

Established 1992



Reg. Charity No.  
1062749

# Kashmir International Relief Fund

255 High Road London E11 4HH

Phone: 08700 421 700 / 07946 412 232 / +44 20 8519 0090

Email: [info@kirf.org](mailto:info@kirf.org)

Web: [www.kirf.org](http://www.kirf.org)

## BAGH RADIO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

BAGH (KASHMIR), 15-DECEMBER-2005 – Kashmir International Relief Fund (KIRF) volunteers Rubina Shafi, Salman Yunus and Omer Qureishi were interviewed by Power 99 FM, a local radio station in Bagh. Power 99 FM was set-up in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2005 to provide remote villages with information about the relief efforts. The volunteers joined the KIRF earthquake efforts from New York, Spain and Pakistan respectively.

Power 99 FM Station Manager M. Saleem Khan (SK) conducted the interview with Ms Rubina Shafi (RS) regarding her experience as a volunteer with KIRF and the documentary film she is making on the quake relief efforts underway in NWFP and AJK. The transcript of the interview is provided in full below.

SK: On tonight's show we would like to welcome Mr Zulfiqar Haider Raja from the KIRF field office in Bagh and a team of volunteers; Ms Rubina Shafi from New York, Mr Omer Qureishi from Abottabad and Mr Salman Yunus from Spain. These volunteers took part in today's field survey conducted by KIRF in Khawaas Village here in Bagh district. I was told that they set off on their mission at seven o'clock this morning. When I reach the radio station in the morning I can tell you that the extreme cold is difficult to bear, and their effort is all the more laudable given that they visited a particularly cold area, Khawaas village, in the early hours of the morning. So on behalf of all of us at Power 99 FM we would like to congratulate KIRF's survey team for their work in the field... On this note we are pleased to inform villagers in Khawaas that distribution of CGI sheets will begin as early as tomorrow morning. Great news for the villagers in Khawaas, you are all invited to collect your CGI sheets at the KIRF field camp in Bagh. Mr Zulfiqar Haider Raja has brought fantastic news for Khawass village tonight as we announce that the distribution of CGI sheets will take place tomorrow morning. You are informed that the sheets will be ready for collection at 10 am tomorrow morning. And the great thing is you will not have to queue. The sheets will be ready for distribution and you just have to collect them. On that note we have just received another call from our listeners who would like to remind Raja Jee (Zulfiqar Haider Raja) of the promise made some 15 or 20 days ago to the families in Suddhan Gali, Bheerpani and Rarr Bann: Raja Jee we are still awaiting relief in these areas, so if you are listening please please remember your promise and come to our help as soon as possible. We are also in desperate need of your help, so please Raja Jee if you hear this message...

(Commercial break)

SK: Power FM has the pleasure of presenting the daily relief distribution update brought to us by UK-based Kashmir International Relief Fund. This update provides us information on how many CGI sheets, tents, blankets and quilts have so far been distributed in the different villages of Bagh District. The report indicates that KIRF has so far covered 23 villages starting with Chatter No. 1 / Dhund, where 495 families have received their shelter kits. That is 4,950 CGI sheets in Chatter No 1/Dhund. In Padder Gulsher Khan, 289 families were covered with 2890 sheets. In Seri Awaira, 3370 sheets were distributed to 337 families, whilst in Dhundar, 2910 sheets were distributed. In Chiran/Kacha, 301 families received 3010 CGI Sheets. In Saver Mutwali and Chack Saver, 361 families were covered, that is 3610 sheets. In Saver Kalloo, 267 families received a total of 2670 sheets. Etc... (see Update of 17 December 2005)

...You are tuned to Power FM 99. Lines are open so please if you want to call us, here is the number :  
0301 536 95 89 or 0301 5672 4850

Established 1992



Reg. Charity No.  
1062749

# Kashmir International Relief Fund

255 High Road London E11 4HH

Phone: 08700 421 700 / 07946 412 232 / +44 20 8519 0090

Email: [info@kirf.org](mailto:info@kirf.org)

Web: [www.kirf.org](http://www.kirf.org)

## Interview:

SK: Assalaam O Aleikum Miss Rubina Shafi, you have come from New York, America, and Power 99 FM would now like to give you a special welcome to our show tonight

RS: Thank you

SK: So for the listeners who have just joined us, Rubina Shafi has come to Bagh as a volunteer and is currently working with KIRF. Rubina, could you tell us what prompted you to visit Balakot and Bagh, and especially to come and help out the people affected by the quake?

