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Award-winning Novelist Partners with Nonprofit Organization to Build Awareness of Human Trafficking

A portion of the proceeds from award-winning author Shamim Sarif's new novel, The Athena Protocol, will help fund Headwaters Relief Organization's comprehensive awareness programs

Around the world—and close to home—as many as four million people each year are trafficked for forced labor and sexual exploitation. Sadly, about 50% of those are children. Now, Headwaters Relief Organization, an international non-profit disaster relief organization, is teaming with award-winning novelist Shamim Sarif to raise funds to educate communities about these risks, and support those who have experienced trafficking.

“We have encountered trafficking nationally and internationally in our disaster work,” comments Headwaters Relief Organization Founder Rebecca Thomley, PsyD, whose organization supports the needs of families and communities after tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, fires and man-made disasters. “Traffickers may take advantage of children and families made vulnerable by these conditions.”

Thomley stresses that education and awareness are key to protecting loved ones from becoming victims. “Traditionally, services have been developed to support people who have been victimized by trafficking. We intend to focus on prevention by providing education to children and their families about the risks as well as harmful social and cultural practices that can support trafficking.”

Using literature to educate as well as help victims build coping skills and develop resiliency was a strategy that drew the attention of author, screenwriter and director Shamim Sarif, whose stories often encompass social justice. Her new novel, *The Athena Protocol*, a YA thriller which HarperCollins will publish on October 8, 2019, addresses trafficking as a global issue. In the book, Athena is a top secret, socially conscious, all-female organization that combats injustice against women and children around the world. The protagonist, Jessie, is a young, hot-headed agent embroiled in a daring mission to take down a human trafficking operation in Belgrade, Serbia.

Like Headwaters, Sarif believes in the impact of storytelling. “Stories can be empowering, giving us characters we identify with and a framework to understand our own lives and humanity,” she says. “I hope to build awareness amongst young adults who read *The Athena Protocol* and perhaps motivate them to make a difference with this global problem.”

Sarif will donate 100 percent of the affiliate fees she receives for each book purchased through the links [on her author website](#) to Headwaters Relief Organization.

“We are keenly aware of the need to educate potential victims, families and community leaders about the possibility of trafficking and to further support those who have experienced trafficking,” says Thomley. “What excites us about partnering with Shamim Sarif is that it promotes our vision for reaching young people who are our future for positive change.”

Awareness tips and strategies to protect against trafficking

Thomley encourages families to talk with their children about simple safety strategies. Some of these tactics include:

- Monitor those in close contact with your family. “People who approach those in need may not always have good intentions.”
- Never allow children to travel alone to or from school or activities.
- Tell them where to go, and who to trust, should they feel uncomfortable or threatened. “Teach children to use a sign or word when they feel uncomfortable, as a cue to let family know they need help.”
- Parents should routinely check children’s emails and phones. “This is often how children are approached.”

To order *The Athena Protocol*, visit <https://shamimsarif.com/the-athena-protocol/>.

To learn more about how Headwaters Relief Organization is trying to prevent human trafficking around the world, visit <https://www.headwatersrelief.org/initiatives/human-trafficking/>.

About Headwaters Relief Organization

Headwaters Relief Organization is a non-profit disaster relief collaboration of volunteers that supports the needs of families and communities after disasters. Headwaters provides public health, psychosocial and medical support as well as disaster debris clean up and rebuilding in partnership with other organizations. <https://www.headwatersrelief.org/>

Dr. Rebecca Thomley

Dr. Rebecca Thomley is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Orion Associates, a management organization providing management services to related and unrelated, for-profit and non-profit companies primarily in the social services field. Dr. Thomley also developed a non-profit, Headwaters Relief Organization, to promote volunteerism and provide disaster relief to communities and those affected by natural disasters.

About Shamim Sarif

Writer and director Shamim Sarif is an award-winning novelist, screenwriter, and film director. Her new book, *The Athena Protocol*, is an all-female contemporary action thriller released by Harper Collins as the first in a series. It is her fourth novel. Her feature films as writer/director include *Despite the Falling Snow* (starring Rebecca Ferguson and Charles Dance), *I Can’t Think Straight* and *The World Unseen*, all based on her books. Shamim has spoken at events worldwide, including TED, INK in India and DLD in Munich. She lives in London with her wife.

<https://shamimsarif.com/>

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