

A SHORT FILM BY GHADA WALI

SHAMS

"IN A LAND THAT TRIED TO BURY HER, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO THE SUN."

A woman is lying on a patterned rug, her head resting on the floor. Her forehead is covered in blood, and her eyes are closed. She is wearing a dark blue headscarf and a red garment with yellow floral patterns. The background is dark and out of focus.

A WOMAN IS KILLED EVERY 11 MINUTES BY A FAMILY MEMBER SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD"

The United Nations reported that, in 2023, an average of 140 women and girls were killed daily by intimate partners or family members, totaling approximately 51,100 such deaths globally. This underscores the widespread nature of gender-based violence and the need for comprehensive interventions.



***A MEDICOLEGAL STUDY IN EGYPT FOUND THAT AMONG 319
SUSPICIOUS DEATHS OF ADULT WOMEN (AGED >20) WERE
PREGNANT AT AUTOPSY.***



THE FILM IS
NOT ABOUT:

- **Virginity**
- **Honor killing**

THE FILM IS
ABOUT:

- **How societies turn bodies into archives, testimonies.**
- **Trauma is presented as inheritance system, not incident.**

**SHAMS IS EVIDENCE CINEMA: A STORY BORN FROM LIVING VOICES, NOT ABSTRACTION.
"BASED ON REAL TESTIMONIES COLLECTED FROM UPPER EGYPT BETWEEN 2015-2025."**

Master Table: Documented Honor/Family Killing Cases in Upper Egypt (2000-2025)

| ID | Victim Name | Age | Perpetrator Relation | Village/Area | Governorate | Date | Short Summary |
|----|--|------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Kareema (كريمة) | 22 | Three brothers | Akhmim | Sohag | 2024-12-18 | Strangled and buried by brothers; remains later disposed in Nile: reported as honor killing. |
| 2 | Unnamed | 19 | Brother + cousin (accused) | North Sohag | Sohag | 2020-09-16 | Killed over alleged "bad behaviour"; referred to criminal court. |
| 3 | Mother + two daughters (unnamed) | — | Multiple male relatives | Isna | Luxor | 2013-05-24 | Three female family members found murdered and dumped in the Nile: suspected honor killing. |
| 4 | Amira; Amir; Adam | 8,7,9 | Mother + her lover | Nagaa Hammadi area | Qena | 2021 / 2022 | Children and father poisoned; mother and lover sentenced to death. |
| 5 | Unnamed (Delga household) | various children | Step-mother (accused) | Delga / Deir Mawas | Minya | 2024 | Household poisoning killed multiple children and father: forensic investigation reported. |
| 6 | Unnamed (Abu Qurgas case) | — | Family / revenge motive | Abu Qurgas | Minya | 2020-07-16 | Murder linked to daughter's escape to marry; arrests and detention reported. |
| 7 | Maghagha retrial case (unnamed victim) | — | Male family member(s) (convicted) | Maghagha | Minya | 2011 (incident) / 2020 (retrial) | Retrial led to a 15-year sentence for a family-related murder originally from 2011. |
| 8 | Unnamed (Naj' Hammadi poisoning cluster) | children | Mother and lover (convicted) | Naj' Hammadi / Qena area | Qena | 2021 / 2022 | High-profile poisoning case in Qena leading to death sentences. |
| 9 | Unnamed (husband killed wife's lover) | — | Husband | Sohag (rural) | Sohag | 2017-08-21 | Husband killed wife's alleged lover and burned the body: reported as honor motive. |
| 10 | Unnamed (sister killed by brothers - Vetoate case) | — | Brothers | Asirāt area | Sohag | 2017 | Sisters' death reclassified as homicide by brothers. |
| 11 | Unnamed (Maghagha child murder) | 15 | Unknown (family context) | Maghagha | Minya | 2013 | Teen murder with family context; court actions reported later. |
| 12 | Unnamed (regional aggregated cases - Assiut) | — | Various family relations | Assiut region | Assiut | Various | NGOs and local press report numerous family-perpetrated killings. |
| 13 | Unnamed (Aswan region) | — | Family members | Aswan region | Aswan | Various | Local reports of family murders with 'honor' framing. |
| 14 | Unnamed (Beni Suef) | — | Family members | Beni Suef region | Beni Suef | Various | Multiple family homicides reported over years. |
| 15 | Unnamed (New Valley isolated) | — | Family members | New Valley | New Valley | Various | Sparse NGO/local reporting of isolated cases. |
| 16 | Two sisters (unnamed) | — | Brothers (accused) | Upper Egypt (unspecified) | Upper Egypt | 2023-01 | Two sisters reportedly killed by brothers over alleged immoral behaviour. |
| 17 | Unnamed (multiple family murders 2013-2015) | — | Multiple family members | Upper Egypt rural clusters | Various | 2013-2015 | Multi-victim family murders interpreted as honor/revenge killings. |
| 18 | Unnamed (2014-2016 Luxor rural reports) | — | Family members / husband | Luxor rural | Luxor | 2014-2016 | Rural Luxor cases of family killings reported. |
| 19 | Unnamed (Qena village short reports) | — | Family members | Qena villages | Qena | 2014-2019 | Short reports of familial homicides lacking follow-up. |
| 20 | Unnamed (historic HRW-cited cases) | — | Family members | Upper Egypt examples | Upper Egypt | 2000-2018 | HRW and US State Dept reports cite multiple honor/family killings. |
| 21 | Unnamed (Sohag 2012-2019 cluster) | — | Family members / husbands | Sohag rural | Sohag | 2012-2019 | Cluster of women killed by relatives over 'honour' |

ETHICAL AND ARTISTIC POSITIONING

*THE FILM IS INSPIRED BY TESTIMONIES AND MEDIA REPORTS ACROSS THE ARAB WORLD,
BUT DOES NOT RECREATE ANY SINGLE CASE.*

*IT TRANSFORMS THESE PATTERNS INTO A
CINEMATIC MYTH OF RESISTANCE AND RENEWAL.*

FILM OVERVIEW

A woman wearing a brown headscarf and a matching long-sleeved top is sitting on the ground. She is looking down with a somber expression. Her hands are resting on her lap. The background is a wicker basket, and the lighting is warm and low, creating a dramatic and intimate atmosphere.

Title: shams | **Format:** short film (15 minutes) | **Country:** egypt / international | **Language:** arabic (with english subtitles) |
Genre: drama, social realism, mythic poetic cinema | **Status:** preproduction, script complete, festival materials ready

LOGLINE



In a remote village in Upper Egypt, an -18year-old bride defies a brutal virginity ritual and escapes an honor killing at the hands of her father—carrying within her both new life and the echo of generations of silenced women.

EVOLUTION THROUGH HISTORY - Babylonian & Assyrian Codes: reinforced patriarchal authority over women's bodies. - **Roman Law:** granted fathers the right to kill adulterous daughters and their lovers. - **Ottoman Penal Codes (19th c.):** introduced "honour" as a mitigating factor in sentencing. - **Modern Middle East:** remnants of such clauses persisted in several penal codes until recently repealed.

SYNOPSIS

In a secluded village in Upper Egypt, an 18-year-old bride undergoes a ritual meant to prove her purity on her wedding night. When the ritual fails, her body becomes evidence, and her fate is sealed. Facing an honor killing at the hands of her own father, she flees into the night—pregnant, wounded, and alone.

As she moves through desert paths and ancient spaces, her escape becomes more than an act of survival. It is a confrontation between inherited violence and the possibility of breaking a generational cycle. Carrying an unborn child, she embodies both the weight of silenced women before her and the fragile hope of a different future.

Blending mythic realism with social urgency, SHAMS explores how patriarchal rituals are sustained through silence—and what it costs for one woman to resist them, even when her voice is denied.



KEY THEMES

Women's bodies are battlegrounds—where silence kills, desire condemns, and freedom demands sacrifice. Through Zahra's struggle, the film confronts global cycles of gendered violence, asking: ***Can one voice, even if silenced, echo loud enough to free the next generation?***

WOMEN POLICING WOMEN

GENERATIONAL TRAUMA:

Mothers, aunts, neighbors—all carry wounds of oppression, passing them like heirlooms. Women repeating cycles, yet planting seeds of change.

