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### **HRD+ Statement on the Destruction of Musical Instruments and the Violation of the Cultural Rights of Citizens of Afghanistan**

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+) issues this statement to draw the urgent attention of the international community to the serious and systematic violations of the cultural rights of the citizens of Afghanistan.

Based on documented reports and published images, the Taliban have collected musical instruments in the provinces of Parwan and Laghman and publicly set them on fire. The deliberate dissemination of images of this act on social media reflects a targeted approach aimed at suppressing the art of music and creating an atmosphere of intimidation against artists across the country.

The public destruction of musical instruments sends a threatening message to artists, musicians, and all individuals whose identity and livelihood are connected to art. When artistic tools are set ablaze, a legitimate and profound concern arises as to what fate may await the human beings who embody that very culture and artistic expression.

This act constitutes a clear violation of fundamental cultural rights recognized in authoritative international instruments, including:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (particularly Article 27)
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (particularly Article 19)
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (particularly Article 15)

The right to participate in cultural life, to enjoy the arts, and to access cultural heritage are inalienable rights of all human beings.

Moreover, under current policies, art in Afghanistan has effectively been rendered prohibited, and artistic activities under Taliban rule are subject to extensive restrictions. Artists, poets, and cultural actors face systematic exclusion, severe limitations, and security threats. Many remain in precarious and uncertain conditions, seeking safe pathways to continue their lives and professional activities, while their sources of livelihood and professional identity have been severely undermined.

We call upon the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, particularly the Special Rapporteurs in the field of cultural rights, and the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, to urgently place this matter on their agenda.

We further urge the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as the UN's specialized agency in the field of culture, to take an official position and adopt practical measures in accordance with its mandate to protect cultural diversity and safeguard artistic heritage.

In this context, we emphasize the vital role of Afghan artistic institutions continuing their work in exile, including the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, as essential centers for preserving, teaching, and sustaining the art of music. Targeted international support to establish concrete mechanisms for the protection of musical instruments, artistic archives, and the educational capacities of these institutions would constitute an important step toward preventing the destruction of Afghanistan's cultural heritage until justice is achieved and normal conditions are restored in the country.

We further stress that support for Afghan artists and cultural actors must translate into practical action. The creation and facilitation of safe and legal pathways, including through dedicated humanitarian visa programs for artists and cultural activists, is an urgent necessity.

We underscore that the symbolic destruction of musical instruments is not merely the demolition of physical objects, but a systematic attempt to silence the voice, creativity, and cultural identity of a nation.

The international community must not remain silent in the face of such actions. Silence in the face of violations of cultural rights amounts to the normalization of artistic repression and the erosion of universal human rights values.

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+)