

COMPASSIONATE ACCOMPANIMENT



Engagement of the Hungarian
Charity Service of the Order of Malta
During the Time of the 2015 Migration Crisis



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**Hungarian Charity Service
of the Order of Malta**

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FOREWORD

By the end of the year 2015, the number of migrants passing through our country had surpassed 400,000.¹ Although Hungary is merely one of the ad hoc stations, a so-called transit country, on the route of people arriving from the Near East, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta considered it a high priority task to rush to the aid of those in need in this historical situation, which was about to escalate into a global issue. With a caring attentiveness stemming from a Christian commitment, the Charity Service followed the everyday life of the crowds migrating through the country, awaiting the arrival of the people in need, offering healthcare and hygienic care at numerous locations. This service was provided for several months during 2015, frequently around the clock, and when necessity so dictated, the assistants and volunteers actively participated outside our borders in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, as well. This present writing is a summary – not devoid of subjective aspects, at times – of this period; here, we will attempt to portray the organisation’s role during that era. Although our activities naturally progressed parallel to the national and international public and political events, and at times closely connected to them, it isn’t our aim to evaluate the processes and their individual participants.

It would be premature to draw very definite conclusions in any event, since we are, for the time being, a part of a process with politicians and decision-makers sitting at their conference tables – as well as thousands or even tens of thousands of migrants, walking along the roads of the globe, all looking for chances for progress. Whether we are at the beginning or the middle of the road, we don’t know exactly. Letting out

¹ – In more detail on the chart „Number of measures taken by the border control special field related to illegal immigration”.

a sigh with *Churchill*, perhaps one thing is certain: “Now this is not the end. Not even the beginning of the end. But perhaps we can say it is the end of the beginning.”² Our analytical observations are largely based on our own perspective, as well as our own field experiences. Besides this, a short introduction of the aspects determining the motivation and orientation of the Charity Service’s activities will endow our summary with an informative character.

Evaluating the events in their complexity and drawing comprehensive consequences will only be possible later. But we trust that we will contribute to thinking together and to continuously searching for how to provide ever better aid.

The Authors

2 – 1942, from his speech following the victory at El-Alamein.

INTRODUCTION

At present, Europe is facing the most difficult migration crisis of the post-WWII era; in the last fifty years, there hasn't been a single migration crisis as bad as the present one. Finding the correct answers based on the vital requirements and unconditioned nature of humanity, and at the same time in the correct relation to reality, taking into account the realistic needs of the participants, is a trying task for the continent as a whole, as well as the individual countries. At the same time, parallel crises occur, like ongoing episodes of the Near Eastern crisis or the decades-long Sub-Saharan African drama, expanding almost as far as the whole continent. By the way, our organisation is playing an active, groundbreaking role in both of these regions. And then, we haven't mentioned the economic, social, political and societal difficulties that further deepen the already strong discord. Currently, very few places are characterized by permanent peace. The conflicts listed above would be "sufficient" on their own for causing crises with deep, global effects, but still, they led to our present-day migration crisis together – just as we can conclude from the decades-long field experiences of the Charity Service.

During the summer of 2015, crowds of people looking for a safer or better future appeared in different regions of Hungary, seemingly without any forewarning, although some European countries – mainly in the Mediterranean region, first of all Southern Italy – have been battling the recurring waves of migration crisis for years. Within the course of a few days, the immediate and broader surroundings of Budapest's Western and Eastern Railway Stations filled up with people from the Near East, Asia, and Black Africa, the mere sight of whom must have been a novel experience for many, and rather alien for eyes used to the relatively homogeneous population of the otherwise typically metropolitan Buda-

pest. There are no Arab, African, or Asian quarters here, the ethnic composition is “simple”. Humanitarian and social workers don’t frequently meet clients arriving from cultural milieus other than the “usual one”, rather unlike in other European cities, where this kind of diversity is an everyday phenomenon. Thus, for the majority of the participants of the Hungarian care infrastructure, it wasn’t just unexpected but entirely new. Most of them had scarce experience regarding meeting the “strangers”, so finding the proper way to help was not self-evident. Let’s just consider the diversity resulting from language, cultural, and religious differences. Of course, we could say a human is a human, but behind this absolute truth can lurk more complex subjective reactions. We relate to everything in many different ways. So for example, one cannot expect the voluntary assistants to display a devotion similar to that of full-time colleagues, just as it isn’t evident that the employees take care of this special service with pleasure and professional expertise. And there is no bad intention whatsoever in question if a helper doesn’t know what religious rules they have to keep when taking care of a Muslim person in need, or if they are uncertain about the risk of potential infection. There are some who represent the principle of full inclusion, whereas others are for total closing and defence. There are some who, based on an ideological or philanthropic commitment, stand on the side of unconditioned help and openness, while others would want to keep their distance as a result of their fear of the unknown. Several aspects exist, and the majority of these are understandable, “legitimate” points of view, at their own place value – even if they happen to be incompatible with one another...

Thus, differences when the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta undertook a daily presence at several locations of the capital to help the people in transit, the difficulties weren’t just caused by the language. It wasn’t the lack of good intentions that caused a dilemma

or eventual delay, when the organisation was looking for the proper form of charitable presence. The most difficult question was how to unleash the finite capacities at their disposal. How should they regroup their powers in the new aim's interest, to maintain the undisturbed continuity and quality of the traditional, institutional daily services for the whole year at the same time? Further questions emerged concerning the points requiring charity-based answers, as well as which ones are more in need of a state-based intervention? So where is the "miserable person", where should "caritas" appear, that voice of love arising from Christian charity? After all, the work of civil charity organisations always has a complementary character: it means a surplus above and beyond the central (care) system. The legal surroundings influencing their work – what is it that they can do and what is it that they can't – weren't clear, either. This was something they frequently had to face in the case of the migrants that were delivered to the hospital for the purpose of more long-term healthcare, although the aid stemming from humanitarian love always transcends the law's conceptual framework. In the very beginning, these and similar professional dilemmas were the ones the Hungarian Charity Service's assistants had to face. Thus, in order to avoid difficulties, we manned the first service period with well-travelled, well-tested colleagues, afterwards continuously expanding our presence in space and time.

TERMINOLOGICAL DELIMITATION

As we have stated previously, there was no doubt about providing immediate aid. We merely had to find the proper way to do so; as we frequently emphasize it, *helping should only be done well*. Thus, at the beginning of our work, we had to reconcile in ourselves the duality of immediate charitable reaction and the otherwise time-consuming professional-human process of seeking a way.³ Offering aid is never easy in an atmosphere saturated with political content, where different terms are mixed – frequently intentionally. Thus, before proceeding with our thought, let’s try to clarify the terminology, offering the reader complimentary knowledge to help understanding.

It might seem to be a secondary issue, but the precise application of more or less consensus-based terms is all the more important if we want to pursue a quality debate. In such a debate, there is no room for sloppiness and faulty terminology, which may lead to misunderstandings and mistaken conclusions. The political undertone of the words we use is, by the way, not a merely Hungarian phenomenon: it can be observed in the atmosphere of the English language, as well. Thus, if the speaker eventually uses the expression “*migrant crisis*”, they may sound anti-migrant and right-wing, someone who cultivates the principle of partial or complete closure. The expression “*refugee issue*” on the other hand, is rather suggestive of a leftist-liberal, unquestionably “pro-refugee” attitude – whatever that might mean. The authors of the present article,

3 – Let’s just consider (among other examples) the 2014 period of the Ukrainian Revolution Maydan Square Drama, when it wasn’t clear at all where the possibility and obligation of charitable participation would start and how far it extended, in the multi-factored situation of domestic politics; which people, and through them, indirectly, which goals the direct assistance would support. . . We were in a similarly difficult situation on several occasions, related to transporting humanitarian aids to the Near East, when we had to provide the right answers to the principle of unconditionally aiding people in need, keeping in mind the local and global political contexts.

however, use the generic term “migrant” to refer to every person whose application for a refugee status has not been officially filed yet. This includes those who are fleeing persecution or other military conflicts, the people arriving from the Near East as well as from Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, we apply this expression to those who left their homes for economic or other reasons, in the hope of a better future, independently of whether they would later be recognized as refugees or not.

Thus, it is the word “*migrant*” that expresses the most generic content, referring to every person who left their country out of their personal choice or as a result of a different force, every person who leaves for another country with the purpose of continuing their life there. The term is cold and impersonal, but has the capacity to let us open wide the terminological “scissors”, if the status of the given persons is unknown or not determined yet. Based on BÁH,⁴ the Charity Service uses the Hungarian terminology, although it’s important to learn the Anglo-Saxon terms, as well; with the guiding documents⁵ offering a good chance to do so.

Our starting point is the *asylum*, which means „an entitlement for the foreign national to whom it is granted to reside in the territory of Hungary, as well as protection against refoulement, expulsion and extradition.”

