EDELSTAM FOUNDATION
THE EDELSTAM PRIZE

PRESS RELEASE
Stockholm, 24th of November 2026

COURAGEOUS PAKISTANI LEADER FIGHTING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS RECEIVES THE EDELSTAM PRIZE

DR. MAHRANG BALOCH, SENTENCED TO TWO LIFE TERMS IN A FACELESS TRIAL

The Edelstam Prize 2026 is awarded to Dr. Mahrang Baloch from Pakistan for outstanding contributions and exceptional courage in standing up for truth and justice for victims of enforced disappearances, one's beliefs, and in the defence of Human Rights. The prize will be awarded during a ceremony at the House of Nobility in Stockholm, Sweden, on 3rd of December 2026. Since Dr. Mahrang Baloch has been sentenced to life imprisonment, she cannot be present. Therefore, Mir Balakh Sher, brother of Beebow Baloch, an imprisoned colleague alongside Dr. Mahrang Baloch, will receive the prize on her behalf.

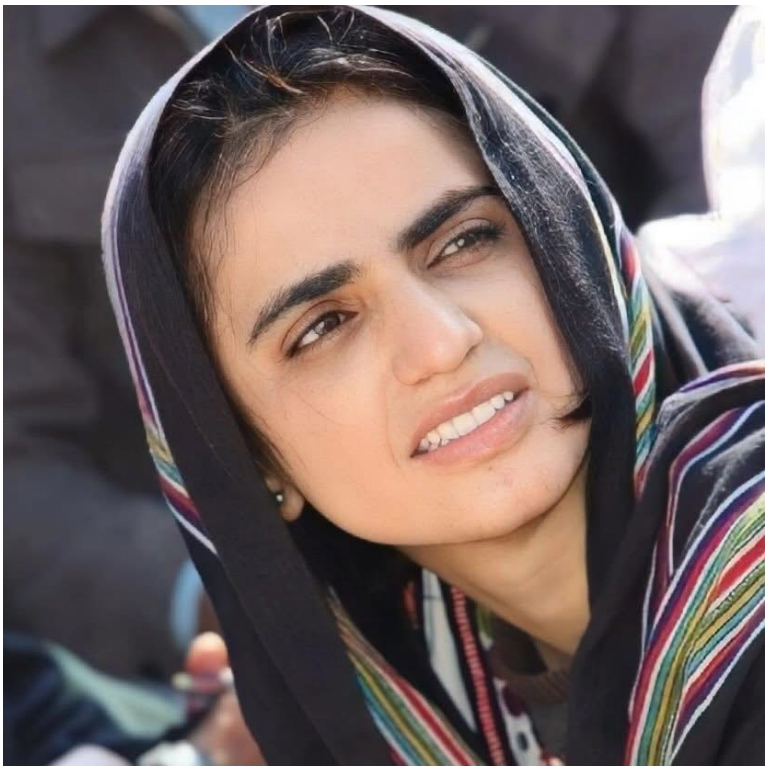


Photo: Baloch Yakjehti Committee.

Dr. Mahrang Baloch, a physician from south-western province of Balcochistan in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was just a young girl when she had to start claiming and searching for her father Abdul Ghaffar Langove who was allegedly abducted by security forces forcefully disappeared in 2009 and later killed due to his political activities. His body was recovered three years later. This process would come to define Dr. Mahrang's life: Campaigning and endlessly demanding information about the whereabouts of missing persons in Balochistan, where thousands of ethnic Baloch people have disappeared over the past decades.

Resilient Struggle for Truth and Justice

In March 2025, Dr. Mahrang Baloch and other leaders of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) were arrested during a police crackdown following a peaceful protest against the enforced disappearance of a BYC colleague. During the protest, police and security agencies opened fire on demonstrators, killing three people. Because of her resolute struggle for truth and justice, Dr. Mahrang Baloch, will be unable to receive her prize in Sweden, as she was sentenced to life imprisonment following proceedings held inside Hudda Jail in Quetta, Pakistan, in June 2026.

"The attention Dr. Mahrang Baloch's courageous leadership has brought to shine light on the thousands of victims of enforced disappearances in Pakistan, is an extraordinary example of human rights activism. Through her mobilization of thousands of people in peaceful protests, campaigns and marches, demanding truth and justice for the victims, she has been fighting back with creative methods showing powerful resistance. Pakistan silences human right defenders through systematic violations, including unlawful arrests and subsequent enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, summary executions, economic exploitation and severe restrictions on political and cultural expression," says Caroline Edelstam, Chair of the Edelstam Prize Jury.

“I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.” – Elie Wiesel, 1986.

Courageous Leadership and Movement

Dr. Mahrang Baloch has played a crucial role in the BYC movement. She has also become a voice for the mothers of those who have been forcibly disappeared, as well as the mothers of those killed in the struggle for justice, bringing their demands for answers and accountability to public attention.

Dr. Mahrang Baloch began speaking out against state oppression during her childhood to become a prominent leader, campaigning against enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings attributed to Pakistani authorities in Balochistan Province. The movement also advocates for greater local control over Balochistan's natural resources, as the region is rich in coal, natural gas, gold and copper. Balochistan has experienced decades of violence and systematic human rights abuses, including abuses attributed to state authorities, intelligence agencies and armed groups targeting local communities and human rights defenders seeking to document violations and demand justice.

