



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF SAINT JOHN OF JERUSALEM RHODES AND MALTA

Declaration of the Sovereign Order of Malta on government priorities

The government has restored leadership in line with the Constitution of the Order

Rome, 2 February 2017 – In a press conference today, the government of the Sovereign Order of Malta has outlined its priorities, following the resignation of Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing on Saturday 28 January. The Grand Chancellor Albrecht Boeselager stated: "Together with the Lieutenant ad interim we are governing the Order according to our constitution and in a united and efficient way".

The government emphasized the Order's loyalty to the Holy Father. It confirmed the Order's willingness to collaborate with the Special Delegate. On behalf of the government, Boeselager thanked Pope Francis for his guidance that helped end government crises. He observed that in all his decisions the Pontiff showed respect and regard for the Order of Malta, while at the same time acknowledging in all his actions, the sovereignty of the Order.

The government also thanked the members of the Papal Commission for the rapid delivery of their report. It regrets unfounded and baseless allegations of a conflict of interest raised against members of the commission.

As the current crisis in the Middle East and the Mediterranean is showing every day, the work of the Order has never been more relevant and needed. "We will not allow the recent distractions in the government of the Order to jeopardize our humanitarian and socio-medical work," said Dominique de La Rochefoucauld, Grand Hospitaller.

The resignation of the Grand Master opens a new phase in the life of the Order, and with renewed vigor, the Order concentrates fully on the enormous challenges in humanitarian diplomacy and the work on the ground.

The Sovereignty and Diplomatic network play a pivotal role in the Order's ability to serve people in need and is an asset for the Catholic Church. A top priority for the Order's government is the reinforcement of

the diplomatic network and the range of action of the Order's current programs. The government of the Order will remain focused on the cooperation and coordination with the UNHCR, the UN mission in Libya, the Mediterranean naval mission SOPHIA and the International Organization for migration IOM. The Government is currently assessing the evolving situation in Syria and is ready for increasing its local engagement at the side of the needy people the moment it will become possible. One of the Order's medical teams is currently involved in an important training mission on board the ship San Giorgio, part of Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean. The aim is to train Libyan coast guards and members of the Libyan navy in 'Search and Rescue' operations at sea. The humanitarian activity of the Order of Malta is carried out in 120 countries around the world. The work of around 100,000 people – members, volunteers and medical personnel – continues unabated.

We are alarmed and concerned by the proliferation of discriminatory positions towards immigrants, not last, based on their national origin. History has already provided us with plenty of examples showing the dramatic and monstrous consequences of policies based on origin and race. Likewise, the Government takes a strong stance against the increasing disregard for the humanitarian laws encoded in the Geneva Conventions ratified by the family of nations.

Albrecht Boeselager: "Not only are the norms being increasingly ignored by State and non-State actors, but they are being publicly challenged and disputed. As an observer to the UN and other multilateral entities, we will continue to raise our voice in the context."

The election of the Grand Master's successor will take place within the next three months, as provided for in the Constitution of the Order of Malta. The Lieutenant ad interim, Fra' Ludwig Hoffmann von Rumerstein, will convene the Council Complete of State, the electing body, which is made up of an international representation of members of the Order. They will meet in the Order's Magistral Villa in Rome.

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The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, founded in Jerusalem around the year 1048, is a subject of international law and a lay religious order of the Catholic Church. The Order of Malta's mission is summed up in its motto *Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum*: witnessing the faith and giving assistance to the poor and the sick. Today the Order of Malta is mainly active in health and social care and humanitarian aid, operating in 120 countries. Its 13,500 members are supported by 80,000 volunteers, with another 25,000 doctors, nurses and paramedics. The Order manages hospitals, health centres, out-patient units, institutes for the elderly and disabled, terminal patient and palliative care centres and volunteer corps. Malteser International, the Order of Malta's special relief agency, is on the front line in natural disasters and in alleviating the consequences of armed conflicts. The Order is currently engaged in the countries bordering Syria and Iraq to provide aid for the population fleeing from the conflict. The Order of Malta's Italian Rescue Corps participates in the first-aid operations for the boats filled with migrants in the Strait of Sicily, alongside the Italian units. The Order of Malta is neutral, impartial and apolitical. It has bilateral diplomatic relations with 106 States, official relations with another 6 States, and relations at ambassador level with the European Union. It is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and its specialised agencies and has representatives to the main international organisations. Since 1834 the Order of Malta's seat of government has been located in Rome, where it is guaranteed extraterritorial rights. For more information, visit: www.orderofmalta.int