THE LAW AS A SILENT GOD

BODIES AS BATTLEFIELDS:

Silenced Voices, Public virginity tests, forced marriages, and honor killings. —rituals that control female bodies.

INHERITED NORMALIZED VIOLENCE

DEATH, REBIRTH AND MYTH:

From goddess ancestry to a reborn legacy of freedom. Zahra's sacrifice is not an ending—it is a passage, her child Shams embodying the possibility of a new dawn.

ACROSS FOUR
GENERATIONS OF WOMEN
BOUND BY RITUAL AND
SILENCE, ONE ACT OF
DEFIANCE TURNS BLOOD
INTO RIVER AND GRIEF
INTO DAWN—SHAMS IS
THE REBIRTH OF VOICE.

MORAL ENGINE

A woman with dark hair is shown in profile, looking out of a window at night. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window, creating a contemplative and somber atmosphere. The woman's face is partially illuminated by the light from the window.

*A woman denied protection becomes protection itself.
her body is treated as evidence.*

Shams is about refusing, not winning.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

The rituals depicted in SHAMS are not isolated acts, but remnants of long-standing social and legal systems that historically regulated women's bodies across the region. These practices persist not through overt brutality, but through collective silence and inherited obedience.

The film does not seek to explain or judge a culture. Instead, it observes how violence becomes normalized when framed as duty, and how individuals—both men and women—become participants in systems they did not create.

Shams offers an artistic reflection on the intersection between law and gender-based violence in Egypt. While **Article 237 of the Egyptian Penal Code reduces penalties for men who commit “honor killings,” the female victim remains condemned even after death.**

The film does not seek a legal trial, but a trial of silence — a cinematic act of remembrance that transforms pain into dialogue, reclaiming women's right to be witnesses rather than bodies filed as “unknown.”



DIRECTORS NOTE

SHAMS was born from a question that haunted me: how does violence survive across generations when everyone believes they are acting out of duty, not cruelty?

This film is not about villains. It is about people imprisoned inside systems older than themselves — systems where women's bodies become evidence, silence becomes survival, and love is distorted into control. Zahra does not escape to be free; she escapes to choose. That choice — even when it leads to death — is the most dangerous act a woman can commit in her world.

Visually, SHAMS moves between realism and myth. The river, blood, fire, and silence function not as symbols but as witnesses. Sound replaces explanation. Bodies carry history. I am less interested in depicting violence than in exposing the mechanisms that justify it.

I approach this story with responsibility, not accusation. Many of the men in SHAMS are also victims of inherited fear. Yet accountability remains unavoidable. This balance — between empathy and refusal — is the film's moral spine.

SHAMS is conceived for international audiences, not to explain a culture, but to confront a universal structure of control that exists in different forms across the world. It is a story about women whose voices were buried — and about one voice that refuses to disappear.

This film is not just a story—it is a scream. A scream for the girls silenced in bedrooms, hospitals, and temples. A scream for the women who ran empires but are now erased from history. I was raised among these contradictions—songs of goddesses alongside whispers of shame. SHAMS is my rebellion, my love letter, and my exorcism.

I want the audience to leave the cinema breathless, unsettled, but also ignited—with the image of Zahra's daughter Shams, a living flame of possibility. In Zahra's struggle lies the struggle of women across the world whose bodies, voices, and freedoms are dictated by others. Yet who still find ways to rebel.

By blending realism with myth, I want to reclaim the image of the Egyptian goddess and place her inside a modern girl's struggle. I believe cinema must bear witness while opening a portal for hope, however fragile. My hope is that Zahra's voice resonates in Egypt and beyond—not only as cinema, but as testimony.

VISION

SHAMS is not a story of a victim—it is a story of resistance, transformation, and rebirth.

It is a film about how violence survives when it no longer needs to raise its voice. It is not driven by spectacle or accusation, but by ritual, silence, and the quiet certainty of a system that believes itself moral.

The story follows Zahra, an eighteen-year-old bride whose body becomes evidence within a social order that equates purity with survival. When a ritual meant to confirm her virtue fails, her fate is decided before she can speak. Her escape is not framed as liberation, but as a physical passage through fear, inheritance, and endurance—through landscapes and memories shaped long before her birth.

I am less interested in depicting violence than in exposing its procedures: how it is normalized, repeated, and protected by tradition. In SHAMS, the most dangerous force is not cruelty, but conviction. The film observes how moral systems operate quietly, how belief replaces brutality, and how silence itself becomes an instrument of control.

CINEMATIC LANGUAGE

The film is rooted in realism, shaped by myth rather than symbolism. Landscape, body, and sound carry meaning where language is denied. The camera remains close to Zahra's physical experience—breath, skin, fatigue, pain—refusing distance, exposition, or psychological explanation.

Sound functions as a primary narrative force. Silence, water, wind, ritual chants, and breath replace dialogue, allowing the audience to inhabit Zahra's interior state rather than observe her from the outside. Music is used sparingly, emerging only when emotion exceeds what silence can contain.

Visually, SHAMS moves through earth, fire, and water as witnesses rather than metaphors. The Nile is not symbolic; it is ancient, present, and indifferent—holding both death and continuation. The formal language balances neorealist intimacy with restrained lyricism, mirroring the tension between bodily confinement and a world that endures beyond it.

Claustrophobic

Handheld, tighter framing, - suffocating tension.

Static

Expressionistic extremes - tableau- like wedding chamber.

Centered

Still, natural light - peace and transcendence.

COLOR PALETTE

The palette shifts from moonlight silver to harsh white, to crimson, to golden dawn. Blues/silvers (desire), ochre/shadows (oppression), blood-red to blue to gold (rebirth). A cycle from oppression to transcendence.

SOUNDSCAPE

Breath, water, fireworks, silence—non-musical elements become the score, with the final Adhan (call to prayer) reimagined as an anthem of female defiance. Layers of women's voices: whispers, lullabies, ululations, the Adhan, prayers — building across the film.

MOTIFS

Water

Birth, death, cleansing.

Blood

Virginity, childbirth, sacrifice.

Palm Basket

Coffin and cradle.

Birds

Freedom denied, then passed on.

Hands

Submission, self-discovery, motherhood.

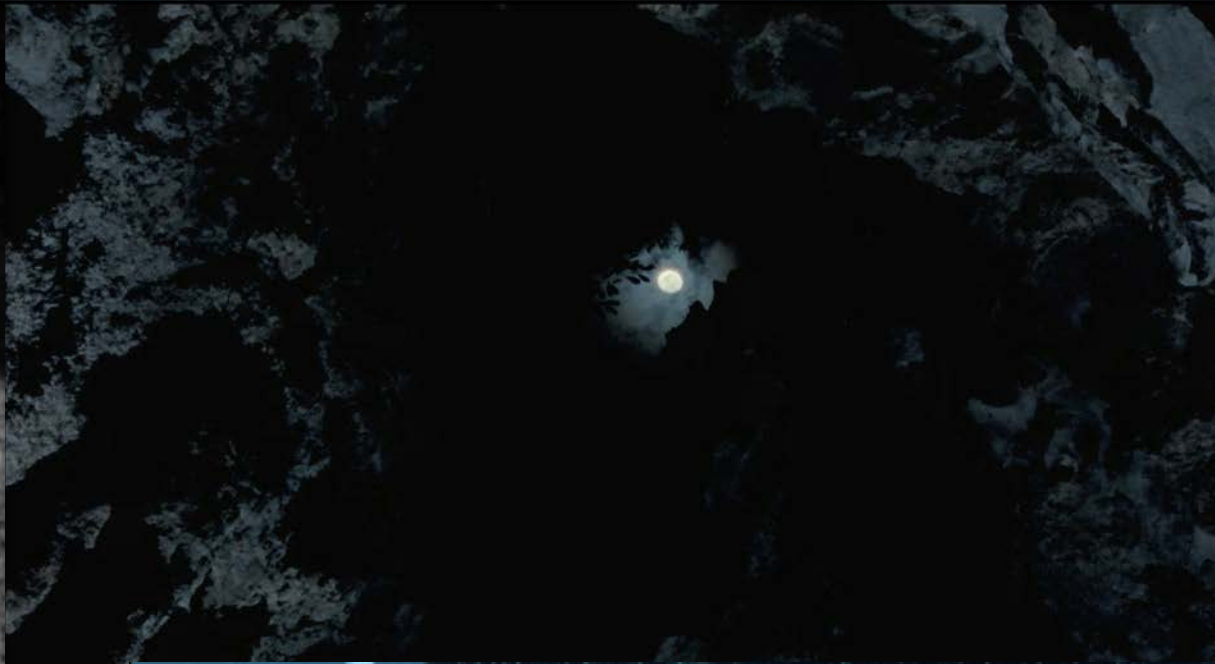
THE NILE

IS BOTH BACKDROP AND CHARACTER: A RIVER OF LIFE, DEATH,
AND REBIRTH.

