



Symposium

Religions Together for Humanitarian Action

Reaching out to victims of armed conflicts:
the special role of faith-based actors



SOVEREIGN ORDER
OF MALTA



WORLD
HUMANITARIAN
SUMMIT

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS - GENEVA, 27 MAY 2015



 
SWISS CONFEDERATION
WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

SYMPOSIUM
RELIGIONS TOGETHER FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION
Reaching out to victims of armed conflicts:
the special role of faith based actors
27 May 2015, 1pm-6pm
United Nations Geneva, Conference Room XVII



OVERVIEW

Ambassador Stefano Ronca

Diplomatic Adviser
to the Grand Chancellor,
Sovereign Order of Malta



A contribution of the Sovereign Order of Malta towards the World Humanitarian Summit

This Symposium is set within an extensive exercise: the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), to be held in Istanbul in May 2016 which will conclude a global consultation process started by the Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon in 2012. Its purpose is to reshape the humanitarian system so it can efficiently address the growing humanitarian needs - needs which are increasing in scale and variety within a fast changing global environment.

The Istanbul Summit is focused on four themes: Humanitarian Effectiveness, Managing Risk and Reducing Vulnerability, Transformation through Innovation, and Serving the Needs of People in Conflict. It is this last issue that interests most our Symposium.

Millions of people are fleeing from wars and violence; nine deaths out of ten are civilians. A hundred years ago, 90% of war victims were military. Today 90% of deaths are civilian. Civilians are paying the price of human violence. Most victims are women and children. Refugees are dramatically increasing.

Religions and conflict, the contribution of faith-based actors in areas of conflict and war and the role of religions in promoting

reconciliation and strengthening resilience, were debated during the Symposium which was divided into two high-level panel discussions:

- the first examined 'Present challenges for faith-based institutions: religions and humanity in times of conflict and crisis';
- the second dealt with 'Preparing for the future. How can faith-based institutions better assist and protect civilians'.

The good practices of religious actors are well known throughout the world. Religious actors provide protection, assistance and care. They facilitate humanitarian access, deter violence through their presence, mediate tensions between refugees and host communities, engage in reconciliation and peace building activities, provide legal counselling and asylum management, improve the conditions of prisoners and support the integration of refugees in society.

The Symposium is intended as a contribution towards the WHS in terms of how the faith-based community can improve the humanitarian system. The emerging key recommendations stemming from the debate are as follows:



Emergency medical aid at sea for refugees, Southern Mediterranean

- Dialogue, communication and common understanding: Develop new approaches for cooperation between faith-based actors
- Power to local communities: build capacity of local faith communities, faith-based organisations (FBO) and affected people
- Bridge the gap: create concerted FBO action and a coherent approach to humanitarian aid and development

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has always found that the work carried out by faith based institutions is invaluable. Why? Because “as active members of civil society, faith actors and their organisations can leverage significant social, physical and spiritual

assets for the benefit of populations in need”.

The United States Department of State has recently established the Office of Religion to advise the Secretary of State on foreign policy matters related to religion. With 84% of the world’s population identifying with a particular faith, it is no wonder that governments are taking this powerful force in global politics and civil society seriously.

Faith actors – as reported in UNHCR documents – are widely present in every country and therefore also in areas of conflict, due to their vast networks. Moreover their presence does not necessarily depend upon external or international funding. They often remain long after international attention has faded and funding has declined.

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*Watch the interventions of the Symposium speakers
and interviews with the panellists*

[youtube.com/user/orderofmaltagm/playlists](https://www.youtube.com/user/orderofmaltagm/playlists)

WELCOME REMARKS

Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann

Permanent Observer of the Sovereign
Order of Malta to the UN Geneva

UN Geneva, 27 May 2015



Director General,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and a special privilege to welcome you here this afternoon on behalf of the Sovereign Order of Malta represented by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Albrecht Boeselager, and our Minister for Health & International Cooperation, Dominique de La Rochefoucauld-Montbel, who will be addressing us shortly. I thank you all for your presence and also extend a warm welcome to the many members of the Order of Malta who have travelled to Geneva from around the world including Africa, Asia and South America.

Allow me at the outset to express my particular gratitude to the Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Michael Møller and his staff, for hosting this Symposium in the Palais des Nations and for the extensive support we have received for the organisation of this event.

We are equally grateful to the Secretariat of the World Humanitarian Summit for our excellent cooperation and in

particular to the Chief of the Secretariat, Dr Jemilah Mahmood, for her advice and much appreciated participation today. It was Dr Mahmood who encouraged us to take this initiative, as she was very keen to see more faith-based institutions become involved in the ongoing preparatory process leading up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul.

I also wish to sincerely thank the members of our two panels who will share with us their valuable experiences and thoughts on a topic with multiple facets that needs to be analysed and further explored so as to enable humanitarian action to benefit fully from the potential that faith-based institutions offer to populations suffering from armed conflicts.

Our discussions will be reflected in a report to be submitted to the Secretariat of the WHS for further consideration by the Global Consultations to be held here in Geneva this October.

