



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.