

HERE & ELSEWHERE Film Festival

2026 Edition in Beirut and Rome

About the Festival

Who we are

HERE & ELSEWHERE (هنا و هناك) is an independent, non-profit, community-driven film festival dedicated to celebrating SWANA (South West Asian and North African) cinema and supporting the filmmakers and communities behind it.

We aim to advance narrative equity for SWANA filmmakers, amplify underrepresented stories globally, and bring communities together through film.

Our Vision

SWANA cinema flows freely between *here* and *elsewhere*, sustaining a thriving independent film culture in Beirut and bringing uncensored, authentic SWANA voices to global audiences.

Our Mission

Support authentic SWANA storytelling by providing emerging filmmakers with visibility and financial support.

Amplify SWANA cinema by bringing SWANA stories from Here (Lebanon) to Elsewhere (internationally).

Build spaces for the community where audiences, filmmakers, and organizations can come together to support SWANA initiatives and films.

Our Story:

Founded in 2025, HERE & ELSEWHERE emerged in response to the structural barriers that continue to limit SWANA filmmakers, from unequal access to funding and industry opportunities to the pressure to conform to narrow, often stereotypical narratives in order to be seen.

The festival was created to build a community-led platform where SWANA filmmakers can share their work, connect with audiences, and receive meaningful support to continue creating. Since then, it has grown into more than a film festival: a space for community, cultural exchange, and collective support for SWANA cinema.

2026 Programming

HERE & ELSEWHERE 2026

Founded:

2025

Type:

Independent nonprofit film festival

Focus:

SWANA independent cinema

Locations:

Beirut, Lebanon (Our Here)

Rome, Italy (This year's Elsewhere)

Dates:

October 8-10, 2026 (Beirut)

November 19-21, 2026 (Rome)

Languages:

Arabic

English

Spanish

Persian

French

All films screened in Beirut will have English subtitles for Arabic films and Arabic subtitles for foreign language films. All films screening in Rome will have Italian subtitles.

Admission:

Tickets for Beirut available for purchase via Ihjoz: <https://ihjoz.com/events/9069>

Tickets available for purchase at the door exclusively (Rome) RSVPs on Eventbrite are encouraged: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1997843809615?aff=oddtcreator>.

Key Facts

- Founded in 2025
- First transnational SWANA film festival with annual editions in Lebanon and an international city
- Non-profit initiative
- 100% independent

- Supports emerging SWANA filmmakers
- Annual Spotlight Director program
- Annual charity beneficiary
- Screenings, talks, and community events
- Held in 2 cities per year
- 19 films in the official selection for 2026

2026 Program

This year's program takes place amidst continued attempts at violent erasure by settler colonial forces, from the ongoing genocide in Gaza to the destruction and attempted occupation of South Lebanon. Amidst this, artists are targeted, archives are targeted, historical and cultural sites are targeted. Why? These sites preserve our stories. They are powerful forms of resistance that state: we have been here and we will remain. Cinema is a way of archiving these memories beyond colonial reach. Cinema is an act of resistance.

We enter into our 2026 festival supporting the work of Lebanese archival filmmaker Cindy Chehab and grassroots relief agency Nation Station. Here & Elsewhere is a volunteer run festival with all profits from ticket sales split 50/50 between these causes. Our festival supports resistance through both filmmaking and community programs, hoping to use collective care to support the immediate wellbeing of displaced people in Lebanon and the greater expression and preservation of culture through storytelling.

This year's programming has a special focus on memory- its complications, its impossibility and its resilience. As we welcome audiences from Here to Elsewhere with our Beirut and Rome editions, we work towards putting our stories back in our own hands.

Why Rome?

Why was Rome selected as this year's *Elsewhere* edition?

Rome was selected as the 2026 *Elsewhere* edition through a combination of community, cultural history, and H&E's wider vision for where SWANA cinema belongs. Since our first edition in 2025, H&E has been propelled forward through its connections across the diaspora, with the team working remotely between Beirut and cities across almost every continent. Having an existing community link in Rome made the city feel like a natural extension of that network. At the same time, Rome holds an important place in European film history, from Cinecittà to its continuing role in contemporary arts and cinema. Bringing H&E into that context is intentional: we want to position SWANA stories within spaces where global cinema is already celebrated, rather than treating them as something that exists at its margins. This also connects to H&E's roots in cultural preservation through film, particularly relevant this year as memory and archival practices run through much of the 2026 program. With Rome's Arab community, the city creates an opportunity to bring these films into conversation with both diaspora audiences and the wider cultural landscape. H&E is not presenting SWANA cinema as

an act of activism, but as cinema that deserves to inhabit the same cultural spaces as any other.