OFFICIAL OPENING

Director-General Michael Møller

United Nations Office at Geneva



Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us be frank: humanitarianism struggles. Religious beliefs are being challenged. And very often both of these processes happen in the same place, and are connected. Today's Symposium in the humanitarian hub that is International Geneva, a city with strong religious history, brings together an impressive range of experts to shape answers to these challenges. I am grateful to the organisers for having organised this Symposium with a view to contributing to the World Humanitarian Summit and am very pleased to welcome all of you here at the Palais des Nations.

The World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 is now only one year away. Six regional consultations have been held and two more are to be convened in the coming months. In October, the global consultations will take place here in Geneva. The multi-stakeholder nature of these consultations, including broad engagement via the internet, is exemplary.

Yes, we need an inclusive approach because the humanitarian challenges we face today are approaching – allow me to use a religious term – an apocalyptic scale. The largest number of displaced people this year since the Second World War is but one illustration of the dimensions of current human suffering. In response, we need to pool all the resources at our disposal.

But inclusiveness brings with it the challenge of coordination. And this is why thorough preparation of the [World Humanitarian] Summit is so important.

Thorough preparation implies that we look at all the major aspects of humanitarian aid. And among these, the role of religion and faith-based organisations is important. Of course, faith-based organisations bring important financial resources to the table at a time where the gap between needs and resources widens. But faith is not about money – and neither is money its most valuable contribution to humanitarian aid.

In many places, as we speak, humanitarian workers from the United Nations, Governments, and NGOs including faith-based organisations are risking their lives to help others. Faith, translated into the impetus to help our fellow human beings, is one powerful explanation why they keep doing this despite an erosion of many of the humanitarian principles that have been enshrined in conventions done here in Geneva. This faith need not be religious. But often, it is.

And when humanitarian aid is based on religious beliefs, this can help generate crucial ties to the recipient community. By facilitating mutual trust, it helps create an environment for safe delivery and receipt of aid. Faith-based organisations also often stay longer than others following humanitarian disasters. At a time when calls for closer integration of development assistance and humanitarian aid for long-time resilience grow louder, the work of some faith-based organisations may serve as



Mobile medical clinics assist refugees in Hungary's three main cities

good examples in that regard.

Beliefs are a powerful tool. When religious beliefs are used to mobilise humanitarian aid, they can serve to bring out the best in humanity. But we also need to bear in mind, that among the humanitarian principles, neutrality, impartiality and accountability are of utmost importance. As we seek to reinvigorate these principles, faith-based organisations, like all others, need to ensure that they provide aid to all those in need, regardless of their religious background and with no intention of influencing the recipient's most intimate beliefs.

The benefits and challenges of the role of faith-based organisations in humanitarian aid will be discussed in today's Symposium – a symposium which serves as an excellent platform for

exchange and discussion. We should do more to create platforms for engagement with religious leaders at the international level. For a number of years now, the United Nations has been strengthening and broadening its interaction with faith-based organisations. The Alliance of Civilizations, along with the UN Population Fund, UNESCO, the Peacebuilding Commission and other UN bodies, have been playing an important part in this process, including by advancing new partnership initiatives and talking frankly about cross-cultural concerns. We welcome all people of faith in this affirmation of our common humanity. I thank you all for coming together in search of ways to bring 'Religions Together for Humanitarian Action' and wish you fruitful discussions. Thank you very much.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Albrecht Boeselager
Grand Chancellor,
Sovereign Order of Malta

The Grand Chancellor is the Minister of Foreign
and Internal Affairs



Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to add my welcome to that of Ambassador Pictet-Althann to this Symposium, which is intended as a contribution to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. My particular thanks to the Director General at the United Nations in Geneva Michael Møller and to the Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat Dr Jemilah Mahmood for hosting this event. It is very encouraging to see so many representatives from both the religious and the humanitarian worlds, and the fact that many of you have travelled so far reminds us how important our work is.

As we gather here today, there are some 180 million people affected by conflict worldwide. We have not seen such a high number since the Second World War. Often we do not understand the complex causes of conflict enough. The proliferation of crises and needs is extraordinary, as are their dramatic humanitarian consequences. The millions of people affected by a variety of very different major crises place unique demands on all humanitarian actors. 80 million people worldwide depend on humanitarian assistance for their mere survival. The majority live in regions of conflict. It is sad but true that conflict will continue to harm millions of people, and will indeed become a normal scenario in the next 10-15 years. Conflict will remain an increasingly important component of humanitarian assistance, and we need to be prepared for this and to look for new

methods and instruments.

Today I want to focus on the humanitarian work of the Order of Malta, which has become a major part of our activities over generations. Our commitment to the sick and the poor is totally impartial and neutral. Not only is the Order not aligned with any political block, our humanitarian programmes are administered regardless of religion or race. The Order of Malta's humanitarian relief agency, Malteser International, is ensuring the health and dignity of millions of people around the globe by implementing over 100 support projects.

With great concern, we observe a fast decreasing regard for humanitarian principles. The great achievements of the family of nations after the two World Wars in codifying humanitarian principles to be observed in wars and armed conflicts are in danger of becoming mere documents. The generation to come may only see them displayed in a museum and deplore the loss of high cultural achievements of a past civilisation. We must not accept this and must work together to find innovative ways to fight this tendency.