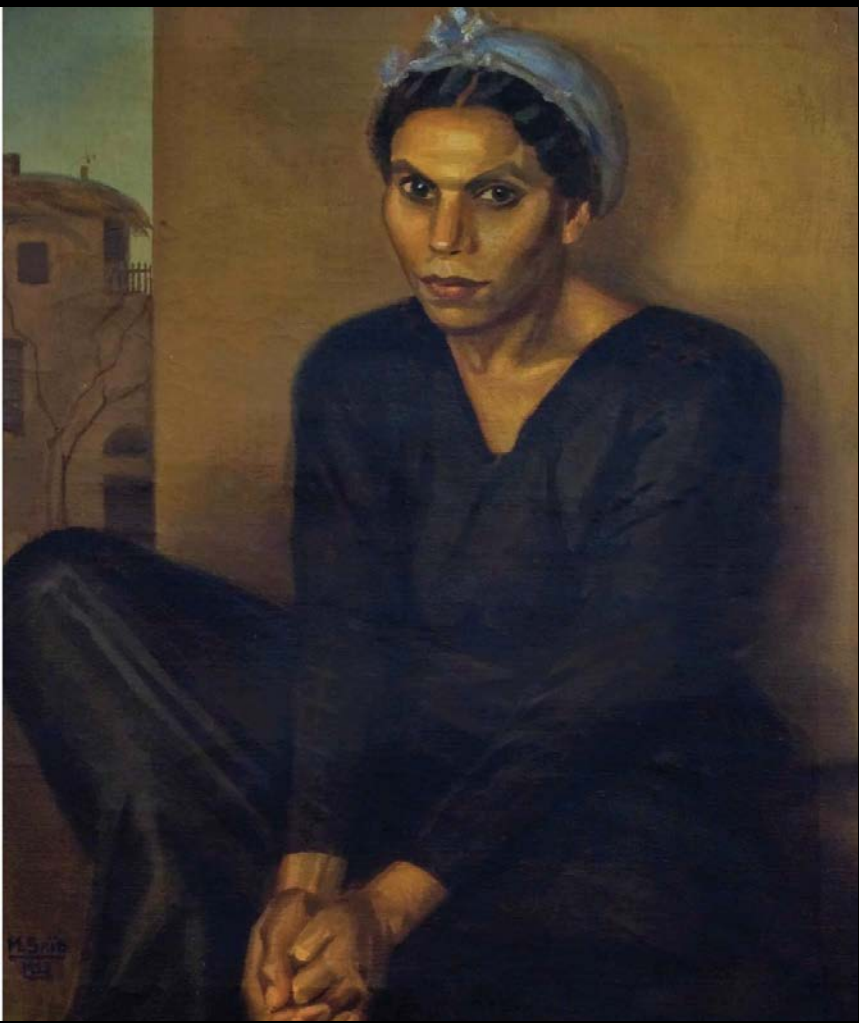
the witness, absorber, and redeemer of women's pain.

ZAHRA'S REBIRTH THROUGH THE RIVER BECOMES A SYMBOLIC
ACT OF RECLAIMING ALL THE WOMEN WHOSE STORIES WERE
DROWNED.









STONE

Like a fever dream—tender one moment, brutal the next, always pulsing with suppressed desire. Minimal dialogue. Symbolic realism. Faces and gestures carry weight.

Influences

Jeanne Dielman (Chantal Akerman),

Timbuktu (Abderrahmane Sissako).

The land (Youssef Chahine).

Atlantics (Mati Diop) – for mythic realism and water as spiritual force.

The Piano (Jane Campion) – for bodies, repression, and female voice reclaimed.

Capernaum (Nadine Labaki) – for raw depiction of childhood and survival.

The Handmaid's Tale (series) – for ritualized violence against women, stylized with poetic rage.

Egyptian iconography – ancient goddesses, palms, temples—interwoven with naturalism to reclaim buried power.

— but infused with mythic surrealism (Apichatpong Weerasethakul).

**THE FILM'S 15 MINUTES UNFOLD LIKE A VISUAL PRAYER
— PART LAMENT, PART PROPHECY.**

SOUND DESIGN MOTIFS

WATER

always present—lapping, rushing, drowning. From threat -cleansing --rebirth.

BREATH/HEARTBEAT

Zahra's POV soundscape. Increases in intimacy/fear moments.

FIREWORKS

joy masking violence; bleed into oppressive chamber scene.

BIRDS

freedom, divine witness. Their flight punctuates turning points.

VISUAL LANGUAGE SUMMARY

CAMERA PROGRESSION

Wide poetic - handheld suffocation - static ritual - soaring transcendence.

LIGHT PROGRESSION

Moonlight silver - fluorescent white - crimson/white clash - dawn gold.

COMPOSITION

Zahra framed in constriction (doorways, windows, beds) until death, then wide open water and sky.

CLOSING IMAGE

*The final image: a baby in a palm basket drifting downstream, an allegory for fragility and infinite possibility. **This is not just Zahra's story. It belongs to every voice buried alive yet still burning beneath the sand.***

SHAMS IS DESIGNED AS A CINEMATIC SCAR — TENDER AND BRUTAL AT ONCE. ITS FINAL CONFRONTATION, WHEN SHAMS STARES INTO THE LENS AND CLAIMS HER NAME, IS A DIRECT CHALLENGE: A REBUKE OF SILENCE, A DEMAND FOR RECKONING.

Shams (the daughter) lifts a white scarf against the sunlight; light passes through the fabric and becomes gold — the shame cloth transformed into freedom.

SHAMS - WHY INVEST NOW?

Shams confronts an urgent and growing global crisis — femicide, honor-based violence, and the social control of women's bodies — through a visually bold, festival-ready short film that promises critical acclaim and a pathway to a feature-length project and advocacy campaign. It builds local capacity in upper Egypt, empowering new voices in Arab cinema.

- **A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS:** Shams turns these truths into cinema — a visual prayer about rebirth and freedom.
- **GLOBAL URGENCY:** Echoes women's movements world-wide (#MeToo / Iran / India / Afghanistan).
- **CULTURAL MOMENT:** Egypt stands at a crossroads between tradition and change; this film captures that tension through poetic realism.

Issue

Egypt / Region

Femicide & family killings

364 cases reported - many unrecorded

FGM prevalence

≈ 87% of women 15-49 yrs

Child marriage

(<18) ≈ 16% of women 20-24

Domestic violence

25-30% of ever-married women

SHAMS is character-driven, not “issue-driven”.

Honor violence is often depicted through spectacle or advocacy. Shams chooses another path — one that withholds judgment and resolution, offering instead an ethical cinematic experience grounded in restraint.

I wanted to make a film where violence is never explosive, only procedural. In Shams, there are no villains performing cruelty, only people performing tradition. The film refuses commentary, trusting silence and duration to carry meaning. By staying inside the body rather than explaining the system, Shams asks the audience not to understand, but to endure.

1. Shams refuses explanation

The film never explains honor, religion, or morality. It shows how systems function when no one questions them.

2. Violence is procedural, not emotional

There is no rage.
No spectacle.
No catharsis.

The horror comes from:

- Calm voices
- Repetition
- Time

3. The camera never abandons the girl

The film does not investigate men, law, or ideology.

It stays:

- With the body
- With breath
- With duration

This creates ethical alignment, not voyeurism.

4. Survival is not victory

The ending does not reassure.

It leaves the audience with:

- A transformed body
- An irreversible choice
- No explanation

A group of people, including men and women, are gathered in a dimly lit room. Some are playing large, round drums. The scene is illuminated by warm, low-key lighting, creating a sense of intimacy and community. The text "CHARACTER PROFILES" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

CHARACTER PROFILES

ZAHRA (18)

“The Flower” protagonist *(the girl who becomes the mythic mother)*

Archetype: The Innocent -The Martyr-Fragile beauty, eyes filled with suppressed fire. Slim build, henna-stained hands. Needs emotional range from timid to defiant.

