

Beat: Lifestyle

Egyptian Khaled Yousef's 'Karma' to be shown in cinemas during 'Eid'

ART & CULTURE

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USPA NEWS - Intensive negotiations were carried out with officials at the Ministry of Culture and at the censorship body to allow 'Karma' to be shown.

Director Khaled Yousef said in comments on social media Tuesday that the 'crisis is over' as he offered his gratitude to the 'state's sovereign institutions.'

A controversial new Egyptian film had its license both withdrawn and returned on the same day after the ban sparked widespread anger.

"Karma" tackles many subjects regarded as very controversial in Egypt, such as inter-faith marriage between Muslims and Christians, the changing of religion to get married, and corruption.

The Central Administration for the Control of Audiovisual Works, which is the body responsible for authorizing films in cinemas, withdrew the movie's screening certificate on Monday, before swiftly performing a U-turn and reinstating it.

The two decisions came a day before the special screening of the film, and three days before being officially shown in theaters to begin the Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

The withdrawal of the license quickly sparked a debate on social media, which then spread to the Egyptian parliament.

During a session of the House of Representatives, a number of deputies expressed dissatisfaction with the ban.

The backlash extended to the culture ministry, where the Cinema Committee of the Supreme Council of Culture, headed by producer Mohamed Al-Adl, submitted a collective resignation in protest.

They described the decision as an "unprecedented collapse in the climate of freedom of opinion and creativity at all levels and an insult to intellectuals, artists and Egyptians." They added that this was an unjust interference by the authorities, and an assault on the constitution with disregard for the values of a democratic society.

"Karma" is directed by Khaled Youssef and stars Amr Saad. It follows similar themes to Youssef's other movies, which have tackled subjects such as homosexuality and corruption. Some believe that his older movies were partly responsible for the 2011 uprising.

A group of filmmakers and intellectuals also issued a statement condemning the ban, saying "this disaster comes without justification and without logic."

"We are in a state of catastrophe and this is an expropriation of the image of Egypt, the Arab world and the international world," the statement said.

It called on President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to speed up the intervention to cancel the resolution.

It only took a few hours until the administration issued its reversal of the decision, allowing the presentation of "Karma" to go ahead.

The announcement came from the director Youssef in a video posted on his Facebook page. He said that the film would be screened in full without any deleted scenes, or even sentences of dialogue.

Youssef thanked everyone who had intervened to solve the crisis, including the Egyptian parliament, Culture Minister Inas Abdel-Dayem and the Egyptian media.

But the initial ban and the U-turn have angered filmmakers and film critics at a time when many have grave concerns over increased censorship in the country.

Youssef said that he still did not know the reasons for the ban, especially since the trailer for the film had been screened for

more than a month and the screening license had been granted in April.

Critic Majida Khair Allah said: "It is clear that there is hostility to art and creativity in all its forms.

"Real creativity is the last wall against the currents of backwardness and barbarity."

Ehab Turki, another film critic, said that the fiasco had been devastating to the Egyptian film industry.

Egypt's film fans have been excitedly anticipating this year's movie season.

Along with "Karma," other strong films are due to premier, including "Karam's War" by Amir Karara and "Ana wel Sorour" by Mohamed Emam.

"There is action, comedy and socialism in the films, which is rare," said Turki. "The audience would have missed 'Karma' if the decision to ban had continued. Khaled Youssef's films are very good because they discuss life issues that Egyptian society knows well."

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