Against the background of this experience and in working with the poor and the sick who have become the innocent victims of conflict worldwide, the Order of Malta appreciates and welcomes the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to convene the World Humanitarian Summit.

To contribute and support this initiative, we are here today to explore how faith-based institutions and humanitarian actors



Medical aid for Malian refugees in camps in Burkina Faso

can better assist and protect civilians in times of conflict – and more specifically, what the distinguishing help of faith-based institutions could be. This exploration needs to combine an investigation of the dimensions of conflict, religion and humanitarian aid. Only by viewing these three dimensions in combination can we make an objective assessment, and draw useful conclusions for our future work. To get a better grasp of how religious institutions and organisations can improve, we need to deal with the role of religion in conflict; be honest about both the positive and negative impact of humanitarian aid on situations of conflict; and explore the particular role that faith-based organisations play when they provide humanitarian aid in conflicts and elsewhere.

Wars have been fought in the name of different gods and goddesses since ancient times. Therefore, it is often suggested that since religion has been involved in all kinds of conflicts, it is at the core of these clashes. The current barbarities committed worldwide by groups which refer to a religion for their justification – ISIS/Daesh, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and the Christian anti-Balaka (CAR), to name just some – and the longstanding regional conflicts in the Near and Middle East, are prompting many people to ask if religion is the cause of most conflicts

in the world. It is far too simplistic to lay the blame on religion as the main source of conflict. The last century was full of examples of mass killing and wars, which needed no god. It is my firm belief that religion is misused as a source of influence to pursue the very secular interests of power. Religious motivations can induce violence when separated from moral content and poisoned by corruption and driven by power. Conflicts may contain religious elements. However, they are always driven by cultural, economic, ethnic, territorial and other factors such as external pressures. Perhaps the answer to conflicts with a religious element is not less religion, but more; more of religion's peaceful, non-violent content as a rich source of reconciliation, social tolerance, devotion, humanitarian commitment, empowerment and peace-building.

It is both interesting and striking that humanitarian aid itself is often contested in the same way as religion. The equivalent to the question of whether religion causes war is: 'Does humanitarian aid prolong conflict?' Everyone in the humanitarian world knows about the problems and negative effects of humanitarian aid. Conflict parties often manipulate aid for their own benefit; agencies create aid dependency; assistance is used as a substitute for political action; there is the concern of aid giving power

28 Order of Malta medical facilities across Lebanon have assisted over 40,000 Syrian refugees since 2011



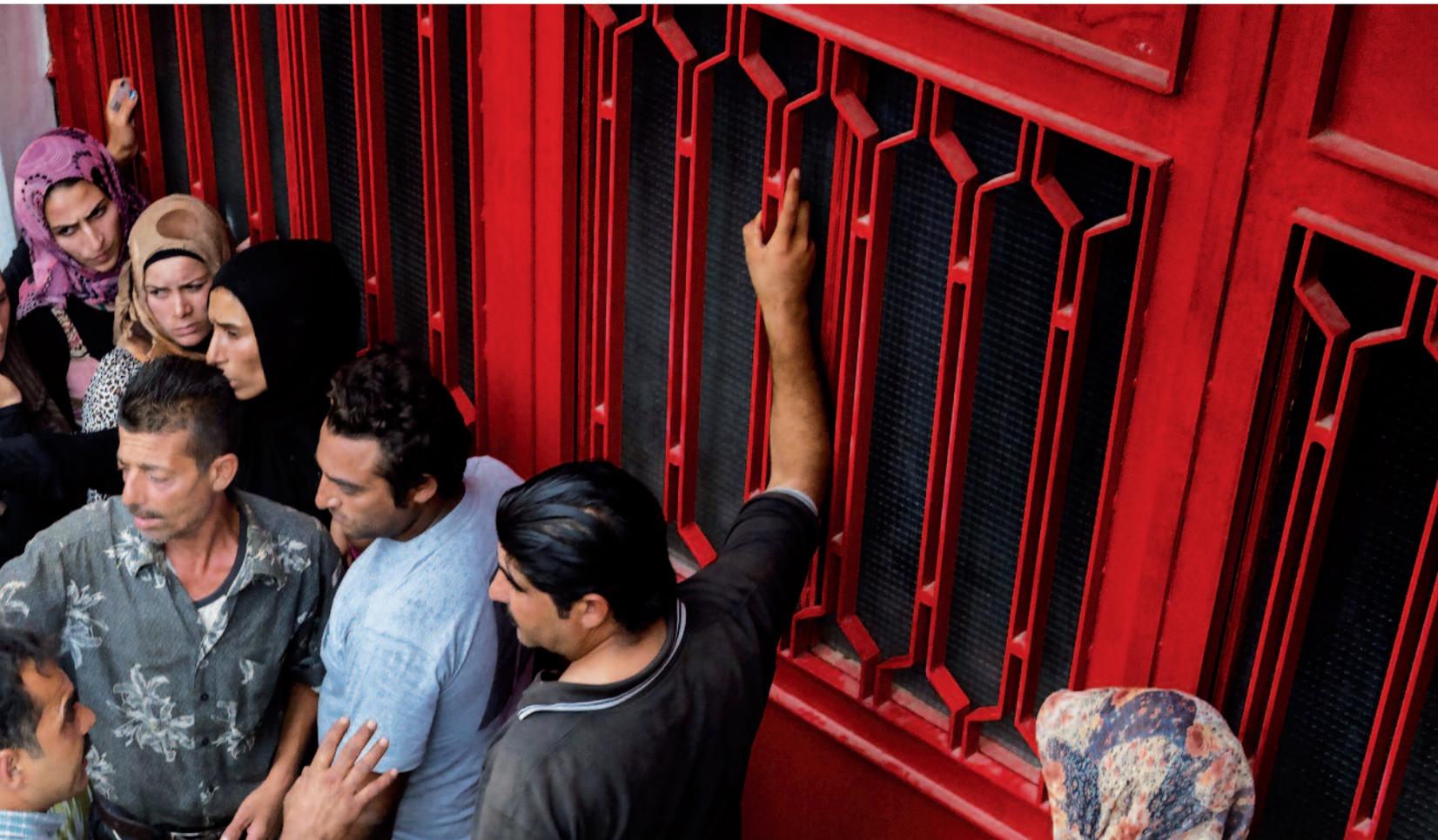
to belligerents. These and many other issues can influence the dynamics of conflict in terms of its duration and violence. However, here again the picture is incomplete. Humanitarians know about these challenges and are doing their best to mitigate the consequences. Standards, norms and principles have been put in place, and even if these measures are often overruled by reality, the humanitarians are rarely the most responsible for that. They save lives where they can, and this is most important in settings that are far from an ideal humanitarian world. Helping people has never been easy. Therefore, humanitarian aid should not be contested at every possible opportunity, but rather, improvement of the humanitarian system in all its facets should be the goal. This is the right thing to do. In this way, our approach to humanitarian aid in conflict should be similar to our approach to religion in conflict: not less humanitarian aid, but more; in the same way that not less religion, but more is needed, coupled always with an acute awareness of its positive and negative effects.