This entitlement is determined in the course of the *asylum procedure*; “The objective of the asylum procedure is to establish whether the asylum-seeker is eligible for refugee status or subsidiary protection, and whether the principle of non-refoulement applies, and if not, should the asylum-seeker be expelled, extradited, or be transferred to another EU Member State by way of transfer under the Dublin process”.

4 – Applying and referring to the terminology of the Hungarian Immigration and Nationality Office (Bevándorlási és Állampolgári Hivatal) (BÁH) (http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=521&Itemid=728&lang=en).

5 – IOM, Glossary on Migration, International Migration Law Series No. 25, 2011.

The quoted expressions are aimed at acknowledging the person in question as a refugee. Thus, a *refugee* status may be granted to “a person whose life and liberty are threatened in his/her country of origin on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or whose fear of being subject to persecution is well founded, and who currently resides in the territory of Hungary and submits an application for asylum”. The applicant’s request for a refugee status, that is, the legal procedure is in progress, as a result of their own request, and this status will apply to the person already acknowledged as a refugee until acquiring Hungarian citizenship or have their refugee status revoked.

Thus, in the case of a person arriving in Hungarian territory, labelling them as a refugee is not self-evident and automatic. So, merely starting from the fact that somebody is *de facto* residing in Hungary, their legal status doesn’t follow as a consequence. The closest to the word migrant is the similar *immigrant*, referring to those who have taken up a long-term residence in our country, with the important addendum that their legal status is ordered, their refugee status procedure has been completed, they are legally studying or taking up a job, and possess documents and permits. Thus, the term “*illegal immigrant*” is incorrect and self-contradictory. In the case of missing “documents”, it’s more fitting to talk about illegal (or in the international terminology, irregular) *migrants*. However, let us remark that although these expressions are being used (typically on an everyday level), none of them are “recognized” by the legal terminology.

Returning to the asylum procedure process: in case a migrant arrives to the territory of Hungary and requests protection, that is, *to be acknowledged as a refugee*, then they will be considered an asylum seeker as long as

the Office of Immigration and Nationality determines whether they are entitled to the protection, and what kind of status they are entitled to. But acknowledging the person in question as a refugee is not the only option. “A person may be admitted for *subsidiary protection* if he/she does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom there is reason to believe that the person concerned, if returned to his/her country of origin would face a real risk of suffering serious harm, and is unable, or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.” Besides this, there is a so-called *temporarily protected* status, i.e. temporary protection, which may be granted to groups leaving their home country in masses. Somewhat close to this is the category of the *tolerated stay*, which applies to the asylum-seeker who is excluded from the refugee, subsidiary or temporarily protected status, but who would nevertheless be subjected to persecution in their country of origin.

Thus, it is obvious that in this colourful linguistic medley, individual terms possess different contents. Moreover, several of these carry a message value with regards to their user – especially in the system and atmosphere of international relations.

NORMATIVE THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Church documents

In the course of our work, we had to daily face both the support and the disapproval of those surrounding us, and we were frequently forced to take a stance in front of them or the larger public of the society. Addressing this difficult situation, we quoted the words of our president, Fr. Imre Kozma, first of all, to ourselves and to others: “We have a mission, not a stance.” This simple but at the same time extremely profound thought provided a perfect response to a significant part of the emerging dualities, and became a premise of our work, so to say. It gave a missionary message and repeated strength to unconditionally see our fellow humans in the people in need.

Although lifting up the prostrate, anyone in need doesn't require an ideological basis, the direction of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta – as an aid organisation of the 900-years-old Sovereign Order of Malta – is also defined by an “objective” basis. Some of this is the concrete manifestation of the organisation's particular Christian identity. In the following section, we will describe a few of these. Beyond the role of the present document, in our opinion, it would be desirable to draw inspiration from the basic principles of the Christian social doctrine, as well as from the well-advised practice of the Christian aid organisations. Let's just consider that some of them have been fulfilling this service for almost a thousand years. During this time, a lot of experiences have accumulated, and there was a chance to weight them thoroughly, stating good and bad practices. Furthermore, one can't ignore the fact that the commitment of faith-(religion-)based (aid) organisations is deeply inherent in its motivation; thus, it isn't connected to any “utilisation” in a material or other modern sense. At the same time, the “reverse” of this

is also true: the religion-based or church-based aid organisations have to draw inspiration from the good practices described by others, their helper mechanisms and basic principles. Bringing these two together, and melding them, without dissolving their individual characteristics, will result in good helping principles.

From bull to rule

For us, the first one in time and importance is the founding document, the papal bull of *The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta*, (in short, *the Sovereign Order of Malta*). The document starting with the words “*Pie postulatio voluntatis*”, promulgated by Pope Paschal II on the 15th of February 1113, legislated the independence and activity frame of the community founded by Blessed Gerard (cca. 1040–1120). The pope gave his apostolic approval to the Order, at the same time guaranteeing certain prerogatives, for example financial independence, as well as allowing for the free election of its superior. Most relevant to our subject matter, though, is that it *expressis verbis* establishes the first and most important aim of the “establishment”, at that time markedly a hospitaller order: *nurturing the poor and the sick*, and with this, determining the long-term orientation and basic feature of the Order’s existence – as we say, its charisma. Namely, this community, which can be regarded as an early charity organisation (although it was significantly more than that) provided help to the Christian pilgrims of the time (*Peregrinantes Christiani*). The Jews of the time and Jesus’ apostles on their pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Festivals could sing “At last our feet are standing at your gates, Jerusalem”. Every tribe was obligated to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem,⁶ to the holy city of the God of the Old and New Testament, where Yahweh’s tent stood, to the holy site of Jesus

6 – Psalms 122,4; 87,3; 76,3; 84

Christ's death on the cross, his resurrection and ascension to heaven. At the same time, the city was Israel's religious center, since the temple that Solomon built stood there. With the passing of time, masses set out from Europe to Jerusalem, to set foot once in their life in the site of Christ's last earthly station, their frequently very risky journey from the western part of France sometimes lasting as long as five months. The exhausted pilgrims who arrived at the cost of great difficulties needed provisions, which they could claim in the "hospitals of the poor", *hospitales pauperum*, or in the hospices named *xenodochium*, the lodgings built beside cloisters and episcopal palaces. Here, the exhausted travellers not only got food and drink, but were also provided with healthcare. The Order started their work in the houses of Sancta Maria Latina (*hospitium* based on the Benedictine rule), and later, Sancta Maria Parva, which was built for the women, (erected to the honour of St John the Baptist), these two places becoming the Order's cradle after another fifty years of activity. The already well-functioning network continued its activity later during the time of the Crusades, and contributed with great expertise to the healthcare of the soldiers fighting in the Holy Land.

The Order's second leader, Frá Raymond du Puy (1083–1160), who was the first one to be called Grand Master, introduced the first extant *Rule of the Order*. The document was created around 1140, and forged the habits of the first hospice of Jerusalem (Sancta Maria Parva) into a "legal" form, keeping in mind the founder's intentions. This document is the oldest codification, "behaviour rule" of the Hospitaller Brothers of St John. The Rule was probably completed in two phases and underwent several changes.⁷ From the aspect of our theme, the most important paragraph to point out is the first one, which is phrased as follows: "Firstly,

⁷ – See *Rendi szabályok és eligazítások*, Gyula, 2012, 120.

I ordain that all the brethren, engaging in the service of the poor, should keep the three things with the aid of God which they have promised to God...⁸ So it is clear that a decisive element of our belonging to this community is to unconditionally serve the poor and the sick. Its members took a triple vow, with differing contents. The engagement that was mutual for everyone went as follows: “We... promise to be servants and slaves of our lords the sick (sclavi dominorum infirmorum).” This was the way the *servus pauperum* Christi (the servant of Christ’s poor) became a proverb, later appearing as a concept of the Order in the writings of the “Johannites: our lords the sick.”⁹ Under du Puy, the institutionalized community, until then territorially active mainly in the Holy Land, spread throughout the Mediterranean: the Brotherhood founded hospices in Marseille, Saint-Gilles, as well as in the towns of Asti, Pisa, Bari, Otranto, Taranto and Messina.

The modern age reflexion on the above Rule is the document titled *Membership in the Order of Malta Regulations and Commentary*.¹⁰ This writing, which is a somewhat difficult text for a contemporary reader, regulates important questions like the Order’s structure and the legal status of the people belonging to it, their spiritual life and the most important issues of their everyday activities. It establishes that “For nine centuries, the mission of the Order has been “the promotion of the glory of God through the sanctification of its Members, service to the faith and to the Holy Father, and assistance to one’s neighbour (CC art. 2 §1)”. The Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Malta fulfils this mission as “a lay religious Order, by tradition military, chivalrous and nobiliary”

8 – Closing this idea, the authors express the triple definition of monastic life, the description of which is beside the subject here.