Want: Escape arranged marriage, Survive and save her unborn child. find freedom.

Need: Own her body and voice.

Arc: Silenced - fugitive - embodied voice -sacrificial mother.

Contradictions: Fierce desire for autonomy but conditioned to silence. Innocent yet bold. Naïve but visionary.

Symbolism: The last buried goddess, reborn as voice.

Core characteristics

*Age: 18. Small, wrapped shoulders, callused fingers from work; expressive eyes that swallow words. **Essence:** a body learning to keep its own voice.*

Motivations & goals

*External: Survive her marriage, keep the baby, escape shame.
Internal: Own her body and speak her truth — to herself and the world.*

Flaws / internal conflict

Naïveté about men who promise but don't stay; self-blame; instinct to protect others by silence (learned survival). This causes paralysis early on.

Key relationships

Sakhr (father/executioner); Tahany, hekam (mother — complicit protector);

Arc map

Act I: Silenced

Act II: Chooses the child (first active choice)

Act III: Raises her voice in labour, dies, but births Shams (sacrifice - transcendence).

Signature quirks & details

Fingertip habit: tracing the Nile's current on any surface. Hums under breath (private songs). Keeps a palm-woven basket as armor. Henna-marked hands that she studies like a map.

How she moves the plot

her choice to keep the child escalates stakes - final public act (scream/prayer in labor) is the thematic climax.

SAKHR (50s)

“The frightened Father”

Archetype: The Tragic Patriarch - Worn-down farmer, haunted eyes. Must balance menace with fragility.

Want: Preserve family honor / restore his pride.

Need: Love his daughter beyond shame. To be forgiven.

Arc: Fear-driven patriarch - executioner - broken man - suicide.

Contradictions: Loves Zahra deeply but weaponized by tradition. Both protector and murderer.

Symbolism: The patriarch whose silence kills him.

Core characteristics

Age 50s. Large-shouldered, weathered, voice like smoke.

Essence: *fear dressed as authority.*

Motivations

Preserve family honor at all costs. Internal: terrified of failure in a harsh world.

Flaws

Violence cloaked in love; unable to imagine alternatives to honor-based punishment.

Relationships

Tahany (wife), Zahra (daughter — both love and executioner role).

Arc

From silent patriarch to executioner and finally to guilt-led suicide. Tragedy shows the cost of enforced honor.

Quirks

Carries a handkerchief; habit of hiding tears; sudden clenched fists.

Plot role

Provides the final threat of honor-killing; his choices drive the climax.

HAMZA (30s)

Groom (fragile masculinity)

Archetype: The Fragile Masculine - Stocky, insecure, a man destroyed by societal shame.

Want: Control, possession.

Need: Escape his own shame.

Arc: Fragile masculinity .humiliation. destruction (river explosion).

Contradictions: More broken than cruel. His violence is born of weakness.

Symbolism: Patriarchy consuming itself.

Core characteristics

Young, boorish, brittle ego.

Essence: *shame made violent.*

Motivations

Prove manhood, avoid humiliation.

Flaws

Insecurity, quickness to punish.

Arc

From groom to male executioner of shame - shame explodes outward.

Plot role

His expected violence and public role escalate danger; his ruin shapes the film's physical collapse.

TAHANY (S)

Mother (the silent generation)

Archetype: The Wounded Protector — a woman who has survived by submission, now torn between duty and conscience.

Want: Preserve her daughter's honor and family safety.

Need: Break the silence and save Zahra — even if it means betraying her community.

Arc: From obedience - guilt -defiance (the key).

Contradictions: Complicit in the system she secretly despises. Her love expresses itself through the very rituals that destroy her child.

Symbolism: The generational wound — silence as both weapon and inheritance.

Core characteristics

Measured, weary, self-effacing. Eyes that have seen everything but speak nothing.

Essence: *Love bound by fear.*

Motivations

Protect Zahra, maintain family stability, survive within a cruel order.

Flaws

Cowardice disguised as duty, emotional paralysis, internalized oppression.

Arc

From silent enforcer of the ritual to quiet liberator — the moment she gives Zahra the key, she frees them both.

Plot role

Her internal conflict gives moral depth to the film's violence. The act of passing the key transforms the narrative from tragedy to legacy — she becomes the unseen bridge between silence and rebirth.

HEKAM (70s)

Older Zahra (The Survivor)

Archetype: The Ghost of Survival — the woman who escaped death but not the cage.

Want: To believe her survival meant something.

Need: To face the truth — that silence is not freedom.

Arc: From survivor - self-denier - haunted witness.

Contradictions: Alive but lifeless; her safety became another kind of burial.

Symbolism: The body that endured while the soul drowned — living proof that endurance without voice is another form of death.

Core characteristics

Haunted, watchful, brittle calm. Speaks as if from a distance, to herself and to time.

Essence: *Freedom deferred.*

Motivations

To justify her survival; to protect the myth that silence saves.

Flaws

Self-erasure, guilt disguised as wisdom.

Arc

She fled the ritual and the village, yet never escaped its hold. Her voice survived only as echo — until Shams's birth reawakens the truth she buried.

Plot role

Acts as the film's temporal and emotional mirror — the "after" of Zahra's myth. Through Hekam, the film asks whether survival without liberation is victory or defeat.

SHAMS (18)

The Granddaughter / Rebirth (legacy of light)

Archetype: The Breaker of Cycles — the first woman in her bloodline born without shame.

Want: To exist freely, unburdened by inherited fear.

Need: To carry her mother's voice forward — to live as the proof that silence can end.

Arc: From infant survivor, living memory, symbol of renewal.

Contradictions: Both fragile and transcendent — born of tragedy, yet untouched by it.

Symbolism: Dawn, voice, and release — the new world rising from ancestral ruin.

Core characteristics

Quiet strength; eyes that seem to remember. Moves with an intuitive purpose, as if guided by an ancient song.

Essence: *Freedom made flesh.*

Motivations

To live, to speak, to remember — without being trapped by the pain that birthed her.

Flaws

None literal — her innocence reveals what others lost: the ability to live without fear.

Arc

From the basket in the river to the child on the shore, Shams completes her family's mythic circle. She does not rebel or escape; she simply exists — and in doing so, redeems those before her.

Plot role

Shams is the film's resolution and transcendence. Her presence transforms Zahra's death into legacy, turning despair into continuity. She is the echo that becomes voice — the living sunrise over generations of silence.

HOW EACH MAIN CHARACTER DRIVES THE PLOT:

| Character | Archetype | Function in Plot | Impact / Transformation |
|---------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| Hekam (Grandmother) | The Origin of Silence | Sets the cycle in motion through her past compliance with ritual. | Her legacy of obedience becomes the curse the next generations must break. |
| Tahany (Mother) | The Silent Enforcer | Maintains tradition but secretly aids Zahra's escape. | Her small act of rebellion turns inherited silence into possibility. |
| Zahra (Daughter) | The Rebel / Catalyst | Defies the virginity ritual and flees, driving the story's core conflict. | Her sacrifice transforms fear into myth and sparks rebirth. |
| Hamza (Groom) | The Fragile Patriarch | His wounded ego triggers public violence. | Embodies how patriarchy destroys itself. |
| Sakhr (Father) | The Executioner of "Honor" | Pursues Zahra to restore family "honor." | Personifies generational male violence and internalized shame. |
| Shams (Child) | The Rebirth / The New Dawn | Born from Zahra's death; carries her legacy forward. | Completes the cycle — silence becomes voice, blood becomes dawn. |

A night scene in a village square. A large crowd of people, including men, women, and children, are gathered. In the center, a man in a bright blue tunic and white cap is performing a ritual or dance, holding a long wooden staff high above his head. The scene is illuminated by warm, glowing lanterns hanging from trees and buildings. The overall atmosphere is one of a traditional community event.

CHARACTER BACKSTORIES

**ZAHRA (Daughter
- The Rebel)**



Childhood: Restless, curious, drawn to stories by the Nile. Grew up under her mother's quiet warnings and grandmother's strict gaze.