This leads me to the role of 'faith-based' or religion-based institutions and organisations in humanitarian aid. In dealing with the issues of conflict, humanitarianism and religion, the circle of themes for today's Symposium becomes complete.

The question in this context is what makes us as religion-based actors distinct from secular actors. Do we do different things, or do we do the same things differently? It is now recognised that religion-based actors are a crucial part of the architecture of international humanitarian activity. The common perception is that this is true because religion-based actors and faith-based organisations have professionalised to the point of having no differences from secular actors.

However, I strongly believe that religious actors have a unique position through the power of their conviction, their reach, their motivation and their longevity, above that of secular organisations. Assisting the poor is deeply rooted in the teachings of religions. Further, I believe that the particular strengths of religion-based actors do not stop at the operational level. We never lose sight of the spiritual dimension of people in need. Our assistance responds not only to material demands, but combines technical care with an ethical and spiritual dimension.

However, we should not conceal the challenges that are particular to some faith-based actors. Faith-based action is rightly challenged when faith actors exclude members of other faith backgrounds; when they proselytise and put pressure on people





Syrian refugees also receive psychological care at Kilis field hospital, Turkey

to convert as a pre-condition for support; or when they stigmatise and discriminate against individuals or groups of people. The inappropriate behaviour of just one faith actor can discredit us all. Therefore we must do everything we can to lead by example and to demonstrate that faith-based action does not undermine the principles of impartiality and neutrality.

We are all well positioned to develop our approach and to adapt to the challenges of a changing world. Steps to improve the assistance of people in conflicts need to include: better usage of the unique strengths of faith-based actors; promotion of the positive role for reconciliation that religion can play through the unifying power of shared faith or the shared conviction that religion is the source of their values; and establishment of interreligious dialogue to learn about other religions and provide for a common understanding of our special humanitarian mandate. Religion-based actors are well placed to interact with the religious infrastructure in affected areas, which in most cases plays a crucial role in organising help and promoting peace.

In conclusion let me share with you two examples. After the

2005 tsunami we helped to rebuild villages in Aceh, Indonesia. When I visited the region the local Mullah, in greeting me at the entrance to the village, remarked how pleased he was to be helped by people who were honouring God. He then invited me to the newly built mosque to pray together, he saying his Muslim prayer, I my Christian prayer.

In Lebanon our Order runs ten socio-medical centres all over the county, some in close cooperation with other religions, with the Druse, the Sunnites and, in the South, with the Shiites. There, Shiite nurses wear our cross on their working dress. The cooperation in the humanitarian field of religion-based organisations plants seeds of peace and creates a bond of mutual trust and confidence among people of different religions.

I am very pleased that today we can embark on this journey of mutual discovery.



Archbishop Silvano Tomasi and Prof. Alexander Aleinikoff



Oliver McTernan and Franco Frattini

FIRST HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

Present challenges for faith-based institutions: religions and humanity in times of conflict and crisis



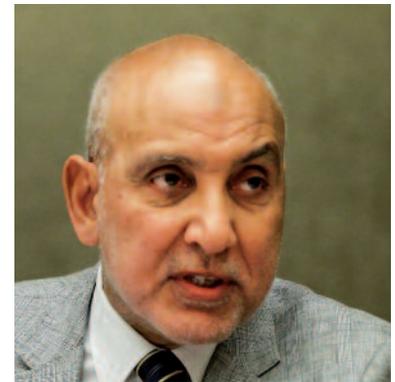
Chief of the World
Humanitarian Summit
Secretariat
DR JEMILAH MAHMOOD

Dr Jemilah Mahmood is the Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat. In 2008, she was one of 16 members appointed by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund.



