



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN GENÈVA

***Human Rights Council – 31st Session – Item 2
Interactive Dialogue
High Commissioner’s Annual Report
Statement by Counsellor Jean-François Kammer
Geneva, 10 March 2016***

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation commends the courageous and enlightening annual report by the High Commissioner.

It rightly stresses that one of the fundamental challenges in today’s world is “countering discrimination” of any kind, against minorities, be it ethnic, racial or religious, against migrants, against people with disabilities, discrimination based on gender etc.

Allow me to underline here what is of particular importance to the Order of Malta today: the question of migration.

Can one say more clearly than the High Commissioner that “migrants including refugees, in countries of transit and destination now pay the price for the long standing lack of principled migration governance that builds on human rights at the global, regional and national levels.” Indeed it is essential that a human rights perspective be integrated into the global debate on migration.

With 60 mio people displaced in the world, 20 mio of them on the move, one must repeat like Pope Francis, that bridges have to be preferred to walls, and that building walls has never been a successful long-term solution.

The humanitarian principles and laws codified in the conventions signed after World War II have to be reaffirmed.

People fleeing war and persecution must be entitled to protection. They deserve to see their human rights and dignity respected, regardless of their legal status. Many people in Europe fear that the influx of such a high number of people of Islamic belief will endanger the Christian civilisation of Europe. The Order of Malta challenges this: will we not risk our identity even more if we put our values of human rights aside, and refuse to host people who flee from persecution and wars?

The Order of Malta, as a 900 year old institution inspired by the Christian faith to help those in need “without distinction of religion, race, origin and age” is active in many countries, specially right now in the context of the Syrian crisis, assisting refugees, asylum seekers and IDP's.

Faith based institutions working together play an important role in supporting migrants and refugees and contributing to peace-building and reconciliation among communities.

The Order of Malta looks forward to the meeting of the WHS convened by the UN SG next May in Istanbul. It will be an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm international humanitarian law and the basic principles of humanitarian assistance.

It will also among other issues be an opportunity to reaffirm the necessary fight against any kind of discrimination and to create awareness of the significant and supportive role played by faith-based humanitarian actors.