

## Egyptian actress Yousra aims to raise Mideast AIDS awareness

Egyptian film star Yousra has taken up a role with the United Nations to help combat HIV and AIDS in the Middle East, where prevalence is low but growing rapidly. In an interview Monday in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, where she was named a UN Goodwill Ambassador for the cause, she said that stigmas and taboos associated with the virus must be combated and societies taught to be more sympathetic to those infected. "For us to defeat it we have to admit it exists," she told the Associated Press. "Because people have a right to medication so they can live with dignity, and so pregnant woman can prevent passing it on to their children. We have to break the silence and overcome the fear."

Some 240,000 people live with HIV in the Middle East and North Africa region, which is facing a worsening refugee crisis, rising inequality, humanitarian emergencies and discriminatory laws. New cases of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, rose by 26 percent in the region between 2000 and 2014, the United Nations says, making the Middle East and North Africa one of the areas where it's growing the fastest. Europe and the United States have also seen recent setbacks in fighting new infections.

Policy in the Middle East, however, greatly contributes to the stigmatization of those infected, with many countries imposing harsh rules surrounding activities that can lead to the virus's transmission. Consensual same-sex sexual conduct, for example, is punishable by death in Iran,

Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, and parts of Somalia, and criminalized in most of the other states in the region. Drug use is also punishable by death in several countries. HIV epidemics are concentrated among high-risk groups - people who inject drugs, migrants, sex workers and men who have sex with men.

### Antiretroviral therapy

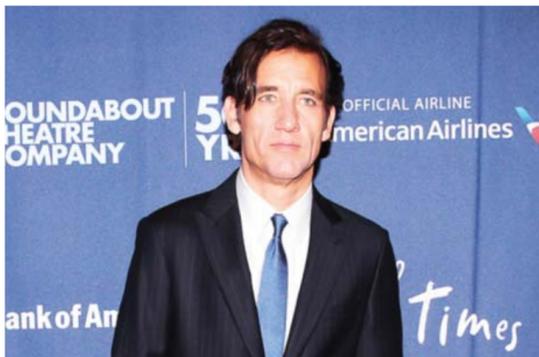
Yousra, whose career spans four decades and who has worked with celebrated filmmaker Youssef Chahine and actor Adel Emam, says she took up the cause after meeting people who had been abandoned by their families after being infected by the virus. "I felt that society and human beings were crueler than even the virus itself," she said, adding that she has known people suffering from HIV and AIDS since the epidemic emerged in the 1980s. "The virus can be handled but the people affected cannot handle the harmful regard of society against them, society ejecting them."

Globally, around 36 million people are living with HIV, with some 2 million newly infected in 2014. The virus is steadily being beaten back, in part due to increasing access to antiretroviral therapy, leaving new infections nearly 40 percent lower than they were in 2001. AIDS-related deaths - which stood at 1.5 million in 2013 - have fallen 35 percent since peaking in 2005. UN efforts to fight HIV aim to reduce the number of new infections to 500,000 by 2020 and 200,000 in 2030. —AP

In this Sunday, Jan 31, 2016 photo, Egyptian film star Yousra speaks after being appointed as UN Goodwill Ambassador in Middle East and North Africa during a ceremony in Cairo. Yousra has taken up a role with the United Nations to help combat HIV and AIDS in the Middle East, where prevalence is low but growing at a rapid pace. Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS Jan Beagle stands at left. — AP



## Clive Owen to join Meryl Streep on Berlin film fest jury



Clive Owen



Dieter Kosslick, director of the international film festival Berlinale speaks at a press conference prior to the 66th edition of the festival in Berlin yesterday. — AFP

British actor Clive Owen and French-born fashion photographer Brigitte Lacombe will serve on the seven-member prize jury of this month's Berlin film festival chaired by Meryl Streep, organizers said yesterday. The 66th annual Berlinale, as the event is known, will kick off on February 11 with a screening of Joel and Ethan Coen's "Hail, Caesar!", a send-up of Hollywood's Golden Age starring George Clooney.

The competition among 18 international productions will start the following day and the panel led by three-time Oscar winner Streep, whose appointment was previously announced, will select the winners of the Golden and Silver Bear top prizes on February 20. Owen, the star of movies including "Children of Men" and "Inside Man", is currently appearing in Steven Soderbergh's television series "The Knick". He will be joined on the jury by Lacombe, a New York-

based photo portraitist whose iconic work appears regularly in Vanity Fair, Vogue and the Financial Times.