Former Italian Minister
of Foreign Affairs,
President of SIOI
FRANCO FRATTINI

Franco Frattini is President of the Italian Society for International Organization (SIOI). He is also Justice and Chamber President to the Italian Supreme Administrative Court (Conseil d'Etat). He served twice as Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and was Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security.



Co-Founder of Islamic
Relief
DR HANI EL-BANNA

Dr Hani El-Banna is the Co-Founder of Islamic Relief. Since leaving Islamic Relief in 2008, Dr El-Banna along with Ismayil Tahmazov founded the Muslim Charities Forum that seeks to foster partnerships and closer co-operation among humanitarian and charitable organisations from Muslim countries and their Western counterparts.



Italian Director General
for Development and
Cooperation
**MIN. PLEN. GIAMPAOLO
CANTINI**

*Minister Plenipotentiary
Giampaolo Cantini is the Italian
Director General for
Development Cooperation. He
was appointed to the Directorate
General for Multilateral Political
Affairs and Human Rights,
served as Italian Ambassador to
Algiers and Consul General to
Jerusalem.*



President of the Racines
et Sources Foundation
**GRAND RABBI MARC
RAPHAËL GUEDJ**

*Marc Raphaël Guedj is President
of the 'Racines et Sources'
Foundation which brings Rabbis
and Imams together with the
aim of promoting peace through
inter-religious and intercultural
dialogue. A Jewish theologian,
Guedj was formerly Chief Rabbi
of Geneva. He is a member of
the Editorial Committee of the
World Congress of Imams and
Rabbis for Peace at UNESCO.*

MODERATOR



Co-Founder and Director
of Forward Thinking
OLIVER McTERNAN

*Oliver McTernan is the Co-
Founder and Director of Forward
Thinking. He was
a Visiting Fellow of the
Weatherhead Centre for
International Affairs at Harvard
University. He was responsible
for initiating the first post-Kosovo
conflict talks between NATO and
the Belgrade government.
His book "Violence in God's
Name" explores the role of
religion in an age of conflict.*

SECOND HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

Preparing for the future. How can faith-based institutions better assist and protect civilian populations in times of conflict



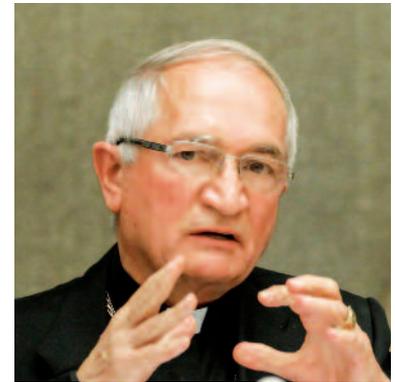
UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner
PROF. ALEXANDER ALEINIKOFF

Alexander Aleinikoff is Deputy High Commissioner of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees). An expert on immigration policy and human rights, Aleinikoff was previously Dean at Georgetown University Law School and a senior official in the US Immigration and Naturalization Service.



Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the UN in Geneva
AMB. SLIMANE CHIKH

Amb. Slimane Chikh is the Permanent Representative of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to the UNOG. He served as ambassador of Algeria to Egypt and permanent delegate to the League of Arab States. He was a member of the National Council, Minister of National Education, Minister of Culture, Counsellor to the presidency of Algeria.



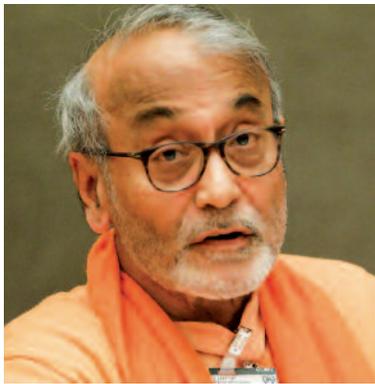
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva
ARCHBISHOP MONS. SILVANO TOMASI

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi is the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations at Geneva, having previously served as the Apostolic Nuncio to Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti, and as Observer to the African Union.



Vice President of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law
PROF. MICHEL VEUTHEY

Michel Veuthey is Deputy Permanent Observer of the Order of Malta at the UNOG, Vice President of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, Professeur associé at the Institut du Droit de la Paix et du Développement of Nice University and Associate Professor of International Law at Webster University.



Director of the Vedantic Centre in Geneva
SWAMI AMARANANDA

Swami Amarananda was born in Bengal in British India and has been Director of the Vedantic Center of Geneva since 1989. He is an expert on the promotion of peace through interreligious dialogue.

MODERATOR



Il Sole 24 Ore special correspondent in the Middle East
ALBERTO NEGRI

Alberto Negri is Middle East special correspondent for Italian newspaper Il Sole 24 Ore and a member of the board of the Italian Institute for International Political Studies. Negri has been a leading figure in Italian journalism for over twenty years.

