



## ARTS & CULTURE

# Afghan Musicians to Recreate Their Famous School in Portugal

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Over 270 students and teachers from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music arrived with their families this week in Portugal.

The Western European country has offered them asylum. As a group, they hope to rebuild their famous school in their new home.

The group fled Afghanistan over a period of six weeks in October and November. First, they went to Doha, Qatar. They arrived Monday in Portugal's capital, Lisbon. Governments, companies and private donors paid for the group's **evacuation** and resettlement costs.

Dr. Ahmad Sarmast is the institute's founder and director. On Monday, he said, "The arrival of the (institute's) community today means that the first and most important step of saving lives and ensuring freedom is now over."

The musicians are among tens of thousands of Afghans who have fled since Taliban fighters seized Afghanistan in August. That is when the U.S. and NATO ended their 20-year military presence.

The Afghanistan girls' youth soccer team has also resettled in Portugal. The country has taken in 764 Afghans since the summer.

Afghanistan has a strong musical tradition. A popular music **scene** also had grown there over the past 20 years. But many musicians fear for their futures under the Taliban.

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music was founded in 2010. It became well-known for its inclusiveness. It became a **symbol** of a new Afghanistan. Women and men studied together and performed to huge **audiences** in the United States and Europe.

The school's **campus** in Kabul is now occupied by a Taliban group. Its bank accounts were seized. Its offices have been destroyed, former school officials say.

The Afghan teachers and students plan to recreate the school in Portugal. This will permit the students to continue their education. The school will be part of a larger Lisbon-based center for Afghan culture that will continue to welcome exiles.

I'm Ashley Thompson.

*Barry Hatton reported this story for the Associated Press. Ashley Thompson adapted it for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter Jr was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**evacuation** -*n.* to leave or remove (someone) from a dangerous place

**scene** -*n.* a particular area of activity that involves many people

**symbol** -*n.* an action, object, event, that expresses or represents an idea or quality

**audience** -*n.* a group of people who gather together to listen or see a performance or who watch a performance such as a movie

**campus** -*n.* the area and buildings around a university, college, school or similar organization

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