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APRIL 11, 2017 3:38 PM

Syrian film star, artist wife to discuss life as refugees at Columbia event

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COLUMBIA, SC — A Syrian film star and his artist wife, refugees from Syria who have resettled in the United States, will be in Columbia next week for a documentary screening and discussion about their journey.

Jihad (Jay) Abdo and his wife Fadia Afashe be at the event, set for April 20 at Columbia Museum of Art.

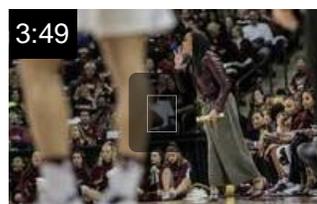
The free event, presented by the Columbia World Affairs Council (CWAC) and the museum, will begin with a screening of “[Jihad in Hollywood](#),” a short documentary on Abdo and Afashe’s plights as refugees from the crisis in Syria resettling in America. It will be followed by a question and answer discussion



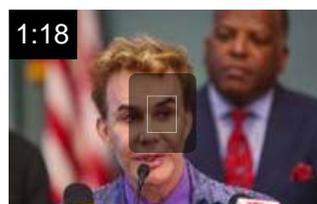
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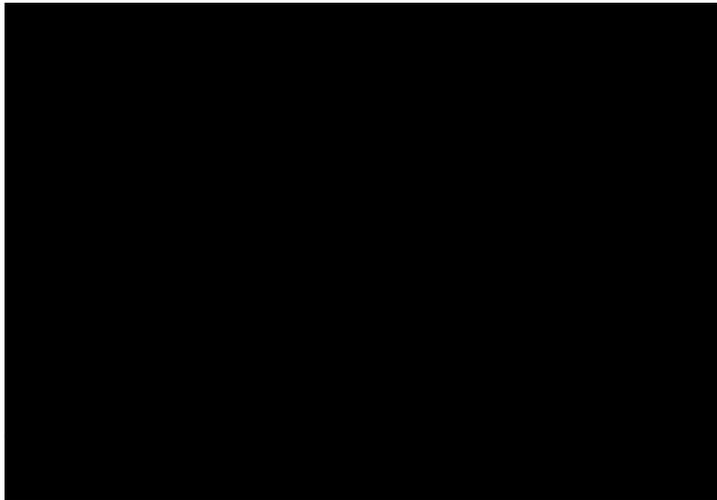
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Ballet "Love is the Answer" derived from healing and racial harmony which came out of the tragedy at the Emanuel, AME Church

with the couple moderated by Heather Williams, a senior international/defense policy researcher at the RAND Corp.

The program also includes a violin performance by Abdo and a viewing of selected artworks by Afashe, who also is a women's rights activist.



Abdo left his home country in 2011, as his unwillingness to endorse Bashar al-Assad's regime put him in personal danger. Assets frozen, property confiscated, and with a name many Americans equate with militant Islam, one of Syria's most prominent actors – having starred in 23 plays, 43 movies, and more than 1,000 TV episodes – found himself working as a Domino's pizza delivery driver.

Since the documentary was filmed, Jay Abdo starred in "Queen of the Desert" with Nicole Kidman, and in 2016 he starred in "A Hologram for the King" with Tom Hanks. His movie "Bon Voyage" was short-listed for Best Live Action Short Film for the 2017 Academy Awards.

Afashe graduated from the Ismail Institute of Art in 2000. She also has a degree in criminal law from the University of Damascus and a masters from the Syrian-French Institute for Public Administration (l'ena). With the help of

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the Geneva Institute for Human Rights, she wrote and produced “Suspended” (2011), a short film about women exposing how the laws of rape in the Arab world leave women unprotected and disenfranchised. At the rise of the Arab Spring in the Middle East, Fadia left Damascus for the United States to pursue a fellowship at the Humphrey School for Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, which she completed in May 2012. Fadia works at the RAND Corp. and shows her art in Los Angeles.

The event is set for 6 p.m. April 20 at the museum, 1515 Main St. That’s also opening night for the Indie Grits Festival downtown.

For more information, visit columbiaworldaffairs.org.



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