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Arab directors discuss importance of cinema

BY A STAFF REPORTER

ABU DHABI : Two of the region's most renowned Arab film directors from Lebanon and Egypt, Nadine Labaki and Jehane Noujaim, discussed film as an essential medium for the depiction of the key social, political, religious, and sectarian issues in the Arab region as part of their session on day two of Beirut Institute Summit that drew to a close on Oct.11 at the St Regis Abu Dhabi Hotel.

Also featuring Labaki's and Noujaim's industry specialist spouses, Khaled Mouzanar and Karim Amer, the engaging conversation investigated the profound effect of international film collaborations that deal with the most pressing political and social issues in the Arab region.

Nadine Labaki said that "creating content in this region is a cry for help as people are frustrated. Writing films is my only way of expressing my anger. My creativity becomes an obsession that evolves into a story and ultimately a film. Cinema is the most powerful nonviolent weapon that can help make a change."

Khaled Mouzanar added: "Um Kulthoom and many other famous Arab artists have done more than any politician in the region. The music created by Um Kulthoom during the 1950s and 1960s acted as a synchroniser of brains, both mentally and emotionally. Where politics failed, art succeeded."

As part of its intensive agenda, the event explored the Arab region's challenges and potential through integrated inter-disciplinary perspectives that move beyond a traditional understanding of the concepts of "political economy" and "security threats". Among the issues addressed at the open-door plenary sessions included the role of smart cities, viewpoint of Arab women, and the relationship between ideas and policy.