Defining Moment: On her wedding night, when the ritual fails, she chooses flight over submission. That moment divides her lineage forever.

Contradictions: Brave yet terrified, innocent yet instinctively wise.
Relationships: Deeply bonded to Tahany, resentful toward Hamza, tender toward Hekam despite fear.
Flaw: Believes freedom must be earned through suffering.

**SAKHR (Father -
The Executioner of
"Honor")**



Childhood: Eldest son, burdened by responsibility and family reputation. Taught that a man's worth is his control over women.

Defining Moment: When gossip spreads about Zahra, he feels his masculinity slipping — and believes only blood can restore it.
Contradictions: Authoritarian yet broken, proud yet terrified of shame.

Relationships: Husband to Tahany, father to Zahra. Loves them in the only way he knows — through control.

Flaw: Mistakes fear for honor, control for love.

**HAMZA (Groom -
The Fragile
Patriarch)**



Childhood: Raised under a cruel father and a submissive mother. Learned that control equals respect

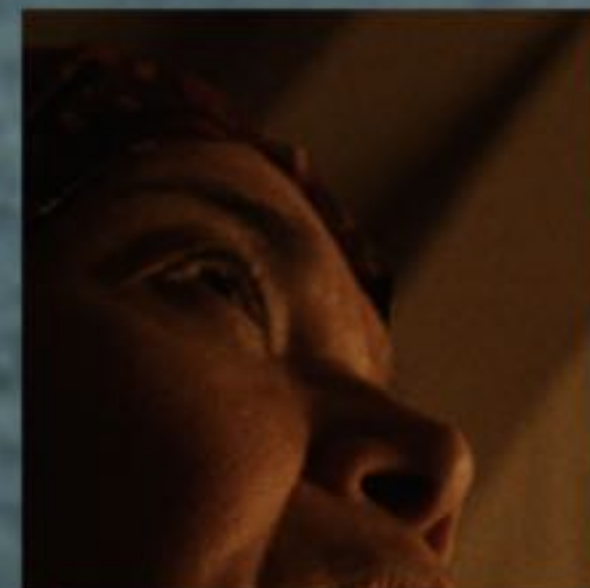
Defining Moment: Publicly humiliated when Zahra's ritual fails, his identity collapses

Contradictions: Brutal yet insecure, desperate for validation yet terrified of emotion

Relationships: Sees Zahra as possession, not partner. Craves his father's approval even after his death

Flaw: Equates violence with manhood; cannot separate pride from pain.

**TAHANY (Mother -
The Silent
Enforcer)**



Childhood: A child bride herself, robbed of education. Secretly once dreamt of becoming a singer.

Defining Moment: Beaten by Sakhr on their wedding night, she buried her dreams. Keeps a secret box of memories — letters, beads, an old tambourine.

Contradictions: Loving but practical, complicit yet protective. Knows survival sometimes requires betrayal.

Relationships: Loves Zahra but fears she will be broken. Holds complex loyalty to Sakhr — both victim and silent partner.
Flaw: Mistakes silence for safety.

**HEKAM
(Grandmother -
The Origin of
Silence)**



Childhood: Married at 13, silenced before she understood her own voice. Witnessed her sister killed for dishonor.

Defining Moment: During her own virginity ritual, the cloth bled — not from truth, but from fear. She survived, and survival became her only creed.

Contradictions: Wise yet blind, devout yet haunted by guilt. Believes she protects her family by repeating the same violence.

Relationships: Mother of Tahany. Respected by all, feared by some. Holds unspoken grief for the women lost under her watch.
Flaw: Mistakes endurance for strength, silence for salvation.

**SHAMS (Child -
The Rebirth)**



Childhood: Born from flight and loss, raised by women who whisper her mother's name like prayer.

Defining Moment: Learns the truth about Zahra and Hekam — realizing her life began where silence ended.

Contradictions: Gentle yet luminous, burdened by a legacy she never lived.

Relationships: Granddaughter of Tahany, great-granddaughter of Hekam — a living thread of hope through generations.

Flaw: None literal — her flaw is inherited silence, and her purpose is to outgrow it.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a small amount of water. The water is dark blue and has several concentric ripples spreading outwards from the center. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

***MINIMAL LOCATIONS, ONE PRIMARY PROTAGONIST ARC,
AND STRONG SINGLE VISUAL METAPHOR
(NILE AS WOMB / JUDGE / WITNESS).***

PRODUCTION TREATMENT & BUDGET FRAMEWORK

FORMAT: 15-minute short, Arabic w/ subtitles.

LANGUAGE: Arabic (with subtitles)

SETTING: Upper Egypt – rural village, Nile river, desert

STRUCTURE & RUNTIME BREAKDOWN

Opening (2 mins)

Visual prologue: infant being buried - VO narration.
Establishes generational oppression and mythic tone.

Act II – Oppression 6 mins)

Henna night: claustrophobic rituals, henna painted on Zahra.
Bridal chamber: virginity test, blood deception.
Video circulates: phones buzzing - community's silent judgment.
Mother slips Zahra a key.

Act III – Rebirth (6 mins)

Zahra flees to abandoned treehouse.
Labor and confrontation with father.
Birth in blood. Death by blade.
Basket in river. Zahra floats.

Act III – Rebirth (6 mins)

Zahra flees to abandoned treehouse.
Labor and confrontation with father.
Birth in blood. Death by blade.
Basket in river. Zahra floats.
Baby survives, reaches shore.

FLASH CUT - Shams, grown, direct address to camera.

LOCATIONS: Desert dune, Nile riverside, one house interior, treehouse set, riverbank.

CAST: Small (Zahra, Khater, Bassant, parents, baby). Performance-driven.

ESTIMATED BUDGET FOR PRODUCTION: 86,000usd Feasible with local crew and contained set design.

CURRENT STATUS: Script complete, festival materials ready.

FUNDING REQUIRED: Completion funds, post-production, and festival distribution support.

POTENTIAL MODELS: Co-production, private investors, NGO/arts grants (women's rights focus).

PRODUCTION TREATMENT & BUDGET FRAMEWORK

LOCATIONS & LOGISTICS

- single sand dune location, static shot. (1 day)
- riverside night shoot with safety crew. (2 days)
- one traditional house interior dressed. (2-3 days)
- single constructed set (abandoned, with musical relics). (2 days)
- dawn exterior, steady-cam + drone for basket drift. (2 days)

VISUAL STYLE & TECHNICAL NOTES

Camera: 2K/4K digital with anamorphic lenses . intimate yet cinematic.

Lighting: Naturalist (lamps, fire, moonlight tones), shifting to stylized reds/blues in climax. **Sound:** Direct sound + layered ambient design; women's voices as sound motif. **Editing:** Long takes, minimal cuts; montage only in symbolic sequences (birds, water, flashbacks).

CAST & PERFORMANCES

Zahra (17) - non-professional or emerging actress with strong physical presence. Silent role, expressive eyes. **Sakhr (50s)** - father, oppressive presence. **Tahany (40s)** - mother, silent resilience. **Baby / Shams** - symbolic continuity. - All roles designed for minimal dialogue, maximum physicality.

- **Rehearsal days**
- **Proper compensation**
- **Emotional safety**

(Production Notes)

- Large ensemble scenes (wedding ritual, villagers)
- Multiple night exteriors
- Water work (river, boat, floating body, basket, fire on water)
- Period-like village control (no modern intrusion)
- Animals (buffalo/wild dog implication)
- Fire + gasoline on water
- Child actors (boy, baby)
- Pregnancy + childbirth + blood effects
- Repeated returns to same locations under different conditions
- Stunts / physical struggle
- Sound design-driven storytelling
- Dawn/night continuity challenges
- Night - dawn transitions
- Water safety resets
- Emotional intensity (can't rush actors)
- Crowd coordination
- Child work-hour limits
- Safety officers
- Boat handler
- Controlled currents / permits
- Fire-on-water coordination

Film “SHAMS” – Detailed Budget

Total Budget: €93,340

Duration: 15 minutes

Type: Short Fiction – Art-house Drama

It ensures:

- Technical excellence for festival projection standards.
- Ethical, fair pay for cast and crew.
- International-quality post-production and distribution.

