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***Powerless* Premieres On *Independent Lens* Monday, November 3, 2014 ON PBS**

New Documentary Illuminates the Tangled Complexity of the Electrical Supply Situation in Once-Prosperous Indian Metropolis of Kanpur

(San Francisco, CA) — There are 1.5 billion people living without electricity worldwide and, of these, 400 million live in India. Kanpur, India, home to over three million people, is a once-booming industrial center that has been turned into an urban nightmare by a shortage of reliable electricity. With constant power outages that can last up to 15 hours a day, Kanpur is at the epicenter of a global shortage in electricity, identified by the United Nations as the main barrier to social and economic development. ***Powerless***, a new documentary about the devastating impacts of living without electricity, is told through the voices of frustrated citizens, power company officials, and a wily electrician who makes his living by illegally tapping into the power grid. Directed and produced by Fahad Mustafa and Deepti Kakkar, *Powerless* premieres on *Independent Lens* on Monday, November 3, 2014, 10:00-11:00 PM ET on PBS ([check local listings](#).)

Loha Singh is a 28-year-old electrician renowned for his prowess in stealing electricity, providing illegal connections from one neighborhood to another so that homes, factories, and businesses can function. His work and that of others like him have turned the landscape of the city into a thick and tangled web of ragged wires, sparks, and sudden fire.

Ritu Maheshwari, the first female chief and new to the Kanpur Electricity Supply Company (KESCO), is on a mission to eliminate powerlessness and save the struggling utility. Electricity theft accounts for nearly 30 percent of their losses, aggravating the crisis, and Ritu has created a new task force to tackle the rising theft. Together with the police, KESCO officials try to disconnect the countless illegal connections that Loha and others like him have installed.

Initially, Ritu's efforts meet with some success. But with the hot Indian summer settling in and temperatures reaching 113 degrees, the power problem takes on crisis proportions, with dire implications on the citizen's lives and livelihoods. What emerges is a picture of a once-thriving city on the brink of chaos.

"My memories of Kanpur are predominantly of long, uncomfortable, waterless summers, spent without electricity," said filmmaker Fahad Mustafa, who was born in Kanpur. "There were always stories about relatives and friends of the family losing their incomes and businesses. Upon returning to Kanpur many years later I found that the situation remains largely unchanged. The city and its people look back with bitter nostalgia and a sense of loss towards its glorious past and uncertain future. This is a story not only about electricity, but a political reality that millions in India and billions worldwide live with."



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Visit the *Powerless* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/powerless/>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker and more information. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

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About the Filmmakers

Fahad Mustafa (Director/Producer) was born in Kanpur, India in 1984. He has since lived in Dammam, New Delhi, Vienna, and Edmonton. He was an Erasmus Mundus Global Studies scholar. He previously directed *FC Chechnya* (Austria, 2010).

Deepti Kakkar (Director/Producer), born in Delhi in 1986, has been engaged in issues of social development and sustainable livelihood for the last ten years. She previously directed a film on microfinance in India and worked on story development and as production manager on Fahad Mustafa's *FC Chechnya*. She lives in Ghaziabad, India.

CREDITS

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|-------------------|---|
| Produced by | Deepti Kakkar and Fahad Mustafa |
| Cinematography by | Amith Surendran Maria Trieb-Eliaz Fahad Mustafa |
| Edited by | Maria Trieb-Eliaz Namrata Rao |
| Music by | Amit Kilam Rahul Ram Nora Kroll-Rosenbaum |

Powerless is a co-production of Globalistan Films Private Limited and ITVS

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10 pm. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation at facebook.com/independentlens and [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