RS: I would first of all like to apologize for my Urdu that is not quite up to scratch but I hope it's good enough for the listeners to understand. I joined KIRF in the hope that I might be able to provide my volunteer help. Listening to the news in America, I heard of the tragic situation endured by the people in the earthquake hit areas. Listening to the news, I felt compelled to travel to Pakistan in the hope of being able to offer my help.

SK: Rubina, what were your first impressions upon arriving in Bagh and Balakot after what you had heard and seen in the news back home?

RS: The first thing that struck me when I arrived here is the extent of the destruction. But then I also saw the resilience of the people here, their hospitality and their kind-heartedness. Despite the tragedy they are faced with, the people I have met have been extremely friendly and warm. In America you sometimes hear harrowing tales of dangers associated with this country but being here now I feel totally safe. Kashmir is a beautiful place and we feel completely at ease here.

SK: Rubina, you have heard various callers singing the praises of KIRF and thanking them for their help. We would like to know your opinion on the work of KIRF. Do you think they are really working effectively? What can you say about KIRF?

RS: Let me tell you that I have worked with a number of NGOs here in the Northern areas of Pakistan but KIRF stands out as the most effective and organised NGO I have worked with. Zulfiqar Haider Raja is a very dedicated individual and KIRF has an in-depth knowledge of this area, which is probably why they're delivering such excellent work.

SK: Thank you Rubina. This takes us to the next question: What are your impressions on Power 99 FM Radio? Do you think we are in any way contributing to the relief efforts?

RS: Indeed. Power FM 99 plays a very important part in the relief efforts. It acts as a link between us and the beneficiaries of the relief efforts. It allows us to tell people where, when and how the goods will be delivered, what's happening, how the aid will be delivered. So in all in all, yes indeed, Power FM is playing a very important part.

SK: Did you actually meet people who have told you that it was thanks to Power FM 99 that they managed to make their voices heard and receive aid?

RS: Yes, we actually did. For example the people of Khawaas to whom we are about to distribute CGI sheets. We found out about their situation through Power FM 99 when someone from the village called the station. FM 99 is really the link that allows the villagers and ourselves to know what is happening, where it's happening and who needs help.

SK: Which areas have you visited here in Bagh district. Is there any particular village that you visited?

Established 1992



Reg. Charity No.  
1062749

# Kashmir International Relief Fund

255 High Road London E11 4HH

Phone: 08700 421 700 / 07946 412 232 / +44 20 8519 0090

Email: [info@kirf.org](mailto:info@kirf.org)

Web: [www.kirf.org](http://www.kirf.org)

RS. We visited three villages in the last few days: Sarrol, Dhundar and Khawaas.

SK: You mentioned Sarrol, Dhundar and Khawaas. Out of these three villages, which is the most hardly hit according to you?

RS: Broadly speaking, the wave of destruction has hit a very wide area. In the case of Khawass however, I would like to point out that the road conditions are extremely bad. The place was utterly destroyed in the quake and the people had so far received no aid at all. Which is why we prioritised the needs of the villagers of Khawaas.

SK. You said you visited Dhundar so the question I would like to ask is -How are the people there living? Have they started building their shelters? Are they living in tents?

RS: The people of Dhundar have taken things in their stride and shelter building is well underway. CGI sheeting has been distributed and some shelters have already been completed. During our visit we saw the ruins of their old homes and the shelters being built next to them. Although building shelters is quite a difficult task, everyone was hard at work. Some were doing it on their own, others had employed carpenters, but all in all, work is in progress.

SK. Rubina, before coming to Pakistan, I believe you did some fundraising in the United States. I would like to ask you Rubina, what are you planning to do with the funds you raised with the generous help of your donors in New York? What will you do with those funds?