“SHAMS” is conceived not only as a film but as a cultural statement — a cinematic act of witness crafted with the highest artistic and production standards.

Pre-Production Total: €14,000

Investments in script development, casting, and field research in Upper Egypt guarantee authenticity and emotional truth. Acting workshops for local performers support the film’s social mission and help develop regional talent.

| Item | Value (€) | Artistic Justification |
|--------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Script Development & Rewriting | 2,200 | Script consultations with a dramatic advisor to refine tone and structure. |
| Location Scouting | 1,600 | Field research and visits to Upper Egypt for authenticity. |
| Casting | 1,700 | Auditions in Cairo and Assiut to discover authentic local talent. |
| Production & Art Design | 3,100 | Symbolic set construction inspired by regional heritage. |
| Insurance & Permits | 1,100 | Legal permits and full production insurance. |
| Administration & Planning | 1,600 | Logistical coordination, scheduling, and planning. |
| Acting Workshops | 2,700 | Intensive acting workshops for local performers. |

Production Total: €37,340

The core of the budget ensures high production value with a full professional crew, local cast, and premium equipment (ARRI Alexa Mini LF).The film’s visual language—rooted in heritage and symbolism—requires cinematic quality lighting and camera work. This section also includes fair wages, travel, and accommodation for a mixed Cairo-Assiut crew.

| Item | Value (€) | Artistic Justification |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Actors’ Fees | 6,200 | Fair compensation for all cast. |
| Directing & Camera Crew | 10,500 | Full professional crew including DOP, Gaffer, and Sound Engineer. |
| Equipment Rental | 8,300 | Use of ARRI Alexa Mini LF for cinematic visual quality. |
| Transport & Accommodation | 5,200 | Travel and lodging for cast and crew. |
| Wardrobe & Props | 2,600 | Symbolic costumes and locally inspired props. |
| Catering | 1,700 | Daily on-set meals for the team. |
| On-Site Production Management | 2,840 | Daily coordination and management of the shoot. |

Post-Post-Production, Total: €23,500

| Item | Value (€) | Artistic Justification |
|-------------------------|-----------|--|
| Editing | 6,300 | Artistic visual editing to preserve rhythm and tone. |
| Color Grading | 3,700 | Symbolic color palette reflecting the film’s mythic realism. |
| Sound Design & Mixing | 3,200 | Layered sound design blending natural ambience with silence. |
| Original Music | 3,300 | Mystical composition inspired by Upper Egyptian heritage. |
| Visual Effects | 2,200 | Subtle symbolic visual effects enhancing texture and atmosphere. |
| Subtitles & Translation | 1,200 | Professional English and French subtitling. |
| Final Mastering (DCP) | 3,600 | DCP and festival-ready digital export. |

Distribution & Festivals Total: €9,300

An essential investment for *global visibility*.Covers festival submission fees (20+ festivals), creation of the bilingual press kit, and a curated digital campaign. This strategy positions *SHAMS* to reach audiences across Europe, North America, and the Arab world.

| Item | Value (€) | Artistic Justification |
|--------------------------|-----------|---|
| Poster & Visual Identity | 1,550 | Artistic poster design and branding reflecting the film’s soul. |
| Festival Submissions | 3,100 | Fees for 20+ international film festivals. |
| Press Kit & Translation | 1,600 | Professional bilingual press materials and translation. |
| Digital Promotion | 2,050 | Targeted social media and online awareness campaign. |
| Printed Materials | 1,000 | Flyers and printed PR materials for festivals. |

Administration & Contingency Total: €9,200

Reflects responsible production management.Includes administrative costs, accounting, and a 10% contingency to handle unforeseen logistics or weather-related issues during location shooting.

| Item | Value (€) | Artistic Justification |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--|
| Administration & Accounting | 3,200 | Financial coordination with funding bodies. |
| Contingency | 6,000 | Coverage for unforeseen production expenses. |

GENERAL STRATEGY

SHAMS is a visually poetic and socially charged short film crafted for international festival audiences seeking bold, artistically daring, and politically resonant cinema. It speaks to global viewers who engage with human rights, gender equality, and poetic realism.

The film carries a **universal feminist message**, confronting gender-based violence and the inherited trauma of patriarchal control.

Through **mythic imagery, emotional realism, and lyrical visual language**, it transcends national borders—offering both a cinematic experience and a social testimony.

SHAMS seeks to ignite dialogue around the control of female bodies, honor-based violence, and the possibility of **rebirth through resistance and self-determination**.

The film is intended for international festival circulation, particularly platforms that support formally rigorous, socially urgent cinema. *SHAMS* is designed to resonate beyond its geographical setting, engaging audiences through sensory experience rather than exposition.

TARGET AUDIENCE

SHAMS is conceived for international audiences, not to translate a culture, but to confront a structure of control that exists across societies in different forms. By grounding the story in specificity while allowing meaning to emerge through form, the film invites reflection rather than conclusion. This is a story about voices that were buried—and about one body that refuses to disappear.

PRIMARY:

International film festival audiences seeking bold, socially urgent cinema. Cannes (Short Film Competition), Berlinale (Generation & Shorts), Venice, Toronto (TIFF Short Cuts), and Clermont-Ferrand.

SECONDARY:

Women's rights organizations, NGOs, Feminist film collectives, Middle Eastern diaspora communities, University circuits and educational institutions.

GLOBAL REACH:

Audiences in Europe, North America, and MENA regions interested in human rights and feminist cinema.

FESTIVAL POSITIONING:

A BOLD, SOCIALLY URGENT, ARTISTICALLY DARING SHORT—A POETIC INDICTMENT OF PATRIARCHAL VIOLENCE, WITH MYTHIC RESONANCE THAT TRANSCENDS ITS LOCAL CONTEXT.

FESTIVAL STRATEGY

The goal is a world premiere at **Cannes Short Film Competition**, followed by a carefully planned rollout to **top-tier international festivals such as Venice, Berlin, Toronto, and Clermont-Ferrand.**

Key regional showcases will include **El Gouna, Cairo International Film Festival, Red Sea, and Carthage**, ensuring both **Arab-world visibility and international resonance.**

The strategy prioritizes festivals known for strong **social justice, human rights, and female-voiced cinema.**

The tone of the campaign will reflect SHAMS's balance between poetic aesthetics and political urgency.

DISTRIBUTION PLAN

A photograph of a balcony at night. The balcony has a dark metal railing. Through the glass doors of the balcony, a warm, lit interior space is visible, featuring a hanging lamp and a person standing. The background is a dark, clear night sky.

PHASE 1 – INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL CIRCUIT (12 MONTHS)

A year-long journey through major festivals to build critical acclaim, press coverage, and award momentum.

PHASE 2 – DIGITAL RELEASE ON CURATED PLATFORMS

Selective release via platforms such as MUBI, Criterion Channel, Netflix Shorts, or Festival Scope, aligning the film with art-house and auteur-driven audiences.

PHASE 3 – EDUCATIONAL & NGO SCREENINGS

Screenings across universities, film schools, cultural institutes, and women's rights organizations, accompanied by discussions and workshops.

PHASE 4 – LIMITED ONLINE & AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

A final digital release accompanied by a short-form social awareness campaign and discussion panels on gender justice and the legacy of women's silence in society

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

A **cohesive digital identity** will extend the film's reach through storytelling, visual symbolism, and feminist activism. The social campaign will showcase the director's vision, the cast's emotional process, and the social urgency behind SHAMS.

KEY CHANNELS:

Instagram - visual storytelling, poetic captions, and stills from the film.

Facebook - collaboration with women's rights NGOs and cultural networks.

YouTube / Vimeo - trailers, interviews, and short behind-the-scenes clips.

LinkedIn - networking with distributors, curators, and festival programmers.

Official Website - biography, press kit, stills, trailer, and contact details.

The voice will remain feminine, resilient, and authentic, using symbolic imagery (water, blood, rebirth) to connect emotionally with followers.

PRESS & PR STRATEGY

A **bilingual press kit** (English & Arabic) will be launched prior to the world premiere through leading industry outlets such as **Variety, Screen Daily, Deadline, and Arab Cinema Center.**

Partnership with an independent PR agency specializing in arthouse and social impact cinema will ensure **interviews, critic engagement, and curated visibility.**

Visual materials — poster, stills, and tagline — will emphasize the poetic yet defiant tone of the film.

