



# From Cairo

a film by Hala Galal



## From Cairo (Min al Qahira) من القاهرة

### Short Content

Egyptian filmmaker Hala Galal documents the lives — and resilience — of two single women in Cairo defying norms to carve out space for their dreams.

### Long Content

In the streets of Cairo, documentary filmmaker Hala Galal moves purposefully and quickly. She presents a brave face, but she is in constant fear of being harassed (or worse) just for being a working single woman. Galal follows two women, Heba and Aya, who challenge the norms and limitations of women in Egypt with a completely different fearlessness.

Heba tries to find space in her life as a single mother and photojournalist to create art that, among other things, focuses on the existence of the female body. Although money is tight, her small home is always filled with laughter and the smell of home-cooked food. Meanwhile, Aya tries to find a foothold in her relationship with family, religion and passion for film. The contact sport of roller derby takes up more and more of her time, and the community and closeness to the other women on the team forces Aya to reconsider her position as a woman.

All three women have a desire to create space for more voices and nuanced perspectives in Egypt. They live alone and work in art specifically, through which they find their way, achieve their dreams and find some happiness—regardless of the consequences.

### Credits

documentary, Hala Galal, Egypt 2021, 65 min (52 min available), Arabic with English ST

Director	Hala Galal
Production	Kesmat ElSayed
DoP	Kesmat ElSayed, Ines Marzouk, Mostafa Bahgat
Editing	Aya Yusuf



## **Film-maker Hala Galal**

Hala Galal is a Filmmaker (writer, director and producer). She is the founder and executive director of SEMAT Production & Distribution supporting Alternative/Independent Cinema in Egypt. She has led SEMAT, a cultural hub with links to a number of civil society organizations involved in the creative sector and youth as well as women organizations in Egypt/the Arab Region. Hala produced more than 10 films for first time directors. Her long documentary 'Women ChitChat' won the Silver Prize at the Arab Rotterdam Film Festival.

## **Director's Note**

As a woman living in Cairo I live with a lot of fear and anxiety. I find that Cairo is a tough city especially for women who choose any choice other than the traditional. On a daily basis, women who look a bit different are confronted with many challenges. The violence towards women, the aggression on the street and the constant judgment is part of the daily exposure that women have to deal with. Traumas that they experience personally or that they are exposed to when they engage with the life of other women. How do we still continue to pursue our dreams and face our fears? I saw in both Aya and Heba a free spirit and attempted to deal with this challenge. They suffer like me from constant fear, anxiety and discomfort of living in this city but they still continue to stick with their choices. They both find in Art a refuge and in helping others and connecting with other women a healing. In following them, I found that they had many answers to my question. Their choices inspired me. They show in a simple way how friendship, solidarity, art, sports, accepting oneself and pursuing your passions is possible in this tough city. They allowed me into their life and helped me share through this film my complex relationship as a woman with my city Cairo. I hope by sharing this experience I would in return shine a positivity to all women who watch this film. (Hala Galal)

## **Producer's Note**

From Cairo is a special project produced by women about women. A full crew of women. It follows two inspiring stories which Hala reflects one very bravely opening up her personal feelings towards our city Cairo. It gives a glimpse into the world of women in Cairo and their survival mechanisms. (Kesmat ElSayed)



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