

## **Amr Gamaal Portrays the Agony of *The Burdened Yemenies***

**By Tanisha Kunden**

*Al Murhaqoon (The Burdened)*, a critically acclaimed Arabic language film directed by Yemini filmmaker Amr Gamal was screened at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Pune International Film Festival (PIFF). The film, starring Khaleed Hamdan and Abeer Mohammed, was screened on January 22 (Day 5) of the festival.

The movie depicts the real story of a young Yemini couple Ahmed and Isra and their three children in Yemen. The narrative unfolds when Isra's parents discover her pregnancy, a revelation that shocks them and prompts the difficult decision to undergo an abortion. This decision is made within a society that frowns upon such practices, both culturally and religiously.

Isra and Ahmed encounter another obstacle in the form of limited access to healthcare services, with many doctors refusing to perform the abortion on religious grounds. Additionally, due to Isra suffering from anaemia, traditional abortion methods pose a serious risk to her life.

Ahmed requests Isra to reach out to close friend Dr. Muna. But Muna refuses to help as she believes performing abortions is against her religion and culture... like killing a soul. She doesn't want to commit such a sin.

However, seeing Isra in deep trouble, Muna gets convinced to help her and she performs the surgery. After the surgery, Muna regrets the operation and cuts off contact with Isra, leaving her burdened with guilt. Despite this, Ahmed reassures her that their decision to terminate the pregnancy was the right decision for Isra and her children.

As the movie comes to a close, the family is traveling to their children's school on a fresh morning in Aden. The parents' expressions reflect both relief and apprehension, anticipating the challenges that lie ahead.

The film sensitively showcases the impact of the economic crisis in a post war era and how the family must overcome their hurdles.

Addressing the audience at PIFF, Gamal shared that this film is inspired by the life of his close friend, offering a touching portrayal of the daily struggles faced by middle-class families in Yemen in the aftermath of war and amidst the ongoing instability. 'The story affected me personally because it was brutal; the couple had to opt for abortion due to the harsh impact of war and the prevailing economic crisis,' shared director Amr Gamal, shedding light on the inspiration behind the film.

