

Solidarity Submission on Article 11-Situation of persons with disabilities in Palestine, Gaza and the West Bank

“The first genocide in history where its victims are broadcasting their own destruction in real time in the desperate — so far vain — hope that the world might do something.” -- Ms *Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh, Counsel at the International Court of Justice, South Africa v. Israel 2024*

I. Introduction

This submission is being made on behalf of 30 organizations of persons with disabilities and other disability rights and justice organizations and 7 individuals. In recognition of the catastrophic situation of people with disabilities in Gaza and the West Bank as Israel continues its genocide against the people of Palestine, the endorsers of this submission stand in solidarity with disability rights activists, including women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities, in and from Palestine as well as all Palestinians. This submission focuses on the situation of women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities in Gaza and the West Bank.

As such, the genocide in Gaza must be understood not only as a catastrophic humanitarian and legal failure but also as a stark reminder of the recurring erasure and targeted harm inflicted on persons with disabilities during mass atrocities. From the Nazi T4 program that systematically murdered disabled people, to the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the 1995 Srebrenica genocide, where disabled people were among the first to be abandoned or executed, history has shown that persons with disabilities are disproportionately impacted and yet constantly excluded from protection, response, and remembrance. It is critical to recognise that that as we are also witnessing a rise in genocides and conflicts in other parts of the world that, States are complicit in the mass production of disability. Any conflict or genocide impacts people with disabilities, especially women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities, disproportionately. This is a topic that would be extremely important for the CRPD Committee to address from disability rights standpoint.

The current genocide in Gaza constitutes a moment of moral reckoning and a test of the CRPD's relevance in the face of mass violence.

II. Current situation of women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities

The dire situation of persons with disabilities in Palestine, particularly women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities, did not begin in October 2023. The current genocide must be understood within the continuum of decades-long-settler-colonial violence, military occupation, and apartheid. In Gaza, even before the events of October 2023, women and girls with disabilities endured a prolonged systemic marginalization under Israel's 17-year illegal blockade, compounded by repeated military assaults and the deliberate dismantling of Gaza's healthcare, sanitation, and social service infrastructure. Access to assistive devices, sexual and reproductive health care, and psychosocial support was routinely obstructed and denied, with specialized disability services either non-existent or made inaccessible due to fuel shortages, travel restrictions, or destroyed facilities. The blockade

severely limited access to education, employment, and community life, with women and girls with disabilities often subjected to isolation, poverty, and heightened risk of gender-based violence.¹

In the West Bank, women and girls with disabilities have long faced systemic discrimination and targeted harm: the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, widespread settler violence, home demolitions, arbitrary detention (including of minors and those with psychosocial disabilities), and the ongoing routine denial of access to healthcare through checkpoints have collectively produced conditions of chronic fear, deprivation, and disablement. The fragmentation of Palestinian land and institutions, combined with an intentional strategy of infrastructural and health degradation, has made the realization of the rights enshrined in the CRPD systematically impossible. This prolonged context of oppression must be fully acknowledged in any effort to redress the human rights violations now unfolding at an even more catastrophic scale.²

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, before the start of the genocide, Palestine had approximately 155,000 people with disabilities.³ This number is very likely much higher now as a result of disability being produced by Israel through its relentless attack on the people of Palestine in Gaza and the West Bank. In a 2024 Gender Alert, UN Women highlighted that of the civilians killed in the Gaza strip since October 2023, more than 70 percent are women or children, while nearly 1,000,000 women and girls had been displaced.⁴ The available data on number of killed and displaced persons is undercounted as demonstrated by analysis published in the Lancet,⁵ and as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, says in her report the human, material and environmental costs of the assault is unquantifiable.⁶ The genocide is not only impacting people with disabilities, especially women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities, in unimaginable ways, but the genocide has also been a mass disabling event. It has produced large scale disability – both visible and invisible. The economy of genocide—as described by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese—is built on the dispossession and disablement of Palestinians. And disability justice helps us understand and name how war, surveillance, and militarism profit from the destruction of bodies and communities.

