



Prize Ceremony honoring METAdrasi:  
Presentation of the largest humanitarian prize in the world  
by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

On Friday, October 18, **the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's 2019 Humanitarian Symposium and Prize Ceremony, honoring METAdrasi**, took place in Los Angeles, California, with nearly 400 people in attendance from all over the world. The Greek Civil Society Organization was honored for its work in the field of refugees support, in a ceremony transmitted over the internet through livestream, attracting more than 125,000 viewers. In the symposium before the Prize ceremony, current issues were discussed by leaders, including the Mayor of Los Angeles. Particularly moving was the speech by the internationally acclaimed author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who mentioned METAdrasi's work, especially the provision of interpretation services, highlighting how important it is for everyone to be able to tell their stories in their own language.

In a particularly warm atmosphere, **METAdrasi's Founder and President, Lora Pappa**, received the prize and thanked the [Conrad N. Hilton Foundation](#) as well as the panel of jurors, expressing her pride for the soul of METAdrasi's team and saying: *"METAdrasi, a grassroots organization, established nine years ago, became the local organization that from the start tried to bring in innovative practical solutions to respond quickly to essential and urgent needs of refugees, and especially children. With commitment and ignoring the naysayers, we often had to take a plunge into deep waters, making the impossible possible..."*

Lora Pappa added that the prize is also a great recognition for the Greek Civil Society, which responded to the challenges; a remarkable social phenomenon of support towards refugees and displaced people. And she stressed that we cannot sacrifice our fundamental European values in the name of safety and security. *"We need to understand that the best way to feel safe and secure is to build security and protection for all."*

*"It is our hope that by honoring METAdrasi with the 2019 Hilton Humanitarian Prize today, we can share with the international community the inspiring accomplishments of this extraordinary organization,"* said **Peter Laugharn, president and CEO of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**. *"We also seek to apply to our own work, and our own communities, some of the approaches they have modeled for us so well, not the least of which is humility, perseverance, and a steadfast hope in the future we all desire."*

In a message which was screened during the ceremony, **Christos Stylianides, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management**, stated: *"METAdrasi has been one of the very few humanitarian actors that the European Union selected and trusted to implement our aid programs for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece. I've seen their work on the ground with my own eyes. I could witness the difference that the people of METAdrasi could make to the lives of the most vulnerable, especially unaccompanied children. Dear friends, in my countless visits to humanitarian crisis around the world, I learned one thing: humanitarian aid should not be only about helping someone to survive. It should be also about giving dignity, giving hope, because this is our moral duty and this exactly what METAdrasi does in Greece and in line with the European Union's noblest principles and values. Also, in line with the universal humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence."*

**Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe**, stated: *"The people who arrive on Greek shores – often crowded into small boats, and at risk of drowning – may be fleeing hardship, persecution and violence. Our Organization is working with the Greek government, and others in Europe, to help ensure that the rights of migrants*

*and refugees are upheld. And NGOs including Lora Pappa's METAdrasi are there to help, day in, day out. It is good to have hope. But our experience shows that it is better when that hope is underpinned by laws and action. So, the generosity of the Hilton Humanitarian Prize is not only a well-judged recognition of the good that is being done, it is also a 2 million-dollar multiplier that will ensure that this organization can do yet more good, for yet more people, at this critical time."*

Carl, a young teenager supported by METAdrasi, gave his personal statement:

*"Two years ago, I was washed on the shores of Chios Island in Greece. I had left Gabon, Africa, fearing for my life. I never expected that the dangers ahead of me on that journey, would be much more terrible than those at home. [...] This could not get worse, could it? Oh yes... It could! I found myself in the Refugee Camp, the hotspot on Chios. [...] I was literally "fished" out of this inferno by METAdrasi. I could finally dare to dream... my one, simple dream... to be able to go to school and hope for a future."*

Carl described how in METAdrasi he found a family to support him in his every step. Today, thanks also to the help of the Lycée Franco-Hellénique, Carl has spread his wings and is realizing his dream: he has started studying in a university in France.



Steven M. Hilton, Lora Pappa, Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni and Peter Laugharn at the 2019 Hilton Humanitarian Symposium and Prize Ceremony at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif. METAdrasi is the recipient of the 2019 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize, the world's largest annual humanitarian award presented to nonprofit organizations judged to have made extraordinary contributions toward alleviating human suffering.  
*Photo credit: Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*



METAdrasi's Founder and President, Lora Pappa, giving her acceptance speech during the 2019 Hilton Humanitarian Symposium and Prize Ceremony.

*Photo credit: Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*



Members of METAdrasi's team, representing all departments and field locations, proudly accepting the Prize.

*Photo credit: Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*