CLOSING SPEECH

Dominique de La Rochefoucauld-Montbel Grand Hospitaller, Sovereign Order of Malta

The Grand Hospitaller is the Minister for Humanitarian Action
and International Cooperation



Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,
In the two years since the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, launched the concept of a World Humanitarian Summit with the focus 'Partnerships in a changing humanitarian landscape' the world has seen the continued development of man-made conflicts, bringing deep human suffering. The need for partnerships to bring effective aid to populations in distress has never been more pressing.

In response, the Order of Malta organised today's Symposium, taking as its motivation the theme: 'Religions Together for Humanitarian Action – Reaching out to victims of armed conflicts: the special role of faith-based actors.'

I would like to thank most whole-heartedly all of our distinguished panellists for your vital contributions to the Symposium and to the thinking around these humanitarian calamities.

Why are your contributions vital? Because together we can give voice to the most important concerns affecting humankind today: freedom to live in peace, freedom of worship, freedom to pursue a healthy life. These are rights enshrined in the international law of human rights. But we are all well aware that these rights are not available to all. By working together we can create the possibility of alleviating suffering - in the provision of relief, in working for post-resolution of conflicts and, very importantly, by demonstrating the force of faith and respect for the dignity of man. Your presence here today, and your contributions, attest to your agreement to pursue these goals together.

Our panellists today represent a wide range of faiths: Muslim, Vedanta, Judaism, and the Christian faiths, as well as a wide range of expertise in international humanitarian law, foreign aid, diplomacy and conflict resolution. An impressive line-up of effective voices and extensive experience! You – we – have, together, made essential points which characterise faith-based organisations and which provide the framework for working together effectively. We have noted and concurred that

- we are present in the field of humanitarian actions worldwide;
- that our work has common fundamental elements in respecting human dignity, the value of the family and the duty of care for our fellow man;
- we have developed networks of support and solidarity;
- we can be, and have often been, the liaison between diasporas and affected populations;
- we note that our organisations are often trusted by afflicted

populations to assist and protect them, which is advantageous when collaborating with governments and with United Nations organisations, as well as other humanitarian organisations.

With this basis, and following our discussions today, we should have strong and realistic proposals to put forward to the World Humanitarian Summit.

We have recognised that we need to strongly promote respect for the standards and principles of human rights and international humanitarian law applicable in the case of armed conflicts. This means promoting – indeed, insisting upon – the rights of refugees. We have seen the greatest displacement of peoples since 1945. This has implications for all target countries and society as a whole.

We agree that we need to bring awareness of the fundamental shared values of the instruments of international law to all nations and peoples, and we agree on the importance of respecting local traditions and cultures.

Some very clear signposts have emerged. They show us the way we need to go. This way includes, among others, finding new ways to unpack the values of FBOs, demonstrating a credible and honest understanding of humanitarian principles, better use of the assets and premises of faith-based institutions for humanitarian action, achieving a coordinated approach of all faith-based organisations and, most importantly, better recognition of the capacity of local communities to ensure that the international humanitarian system does not ruin their future when it leaves. We also need to think about establishing quick and very practical inter-religious links, for instance by establishing liaison points in specific crises. Some of these issues do not only apply to faith-based institutions, but to secular organisations as well. We, the Order of Malta, will continue to seek alliances so that together we can turn these ideas into practical and concrete actions and I encourage you to join us in that effort.

Therefore, may I take this opportunity to express the desire that this Geneva meeting is the beginning of an improved engagement and dialogue between faith-based actors, affected people, governments and international humanitarian organisations. It is only by a constant effort of attention to the evolution of the needs of assistance and protection that we can try to meet the challenges of the Good Samaritan in the 21st century.



SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

SYMPOSIUM

RELIGIONS TOGETHER FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Reaching out to victims of armed conflicts:
the special role of faith based actors

27 May 2015, 1pm-6pm

United Nations Geneva, Conference Room XVII



Director-General Michael Møller opens the Symposium



Grand Rabbi Marc Raphaël Guedj with Grand Chancellor Albrecht Boeselager



Franco Frattini addresses the press conference



Humanitarian experts, diplomatic representatives and leaders of secular and faith-based organisations attended the Symposium



Oumayma Farah, Order of Malta Lebanon

Extract from the intervention of

Oumayma Farah Rizk

Communications Officer, Order of Malta Lebanon

The Order of Malta's network of 28 different operations in Lebanon reach as many Christians as Muslims and are run in collaboration with religious congregations or foundations. Created during the mid-1980s war in the most remote villages, its target is to serve the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled and the displaced - regardless of their religious denomination - and to attend to and relieve the suffering of the forgotten. Regarding Christian minorities, the presence of the Order of Malta at that time gave them strength and

confidence to stay in their villages. Respecting everyone, providing food and shelter, helping women and children to live in dignity and offering the best quality of medical services and medication during times of war, created a sense of trust and deep respect for the Order by all denominations.

Our centres became a symbol of peace, solidarity and coexistence. After 30 years, this drive is still very much the same today.



Dr Jemilah Mahmood, Chief of the WHS Secretariat



Second High-Level Panel

POST SYMPOSIUM: EMERGING PROPOSALS AND ACTION POINTS



The Order of Malta runs medical, food security, infrastructure programmes for IDPs in Eastern DR Congo

The key ideas and proposals that emerged from the Symposium cover three areas in which the faith-based community could improve the humanitarian system. They reflect the contributions made by some participants during and after the Symposium and contribute in general to our research and reflection.