Unfair Trial and the Rule of Law

The Edelstam Foundation calls on Pakistani authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Mahrang Baloch and her imprisoned colleagues from the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, and in any case, calls for judicial proceedings against Dr. Mahrang Baloch to fully respect her fundamental right to a fair trial, including the right to attend hearings in person, to freely choose and consult her own legal counsel, and to have her case heard in open and transparent proceedings.

“A justice system must protect those who stand up for human rights, not become a tool to punish and intimidate them. They have a right to work in a safe environment, free from reprisals and violence. The case against Dr. Mahrang Baloch raises fundamental questions about the rule of law and the protection of peaceful resistance and speaking out against

injustices in Pakistan. Any proceedings must fully comply with international fair trial standards and due process guarantees," says Caroline Edelstam, Chair of the Edelstam Prize Jury and co-founder of the Edelstam Foundation.

Investigation of Enforced Disappearance

Enforced disappearances are grave human rights violations. The Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, approved on 18 November 1992 by Resolution 47/133 of the UN General Assembly proclaims: Any act of enforced disappearance is an offence to human dignity. The Edelstam Foundations further calls on the Pakistani authorities to uphold the absolute prohibition of enforced disappearances under international law and to ensure that all reported cases are promptly, thoroughly and independently investigated. According to Article 1 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted on 20 December 2006 by UN General Assembly Resolution 61/177, in force since 23 December 2010, no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.

Pakistan is one of the 80 countries who have taken no action to ratify the UN Convention against enforced disappearances.

"The families of the disappeared must have the right to know the truth and receive answers and obtain justice and redress. According to international law, family members of the disappeared are recognized as victims of enforced disappearances as well," says Caroline Edelstam, Chair of the Edelstam Prize Jury and co-founder of the Edelstam Foundation.

Responsibility to Protect and the International Community

The continued suffering of the Baloch people must not be met with international silence or indifference. The international community must uphold the principles of the Responsibility to Protect, support independent international investigations into alleged grave human rights violations, establish justice and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

“The primary responsibility of the State is to protect its own population, taking into account the humanitarian, security and fundamental human rights dimensions. Pakistan must uphold its human rights obligations,” says Caroline Edelstam, Chair of the Edelstam Prize Jury.

The Edelstam Prize Jury’s Motivation

Dr. Mahrang Baloch is a Pakistani physician who decided to devote her life to defending human rights in her country, campaigning against state oppression, human rights violations, and unlawful enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings by the Pakistani authorities in the Balochistan Province. She has become a voice for the collective of mothers of victims forcibly disappeared, who continue to demand justice.

Rather than pursuing her medical career, she chose to stand alongside other families sharing their suffering; her life changed dramatically in 2011, when her father was extrajudicially killed by Pakistani forces after having been subjected to enforced disappearance.

In 2017, she mobilized to demand her abducted brother’s release. Thousands of Baloch people have been forcefully disappeared over the past two decades; many were detained by security forces without any guarantees of due process, or abducted, tortured and killed as part of operations against a long-running separatist movement of insurgency. Having experienced the

devastating consequences of state repression herself, Dr. Baloch chose to stand up not only for her family, but for all victims of injustice, for the principle of rule of law and the right to truth in Pakistan.

Through Dr. Mahrang Baloch's courageous leadership of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), she has mobilized thousands of people in peaceful protests and campaigns demanding justice for victims of illegal arrests, torture, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings. In 2023, she helped lead the historic Baloch Long March to Islamabad, where families of the forcibly disappeared demanded accountability. Despite arrests, threats, travel restrictions, surveillance, and violent crackdowns, she refused to stay silent. In 2024, she mobilized mass protests in Gwadar against human rights violations and economic projects imposed on Balochistan without the consent or will of the Baloch people, asserting the right to self-determine the future of their land and resources.

In 2025, Dr. Mahrang and other BYC leaders were arrested during a police crackdown following a peaceful protest against the enforced disappearance of a BYC colleague. In June 2026, she was sentenced to life imprisonment following proceedings held inside Hudda Jail in Quetta. Reports indicate that she and her co-accused boycotted the trial after being denied an open court and legal counsel of their choice. The proceedings have raised serious concerns about the fairness and transparency of her trial.

The Edelstam Foundation respectfully asks the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Mahrang Baloch, and in any case, ensure fair, transparent, and independent judicial proceedings, ending the abuse of biased judicial processes to intimidate and silence human rights defenders. Further, we urge to put an end to reprisals against the Baloch Yakjehti Committee and its supporters; and conduct independent investigations into enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, thus providing accountability for serious human rights violations.

We further call on the mobilization of the international community to act and demand Pakistan to uphold its human rights obligations, supporting meaningful international accountability mechanisms where domestic authorities fail to deliver justice.

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.

For further information, please contact:
Caroline Edelstam, President of the Edelstam Foundation
Tel: +46 (0)706 98 72 23, e-mail: caroline.edelstam@edelstam.org
Website: www.edelstamprize.org / www.edelstam.org

Further information on the Seminar, December 4th at 1 P.M. discussing the Laureate's case, please see HERE.