RS: I would first of all like to express my gratitude to the American people who donated generously to this humanitarian appeal. I promised the donors I would bring the money to Pakistan and use it to bring relief to the people who are most in need of assistance. In this sense we were very fortunate to meet Mister Raja and collaborate with KIRF who have facilitated our efforts in a way that we are now in a position to use those funds to provide shelters to 25 households, the rest of the shelters being provided with the help of other partner NGOs, in this case in particular IOM. By the grace of god, this has allowed us to cover the needs of an entire village, both in terms of CGI sheets and quilts.

SK. Rubina, could you please tell us the name of the village this aid was provided to?

RS: It is Khawaas Village.

SK; This is your first visit to this region, and to Bagh in Particular. What can you say about the weather conditions in the area right now?

RS ; Well it's a quite chilly of course but above all I have to say this place is gifted with immense beauty and the people especially are extremely hospitable and well-meaning. I do hope, Inch Allah, that I will be able to come back in the future.

SK. What did you feel when you went to Khawass and you took up the challenge of helping the people of Khawaas? What were your impressions?

RS: When the villagers from Khawaas came to collect their shelter kits you could see happiness on their faces, you could feel they were grateful, which is of course very gratifying. I will now go back to the States and tell the donors exactly how their aid was distributed and who benefited. I will also tell them that thanks to their contributions some people at least will be spared from the rigours of winter.

Established 1992



Reg. Charity No.  
1062749

# Kashmir International Relief Fund

255 High Road London E11 4HH

Phone: **08700 421 700** / **07946 412 232** / **+44 20 8519 0090**

Email: **info@kirf.org**

Web: **www.kirf.org**

SK. Rubina, you are currently working on a documentary film and you told me you plan to go back to the US and use this material for awareness raising and fundraising purposes. How did you initially get the idea of making a documentary?

RS: Back at home I work in film production, more specifically in documentary production, so it just seemed to me as a good opportunity to use my skills to make a documentary on Pakistan and Kashmir at this key moment, at a time when many people are working hand in hand in the relief efforts. I basically thought it would be good to get these crucial events on film.

SK. Thanks Rubina. I will now leave you in the company of my colleague Aqueel Younis (AY) who would also like to ask you some questions just after this short commercial break.

AY. Welcome back. Tonight we have the pleasure of inviting Ms Rubina Shafi to our programme. Rubina, this is your first time in Kashmir; what can you say about the hospitality of the people of Kashmir?

RS; Actually we are fortunate to have received a very warm welcome in the home of Mr Rasheed and his family. They have helped us enormously and we are currently staying at their home. In spite of the notable damages they sustained during the quake, they have been extremely hospitable and we are very grateful.

AY. You have visited several villages within Bagh district, especially far flung places at high altitudes with extremely cold temperatures. There you were able to see that people were busy building shelters. What are your impressions, do you think these people are working hard?

RS. Yes indeed. I think Kashmiri people are very strong, I mean physically but also emotionally. Spiritually they are very strong, very resilient.

AY. The upper areas you have visited are exposed to particularly harsh weather conditions, especially as of January and February when they become snowbound. Once it was established that tents would not provide a viable solution to protect the villagers from the cold, KIRF's Mr Raja started distributing CGI sheets for the construction of shelters. What can you say about the work undertaken by Mr Raja?

RS: Raja Sahib and his team are working very effectively in the distribution of CGI sheets, such as in the case of Khawaas village. Without them it would be impossible for us to provide those people with help. The knowledge Mr Raja's team has of the area is a great asset when it comes to aid distribution. I believe they're doing an excellent job.

AY: Are you totally satisfied that they are working hard?

RS: I have been really impressed with the way Mr Raja is conducting the field activities, and I am especially impressed by his generosity and compassion towards the needy.

AY. What can you say about the nature and the greenery that is associated with Kashmir and our district, Bagh, in particular?

RS. I feel as though I am in a dream, as though I am in heaven, and Insh Allah I hope I will have another opportunity to visit this place in the future.

AY. What were your feelings when you heard about the disaster?

RS. My initial reaction was of deep sadness and grief. I then had the idea of collecting some funds for Pakistan. It would also be a good way of dispelling some of the preconceptions that are associated with

Established 1992



Reg. Charity No.  
1062749

# Kashmir International Relief Fund

255 High Road London E11 4HH

Phone: **08700 421 700** / **07946 412 232** / **+44 20 8519 0090**

Email: **info@kirf.org**

Web: **www.kirf.org**

the people of the United States, a way of showing that Americans too can be kind hearted and generous. And obviously when I go back to the States, I will also show the people back home how kind-hearted the Pakistanis are.

