

*“There are very few true journalists who work in the communications space. Haas Communications is the only public relations firm with which I have worked that has grasped the importance of journalistic integrity. Christine helped ESPN Canada execute not only the logistical challenges of filming remotely, but more importantly, she complimented our very challenging story perfectly by applying her great journalistic instincts. A very effective and valuable combination of skills. Christine is the best!”*

~ Josh Shiaman, ESPN Canada

## Overview



Afghanistan Immigration Soccer Weekend Reads  
International soccer Portugal Professional soccer Premier League

### Afghanistan girls soccer team given asylum in Portugal

BY ALEX SANZ  
Sep 21, 2021

The girls on Afghanistan's national soccer team were anxious. For weeks, they had been moving around the country, waiting for word that they could leave.

One wants to be a doctor, another a movie producer, others engineers. All dream of growing up to be professional soccer players.

Haas Communications client [DeliverFund](#), a Texas-based nonprofit that fights human trafficking, began fighting for the safety of Afghan women and girls following the U.S. military's withdrawal out of Afghanistan in late summer 2021. Having already provided housing for dozens of Afghan families in the U.S., DeliverFund called on Haas Communications principal Christine Haas to handle media surrounding several sensitive Afghan-related events, such as “Operation Soccer Balls,” a massive rescue attempt of the Afghan girls’ soccer team. Farkhunda Muhtah, captain of the Afghanistan women’s national soccer team who is now playing professionally in Canada, issued pleas for the girls’ rescue.

An international coalition that included DeliverFund, U.S. military and intelligence officials and allies,

U.S. Sen. Chris Coons and former Bush administration official Robert McCreary successfully navigated the rescue of 80 people in that operation, including the 26 young soccer players along with other adults, children and infants. With Pakistan’s assistance they made their way to Portugal, where they were granted asylum.

After carefully balancing the necessary secrecy of the rescue attempts with international media coverage for her client amid extraordinary events, DeliverFund had one more request for Christine: Handle media coverage of the reunion between the soccer coach, Farkhunda Muhtah, and the girls on the soccer team whose lives she surely helped save.

Christine flew to Lisbon, Portugal, and deftly handled timing of international media interviews while preserving the reunion’s surprise element. She also earned DeliverFund top tier media coverage as a key player in very high-profile events, including in the [Associated Press](#).



Soccer International soccer Portugal Lisbon

### Afghan girls soccer team in Portugal gets surprise visit

Sep 30, 2021

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Girls from the Afghanistan national soccer team who were recently granted asylum in Portugal have had a surprise visit from the captain of the senior team.

Farkhunda Muhtaj, a professional player who from her home in Canada spent weeks helping arrange their recent rescue from Afghanistan, flew into the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, for an emotional reunion with the girls’ team late Wednesday.

## Client Information

Dallas-based [DeliverFund](#) is a nonprofit intelligence organization that leverages cutting-edge technology in the fight against human trafficking in the United States. Its International Human Trafficking Analysis Center (iHTAC) serves as the central all-source, shared knowledge bank on trafficking activity, human traffickers and their networks. It is the central dissemination and coordination point for law enforcement, select nonprofits and other professionals working to end modern-day slavery. Founded by former Navy Seal Jeremy Mahugh and CIA and Air Force veteran Nic McKinley, the 501(c)3 organization also provides subject-matter expertise in victim restoration services.



## Challenges & Goals

With the rescue of the soccer team catapulted into the international press, Haas Communications now had to navigate international press in a foreign country while carefully maintaining the secrecy of the planned reunion between the girls' soccer team and coach Farkhunda Muhtah:

- Timing – balancing secrecy and media coverage
- Crisis – developing crisis communications plan and media training for their client
- Client coverage – getting her client a balance of media coverage commensurate with their role in the field of other high-profile and critical international players involved in the operation and following events

The situation demanded balancing the delicate timing of preserving the necessary secrecy of planning and executing the reunion with ensuring the right media was there for the event to serve as a worldwide mouthpiece for optimum coverage, while also gaining her U.S. client some coverage in a crowded field of international players and events in another country.

Haas Communications also had to prepare their client for anything that could go wrong with a custom crisis communications plan that included media training for DeliverFund spokespersons.

## Approach

Haas Communications principal Christine Haas knew that the fastest way to maximize coverage with the greatest speed was to get it into the hands of the Associated Press, which “feeds” other outlets around the world. As a trusted, independent, non-profit global news organization, AP is known for its balanced and factual reporting. From the beginning of her work on DeliverFund’s Afghanistan-related events, Christine knew the right AP contact was critical for this mission, which is where her experience as an investigative journalist came into play. Over the course of these events, her expertise and aplomb earned her the trust of the AP reporters. Christine also had to make sure her client was prepared with messages suited to any outcome scenario, and that they came across as one of the many key players involved in the operation.



## Results

Since Haas Communications had already earned the trust of AP reporters in DeliverFund's participation in other Afghan-related events, she built on that trust for the reunion story in Portugal. Another respected news feeder, [Reuters](#), also picked up the story, as well as other international news channels. Christine was also able to successfully conduct her own on-camera interview with the soccer coach in Lisbon.



September 30, 2021 12:49 PM CDT Last Updated a month ago

Asia Pacific

### Afghan girls' soccer squad find new home in Ronaldo's Portugal

By Catarina Demony

3 minute read



LISBON, Sept 30 (Reuters) - Leaving her

Some examples of the coverage:

<https://apnews.com/article/soccer-sports-europe-international-soccer-portugal-cf7b69708ca8d5ae2275ceec4c9b3e3e>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-girls-soccer-squad-find-new-home-ronaldos-portugal-2021-09-30/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MZS9EqHplw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkxyX38i0AE>



REUTERS®

## About Haas Communications

Haas Communications was founded by veteran news anchor and investigative reporter, Christine Haas, with the mission of being THE premier marketing and communications agency, applying results-driven strategies to help clients achieve their most ambitious marketing goals and communications objectives. With her extensive background as an investigative reporter and on-camera experience, Christine quickly rose to become one of the most sought-after media training professionals in the country. Christine also leads the Haas Communications team as they offer strategic public relations services, media relations counsel, broadcast interview training and presentation coaching to a wide variety of clients around the world.