



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

151st Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

General Debate

Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis

Statement of the Sovereign Order of Malta

Geneva, 21/22 October 2025

Mr./Madam (Vice-)President of the Assembly,
Madam President of the IPU
Mr Secretary-General of the IPU,
Honourable Speakers and Members of Parliaments,
Distinguished Delegates,

The theme of this Assembly's General Debate "*Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis*" is indeed very timely and aligns with the goal of the Order of Malta.

Presentation of the Order

The Sovereign Order of Malta is a lay/religious order of the Catholic Church, a sovereign entity and a global humanitarian actor. For over 900 years, we have been faithful to our motto: *Tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum* – witnessing the Faith and serving the poor – committed to serving those in need, without any distinction of religion, national origin or age.

The Order entertains diplomatic relations with 115 States, the EU and has Permanent Observer status at the United Nations and other major International Organisations. It can act as a mediator whenever a State requests its intervention to help settle a dispute.

In 2021, at the 143rd IPU Assembly in Madrid, the Sovereign Order of Malta was granted Permanent Observer Status at the Inter-Parliamentary Union, considering its long and good cooperation with IPU in matters related to peace and security, international humanitarian law, human rights, interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Through its National Associations, volunteer corps and worldwide relief agency, **Malteser International**, present in more than 120 countries, the Order of Malta provides emergency medical



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and humanitarian aid and works with the affected populations to implement reconstruction and disaster preparedness programmes.

Humanitarian law

Mr./Madam President,

We have witnessed for too long grave **violations of international humanitarian law**, in total impunity and work together must put an end to those violations, support the victims, ensuring justice and accountability for all. It is a legal and moral imperative to respect and uphold IHL and the Geneva Conventions.

So many innocent people suffer the scourge of war and don't have access **to humanitarian assistance** whether it is because they live in remote or dangerous areas, or face blockade. Humanitarian assistance should always follow its **four principals** of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality.

The principles of distinction and proportionality are too often ignored and civilians, especially the most vulnerable (displaced persons, minorities, persons with disabilities, women and children, etc) are disproportionately affected.

This year is also the deadliest for humanitarian and health/**aid workers**, sometimes deliberately targeted (as well as destructions of medical facilities) in conflicts.

Interfaith dialogue

Mr./Madam President,

The Sovereign Order of Malta participated in the **Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue**, earlier this year in Rome, under the great leadership of the Hon. Senator P.F. Casini of the Italian Senate, Honorary President of the IPU.

Our Ambassador to the State of Palestine, **H.E. Mrs. Michèle Bowe**, as a panellist addressed the theme "*Fostering Solidarity and Action for People in Vulnerable Situations*" presenting the work of the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem and its activities in the West Bank.



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We welcome the Marrakesh Communiqué and the **Rome communiqué**, which recognised “the essential role of parliamentary and religious diplomacy in fostering dialogue, cooperation and trust between communities”.

We commend the active role of IPU is in the field of interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the international stage, engaging with parliamentarians and religious leaders. This was exemplified by the **interfaith workshop on *Countering intolerance and fostering religious literacy for more inclusive and peaceful societies***” held at this Assembly.

Conflicts and refugees

Mr./Madam President,

The Sovereign Order of Malta welcomes the ceasefire in **Gaza** and is ready to deliver immediate emergency humanitarian assistance. It is our hope that the ceasefire will hold and that peace will prosper in the region

In **Ukraine**, we have been present since the start of the conflict, in the country providing humanitarian and healthcare aid, as well as support for refugees in neighbouring countries.

The Order of Malta is present worldwide, in refugee camps, war zones, disaster afflicted areas, with a multitude of projects (in Syria, Lebanon, Bangladesh and Myanmar, DRC, South Sudan). They are focused on basic necessities, food, WASH, healthcare, poverty alleviation, support for persons with disabilities, resilience building, and disaster risk reduction.

The importance of Parliamentary diplomacy in upholding IHL

Mr./Madam President,

Parliaments are the guarantor of the Conventions ratified by their countries; thus, Parliamentarians have responsibility to ensure that their Governments respect their obligations under international law.

We hope that this 151st IPU Assembly will strengthen international, national and local efforts upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis.

Thank you.