

## PRESS RELEASE

### Syrian Art in Exile

Festival Presents Journey of Syrian Artists



**October 13-14, 2014**

**Goethe-Institut Washington  
812 7<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20001**

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[www.goethe.de/washington](http://www.goethe.de/washington)

(Washington, October 2, 2014)– “Syrian Art in Exile”, two days of films, discussions, and art work at the Goethe-Institut October 13-14, 2014, explores the challenges and potential for artistic expression during times of tyranny, war, and exile. From an Iraqi fashion designer seeking refuge in Syria, to an actor facing forced conscription in Syria, to filmmakers working under the Assad regime, and finally to several Palestinian artists from Syria who have found themselves twice displaced, this short festival follows the journey of several artists pre- and post- the 2011 uprising. The events are organized by Syria Relief and Development and hosted by the Goethe-Institut as a show of solidarity with the citizens of Syria and the plight of civil society in that country.

Film screenings will be followed by panel discussions on the themes in the films, and accompanied by an exhibition featuring works by artists originally from Yarmouk Camp in Damascus, Syria who are now living everywhere from Beirut, Lebanon to Gotland, Sweden. This exhibition aims to highlight the artists’ creative and physical exile, the war, and the importance of addressing the refugee crisis in the region, Europe and the United States.

Sponsored by Syria Relief and Development, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Embassy of Norway, and the Goethe-Institut Washington.

[Tickets](#) for the film screening are \$12; proceeds will be donated to Syria Relief and Development. Artwork sold will be donated to the Jafra Foundation, which aids Yarmouk Camp in Damascus.

**Monday, October 13, 6:30 pm**

**The Shebabs of Yarmouk** (Les Chebabs de Yarmouk)  
France/Syria, 2011, 77 min., Director: Axel Salvatori-Sinz

Elegantly alternating between moments of intense conversation and poetic

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monologue, this film paints a portrait of a tight-knit group of third-generation Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk, a 50-year-old refugee camp in Syria. It delves deep into their identities, in a place where citizenship is hard to find or define, capturing the lives and unshakable bonds of friendship formed in the camp, the dashed aspirations, and the ceaseless frustrations born of sanctions. Despite their circumstances, *The Shebabs of Yarmouk* finds vibrancy and grace among hardship.

*The Shebabs of Yarmouk* has been shown at 30 festivals through Europe and Canada, as well as in Jerusalem, Amman, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Gaza, Hebron, Dubai, Tunis, Morocco and Turkey. It has received various international awards.

Discussion follows the screening with Nidal Bitari, a former resident and journalist at Yarmouk Camp. Moderated by Jomana Qaddour, Syria Relief & Development.

**8:30 pm**

**MiG**

2011, 12 min., Director: Thaer Al-Sahli

In this lyrical first-person film, the filmmaker, Thaer Al-Sahli, bears witness to the aftermath of a direct strike on the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk. The bombing, which hit a school and a mosque, caused a massive exodus of refugees from the camp—upwards of 70% of its residents by some estimates.

**Thaer Al-Sahli** is a Palestinian-Syrian filmmaker and activist. *MiG* was a collaboration with other artists and aspiring filmmakers from Yarmouk. Al-Sahli now lives in the Netherlands.

Following the second screening, an opening reception for the exhibition “Artists Twice Displaced” will take place.

**Moderator on Monday:**

**Jomana Qaddour** is the co-founder of Syria Relief & Development, a Washington, DC-based humanitarian organization that has sought to provide direct emergency and ongoing humanitarian relief for Syrians since 2011. Jomana Qaddour presently leads Caerus’ research and analysis focusing on the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA), with a current focus on Syria.

**Tuesday, October 14, 6:30 pm**

**6:30 pm**

**A Tale of Two Syrias**

UK/Syria, 2012, 64 min., Director: Yasmin Fedda

Salem is an Iraqi fashion designer in Damascus. Botrus lives a remote existence in a hillside monastery. This consistently insightful and unexpected



documentary offers a unique perspective on what the dream of freedom means to two very different people in the face of a brutal regime, creating a vital snapshot of life in the year before Syria's uprising. The film ends as the uprising begins, following the uncertain futures of the protagonists.

*A Tale of Two Syrias* has been shown at various film festivals, including the Glasgow Film Festival and the Birds Eye View Film Festival, as well as in New York City and at a number of universities.

**Discussion follows with filmmaker Yasmin Fedda (via Skype), moderated by Honey al Sayed.**

**Yasmin Fedda** is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose films have been BAFTA nominated and screened at Sundance. Her work includes *Breadmakers* (2007), about a bakery run by adults with learning difficulties, and *Waiting for Spring* (2012), an *Al Jazeera* English documentary following exiled Syrian poet Hala Mohammed as she watches the revolution unfold in Syria. Yasmin has a PhD in Transdisciplinary Documentary Film, for which she was awarded a scholarship for Peacebuilding in the World of Documentary Film from the University of Edinburgh in 2009 - 2013. She is co-founder of Reel Arts, an organization that works with artists in times of conflict.

