

# Courageous Syrian swimmer named UN refugee agency Goodwill Ambassador

27 April 2017 – The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) today appointed Yusra Mardini – a Syrian refugee who together with her sister swam for three hours in the Mediterranean Sea off Turkey's coast, pulling a capsizing boat of refugees to safety – as its new Goodwill Ambassador.

Her actions saved the lives of 20 refugees who were fleeing the Syrian capital, Damascus.

[Yusra](#) was also one of the 10 athletes who made up the historic Olympic Refugee Team and participated at the Rio Olympic Games last year. She has been a very powerful voice for the forcibly displaced across the world and an example of their resilience and determination to rebuild lives and positively contribute to host communities.

"The UN refugee agency does the most important and incredible work for refugees under extremely challenging circumstances, and I am proud to use my voice to support UNHCR," [said](#) Ms. Mardini, accepting her new role.

"I am thrilled to join the UNHCR family and eager to continue spreading the message that refugees are just normal people living through traumatic and devastating circumstances, who are capable of extraordinary things if only given a chance."

Since her participation at the Rio Olympics, Ms. Mardini has worked closely with the UN agency, drawing global attention to the plight of refugees, speaking at forums including the 2016 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants (which adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants) and the 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos.

She has also advocated for the refugee cause during meetings with the Pope, world leaders, influential business figures and other world leaders.

"Yusra is a deeply inspiring young woman. Through her powerful personal story, she represents the hopes, the fears and the incredible potential of the more than ten million young refugees around the globe," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, welcoming Ms. Mardini's appointment.

Also welcoming the announcement, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach added: "It is my hope that through her role as UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, Yusra will continue to inspire refugees, reminding us that anyone can contribute to society through their talent, skills and strength of the human spirit."

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Ms. Mardini is currently a full time student in Germany and continues to train in the hope of competing at the next Olympic Games in the Japanese capital, Tokyo, in 2020.

UNHCR [Goodwill Ambassadors](#) are some of the most recognizable public faces the UN agency. They help take its work to every corner of the world through their influence, dedication and hard work.