



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER  
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

EMBASSY TO THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

## **Speech by Ambassador Niels Carl A. Lorijn on the occasion of the feast day of St. John the Baptist - 22 June 2026**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

Welcome to our annual celebration of the feast day of St. John the Baptist, National Day of the Order of Malta, and thank you for being here with us today.

I would like to start by thanking His Most Reverend Excellency Archbishop Antonio Filipazzi, Apostolic Nuncio to Poland and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, for the beautiful Mass he celebrated earlier today at the Field Cathedral of the Polish Army, and for his inspiring homily about St John the Baptist, as a spiritual model for the dual charism of the Order of Malta: witness of the faith and assistance to the poor and sick.

Another eventful year has passed and not much seems to have improved in the world. Today, 65 state-based armed conflicts are raging across the globe — the highest number recorded since the Second World War. Nearly 200 million people are trapped in immediate danger zones; more than 118 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes; about 350 million people face acute hunger or crisis-level food insecurity; and an estimated 40 million women and children are victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.

The scale of these figures is difficult to fathom. Yet they are not just figures. Each number represents a human life, a story of suffering, and a future at risk.

Behind these figures lies what is perhaps the most defining moral challenge of our times: *a crisis of global solidarity* — the widening gap between humanitarian needs and the political will to address them. A crisis of confidence in one another and in ourselves.

The atrocities of the two world wars were a wake-up call that led to the creation of the United Nations. Multilateralism can be frustrating at times, and the UN may be in dire need of reform, but it is more essential today than it ever was, as the custodian of peace, of humanitarian law and human rights, and as a catalyst for sustainable development.

In a world so interconnected, lasting security is not achieved with more weapons or more economic sanctions. That only fuels the very causes of insecurity: poverty, forced migration, social conflict, radicalisation, environmental degradation, and structural dependence on foreign aid. True lasting security starts with safeguarding the fundamental rights and dignity of the individual.

Yet at a time when the need is reaching unprecedented levels, funding for global humanitarian aid is being curtailed dramatically. The result is a harsh triage of survival, forcing impossible choices and disproportionately impacting the world's most vulnerable populations.



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Against this backdrop, the Order of Malta continues its work — at the crossroads of emergency aid and rebuilding local capacity, by providing medical and psycho-social care, assisting the elderly, the homeless, refugees and people with disabilities, protecting the rights and livelihoods of the most disadvantaged communities, developing micro-agriculture projects and local supply chains, and managing food and nutritional programs linked to healthcare and maternity.

This work is carried out every day by our 160,000 doctors, nurses, paramedics, social workers and volunteers — in Ukraine, in Palestine, in Lebanon, and across the 130 countries in which we are present. They place their lives at the service of others, sometimes paying for it with their own. I think in particular of Chadi Ammar, a colleague of ours who was killed last March in an airstrike in southern Lebanon while helping his community. He was 20 years old. He was not a soldier, not a militant. He was a young man in the prime of his life, who chose to serve others.

In the Middle East, the Order of Malta remains committed to participating in the region's international peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, in particular those promoted by Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and other partners, and to continue sustaining humanitarian operations on the ground:

- in Lebanon, where we run over 60 hospitals, clinics, community kitchens and agro-humanitarian centres and where, together with the Polish Government, we recently completed a very successful food program for refugees and internally displaced persons;
- in Northern Syria, where we support eight hospitals and primary-care centres;
- in Iraq, where we assist religious minorities victims of violence, and support rehabilitation programmes for children with autism;
- in Gaza, where after two years of food assistance we have finally been able to open up a primary healthcare clinic in Gaza City, and a second one in Deir al-Balah, which will be soon operational;
- And lastly, in the West Bank, where the Order of Malta operates the leading maternity and neonatology hospital in the region, in addition to mobile clinics serving the neighbouring areas. The hospital is facing acute operational difficulties due to restrictions on freedom of movement, recurring violence, and the collapse of tourism, the main source of livelihood for the local population.

Closer to home, our works in Ukraine have touched the lives of more than four million people since the war began. Last February, our Polish and Ukrainian relief organisations launched an emergency operation to assist nearly 15,000 residents of Kyiv — many of them children and elderly persons exposed to life-threatening winter conditions following the large-scale attacks by Russia on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.



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Our cooperation with the Polish Government on Ukraine continues to deepen and the upcoming Ukraine Recovery Conference in Gdansk this week will provide an opportunity to advance our joint projects and explore new initiatives.

Here in Poland, the Order's presence and activities are also expanding — in elderly care, assistance to adults and children with disabilities, support of underprivileged families, and in civil protection, where we aspire to play an increasing role alongside the central and local authorities.

Amid all this, we also found the time to celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Poland and the Order of Malta with a photographic exhibition hosted by the Sejm last October, for which we are very thankful.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our host country, Poland, to the Polish Government and public authorities, and to the many wonderful partners and people we work with — for the centuries-old bonds of friendship that unite us, for the human values that we share, and for a partnership in humanitarian service that continues to grow richer every year.

Allow me to finish on a personal note. Those who know me well know that I could not serve in my role as Ambassador of the Order of Malta without Eva at my side.

That is why I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the often-unsung heroes of our diplomatic missions: our spouses and partners — for the immense and often unrecognised contributions they make to the life of our embassies, for supporting their husbands, wives and partners, in good and bad times, for their personal sacrifices, and for making the Warsaw diplomatic community so vibrant and welcoming.

To conclude, I would like to thank everyone who made this event possible, including Mr and Mrs Paradowski for helping us organise this reception, our members and embassy team, and of course our wonderful volunteers.

On that note, let us raise our glasses to our host country Poland, to peace, and to solidarity with one another.

Dziękuję bardzo.