



**PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE  
SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
216 EAST 47th STREET / 8 FL  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017  
PHONE: (212) 355-6213 - FAX: (212) 355-4014  
e-mail: orderofmalta@un.int**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. Robert L. Shafer**

**Ambassador and Permanent Observer**

**of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta**

**to the United Nations**

**TO THE**

**60TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY ON**

**Item 73 a, c and d: Strengthening the Coordination of Humanitarian and Disaster**

**Relief Assistance of the United Nations, including Special Economic Assistance.**

**New York, November 14, 2005**

**Check against delivery**

Mr. President,

Thank you very much for giving me the floor on behalf of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Allow me to express my gratitude for your good work in directing the deliberation of this session.

The Sovereign Order of Malta has over 80,000 humanitarian volunteers who execute an ever growing number of life-saving and livelihood-restoring programs globally. They are motivated by one goal, powerful in its simplicity: to alleviate human suffering. Obstacles to the successful achievement of this mission are numerous. Therefore the Order of Malta works actively in partnership with UN Agencies, states and local and international NGOs to further strengthen a coordinated response to these challenges.

Mr. President,

Humanitarian aid workers throughout the world are often the first to respond to crises in the most unsafe areas, and the last ones to remain long after financial support ebbs. It is this very dedication and tenacity that makes them uniquely vulnerable to acts of violence and persecution.

This regrettable fact is conveyed in the Report of the Secretary-General on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel for the year 2005, which reports an increase in the number of security incidents involving UN staff. The most significant dangers to personnel continue to be physical attacks, threats, robbery and theft. The Report says that this increase can most likely be attributed to the increased number of staff operating in the field and enhanced reporting capability. However, this opinion does little to assure current and future personnel that our capacity to ensure their safety can grow at a sufficient rate.

In addition to those UN personnel whose lives have been taken, at least sixty-five NGO and IGO international and national staff were the victims of fatally malicious acts during the reporting period. Forty-eight of these incidents occurred in Afghanistan alone; eleven in the Sudan; three in Somalia; two in Iraq; and one in Niger. These numbers are more than just statistics to the courageous field personnel of the Order of Malta. In early August of last year, Mohammed Idrees Sadiq and Emal Abdul Samad, two local staff members of the Order of Malta, were killed in an ambush in Southeast Afghanistan. The two men had been working to support the return and reintegration of refugees, the building of local income-generating measures, and the efficient development of infrastructure as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

As an active partner in a number of UN peacekeeping operations, the Order of Malta is deeply concerned about the protection of all humanitarian personnel. Allow me

to observe that adequate measures for the protection of *all* humanitarian personnel could be included in the Security Council mandates. We must neutralize the threats facing humanitarian personnel, so that they may continue to actively improve the lives of those in distress.

Mr. President,

In the wake of both manmade and natural disasters, it is imperative for humanitarian assistance to provide not only *immediate* relief to victims, but to develop *comprehensive* relief systems that include mitigation, prevention, and reconstruction. The Order is convinced of this fact, and has demonstrated its ability to transition from immediate relief to long-term development in many different contexts, not least in the area of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster in December, 2004.

The Order had personnel on the ground in the first days following the disaster, working cooperatively with other organizations and the local community to provide medical care, water and vital goods for survivors in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Indonesia. When the need for emergency relief subsides, organizations with the necessary capacity can transition seamlessly into reconstruction and development. In the affected countries, the Order buys goods locally to limit transportation cost and strengthen the local economy, providing a sustained impetus towards self-help. Projects with timetables of progress stretching from three to five years in the future are planned and executed in close consultation with national authorities, ensuring the Order's lasting

and meaningful assistance.

Before concluding these remarks, a few words on the Order's humanitarian activities in providing assistance to the Palestinian people. The Order of Malta has operated the Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem-Palestine for 15 years. The hospital has just celebrated its 30,000<sup>th</sup> healthy delivery, despite having been besieged and damaged as a consequence of the violence in the area. The Order remains committed to the development of a sustainable health system for the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

The Order of Malta considers that, as a consequence of its humanitarian principles, its neutrality, its impartiality, and its independence, it has the credentials to continue and, as far as possible, to improve its effectiveness in the provision of humanitarian relief and development. Allow me to assure you that the Order of Malta is responding daily to the challenges that humanitarian work presents and we will continue to closely follow the leadership and initiatives of the United Nations.

Thank You.