



ORDRE SOUVERAIN MILITAIRE ET HOSPITALIER  
DE SAINT-JEAN DE JERUSALEM DE RHODES ET DE MALTE

MISSION PERMANENTE D'OBSERVATION AUPRES DE L'OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES  
ET DES AUTRES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES A GENEVE

# Sovereign Military Order of Malta

## United Nations Human Rights Council Eleventh Special Session

### “The Human Rights Situation in Sri Lanka”

Statement by:

H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann

Permanent Observer

Geneva, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2009

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Mr. President,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Prior to the recent visit to Sri Lanka of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, the Sovereign Order of Malta's worldwide relief agency, Malteser International, joined other aid agencies in addressing an appeal to the Sri Lankan Government to secure access to the camps so as to enable them to provide urgently needed services to thousands of internally displaced persons. We are now encouraged by the statement made by the Secretary-General at the conclusion of his visit, jointly with the Government of Sri Lanka, stressing that "the Government will continue to provide access to humanitarian agencies", in referring to the situation of internally displaced persons. We are thus confident that access to the victims will no longer be curtailed.

Malteser International, has been providing humanitarian assistance in Sri Lanka since 2005. In addition to its rehabilitation and reconstruction work, in 2007 and 2008 it also assisted displaced persons in camps and supported the construction of temporary houses in their home areas. Currently Malteser International is providing emergency aid in Saiva Pragasa camp close to Vavuniya.

Mr. President,

The Order of Malta's vocation is to alleviate suffering by assisting those of our fellow human beings in need, wherever they may be. We are aware of the many complexities of a post-conflict situation, as underlined by The Hon. Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights, in his statement to the Council yesterday. We fully support calls made by the Secretary-General and many delegations for the international community to help the Sri Lankan authorities in facing the tragic humanitarian consequences of the conflict. For the international humanitarian community to succeed in its mission to save lives and restore the human dignity of those who have lost family members, their homes and their livelihoods, it needs unrestricted and full access to those who are almost totally reliant on aid. Burden-sharing and solidarity are key elements of a comprehensive approach which must ensure the respect of basic human rights such as the right to health, food, shelter and freedom of expression and movement. The Order of Malta remains committed to contribute, within the scope of its means, by responding to the present humanitarian challenges in the same positive spirit as in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami when it provided emergency relief in some of the worst-affected areas.

We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the Government of Sri Lanka.

Thank you, Mr. President.