

NOHA Scholarship in memory of Zaida Catalán

In memory of **Zaida Maria Catalán** (1980-2017), a humanitarian, human rights and environmental activist, tragically killed while on duty in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Network on Humanitarian Action has established a scholarship fund to support NOHA students.

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What can I do to make the world a better place?

Zaida Maria Catalán was born in 1980 to a mother from Stockholm and a father who had fled to Sweden after the 1973 coup d'état in Chile. She grew up in the Swedish countryside with her younger sister and a pet goat named Oskarina. Even as young girl, Zaida was deeply concerned by the state of the world and felt an urgency to address human rights violations, animal abuse and environmental issues. At age six, Zaida asked her mother what she could become in order to make the world a better place. Her mother suggested becoming a lawyer, to be able to shape the ways that society is regulated.



By fourteen, Zaida had published an article in an animal-rights newspaper; it was that cause among others which brought her into the Swedish Green Party. She was elected national co-president of the party's youth association in 2001, the same year that she took part in a protest against an economic summit with George W. Bush. Witnesses described how a peaceful Zaida was thrown to the ground and beaten by Swedish police at the protest, an experience that she later noted was useful in revealing the nature of power in society.

Alongside her leadership of the youth association, Zaida completed a law degree at Stockholm University. In the years that followed, she would work within the Green Party at many levels, from serving on the Stockholm City Council to being a substitute member of the European Parliament. Zaida also worked extensively with shelters for battered and threatened women.

I longed to travel, to live in other countries and make friends from all over the world. I yearned to speak different languages and experience the plethora of different cultures of the world. I knew I was going somewhere, I had a feeling in my stomach that told me so.

Zaida Catalán, personal notes, 2010

In 2011, Zaida left the world of Swedish politics to take up a post as expert on sexual violence for the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) in Goma, Congo. There Zaida worked to train police on how to deal with sexual violence. She developed a pioneering two-week training program, financed by the Dutch embassy, to promote and empower female police officers in regard to sexual violence and human rights.

Next came a posting in Kabul, Afghanistan, again for EUPOL. Zaida created and led training sessions on gender and human rights for Afghan police officers, prosecutors, lawyers and others.

A third assignment for EUPOL came in Ramallah, in the occupied territories of the West Bank. Zaida worked with Palestinian police and judicial authorities to build up their awareness and capabilities in regard to gender. She created a network of female judges and negotiated the draft of a new law against family violence.

In between her international assignments, Zaida sometimes lectured on gender and humanitarian engagement. She came to Uppsala University for in-class interviews in Brian Palmer's courses on civic courage, and in 2016 Zaida was interviewed by the students of the NOHA master's degree course on conflict and peace-building. That year she was an invited expert participant in NOHA's European Humanitarian Roundtable in Uppsala, a preparatory event for the World Humanitarian Summit.

I left the DRC, but a piece of my heart still remained there. The people of the country have endured hardships beyond comprehension, but still fight the good cause, as best as they can, and they dance. They dance to smile, to sweat and to shake off the devil's grip.

Zaida Catalán, personal notes after her first mission in Congo, 2012

In 2016, Zaida returned to Congo after being appointed to the United Nations Security Council's Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Zaida worked tirelessly to investigate and gather evidence of human rights violations in Eastern Congo to help put an end to impunity. A case in point was the groundbreaking conviction of the Congolese Provincial Member of Parliament, Frederic Batumike, who was found guilty of having organized systematic rapes of young children and babies in Kavumu. Part of her work also involved investigating a massacre that had been blamed on rebel militias in the Kasai region. Zaida began to find evidence that members of the Congolese regime were the actual perpetrators. In March, 2017, Zaida and her American colleague, Michael J. Sharp, were forced into the jungle by armed men and murdered.

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THIRD SEMESTER MOBILITY GRANTS

Subject to availability of funds, the scholarship of a minimum of 1.000€ will be granted to the best candidates on the basis of the following criteria:

- (1) **Academic merit** – GPA (grade point average) received during the first semester of the NOHA programme, confirmed by home university (64%)
- (2) **Relevance** - correlation between Zaida Catalán's work and the candidate's profile (20%)
- (3) **Distance** to the third semester mobility destination (16%).

Interested students should submit their application within the given deadline to the NOHA General Secretariat via email to apply@nohanet.org (title: "Zaida Catalán Scholarship application") with the following information:

- Full name, NOHA home university and the destination of the third semester mobility (be it work placement or regional training track),
- GPA received during the first semester of the NOHA programme – only the final grades from each module should be taken into consideration,
- A motivation statement/essay of max 500 words, explaining one's interest and/or experience in the area of work conducted by Zaida Catalán,
- Payment information form duly filled in.

NOTE: At minimum, the applicant should score 40% in order to be considered for the scholarship.

TIMELINE for the 2017-2019 COHORT

Until 31 March 2018	Scholarship applications to be submitted to apply@nohanet.org
April 2018	Applications review by the Selection Committee formed by the NOHA General Secretariat and a representative of the NOHA Board of Directors
15 May 2018	Approval of the ranking list and award of the scholarships by the NOHA Board of Directors
21 May 2018	Notification to all candidates
May-June 2018	Distribution of the scholarships