

**NEWS**



# Metropolises standing #WithRefugees

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Today, to mark the World Refugee Day, mayors from 55 cities around the world are calling on all local authorities to join them in the campaign Cities #WithRefugees, to welcome and include refugees in their communities. Seven Metropolis members – Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Mexico City, Montevideo and São Paulo – have already signed the respective solidarity statement, and some others are already taking direct action and leadership in support of refugees.

Yesterday, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, released figures that show a continuation of a five-year upward trend in the number of people displaced by conflict or persecution worldwide. In the face of ever higher levels of forced displacement, and alongside growing levels of xenophobia around the world, it is crucial that local governments of all levels join together to show solidarity at a time when more and more people are forced to flee.

The Cities #WithRefugees statement of solidarity highlights the increasingly important role cities have taken on in hosting refugees. Nearly two out of three refugees settle in urban areas whose residents are often the first to help them upon arrival.

Here are practical examples of what our members are doing for refugees:

- The Greater **Amman** Municipality promotes a community led initiative that uses public spaces to encourage social interaction between host communities and refugees, and to reduce socio-cultural tensions and spatial segregation
- The **Berlin** district of Neukölln promotes the long-standing programme “Neighbourhood Mothers”, which empowers the female leaders of disadvantaged migrant families
- The **Madrid** Municipality employs migrants as mediators between the local government and communities to promote environmental awareness

“Cities #WithRefugees sends an important message of solidarity with refugees. With the majority of refugees now living in towns and cities, mayors and community leaders play a critical role in mobilising support, providing services and opportunities, and helping refugees become members of communities. As we work towards a Global Compact on Refugees, it is imperative to recognize and support of local communities to welcome refugees”, states the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, praising the communities and individuals that are a positive force for inclusion.

The United Nations have been developing a Global Compact on Refugees to transform the way the international community responds to refugee crises and secure more predictable and equitable support for refugees and the countries and communities which host them. In 2017, Metropolis members submitted a position paper to the Global Compact on Refugees, with the leadership of **Montréal**. This position paper aims to recognize and highlight the key role played by major cities in terms of migration, diversity management and inclusion. Click here to read the **Metropolis position paper for the Global Compact on Refugees**.

The Cities #WithRefugees initiative is part of UNHCR’s ongoing #WithRefugees campaign, launched in 2016 to support the development of the global compact on refugees. To date the campaign has almost two million individual signatures to its core petition and has approached 19 million actions in support of refugees.

We strongly encourage all our members to join this global effort of standing #WithRefugees by:

- **Signing the Cities #WithRefugees statement of solidarity** - [click here](#)
- Sharing your experiences in support of refugees at the **Policy Transfer Platform**