



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

THE GRAND CHANCELLOR

Address
By
H.E. the Grand Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs
To
The High Level Segment
Of the 52nd Session
Of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Geneva, 27th February – 2nd March 2023

Mr. President,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is my honour to address this session of the Human Rights Council in my capacity as Grand Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

The Human Rights Council plays an essential role in promoting the respect for human rights and human dignity worldwide, especially for the most vulnerable.

I wish to thank the High Commissioner and his Office for their commitment and actions to protect human rights and address violations worldwide.

Mr. President,

The Order of Malta remains deeply concerned by the continuous and massive violations of human rights in times of conflict, in particular in the context of the war in Ukraine. We deplore the enormous human suffering and call for an immediate stop of hostilities. All parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and ensure humanitarian access.

At the beginning of the war a year ago, we immediately responded and continue to this day to assist civilians in Ukraine and across Europe. The Order of Malta's international and national entities and partners have to this date delivered more than



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4'500 tons of humanitarian aid in Ukraine, distributed half-a-million hot meals to IDPs, provided 19'000 beds in shelters and trained 13'000 people in first aid.

We are also present in Hungary, Romania, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, assisting refugees through medico-social projects, psychological support, providing healthcare, food and shelters.

Mr. President,

The Sovereign Order of Malta attaches great importance to the fundamental right of freedom of religion or belief, as enshrined in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are committed to upholding this right through our humanitarian action and diplomacy.

The works of the Order of Malta in 120 countries are a glimmering example of our commitment to advance the observance of international humanitarian laws, protecting the disadvantaged and the communities whose fundamental rights have been violated. This is also reflected in our active involvement in multilateral bodies such as the International Freedom of Religion or Belief Alliance.

At the Munich Security Conference last week, in a side event we organized, the Order of Malta once again reiterated the special role faith actors play in promoting religious diplomacy when addressing conflict mediation and resolution. The Order of Malta also engages in interfaith dialogue and promotes such dialogue between different religious and faith communities at all levels.

My Delegation looks forward to participating in the interactive debate with the new Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief during this session.

Mr. President,

Following the recent devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, the long-term impact on the human rights of the affected populations will be dramatic, especially in terms of right to food and housing.

The Order of Malta has instantly undertaken emergency humanitarian relief activities and continues to assist those in need.



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With regards to the right to health, we must note that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on human rights is still consequent and may last in the coming years. The health crisis might be over, however, the inequalities - it has deepened or created - persists.

The Order of Malta fully supports the inclusion of the respect for human rights supporting the World Health Organization negotiating body which is drafting a new International Instrument on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response.

Mr. President,

My Delegation will also participate and contribute the Order of Malta's expertise on the topic of the rights of children, in the interactive debates on the sale of children, violence against children, forced child labour, children in armed conflicts, as well as on the right to food.

Finally, I wish and hope that this 52nd regular session of the Human Rights Council will prove fruitful, and that it can substantially contribute to the promotion, protection and implementation of human rights for all.

Thank you.

Riccardo Paternò di Montecupo