

Afghan Aftermath: The Future of Film in Afghanistan
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Afghanistan's film industry flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, when film was recognized as perfect for building the national consciousness. Newsreels and documentaries about government activity were screened in cinemas, ahead of features that carried nationalistic messages, and there was true appreciation for film in Kabul, where at least 18 cinemas were doing great business by the 70s. Decline came due to Soviet censorship that made many filmmakers leave the country. After 1996, the Taliban's obliteration of filmmaking was absolute. Even owning a television was illegal, and officials once attempted to destroy the entire 3,000 film archive of Afghan Film – the country's national film institute. Approximately 1,000 were saved, luckily.

A regeneration has started since the Taliban's fall. International NGOs invest in educational documentaries that tour the country, caravan-style, informing the largely illiterate public about issues such as landmines and women's health. There is also support for building a national cinema once again. Patronage has come from Iranian filmmaker, Mohsen Mahkmalbaf, and other international devotees of socially conscious film. Undoubtedly the most well known of the Afghani filmmakers, who seeks to use film to "hold up a mirror to Afghanistan, for its people and by its people," is Siddiqullah Barmak. His 2003 movie, *Osama*, about a young girl forced to mask as a boy during the time of the Taliban, won numerous international awards. *Osama* has yet to screen in Afghanistan, however, because the topic is still quite sensitive.