



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

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

**ICRC – 4th Consultation with States on International Humanitarian Law
Working Group on IHL and Peace
Statement by Ambassador Michel Veuthey,
Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
Deputy Permanent Observer
Geneva, 4 May 2026**

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

Pope John XXIII, in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, defined peace not merely as the absence of war, but as the work of justice and the fruit of charity, as well as the safeguarding of human dignity. Such a definition of peace naturally encompasses International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

When initiating mediation, it is essential to include practical measures from the outset to ensure respect for IHL by all belligerents. Indeed, when peace negotiations begin, humanitarian gestures often provide the first opportunity for contact between belligerents, enabling the establishment of initial communication channels. Integrating and implementing humanitarian measures is an important way to build trust between belligerents because it demonstrates good faith and proves each party's ability to honor commitments. The primary aim of proposing humanitarian measures within a mediation process is to humanize the adversary in the eyes of the other party to prevent possible serious human rights violations.

The collective memory of peoples is a crucial factor to consider when working toward peace because the traumas they have endured often sow the seeds of future conflicts. Respecting humanitarian law means respecting human dignity, the dignity of individuals and entire communities. As Kant wrote in Article 6 of Perpetual Peace: “*No State at war with another must allow itself hostilities of a kind which would make reciprocal confidence impossible during future peace.*”

Respect for IHL is essential to ensure that civilians are spared, prisoners are treated humanely, and they are protected from torture. It is also essential to honor what peoples represent beyond the individual: their cultural identity and heritage. Respecting cultural property, and particularly **places of worship**, is essential for lasting peace¹. History has demonstrated the importance of safeguarding places of worship. Preserving essential infrastructure for survival, such as hospitals, and protecting the environment are equally vital.

Finally, faith-based organizations (FBOs) and other humanitarian actors that are neutral, impartial, and free from any political or economic interest can fulfill the role of mediator. They can initiate

¹ Veuthey, M. (1998). International Humanitarian Law and the Restoration and Maintenance of Peace. *African Security Review*, 7(5), 26–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.1998.9627876>



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discussions on respect for humanitarian law among the parties to a conflict, particularly in remote regions and among populations.

The Sovereign Order of Malta is an actor that stands ready to act as mediator whenever the need arises, by virtue of its historical legitimacy, its humanitarian action across all continents and in major conflict zones, and its sovereignty under international law, which affords it an extensive diplomatic service. The Order of Malta is a neutral and impartial actor that pursues no political or economic interests. It has a thousand years of history, serving the most vulnerable and promoting peace. The Order has already demonstrated its expertise in providing training in contexts of humanitarian crises and armed conflict. In 2021, for example, the Order trained Libyan authorities on protecting civilians, including migrants and refugees.

Thank you.