

## **We need to talk about Cologne**

We, refugee and migrant communities settled in different EU countries, from different nationalities and backgrounds, strongly condemn the recent sexual attacks against women in Germany. We would like to express our sorrow and sympathy to the victims of these terrible attacks. We condemn any violence against women, be they nationals or foreigners, perpetrated by foreigners or nationals. Perpetrators should be prosecuted and convicted. It is important now to clarify and understand what happened so that people, in particular women, feel safe again, justice can be done, and further violence prevented. We did not flee violence there to accept it here.

We think it is crucial to raise our voices now because we fear that the political and social consequences of what happened in Germany will deeply affect the reality for those societies who welcomed us and for the thousands of innocent people seeking refuge. We wish to remind that people arriving now in the EU are looking for a safer life for themselves and their children. Refugees arriving are not dangerous but in danger. It would not be fair for a few individuals to make us forget the millions who are doing their best to overcome all the obstacles to settle and integrate into European societies. Everyday, we are witness to the fact that the great majority of refugees and migrants today are eager to give back to the people who welcomed them.

We call on all Europeans not to generalise based on the shocking events in Germany. The perpetrators, be they asylum seekers or not, are not representative of the majority of people living and seeking refuge in the European Union. Nor should we point the finger at Islam as somehow incompatible with European values or women's rights as this is a great disservice to the majority of Muslims who condemn this type of behaviour.

We also call on the authorities and decision makers to avoid generalisations that could polarise society. We ask them not to use these events to close their borders or to introduce restrictive policies that will not provide real solutions to the problems faced, but will only expose refugees and migrants to even more danger. We acknowledge the great challenges this crisis has placed on states and social systems. But fear and closure are not the answers. We ask the European states that welcomed us to continue to do so. Other states should adopt the same attitude.

We are grateful to all countries that have given us a new home and a possibility to live normally again, in peace. We are especially grateful to those few who decided to open their doors and follow the original spirit of the Refugee Convention against the temptations of populism.

We thank all the people and organisations who help refugees and migrants, everyday, everywhere in Europe. We are certain that the "welcoming culture" some European societies have demonstrated will pay off in the long term, and provide secure foundations for our societies to grow based on mutual respect and tolerance.

## Signatories

### Refugee and migrant organisations

Afghan Academy International (UK),  
Afghan Association (Stockholm-Sweden),  
Afghan Community of Greece,  
Afghan Cultural center in Boden city-Sweden,  
Afghan Cultural center in the north of Sweden,  
Afghanische Kultur, Integration und Solidarität (Austria),  
African Media Association Malta (AMAM),  
Aithiops Socio-Cultural Center (Greece),  
All Africa Association in Greece,  
Asante (Greece),  
Associação de Refugiados em Portugal  
Association of Nigerian Women in Greece,  
Association of Maghreb Arabi in Crete,  
Association of Arabic Community of Ampelokipi (Greece),  
Association of Cameroonians of Greece,  
Association of Moroccan Community in Greece,  
Association of Russian Speakers and Russian Friends of Trikala Region (Greece),  
Association of Syrians Overseas in Greece,  
Centre for Youth Integrated Development-CYID (Finland),  
Change4all  
Community of Ukrainians in Greece,  
Community of Afghans Immigrants and Refugees (Greece),  
Community of Bangladeshi people in Greece,  
Community of Cameroon in Greece,  
Community of Congo in Greece,  
Community of Ethiopia in Greece,  
Community of Ghana in Greece,  
Congolese Community in Athens  
Coordination Group of Afghan Refugees in Turkey,  
Enugu State of Nigeria- Association in Athens, Greece,  
Ethiopian Community in Greece,  
Federation of Albanian Associations in Greece,  
Greek – Pakistani Association in Greece,  
Greek – Soudan Friendship Association,  
Greek Forum of Migrants,

Greek Forum of Refugees,  
Greek-Georgian Union – Dioskouria,  
Greek-Indian Cultural Association,  
Greek-Moldavian Association “Orphev”,  
House of Syrians in Greece,  
Iranian Association (UK),  
Islamic Foundation (Slovakia),  
Kenyan Community of Greece,  
Migszol (Hungary),  
Mosaico azioni per i rifugiati (Italy),  
Nigerian Community in Greece,  
Nigerian Community in Greece,  
Nuba Mountains Peoples Foundation (UK),  
Organisation Somali Plus (Germany),  
Organization of United Women of Africa (Greece),  
Pak Hellenic Cultural and Welfare  
Refugee Council Duisburg (Germany),  
Refugee Community Seelow (Brandenburg/Germany),  
Somali Association in Greece,  
Somali Community of Malta,  
Stop Deportation! (Germany)  
Sudanese Refugees Association-Greece,  
Sympathia (Greek Solidarity Group Bremen - Germany),  
Tanzanian Community of Greece,  
The land of the Stork (Greece),  
Umbrella Organisation for Refugees,  
Union of Egyptian Workers in Greece,  
Union of Ethiopians Workers in Greece,  
Union of Palestinian Workers in Greece,  
Union of Sierra Leone in Greece,  
United African Women Organisation, Bridges "humanitarian initiative" Syria,  
World Hazara Council-Belgium,  
Zanzibar Community in Greece

## **Supporters**

Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism - KISA (Cyprus),  
Aditus foundation (Malta),  
Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration - ASGI (Italy),  
Asylkoordination (Austria),  
ATTAC Hamburg (Germany),  
British Refugee Council,  
Bündnis Gegen Rassismus (Alliance Against Racism Germany),

Coordination et Initiatives pour Réfugiés et Étrangers - Ciré (Belgium),  
Croatian Law Centre (HPC),  
Diakonie Germany  
Dutch Council for Refugees,  
Estonian Refugee Council,  
European Council on Refugees and Exiles - ECRE,  
Forum réfugiés-Cosi (France),  
Foundation for Refugee Students UAF (Netherlands)  
France terre d'asile,  
Future Worlds Center (Cyprus),  
Greece Solidarity Group (Germany)  
Greek Council for Refugees  
Human Rights League (Slovakia),  
Hungarian Helsinki Committee,  
Icelandic Red Cross,  
Immigrant Integration Council of the City of Athens,  
Integra Foundation (Malta),  
International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC),  
Italian Council for Refugees,  
Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association (MYLA),  
Menedek (Hungary),  
Multeci-Der (Turkey),  
My Right Is Your Right (Germany),  
OPU (Czech Republic),  
PIC - Legal-Informational Centre for NGOs (Slovenia),  
PRO ASYL (Germany),  
Raoul Wallenberg Institute (Sweden),  
Refugees Welcome Germany,  
Refugees Welcome Netherlands,  
Refugees Welcome Portugal,  
Scottish Refugee Council,  
Sustainability4Youth (UK)  
Transform! Europe  
Verein Projekt Integrationshaus (Austria),  
Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (Flemish Refugee Action)