



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 ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

World Health Organization
Special Session of the Executive Board on the
Health Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian territory
Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann

Geneva, 10 December 2023

Madam President,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

The Sovereign Order of Malta is alarmed and deeply concerned by the rapidly deteriorating and unprecedented health crisis in the Palestinian territory. Our Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem and its Outreach Clinics have impacted more than one million lives since 1990. In this area of conflict, it stands as a beacon of hope for families in the whole region, including refugee camps and remote desert villages.

To-day, our medical and humanitarian mission is severely impaired. 500 new checkpoints and 10,000 additional arms in the West Bank settlements have made it unsafe to travel in medical vehicles. The movement of ambulances, medical personnel and mobile medical units have been increasingly hindered throughout the West Bank while the blockade also prevents access to much needed medicines and equipment. Our Mobile Medical Clinic, a lifeline in the region, is no longer able to make its daily rounds. The populations we serve in isolated villages and Bedouin communities are without care. Babies needing surgery can no longer be transferred to Jerusalem, thus seriously reducing their chance of survival.

The Order of Malta, with a history spanning nearly a thousand years, has been a consistent force for relief and assistance during times of crisis and conflict. It remains committed to serve the people of Bethlehem and Gaza, to alleviate their suffering and save lives, irrespective of their faith. We urge all parties to forge a peaceful solution, to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and to respect the right to health of every person, as called for in the draft resolution before us which we encourage the Executive Board to adopt by consensus.