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L.A. Film Festival to Screen Cal Poly Professor's Documentary on Afghanistan

SAN LUIS OBISPO – “Kabul Transit,” a documentary by Cal Poly social sciences Professor Maliha Zulfacar that explores the soul of a city devastated by nearly three decades of war, has been accepted into the 2006 Los Angeles Film Festival.



“Kabul Transit” will be shown June 24, 25 and 29 at [the festival](#). The 104-minute film follows city residents in the course of their daily lives and listens to stories of their past and hopes for their future, according to Zulfacar. “The central character of ‘Kabul Transit’ is the city itself -- neighborhoods leveled by rockets, traditional mud brick homes next to modern glass towers, gleaming SUVs caught in traffic jams with rebuilt taxis,” Zulfacar said. “Kabul Transit is about the spirit of the Afghan people, as much as it is about the problems of the city. It is about the black humor and sardonic good sense that keep people attuned to the realities of their lives, even as politicians lay the groundwork for battles yet to come.”

Zulfacar, along with anthropology Professor David Edwards from Williams College and Greg Whitemore, Williams College alumnus and freelance cameraman and film editor, wrote, filmed, edited and produced the film. She and Edwards traveled to Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, in fall 2003 to work on the documentary. “Initially we had no specific theme,” she said. “Instead of having a specific topic, we let the film's content decide for itself. It took almost two-and-a-half years to finish and edit the film.”

While Zulfacar is credited with producing the film, her professional obligations didn't allow her to spend the necessary time at Williams College to edit and direct it. In addition to her teaching responsibilities at Cal Poly, she served as director of the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies in Afghanistan for much of 2005.

In January she was featured in a National Public News broadcast about her work in Afghanistan. Zulfacar, born and raised in Kabul, was a sociology professor at Kabul University before fleeing to Germany after the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in 1979. Since the U.S. entry and occupation of Afghanistan, she's been spending summers and vacations there, working to rebuild the nation's higher education system and encourage women to return to Kabul University. She has also coordinated a number of fund-raising drives.

Zulfacar is currently in Thailand teaching Cal Poly exchange students. She expects to return to California in mid-June.

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