Minister Terzi receives Father Paolo Dall’Oglio at the Farnesina

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Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi received Father Paolo Dall’Oglio at the Farnesina today, 11 September 2012. Father Dall’Oglio is the Jesuit priest who for decades has been engaged in missionary work in Syria, most notably by promoting inter-faith dialogue between Christianity and Islam. The restoration of the striking Deir Mar Moussa Monastery, 90km north of Damascus, is the fruit of his efforts. Thanks to Father Dall’Oglio, the Monastery has become a beacon for inter-faith dialogue and a place of meditation open to all creeds.

Minister Terzi told the priest of his strong personal appreciation for his work. He underscored that the right of each individual to freely profess their faith, and respect for religious minorities, are vital pre-conditions for the peaceful co-existence of peoples. They are absolute principles, and to see them upheld Italy is conducting an intensive diplomatic campaign in all the international fora.

During their discussion, Minister Terzi and Father Dall’Oglio devoted ample space to the dramatic humanitarian emergency in Syria. As Terzi pointed out, this is an absolute priority for Italy. The Foreign Minister illustrated to Father Dall’Oglio the numerous humanitarian initiatives conducted by Italy on behalf of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, where a field hospital has been set up. Medical kits to treat Syrians fleeing the violence have also been sent to the countries concerned.

Terzi finished by recalling that, since the onset of the crisis in Syria, Italy has stressed the need for the international community to take joint responsibility to speed up the opening of a Syrian-led political transition that meets the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Syrian people.

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