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For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/dinnerwiththepresident

**“DINNER WITH THE PRESIDENT: A Nation’s Journey”
Premieres October, 28 2008
on the Emmy® Award–Winning PBS Series *Independent Lens***

Documentary Offers Intimate Portrait of Life in Pakistan and Its Struggle for Democracy Through Candid Conversations with Former Pakistani Leader Pervez Musharraf over Dinner

(San Francisco, CA)—Are dictatorship and democracy mutually exclusive? In a country of cultures as ancient and complex as Pakistan’s, the answer to what the future holds is not straightforward. Projected to be the world’s third-most-populous country by 2050, Pakistan has stood at the crossroads of East and West for centuries. Now in the “nuclear club” and an emerging secular democracy amidst neighboring Islamic theocracies, Pakistan plays a critical role in America’s war on terrorism. President Pervez Musharraf, who recently resigned, was long viewed as a key U.S. ally in the region—a reputation that did not always serve him well in Pakistan.

In **DINNER WITH THE PRESIDENT: A Nation’s Journey**, Pakistani filmmaker Sabiha Sumar and Sri Lankan co-director Satha Sathananthan request a dinner with Musharraf, still the country’s leader at the time — and to their surprise the request is granted. The family dinner with Musharraf and his mother forms the backdrop to a filmic journey through contemporary Pakistan as the filmmakers forgo the headlines and search the country for deeper answers. In surprising encounters with people from all levels of Pakistani society, they reveal a country where ethnic and tribal loyalties struggle against modernization and where religious Islamic forces threaten to make Pakistan a theocracy like Iran. In the crosshairs of change sits the president himself, whose ties to the military and modernization efforts in Pakistan have made him a lightning rod for controversy from across the political spectrum.

The film impels its audience to rethink conventional Western wisdom around concepts such as individual rights, democracy, power and political process. What system of government would replace Musharraf if he were to lose power? Could the future be a nuclear-armed fundamentalist Islamic theocracy? The filmmakers achieve an amazing sense of openness in their conversations with the president as he ponders the situation in his country, which also has immediate and real consequences for the entire world.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **DINNER WITH THE PRESIDENT: A Nation’s Journey** at pbs.org/independentlens/dinnerwiththepresident/. Get detailed information on the film, watch video clips, read an interview with the filmmaker and find related links and resources to explore the subject in depth. The site also features a Talkback section for audiences to share their ideas and opinions.

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About the Filmmakers

Sabiha Sumar was born in Karachi, Pakistan. Sumar's debut documentary, *Who Will Cast the First Stone?*, won the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival, and her first feature film, *Khamosh Pani (Silent Waters)*, won the Golden Leopard for Best Film at the Locarno International Film Festival. Sumar studied filmmaking and political science at Sarah Lawrence College in New York and read history and political thought at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

Sachithanandam Sathananthan was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. He co-founded Vidhi Films and has produced work that catalyzes critical debates on social change. His films include *Suicide Warriors*, a documentary about the women's suicide brigade of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and *Khamosh Pani (Silent Waters)*. **DINNER WITH THE PRESIDENT: A Nation's Journey** is his directorial debut. Sathananthan read for a Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award winning weekly series airing 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 unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 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. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens.

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