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 For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom

 For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/project-kashmir

**PROJECT KASHMIR TO PREMIERE ON THE PBS SERIES
INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2010 AT 10 PM**

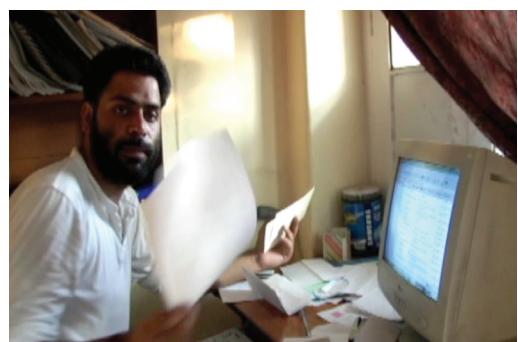
*Two Women from Opposite Sides
Seek the Human Truth
Behind the Conflict*

(San Francisco, CA)— When countries and communities are deeply divided by conflict, how can peacemaking begin? Senain Kheshgi and Geeta V. Patel, two American friends from opposite sides of the divide in Kashmir (one is Pakistani Muslim and the other Indian Hindu), search for answers — not by asking political leaders, but by listening to the people on the ground. What do Kashmiris really want? Exploring the conflict in one of the most beautiful —and dangerous—places on earth, *Project Kashmir* will premiere on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Maggie Gyllenhaal, on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at 10 PM. (check local listings).

Lensed by Academy Award®-winner Ross Kauffman, the film captures the stunning beauty of Kashmir, while interweaving deeply moving personal stories of Kashmiris who have never known a world without war. *Project Kashmir* shows how hatred and suspicion grow in violent places, but also how dialogue and peacemaking have the power to create change.

Project Kashmir serves as a call to action for peacemaking that begins with people, not politics. But the film also reveals that for some questions, there is never just one truth.

Project Kashmir has been awarded grants from Independent Television Service (ITVS)/PBS, The Sundance Institute, Cinereach, The Fledgling Fund, and The Center for Asian American Media (CAAM), among others. *Project Kashmir* premiered at the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival in New York in 2008, and it continues to screen all over the world. The film has been selected by the U.S. State Department to be screened at over 55 embassies and consulates internationally.



Scenes from Project Kashmir, coming to Independent Lens May 2010.

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Historical Background

With over 500,000 armed Indian soldiers, Kashmir, called the most militarized zone on the planet, has been fought over for more than 60 years by Pakistan, Indian, China, and its own citizens. How did this beautiful area become such a conflict zone?

In 1947, the Indian subcontinent, previously under British rule, was divided into the countries of India and Pakistan. One state, Jammu and Kashmir — with a Muslim majority of citizens, but Hindu leadership — was situated squarely between these two nations. Kashmiris were given a choice: India or Pakistan? Both countries wanted Kashmir, a lush mountain region called “paradise on Earth.”

From that point on, Kashmir became a disputed region. In 1949, the Line of Control was created by the United Nations, which separates the Indian and Pakistani controlled parts of the state. Despite a UN call in 1949 to allow the Kashmiris to decide their own future, as of today, this hasn’t happened.



Armed insurgencies, seeking freedom, began to appear in Kashmir in the late 1980s. Even they couldn’t agree on demands: some were pro-Pakistan, others pro-Indian, while still others wanted a completely independent nation. This political impasse between India and Pakistan remains today, each claiming the other responsible for the conflict.

According to human rights groups, over 70,000 civilian casualties and more than 8,000 disappearances have occurred. Over 200,000 Kashmiri Hindus fled their homes, and were forced into refugee camps.

While the Western world remains largely uninvolved, the fighting in Kashmir rages on. Sandwiched between two nuclear states, Kashmir has the potential to become a global flashpoint. This complex conflict continues to divide along cultural, religious, and national lines, with no current end in sight.

To learn more about the film and its subjects, visit the companion website for *Project Kashmir* at www.pbs.org/project-kashmir. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section, where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

Onscreen Participants

Aarti Tikoo Singh is an Indian print journalist who worked in Jammu and Kashmir for seven years, with India’s leading and largest-selling newspaper *The Times of India*. In the early 1990s, her family was forced to leave Kashmir because of the conflict. Although she has been friends with Muzamil Jaleel for ten years, they have been unable to publicly acknowledge their friendship because she is a Kashmiri Hindu, or Pandit.

