



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

AMBASSADOR TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

**Human Rights Council – [A/HRC/62/26](#)
Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
on child, early and forced marriage
Statement by Prof. Michel Veuthey,
Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons,
Deputy Permanent Observer in Geneva**

Excellencies,

The Sovereign Order of Malta thanks the Office of the High Commissioner for this excellent report, as well as for its practical recommendations aimed at combating child and forced marriage. The figures highlighted in the report are deeply alarming: nearly 12 million girls are married each year.

The Order of Malta wishes to emphasize that eradicating child and forced marriage is a legal, moral, and a spiritual challenge. It is a matter of ensuring that every human being is endowed with inherent dignity and that international human rights standards are fully respected.

From a legal perspective, international human rights instruments, notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, clearly set out the obligations of States Parties to prevent child and forced marriages, which may constitute forms of human trafficking.

From a moral and spiritual perspective, child and forced marriage constitute a grave violation of human dignity. Women and children subjected to these practices often endure long-term trauma, with serious consequences for both their physical and mental health. Children are among the most precious members of our societies. It is therefore essential to complement legal efforts with a strong spiritual dimension by fully engaging local religious leaders. In this regard, as the OHCHR rightly points out, no major religious tradition mandates child marriage.

Finally, it is crucial to recall that, beyond the legal and spiritual dimensions of this struggle, it is equally important to address the root causes that exacerbate vulnerability, including population displacement, armed conflict, poverty, and the adverse effects of climate change.

Accordingly, the Sovereign Order of Malta reaffirms its commitment to combating the scourge of human trafficking, of which child and forced marriage are manifestations, and more broadly its commitment to promoting and protecting the inherent rights and dignity of every human being.

Thank you.



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AMBASSADOR TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Human Rights Council – [A/HRC/62/49](#)
Report of the SRSG on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences
Statement by Prof. Michel Veuthey,
Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons,
Deputy Permanent Observer in Geneva

Excellencies,

The Sovereign Order of Malta thanks the Special Rapporteur for this landmark report and commends her for **placing mothers at the centre of the human rights framework**, as a distinct category of rights holders deserving specific protection.

The Order is deeply committed to the protection of mothers. Their dignity is inseparable from the common good, and violence against them strikes at the very heart of our societies and our shared humanity. This commitment is not merely declaratory. The [Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem](#), managed by the Order of Malta for over a century, is the premier maternity and neonatal critical care centre in the West Bank. As the primary referral hospital for expectant mothers and newborns in the region, it offers a safe place to give birth, cares for the most fragile newborns through its Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and reaches the most isolated mothers through an outreach clinic that brings medical and social care directly to their doorstep.

The trafficking and exploitation of mothers is of particular concern to the Order. As the report underlines, **motherhood deepens vulnerability to trafficking**. Mothers will do everything to protect their children, and traffickers exploit precisely this: they use threats against children to blackmail mothers, false promises of employment to lure and trap them, and the fear of losing custody to force compliance. We call on States to integrate this mother-specific dimension explicitly into their national anti-trafficking legislation and victim identification protocols. The intersectional vulnerabilities faced by mothers are also of deep concern. **Women and girls who are simultaneously victims of trafficking and seeking asylum¹** face a compounded invisibility: their needs at the intersection of forced displacement, exploitation, and maternity are too often unrecognized. Survivor mothers in birthing and postnatal care deserve targeted, trauma-informed support.

Finally, as the Special Rapporteur notes, **surrogacy constitutes a form of trafficking in persons**, commodifying women's bodies, severing the mother-child bond, and exposing women to serious physical, psychological and reproductive violence under conditions that can amount to servitude.

The Order reaffirms its commitment to **protecting mothers from any forms of violence** and calls on all States to ensure that the protection of mothers becomes a cornerstone of their human rights obligations.

Thank you.