9 – Török J.–Legeza L.: *Máltaiak*, Budapest, 2009, 17–18.

10 – See Rendi szabályok és eligazítások, Gyula, 2012. június 24, translated from the original English *Membership in the Order of Malta Regulations and Commentary*, Rome, 2011.

(CC art. 1 §1). The Order “is devoted to its charisma of nurturing, witnessing and protecting the faith (*tuitio fidei*), and of serving the poor and the sick representing the Lord (*obsequium pauperum*).”¹¹ This modern document further confirms the community’s permanent task: that is, in connection to our theme, to take care of people in need. Several other writings command the inner structural order of the institution, its main priorities, the tradition and the habits received as a heritage – about the maintaining force of the Order and its community. Such a document is e.g. the handbook determining the direction of the Order’s foreign relations,¹² or the declaration issued recently, a recommendation about the complex role that the religious organisations fulfil in the humanitarian field.¹³

A few aspects of the statements by the Catholic Church

Our organisation not only drew from the statements of the *Magisterium of the Catholic Church*, but considers these obligatory regarding itself, based on its identity. From the aspect of our work, this primarily means the principles of social ethics within the Christian social doctrine and the system of social structure obligations springing from this teaching. Once again, it is not our aim to analyze the individual documents in depth, but merely refer to the most relevant ones shortly. The social doctrine of the Church has three supporting pillars. (1) Its starting point: the person, who is an *individuum* and a social being at the same time. Thus, our organisation always places “the other human” into the center of its attention. Like our founding president frequently phrases it: “We can only find ourselves in the other human, we can only become more

11 – See *ibid.*, II, 24.

12 – *Diplomatic Handbook of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta*, Rome (Grand Magistry), 2014.

13 – See the declaration „*Religions Together for Humanitarian Action*”: The special role of faith-based institutions The Sovereign Order of Malta Symposium, United Nations Geneva, 27 May 2015.

through lifting up the other human”. We could say, simplifying it: we search for the human, regardless of age, gender, or religious affiliation, without judgment, we take care of the poor and the needy, to whom, as a result of our position, we can stoop to give them a hug, so that they can live and develop in their own dignity. “The *individuum* is a unique and irrepeatable, unexchangeable being, made valuable not by their function and usefulness but by their very existence. The *individuum* is not a value in relation to something else, as a result of its participation in another matter, but by and for themselves.”¹⁴ This universal *individuum* principle is also essential from the aspect of our work. It doesn’t give a “chance” to exercise either negative or positive discrimination regarding the other human; just like the ambulance doctor can’t make a selection regarding one or the other patient guided by individual motives, on the occasion of a traffic accident... Thus, from our perspective, the sole aspect that we take into account is the state and measure of need. (2) “The second basic concept of the Christian social doctrine is the solidarity principle: humans can evolve by help of the community, that is, they fall back upon others; at the same time, they themselves can contribute to the growth of the community, are capable of helping others. Anthropology emphasises the role of the me-you relation and the ability to have discussions. (...) According to the solidarity principle, the individual and the community are both ontologically and ethically directed towards one another. By nature, humans rely on the community and fulfil their vocation to the benefit of the community. And in the reverse, the aim and task of the community (and the society) is to support its members, the individuals. (...) Solidarity means building a community, developing the society’s mode of functioning, making its organisation more effective;

14 – See Tomka Miklós: *Az egyház társadalmi tanítása – Dokumentumok, Bevezetés*. Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 13.

taking responsibility for real, concrete persons, issues and procedures.”¹⁵

(3) The third basic element of this system, since St. Thomas Aquinas and the scholastics, Pius XI, and Blessed Pope Paul VI, is the principle of subsidiarity. This term, which has become ubiquitous in our time, has been the basic principle of the Christian social doctrine for centuries. Its aim is no less than contributing to the establishment of a better society. An essential aspect of this very complex principle, from the aspect of our theme is that “Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. However, in case the individual who has to resort to themselves cannot help themselves if solving the problem is beyond their powers and thus, they fall back upon the (...) community, then the latter one has to offer help...”¹⁶ Although the social doctrine of the Church is not a mere social orientation but more than that: a system of norms pertaining to all human coexistence and the whole society, it is nevertheless an important source for us, out of which we shortly touched on those which we regarded as a standard.

A similarly essential document is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is the organic and ordered summary of the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching. In the special dimension of its teaching, the expression of charity stands in the middle, whose “fruits are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence (...); it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested...”¹⁷ Regarding the respect for the other person and the transcendent dignity of humans, it clearly states that “everyone should

15 – Id. 14.

16 – Id. 15.

17 – CCC 1829

look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as ,another self;’ above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity”.¹⁸ Regarding the dedication towards the community, it settles another important basic point, in terms of the spatial dimension of our work: “Participation is achieved first of all by taking charge of the areas for which one assumes personal responsibility: (...) by conscientious work, and so forth, man participates in the good of others and of society.”¹⁹

We can discern further specific teachings and applicable principles from the so-called Encyclicals of the popes, elaborating specific themes, for example, Pope Leo XIII’s document beginning with the words *Rerum Novarum*, which, among other things, reflects on the balancing role of the state, and determines the idea of common good. It is important to mention Pope St John the XXIII’s encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, as well as *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council, or Pope Saint John Paul II’s documents beginning with *Populorum Progressio* and *Octogesima Adveniens*. The first one is an extremely important document for us, providing an in-depth analysis of the developmental difficulties of the nations, the problems of hunger, squalor, and epidemics; it reflects on families and the question of population demographics, as well as the fraternity of nations and the obligation of solidarity, dialogue, or among other issues, that of guest workers. Just as important as these are Pope St John Paul II’s writings, like *Laborem Exercens* or *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, as well as Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Caritas in veritate* about the full-value development of humans. We also have to emphasize Pope Francis’s exhortation titled *Evangelii Gaudium* about the dedication towards the community. With regards to him, let us mention the radically

18 – CCC 1931

19 – CCC 1914

biblical and philanthropic approach, drawing from that peculiarly Latin-American atmosphere, urging particularly those who stand closest to him on an ideological basis, but also the whole world and all the people of good will in it, to take care of the migrants and welcome them. Later, we will dwell upon the standpoint of the Pope and the Holy See in more detail.

The Holy See's standpoint and its development

The specific character of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta reaches down to its Catholic roots and devoted Christian responses. In this context, let us recall the Holy See's standpoint on migration and the refugee issue, with special regard to Pope Francis's approach, which sparked a widespread debate. In his New Year speech,²⁰ addressed to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, the pope gave something of a synthesis of his standpoint regarding the migration and refugee issue. The shift of terminology, which had already been observed by many, that is, in a legally and politically more correct way, calling the transit passengers *migrants* instead of *refugees*, signified the influence of the "Third Loggia" within the papal palace, that is, the Papal State Secretary's Office, on the development of the Holy See's standpoint. This, however, did not mean a marked shift of balance in the traditional papal speech, which was intended for the whole world as an annual evaluation speech. Besides the themes of mercy (Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy) and the family (Synod), the migration crisis constituted the center of the speech, permeating the atmosphere of the whole year – as the pope phrased it. He also delivered a short analysis of this theme, listing the possible causes of becoming a refugee, emphasizing the necessity of changing the legal environment. We have to make it

20 – http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/january/documents/papa-francesco_20160111_corpo-diplomatico.html, Time of access: 2016. 03. 31.

possible for the migrants in need of protection and shelter to not be squeezed out of its rigid framework. He also touched upon those who would like to return to their home country, thus, urging the supporting, so-called donor countries to provide a helping presence in the issuing countries (source countries or countries of origin). In his speech, however, the Pope also touched on other aspects besides the principle of the complete openness and unconditioned reception introduced earlier, he pointed out that we can't abandon the efforts of those countries that are, in some way, participating in finding the proper responses to these issues. At the same time, these countries have to seek out sustainable solutions that are capable of maintaining order. The Pope also touched upon the cultural aspects of the theme, reminding everyone of the challenge presented by the encounter of markedly different traditions, as well as how adaptation and integration is possible. He gave voice to his hopes that the European Union will be capable of protecting its own citizens, at the same time, parallel with this, fulfilling the humanitarian needs of the destitute. These two – as he phrased it – are the European Union's „moral responsibility”. At the same time, he warned the migrants that it is their duty to respect the „values, traditions and laws” of the countries who receive them. Undoubtedly, he painted a more nuanced and complex picture than his earlier views. He gave a balanced, realistic and correct summary of one of the most burning social issues of our age. A political speech, however, has its own character, and we can have no doubt whatsoever about Pope Francis having the right to his determined private opinion – which he frequently, unmistakably gives expression to; just like he did in September 2015, urging the Catholic parishes and churches to receive refugee families. Thus, it is not likely that in the future, he could be deterred from his radically biblical standpoint. This can actually be considered as a positive extreme in this complex, multi-faceted process.