¹ UNFPA, 2019, WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES: NEEDS OF SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SERVICES OFFERED TO THEM, https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Women%20and%20Girls%20with%20Disabilities_0.PDF

² ESCWA, (2019), Social and Economic Situation of Palestinian Women and Girls (July 2016 – June 2018), https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ESCWARPT_090119.pdf

³ COSPE (2024), Legal landscape and regulations affecting women with disabilities in the labor sector in the West Bank and Gaza, <https://palestina.cospe.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/COSPE-Fact-Sheet-En-2024-Preview.pdf>

⁴ UN WOMEN, 2024, Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Gender%20Alert%20The%20Gendered%20Impact%20of%20the%20Crisis%20in%20Gaza.pdf>

⁵ Khatib R. et al, 20204, Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential, The Lancet, <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2824%2901169-3>

⁶ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, Genocide as colonial erasure, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/genocide-as-colonial-erasure-report-francesca-albanese-01oct24/>

International arms sales, border militarization, and the blocking of humanitarian aid are capitalist ventures that produce and sustain disability on a mass scale. While it is imperative to recognise that due to the actions of Israel, it is close to impossible at this point to obtain accurate and timely data on the situation of women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities in Gaza and West Bank, since October 2023, thousands have been rendered newly disabled due to mass amputations, traumatic injuries, psychological trauma, and the denial of critical medical care.⁷ The destruction of healthcare infrastructure, including rehabilitation and mental health services, has resulted in widespread and untreated injury. The latest targeted attacks on the Community Centre of Humanity & Inclusion's local partner, Al-Jaleel Society for Care and Community-based Rehabilitation, is an example of the multiple ways in which those with disabilities and/or providing disability support are being destroyed.

As this Committee has previously noted, of the people with disabilities killed and injured in Gaza and the West Bank in the first seven months since Israeli attacks, a majority were women and children with disabilities. Additionally, this Committee has also highlighted the heightened vulnerability to sexual abuse, lack of SRHR services and safe and accessible shelter and access to food and water inter alia women with disabilities are facing.⁸ The Palestinian Association for Human Rights has also noted in their November 2024 report, '(W)omen constitute a significant portion of persons with disabilities in Gaza, and their suffering is exacerbated by displacement, overcrowding, and the lack of privacy and security. These challenges are further intensified as they face continuous displacement, often on foot and without access to food or water.'⁹

While the CRPD Committee has long advanced the rights of persons with disabilities through its principles, the situation of Palestinian women and girls with disabilities reveals a deep pattern of gendered and disability-based dispossession. This dispossession is not incidental; it is structured through the ongoing settler colonial occupation, expansion, and systemic destruction. Physically, it manifests through violence, displacement, and the destruction of healthcare and essential services, leaving disabled women and girls without access to life-saving support. Systemically, dispossession is embedded in the Israeli settler colonial policies, which intentionally target and undermine both their bodies and livelihoods. Disability-based dispossession is further entrenched by the occupation, where impairment is generated or worsened through violence, deprivation, and denial of access to care, education, and freedom of movement. This gendered and disability-based dispossession specifically illustrates how the bodies, autonomy, and rights of women and girls are disproportionately affected. This reality challenges traditional frameworks and compels the CRPD Committee to consider different approaches in its monitoring and reporting. The context of Palestine compels the Committee to

⁷ OCHA, 2025, Humanitarian Situation Update #297 Gaza Strip, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-297-gaza-strip>

⁸ UN 2024, Palestinians with disabilities subject to unbearable consequences of the ongoing hostilities and violence in the OPT, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/05/palestinians-disabilities-subject-unbearable-consequences-ongoing>

⁹ PAHRW (2024), Women Facing Genocide, The Challenges of Health and Care in Gaza, <https://pahrw.org/assets//tkryr-alnsaa-english.pdf>

acknowledge the disabling effects of settler colonial violence and genocidal warfare.¹⁰

