



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

**Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to
International Humanitarian Law (Global IHL Initiative)**

**Fourth State Consultation
on Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict**

Statement by Mr. Friedemann EDER, First Counsellor

5 May 2026

Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,

The Sovereign Order of Malta thanks the Co-Chairs of Workstream 5, Nigeria, Pakistan, Spain, Uruguay and the ICRC, and all the experts who contributed to the consultations.

Dedicated to Hospitaller service for nearly a millennium, the Order of Malta joins you to reaffirm today a fundamental principle clearly stated by International Humanitarian Law: hospitals must never be targets, they are sanctuaries protected at all times. However, the facts paint a disturbing picture. Medical facilities are being attacked, deprived of essential resources, or used for military purposes. These incidents are not isolated occurrences but rather a worrying trend.

Two days ago, the ICRC, the World Health Organisation and Médecins Sans Frontières have confirmed this in a joint statement marking the tenth anniversary of the unanimously adopted UN Security Council Resolution 2286 on health care in armed conflicts. They emphasised that « Health care must never be a casualty of war », but « the situation is even worse compared to ten years ago ».

We all recognise that laws alone are insufficient; they must be enforced. Drawing on its own field experience, the Order of Malta strongly supports the proposed concrete measures for parties to armed conflict to comply with IHL obligations.

In this context, it may be useful to specify that the Hospitaller mission of the Order of Malta operates on three fronts:

On the ground, we support hospitals in conflict zones by providing medical care and training staff. We also document violations to raise awareness internationally.

In advocacy, we collaborate with organisations like the UN, the ICRC and the WHO to strengthen protection mechanisms.

Finally, we train local actors in humanitarian compliance, in partnership with various institutions.

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, to support humanitarian actors providing desperately needed care, International Humanitarian Law must be respected. Protecting hospitals protects human dignity itself.

Thank you!