Some practical and concrete ideas for the implementation of such improvements:

1. Dialogue, communication and common understanding: Developing new approaches for cooperation between faith-based actors

Needed: a more sustained and enduring engagement to explore the benefits of faith-based actors and translate these benefits into practice. A common understanding of principles as well as new and honest ways to interpret and apply them should be integrated in this exploration.

Some practical action could be:

- Initiate a discussion with religious leaders on the convergence of shared religious values towards the spiritual values of humanity regarding the protection of human life and dignity, and the relationship of these values to humanitarian principles. Identifying ways to link religious principles to humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law (IHL); exploring topics which could form the basis of a Charter for humanitarian action by FBOs/institutions; showing real evidence for the advantages of FBOs/institutions by giving examples of good practice and defining policies: for example, collecting lessons learned on religious leaders' roles in supporting ceasefires and peace negotiations which have created space for humanitarian assistance to reach affected populations.
- Agree on a 'multi-faith compact' between religious humanitarian actors as an opportunity to strengthen the humanitarian idea and to reaffirm humanitarian principles (particularly in situations of conflict and protracted crisis). This compact may include agreements to promote fundamental rules and principles of IHL (in particular reaffirming Common Articles 1 and 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions)

and other values, in order to protect human life and dignity, lobby and advocate towards state and non-state actors for the rights of refugees, IDPs and other affected people, counteract the manipulation of religion for power and economic purposes, fight the stigma of politicised aid, etc.

- Establish a network of faith-based actors at regional level to exchange good practices in humanitarian aid, scale up dialogue activities, exchange of information, and improve inter-religious links on the ground - for example, through the creation of liaison points in specific crises.
- Highlight cooperation between different religions in emergencies and accentuate the inclusive rather than the exclusive side of religion. This would help to reinforce a positive and open self-image of FBOs/institutions, validate their values of transparency and inclusiveness and counteract exclusionist tendencies.
- Strengthen humanitarian diplomacy and make better use of FBOs' trust capital in specific areas - for example, provide support to international and regional policy initiatives, with the aim of negotiating better access to people in need, and facilitating relief and protection.
- Explore alternative sources for humanitarian financing that originate from religious practices such as Zakat from Islamic social financing, Zedakah from the Jewish traditions. Assess how the cooperation between faith institutions can also extend towards co-financing models.
- Identify supportive religious leaders in the realm of FBOs/institutions to promote peace and reconciliation in times of conflict. Wherever possible, integrate such reconciliation and peace-building elements into humanitarian programmes and aid initiatives. The role of religious leaders has often been overlooked and their potential is not yet fully realised.
- Promote religious literacy within the international humanitarian community for both secular and faith-based actors.

2. Power to local communities: Build capacity of local religious communities, FBOs and affected people

Local religious communities are groups of people bound through adherence to shared beliefs, history and identity. Faith-based actors are institutions with a religious motivation or background and which are affiliated with a religion. Along with other local groups, they are among the first responders in a crisis or emergency. Capacity building should contribute to locally led and owned humanitarian response.

Potential action in this field might encompass:

- Establish training and knowledge centres to share good practice and build the capacity of 'first responders' in crises, particularly to improve access for people in need.
 - Provide more direct funding to local FBOs, and commit to the target of a specific percentage of funding for local FBOs.
 - Establish mechanisms to better integrate the voices of local faith communities into the decision processes of humanitarian aid, starting on a local or programme level.
 - Start a dialogue on a local and regional level on how to support local and regional peace processes, change mind-sets and listen more attentively.
- Encourage south-south, multi-faith, inter and intra-faith cooperation, dialogue and action on these issues.
 - Explore the development of a cadre of regional and local religious leaders trained in International Humanitarian Law and principles in order to provide support in advocating for access to affected populations. This could be piloted in one or two countries (or one region of one or two countries). The process could draw on lessons learned from other contexts where religious leaders have been able to provide support on access dialogues, such as South Sudan.
 - Explore how the moral force of religion (and spirituality) can be a motivator for aid workers of FBOs/institutions and a psycho-social tool to relieve stress.
 - Consider the possible use of religious premises and assets such as mosques, churches, synagogues, temples and other sacred places as possible emergency facilities. Explore capacity building amongst local religious institutions in order to be able to respond to conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. This could be piloted in one or two countries.



Urgent medical care for innocent victims of war, Syria-Turkey border



An estimated 2 million refugees are in need of care in Lebanon

- Involve young people in humanitarian relief and mobilise local youth from different communities as a best practice example for strengthening social cohesion and reconciling divided societies. FBOs/institutions have a comparative advantage in mobilising local youth.

3. Bridge the gap: Create concerted FBO/institution action and a coherent approach to humanitarian assistance and development

Faith-based actors are, by their nature, usually multi-mandated institutions, that is, they are working in both the fields of humanitarian assistance (where the overriding priority is saving lives) and of development (which has dimensions that go far beyond saving lives and often comes with a politicised agenda). This is why the divide between humanitarian assistance and development is often challenging for FBOs/institutions. Secular stakeholders also face this challenge because the link between emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction cannot be ignored. At the same time, open dialogue between religious actors on how they can uphold humanitarian principles must take place continuously.