**8:30 pm**

**Border**

Italy, 2013, 90 min., Director: Alessio Cremonini

More than 100,000 people have been killed and 2 million others displaced to refugee camps - many orphaned children and women. *Border* explores the complexity of the conflict in Syria. Filmed in Italy but set in Syria, the movie is cast with Syrian actors in exile. The characters disagree about everything from politics to religions to how to escape. No one in this beautiful movie is an innocent victim, yet everyone is some kind of victim. *Border* bravely tackles the Syrian crisis, giving a face to the countless men, women, and children who are dying every day to get out.

Introduced by Honey Al Sayed.

**Moderator on Tuesday:**

**Honey Al Sayed** is a radio talk show host and producer. Al Sayed was the host and producer of the popular radio show *Good Morning Syria*, an award-winning program focused on civil and social reform that was heard by six million listeners. She also created a platform called Positive Media, which focuses on promoting leadership and tolerance in Syria by communicating positive messages at the grassroots level, particularly to youth groups. After the outbreak of the Syrian uprising, Honey Al Sayed came to the United States, where she co-founded Souriali, an independent, nonprofit, online radio station where she serves as media consultant, host, and producer.

Exhibition



**October 13 – 14, 2014**  
**Artists Twice Displaced**

This exhibition features works by artists originally from Yarmouk Camp in Damascus, Syria who are now living everywhere from Beirut, Lebanon to Gotland, Sweden. The exhibition aims to highlight the artists' creative and physical exile, the war, and the importance of addressing the refugee crisis in the region, Europe and the United States.

Opening Monday, October 13, at 9 pm; also on display Tuesday, October 14, 9 am – 6:30 pm.

**Abed Naje** is a former resident of Yarmouk Camp, a graphic artist, and a character in the film *Shebabs of Yarmouk*. In Yarmouk, Naje worked as a trainer in the development program for adolescents with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in the field of photography. During the events in Syria, he worked to document abuses by the Assad regime in Yarmouk, Damascus. He was a member of the group "Reaction" for creativity and development. Naje fled to Lebanon after the Syrian army bombed his camp with MiG rockets (a recurrent theme in his artwork). He is now a refugee in Sweden, where he has been pursuing his interest in graphic art.

**Haissam Abdul Karim Shamloni** was born in Yarmouk refugee camp. He is an artist, critic, journalist, and news photographer, in addition to a short story writer. He studied at the Adham Ismail Center of Fine Arts and Media in Damascus and participated in over 50 exhibitions in the past 20 years, including the Tehran International Festival and an exhibition on the Palestinian issue in Damascus. Most of his pieces are linked to national and humanitarian issues. He now lives in Paris, France.

**Lina Salman** was born in Yarmouk in 1986. She studied as an architect and was a member of the Union of Palestinian Artists with a specialty in painting and charcoal. Salman has participated in numerous exhibitions in Syria and Lebanon. The goal of her artwork is to deliver a message to all refugees in the diaspora to come home and demand the right of return. Through her brush, she aims to spread awareness of their suffering to the world. She is now living in Ain el Hilweh Camp in Lebanon.

**Anas Salameh** was born in Yarmouk refugee camp in 1979. He studied Decor and Interior Design at the Adham Ismail Center of Fine Arts and Media. He worked for 12 years in the field of design and as a children's cartoon artist. Salameh has participated in numerous exhibitions in Damascus and Oslo with his art, which takes on issues such as the human defiance against injustice. His works are still in the holdings of the Museum of Modern Art in Damascus. Anas Salameh lives in Oslo.

**Niraz Saied** was born in Yarmouk Camp in 1991. He has worked in



photography for eight years and both studied and taught the medium. He returned to the camp one week after the crisis started, and he remains there to this day. His photographs try to capture the people of the camp: their daily lives, reality, memories, and dreams. He provides an intimate portrayal of the hardship and humanity in Yarmouk. All of his photographs were taken within the camp recently during the siege.

**About the Goethe-Institut Washington:**

On behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany, cultural institutes around the world provide cultural programs, language courses, support to educators, and up-to-date information on Germany in the context of Europe. Founded in 1990, Goethe-Institut Washington, DC is a center for German culture and language in the midst of the revitalized Downtown.

[www.goethe.de/washington](http://www.goethe.de/washington)

**About Syria Relief and Development:**

Syria Relief and Development (SRD) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing humanitarian aid to Syrians affected by violence, hunger, poverty, injury and displacement. The volatile situation in Syria has created a dire need for food, shelter and medical care. SRD is working to address these needs through its established programs within Syria and in surrounding regions. As of January 1, 2014, it has distributed nearly \$10 million in aid to Syrians in need.

[www.syriareliefinddevelopment.org](http://www.syriareliefinddevelopment.org)

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