Jordan's Oscars submission 'Inshallah A Boy' is smartly written and moving

CHENNAI: Patriarchal norms can be so rigid that they bring misery to women and Jordan's submission at the upcoming Oscars, "Inshallah A Boy," which was also part of the recent Cannes Film Festival, explores this theme.

Helmed by Amjad Al-Rasheed, who co-wrote the movie with Delphine Agut and Rula Nasser, the film is set in 2019 Jordan and traces the life of a 30-something woman, Nawal (Mouna Hawa). When her husband dies leaving her and daughter Nora (Seleena Rababah) behind, the wife finds that she is completely lost and devastated. And it seems it is worse for a widow who has no son. After her bereavement, she is in a dilemma — will she lose her job? Will she lose her house and even the custody of her daughter to her husband's brother? He is, according to inheritance laws, is "responsible before God and the public for taking care of the wife and her children." Did her husband really forget to co-sign a document that would have added her name to the lease of the house. But Nawal is a woman who never says never and begins to fight the system that s stacked against women.

The movie gets into a claustrophobic situation that begins to resemble a thriller. The very real issues take on the form of terror. However, the work is not all dark, and shows us some powerfully positive moments. Nawal feels a sense of camaraderie when she finds that there are other women who are in a similar situations.

Mouna Hawa shines as Nawal, who rises out of the depths of despair to turn "Inshallah A Boy" into something positive. Also, one must also take note of the two main antagonists. Nawal's brother, Ahmad, (Mohammad Al Jizawi), is particularly interesting. Though part of her family, he is a villain in disguise. He keeps pestering Nawal for the money her husband owned him, and also part of her property which he has a right over according to the law.

The film tackles an array of themes and is smartly written. Technically impressive, it made waves at Cannes.