

Media Update-2

29 September 2021

UNHCR

PRESS RELEASE

Afghan doctor in Pakistan wins the regional Nansen Refugee Award

Islamabad, 29 September 2021 – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency is pleased to announce Dr. Saleema Rehman as this year's regional winner of the Nansen Refugee Award in the Asia region. Dr. Rehman is a 29-year-old Afghan refugee doctor, serving local communities and refugees in Pakistan.

UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award is given to Dr. Rehman in recognition of her outstanding service and commitment to Pakistanis and refugees in the country. It also acknowledges her contributions as a refugee to Pakistan, particularly the unwavering dedication towards her patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Award further highlights the powerful example that Dr. Rehman has set for other Afghan refugee women and girls.

"Access to education is very important in our lives. Investing in the education of a woman is an investment in a whole next generation," Rehman said at a ceremony held in her honour at the Swiss Embassy in Islamabad.

The Ambassador of Switzerland, Bénédict de Cerjat, and the Chargée d'affaires of Norway, Elin Kylvåg, in Pakistan presented the Award.

The Swiss Ambassador Bénédict de Cerjat termed her as an inspirational young Afghan woman. "She is a bright example on how valuable it is for the international community to support countries hosting refugees with inclusive policies like Pakistan. Investing in refugees also helps Afghanistan, which is in need of professionals. Women and men, like Dr. Saleema, could contribute to their own country – if it becomes safe to return home. We are committed to

help ensure that the next generation of Afghan girls can also fulfil their dreams,” he said.

The Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugees, Saleem Khan, welcomed Dr. Rehman’s win. “We feel proud of Dr. Rehman. She’s a wonderful example of her community. Pakistan can take pride in producing such a fine doctor – countless young Afghans have benefited from Pakistan’s progressive policies.”

The UNHCR Representative in Pakistan and other dignitaries representing a range of countries and organizations participated in the ceremony.

Established in 1954, the award named for the late Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian diplomat, scientist, polar explorer and humanitarian who went on to serve as the first High Commissioner for Refugees for the League of Nations and won the 1922 Nobel Peace Prize.

The Nansen Refugee Award is given annually to one or more individuals or an organization for outstanding work on behalf of the forcibly displaced and/or stateless people.

This year, the global winner is the Jeel Albena Association for Humanitarian Development, a relief organization in Yemen. There are also five regional winners, including Dr. Rehman in Asia, as well as regional winners in the Americas, Europe, and Africa.

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Photo captions:

The Ambassador of Switzerland, Bénédict de Cerjat, the UNHCR Representative, Noriko Yoshida, the Chargée d'affaires of Norway, Elin Kylvåg, and the Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugees, Saleem Khan, presenting an award certificate to the regional winner for Asia of the Nansen Refugee Award, Dr. Saleema Rehman, at the event in Islamabad. © UNHCR/Asif Shahzad

Dr. Saleema Rehman, the regional winner for Asia of the Nansen Refugee Award, posing with an award certificate in Islamabad. © UNHCR/Asif Shahzad