



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 – 5th Consultation with States on International Humanitarian Law
Working Group on Prevention Good Practices
Statement by Ambassador Michel Veuthey,
Ambassador to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
Deputy Permanent Observer
Geneva, 25 June 2026**

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

The Sovereign Order of Malta would like to underscore how locally rooted actors, faith-based organizations, and religious leaders can help prevent IHL violations.

Engaging local religious leaders as advocates for international humanitarian law is essential for reaching the deepest levels of communities. Such figures carry a moral authority that few other actors can match, uniquely positioning them to prevent violations at the source. They often have a direct line of influence over armed forces, non-state actors, and civilian populations alike, and their voices provide a powerful platform from which calls for respect of international humanitarian law can resonate.

Moreover, religious leaders lend ethical and spiritual legitimacy to humanitarian rules and principles. By anchoring IHL principles in moral authority, they ease the acceptance of these norms within their communities.

Quite often, religious congregations play a unique role in the field, caring for civilians and the wounded.

By virtue of their proximity to local populations, religious actors are also often uniquely positioned to detect early warning signs, identifying behaviours and tensions that may signal future violations before they escalate.

This capacity reinforces precisely the kind of safeguard this framework seeks to embed: one capable of surfacing risk early, before it manifests in violations.

Finally, local religious leaders are often trusted figures who can act as a bridge between warring parties. In Colombia, for instance, the Catholic Church has maintained close dialogue with both the government and various guerrilla movements, including the FARC and the ELN, for over thirty years, in steady pursuit of a lasting and just peace.

Thank you.