



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

U.N Human Rights Council – 55th regular session

High-Level Ministerial Event
“Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse PICTET-ALTHANN, Permanent Observer

Monday 26th February 2024, Geneva

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

The Sovereign Order of Malta thanks the Permanent Mission of Palestine for its invitation to participate in this crucial High-Level Ministerial Event.

We are appalled by the grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and the disastrous humanitarian situation in Palestine.

Our worldwide Relief Agency, Malteser International, in partnership with German aid organizations, is providing emergency assistance through Egypt to support families in Gaza. The effects of the war are also deepening on the West Bank with incursions, arrests and home and building demolitions adding to an atmosphere of despair. The impeded entry and distribution of aid to civilian populations is obstructing our longstanding medical and humanitarian mission. Access to our maternity and critical care facility, the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, has been severely restricted. A lack of medical care and food in an insecure environment generate anxiety. Yet, we remain committed, as we have been for many decades, to alleviating the suffering of the civilian population by providing hope in the greater Bethlehem and Northern Hebron regions through high quality healthcare for women and children, as well as education and employment.



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The Order of Malta calls on all Parties to respect the fundamental norms of International Humanitarian Law, as enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols which prohibit attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel, hospitals, medical units and transport, (art. 14 APII) as well as on cultural objects, places of worship (art. 16 APII), and the misuse of protected objects to conduct hostilities.

Only 10 days ago, during a high-level event at the Munich Security Conference, on the topic *“Protecting the Protectors: Upholding the Safety of Humanitarian Workers in Conflict Zones”*, our Grand Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs reaffirmed that *“humanitarian aid is and must remain neutral and those in need and those who provide assistance should be protected, even under the worst and most dangerous situations of conflict”*.

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,

In concluding, the Sovereign Order of Malta fully supports the United Nations Secretary General’s *“call for action for human rights”* and his appeal to the Council this morning for an immediate humanitarian cease-fire and an unconditional release of hostages. As the Secretary-General remarked: *“Protecting human rights protects us all”*.

Thank you.