



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/61/37
Report of the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict
Statement by Prof. Michel Veuthey,
Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons,
Deputy Permanent Observer in Geneva

Excellencies,

The Sovereign Order of Malta reaffirms its commitment to the protection of children in armed conflict and expresses its appreciation to the Special Representative for her comprehensive report ([A/HRC/61/37](#)).

As underscored in the report, children affected by armed conflict continue to suffer grave and systematic violations of their rights. These include abduction, recruitment and use as child soldiers, sexual violence and exploitation, killing and maiming, child marriage, forced contraception, and exposure to extreme trauma, such as witnessing the execution of family members. Such experiences inflict profound and long-lasting harm on children's mental health, development, and overall well-being.

In these environments, the risk of trafficking and exploitation increases dramatically. Displacement, family separation, and the collapse of basic services leave children without protection and acutely vulnerable to criminal networks and armed actors.

Addressing the nexus between armed conflict and child trafficking must therefore be a priority. This requires strengthened coordination among key mechanisms, including the mandates of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, as well as UNODC, humanitarian actors, governments, and relevant non-State actors, including faith-based organisations. Such coordination is essential to ensure timely prevention, protection, and comprehensive support for affected children.

Humanitarian organizations play a critical role not only in ensuring the survival of affected populations, but also in identifying children at risk and protecting them from abuse, exploitation, and trafficking.

Protecting and rehabilitating children in armed conflict is both a moral and legal duty¹ and an investment in the future of societies. Exploitation and trafficking inflict damage that outlasts the conflict itself, with lasting consequences for peace and stability. For this reason, the Sovereign Order of Malta stresses that the dignity and rights of every child are inviolable and must be protected without exception, even in the most difficult circumstances.

¹ Children affected by armed conflicts are protected under international humanitarian law (The 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), international criminal law, and international labor law (ILO/C/182 Worst Forms of Labour Convention).