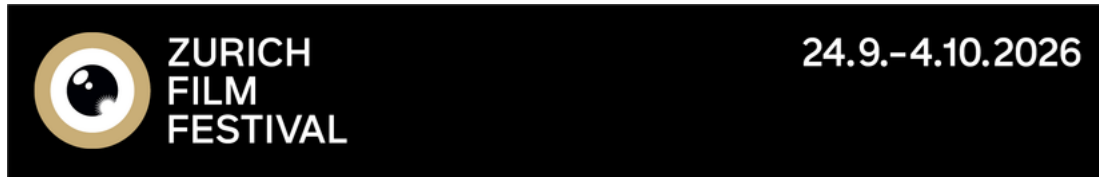


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MEDIA RELEASE



Zurich Film Festival and El Gouna Film Festival Announce Strategic Partnership

Zurich, August 10, 2026

The Zurich Film Festival (ZFF) and Egypt's El Gouna Film Festival (GFF) are entering a strategic partnership. Going forward, the two festivals will collaborate on programming and join forces to strengthen and support each other's presence within the international film community. The world premiere of the feature documentary **DOLPHINS: MY CLOSE ENCOUNTERS** at this year's 22nd edition of the ZFF will mark the beginning of this new alliance. The film follows Swiss marine biologist Angela Ziltener and her decades-long dolphin research conducted in the Red Sea. This documentary will also hold its **MENA Premiere** at El Gouna Film Festival (October 15 – 23, 2026), just miles from the coastline where she first began her groundbreaking research.

Two Festivals, One Shared Strategy

«Samih Sawiris has been familiar with the Zurich Film Festival for many years, and we've had inspiring strategic conversations. Now, we are joining forces», says **Christian Jungen, CEO of the Zurich Film Festival**. «This is a true win-win partnership. We can help the El Gouna Film Festival gain access to films and talent

while they provide us with invaluable logistical support and guide us on our way to gain new perspectives while navigating the film landscape of Africa and the Middle East. We are excited to collaborate with this dynamic and fast-growing festival.»

Sawiris agrees that the partnership will open new horizons for both festivals: «El Gouna Film Festival was founded with a mission to connect regional and international film industries at the intersection of world-class cinema, global dialogue, and social impact», says **Samih Sawiris, Founder of El Gouna and Chairman of El Gouna Film Festival Board of Directors**. «Partnering with a festival as prestigious as Zurich marks an exciting extension of this mission, reflecting a shared commitment to fostering meaningful exchange across outstanding cinema and industry leaders.»



L-R: Christian Jungen, Samih Sawiris, Reta Guetg, Amr Mansi, Andrew Mohsen

Sawiris, who lives in Switzerland part of the year and is a member of the ZFF's patrons' association, the Golden Eye Circle, brings a personal connection to this partnership as well. Thanks in part to a strong partnership network, ZFF has become one of the fastest rising European film festivals and was recently named one of the top ten film festivals in Europe by The Guardian. Often referred to as the «Toronto of Europe», the Zurich Film Festival has been established as a platform for European film premieres of internationally significant productions. Today, it's the second-largest film festival in the German-speaking world.

The new cooperation will not only extend ZFF's partnership network, but it will also offer GFF a wider platform for joint creative minds connecting the Middle East and African filmmakers with their European counterparts.

«For the better part of a decade, El Gouna Film Festival has worked tirelessly to give filmmakers in this part of the world a platform for them to collaborate and create films that share stories from the region with the rest of the world», says **Andrew Mohsen, Artistic Director of GFF**. «Moreover, we have worked to provide countless opportunities for up-and-coming filmmakers to develop their

skills and meet with industry leaders from around the world. This partnership with ZFF will facilitate the creation of synergies with others in the industry from various parts of the world.»

«As a film festival, building bridges is one of our key functions», says **Reta Guetg, Festival Director of the Zurich Film Festival**. «We want to connect people who share our beliefs and utilize films as powerful ambassadors of cultural exchange. That is exactly what this new friendship and partnership stands for.»

Both festivals share the belief that independence and collaboration are not opposing forces. Instead, they are essential to working side by side with major studios, global streaming platforms and the international film community as equal partners. In concrete terms, this means that both festivals will exchange films and talents.

The collaboration between the two film festivals will fulfill their joint long-standing goal of building cross-cultural bridges for filmmakers in Egypt, the Middle East and Africa and their counterparts in Europe.



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DOLPHINS: MY CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: World Premiere at ZFF, Next Stop: El Gouna

The first film presented jointly by the two festivals connects Zurich and the Red Sea by focusing on nature: The feature documentary DOLPHINS: MY CLOSE ENCOUNTERS follows Swiss marine biologist Angela Ziltener, who has been studying the behaviors of wild dolphin populations in the waters off the Egyptian town of El Gouna for years.

Directed by Barny Revill and produced by world-leading natural history producer Silverback Films, with Keith Scholey as executive producer, the film traces Angela's more than 15-year-long diving journey alongside wild dolphins, slowly gaining a rare window into their lives. What began as a scientific study became something far more personal, as Angela found herself drawn into the dolphins' world and faced with a profound question: who was really observing whom?

Set within the extraordinary coral reefs of Egypt's Red Sea, DOLPHINS: MY CLOSE ENCOUNTERS follows Angela's emotional journey between science and intuition, revealing surprising behaviors, remarkable discoveries and an intimate connection with one of the planet's most intelligent and enigmatic animals. Angela Ziltener is a Swiss wildlife biologist and conservationist, as well as the Founder and President of the Dolphin Watch Alliance. She is internationally recognised for her long-term research on wild dolphins in Egypt's Northern Red Sea.

DOLPHINS: MY CLOSE ENCOUNTERS will celebrate its world premiere at the 22nd Zurich Film Festival before its Middle East premiere at the El Gouna Film Festival, just miles from the coastline where Angela Ziltener first began her groundbreaking research.

Zurich Film Festival

The Zurich Film Festival (ZFF) is the second-largest film festival in the German-speaking world, presenting the year's finest discoveries and most anticipated films over a span of eleven days each fall. It fosters communication between emerging directors, established filmmakers, the film industry, and audiences.

The 22nd edition will take place from September 24 to October 4, 2026.

Further information: [Zurich Film Festival](#) | [ZFF Industry](#)

El Gouna Film Festival

El Gouna Film Festival is one of the leading festivals in the Middle East, aimed at showcasing a diverse array of films to an audience passionate about cinema. It seeks to promote better cultural connections through the art of film, connecting filmmakers from the region with their international counterparts to enhance collaboration and cultural exchange. Additionally, the festival is dedicated to discovering new cinematic voices and is enthusiastic about being a catalyst for the development of cinema in the Arab world, particularly through its industry arm: the CineGouna Platform.

This year's edition takes place from October 15-23, 2026.

More information: [El Gouna Film Festival](#) | [GFF](#)

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