

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:*

*[www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos](http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos)*

*Program companion website: [www.pbs.org/afghanistanunveiled](http://www.pbs.org/afghanistanunveiled)*



**INDEPENDENT LENS'S "AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED" CHRONICLES LIFE OF WOMEN DURING TALIBAN ERA**

**Documentary Is First Film about Afghan Women by Afghan Women, Offers Unprecedented Look at Continued Struggle to Survive and Hope for Brighter Future**

***Film by Brigitte Brault and the AINA Women's Filming Group Premieres Nationally on "Independent Lens"***

***Emmy® Award-Winning Series on PBS***

***Hosted by Susan Sarandon***

***Tuesday, November 16, 2004 at 10 P.M.***

***(check local listings)***

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*"I will never accept that ignorance and intolerance should hide my face ever again." —MEHRIA AZIZI, JOURNALIST*

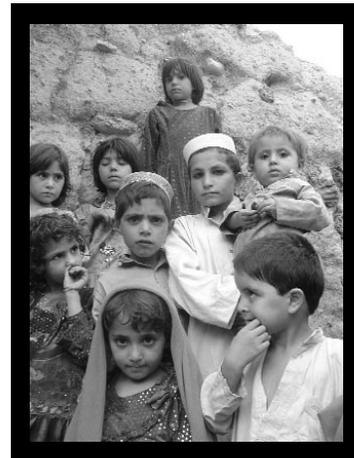
(San Francisco, CA) — Created as the culmination of a unique training program for Afghan women journalists, **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** explores the effects of the repressive Taliban regime and the subsequent U.S. military campaign on the lives of Afghan women and their families. As much an emotional as a geographic journey, the film contrasts the harsh lives of the rural women of Afghanistan with those of the young camerawomen who are experiencing newfound freedom and opportunity and are attempting to use their work to change the condition of women in their country. Fourteen young women, several still in their teens, were trained as camera operators and video journalists

at the AINA (which means 'mirror' in Farsi) Afghan Media and Culture Center in Kabul, the first female journalists to be trained in that country for more than a decade, and the first ever to be trained in digital media. None of the trainees had ever before traveled outside Kabul, and except for one, none had been able to study or pursue careers while the Taliban controlled their country. **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** will have its television premiere on *Independent Lens* on Tuesday, November 16 at 10 P.M. (check local listings).



Traveling to rural regions outside of Kabul, the filmmakers worked to gain the confidence and trust of their interviewees, obtaining unprecedented access to their countrywomen. Journeying to Bamyan, the mountainous region where the Taliban destroyed the enormous ancient statues of the Buddha, the journalists capture heartbreaking footage of women and children who have been reduced to burrowing in caves. Struggling to survive with little food and no water or electricity, left to fend for themselves as the rest of the country rebuilds, the women are led by Zainab, an older woman who details the privations of their daily lives.

The journalists travel to Herat, a city known for its rich heritage but also for its lack of freedom for women, where they discover it difficult even to find a woman willing to speak to them. They visit a doctor who treats women who cannot afford medical care and meet Faugia, whose husband was killed by U.S. bombs when she was six months pregnant. Now Faugia's daily struggle is to find food to feed her family.



In Jalalabad, the young women are anxious to interview some of the nomadic Kuchi women, who roam the country and find shelter in destroyed villages. But tribal elders forbid them to film women's faces and so they journey on. In Badakshan, the journalists learn that the primary source of money in the region is the cultivation of poppies, where one crop can earn enough to buy a car. They finally find a group of Kuchi women willing to speak to them and they hear about their struggles to eke out a life for themselves and their children.

The journalists film a wedding, where it is traditional for Afghan brides to look unhappy at leaving their families. One woman tells how a local militia commander tried to force her to marry against her will, a not uncommon practice in Afghanistan.

Despite the widespread suffering they encounter, the journalists also manage to find moving examples of hope for Afghanistan's future, and emerge from the experience committed to reveal these stories to the world. We also learn about the personal stories of the women behind the cameras, women who were not allowed to appear in public, let alone travel, during the Taliban era. A poetic journey of self-discovery, **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** is a profound reminder of independent media's power to bear witness.

The Asia Foundation, a leading non-governmental organization active in Asia since 1954, with funding from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau for South Asian Affairs, and the Office of Public Diplomacy, provided support for the journalists' training and the transportation costs for the journalists to conduct their interviews around the country. The Foundation also provided an oral history specialist, Shaista Wahab, an Afghan-American professor at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, as a consultant to the project. Additional donors for the project included United States Agency for International Development, UNESCO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The companion website for **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** (<http://www.pbs.org/afghanistanunveiled>) features a map of the filmmakers' travels and a selection of video clips of interviews featured in the film. The site presents an overview on Afghan women's past and current issues and concerns with a sidebar on modern Afghan history. Behind-the-scenes highlights on the making of the film include filmmaker bios and background information on AINA, the program in which they participated. The site features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, Learn More links and a For Educators section with teacher resources and lesson plans.

