

PRESS RELEASE from The National Film Organization in Syria:

"Syrian Documentary *The Other Side of the Sun* Selected as Syria's Entry for the 99th Academy Awards

Damascus — The General Organization for Cinema has announced that the Syrian committee responsible for selecting the country's submission to the Academy Awards has chosen the documentary film *The Other Side of the Sun*, directed by Syrian filmmaker Tawfik Sabouni, to represent Syria at the 99th Academy Awards in the International Feature Film category.

The selection holds particular significance, as it marks the first selection made by the newly established Syrian committee accredited by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. It is also the first film selected by the committee to represent Syria following the political changes that took place in the country in December 2024 and the fall of the Assad regime.

The selection of *The Other Side of the Sun* comes within a distinctive cinematic and humanitarian context. The film explores the experience of imprisonment in Saydnaya Prison, one of the most prominent detention sites associated with Syria's recent history and collective memory during the previous decades of rule. It does so through the experience of director Tawfik Sabouni, who was previously imprisoned there, alongside four other survivors of detention.

Following the fall of the regime in December 2024, Sabouni returned to Saydnaya as a filmmaker alongside several other survivors, to revisit their experiences of detention. Through reenactment, the film brings their memories and testimonies to the screen, conveying aspects of their suffering that words alone cannot fully capture.

Through the survivors' testimonies and their return to the site where they endured years of imprisonment and suffering, the film also serves as a documentary record of the memories of detainees and missing persons and their families. It contributes to preserving testimonies and human experiences that have formed a painful part of Syria's modern history. Specialized sources have described the film as a work that confronts the legacy of Syria's prison and detention system through memory, testimony, and the restoration of survivors' voices.

The Other Side of the Sun premiered at Berlinale 2026 (Panorama section), and participated in several international festivals and received awards at the Amman International Film Festival, including the Jury Award, the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI) Award, and the Audience Award in the Arab Documentary Feature Competition. The film is produced by Dérives (Belgium), Habilis Productions (France) and Clin d'Oeil Films (Belgium), with international sales handled by Andana Films.

The selection of *The Other Side of the Sun* marks a new milestone for Syrian Cinema on the international stage. It comes at a time when Syria is reassessing many chapters of its modern history, with cinema emerging as a means of preserving collective memory, giving survivors a platform to recount their experiences, and documenting stories that remained beyond public view for years."