AY: What do you have to say about the people of Kashmir?

RS: As I said, I admire the strength of the Kashmiri people, their resilience as well as their physical and spiritual strength in the face of such tragic events. The strength they have of smiling amid such difficult circumstances. Their hospitality has been tremendous and I feel very attached to this place and the people of Kashmir.

AY: I believe you are working on a documentary film on the quake affected areas. My question is How do you intend to use this material, and how do you plan to run fundraising activities when you return to the US?

RS: I will of course try my best, Inch Allah, to raise some funds for donations, and I hope that this documentary film will help me raise people's awareness to the Kashmir disaster and thus also contribute to fundraising. The documentary basically portrays on the one hand the extent and scale of devastation and, on the other, the splendour of Kashmir's landscapes and nature, and also its people. I plan it as a thought-provoking documentary that will inspire donors to contribute generously to the cause. The personal accounts included in the documentary may also incite potential donors to donate more generously to the Kashmir appeal, be it blankets, money, or prayers.

AY: Zulfiqar Haider Raja and the Kashmir International Relief Fund are doing a splendid job in the field of relief assistance but the needs of the affected populations are far from covered, especially in this case in terms of CGI sheeting. As winter and extreme weather conditions are approaching fast, people are increasingly concerned that they might not receive tin sheets in time. So what I would like to ask you is whether these sheets are about to be delivered, whether a stock of sheets is available, how can you reassure the people still in need regarding the delivery of tin sheets, Ms Rubina?

RS: We are faced with a real problem. So many people need CGI sheets and supplying such quantities of sheets obviously takes time. Shipments are coming in from all sides. From what I have seen, KIRF operates extremely efficiently. They have a stock of sheets at the field camp, this stock is regularly replenished and needs are identified in the various locations, but of course the stock of sheets depends on funding, funding is essential if they are to keep providing sheets to the needy.

AY: But does KIRF actually have enough stock to cover the existing needs within the coming weeks?

RS: Inch Allah the distribution will continue. KIRF distributes CGI sheets but these of course need to be either donated by other organisations or purchased, and that requires funding. Our efforts are aimed at generating consciousness among our potential donors in order to secure funds for the continuity of our relief assistance.

AY: Before we end this interview, is there anything special you would like to share with our listeners?

RS: Well you know my time in Kashmir will soon come to an end and I'll have to go back home. My heart is telling me not to go and find a way of staying on. I have met so many people here and it just feels like I am here forever.

AY: Thank you very much Rubina.

End

Established 1992



Reg. Charity No.  
1062749

# Kashmir International Relief Fund

255 High Road London E11 4HH

Phone: [08700 421 700](tel:08700421700) / [07946 412 232](tel:07946412232) / [+44 20 8519 0090](tel:+442085190090)

Email: [info@kirf.org](mailto:info@kirf.org)

Web: [www.kirf.org](http://www.kirf.org)

## Editor Notes

Kashmir International Relief Fund (KIRF) is the largest charity and NGO in Azad Kashmir – the region most affected by the devastating earthquake on 8th October 2005. As a registered UK charity, KIRF has been at the forefront of providing humanitarian relief, welfare and development to the people of Azad Kashmir since 1992. KIRF has a long understanding and capability to deal with the human tragedy resulting from natural or political disasters. Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone affected by this unprecedented earthquake in the region. KIRF will use all its efforts to help the emergency relief effort in the short term and also to lead the way in the long-term development effort that will be necessary in the weeks, months and years to come.

KIRF will work with the Kashmiri, Pakistani and international communities globally to help rebuild and rehabilitate the disaster area. KIRF has and will always work in Kashmir – especially when the world's attention turns elsewhere.

**For more information please contact:**

### Ishfaq Ahmed

KIRF Chief Executive

Phone 07946 412 232

Email [info@kirf.org](mailto:info@kirf.org)

Web [www.kirf.org](http://www.kirf.org)