



THE PRINCE AND GRAND MASTER  
SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER  
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

Rome, 14 January 2017

To:

- Their Excellencies the Members of the Sovereign Council
- His Eminence the Cardinal Patronus
- His Excellency the Prelate
- The Members of the Government Council
- The Members of the Board of Auditors
- The Members of the Communications Board
- Their Excellencies the Grand Priors  
and the Procurators of the Grand Priories
- The Regents of the Sub-Priories
- Their Excellencies the Presidents of the National Associations
- Their Excellencies the Heads of Diplomatic Missions
- The Knights of Justice
- The Director of the Cabinet of H.M.E.H.
- The Aide-de-Camp of H.M.E.H.  
of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

Your Excellencies and dear Confrères,

By now all of you will know something of the events that have struck the Order in the past few weeks. Suffice it to say whilst I was trying to enjoy a peaceful Advent and Christmastide, I have barely been able to concentrate on anything else. It has been extremely tiring and I am sure many of you have had your Christmases disturbed by similar preoccupations.

Now that people seem to have calmed down about the initial shock of removing such a longstanding figure within the Order, I would like to clarify to you exactly what has happened – in spite of what the various news outlets and rumourmongers have been spreading.

Regarding the removal of Albrecht Boeselager as Grand Chancellor, for the exact sequence of events please see the article on the Order's website which appeared on 13 December 2016: <https://www.orderofmalta.int/2016/12/13/current-situation-order-malta-albrecht-freiherr-von-boeselager/> (attachment 1).

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There was originally some debate about the legality of the process used to remove the former Grand Chancellor from his position. The legal position has been clarified by numerous sources, and most importantly by the Advocate General, who has issued a statement defending the correct procedure which was followed.

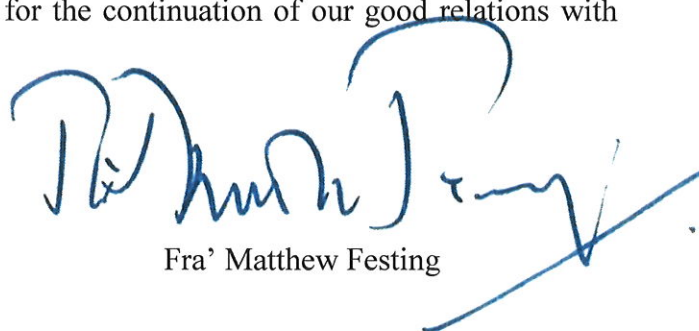
For reasons unknown to the Grand Magistracy, the Holy See decided to investigate the dismissal of the former Grand Chancellor by asking a group of people to look into the process by which Albrecht Boeselager was removed as Grand Chancellor. This is seen by some as an attempt to pacify a split in the Order, by apparently clarifying the situation. However the Grand Magistracy has pointed out that the removal of the Grand Chancellor is an act of internal governance and has given the legal reasoning why the Holy See has, in spite of its honourable and laudable intentions, no way of effectively intervening in such matters. Please see the Order's clarification prepared by the Grand Chancellor Ad Interim and the Advocate General: <https://www.orderofmalta.int/2017/01/10/statement-grand-magistry/> (attachment 2).

Furthermore, the makeup of the group of people has raised serious questions within the Grand Magistracy. There are serious accusations of a conflict of interest for at least three of the members who have been proved to be linked to a fund in Geneva. The two former Grand Chancellors had been overseeing the Order's interest in this fund. Needless to say there is nothing to suggest anything untoward, but personal and financial links make the Commission members clearly unfit to address the situation objectively. The proofs presented to me have prompted me to put in place a professional Commission of Inquiry into the situation. We await its findings. I expect to have these soon, until which point I will keep the group at arm's length.

In refusing to acknowledge this group of people's jurisdiction, I am trying to protect the Order's sovereignty. In addition, as I told the Holy Father in my letter of 22 December, I want to safeguard the Church and the Order against any potential scandal. Finally – I will not allow the rebellion of a few influential members of the Order to succeed in their aim, for whatever reason, to drive a wedge between the Holy See and the Order, and the Holy Father and me. Please do not misunderstand my intentions, nor question my unflinching loyalty to the Holy Father.

Let us pray together that this needlessly fluid situation is quickly resolved and that unity can be restored to the Order. The only truly disturbing consequence of the removal of the former Grand Chancellor is the distraction of some members of the Order from their defence of the Faith and their service of Our Lords the Sick and those in need. I call upon all of you to unite in prayer and service to witness the strength and unity of the Order, and to ensure that those few who are trying to divide the Holy See and the Order for their own interests meet with failure. I personally need your loyalty and support now more than ever.

Please pray for the Holy Father's intentions, for the continuation of our good relations with the Holy See, and for me.



Fra' Matthew Festing