



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 GENEVA

# **Sovereign Order of Malta**

## **High-level meeting on global responsibility sharing through pathways for admission of Syrian refugees**

Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann  
Permanent Observer

Geneva, 30 March 2016

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Mr. High Commissioner,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Since the start of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sovereign Order of Malta has been assisting displaced populations in the countries of origin, transit and arrival. Its initiatives are aimed at relieving the pressure on communities hosting large numbers of refugees by providing support where the strain is most acute.

The Order of Malta's worldwide relief agency, *Malteser International*, is implementing programs in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. In **Turkey** in the border region of Kilis, it has set up quality projects in the sectors of health and education which include a rehabilitation field hospital, as well as community and education centers for Syrian refugee children. In **Syria** and **North Iraq** Malteser International operates health care centers in IDP camps, delivers much needed medical equipment and runs projects with mobile health teams to serve out-of camp IDP populations. The Order of Malta's action in **Lebanon** stretches from north to south, reaching remote areas to assist the Syrian refugees and the needy Lebanese host population. Its Lebanese Association runs Primary Health Care centers, mobile medical units and distribution projects.

In the wake of the influx of refugees into Europe, the Order of Malta scaled up its efforts in **Hungary, Austria** and **Germany** to assist these countries' capacities in facing the increase of new arrivals. Volunteers were deployed in train stations and medical care is offered to asylum seekers housed in temporary camps. It is estimated that about one in three of the refugees who arrived in Germany in 2015 were assisted by special structures managed by the Order's German Association which offers a variety of services from immediate help, first aid and accommodation for people arriving, to care for refugees in central facilities, towns and communities and for unaccompanied minors, to integration support through language training, professional skills' development, access to jobs' and housing markets.

Furthermore, the Order of Malta continues its rescue activities in the **Mediterranean** and **Aegean seas**. Since 2008 doctors and nurses of its Italian Rescue Corps have been operating on the Italian Navy and Coastguards' vessels in the Strait of Sicily and since December they are also working onboard a Migrant Offshore Aid Station MOAS, in close cooperation with the Greek Coastguards and local authorities. By providing healthcare at sea, they are saving lives of refugees fleeing conflict along the Aegean Sea route between Turkey and Greece.

As the international community seeks solutions to the current refugee and migrant crisis, our call for action must be for measures which are practical and possible, which are embraced by us all and which provide clearer policies among states and faster administrative procedures to cope with the influx. Events unfolding daily remind us of the determination of the oppressed to find a better life, the importance of their human rights in achieving it and the contribution we must make to effect it. The dignified admission of refugees and its commitment to the fundamental principles of international solidarity and humanitarian law are at the center of the Order of Malta's action in support of the thousands of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. The Order will pursue and, wherever possible, step up its interventions by addressing humanitarian needs in a spirit of international cooperation that ensures the sharing of responsibilities. Furthermore, it is actively engaged in the ongoing preparatory process leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit and looks forward to participating in what should be an opportunity to reverse the current tide of suffering and take steps towards an equitable response to the humanitarian crisis.

Thank you.