Food delivering in Budapest in 1989 for East German refugees...



...and near Rösztke in 2015 alongside the Hungarian-Serbian border.

Secular documents

Agreement between the government of Hungary and the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta

Now we will mention a few *secular documents* that likewise present important guidelines for us; moreover, they specifically express the area of our activity. Since it is a Hungarian Organisation, we have to cite at first place the *Act CXL* of 2010 on the promulgation of the Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.²¹ This legal act promulgated on the 7th of December 2010 serves as a framework in principle for the cooperation between the Hungarian Government and the Sovereign Order of Malta, resp. its relief organisation, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta. It considers “the traditionally excellent relations between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Sovereign Order of Malta”, and recalls “the fundamental political changes taking place in 1989 in Hungary” and „ the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta's Association”. Article 2 states: “The objective of the present agreement is to set up the general framework and guidelines for the future cooperation between the Contracting Parties in the field of social, health or humanitarian services and of international development...” Article 3 expresses: “Subject to their means and possibilities, the Contracting Parties will support and implement measures intended to facilitate, develop and diversify their social, humanitarian, health and international development cooperation, as well as steps aimed at the expansion of such activities to related fields.”

21 – http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1000140.TV, Time of access: 2016. 03. 05. See further: <http://www.parlament.hu/irom39/01670/01670.pdf>, as well as *Magyar Közlöny*, 184. issue: <http://www.kozlonyok.hu/nkonline/MKPDF/hiteles/mk10184.pdf>, Time of access: 2016. 03. 05.

Article 4 continues as follows: "... may carry out all activities concerning education, cultural and social development, health care, disaster relief, sport, and the protection of children and the youth that are not reserved by effect of national legislation exclusively for the Hungarian State, its state organs or institutions. Within the framework of these activities, the appointed organization may establish and maintain services and institutions and carry out projects."

The Geneva Convention

In 1951, a landmark document was issued regarding the theme of migration. It was signed on the 28th of July at the United Nations conference in Geneva, to ensure peace; with the intention of establishing the "criteria for determining refugee status, as well as defining the kind of legal protection, other assistance and social rights a refugee is entitled to receive" in the states which signed the document. One of the agreement's most important regulations states that "a refugee should not be returned to a country where he or she faces persecution. It also defines a refugee's obligations to host countries and specifies certain categories of people, such as war criminals, who do not qualify for refugee status".²² By now this document, also called the 1951 "*Refugee Convention*"²³ or "Geneva Convention" has become the most important document with regards to international refugee protection. According to its definition, the term refugee shall apply to any person who: "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and

22 – <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/hu/informacioforrasok/egyezymenyek/menekultugyi-egyezymeny.html>

23 – <http://www.unhcr.org/3b73b0d63.html>

being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”²⁴ World War II can be considered the main circumstance leading to its formation, and it focused on protecting war refugees. With the passage of time, this became outdated, requiring additions and modifications. Extending the convention’s perspective and range of influence, as well as abrogating the geographical limitations, thus transforming the legal document into a universal one became a necessity. Taking into consideration the phenomenon of continuously increasing “forced migration”, the *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967* was issued in reaction.

Dublin

Another widely quoted regulation in our days, in relation to migrants and refugees, is the so-called “Dublin Procedure”²⁵ or “Dublin Regulation”. Officially: “Information in accordance of Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013, establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (Dublin III Regulation.”²⁶ As opposed to the 1951, and later the 1967 conventions, this document narrowed its legal focus and territorial limitations. The “Dublin Regulation”²⁷ is a European Union legislation, which determines the responsibility of a member state with regards to evaluating the refugee applications,

24 – 1989. évi 15. törvényerejű rendelet a menekültek helyzetére vonatkozó 1951. évi július hó 28. napján elfogadott egyezmény, valamint a menekültek helyzetére vonatkozóan az 1967. évi január hó 31. napján létrejött jegyzőkönyv kihirdetéséről, See: http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=98900015.TVR (Law Decree 15 of 1989 on the publication of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees adopted on 28 July 1951 and of the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees entered into force on 31 January 1967)

25 – See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HU/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R0604>

26 – Based on the information on the website of the Immigration and Nationality Office.

27 – <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HU/ALL/?uri=CELEX:41997A0819%2801%29>

specifically within the territory of the European Union. Its aim is to determine the responsibility of the member state regarding individual asylum requests, directing the applicant to the member state through which they entered the territory of the European Union. Moreover, the Eurodac fingerprint database, which was created parallel to this document, is the official source of the individuals entering the territory of the European Union illegally. Thus, if someone submits an application in Hungary to have their status acknowledged, this does not necessarily mean that their asylum procedure will be processed in Hungary. Namely, according to the Dublin Regulation, if certain legal conditions apply, another state of the Union (or other state that has signed the regulation) may be responsible for evaluating the asylum request.

It is also worth citing the Hungarian Act XC concerning International Development Cooperation and International Humanitarian Aid,²⁸ adopted on 15th December 2014, which also determines the participation of Hungarian NGOs in the complex system of international relief. Documents of other international organisations, like the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*,²⁹ the *European Convention on Human Rights*,³⁰ documents of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), standards of the UNO and the EU³¹ and other relevant documents³² contain similarly important basic elements.

28 – *Magyar Közlöny* 183. szám: <http://www.kozlonyok.hu/nkonline/MKPDF/hiteles/MK14183.pdf>, Time of access: 2016. 03. 05.

29 – http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/hng.pdf, Time of access: 2016. 03. 05.

30 – [Shttp://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_HUN.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_HUN.pdf), Time of access: 2016. 03. 05.

31 – See: <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/en/resources/legal-documents/unhcr-handbooks-recommendations-and-guidelines.html>

32 – CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add. 13 26 May 2004.

- International covenant on civil and political rights / 1949 Conventions and Additional Protocols, and their Commentaries / Hague Convention (XI) on Restrictions of the Right of Capture, 1907 / Geneva Convention (I) on Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, 1949 / Geneva Convention (IV) on Civilians, 1949 / Resolutions of the Diplomatic Geneva Conference, 1949 / Teheran Resolution on Human Rights in Armed Conflict, 1968 / United Nations Resolution on Human Rights in Armed Conflicts, 1968 / Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 – Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 2000 / Hague Convention (II) on the Laws and Customs of War on Land, 1899.

Earlier on, we described the difficulties that arose for the Charity Service at the beginning of the migration crisis, and then the theoretical and material basis determining its work and mission. We shortly reviewed a few of the basic social principles related to its specifically Christian identity, then we touched upon the secular documents determining the orientation of its activity.

CHARITY IN PRACTICE

The organisational context of refuge

After the theories, let us review the roles that the Sovereign Order of Malta and its Hungarian aid organisation, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, fulfilled on the field. Inner and outer migration, refuge and reception, adaptation and integration (using a modern term) is not a foreign vocabulary for us; moreover, the members of our community had to experience several different forms of these in the past as well as in the present, from the sufferer who was wronged, to the welcoming supporter. The Order's almost thousand-year long history is connected to persecution in a peculiar way, which has a strong influence on its functioning to this very day. Thus, beside the healthcare service (Hospitaller Order), it regards caring for the refugees as its most important endeavour. In the Order's history, it frequently occurred that its members (the knights) had to flee while fulfilling their services; after all, their work was carried out in territories situated in the centre of wars. This experience left a deep mark on our community, and thus, it resulted in a close connection in terms of relating to the "refugee issue". Through its own history, the military Order deeply resonates with the situation of those who are oppressed or are simply seeking a better future.

Historic perspectives

Let us just recall the devastating Muslim attack in 1291 against Acre,³³ which the "Johannites" could not withstand. Following this, the Center of the Order (at first) settled over to Cyprus, and after almost a hundred years, as a result of inner conflicts, "migrated" to the island of Rhodes. Besides the events in Cyprus, the Great Western Church Schism (1378–1417)

33 – <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1042>



Volunteers of the Order of Malta took care of Hungarian children in 1956...



...and Hungarian volunteers in 2015 at the leaving point between Austrian and Hungary.

and the life-and-death warfare against the Turks, also contributed to this process. Then, in 1522, Suleiman II dealt the Westerners a final blow, when the Turkish fleet encircled the island and marched into the city after several months of siege. The knights, together with the population of the island, set off from the harbour on the morning of the New Year of 1523, on the deck of 30 ships, towards the unknown future – now for the second time, hoping for a welcome resolution as soon as possible. “The Grand Master and his knights were sailing towards the West in the midst of the birthpains of a modern Europe, like emissaries who embodied the medieval age. The European monarchs were plagued by other troubles, and not so much concerned with settling down the knights, who were beguiled with empty promises for years.”³⁴ With different characters and in a different historic context, it seems as if we were reading these lines in one of the contemporary reports, telling us about the “emissaries”, with their “medieval”, foreign appearance, arriving from the Near East or Sub-Saharan Africa, and the European Union precariously seeking a path – while the world beguiled them with empty promises....