Practical implementation of concerted FBO action and a coherent approach within this sphere could consist of measures such as:

- Initiate a common context and risk analysis of a particular crisis on a regional level to make best use of the variety of mandates and experiences amongst FBOs - with a focus on the social services rendered by FBOs and religious organisations.

- Establish a common FBOs/institutions consultation with the affected community so that relief programmes are based on community priorities and take into account both immediate and longer term local needs (“don’t leave them with nothing when you’re gone”), particularly those that can best be delivered by FBOs/institutions.
- Strengthen communication mechanisms and information sharing on common issues such as the Mediterranean refugee crisis and other crises in Africa and Asia.
- Use FBOs’ religious background in recovery activities and processes. Since religion is an integral part of the lives of many people, it can provide valuable help in restoring those lives following armed conflicts and natural disasters.
- Integrate premises and projects of ‘FBOs/institutions’ development and social sector’ into emergency response plans. A great many of the social services in developing countries are provided by FBOs and these could be well used for preparedness activities and resilience building.
- Together, advocate for better policies to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development, particularly where the policies being adopted have strong negative implications for the affected population.

Sovereign Order of Malta

The Sovereign Order of Malta is a global institution operating medical, social and humanitarian projects in 120 countries. A subject of international law and a lay religious order of the Catholic Church, the Sovereign Order of Malta has bilateral diplomatic relations with over 100 states and the European Union, and permanent observer status at the United Nations. It is neutral, impartial and apolitical.

The Order of Malta is especially involved in helping people living in the midst of armed conflicts and natural disasters by providing medical assistance, caring for refugees, and distributing medicines and basic equipment for survival. Day-to-day, its broad spectrum of social projects provides a constant support for forgotten or excluded members of society. Across the world, the Order of Malta is dedicated to the preservation of human dignity and the care of all those in need, regardless of race or religion.

Founded in Jerusalem in the 11th century, the Order of Malta has a long history of service to the vulnerable and the sick. This 900-year history is reflected in its full name: Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta. Since 1834 the Order of Malta's government seat has been in Rome, where it is guaranteed extraterritorial rights.

The Order of Malta operates through 12 Priorities, 47 national Associations, 133 diplomatic missions, 1 worldwide relief agency and 33 national relief corps, as well as numerous hospitals, medical centres and specialist foundations. Its 13,500 members, 80,000 permanent volunteers and qualified staff of 25,000 professionals – most of whom are medical personnel and paramedics – form an efficient network that includes everything from hospital work and general medical care to emergency relief and social services.

The humanitarian activities of the Order of Malta around the world are very largely facilitated by the existence of its diplomatic network, which strengthens its relationships with the governments of the countries in which it operates. Thanks to international cooperation agreements concluded between more than 50 states and the government of the Order of Malta, the organisations of the Order on the ground have an operating framework that favours the efficacy and the durability of its actions. This allows it to be integrated into national and regional healthcare systems and to obtain customs facilities for the importing of essential healthcare equipment. Moreover, the diplomatic relations offer stronger protection for humanitarian personnel in the field. The Order of Malta does not pursue any economic or political goal and does not depend on any other state or government.

Order of Malta Organising Committee

GRAND MAGISTRY, ROME



**AMBASSADOR
STEFANO RONCA**
Diplomatic Advisor to
the Grand Chancellor



IVO GRAZIANI
Chief of Cabinet to
the Grand Hospitaller



MARINA MOLL
Chargée de Mission
to the Grand
Chancellor and Grand
Hospitaller

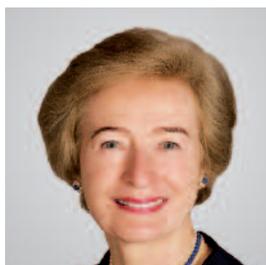


MARIANNA BALFOUR
Press and
Communications
Officer



CECILIA AMENDOLEA
Secretariat to the
Grand Chancellor

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UN GENEVA



**AMBASSADOR
MARIE-THÉRÈSE
PICTET-ALTHANN**
Permanent Observer



MICHEL VEUTHEY
Deputy Permanent
Observer



**JEAN-FRANÇOIS
KAMMER**
Counsellor



**SID JOHANN
PERUVEMBA**
Vice Secretary
General

MALTESER INTERNATIONAL

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Philippa Leslie
Sandra Girardo
Mary Engleheart
Blandine Rubattu
Nicusor Floroaiça

Guillaume Fournier
Julian Anthony Theseira
Anna Requejo
Louis De Clerq
Henri De Baudouin

WHS / OCHA team:
Robert E Smith
Nishanie Jayamaha
Milan Magyar
Pascal Chaillet
Jens Laerke

Vanessa Huguenin
Amjad Saleem

For information on 'Religions & Faith-based Organisations Dialogue' and the WHS:
worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_faith

To contact the Order of Malta organising committee:
whs@orderofmalta.int

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Magistral Palace
Via dei Condotti, 68
Rome - Italy
Tel. +39.06.67581.250
info@orderofmalta.int

www.orderofmalta.int

