

Rt, Hon. Dominic Raab MP  
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Dear Foreign Secretary,

The world has watched with shock and sadness in recent weeks as the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated.

As the Taliban has claimed control of more and more territory throughout the country, we have all shared feelings of grave concern for the people of Afghanistan and those inside Afghanistan from other countries.

The music industry has also been deeply distressed to see reports in recent days of what the Taliban's resurgence has meant for musicians. Disturbingly, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid has said music would not be allowed in public but added that they hoped to persuade people rather than pressuring them. Yet, despite these words there are widespread reports that the Taliban plan to ban the performance of music, as they did in 1996. Musicians and music students will now be fearful for their futures and their safety. Those fears have already been tragically realised as popular folk singer Fawad Andarabi was taken from his home and killed in recent days.

We have been further disturbed to hear that the Afghanistan National Institute of Music – which broke ground by teaching girls and boys in the same classroom, taught Afghan and Western classical music and was home to the all-female Zohra orchestra – has now fallen silent due to fear of punishment for students and teachers.

Music is an international language and the music community is a global one. Our community has felt smaller in recent weeks as we fear for the consequences which Taliban control will have for musicians – as well as so many other Afghans.

There is a fear amongst the music community inside the country that there will be repercussions for musicians even if they stop performing now - meaning that musicians and students could be at risk of punishment for following their country's past laws.

We write to ask that you recognise the threat musicians now face in Afghanistan due to the Taliban, and that you take all steps necessary to ensure their safe passage from the country.

Our Government must make a clear statement that no one should be persecuted or considered a criminal for playing music and offer refuge to Afghan musicians who need it.

Yours sincerely,



**Deborah Annetts**

**Chief Executive**

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