

## **Liberty Victoria – Sitarah Mohammadi and Sajjad Askary win Young Voltaire Human Rights Award**

Liberty Victoria is pleased to announce that **Sitarah Mohammadi** and **Sajjad Askary** are the 2022 Liberty Victoria Young Voltaire Human Rights Award recipients.

The Young Voltaire Human Rights Award honours a person or group of people who are no older than 30 at the date of their nomination for an outstanding contribution to or action on free speech, human rights and/or civil liberties, with particular emphasis on progressing freedom, respect, equality and dignity. It celebrates those who speak out, write, campaign, whistle-blow, take action, or a stand against authoritarianism.

Sitarah and Sajjad arrived in Australia as Hazara refugees from Afghanistan. They have received the award due to their incredible advocacy for the human rights of Hazaras, and other highly vulnerable and marginalised people in Afghanistan. Over the last year, they have published articles in major newspapers in [Australia](#) and [globally](#), as well as advocating for increased action by Australia to support people from Afghanistan as members of the *Action for Afghanistan* [campaign](#). Since 2018, Sitarah and Sajjad have been among Australian delegates and refugee advocates to the United Nations and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), attending global consultations in Geneva, Switzerland. They lobby with refugee resettling states, international NGOs, UN representatives, the UNHCR and advocate for the rights, needs and protection of refugees. They also lobby with UN member states for increased refugee and humanitarian protection for marginalised and vulnerable groups from Afghanistan. In their advocacy, Sitarah and Sajjad provide their input in discussions and proposals for a more effective and sustainable global refugee policy.

**Sitarah Mohammadi** was eight years old when she first learnt to read and write. Born in Afghanistan during the previous Taliban regime, she was told that women and girls were second-class, that her people, the Hazaras, had no rights, and they didn't need an education.

It was only when Sitarah escaped to Australia that she was given the chance to go to school. This ultimately led to a wide range of academic achievements including spending 2019 as a Provost Scholar at the University of Oxford. She also has a bachelor's degree in International Relations and Human Rights and is currently undertaking her Juris Doctor (Law) at Monash University.

Sitarah has also demonstrated her deep commitment to effecting positive social change in her community and beyond through her volunteer work with the City of Casey, Monash University, the City of Melbourne, the [Refugee Council of Australia](#); regionally with the [Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network](#) as Deputy Chair, as well as internationally with the UN Refugee Agency, Danish Refugee Council, and the [World Hazara Council](#) as spokesperson. Sitarah writes on issues of refugees, Hazaras and Afghanistan as a commentary contributor for [Guardian Australia](#) and [Al Jazeera](#). She continues to advocate for the rights and protections of people in Afghanistan with the European Union, UNHCR, as well as the United Nations.

**Sajjad Askary** is a former Hazara refugee from Afghanistan. In 2012, he arrived in Australia by boat seeking asylum. Sajjad has a BA in International Relations and is a Juris Doctor student at Monash University, and an Op-ed contributor for Guardian Australia, Al Jazeera

English, and other news outlets. Sajjad writes on refugees, human rights, Hazara people, Afghanistan, and Australia.

Sajjad is also volunteering with Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN). As Deputy Chair, his group advocates for protecting the rights, needs and protection of people seeking asylum in Australia, New Zealand, Papua-New-Guinea, Manus Island, and Indonesia. He has volunteered with many refugee-led organisations such as the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, the Refugee Council of Australia and GetUp, mainly advocating for refugees and people seeking asylum in the community through public speaking, organising, and facilitating events. He has also been involved with Community Four, Noor Foundation, and Deakin CREATE as a community organiser, helping young refugee students find internships and training opportunities in their area of studies and helping refugees on temporary visas fill out forms and interpret.

Both Sitarah and Sajjad use their insights and experiences as refugees, their professional work skills and knowledge to share their perceptions and thoughts through writing and have become exceptional advocates for the people of Afghanistan.

They are worthy recipients of the Young Voltaire Human Rights Award.

The Liberty Victoria Voltaire Human Rights Award will be presented at an awards dinner at the Sofitel Hotel in Melbourne on Friday 18 November at 7 pm.

Online Registration is here: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=907800&>

We sincerely hope you can join us on 18 November 2022 and hear from Sitarah, Sajjad and other Voltaire Human Rights Awards recipients about how we can protect and promote civil liberties and human rights.

Michael Stanton  
President Liberty Victoria

Tickets are available at  
<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=907800&>

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