

PRESS RELEASE

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Grant by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: Five additional at-risk scholars, journalists and artists from Afghanistan to be supported

Essen / Berlin, Germany - The Academy in Exile is pleased to announce that The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded a grant to support Academy in Exile's Afghanistan program. In October 2021, AiE received funding from the VolkswagenStiftung to initiate an Afghanistan program which provides Afghans working in the humanities, social sciences, law, journalism, and the arts, who are at risk because of their professional work and/or civic engagement in human rights, democracy, and the pursuit of free speech, with 24-month fellowships at AiE's consortium partners—the Universität Duisburg-Essen, Freie Universität Berlin, Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut, and Forum Transregionale Studien. More than 2000 application inquiries demonstrated the acute need for additional support.

The grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation will allow Academy in Exile to expand this program with five additional fellowships. Funding will be offered to recipients who are currently outside of Afghanistan. The fellowships will allow recipients to continue their work on behalf of civil society in safety, providing them with the opportunity to reestablish themselves in Germany and work on their own project in a multidisciplinary environment. AiE attaches particular significance to gender equity and will endeavor to maintain this in allocating fellowships, with priority given to women applicants. The expansion of AiE's Afghanistan program is being supported by the Chancellery of the Universität Duisburg-Essen through the provision of additional personnel and infrastructure.

Principal Investigator and Director of Academy in Exile's Critical Thinking Program at FU Berlin, Professor Vanessa Agnew (Universität Duisburg-Essen), says: *"Displaced scholars, journalists, and cultural producers can act as interlocutors between refugee, diasporic, and host communities. Their work helps preserve traditions of knowledge making, cultural innovation, and critique in the diaspora and can contribute to social and political change in the future."*

Applications for the Afghanistan Program are rated according to scholarly or artistic merit, risk status, and suitability for hosting by AiE's consortium partners. Complete and meritorious applications have been evaluated by a regional expert panel, comprising Professor Reinhard Bernbeck (Near Eastern Archaeology, Freie Universität Berlin), Professor emeritus Michael Daxner (Sociology, Universität Potsdam), Dr. Hannah Pool (Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne), Assistant Professor Fatemeh Shams (Modern Persian Literature, EUME-CNMS Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Forum

Transregionale Studien, Berlin) , Professor Lutz Rzehak (Central Asian Studies, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin), and Professor Alessandro Monsutti (Anthropology and Sociology, Graduate Institute Geneva). Academy in Exile's international advisory board will conduct a further evaluation of the pool, with the final selection being made by the AiE Council.