GRANTS & INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING TARGETS

PRIVATE & IMPACT INVESTORS

Ideal profiles: art patrons, NGOs, and philanthropists supporting women-led cinema.

Additional Targets: SheFilms Fund, Women Make Movies (NYC), Ford Foundation, Feminist Review Trust, Open Society Foundations.

| Grant / Fund | Region | Typical Amount | Relevance |
|---|--------------|-----------------|--|
| AFAC (Arab Fund for Arts & Culture) | MENA | up to \$20K USD | Focus on Arab female filmmakers & strong cultural impact |
| Doha Film Institute (Shorts Grants) | MENA | up to \$15K USD | Strong for poetic Arab cinema with social depth |
| CNC - Aide aux Cinémas du Monde | France | up to €30K | Co-production support for films with global cultural value |
| Berlinale World Cinema Fund (Shorts) | Global | €10-20K | Supports poetic, socially critical voices |
| Sundance Institute - Short Film Fund | Global | \$10-20K | Ideal for artistic and women-driven short films |
| UN Women / Spotlight Initiative | Global | Variable | Strong alignment with gender-based violence awareness |
| Goethe-Institut Cairo / British Council - Creative Economy Fund | Egypt-Europe | €5-10K | Cultural dialogue and socially engaged cinema |
| Hot Docs / IDFA Bertha Fund (doc-hybrid) | Global | \$5-15K | Suitable if pitched as doc-fiction or hybrid work |

TIMELINE

| Phase | Dates (Shifted) | Deliverables | Funding Stage |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Preproduction | Mid-May - Jul 2026 | Casting, location scouting, final budget | Apply to AFAC, DFI, WCF |
| Production | Aug - Sep 2026 | 7-10 day shoot in Upper Egypt | Secure co-producer / private equity |
| Post-production | Oct - Dec 2026 | Edit, color, music, sound mix | Post funds (CNC, Goethe, UN Women) |
| Festival Submission | Jan - Apr 2027 | Festival cut + campaign, targeted global submissions and PR rep | Crowdfunding + impact campaign |
| Premiere & Screenings | Mid-Late 2027 | Launch + press + NGO screenings, national & international festival circuit | Reinvest awards proceeds |
| Digital Distribution | Throughout 2028 | Platform releases (MUBI, Criterion Channel, curated shorts platforms) | — |
| Social Campaign | Aug 2026 - Dec 2028 | Continuous digital engagement and advocacy | — |

LONG-TERM STRATEGY

SHAMS short - feature expansion (Zahra's legacy / "The River and the Sun") - Potential TV/streaming partnership (MUBI, Netflix, Arte) - Build "Shams Initiative" — film + educational campaign on gender-based violence in MENA.

CORE POSITIONING STATEMENT

Zahra is not portrayed as a symbol or martyr. She is a body under pressure, making decisions with limited options. Her resistance is quiet, physical, and costly.

The unborn child she carries embodies both burden and possibility. Through this duality, SHAMS explores generational inheritance: how trauma is passed down, and how it might—at great cost—be interrupted.

SHAMS is not just a short film — it is a **poetic testimony** of a woman's struggle against fear, society, and her own body. Her final gaze into the camera **indicts the audience**, breaking the wall of silence and transforming the viewer from observer to witness.

Through mythic symbolism, grounded realism, and cinematic defiance, SHAMS becomes more than a story — it is a mirror held up to **collective silence**, and a **declaration of rebirth**.

The film's central question is not whether Zahra survives, but whether survival can transform into something other than repetition.

WORLDWIDE HONOR-KILLINGS DATASET

| Name | Age | Killed_by | Country | Date | Outcome | Source |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Pela Atroshi | 19 | Male relatives | Sweden/Iraq | 24 June 1999 | Perpetrators convicted in Iraq | news / Amnesty / Wikipedia |
| Fadime Şahindal | 26 | Father (Rahmi Şahindal) | Sweden | 21 January 2002 | Father convicted; later suicide in prison | Swedish press / BBC |
| Banaz Mahmud | 20 | Father & uncle (arranged; cousins/hired men executed) | UK (London) | 24 January 2006 | Perpetrators convicted; life sentences | BBC / Guardian |
| Du'a Khalil Aswad | ~17 | Mob (including local men/relatives) | Iraq | ~7 April 2007 | Some local arrests reported; prosecutions unclear | BBC / Al Jazeera |
| Surjit Kaur Athwal | 27 | Mother-in-law & husband colluded | UK/India | December 1998 | Perpetrators convicted (UK/India) | BBC / Guardian |
| Samia Sarwar | 28 | Arranged by parents (hired killer) | Pakistan | 6 April 1999 | Historic case; parents implicated | news archives |
| Shafiea Iftikhar Ahmed | 17 | Parents | UK (Warrington) | 11 September 2003 | Parents convicted (2012); father imprisoned for life | BBC |
| Qandeel Baloch (Fauzia Azeem) | 26 | Brother | Pakistan (Multan) | 15–16 July 2016 | Brother arrested/confessed; legal process widely reported | BBC / Time |
| Tiba al-Ali | 22 | Father | Iraq | 31 January 2023 | Father surrendered/arrested; prosecution reported | news reports |
| Nayera Ashraf | 21 | Mohamed Adel (classmate/attacker) | Egypt (Mansoura) | 19–20 June 2022 | Perpetrator convicted; sentenced to death; execution reported | Egyptian press |
| Shaimaa (Shaima) Gamal | 42 | Husband (Ayman Haggag) & accomplice | Egypt (Giza/Mansouria) | June 2022 (body found 27 June 2022) | Perpetrators convicted; death sentences reported/upheld | Egyptian press |
| Nora Marzouk Ahmed | (reported historically) | Father (reported) | Egypt | 1990s (reported Aug 1997) | Older reports record the killing; court outcome not found in modern archives | older press |
| Morsal Obeidi | 16 | Brother | Germany | 9 May 2008 | Brother convicted and imprisoned | German press |
| Aqsa Parvez | 16 | Father (and possibly brother) | Canada (Toronto) | 10 Dec 2007 | Father convicted; sentenced to life | Canadian press |
| Hatun Sürücü | 23 | Brother | Germany (Berlin) | 7 Feb 2005 | Brother convicted; heavy sentence | International press |
| Samaira Nazir | ~25 | Brother & cousin | United Kingdom | 23 Apr 2005 | Perpetrators convicted | UK press |
| Farzana Parveen | 25 | Relatives (mob) | Pakistan (Lahore) | May 2014 | Several convicted; death sentences reported | Time / Guardian |
| Pranay Perumalla | 26 | Family rivals / assailants | India | 2018 | Perpetrators convicted/sentenced | Indian press |
| Romina Ashrafi | 14 | Father | Iran | May 2020 | Father arrested; case prompted national outrage | Reuters / Wikipedia |
| Sandeela Kanwal | 19 | Father | United States (New Jersey) | 2008 | Father convicted; life sentence | US press |
| Noor Almaleki | 20 | Father | United States (Arizona) | 2009 | Father prosecuted; US coverage | US news archives |
| Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu | ~25 | Mother & uncle implicated | India / Canada context | 8 June 2000 | Implicated; multiple legal proceedings | International press |
| Doski Azad | 23 | Brother (Chakdar Azad) | Iraq (Duhok) | 28 Jan 2022 | Brother accused; investigation reported | Wikipedia / news |
| Ali Fazeli Monfared | 20 | Half-brother + cousins | Iran | 4 May 2021 | Perpetrators identified; arrests/reports varied | International press |
| Mona Heydari | ~17 | Husband (first cousin) and brother-in-law | Iran | 5 Feb 2022 | Husband & brother-in-law arrested; sentencing reported | Wikipedia / Iranian press |
| Rania Alayed | 25 | Husband (Ahmed Al-Khatib) | England (Greater Manchester) | 7 June 2013 | Husband jailed for life | BBC / Wikipedia |
| Madiha | 26 | Mother and two brothers | Pakistan | Nov 2018 | Mother and brothers admitted; arrested | DW |
| Soraya Bayatlu | 34 | Husband | Iran | 7 Apr 2025 | Husband fled; reportedly at large in some sources | hengaw.net |

CAST AND CREW BIOS



GHADA WALI - WRITER & DIRECTOR

Ghada Wali, an award-winning Egyptian visual artist and filmmaker, was listed by Forbes Middle East among the most influential women. Her works have been exhibited at the UN and the Venice Biennale, where she explores the intersection of art, identity, and justice.

