



## NEW EXPANSION FOR THE TUNISIAN HOLLYWOOD “LE MONDE”, JANUARY 5<sup>TH</sup> 2009

Tarak Ben Ammar, the 59 year old Tunisian cosmopolitan businessman, film and TV producer and network owner, is carefully making efforts to become an indispensable partner as a service provider. Determined to do business with Hollywood while keeping control of the European market, the development of the film industry markets in the Maghreb is crucial in his opinion.

He had first committed to implement pharaonic studios in his native country. He built a vast complex, the Empire studios in Hammamet, covering 10 hectares dedicated to biblical productions, religious fictions and Ancient Rome Films with historical buildings, costume workshops, sets and accessories. It is on these sets that were shot titles such as *The Messiah* by Rossellini, *Adventures of the Lost Ark* by Spielberg, *Jesus of Nazareth* by Zeffirelli, *The Last Legion* by Doug Lefler, or *Pompei, Nero, Saint Peter* and other Roman Emperors biographies and TV series for the networks owned by his partner Silvio Berlusconi. Currently in production is *Saint Augustine* and soon a remake of *Ben Hur*.

Ben Ammar, the boss of the impressive Quinta Communications Group, who released *Passion of the Christ*, by his friend Mel Gibson, has now just opened a new studio in Benarous, ten minutes away from Tunis on a piece of land of 3 hectares lent to him by the Tunisian State in an old abandoned factory. Giuseppe Tornatore has just finished shooting *Baaria* after replicating the little Sicilian town where he spent his childhood, including the exact replica of a 500 meter street.

The set costs exceeded €15 millions. About 30,000 local extras have been mobilized for this film produced by Quinta and Medusa film (a company managed by Berlusconi's daughter). Nabil Kila, the production director, and Taoufik Guigua, his right hand man in Tunisia, were pleased by the physical resemblance of their fellow citizens with the Italians, and they can offer prices beating any competition as labor costs are ten times lower than elsewhere.

During the “Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage” held between October 25<sup>th</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, a rich Indian producer came by to visit the Studios. The new card held by Quinta, who controls a monopoly on the French Technical labs after the acquisition of LTC and a participation in Éclair, is a third site he is developing on a magnificent piece of land, lent to him by the Vatican. It includes a printing lab, color grading and mixing facilities equipped with up to date machines for the picture, the sound and the special effects. Ben Ammar expects to attract there producers from all over the world and, with the help of his group who controls the whole process from technical industries to distribution, become a key player in the world audiovisual industry.