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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 2011

BOSTON PALESTINE FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 5th ANNIVERSARY

The **Boston Palestine Film Festival (BPFF)**, co-presented with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, celebrates its fifth anniversary this year. From October 21-30, BPFF will screen over 50 Palestine-related films by Palestinian, American, Israeli, and international filmmakers at the MFA and other venues across the city. Film Premieres include the following: World Premiere (1), North American Premieres (3), USA Premieres (7), New England Premieres (4), and Boston Premieres (2). The festival also features three live music shows. Twelve distinguished invited guests will attend.

The Opening Night film is ***The Time That Remains*** (2009), by Elia Suleiman, with the director in attendance, on Friday October 21, at 6:30 pm at the MFA. The highly acclaimed film, a 2009 Cannes Selection, is a semi-biographical black comedy film written and directed by Suleiman, starring Elia Suleiman, Saleh Bakri, Leila Mouammar, and Bilal Zidani. It offers an account of the creation of the state of Israel from 1948 to the present. The film won the prestigious Black Pearl Award for Best Middle Eastern Narrative Film at the 2009 Middle East International Film Festival (MEIFF) in Abu Dhabi. It also won the Jury Grand Prize (with *About Elly*) at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards. According to *Variety Magazine*: “Suleiman has unquestionably made his masterpiece with *The Time That Remains*.”

The film is co-presented with the Consulate General of France in Boston—Consul General Christophe Guilhou will attend—and is sponsored by the following organizations at Northeastern University: The Program in Cinema Studies; the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures; and the Middle East Center for Peace, Culture and Development.

Elia Suleiman is a Palestinian film writer, director, actor, and producer. According to *The New Yorker Magazine*, “Suleiman’s name is often linked with that of Jacques Tati, and the comparison is just.”

He is best known for his 2002 film ***Divine Intervention***, a modern tragic comedy on living under occupation in the Palestinian territories, which won the Jury Prize at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival and the International Critics Prize (FIPRESCI); also receiving the Best Foreign Film Prize at the European Awards in Rome. ***Divine Intervention***, as well as his earlier work ***Chronicle of a Disappearance*** (1996), which won the Best First Film Prize at the 1996 Venice Film Festival, are part of a trilogy together with *The Time That Remains*.

All three works will be shown at separate screenings at the MFA as part of the festival, all followed by discussion with Suleiman, **offering a rare opportunity for engagement with an iconic Palestinian filmmaker about a major body of his work.**

The festival closes with *Man Without a Cell Phone (2009)*, a feature debut by Sameh Zoabi, a Palestinian director who is a citizen of Israel. Zoabi, who will attend the screening, was named **“one of the top 25 new faces of independent cinema”** by *Filmmaker Magazine*. The film is a humorous, sharp take on the social milieu of a Palestinian village inside Israel. The film was selected to screen last March at the New Directors/New Films festival, presented jointly by The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

Music Programs | At the reception following the Opening Night Film October 21, BPFf presents **Shusmo** (which means “Whatchamacallit” in Arabic), an eclectic NY-based band that has created a unique mélange of alternative Arabic music. **NPR** called them *“funky New Yorkers with Middle Eastern roots.”* The reception takes place at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at 9 pm, with directors and special guests, buffet and cocktails.

On Saturday, October 22 at the David Friend Recital Hall of Berklee College, BPFf hosts a Special Event to celebrate the legacy of the late Edward Said in facilitating access to music education and involvement for Palestinian youth, and “promoting interaction and coexistence among cultures through music.” The two-part event, called **The Gift of a Music Education: Celebrating the Legacy of Edward Said**, begins at 5:30 pm with a screening of the award-winning film *Knowledge is the Beginning*, which chronicles the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (WEDO), established in 1999 by Edward Said and Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim with the aim of bringing together young musicians from Israel, Palestine, and various Arab countries, supported by Spanish musicians. The film traces the orchestra’s history from its founding through its historic live concert in Ramallah’s Cultural Palace in the occupied West Bank in 2005. The West-Eastern Divan, a name derived from a collection of poems by Goethe, is not only a music project, but also a model of democracy and civilized living. Edward Said called it the most important thing he had done in his life.

Following the film, a reception and concert honor the ongoing efforts of Berklee College, building on Said’s legacy, to collaborate with the Edward Said National Music Conservatory in the occupied West Bank to identify and recruit gifted Palestinian musicians to study at Berklee. The students have prepared a **musical program and remarks** about what the gift of a Berklee music education means to them. **Ensemble performers** include: Naseem Alatrash, cello; Ali Amr, qanun, vocals; Utar Dunderartun, piano; Alex Gable, mandolin; Tyreek Jackson, bass; Maya Khaldi, vocals; Sergio Martinez, percussion; Ariadna Castellanos Pliago, piano; and Tareq Rantisi, percussion.

Speakers include Roger Brown, President of Berklee, and Adel Iskandar of Georgetown University and Co-Editor, *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation* (2010).

The Special Event is co-presented with:

- The Middle East Center for Peace, Culture, and Development, Northeastern University
- The International Affairs Program, Northeastern University
- The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee of Massachusetts (ADCMA)
- Musicians Without Borders

On Sunday November 13, BPF presents an **all-star Palestinian Hip Hop concert**, the closing event of the festival's university film series (see below for full details).