The Independent Television Service's Community Connections Project (CCP) is partnering with women's rights groups and Afghan immigrant organizations to engage their local communities in discussions about the ongoing challenges and emerging opportunities for women in Afghanistan. Through **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** film screenings, trainings, and forums the CCP will involve public policy makers and non-governmental organizations in dialogue about the U.S.' role and responsibility in promoting Afghan women's rights and self-determination in the post-war period.

The CCP is planning campus forums to involve women's studies, public policy, and Asian studies students in exploring the impediments faced by women during Afghanistan's peace and democratization process. **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** companion curriculums will enable K-12 teachers to expose their students to the principles of equality and human rights.

Women Make Movies distributes **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** in North America. More information is available online at [www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com).

Additional information and/or downloadable photographs from **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED** are available at [www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos](http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos).

## **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED Credits**

DIRECTOR:

PRODUCER:

SCRIPT:

EDITOR:

CINEMATOGRAPHY:

**Brigitte Brault**

**Florent Milesi**

**Brigitte Brault**

**Michele Hickinson**

**Brigitte Brault, Gul Makai Ranjba, Halima Hussiani,  
Shakiba Adill, Mehria Azizi, Marie Ayub, Jamila Emami,  
Nassima Mustafa & Habib Samin**



## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS (A Selected List)

**BRIGITTE BRAULT** (DIRECTOR AND WRITER) is the Media Project Manager for the French Foreign Ministry, a writer and video journalist for French television, and the director of documentary films and reports. She is also a volunteer video journalist for “Etats d’Urgence,” a production company of the French NGO, “Medecins sans Frontieres.”

**SHEKEBA ADILL** (CINEMATOGRAPHER) is 19 years old and has always lived in Kabul. She was a high school student working part time at Kabul TV in children’s programming when she started filming **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED**, traveling to Badakhshan and Herat. She toured in France and Germany for festivals and is now working full time for AINA as a video journalist.

**MARIE AYUB** (CINEMATOGRAPHER) is 26 years old and has also always lived in Kabul. She traveled to Herat and Bamyan during the making of the film and has just completed co-directing *Shadows*, the second AINA documentary about women’s rights in Afghanistan.

**MEHRIA AZIZI** (CINEMATOGRAPHER) is 20 years old and a native of Kabul. She worked as a high school teacher and also at Kabul TV. Mehria traveled to Badakhshan and Jalalabad during the making of the film and has also toured Europe to promote the documentary. She is currently working full time for AINA as a video journalist.

**JAMILA EMAMI** (CINEMATOGRAPHER / EDITOR) is 19 years old and completed her high school education in Pakistan. She returned to Kabul with her family in early 2002. Jamila produced her first news report in September 2002 for French TV and traveled to Herat, Jalalabad and Bamyan during the making of **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED**. She is now working full time for AINA as an editor and cinematographer.

**HALIMA HUSSIANI** (CINEMATOGRAPHER) is 26 years old and returned from Iran without her family in early 2002, in order to study journalism at Kabul University. She produced her first news reports for French television in September 2002 and traveled to Bamyan and Herat working on **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED**. She represented the film at the Copenhagen cph:dox Documentary Film Festival. She is now working full time for AINA as a video journalist.

**NASIMA MUSTAFA** (CINEMATOGRAPHER) is in her mid thirties and works as a kindergarten teacher. She produced her first news report for French television in September 2002 and traveled to Jalalabad during the making of **AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED**. She is now happily married and recently moved to Pakistan to follow her husband.

**GUL MAKAI RANJBA** is 22 years old and has always lived in Kabul. She is currently a university student. She traveled to Badakhshan for the making of the film and is now working full time for AINA as a video journalist.

## ABOUT *INDEPENDENT LENS*

***Independent Lens*** is an Emmy Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. Hosted by Susan Sarandon, 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, which prompted Nancy Franklin to write in *The New Yorker*: “Watching ***Independent Lens***... is like going into an independent bookstore—you don’t always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn’t even know you wanted.” Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community outreach campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [www.pbs.org/independentlens](http://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.

## ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series ***Independent Lens*** on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org). ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

## ABOUT PBS

PBS is a private, nonprofit media enterprise that serves the nation’s 349 public noncommercial television stations, reaching nearly 90 million people each week. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is the leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of educational services for adult learners. PBS’ premier kids’ TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online ([pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org)), continue to be parents’ and teachers’ most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at [pbs.org](http://pbs.org), the leading dot-org Web site on the Internet. PBS is headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia.



ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

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