The panel will be rounded out by British film critic Nick James, Italian actress Alba Rohrwacher, German film and stage actor Lars Eidinger and Polish director Malgorzata Szumowska, who won the festival's Teddy Award for gay and lesbian-themed cinema in 2013 for "In the Name Of" about a closeted priest. Berlinale director Dieter Kosslick announced a special Berlin Camera prize for US actor and director Tim Robbins, who will be honored with a screening of his 1995 death row drama "Dead Man Walking". The festival will also pay tribute to three luminaries who died last month: British actor Alan Rickman, who will be commemorated with a presentation of Ang Lee's 1995 drama "Sense and Sensibility"; Italian director Ettore Scola, whose 1983 film "Le Bal" will be shown; and rock legend David Bowie, who lived

in West Berlin in the late 1970s. "Bowie was a tremendous musician, an avant-garde artist who expressed his creativity in many disciplines," Kosslick said. The festival will screen Bowie's 1976 movie "The Man Who Fell to Earth".

Among the most keenly awaited premieres in competition this year are "Alone in Berlin", an adaptation of the Nazi-era international best-seller starring Emma Thompson and Brendan Gleeson, and "Genius", a British-US biopic starring Colin Firth as legendary literary editor Max Perkins. The cast includes Jude Law, Nicole Kidman, Dominic West and Guy Pearce. Other titles drawing buzz are an audacious eight-hour-long Filipino film, Lav Diaz's "A Lullaby for the Sorrowful Mystery", which will be shown in a single screening, and the feature debut by Tunisian director Mohamed Ben Attia, "Hedi", a love story set against the aftermath of the Arab Spring. —AFP

## George Miller's long ride from 'Mad Max' to Cannes

Director George Miller, the next president of the jury at the Cannes Film Festival, is known for his violent, high-speed "Mad Max" road movies but the ex-doctor is also celebrated as part of the renaissance of Australian cinema. Post-apocalyptic visions aside, the 70-year-old can also boast a softer oeuvre, bringing to the screen titles such as "Happy Feet", "Babe" and "Lorenzo's Oil". Miller, the first Australian to chair Cannes, unleashed the first "Mad Max" starring a young Mel Gibson in 1979 and has said the cult feature was influenced by his childhood in car-obsessed rural Queensland.

"It wasn't until I really ended up being a doctor in emergency and seeing the kind of carnage as a result of car accidents or bike accidents that it kind of got into me," he told Australia Screen Online in 2006. "It kind of disturbed me quite a bit. And I think all those things were part of the mix of the 'Mad Max' films. Particularly the first one." Miller gave up a career as a doctor to concentrate on film and



This file photo taken on May 14, 2015 shows South African-US actress Charlize Theron (left) and Australian director George Miller leaving the festival palace after the screening of the film "MadMax: Fury Road" during the 68th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes. — AFP

went on to direct "Witches of Eastwick" (1987) starring Jack Nicholson, Cher and Susan Sarandon.

"Babe: Pig in the City" (1998) and the penguin movie "Happy Feet" (2006), for which he won an Oscar for best animated feature,

followed. His latest instalment, "Mad Max: Fury Road", starring Charlize Theron and Tom Hardy as Max, has picked up 10 nominations for the upcoming Academy Awards including best director. Miller has said he has aimed for the audience to be able to pick out the story as the film rushes headlong past, likening it to watching a silent movie. "The task was to see how much story or experience or felt life you could create for an audience during a very fast action piece," he told The Sydney Morning Herald in October 2015.

