

Commitment of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the WHS High Level Leaders Roundtables, in particular the Roundtable entitled “*Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity*”

The Sovereign Order of Malta endorses all the Core Commitments presented by the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat in the framework of the seven High Level Leaders Roundtables.

On the topic “Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity” (to be covered in Roundtable No. 5), the Sovereign Order of Malta endorses in particular Core Commitment number 3 (“**Commit to ensure populations in need receive timely and unimpeded humanitarian access**”) and will pay special attention to the following:

Firstly, the Order will use its unique position as a religious, diplomatic and humanitarian actor to strengthen and promote international humanitarian law and other legal instruments protecting human life and dignity and their implementation and compliance. In particular we will promote Common Article 1 and 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and, in general, promote the protection of humanitarian and medical personnel, as strongly urged by Resolution S/RES 2286 (2016) recently adopted by the Security Council.

Secondly, in the spirit of the Symposium “Religions together for Humanitarian Action” organized with the United Nations in Geneva in 2015, the Order commits to organizing a meeting in 2017: 1) to explore how faith-based organizations and humanitarian actors can better assist and protect civilians in times of conflict and 2) to assess the connection between conflict, religion and humanitarian action.

Thirdly, the Order of Malta will continue to use its diplomatic network and status to provide support in implementing humanitarian aid and to promote dialogue among parties. In 2015, it provided a neutral setting for opposing parties in Libya to convene and discuss the main humanitarian emergencies. The Order commits to a facilitating role wherever there is a possibility of exchange and cooperation between different parties.

On the topic “Political Leadership to Prevent and End Conflicts” (to be covered in Roundtable No. 1), the Order of Malta will identify supportive religious leaders of all faiths and religions to act together to influence communities to promote peace. We will make our network and diplomatic means available to ensure that religious actors use their sphere of influence and their moral obligation to promote and bring into force the fundamental principles and basic rules of human rights at both State and community levels. We believe that religion in this way will be a driver for peace.

On the topic “Leaving No One Behind – A Commitment to Address Forced Displacement” (to be covered in Roundtable No. 4), the Order of Malta will continue to protect and assist refugees and

migrants crossing the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. To this end, it will continue to provide medical, psychological and rescue teams on board the Italian Navy, Coast Guard and private vessels. It also commits to ensuring long-term assistance, from medical care to integration projects, for the benefit of the thousands of refugees arriving in Europe, based on ongoing effective programs. These programs include medical and social assistance, legal assistance to apply for asylum requests, and educational projects to enhance integration into the social fabric of migrants who remain in European countries.

An overview of the Order of Malta's current projects for refugees

In December 2015, the Italian Relief Corps of the Order of Malta launched the **Aegean SAR** Operation to rescue the migrants crossing the sea in often overcrowded and makeshift boats from the Turkish coasts. A particularly perilous journey due to very low temperatures of the water and the presence of many under sea rocks. Since the beginning of the year, the doctors of the Order of Malta have saved about 1.500 people at risk of dying of hypothermia and chemical burns. In the **South Mediterranean**, the **Italian Relief Corps** doctors, nurses and psychologists have been actively present, round the clock, since 2008.

The worldwide relief agency of the Order of Malta, Malteser International, has been present in the Middle East area – Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria- since 2012, and currently assists circa 80,000 people in need. Through its local partners, a field hospital provides medical first aid in the Bab Al Salam camps in northern **Syria**.

In **Turkey**, at the Syrian border, a field hospital has been running for over 3 years, treating wounded and sick refugees. Staff of the Order of Malta also provides psychosocial assistance to the many displaced, often severely traumatized by the experience of war and of leaving their homeland. Educational programs in schools are also offered to the young refugees .in the Vali in Karhamanmaras, in southern Turkey. With the support of Malteser International, its Syrian partner organization has recently opened a branch in Istanbul providing educational services.

In **Lebanon**, since 2012, the Order of Malta has been distributing first aid kits, medicines, blankets and food to the refugees. The programs are aimed not only at the refugees living in the improvised camps in the country but also at the impoverished within the Lebanese population. In the Akkar province, a mobile unit provides medical aid and health prevention campaigns, which are run regularly. Socio-medical centers in Khaldieh and in the Bekaa Valley run by the Order of Malta provide free medical consultations and care to the many refugees hosted in the country.

In the Kurdistan region, in **Northern Iraq**, the Order of Malta implements and coordinates activities in the health care sector providing medicines and offering assistance in a health care centre for IDPs. About 150 people are treated every day. Medical teams including specialists in psychological assistance areas are also deployed in health care centers in the Bersevi and Khadia camps where many Yazidis have found refuge.

In the wake of the influx of refugees in the summer of 2015, the Eastern European associations of the Order of Malta (**Hungary, Austria and Germany**) scaled up their programs to provide medical assistance to the refugees taking the Balkan route. Here activities are aimed not only at responding to the emergency needs but also at facilitating integration in the social fabric. In **France**, a long-standing project provides legal assistance to immigrants detained in prison and helps them in the asylum request procedures.