



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Music Initiative

Press Release

For Immediate Release

## **UNHCR selects AKMI roster artists Basel Rajoub and Soriana Project to perform for UN World Refugee Day commemoration**



**Geneva, Switzerland, 20 June 2016** - Syrian saxophonist and composer Basel Rajoub and his Soriana Project are the featured performers for the 2016 commemoration of World Refugee Day at the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva today. First marked in 2001, World Refugee Day is observed each year on 20 June to commemorate the “strength, courage, and perseverance of millions of refugees,” according to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

Rajoub and Soriana are part of the artist roster of the Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI), which supports musicians and music educators from 11 countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East who are working to preserve, revitalise and transmit their musical heritage to new generations of artists and audiences.

Soriana translated as “Our Syria” is a project which brings together eminent performer-composer-improvisers from Syria and the West who create contemporary music inspired by the rich cultural heritage of the Middle East. Rajoub, himself living away from his homeland, Syria, notes that he has been sustained by the knowledge of his own cultural heritage that he has carried with him. “This gift of musical knowledge has remained with me throughout many journeys, during which it has soothed wounds, inspired creativity, and provided a platform of stability,” said Rajoub.

Rajoub, born in Aleppo, Syria, and currently a resident of Switzerland, will be joined for the World Refugee Day performance by fellow Soriana Project musicians Feras Charestan, from Al-Hasakeh, in northeast Syria, who presently lives in Stockholm, and is a virtuoso performer on the *qanun*, a plucked zither with ancient roots in the Middle East; vocalist Lynn Adib, born in Damascus and currently a resident of Paris; and Italian percussionist Andrea Piccioni, a leading performer on frame drums from a variety of world music traditions. In May 2016, Basel Rajoub and Soriana Project released their first joint recording, “The Queen of Turquoise,” on the Jazz Village label of Harmonia Mundi, an international record company known for both its classical music and jazz catalogues.

Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI) supports sustaining musicianship and music making —both amateur and professional — for and within displaced communities. Though support for music and other forms of cultural expression is often viewed as a low priority in humanitarian assistance programmes for refugees, AKMI believes that art and music offer a unique resource and can sustain hope and provide an intangible, yet indestructible link to cultural memory, which, eventually becomes the catalyst of cultural revitalisation.

For more information on Basel Rajoub and Soriana Project, and on the Aga Khan Music Initiative, please follow the links:

<http://sorianaproject.com> (Soriana Project)

<http://www.akdn.org/akmi> (Aga Khan Music Initiative)

Read online at: <http://www.akdn.org/press-release/unhcr-selects-akmi-roster-artists-basel-rajoub-and-soriana-project-perform-un-world>