As other submissions for the Committee's hearing will have highlighted, organizations inside and outside of Gaza and the West Bank have been documenting the impact of Israel's concerted and relentless attacks and occupation since October 2023 and long before this, as well. According to Gaza's Health Ministry¹¹ as of 7th July 2025, since October 2023 Israel has killed at least 57,575 people and wounded 136,879. However, the Ministry has also noted that collecting accurate data is close to impossible at this time.¹² Thus, it should be assumed that the numbers might be much higher than reported. The recent estimations published in Harvard Datavers speak about *"377,000 people in Gaza have been 'disappeared' by the Israeli military."*

If the international community fails to act in the face of such catastrophe, the promise of Article 11 and the Convention's commitment to dignity, safety, and equality in situations of risk stands to be rendered meaningless.

Sporadic data available on the situation of women in Gaza and West Bank as well as the situation of people with disabilities points to the grave situation of women and girls with disabilities. The 2024 report on the impact of the genocide on people with disabilities in Gaza by ACAPS, an independent disaster data analysis organisation, highlights multiple challenges people with disabilities have been facing. These include difficulties in accessing assistive devices, Palestinian sign language services, deterioration of health conditions of people with disabilities, lack of access to any form of healthcare services, a disproportionate impact on people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, rise in gender-based violence in shelters, separation from family members/caregivers etc.¹³ Similarly, multiple reports highlight the challenges women face including having to give birth without access to anaesthesia, illegal detention and rape by Israeli forces, no access to menstrual hygiene products etc.¹⁴ As the Palestinian Feminist Collective writes:

We bear witness to the reproductive genocide taking place in Palestine by the Israeli regime. We bear witness to traumatized mothers who have to deliver their babies without anesthesia, with doctors using the flashlights of their phones to conduct the operations due to being cut off from electricity by the occupation forces. As Palestinian women and girls of reproductive age are

¹⁰ UN 2024, Palestinians with disabilities subject to unbearable consequences of the ongoing hostilities and violence in the OPT, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/05/palestinians-disabilities-subject-unbearable-consequences-ongoing>

¹¹ Al Jazeera, LIVE: Israel kills 82 in Gaza; Rafah 'concentration camps' plan slammed, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2025/7/10/live-israel-kills-dozens-in-gaza-as-trump-says-very-good-chance-of-truce>

¹² Khatib R. et al, 20204, Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential, The Lancet, <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2824%2901169-3>

¹³ ACAPS, 2024, Impact of the conflict on people with disabilities in the Gaza Strip, https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20240214_ACAPS_Palestine_Impact_of_the_conflict_on_people_with_disabilities_in_the_Gaza_Strip.pdf

¹⁴ Palestinian Feminist Collective, The Palestinian Feminist Collective Condemns Reproductive Genocide in Gaza, <https://palestinianfeministcollective.org/the-pfc-condemns-reproductive-genocide-in-gaza/>

dealing with aerial strikes on their neighborhoods, schools, and shelters in Gaza, they are forced to take pills to stop their menstrual flow in the sheer absence of basic feminine care. Since October, over 20,000 women have given birth under women have given birth under genocidal conditions. We are unable to determine the outcome of these births and the conditions of mother and baby. *We bear witness to the deprivation of prenatal and postnatal care that puts Palestinian mothers and babies especially at risk of death, and forces mothers to give birth under intense bombings on the floors of crowded hospitals with no pain medication. We see women having miscarriages, stillbirths, and early deliveries as a result of stress, trauma, and fear, and babies prematurely dying after birth due to the lack of fuel and electricity necessary to maintain their incubators. As a result of the lack of food and water due to the blockade, birthing women are deprived of the ability to properly clean after delivery and have resorted to mass hysterectomies because they are unable to control their postpartum bleeding. Moreover, starvation has made it impossible for mothers to produce milk or to nurse.*¹⁵ We are unable to determine the outcome of these births and the conditions of mother and baby. *We bear witness to the deprivation of prenatal and postnatal care that puts Palestinian mothers and babies especially at risk of death, and forces mothers to give birth under intense bombings on the floors of crowded hospitals with no pain medication. We see women having miscarriages, stillbirths, and early deliveries as a result of stress, trauma, and fear, and babies prematurely dying after birth due to the lack of fuel and electricity necessary to maintain their incubators. As a result of the lack of food and water due to the blockade, birthing women are deprived of the ability to properly clean after delivery and have resorted to mass hysterectomies because they are unable to control their postpartum bleeding. Moreover, starvation has made it impossible for mothers to produce milk or to nurse.*¹⁶