The Order, even in its “homelessness”, actively participated in defending the Christian Europe against the Turks. Following the negotiations with Pope Clemens VII and Emperor Charles V, the knights could finally move to the island of Malta on the 29th of May 1530, where they established flourishing cities after the historically significant Battle of Lepanto. “This era was the height of power for the Order. They turned Malta’s capital, Valletta into an impregnable fortress, their fleet developed into the mightiest of the Mediterranean Sea, which the European monarchs frequently called for help against the Turks as well as pirates. (...) The Order continued to minister to the poor, with Malta’s hospice never becoming empty; it was every knight’s duty to serve here for a certain amount of time.”³⁵

34 – Török J.–Legeza L.: *Máltaiak*, Budapest, 2009, 34.

35 – Magyar Katolikus Lexikon, Szent István Társulat, 2004.

Following their long “prosperity”, a new threat arrived in 1798, when Napoleon “blockaded Malta on his way towards Egypt. The German Grand Master, Ferdinand von Hompesch, couldn’t defend Malta, with all the French knights siding with Napoleon. Valletta’s huge fortress and together with it, the Empire of the Sovereign Order of Malta fell into Napoleon’s possession, who forced the Order to abandon the island and deprived the Order of all its property”.³⁶

In the course of its history, the Order frequently experienced persecution and new beginnings at the same time as taking the greatest efforts to help the poor and the sick (the needy). Thus, the historic experience formed an especially strong bond within its traditions, which permeates the organisation’s life to this day. At the time of the humanitarian catastrophes in the world, they pay a special attention to help the most vulnerable: the refugees, the sick, the families, children and elderly. In our days, the Order actively participates in humanitarian tasks all over the world with its nationally active modern aid network.

The Charity Service is established among migrants

The birth of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta is related to another world history event: taking care of the East German refugees. We could say that the organisation was born in the crisis. In 1989, citizens of the German Democratic Republic arrived en masse to Hungary, in order to reach the Federal German Republic. In August, because of the number of East Germans that were residing in Hungary, with no intention to return home, the resulting situation was declared a refugee-issue catastrophe situation. The West German consul, and the first secretary of the embassy, asked the Hungarian Charity Service

36 – Id.

of the Order of Malta, under Fr. Imre Kozma's leadership – an organisation ready for its “first flight” – to provide the refugees with board and lodging. The next day, the first tents arrived to the Zugliget parish church, and the first refugee camp, which was established in the church garden, opened up its gates. A little while later, newer camps were opened: two in the Hárshegy campings and the Csillebérc pioneer camp. With this, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta launched its largest humanitarian aid project, during the course of which, the Maltese took care of tens of thousands of refugees. The people living in the camps not only received food and drink, but encouragement and understanding, as well. Hungary opened its borders for the citizens of the German Democratic Republic on September 11, and the last refugees left Budapest on the 14th of November 1989. With this, the Hungarian government violated the obligations of interstate agreements within the “Eastern bloc”. This decision, however, reaching beyond political considerations, was wise and humane. This decision was reinforced by the Hungarian people, who made it clear that they sided with the refugees. The Charity Service's participation wouldn't have been possible without a large-scale social support. Earlier, several local families in Zugliget welcomed strangers into their homes; there were houses with more than seventy refugees residing in them. At the same time, in other areas of the capital, as well as in the countryside, many people fulfilled an active role in taking care of the Germans seeking the hope of the better future. During this three-month-long episode, altogether 48,600 refugees received help at several locations, for varying lengths of time. Recalling the memory of this, we celebrate the 14th of August annually as the Day of Welcoming.

The places of the East German refugees haven't even cooled down yet, when the Rumanian revolution, and in 1991, the bloody Yugoslavian war put the young organisation to the test, demanding its immediate

coming of age... Getting tempered in these historic crises was what made the Charity Service's assistants battlewise, meaning a specifically deep spiritual dedication to provide helpful assistance within the hardships of our country and the world. By that time, the resources of the Charity Service were not only limited to receiving the refugees, but included other types of field participation, as well; organizing care for the sick and needy at several locations, the direct support of local communities, or even help with transporting people in danger to Hungary. It was a memorable moment when the Charity Service fulfilled their action at the siege of the city of Vukovar, in the course of which several thousand people successfully passed through to Hungary, meaning their survival from the almost certain destruction.

The Charity Service turns towards the other person with the experiences of these humanitarian crises, thus seeing the most needy in the people who are fleeing, the abandoned ones, who lost and gave up their families, their communities, homes, and birth countries. Leaving all these behind, even if it's based on free determination, always requires a pressing cause. In the most cases, it is overwhelming powers that force people to make this decision. The uncertainty of their future, the feeling of being a stranger in the world requires help even in the case of the strongest people. It requires support for survival, and processing one's losses – especially for the children, the elderly torn away from their roots, the sick and the disabled.

Contemporary challenges

From the summer of 2015, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta provided services at about 15 locations with the participation of almost 500 volunteers and 100 full-time employees in total. In Budapest, Győr, Hegyeshalom, in the region of Körmend-Pinkaminszent,

at Letenye, Zákány, Barcs, Mohács, Magyarbóly, in the Croatian towns of Opatovac and Tovarnik, and in the neighbourhood of the Serbian Sid and Horgos, as well as Rösztke and Mórahalom – thus covering a significant part of the country, all the locations where the people in need required any kind of treatment with regard to migration. Our mobile units and territorial groups and employees constantly frequented the country's most remote locations, as well as territories outside the borders, in order to get the proper form of help to its destination. The work lasted day and night for months. The following numbers reveal a lot about our presence: almost 50,000 sandwiches and bakery products, 36,000 half-a-litre mineral waters, 9,200 bandages, 3,400 pairs of socks, 8,300 pain killer pills, 2,600 diapers, 80,000 muesli bars, 2,300 packages of infant formula and daily 600 litres of warm tea were distributed. Now, we will show the relevant events in the form of a chart, highlighting the most decisive ones.

As for the time span and its significance, we have to mention the initially spontaneous multitude that was formed in the environs of the Eastern as well as Western Railway Stations in Budapest. The “Keleti” (Eastern Railway Station) later became the iconic location of our national migration crisis, where tens of thousands passed through during the course of a few months, following various lengths of stay and recuperation. People seeking a better life appeared almost out of “nothing”, to disappear with a similar speed. The railway station was a logical “transit zone” for the passing migrants: the trains to Germany departed from there. They mostly arrived through human smugglers via the southern border, generally possessing one backpack each, weary and exhausted. By July, the presence of exhausted, sick, and needy people became permanent – after all, the railway station is one of the capital's busiest locations. In this situation, the Charity Service considered it their task – as a part of their mission – to help people who were forced to leave their

homes as they migrated through Hungary. In the spring of 2015, the organization helped families escaping persecution, on an individual basis, about which, however, they did not release any information to protect the safety of those involved. In June, the Charity Service management decided to provide healthcare service to the people passing through Hungary.³⁷ From the 13th of June onwards – including weekends and holidays – the Maltese doctors and helpers visited all the locations where migrant families gathered in great numbers, to treat those in need. At the Eastern Railway station and at John Paul II Square, the Charity Service was active for almost two months. From the beginning of August, they organized a voluntary service to support the mobile medical care, with several hundred volunteers reporting for duty in a short time. There were days when there were twenty Maltese volunteers outside at the Keleti Railway station, with some of the assistants coming to help from faraway spots of our country. The employees of companies supporting the Charity Service, as well as university students and members of parish communities, also joined the work. In the subways, sometimes several Maltese doctors were on duty, with Arab, Pastu, or Farsi interpreters helping their work. They provided their service from the Mobile Doctor's Office. This microbus – due to its mobility – proved to be an ideal tool to search for people scattered over a large territory. This was the place where the Maltese doctors were on duty, tending to the more complicated cases in its space specially designed for healthcare, while others were roaming the square, the streets and subways, to search for medical cases. The volunteers went around the families camping on blankets spread on the floor or in tents, seeking out sick, feverish, injured infants and adults. As a rule, the doctors alleviated fever and pain, treated allergic symptoms, treated abrasions and injuries. They transported the serious, locally

37 – <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-human-resources/news/those-who-wish-to-help-should-do-so-through-aid-organisations>, Time of access: 2016. 03. 07.