"I'm always interested as to how film language is evolving. It's an acquired language. It basically laid down its syntax in the silent era. In many ways, 'Mad Max' is a silent movie with sound." Besides film, Miller has also been involved in making acclaimed television in Australia, including mini-series such as "The Dismissal", "Bangkok Hilton" and "Bodyline". Miller, whose father came to Australia from Greece, is married to film editor Margaret Sixel. — AFP

## Adele: No permission given to political campaigns to use her music

British singer Adele made clear on Monday that she has not given permission for anyone to use her music for political campaigns. Adele's spokesman issued a statement after Republican US presidential contender Donald Trump played Adele's 2011 hit song "Rolling in the Deep" at rallies in Iowa, and Mike Huckabee released a YouTube parody last week of her 2015 single "Hello." "Adele has not given permission for her music to be used for any political campaigning," the singer's spokesman said in an email. The spokesman did not say whether Adele, whose new album "25" was the



biggest seller in the United States last year, was contemplating legal steps to prevent the unauthorized use of her music. Adele is far from the only pop or rock star to have seen politicians co-opt their music for political purposes.

Rock band R.E.M. lashed out in September at Trump for using its hit song, "It's the End of the World" at a rally, and Frankie Sullivan complained about the use of the band's 1982 hit "Eye of the Tiger," at a news conference in September featuring Kim Davis, a county clerk in Kentucky briefly jailed for refusing to issue gay marriage licenses. — Reuters



### COLD CHILLING

## Music Review: 'Cold Chilling: Compton' just sort of tepid

California knows how to party. So goes the refrain on 2Pac's enduring rap favorite "California Love." That love is on display in the form of an homage on "Cold Chilling: Compton," an album of reimagined takes on West Coast rap classics. Musically, the release is polished. The vocals are carefully crafted and the lyrics are true to their origins. But songs like Snoop Dogg's "Gin and Juice," reworked by The Rooks, seem conflicted. The lyrics don't seem a solid fit for the mature, lush vocals. Moreover, the saxophone work is too lazy, even for the medium-paced song.

Also lackluster: "Hail Mary" by Mackaveli

(aka 2Pac). Pop song cover rendition specialist Dan Henig rattles off the appropriate verses, but it comes off dry and without the emotional punch that the staccato rap style of 2Pac might have injected. The best track is "The Crossroads" delivered by Los Angeles singer-songwriter Dannelle Sandoval. The inventive minimalist arrangement of the Bone Thugs-n-Harmony hit with her sweet vocals feels just right, and she quickens the vocals in all the right places. Sandoval keeps just enough of the old-school flavor intact while adding her distinct approach. Her track is a gem, while most of the others sound like dull wedding band fodder. — AP

## Cosby's lawyers to urge dismissal of sexual assault criminal case

Lawyers for disgraced comedian Bill Cosby yesterday will urge a Pennsylvania judge to throw out criminal charges of sexual assault against him, arguing that the case violates a prosecutor's decade old agreement not to charge Cosby. Cosby, 78, is set to appear in a criminal court in Norristown, Pennsylvania, where he was charged in December with the 2004 assault of Andrea Constand, a former women's basketball team manager at Temple University in Philadelphia, Cosby's alma mater.

Dozens of women have accused Cosby of assaults stretching back decades, but the prosecution brought by the Montgomery County district attorney's office is the only criminal case he has faced. Constand, now 44, said Cosby pled her with drugs and alcohol before sexually

assaulting her. Cosby's lawyers have asked Common Pleas Court Judge Steven O'Neill to dismiss the case, citing a supposed agreement reached in 2005 with then-District Attorney Bruce Castor.

Under that deal, Cosby's lawyers say, Castor promised not to prosecute Cosby over Constand's allegations if he agreed to testify under oath in a civil lawsuit she filed against him. A judge last year unsealed that testimony, in which Cosby acknowledged giving her Benadryl, an anti-allergy medication, but portrayed the encounter as consensual. Prosecutors are generally free to use civil depositions as evidence in criminal cases. Castor is prepared to testify that he told Cosby's lawyers he would not bring charges in exchange for the testimony,

according to court papers.

But prosecutors have said in court filings that no documentation exists to corroborate any such agreement. Moreover, they argue, Castor did not have the authority to bar his office forever from pursuing criminal charges against Cosby. The Constand allegations played a crucial role in last year's campaign for district attorney, which pitted Castor against Kevin Steele. Steele, who attacked Castor during the race for failing to prosecute Cosby, won election in November and then charged Cosby just before the statute of limitations expired. The accusations by more than 50 women have destroyed the reputation of the once-beloved Cosby, whose father-figure persona made him a popular entertainer for years. — Reuters



Actor and comedian Bill Cosby, center, arrives for a court appearance yesterday, in Norristown, Pa. — AP