



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 GENÈVE

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Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann
Geneva, 19th September 2016

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

My Delegation thanks the Commission for dedicating, in its latest report A/HRC/33/55, a specific chapter on “**Assaults on medical care**”.

In its capacity as a hospitaller and faith-based institution, the Sovereign Order of Malta, supports numerous medical projects in Syria through its international humanitarian relief agency, *Malteser International*. These activities cover hospitals, static and mobile medical centers, oxygen production, blood banks, pediatric and ambulance services. In 2015 some 73’000 patients were treated, 14’000 internally displaced persons benefitted from aid distribution and around 5’000 women received mother and child healthcare. Furthermore emergency relief is being provided to thousands of IDPs in the Azaz region.

Despite the unrelenting attacks on health facilities and medical workers, Malteser International has been expanding its medical aid measures for IDPs and local residents in the Aleppo region, together with its Syrian partner. The illustration in the report on the severe destruction of medical facilities refers in paragraph 48 to the bombing of the Al-Quds Hospital. The rockets killed medical staff and patients including the pediatrician who was also working in the Malteser International supported Aleppo Specialized Pediatric Hospital. Due to the ongoing assaults this hospital, like others, has moved its operations into cellars in order to give staff and patients as much safety as possible. At the time Dr. Mohammed Wasim Ma’az was one of the last three pediatricians in Aleppo City.

Mr. President,

As we all know, the destruction of Syria’s once sophisticated health system is against the corpus international humanitarian law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols of 1977. In this context the Order of Malta fully supports the Commission’s recommendations and calls on all concerned parties to enforce IHL by ceasing the strategy of assaults on medical care as a tool of war.