



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/62/49](#)
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 asylum**¹ 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>