An emerging filmmaker blending mythic imagery with raw realism, she is driven to tell stories of women's resilience and resistance. With a multidisciplinary background in visual communication and storytelling, and selections in international labs and exhibitions, Wali crafts poetic yet politically urgent narratives. She is dedicated to creating socially conscious cinema with international reach.



MINA SAMY - MUSIC COMPOSER

Mina Samy is an award-winning Egyptian composer based between London and Cairo, celebrated for his emotive, cross-cultural film scores. He was the first Egyptian to rank among the top five composers at Europe's Call for Score 2023 competition and is a Global Music Award winner for Outstanding Achievement in Composition. His work blends cinematic orchestration with Middle Eastern influences, bringing a distinctive and globally resonant sound to contemporary storytelling.



ONSI ABOU SEIF - PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Onsi Abou Seif is an award-winning Egyptian production designer with over five decades shaping the visual identity of Arab cinema. A graduate of the Higher Institute of Cinema, he is known for classics like *The Kit Kat* and *Messages from the Sea*, as well as his work on *Malcolm X*. He received the Career Achievement Award from El Gouna Film Festival for his enduring contribution to cinematic art direction.



KAMAL SAMI - CINEMATOGRAPHER

Kamal Samy is an Egyptian cinematographer best known for lensing the award-winning film *Feathers* (Cannes Critics' Week, FIPRESCI Prize). His work is noted for its poetic realism and striking visual sensitivity, capturing the social and emotional depth of contemporary Egyptian life.

CAST AND CREW BIOS



Important Note: All names mentioned represent the preliminary envisioned cast and crew for Shams. While no formal agreements have yet been signed, these artists best align with the film's vision and ethos. Negotiations will begin upon securing initial development funding.

YASMINA EL ABD

the breakout Egyptian actress of Netflix's *The Swimmers* (TIFF 2022) and *Daughters of Abdul-Rahman* (Cairo & Carthage laureate), delivers extraordinary depth and authenticity.

Her luminous stillness and inner power embody Zahra, a young woman transforming fear into freedom.

BASSEM SAMRA

A leading actor of Egyptian neorealism, Bassem Samra won Best Actor at Carthage for *The City* and appeared in *The Yacoubian Building* and *After the Battle* (Cannes Official Selection).

As Sakhr, he embodies the tragic face of inherited patriarchy.

WEGZ

Wegz, one of the Middle East's most-streamed artists and a defining voice of Arabic trap, brings his raw charisma and modern edge.

Following his acting debut in *Suits Arabia*, he portrays Hamza, the man torn between guilt and masculinity.

SAWSAN BADR

Often called "Nefertiti of Egyptian cinema," Sawsan Badr is an award-winning icon known for *The Collar* and *the Bracelet* (Cairo FF) and *A Talk of Morning and Evening*. As

Hekam, she personifies ancestral wisdom — the earth remembering its daughters.

SHERINE

With over a billion streams and multiple regional awards, Sherine Abdel Wahab is among the Arab world's most influential performers. Her acclaimed roles in *Tareeq* reveal her acting depth — qualities she brings to Tahany, the survivor turned silent rebel.

CAST AND CREW BIOS



BEGAD OMRAN - PRODUCER

Begad Omran is an internationally acclaimed Egyptian producer, recognized for his visionary leadership in film and branded content. His award-winning work includes the Gold Pencil-winning campaign Now or Never (The One Show, 2018). Renowned for combining creative excellence with strategic production mastery, Omran consistently delivers compelling narratives that resonate on a global scale.



FARAH WALI - COSTUME DESIIGNER & STYLIST

Farah Wali is an award-winning Egyptian fashion designer and stylist, founder of Maison Farah Wali. A Polimoda graduate, she's known for blending heritage with contemporary art, creating bold, story-driven designs featured in Vogue Italia and L'Officiel Paris.



AHMED MOURAD - CREATIVE CONSULTANT

Ahmed Mourad is an acclaimed Egyptian novelist and screenwriter, known for The Blue Elephant, Diamond Dust, and The Originals. A graduate of the Higher Institute of Cinema, he brings sharp visual storytelling and psychological depth to his screenwriting work.



AHMED HAFEZ - EDITOR

Ahmed Hafez is an Egyptian film editor whose work encompasses over 20 feature films, as well as music videos and commercials. His editing style is recognised for its clean narrative rhythm and emotional clarity, making him an impactful contributor to contemporary Arab cinema. He is based between Cairo and London, blending local sensibility with international standards of post-production workflow.

Important Note:

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***FOR ME, ART IS A WAY TO
RECLAIM THE RIGHT TO NARRATE.***

***SHAMS AIMS TO RESURRECT SILENCED VOICES AND TRANSFORM TRAGEDY INTO VISUAL
MEMORY — NOT THROUGH CONDEMNATION, BUT THROUGH AWARENESS AND LIBERATION.***

IN HE MEMORY OF THE SILENCED

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------|
| Ghazala Khan | Huda | Nermin | Iman | Safia | Rasha | Pela Atroshi |
| Morsal Obeidi | Samar | Rabab | Salwa | Samah | Ibtisam | Fadime Şahindal |
| Aqsa Parvez | Mariam | Faten | Huda | Loubna | Safia | Banaz Mahmud |
| Hatun Sürücü | Nadine | Mariam | Samah | Halima | Loubna | Du'a Khalil Aswad |
| Samaira Nazir | Aisha | Safa | Rukhsana | Fatima | Halima | Surjit Kaur Athwal |
| Farzana Parveen | Zakia | Fouzia | Shireen | Sana | Fawzia | Samia Sarwar |
| Israa Ghrayeb | Rosa | Hana | Faten | Yasmin | Samina | Shafilea Iftikhar Ahmed |
| Romina Ashrafi | Sofia | Inas | Mariam | Hanan | Hanan | Qandeel Baloch (Fauzia |
| Swathi Byadagi | Hiba | Enas | Amina | Samira | Laila | Azeem) |
| Sandeela Kanwal | Yasmin | Shahida | Sabira | Rania | Mariam | Tiba al-Ali |
| Noor Almaleki | Sultana | Fatouma | Salima | Nawal | Yasmin | Nayera Ashraf |
| Shafilea Iftikhar Ahmed | Khadija | Naima | Rima | Huda | Samira | Shaimaa (Shaima) Gamal |
| Banaz Mahmud | Hana | Sadiya | Fawzia | Fawzia | Rania | Nora Marzouk Ahmed |
| Fadime Şahindal | Rasha | Malika | Gulshan | Rukhsana | Nawal | Morsal Obeidi |
| Pela Atroshi | Lamia | Loubna | Khadija | Lina | Huda | Aqsa Parvez |
| Du'a Khalil Aswad | Yara | Samira | Lina | Yasmin | Fawzia | Hatun Sürücü |
| Qandeel Baloch | Sana | Karima | Najwa | Samah | Rukhsana | Samaira Nazir |
| Tiba al-Ali | Fatma | Ibtisam | Samira | Rania | Lina | Farzana Parveen |
| Nayera Ashraf | Zeinab | Yasmi | Zeinab | Mariam | Yasmin | Pranay Perumalla |
| Shaimaa Gamal | Maha | Samina | Yasmin | Samira | Samah | Romina Ashrafi |
| Name | Rokaya | Hanan | Farah | Fatima | Fatima | Sandeela Kanwal |
| Amina | Wafa | Laila | Hiba | Huda | Huda | Noor Almaleki |
| Sadia | Nadia | Rania | Noor | Yasmin | Yasmin | Jaswinder Kaur Sidhu |
| Razia | Luna | Yasmin | Rasha | Lina | Lina | Doski Azad |
| Nora | Rim | Fatima | Ibtisam | Samah | Samah | Ali Fazeli Monfared |
| Laila | Zara | Noor | Mariam | Noor | Noor | Mona Heydari |

A SHORT FILM BY GHADA WALI

SHAMS

"IN A LAND THAT TRIED TO BURY HER, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO THE SUN."

Contact

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