

PRESS RELEASE

Stockholm, 19th of November 2024



**EDELSTAM
FOUNDATION**
THE EDELSTAM PRIZE

Mr. Dawit Isaak Awarded the Edelstam Prize at Ceremony in Stockholm

The Edelstam Prize 2024 was awarded this evening during a solemn and moving ceremony at the House of Nobility in Stockholm, Sweden. The laureate, Mr. Dawit Isaak, a Swedish-Eritrean journalist and the world's longest-held arbitrarily detained journalist, was recognized for his exceptional courage in standing up for freedom of expression and human rights.



Photo credit: Arne Hyckenberg / The Edelstam Foundation

Edelstam Prize Award Ceremony

The prize ceremony brought attention to Dawit Isaak's more than 23 years of detention without trial. The President of the Edelstam Prize Jury, **Ms. Caroline Edelstam**, presented the jury's motivation, emphasizing Mr. Isaak's resilience and commitment to the freedom of expression, and the principles of human rights and democracy.

As Mr. Isaak remains imprisoned and unable to attend, his daughter, **Ms. Betlehem Isaak**, received the prize on Mr. Isaak's behalf: a diploma and a piece of art of the contributing Swedish artist, Mr. Henry Unger. With other family members in attendance, Ms. Isaak gave a heartwarming speech of her father's life before the imprisonment, his work, his courage, and addressed the situation of the many journalists imprisoned in the world.

During the ceremony, the choir, *John Erik Elebys Kammarkör*, contributed to creating an including and warm ambience.

The ceremony was moderated by the Swedish journalist **Ms. Ulrika Nilsson**. Among other speakers were **Ms. Yirgalem Fisseha**, an Eritrean poet, writer and journalist, and former prisoner, detained for six years without being charged. She shared her personal experience of being imprisoned in Eritrea. **Mrs. Lise Bergh**, Vice President of the Edelstam Foundation, mentioned the criteria of the prize. Ambassador Harald Edelstam's great grandchildren spoke of Edelstam's important deeds in Nazi-occupied Norway during the Second World War, and during and after the coup in Chile in 1973, saving more than a thousand of lives.

Other participants in the ceremony, who participated digitally, were international distinguished experts, such as **Judge Shirin Ebadi**, member of the Edelstam Prize Jury and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate in 2003, **Dr. Philippe Sands**, human rights lawyer and expert in international law, **Mr. Thibaut Bruttin**, Director General, Reporters without Borders (RSF), **Dr. Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker**, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, and **Mr. Burhan Sönmez**, President of PEN International.

Candle-Manifestation

As this date, the **19th of November, is of importance**, due to the fact that 19 years ago, on the very same date, Mr. Dawit Isaak was unexpectedly released from prison after a four-year long arbitrary detention. Two days later, he was rearrested, while seeking medical care. He has been detained incommunicado since then.

All the attendees participated in a **candle-manifestation**, lighting candles in the garden of *the House of Nobility*, in central Stockholm, overlooking the Parliament and the Stockholm City Hall, to demand Mr. Dawit Isaak's immediate release.

A Supportive Community

The ceremony was attended by a large number of representatives from the national and international community and civil society; representatives of the diplomatic corps stationed in Sweden, leaders of national and international NGO's engaged in human rights and free speech, representatives from the Swedish government, human right defenders and activists, relatives of other Swedish political prisoners, former unlawfully detained prisoners, members of the Edelstam Foundation's board, representatives from the journalist corps, together with partners and friends of the Edelstam Foundation.

Seminar on Global Responsibility and Accountability

As part of the Edelstam Prize events, a seminar entitled "On Global Responsibility and Accountability" will take place on Wednesday, November 20, 2024. The conversation will be moderated by **Elisabeth Löfgren**, Chairperson of Free Dawit, will bring together distinguished panelists to discuss pressing human rights issues.

Panelists are **Yirgalem Fisseha**, Eritrean journalist and former prisoner, detained for six years without charge; **Maja Åberg**, Human Rights Expert, Amnesty International Sweden; **Esaias Isaak**, brother of Dawit Isaak; **Björn Tunbäck**, Board Member, Reporters Without Borders Sweden; **Karin Olsson**, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Swedish daily Expressen.

The seminar will be held in English and aims to explore how the global community can uphold accountability for human rights violations.

Press Material

For press materials in several languages, including high-resolution photos from the ceremony, please visit our **International Press Room**, <https://www.edelstam.org/international-press-room/> or contact us through press@edelstamprize.org

The Edelstam Prize

The Edelstam Prize is a Sweden-based international monetary award, administrated by the Harald Edelstam Foundation. The Edelstam Prize is awarded for outstanding contributions and exceptional courage in standing up for one's beliefs in the Defence of Human Rights.

The Edelstam Prize is named after, and awarded in memory of, the Swedish diplomat and Ambassador, Harald Edelstam (1913-1989). Harald Edelstam distinguished himself as a diplomat by his professional competence, his bravery, and his civic courage in the fight for Human Rights. His memorable acts contributed to saving more than a thousand lives.

The winner of the Edelstam Prize can be a private person or a person who serves in Government, international or national organizations. The winner shall be an individual who has acted in Ambassador Harald Edelstam's spirit in a country/countries where Human Rights, according to international law, have been violated. The laureate must have shown outstanding capabilities in analysing and handling complex situations and in finding ways, even unconventional and creative ones, to defend Human Rights. The candidate has, presumably in a complex situation, been able to take a decisive role in helping threatened people or directly saving human lives. Civic courage is a central parameter in the selection of the successful candidate.

Members of the Jury

The international jury is chaired by **Ms. Caroline Edelstam**, Harald Edelstam's granddaughter and co-founder of the Edelstam Foundation. Other members are the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2003 **Judge Shirin Ebadi**, who represents Asia. Africa is represented by **Dr. Fatou Bensouda**, former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). **Ambassador Eileen Donahoe**, Executive Director of Global Digital Policy Incubator at Stanford University's Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law and the former US Ambassador to UN Human Rights Council represents North America. **Professor Philip Alston**, former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, represents Oceania. Latin America is represented by **Magistrate Patricia Linares Prieto**, former President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). Europe is represented by former **Judge Baltasar Garzón**, who served on Spain's central criminal court, who is known for having indicted the Chilean dictator, General Augusto Pinochet for the deaths and torture of thousands of victims from Chile and other countries.

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