Themes | This year's 5th anniversary festival program has a number of thematic threads, including:

- The work of Elia Suleiman (*The Time That Remains, Chronicle of a Disappearance, Divine Intervention*)
- Celebrating the legacy of the late Edward Said (our Special Event at Berklee College of Music, *Knowledge is the Beginning, The Last Interview*)
- Homage to past and present revolutions in honor of the Arab Spring (*We Are Egypt, Nasser 56, This is My Picture When I Was Dead, Gaza Hospital, We Were Communists, Genet in Chatila*)
- Challenging the status quo (*77 Steps, Paradise Lost, Love During Wartime, Cultures of Resistance, My Land, and Breaking the Silence*, among others), and
- Women making movies (such as: Dahna Abourahme, Basma AlSharif, Gabriella Bier, Zeina Durra, Omaima Hamouri, Dara Khader, Raneen Jeries, Iara Lee, Ibtisam Mara'aneh, Nadine Naous, May Odeh, Lillie Paquette, Vanessa Rousselot, Jaqueline Salloum, Eti Tsicko)

Finally, this year's program showcases a burgeoning number of young emerging filmmakers who are focusing their talents on Palestine-related narratives, such as: Dahna Abourahme, Taghreed al-Azza, Basma AlSharif, Zeina Durra, Amber Fares, Avi Goldstein, Omaima Hamouri, Suhel Nafer, May Odeh, Vanessa Rousselot, Jaqueline Salloum, and Sameh Zoabi, among others.

Guests | Distinguished invited guests are (in chronological order of appearance at the festival): Elia Suleiman (*The Time That Remains, Chronicle of a Disappearance, and Divine Intervention*); Roger Brown (Berklee concert); Adel Iskandar (speaker at *The Last Interview* and the Berklee concert); Lillie Paquette (*We Are Egypt*); Samir Abdallah (*Gazastrophe*); Ibtisam Mara'aneh (*77 Steps, Paradise Lost*); Rajie Cook (*Pastports*); Dahna Abourahme (*The Kingdom of Women*); Gabriella Bier (*Love During Wartime*); Osama Zatar (*Love During Wartime*); Zeina Durra (*The Imperialists Are Still Alive!*); and Sameh Zoabi (*Man Without a Cell Phone*).

The full program is available at www.bostonpalestinefilmfest.org.

Venues | In addition to our ticketed shows at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Berklee College of Music, eight shows are free and open to the public this year: two at the Cambridge Public Library's Main Branch (Sunday, October 23 at 2 pm and Sunday, October 30 at 2 pm); two at the Brookline Public Library (Wednesday October 26 at 5:30 and 7 pm; and four at Harvard Law School (Monday, October 24 at 6 and 8 pm, and Tuesday, October 25 at 6 and 8:30 pm).

University film series | After the festival, in early November, we are facilitating film series at a number of area universities in conjunction with student groups. Participating universities include: Northeastern University; Boston University; University of Massachusetts-Boston; Brandeis University; MIT, and Roxbury Community College.

The university program culminates with a major series of hip hop events. Hip hop music is rapidly spreading across the Arab world as a means to fight oppression and demand social justice, alongside the Arab Spring. BPF is proud to present ***Hip Hop is Bigger Than Occupation / Existence is Resistance*** (2011), a 90-minute documentary that chronicles a 10-day musical tour through Palestine to teach resistance through the arts. Staying in the heart of Balata Refugee Camp at the Yafa Cultural Center in Nablus, the group witnessed and experienced the day-to-day struggle of Palestinian life. Accompanying

the filmmakers are acclaimed hip hop artists, including: M1 of Dead Prez, Lowkey, Shadia Mansour, Marcel Cartier, Mazzi of S.O.U.L. On November 13, BPFf presents a **Palestinian Hip Hop All-Star Concert** on at the Middle East Upstairs in Cambridge. Featured artists include **DAM, Shadia Mansour, and Yusuf Abdul Mateen**. A panel discussion with the artists will precede the concert.

About BPFf | Since 2007, the Boston Palestine Film Festival has been bringing Palestine-related cinema, narratives, and culture to New England audiences. The festival has featured hundreds of compelling and thought-provoking films, including documentaries, dramatic features, animated films, rare early works, video art pieces, and new films by emerging artists and youth. These works from directors around the world have offered refreshingly honest, self-described, and independent views of Palestine and its history, culture, and geographically dispersed society.

BPFf was created to celebrate Palestinian cinema as a cultural and artistic production of a people in exile and under occupation and siege. BPFf also aims to reduce prejudice and discrimination against Middle Eastern people generally and Palestinians in particular in the United States, a critical effort in the post-9/11 world. We also aim to instill pride in our Arab-American community and to provide a link for Americans of Arab heritage back to their original culture. The organizing committee works year-round on a volunteer basis to sustain the festival.

BPFf is one of a proliferating number of Palestine film festivals worldwide. Others have been established in London, Toronto, Sydney Australia, Chicago, Houston, Ann Arbor, and the newest – opening this past September – in Washington DC.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Elia Suleiman or any of the invited festival guests, please call Kristen Lauerman at the MFA or Salma Abu Ayyash at BPFf.

The Boston Palestine Film Festival is made possible in part by the generous support of:
THE GENEVIEVE MCMILLAN - REBA STEWART FOUNDATION



BPFf's OFFICIAL AIRLINE CARRIER FOR 2011