Festival Impact and Charity Model

In 2025, our *Elsewhere* edition was held in Barcelona, Spain. The 28 short films that made up the program, delved into the complexity and vibrancy of one's homeland; from Lebanon to Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Iran and beyond to the diaspora.

We had a total of 480 attendees across Beirut and Barcelona. Additionally, through our partnership with local Beirut NGO, Ahla Fawda, were able to gift festival tickets to community members who may have not otherwise had the opportunity to attend, helping to make cinema and art accessible to all.

We were able to raise just about \$4,000 which we redistributed to the community by donating:

- \$2000 to the Gaza Skate Team
- \$2000 to Fateema Al-Hamyedeh Miller's debut feature film production of "*Amwaj*" / *Waves*"

Spotlight Director

Who is Cindy?

Cindy Chehab is a Lebanese filmmaker based in Dublin whose work resonated deeply with us at Here & Elsewhere. Her archival filmmaking process explores incomplete archives and re-imaginings of what has been forgotten.

Cindy Chehab is a Lebanese filmmaker and film programmer whose work focuses on the identity of the SWANA region. Through a research-based ethno-biographical film practice, she interrogates the notion of the "absent archive" and the mechanisms of erasure, questioning how what is missing, suppressed, or fragmented can still structure history and image-making. She currently works as an archive researcher and producer on different documentary projects across Europe. In 2022, she co-founded a film and image culture space in Nicosia, Cyprus, a film club dedicated to critical engagement with film culture. Her curatorial interests center on militant and underrepresented documentary films. She pursued a master's degree in Film Heritage and culture, between Brussels, Lisbon, and Dublin as part of the first edition of the FilmMemory program. She also took part in the 2026 edition of EURODOC MED for her project in development.

I Had to Learn How to Scream (Cindy's project that we are supporting) Women in my family have carried the same chronic disease for generations, passing it from mother to daughter like an inheritance no one asked for. As I trace its path through our lives, I begin to question whether the illness is biological or the result of silence, sacrifice, and oppression shaping our

bodies and genes. This film follows the women before me and the illness we share, questioning whether it was inherited through blood or shaped by the weight of the lives they lived.

Why was she chosen?

We loved Cindy's strong vision & process based work. We love her perspective & focus on the weight women carry & pass down from generation to generation.

What makes the program unique?

Cindy will be closing out our festival with a shorts program & panel that she has curated. This package features a series of archival films created by her peers as well as a talkback with Beirut based archivist, Maher Kouraytem.

Read more about Cindy in the article: [The histories our bodies carry](#).

Our Charity Model

Our crowdfunding model

We reinvest festival ticket revenue in two ways:

- 50% of the profits go towards supporting independent film projects by SWANA filmmakers. This year we're supporting Cindy Chehab's project *I Learn How to Scream*.
- The other 50% of the profits goes towards funding charitable organizations serving communities across the SWANA region. This year we're supporting Nation Station.

Partners and Supporters

Venue Partner (Beirut):

Beirut Art Center

<https://beirutartcenter.org/>

Venue Partner (Rome):

Zalib - Circolo Arci

<https://www.centrogiovanioroma.com/>

Community Partners:

Ahla Fawda

<https://ahlafawda.org/>

Institutional Partners:

Goethe Institute Lebanon

<https://www.goethe.de/ins/lb/en/index.html>

F&B Sponsor:

Cafe Najjar

<https://najjareshop.com/>

Media Partner (Rome):

Generazione

<https://generazionemagazine.it/>

Technical Partners:

Tunefork Studios

<https://www.tuneforkstudios.com/>

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Media Resources

Brand Assets

- [Logos \(PNG/SVG\)](#)
- [Flyers & Program Visuals](#)

Photography

- [2025 Festival](#)
- [Portraits](#)
- [Venues](#)

Video

- [2025 Recap](#)
- [Spotlight Director Interview](#)