

Egyptian director's award-winning 'Amira' is novel but trips up



CHENNAI: Egyptian director Mohamed Diab, who gave us gripping works like “Cairo 678” and “Clash,” gets intimate with his latest outing, “Amira,” which was screened at this year’s Venice Film Festival, the El Gouna Film Festival and the MedFilm Festival in Rome, where it scooped up multiple prizes this week.



[For the latest updates, follow us on Instagram @arabnews.lifestyle \(https://www.instagram.com/arabnews.lifestyle\)](https://www.instagram.com/arabnews.lifestyle)

A portrait of a father-daughter relationship in which the young girl places her parent on a pedestal and worships him as a hero, “Amira” has twists and turns that will keep the audience glued to the screen.



“Amira” has twists and turns that will keep the audience glued to the screen. Supplied

Amira (Tara Abboud) is a 17-year-old girl who believes she is the daughter of a Palestinian man, Nawar, held in an Israeli jail. She is led to believe she was conceived via less than usual means — a means that other films have yet to explore, which adds to the novelty factor of Diab’s feature. A happy, spirited girl, she aspires to be a photographer and we are told that the relationship between Amira, Nawar and his wife, Warda (Saba Mubarak), is mostly warm and genuine, although they have never lived together as a family.

Diab takes us into the tricky labyrinth of human behavior and emotions when Amira loses her cool with her mother and the movie weaves itself into a tight spot when skeletons tumble out of the closet, leading to despair and disillusionment. Diab’s no-holds barred filming presents the stark reality of how women continue to be looked down upon as inferior to men, and how purity is given more than its share of importance in society as Amira begins to feel that she is somehow culpable for the shameful status her family has found itself in.



“Amira” has great social relevance and is a unique commentary on a Palestinian issue that has not been widely explored. Supplied

Diab’s movie is blunt and matter-of-fact, especially when it tackles the issue of paternity, but it does not quite get to the core of this by failing to tell us what exactly constitutes being a father. Co-produced by Film Clinic — which is led by the now-director of the Cairo Film Festival, Mohamed Hefzy — “Amira” has great social relevance and is a unique commentary on a Palestinian issue that has not been widely explored.

In this landscape that is ripe for drama, Amira’s relationships with her parents and a local boy with whom she is tentatively in love appear synonymous with Palestinian-Israeli tension. However, the attempt to weave in socio-political themes is a tad heavy handed.
