

## EUROPEAN OLIVE BRANCH FILM AWARD

### LAUDATIO – JURY DECLARATION

It is an honour to present the **European Olive Branch Film Award 2025** to *Life After Siham / La Vie après Siham* by **Namir Abdel Messeeh**.

In this film, based around a woman who is his deceased mother Siham, Namir Abdel Messeeh crafts an intimate meditation on loss, memory, and the quiet endurance of the human heart. The story begins with the passing of Siham in 2015, and unfolds across a decade of filming, remembering, and reflecting. Siham, even through death, is present throughout, although she remains a mysterious figure. The camera becomes both witness and companion, a vessel through which grief is felt, memory preserved, and love expressed, without any judgment. The story is woven together with excerpts from classic Egyptian cinema which adds to the unique treatment of time in the film.

Namir conjures a layered portrait of his parents' lives. These images do not merely record; they speak, they converse, between past and present, self and other, absence and presence. Memory is neither neutral nor fixed, yet within its folds lies the power to heal, to teach, and to bind us together, with humility and respect.

Memory itself is a living, breathing presence in the film. Through the poetic and very convincingly achieved weaving of family archives, personal footage, and sequences from classic Egyptian cinema, Namir reclaims a cultural heritage while inviting imagination, humour, and nostalgia. This dialogue of eras and aesthetics gives the film a texture that is at once reflective, and profoundly sincere. The film simultaneously demonstrates the power, objectivity and subjectivity of memory, while acknowledging that memory is not always reliable, or at least not always in line with others' memory of a similar event or person.

Namir's omnipresence throughout the film, at times playful, at others intrusive, draws attention to the delicate ethics of filming loved ones, capturing life while honouring autonomy, revealing intimacy without betraying it. His narration, and interventions guide us on a journey that is as much about making cinema as it is about living, surviving grief and transforming it into an experience of renewed and blossoming love.

At its heart, *Life After Siham* is a meditation on women, family, gender, and resilience. The woman and mother; strong, humorous, dignified, her choices honoured, her mysteries preserved. The men; fathers, sons, relatives, are tender, fragile, protective, and enduring. Through these distinct perspectives, the film reveals the many ways affection, care, and responsibility flow across generations, without ever prescribing what is right or wrong.

*Life After Siham* is the only film directed by a man among those shortlisted for this Award. It has been chosen by a jury of women, welcoming a gentle and meaningful masculine look on the life of a woman. A look capable of weaving through family ties, of a caring attitude and of respectfully preserving memories. It is a genuine and sensitive piece of work by a man who does not hesitate to show his weaknesses and contradictions and who pays tribute to his mother, and indeed to his mothers.

The film is a work of humility, empathy, and profound humanity which reminds us that life continues after loss, that grief and the sense of sacred can coexist with humour and tenderness, and that remembering is itself an act of care. *Life After Siham* stands as a testament to human resilience and connection. For its emotional honesty, its nuanced exploration of family and gender, and its celebration of care and memory, we are proud to present the **European Olive Branch Film Award 2025** to *Life After Siham / La Vie après Siham* by **Namir Abdel Messeeh**.

Gaia DANESE, Juliette DURET, Ingrid GODKIN, Maggie MORGAN, Maud QAMAR