

ARTISTIC FREEDOM INITIATIVE

About Artistic Freedom Initiative

Led by immigration and human rights attorneys, Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI) provides pro bono immigration representation and resettlement assistance for international artists at risk. AFI directly assists artists who have experienced persecution, censorship, or other restrictions on their freedom of expression. Further, we support artists who have demonstrated a commitment to advancing progressive social change and fundamental human rights.

Since inception, AFI has taken on over 700 artist cases, providing \$2.5 million in pro bono legal services and resettlement assistance. The at-risk artists in AFI's network come from 50+ countries and work across 30+ creative disciplines.

About AFI's Afghan Artists Protection Project (AAPP)

The Afghan Artists Protection Project (AAPP) is a holistic resettlement initiative developed by AFI. It is generously funded by the Mellon Foundation and the SDK Foundation for Human Dignity. The project aims to safely resettle 18 Afghan artists and their families, who are increasingly threatened under Taliban rule, and allow them to preserve their livelihoods as artists in the U.S.

Through AAPP, AFI facilitates the relocation and resettlement of these artists and their families by providing pro bono immigration representation, logistical relocation support, temporary housing, resettlement funds, customized employment and fellowship opportunities, and ongoing support post-relocation. AAPP draws on AFI's highly-specialized expertise working on 700+ cases of at-risk, forcibly displaced artists from over 50 countries.

AAPP was developed in response to the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Since the U.S. announced its intention to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in August, AFI has received an unprecedented 2,500+ individual requests for legal assistance from Afghan artists. Many of these artists have been subjected to torture, beatings, door-to-door searches, destruction of art and musical instruments, and the infliction of physical injuries to prevent them from creating work. AFI is dedicated to safeguarding the right to artistic freedom, uplifting artists at risk, preserving art at risk, and championing the power of art to effect change. Through AAPP, we actualize this commitment in a comprehensive and holistic way.

About Our Partners

AAPP depends on innovative partnerships with several prestigious institutions. Primary funding for AAPP is provided by the Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the SDK Foundation for Human Dignity.

The New School (TNS), through the New University in Exile Consortium, has committed to providing year-long fellowships for up to 10 of the 18 AAPP artists. Tailored to the disciplines and interests of each individual artist, fellowships will be granted in several TNS departments, programs, and research centers including Parsons School of Design, the College of Performing Arts (Mannes School of Music, the School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, the School of Drama), the Vera List Center for Art and Politics.

How Can You Help?

To provide vital support for Afghan artists at risk who are resettled under AAPP, AFI seeks partnerships and collaborations with institutions, individuals, and businesses committed to protecting human rights and the arts.

Why Is This Important?

AFI offers holistic resettlement support to at-risk artists through our many projects, programs, and partnerships. Our work addresses a spectrum of needs that arise post-displacement, from securing legal entry and safe haven housing to connecting with social services and professional development opportunities. We support artists as they navigate each step of this process, and work alongside them to build up creative and professional communities in their new homes. Partnerships and collaborations with organizations and individuals are key components to the success of this holistic approach.

Institutional Partnerships

AFI seeks to partner with:

- U.S.-based **museums, universities, arts organizations, and arts presenting institutions** that can:
 - Host year-long fellowships and/or provide employment opportunities for incoming AAPP fellowships, typically at \$50k per artist for one year;
 - Curate, commission, and employ AAPP artists for exhibitions, performances, and other programming; or
 - Donate exhibition and performance spaces for public programming featuring AAPP artists.
- U.S.-based **universities** that can enroll AAPP artists as students in an accredited program or department.
- U.S.-based **artist residencies** that can provide professional/creative development opportunities and in-kind housing (short- or long-term) for incoming AAPP artists.
- International **nongovernmental organizations** that are actively resettling Afghans and can facilitate connections with additional AAPP eligible artists.
- U.S.-based **social service and health care providers** that are equipped to provide support for individuals displaced by armed conflict.

Individual Partnerships

AFI seeks to partner with:

- U.S.-based **artists and academics at the top of their fields** who can:
 - write “expert testimonial” letters of recommendation for AAPP artists’ immigration applications, and;
 - volunteer as industry mentors for AAPP artists.
- U.S.-based or international **journalists** who wish to help amplify the stories of AAPP artists.

Private Sector Partnerships

AFI seeks to partner with:

- U.S.-based **immigration attorneys and/or law firms** who can take on AAPP cases pro bono
- U.S.-based **real estate developers, property management companies, and hotels** that can provide in-kind housing (short- or long-term) for incoming AAPP artists.

- U.S.-based **clothing retailers** who can donate warm winter clothing to incoming AAPP artists and their families.
- U.S.-based **furniture and homeware retailers** who can donate items to furnish the artists' places of residence.
- U.S.-based **grocery and meal kit retailers** who can donate food items to AAPP artists and their families.
- U.S.-based **mental health care practitioners** who can offer pro bono support to incoming AAPP artists.

Private contributions

Donations from individuals and foundations ensure that AFI can continue to fulfill AAPP's urgent mission. All levels of giving are warmly welcomed. Please see below for examples:

- **\$50,000** funds a one-year fellowship for an Afghan artist at a leading U.S.-based institution
- **\$12,000** funds a one-year placement for an Afghan artist in AFI's New York City Artist Safe Haven Residency Program, hosted at Westbeth Artists Housing
- **\$3,000** funds the USCIS legal filing fees for a single talent-based artist visa application. These visas grant an Afghan artist the ability to live and work in the U.S. for up to three years.

AFI welcomes financial contributions, partnerships, and in-kind donations from individuals and institutions across the arts, law, academia, philanthropy, civil society, and the private sector. For inquiries, please contact AFI's Senior Officer, Sofia Monterroso: sofia@artisticfreedominitiative.org.