Muzamil Jaleel is the Kashmir bureau chief of the *Indian Express* newspaper in Srinagar. His writings are primarily focused on the changing psyche of Kashmiri youth, looking at the reasons they opt for violence as a means to pursue a political struggle. He also reports on the psychological cost of violence in Kashmir, the impact of that violence on children, and how violence has altered the social fabric of the region.

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Khurram Pervez is a human rights activist who encourages young people to pursue peaceful approaches to change and advocates for families affected by the violence. He is the founder of the Students' Helpline, which encourages and educates youth in peace-building strategies and educates them on the dangers of war. He co-founded the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, where he monitors and reports on human rights issues, and he's helped the Coalition earn a reputation as a credible and critical source of information. Pervez also works with the Kashmiri Lawyers for Human Rights to provide legal aid for families affected by the conflict. In 2004, while on an election-monitoring mission, the jeep he was riding in struck a landmine. Khurram lost a leg; another human-rights activist and the driver lost their lives. He is a 2006 recipient of the Reebok Human Rights Award.

Directed, produced & written by:
Senain Kheshgi and Geeta V. Patel

Executive producers
Geralyn White Dreyfous & Diana Barrett

Cinematographer
Ross Kauffman

Editors
Billy McMillin & Sharmila Ariathurai

About the Filmmakers

Senain Kheshgi (Director/producer/writer) is a Pakistani American filmmaker who has produced, written, and directed projects for numerous networks including CNN, ABC NEWS, PBS, Discovery, as well as The BBC and CHANNEL 4 in the UK.

Senain co-produced her first feature documentary, *The First Year*, with Academy Award®-winning director Davis Guggenheim (*An Inconvenient Truth*), which was broadcast on PBS in 2001 and was awarded the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award. She has also produced and developed projects with Academy Award®-winner, Ross Kauffman (*Born Into Brothels*), Shari Berman, and Robert Pulcini (directors of Sundance Award-winner, *American Splendor*), as well as with Sophie Fiennes.

In 2001, Senain directed *Family Recipe*, a short film about the legacy of Partition and its effect on her family for the Queen's Museum of Art in New York; in 2008, she directed *Kitchen Diplomacy*, a film commissioned by Morgan Spurlock's documentary company, CINELAN.

Senain is a Tribeca all access fellow, a Sundance Institute fellow, where she attended the documentary editing, composer and producing labs, and she is a recipient of the Rockefeller Foundation's ReNew media film fellowship. Senain was recently awarded a prestigious Asia 21 fellowship from the Asia Society, which aims to help prepare young leaders for the challenges and responsibilities of global citizenship. In 2008, she was selected as a filmmaking fellow for Jehane Noujaim's Global Pangea Day. Senain is on the board of directors for the International Documentary Association (IDA), as well as on the Board of Ciné, an art and cultural institution in her hometown of Athens, Georgia.

She is currently directing a documentary in Pakistan, as well as developing a narrative feature based on her father's journey from being Pakistan's most famous television game show host in the 1960's to his life in the American South in the 1980s.

Geeta V. Patel (Director/producer/writer) is an Indian American writer/director of both documentary and dramatic feature films. She was recently a visiting artist in Belarus and Turkey, as one of 29 filmmakers chosen for a new U.S. State Department initiative in the arts. Currently, she is directing the dramatic feature film, *Mouse*, and a romantic comedy documentary film entitled *One in a Billion* (ITVS/CAAM).

Geeta began her career as an associate screenwriter in Hollywood, working with award-winning writers and directors of big-budget films. She has worked for Disney, Universal Pictures, Imagine Entertainment, ABC, NBC, and Twentieth Century Fox, working on films such as *The Fast and the Furious* and *Blue Crush*.

A former Sundance Institute directing fellow and Tribeca TAA fellow, Geeta has served as visiting lecturer and taught master classes in universities around the world. She is a filmmaking advisor for the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM), and has served on the Nomination Committee for the Rockefeller Foundation/Re-new Media's Media Art's Fellowship, as well as the International Documentary Association's DocuWeek and CAAM selection committees. A graduate in comparative area studies at Duke University, Geeta's background in film, languages, and international relations informs her work as a writer and filmmaker.

Geeta's research for her novel, *The Laughing*, which is set in Kashmir during the height of the insurgency, led her to make *Project Kashmir*.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites, national publicity, and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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