untreatable cases to a hospital in an ambulance car, this meant two to five cases per week. One of my doctor colleagues recalls the time he spent there as follows: “After work, we went to the Eastern Railway Station in the evenings. It was exhausting to work at the railway station until 9 or 10 o’clock after the hospital duty, but it never occurred to me not to get going, and I’m sure I won’t forget the weeks I spent there. The encounters, the smiles, especially those of the kids. Asian kid faces are wonderfully sweet. Of course, it was also heart-wrenching to see them, especially considering what all they must have gone through during their long trek, wrought with suffering. But there, in the station subway that provided safety, they were playing football, running around happily. My youngest patient was a two weeks old baby, whose mother had to be provided with advice on how to feed the baby. My colleagues, by the way, had patients even younger than that. Apart from a few more serious cases, most of the time we bandaged wounds, relieved pain, alleviated the »marks« of the long journeys. It was an experience of a lifetime.”³⁸ Over the course of time, a kind of spontaneous refugee camp was created in the subway and its broader surroundings. Although in the course of time, the municipal city government declared the area a transit zone (that is, the police force couldn’t launch any procedure against the transit passengers), and the Municipal Waterworks established a few basic hygienic services, the developing circumstances couldn’t be continued. It was made somewhat bearable by individual initiative, as well as by various civilian organisations, taking care day and night of the people residing there. The continuous flow of passengers travelling towards Germany by the trains prevented “overpopulation”. As a result of the changes in foreign as well as internal politics, launching the trains became slower over the course of time, until it stopped for good, while the number of migrants arriving

38 – Based on the report of Dr. Gabriella Csikós, volunteering doctor at the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

from the southern border didn't decrease. By that time, the railway station couldn't fulfil its traditional function any more, and finally, it was closed permanently. The situation that ensued became untenable by September, the demonstrations and rude expressions of opinion became more and more frequent. People were untrusting and hostile after one day the migrants were sent off a train heading towards the Austrian border and directed to the refugee camp. (Later, a group of three hundred people broke out of the camp and started towards the border on foot.)

“Born on the Fourth of September”

On September 4th, during the day, a few groups started progressing towards Austria on foot. They were joined by hundreds or even thousands, causing a massive chaos on the M1 highway. At 9 p.m., the Hungarian government decided to transport the refugees to the border crossing point at Hegyeshalom, and for arranging this transport, they asked the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta for help. The Maltese crisis staff mobilised almost a hundred volunteers and employees, who organized the transfer at the railway station and on the highway, and took part in launching the convoys. The work lasted until dawn, with the aid of the interpreters who had been helping for weeks. The final convincing argument in most cases was the Maltese emblem of the Charity Service, along with the promise that the Maltese employees would accompany them to the border, staying with them until the end of the journey. In the case of the crowd walking on the highway, overcoming the lack of trust was the biggest challenge, with the groups' opinion leaders requiring assurance that the buses would not take them to refugee camps. The men who broke out of the camp at Bicske were picked up by buses at Vértesszőlős; the authors of these lines recall the events as follows: “We arrived there at around one o'clock at night with our Arab interpreter

colleague on that particular September 4th. From the police, we got the request to help their forces who were present on the spot. The previous day, about 200 to 300 migrants of Afghan origin »broke out«, and started on foot between the rails in the direction of Austria. We were waiting for them at the abandoned railway station – the lights of their cell phones signalled their approach in the faraway forests. Our aim was to make them get on the arriving buses to get to the Austrian border safely. The policemen withdrew into a distance; they couldn't interfere, since the migrants were afraid of uniforms, they would have dispersed at the mere sight of them. We went on persuading them for three hours, one by one, until we managed to convince everybody to get on. There were some who, in their exhausted state, pouring petrol over their bodies, with a lighter in their hands, threatened to set themselves on fire. Others wanted to slash us with their knives, telling us that if we deceive them, we are finished ... Finally, however, at 5 a.m. we arrived to Hegyeshalom in peace, although completely exhausted.” At other places, the men got on the bus on the condition that the Maltese leader would stay with them right up to the border as a kind of hostage and prove with the GPS sign visible on his telephone that they were indeed progressing towards Austria... It was a truly demanding night for all the employees taking part, heroically standing their ground in the most varied situations.

Ambulance station on the field

The Eastern Railway Station and its surroundings emptied in the course of one night. In a few days, Budapest's usual order was restored; however, the Charity Service's work did not diminish. Very soon, thousands were jammed in the region of Rösztke, on the farm fields next to the Hungarian-Serbian border – people who were “shifted” there as a result of the border fence and the receiving stations being overcrowded.

An informal collection point was set up, where the Charity Service re-directed its mobile healthcare service. Within the course of a few hours, Maltese Ambulance emergency vehicles arrived; we constructed a dispensary at the settlement in order to provide supplies, the “tea transport” known from homeless care was settled there, and we established a mobile doctor’s office in our inflatable tent. One of the organisation’s volunteering ambulance officer recalls this as follows: „On the signal of one of our colleagues, we started out from the collection point, the camp of tents set up on the field, to tend to a little boy who was lying by the rail with his parents. Still on the Serbian side. He was gone completely cold. I measured his temperature, it was barely as high as 30 degrees, the so-called core temperature. He was two years old. The parents didn’t speak English, so I tried to explain to them, with hands and legs that we will carry the little one to the hospital at Szeged, and then we will bring him back, but they didn’t consent. They were afraid of missing the bus that was leaving for the Austrian border. It was a rather cold day, I remember I had a coat on. I had no other choice, I hugged the little boy, close to my body, nice and snug. I zipped him into my coat, then we lounged around like that, together beside the rails for 15 minutes, until he warmed up. I will never forget that. He said goodbye smiling. I hope a better life awaits him somewhere...” The organisation was present on the territory of the “Röszke Collection Camp” for almost two weeks, providing daily medical care, as well as food and drink. Together with national and foreign civil organisations, they took care of the people drifting in; sometimes there were days when 10 to 20 thousand people passed through during 24 hours... The circumstances were often chaotic, the helpers’ work sometimes progressed without coordination. And yet, this exaggerated attention might have been the cause of no infants suffering hypothermia and no one getting seriously harmed on those autumn nights, with the temperature frequently dropping below zero.

“On no man’s land”

At the end of September, new legal regulations entered into force: the government announced a crisis situation in the southern counties, in reference to the mass immigration. They shut down the Serbian-Hungarian border, and continued to assess the refugee applications directly in the areas appointed for entry. After the changes, the groups who were on their way got stuck outside the border. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta helpers who had been on duty at Röszke continued their activities in the transit territory as well as in Serbia, taking care of the sick, distributing hot tea, food, and drink to the families, handing out warm clothing and blankets to those in need. When the migrants realized that it was no longer possible to cross the Hungarian-Serbian border, they started towards Croatia. Charity Service employees provided care at the locations where the larger refugee groups stopped for the night. In Croatia, the authorities directed the people towards the Hungarian border. At the Beremend border crossing point, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta was the first organisation to help; later, they organized the care at Mohács, Barcs, Gyékényes, Zákány and Magyarbóly, as well. The government-requested aid organizations – the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, the Hungarian Red Cross, and the Ecumenical Aid Service – distributed the tasks and locations among one another.

At Beremend, there were five to seven people on duty for 12 to 15 hours. We gave medicine and bandages to the people in need of treatment – thus complementing the presence of the National Ambulance Service’s local employees. Our colleagues gave water, non-perishable food and basic hygiene items to the migrants arriving on buses. According to our employees’ reports, from the 16th to 20th of September, they got in contact with, and attended to, almost 15,000 people.

After a while, the work shifted over to the region of the border crossing point at Barcs, where the employees of the Charity Service were present from September 21st, with five to eight people working day and night, 24 hours a day, in two shifts, changing every 12 hours. We carried out this work with the operative direction of Pécs and professional supervision from Budapest, which involved local colleagues. The number of people who received treatment was about 1000; it varied depending on the transit passengers.

Also a lot of people arrived by train at Gyékényes-Zákány, as well; by the thousands they started on foot towards Nagykanizsa. Regarding the several hundred people remaining at the station, employees of the Charity Service from Kaposvár cared for them. According to the employees' reports, they took care of about 8,000 train passengers and treated an additional 5,000 people remaining or waiting at the stations during this period.

On the southern border settlements, the work of the charity organisations was needed until the second week of October; from then on, the refugees were transported exclusively by train, and the aid was concentrated at the Austrian border.

Constant duty at the northern exit points

While the assistants at the individual southern "exit points" experienced a somewhat more divided pressure, their colleagues at the main (later only) northern "exit point" were under an intense pressure, keeping up the "front" at the border day and night. Five or six (sometimes more) special trains arrived to Hegyeshalom daily, delivering five to seven thousand people. At the railway station, policemen and railway guards organized the crowd into lines, with four kilometres of walking still ahead of

Members and volunteers of the Hungarian Charity Service of Order of Malta...



