

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE
SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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INFORMATION NOTE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

South Asian Earthquake.

On the 8th of October an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale caused significant damage to large areas of Northern Pakistan and two districts of India. The quake is estimated to have claimed the lives of more than 1,400 people in India's part of Kashmir and 54,000 people in Pakistan; it has left more than 2 million people homeless, destroying whole communities in the Himalayan region of Kashmir. The quake damaged sanitation systems, destroyed hospitals and left many victims with no access to clean drinking water, making them more vulnerable to disease. For the survivors in Pakistan and India, hunger, frostbite and sometimes fatal infections are the second disaster after the earthquake catastrophe.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta has already pledged up to one million Euro and has taken several initial steps in the relief process. A portion of funds has been donated to support the organization "Alliance Germany Helps" in its delivery of blankets, tents, covers, household kits and medicines. An Order of Malta assessment team has been dispatched to the region to investigate the most effective means to provide relief. The Order's involvement will focus on supplementing local capabilities. The Order of Malta is therefore working in close cooperation with the Sister Doctors Forum India, International Blue Crescent and the Catholic Health Association of India.

The Order of Malta's objectives also include long-term programs: rehabilitation of health care centers, schools and houses, as well as the establishment of psychosocial care centers.

New York, October 18, 2005