhubhani**

Project: *Let's Play Soldiers*

Type: Documentary Feature

Logline: A 16-year-old former child soldier in Yemen returns home and seeks employment in order to spare his younger brothers from the same plight.

ABOUT FILM INDEPENDENT

For over 40 years, Film Independent has helped filmmakers get their projects made and seen. The nonprofit organization's core mission is to champion creative independence in visual storytelling in all its forms, and to foster a culture of inclusion. We support a global community of artists and audiences who embody diversity, innovation, curiosity and uniqueness of vision.

In addition to producing the [Film Independent Spirit Awards](#), the organization supports creative professionals with [Artist Development](#) programs, grants and labs. Signature mentorship program [Project Involve](#) fosters the careers of talented filmmakers from underrepresented communities. Education events and workshops equip filmmakers of all ages and experience levels with tools and resources. [Global Media Makers](#), a cultural exchange program produced in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, provides career-building opportunities for international film professionals. And year-round screening series [Film Independent Presents](#) offers a robust program of unique cinematic experiences, including screenings, conversations, Live Reads and Bring the Noise musical events.

For more information or to become a Member, visit filmindependent.org.

ABOUT THE BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA) mission is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange that assist in the development of peaceful relations. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional, and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United

States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us. ECA programs build connections that engage and empower people and motivate them to become leaders and thinkers, to develop new skills, and to find connections that will create positive change in their communities. For more information, please visit <https://exchanges.state.gov/us>.

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