...took a good care of East German refugees in 1989 in the backyard of Zugliget parish church...



...and in 2015 during the so-called refugee crisis in Hungary and in Serbia.

them to the border crossing point. There, the Charity Service's volunteers were waiting for them in front of their snugly erected tents. The refugees marched past them in long lines, many of them taking the food and drink offered to them as they walked past. Personal contacts were restricted to minutes – as if providing aid had occurred on the assembly line. The quickly progressing people only stopped when the volunteers addressed the families with little children, or obviously tired people, asking whether they needed a warm piece of clothing or a hot coffee? In October, bare-foot children and people in summer-like clothing were still to be seen. In the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta tent, the hot water continuously steamed in the cauldron fixed onto the gas container, thus making it possible to mix baby formula; hot tea was made on a large scale, as well. The volunteers relieved mothers of their babies, whom they were carrying in their hands all day, so that the mothers could take a rest at least until they ate their sandwiches. After the departure of the crowd flooding through the Hungarian side of the border, cleaning and restocking the supplies became the volunteers' next task. After three hours of waiting in average, the next train arrived and everything started anew...

On a new field in Slovenia

On October 16th at midnight, the closing of the border was put into effect at the Croatian border, as well. The migrants continued their journey bypassing Hungary, travelling through Slovenia. The last refugee train arrived to Hegyeshalom on the afternoon of October 17th. After the last refugees crossed towards Austria, the aid organisations began folding up their tents. The employees and volunteers of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta maintained a nonstop, 24-hour care center at Hegyeshalom, where in the course of this time, more than hundred thousand refugees and migrants passed through. Between

October 30th and November 4th, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta provided help in Slovenia, in the refugee camp of Dobova. The six-day long participation was preceded by a coordination with the representatives of the Slovenian Order of Malta, the country's catastrophe relief organisations, and the leaders of the involved aid organisations. The nine-member team, which was transferred from Hungary with the tea transport, consisted partly of the employees of the Charity Service, and partly of the voluntary fire department of Csömör. At Dobova, in the fully packed refugee camp, as well as near the railway station of the settlement, the Maltese group provided a 24-hour nonstop service with 6-hour shifts. During the six days of relief efforts, the helpers arriving with the tea transport got in contact with about ten thousand people, providing with hot tea not only the refugees and migrants but also the police forces spending their resting time. The relief effort, which was carried out together with the representatives of the Order of Malta of Slovenia, established the authority of the local Maltese in the circle of the organisations helping the refugees and migrants. Upon leaving, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta provided the Slovenian Maltese Charity with a significant amount of donations and resources to help them continue their work.

Healthcare considerations

As a result of its special character, the Charity Service regarded as its primary task to provide healthcare to the people passing through our country, and later to those who were marooned outside the borders. At the Eastern Railway Station, around the collection point at Rösztke, and later, at the entry points at Barcs and Beremend, they endeavoured to alleviate the migrants' injuries and pains. Taking advantage of the mobility of the emergency vehicles, they frequented difficult-to-approach

locations, took care of the more difficult cases in their inflatable tent (also applied to catastrophe situations), and transported people to a hospital when necessary. We offered our experiences to several international organisations, sharing the knowledge in the course of external observation programs, roundtable discussions and personal consultations that they organized.³⁹ Now we shall delineate a few important statements of these.

We had to face the fact several times that even for the employees of healthcare institutions, the legal background of treating migrants was questionable. This was especially typical in the beginning period. The uncertainty was never caused by the refusal to help but rather by the novelty of the phenomenon. In Hungary, the healthcare services within the urgent necessities of those residing on the territory of our country are specified by the EüM regulation 52/2006. (XII. 28.)⁴⁰. Thus, every person residing here, including the migrants, has a right to medical urgency treatment, independently of whether they have been registered or not. In the case of those whose refugee procedure is being processed, the first medical examination is performed at a collection point managed by the police. Following this, the people handing in an application for refugee status are subjected to a wide-ranging set of examinations. In the course of this, they have a chance to receive a family doctor's treatment at the accommodations maintained by the Office of Immigration and Nationality (BÁH) as well as the police; moreover, they are entitled to specialized treatments offered by the regional healthcare provider, and hospital

39 – They shared their experiences with the organisations of International Red Cross (ICRC), the EU, the UNHCR of the UNO and the WHO. See among others the following reports: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health/news/news/2015/10/whoeurope-and-the-ministry-of-health-of-hungary-conduct-a-joint-assessment-of-refugee-and-migrant-health-in-hungary> and <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health/news/news/2015/10/whoeurope-and-the-ministry-of-health-of-hungary-conduct-a-joint-assessment-of-refugee-and-migrant-health-in-hungary>, as well as their report materials.

40 – See: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=103128.144918, Time of access: 2016. 03. 07.

treatment as well – similarly to the Hungarian citizens residing in foreign countries, in the countries in synchronicity with this. Thus, the refugees are entitled to the necessary medication, bandages, certain medical accessories, urgent dental care, pregnancy and obstetric care, procedures aimed at terminating a pregnancy in accordance with legally determined conditions, in certain cases, to patient transport, if the transport is not possible any other way due to the patient’s medical condition.

The risk of contagious diseases was a serious question to us from the very beginning. This was a big concern especially regarding our volunteers, since we – as employers – wanted to do our best to ensure the volunteers’ safety, and avoid occasional infections. As it turned out later, there was no reason for this exaggerated concern. Later on, and markedly during the Rösztke period, the representatives of the media addressed us several times with the question whether our colleagues have met any cases of epidemic. In the case of those participating in the official process (that is, the people contributing to the registration procedure), the receiving stations and guarded lodgings are established and maintained by the Immigration and Nationality Office, as well as the police, and supervised by the Public Health and Epidemiology Service of the Police, in cooperation with the employees acting within the public health duties of ÁNTSZ-OTH (National Public Health and Medical Officer Service - Office of the Chief Medical Officer) and the county government offices in charge of public health tasks. The procedure of the screening examination for those who apply for a refugee status is regulated in detail in Paragraph 63. § (1) of the Government Decree 301/2007. (XI. 9.)⁴¹ on the implementation of Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum⁴². Based on this, the Immigration and Nationality Office notifies the migrant applying

41 – See: http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A0700301.KOR

42 – See: http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A0700080.TV

for recognition and the competent chief medical officer of the district, who determines the necessity of medical examinations corresponding to the epidemiological situation. Of course, this couldn't be carried through in the mass crisis that progressed within an informal framework with hundreds of thousands passing through our country without an official healthcare control. In this situation, the only possible chance and task of the Charity Service – just like with other civil organisations – was to provide first aid in crisis situations. According to the briefing⁴³ held by the Epidemiological Department of the ÁNTSZ Office of the Chief Medical Officer, in 2015, merely one single gastroenteritis (stomach-bowel-carrh) epidemic was discovered and reported, on July 10-12th, 2015, in the Guarded Reception Center of the Debrecen Refugee Department of the Office of Immigration and Nationality, where 15 people got sick (after celebrating Ramadan, the cause of sickness remained unknown). On July 28th, 2015, symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting were experienced among Afghan and Syrian migrants in the surroundings of Nyugati square. With the cooperation of the National Ambulance Service, 56 people were transported to the hospital “Egyesített Szent István és Szent László Kórház”, where a general medical examination was carried out. In retrospect, we can say about the year 2015 that, “according to the evaluation of the National Public Health and Medical Officer Service, the immigration wave reaching our country did not pose a threat of epidemic but carried in itself an epidemiological risk”.⁴⁴

43 – See: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health/news/news/2015/10/who-europe-and-the-ministry-of-health-of-hungary-conduct-a-joint-assessment-of-refugee-and-migrant-health-in-hungary>

44 – See: https://www.antsz.hu/felso_menu/rolunk/sajto/sajtokozlemenyek/150824-bevandozlas.html. Time of access: 2016. 03. 07.

Although not closely connected, this is the place to mention the psycho-social-related work of the Charity Service, carried out mainly in the Károly István Children's Home at Fót, which is maintained by the Directorate for Social Affairs and Child Protection. Our organisation paid very special attention to the immigrant children and the under-aged. It is always heart-wrenching to experience the hardships of the youngest, although in their sufferings, they are perhaps comforted by the hope of a better life. Our volunteers and employees continuously searched for the under-aged travelling without an escort, in order to be able to transport them to the most appropriate place. Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified on the 20th of November, 1989, in New York, "A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State".⁴⁵ They have to be provided with full-scale care, in the same quality as the children's homes providing care to Hungarian citizens. Their physical, mental, and emotional development has to be promoted according to their age and health state. They qualify as persons requiring special care, about whom Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum disposes specially. The Charity Service took care of about 150 little children for various lengths of time, among which 40 to 50 were cared for within an institutional frame. We organised for them psycho-social and other occupational programs, or helped them search for their lost parents. Unfortunately, due to the lack of registrations, this was usually a very difficult task. In our work, besides our almost 25 years of experience, we received a lot of help from the standards of other international organizations, mainly the WHO's documents and manuals, such as Toolkit

45 – See: <http://ndi-szjp.hu/Controls/DownloadEDoc.aspx?attld=b2b5d05b-25bd-46ee-b77d-a225c0573786>, Time of access: 2016. 03. 07., or here: <http://szmm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=16455&articleID=32271&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>

for Assessing Health-System Capacity for Crisis Management⁴⁶ and The Sphere Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response⁴⁷.

