



**Statement by**  
**His Eminence Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness**  
**at the *Roundtable***  
**“Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity“**  
***of the World Humanitarian Summit***  
Istanbul, 24 May 2016

The Summit represents an occasion for the Member States of the United Nations Organization to honour the principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as the fundamental agreements that form the bedrock of our humanitarian system. All relevant and binding norms should be reaffirmed, reinforced, respected and implemented.

Humanitarian assistance may never be used as a means of blackmail or an instrument of political, economic or ideological pressure, leaving human lives to hang in the balance hovering between life and death, due to deprivation of food, shelter, clothing and basic medical care.

Neither can we remain silent in the face of unspeakable crimes on account of one's religion. Convinced of the need for effective juridical means for the practical application of international law to protect all, including Christians and other religious minorities, the Holy See supports all timely and decisive actions to prevent and end acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Along these lines, the Holy See also condemns all acts of violence against women and girls, especially systematic rape used as a tactic of war or terror. The Holy See promotes the prevention and deterrence of crimes, the prosecution of criminals and access to victim assistance, which does not involve further violence to the traumatized victim and innocent unborn child.

In this regard, the Holy See emphasizes that there is no right to abortion under international human rights law or international humanitarian law and repeats the exhortation of the Secretary-General that States and non-State parties to armed conflict

must refrain from “expansive and contentious interpretations” of international law.<sup>1</sup> The Holy See continues to encourage religious institutions and Catholic organizations to accompany victims of rape in crisis situations, who, in turn, need effective and ongoing psychological, spiritual and material assistance for themselves as well as their children, conceived and born of rape.

For its part,

- The Holy See is committed to promoting, at all levels, the principle of respect for the centrality of the human person in the context of humanitarian assistance, which must be guaranteed by various humanitarian actors and in the distinct situations of armed conflicts, social crises and natural disasters, according to three criteria: 1) integral service to the human person, including both material and spiritual assistance; 2) support for the family, the natural and fundamental unit of society; and 3) access to education.
- The Holy See is committed to promote and enhance increased respect and protection of civilians and civilian objects, in particular hospitals, schools, places of worship, cultural objects and patrimony, especially during armed conflicts with a view to preventing civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas or from the use and destruction of civilian infrastructures for military operations.
- The Holy See is committed to promoting in the international community the principle that humanitarian assistance must always be guaranteed as a life-saving necessity, and therefore, it should never be used as an instrument of pressure by any actor either before, during or after hostilities.

Each one of us has the responsibility to defend the norms that save lives and protect humanity from suffering and barbarity, and the duty to translate the norms into concrete social, political and legal actions.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit (A/70/709 February 2, 2016), para. 51.