

Press Release

Stockholm, Sweden. May 6, 2024

## BERMAN LITERATURE PRIZE 2024 GOES TO EDUARDO HALFON

The Guatemalan author Eduardo Halfon is being awarded the 2024 Berman Literature Prize. The prize sum is 750,000 Swedish kronor.

### The jury's motivation reads:

“**Eduardo Halfon** is being awarded the 2024 Berman Literature Prize for his novel **Canción** which, with an inimitable sense of style and an impressionistic auto-fictional narrative, dissolves every boundary between identity and mask, home and diaspora, past and present.”

“Eduardo Halfon’s *Canción* is a rich portrayal of how lives are shaped by different layers of identity, how chance and violence affect people, regardless of language or culture,” says Daniel Pedersen, Chairman of the Jury. “A short novel that manages the feat of uniting the long and broken lines of history.”

**Eduardo Halfon** was born in Guatemala in 1971 and has lived in the United States, Spain, Paris, Berlin and elsewhere. In all his autofictional short novels – such as *The Polish Boxer* (2008), *Monastery* (2014), *Mourning* (2017) and *Canción* (2021) – he has explored the multifaceted legacy of the Diaspora and the transformative power of imagination. Halfon has been translated into fifteen languages such as English, French, German, Portuguese, Danish, Norwegian and Dutch, and he has won a raft of awards and distinctions, including Guatemala’s Miguel Ángel Asturias National Prize in Literature, his country’s highest literary honor. The novel *Canción*, in which an author called Eduardo Halfon is invited to a conference for Lebanese authors in Japan and begins reflecting on his Jewish paternal grandfather’s Syrian-Lebanese background and dramatic kidnapping by Guatemalan guerillas in the 1960s, was awarded the Spanish literary prize Premio Cálamo in 2021, and was nominated for the Dublin Literary Award 2024. Eduardo Halfon lives in Berlin with his family.

**The Berman Literature Prize** was established in 2020 to reward an author whose works embody the statues of the Prize, in the spirit of the Jewish tradition and literary works aiming to explore the rich Jewish culture and at the same time »exceed times and cultures« thereby striving for the universally human.

The Berman Literature Prize is for ten years awarded annually, and the prize sum is 750,000 Swedish kronor. The previous laureates are David Grossman (2021), Péter Nádas (2022), and Maria Stepanova (2023). The 2024 prize will be awarded at a ceremony in Stockholm on Tuesday, October 22.

The Berman Literature Prize will go to an author who, regardless of background or genre, has worked in the spirit of the Jewish tradition. Members of the jury are Daniel Pedersen, Ingrid Elam, Hanna Nordenhök, Na’ama Rokem, Kaj Schueler and Thomas Steinfeld.

Press photos for download available at:

**WWW.BERMANLITERATUREPRIZE.COM**



Catharina and Thomas Berman (©: Jonas Ekströmer/TT)

### **The Founders:**

Thomas Berman was born in Stockholm in 1943 and grew up in Norrköping. Catharina Berman (born Wranne) was born in 1949 and grew up in Stockholm. In 2019, the Berman family began discussions about a donation to a literature prize dedicated to the Jewish tradition. In the spring of 2020, the Berman Literature Prize was founded and the organization, consisting of a committee and a jury, was established.

### **Berman Literature Prize has the following ethos and declaration of intent:**

#### **”KNOWLEDGE IS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU”**

There is more than one Jewish tradition, and the tradition that the Berman Literature Prize seeks to highlight has developed in constant dialogue with other cultures and languages. This means that for thousands of years it has preserved a rich history and literature, while simultaneously encountering the languages and texts of other cultures. Tradition and renewal have interacted, giving rise to a constant critical rereading of religious texts as well as literature and songs, poetry and philosophy. This is a tradition of knowledge in which interpretation, interpretative concepts and memory are at the centre, and because of historical circumstances involving persecution and discrimination, it is often written from a marginal position and from the experience of exile.

It is an ongoing exploratory discussion, and all the forms it takes have one thing in common: an impassioned and sincere belief in the ability of the literary text to transcend times and cultures, to let words convey experiences and thoughts between people.

The aim of the **Berman Literature Prize** is to honor authors in recent years who, regardless of background or genre, have worked in the spirit of this tradition.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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