46 – See: <http://ec.europa.eu/chafea/documents/health/leaflet/who-toolkit.pdf>

47 – See: <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/>

A MODERN AGE OF MIGRATION?

In 2015, a typically unidentified, multinational migration crisis took place in our country and other European countries, as well. According to the Frontex database,⁴⁸ 1.83 million illegal border crossings were detected at EU's external borders. It's difficult to get hold of exact data, since the registration is not uniformized, and a lot of people didn't fulfil this obligation, and thus, often the target countries themselves don't possess the exact numbers. The tendency continued in 2016, with the winter not diminishing the number of people flooding in, which meant that once every 12 seconds on average, one person passed one of Europe's outer borders. The consequences of this phenomenon in terms of common and national safety, common healthcare, as well as its demographic, ethnic, social and political implications, are all equally momentous. In 2015, more than 430,000 migrants passed Hungary (see chart), arriving altogether from approximately 100 different countries all over the world, (with 36,000 people, it was impossible to define the country of origin. During their journey, they got help from people smugglers, against whom the authorities launched procedures charging them with "aiding illegal residence". According to the Europol's data, 30,000 suspected people smugglers helped (are helping) the migrants pass the borders illegally on the route through the Balkan.⁴⁹ This is a cardinal problem particularly because these people heavily exploit others, frequently transporting them among life-threatening circumstances. On several occasions, they commit inhuman acts that can have lifelong psychological influences (primarily, acts of violence against women and children).

48 – See: <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/greece-and-italy-continued-to-face-unprecedented-number-of-migrants-in-december-0BbBRd>

49 – See: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-investigation-idUSKCNOR-G1U120150916>

On the 8th of December 2015, the number of people entering Germany exceeded the psychological limit of 1 million, which can be considered the peak. It is a legitimate question why exactly now, why here, why in such numbers, why in such an invasion-like manner all this occurs. We will point out one aspect of the several realistic concepts and less probable conspiracy theories: the issue of overpopulation. We will touch this issue, possessing a vast literature of its own, just shortly, stressing a few points that are relevant from our point of view, mainly based on the field experience of our organisation.

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has been active in Asia as well as the Near East for almost 15 years, and have been constantly present in a few countries of Horn of Africa with its international developmental aid programs. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta assistants worked in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sumatra, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Lebanon and Syria, Burma, Vietnam, as well as Ramallah. In 2011, they were the first to appear in Nairobi, Kenya's capital with a program initiated by Hungary; in one of the biggest ghettos of the territory, the Hungarians established one of the first African sanitation centres, where the local residents could access clear, healthy drinking water and basic hygiene services.⁵⁰ In 2012, with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, a larger scale undertaking was carried out, with the same goal and contents, in Mombasa, the country's seaside holiday resort, into whose largest slum the Hungarian aid organisation was the first to introduce drinking water. In 2013, the Hungarian Maltese assistants carried out a development project in Uganda's capital, Kampala, on three different segregated settlements of the African metropolis. Within the Ugandan program, biogas-using centres were

50 – Solymári D.: *Harcok és távlatok, Kelet-Afrikai nyomortelepek ma és holnap* in Afrika Tanulmányok, 2014/8. évf. 2. sz. 5–15.

established, which were unique among the settlement circumstances and are considered an innovation. The sample, which was taken from the active house technology, provides a chance for the affected residents to cook and light their homes without harming their health. In 2014 and 2015, they continued their work in Tanzania:⁵¹ The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta developed and transformed the drinking water supply of one of the heavily deficient schools in Dar es Salaam, ensuring the daily water requirements of 2000 children. With all this, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta Service is trying to give in-field answers to one of the biggest humanitarian challenges of our days.⁵²

Based on our personal experiences, we think one of the most basic roots of the problem is the overpopulation in the cities. The rural population is unable (or unwilling) to continue their fight for daily survival, so they migrate into the cities in the hope of a better future. They abandon their various sized farms in the belief that the cities will offer them better opportunities.⁵³ These inner movements can be caused by environmental changes, natural catastrophes or human factors, with acts of violence forcing other people to leave their homes (called internally displaced persons or IDP in short in the English terminology⁵⁴). It is the desire for a better life that stands in the background of inner migration out of one's free will. However, while in the countryside, these people lived in a poverty which was capable of adapting to each other (for example, they could exchange agricultural products or other wares among one

51 – See: <http://www.maltai.hu/?action=new&newid=1726>

52 – See: <http://www.orientpress.hu/cikk/gyermekeketek-mentenek-a-magyarok-afrika-nyomornegyedeiben>

53 – Solymári D.: *Elfeledett milliók, Nyomorteleppek Kelet-Afrikában* in *Élet és Tudomány*, 2013/4 (LXVIII) 115–117.

54 – See: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c146.html>

another), in the cities, they segregate, and continue their life in one of the slums, within circumstances that are below human standards. Thus, the countryside depopulates, while at the same time, the already badly organised and established cities become overpopulated. They are unable to provide the people drifting in with jobs, and for want of any social system, the people living there sink into a deep squalor. Those who leave their homes due to violence or natural catastrophes are frequently forced to live in refugee camps.⁵⁵ According to the UNO's data, today there are approximately 60 million people worldwide who have fallen victim to some kind of a forcible displacement,⁵⁶ out of which 27 million people are living within their own countries, and about 15 million elsewhere.⁵⁷ The 50 largest refugee camps⁵⁸ house more than 1.9 million displaced individuals, with many of the residents already born into it. In the oldest Near-Eastern camps maintained by the UNO UNRWA, three generations of refugees have been living without the slightest hope for a better future.⁵⁹ There are kids whose parents, and even grandparents were born into these camps. Many of them have no mother tongue, since they have no mother country, they live their lives in the institutions maintained by the UNO. Thus, this phenomenon is not a new-fledged one. Already in the 1980's, it was to be suspected that as a result of overpopulation and the unsustainable situation in the refugee camps, masses will set out towards Europe from both the Islamic world and the territories south of the Sahara. This process could be observed in Morocco, which was already then full of black Africans, and also in Sudan – let's just recall the origins of the Darfur conflict, and its escalation. But the masses of

55 – Solymári D.: *Testvérháborúk Dél-Szudánban* in A Földgömb, XXXIII. 279., 2015. október, 54–67.

56 – See: UNHCR Global Trend 2014: <http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html>

57 – See: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/refugees/>

58 – See: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/where-are-50-most-populous-refugee-camps-180947916/?no-ist>

59 – See: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-refugees-idUSBRE8480S720120509>

migrants also started towards South-Africa due to desertification, climate change, and violent civil wars, as a result of which, almost 4 million refugees live in Africa's southern region. The problem was exasperated by the interference of the armed forces of Western powers, and the Arab spring wasn't followed by a summer, either....

The uncertain present and a future without prospects urges millions of people to emigrate, the causes of which can be found not so much in the Islam, but rather in a complex process that has been going on for decades, and its interaction with the "European vacuum". In our days, there are numerous places in the world where groups of different languages, religions, and ethnic combinations live in constant threat, without any hope of a future, often presenting a risk for one another. The borders between the countries dissolve, forming cultural melting pots. In our days, it's almost impossible to live isolated from one another. Coexisting is an unavoidable fate, prompting the peace-seeking parties to incessantly seek out the chance for solidarity with the others. In this sense, it is a challenge for all of us, inasmuch as besides preserving and strengthening our cultural traditions, only a search for a continuous dialogue and connection can be acceptable. This task, however, is not even easy in countries where the population is homogeneous. History itself doesn't offer readymade recipes for settling the "co-habitation" of nations. Freedom, equality, coexistence – this could be the new motto on the pilgrimage of "mosaic nations" living beside one another. This is especially difficult in the heterogeneously populated countries of the Near East or Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly when just a few people are capable of destabilizing a country. For them, and for us, practising the art of peaceful dialogue is a challenge, for which we need all our wisdom to make a civilisation of coexistence happen.

APPENDIX

COMPASSIONATE ACCOMPANIMENT

ENGAGEMENT OF THE HUNGARIAN CHARITY SERVICE OF THE ORDER OF MALTA DURING THE TIME OF THE 2015 MIGRATION CRISIS