¹Bosatta, L., Crespi de Valldaura, M., Bales, K., Spiby, H., & Ni Bhriain, L. (2024). Motherhood, Human Trafficking, and Asylum Seeking: The Experiences and Needs of Survivor Mothers in Birthing and Postnatal Care. *Societies*, 14(5), 69. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14050069>



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AMBASSADOR TO MONITOR AND COMBAT TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

**Human Rights Council – [A/HRC/62/41](#)
Report of the SRSG on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children
Statement by Prof. Michel Veuthey,
Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons,
Deputy Permanent Observer in Geneva**

Excellencies,

The Sovereign Order of Malta thanks the Special Rapporteur for her comprehensive report, which addresses the full range of vulnerabilities faced by displaced and stateless children in relation to trafficking and reaffirms its commitment to the protection of every child.

Trafficking does not merely violate fundamental rights; it destroys life trajectories. A child who is trafficked today is denied the future on which every society depends. Through its humanitarian and medical presence in 130 countries, in refugee camps, at border crossings, and in conflict zones, the Order of Malta witnesses daily what this report documents so powerfully: that statelessness, irregular migration, and forced displacement are not merely contexts in which trafficking occurs. They are conditions on which trafficking feeds.

We wish to share three observations.

First, on the right to family life. The upcoming report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, to be presented to the next General Assembly, will focus on children's right to family life in migration and asylum contexts. Family unity is one of the most effective protections against child trafficking.

Second, forced criminality and survivor voices. The Sovereign Order of Malta regularly participates in the [OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Persons annual conference](#), which this year focused on forced criminality. We heard survivors testify powerfully, including [Sosa Henkoma](#), who, displaced as a young child and separated from his family, was forced into criminal activity from the age of nine. His account powerfully illustrates what the non-punishment principle means in practice: justice owed to a child who was a victim, not a perpetrator.

Third, on emerging risks through new technologies. Traffickers are increasingly exploiting digital platforms and artificial intelligence tools to recruit, deceive, and control victims, including displaced and stateless children with limited digital literacy. This dimension may warrant attention to future work.¹

We fully support the recommendations in the report and stand ready to contribute, through our operational networks, to their implementation. Thank you.

¹ See the Encyclical Letter “[Magnifica Humanitas](#)” of H.H. Pope Leo XIV (15 May 2026) on safeguarding the human person in time of artificial intelligence, especially “Breaking the new chains of new forms of slavery”, paragraphs 173-179.



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**Human Rights Council – [A/HRC/62/53](#)
Report of the Report of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and
transnational corporations and other business enterprises
Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons,
Deputy Permanent Observer in Geneva**

Excellencies,

The Sovereign Order of Malta thanks the Working Group for the report on the 14th session of the Forum on Business and Human Rights.

In the view of the Sovereign Order of Malta, this Forum is of paramount importance, as it serves as **a bridge between the private sector and human rights, with businesses having a significant role in ensuring human rights implementation.** This is illustrated, for example, by issues related to supply chain monitoring and human trafficking, the latter being a priority area for the Sovereign Order of Malta, as underlined by the Grand Master in his address to the Diplomatic Corps at the beginning of the year¹.

Moreover, on the question of artificial intelligence, such a Forum can provide concrete added value. AI represents a major revolution with the potential to profoundly transform our societies, for better or for worse.

Regarding human trafficking in particular, AI is being exploited by traffickers for sextortion, grooming, and the production of child sexual abuse material. In 2020, at the initiative of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Microsoft and IBM signed the “Rome Call for AI Ethics”², a first step toward engaging technology companies in the development of AI that respects fundamental rights.

This call for a human-centred AI, placed at the service of the human person, was renewed by Pope Leo XIV in his Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*³.

Finally, the Sovereign Order of Malta supports recommendations made by the Working Group, particularly those concerning the opening of legal migration pathways, while tens of millions of migrant workers are at risk of being victim to various forms of human trafficking.

Thank you.

¹ Sovereign Order of Malta. (2026, May 12). Address of the Grand Master to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Order of Malta. Sovereign Military Order of Malta. <https://www.orderofmalta.int/news/address-grand-master-diplomatic-corps-order-of-malta/>

² The call | Rome Call. (2020). <https://www.romecall.org/the-call/>

³ Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Leo XIV *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026). <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>



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