It is clear that women with disabilities are experiencing this, and it is crucial to recognise that each of these violations constitute grave human rights violations under the CRPD, CEDAW as well as the Geneva Convention.¹⁷

As a State Party to the CRPD, Israel is legally bound to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities, including under Article 11, which requires protection and safety in situations of risk, including armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Moreover, as the occupying power in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Israel is bound by the Fourth Geneva Convention, which mandates the protection of civilians, including persons with disabilities, from collective punishment, forced displacement, and deprivation of essential services. These obligations are further reinforced by Israel's commitments under CEDAW, CRC, and customary international law. The Committee must urgently reaffirm that non-compliance with these obligations, particularly in the

¹⁶ Palestinian Feminist Collective, The Palestinian Feminist Collective Condemns Reproductive Genocide in Gaza, <https://palestinianfeministcollective.org/the-pfc-condemns-reproductive-genocide-in-gaza/>

¹⁷ UN 2024, Palestinians with disabilities subject to unbearable consequences of the ongoing hostilities and violence in the OPT, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/05/palestinians-disabilities-subject-unbearable-consequences-ongoing>

context of widespread and systemic harm, may amount to grave breaches of international law and warrant independent investigation and accountability.

III. Recommendations:

In light of the above, we recommend the following:

A. For the CRPD Committee:

- a. Urgently call on Israel to comply with its obligations under the CRPD, International Humanitarian Law, and International Human Rights Law, including by ceasing military operations that target or disproportionately impact persons with disabilities.
- b. Initiate an independent inquiry into the violations committed by Israel on people with disabilities, with special focus on women and girls with disabilities.
- c. Acknowledge the gendered and structural nature of disability-based oppression and discrimination in the context of Israel's settler colonial occupation and genocide.
- d. Recognize that, for the realization of the rights protected under the CRPD and international human rights standards, Palestinian liberation is imperative.
- e. Ensure the full and meaningful consultation of women and girls with disabilities in all monitoring, reporting, accountability, and reparative processes related to the ongoing genocide, in accordance with Articles 4(3) and 33(3) of the CRPD.
- f. Mandate a gender and disability responsive design of humanitarian aid, recognising the specific needs to women and girls with disabilities. To recognise the actions of Israel as genocide against the people of Palestine

B. For the Committee to ask of Israel:

- a. Call upon Israel for an immediate and complete ceasefire, and provide full access to aid agencies, especially for those with disabilities, and thus, the most vulnerable.
- b. Recommend that Israel permit immediate access, in Gaza and the West Bank, to services including access to food, water, lifesaving accessible medical services, medication, especially for people with chronic health conditions and disabilities, sexual and reproductive health services as well as accessibility services for people with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities.

C. For the Committee to ask of Third Party States:

- a. Urge member States to ensure the protection and safety of the people of Palestine and support access to essential services, and facilitating humanitarian aid, such as medical care, food, and mobility aids for people with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities.
- b. Urge member States to upholding their International Law Obligations and hold the occupying power of Israel accountable to its obligations to protect civilians, particularly those with disabilities.
- c. Urge member States to immediately and urgently demand an arms embargo against Israel to stop genocide against the people of Palestine.
- d. Urge member States to impose sanctions on Israel and hold the State accountable to the targeted genocide it is committing against Palestine.

Endorsed by:

Organizations

1. Women Enabled International
2. New Disabled South
3. Mad Thinking
4. Disability Victory
5. Humanity Welfare Organization Helpline
6. F.R.i.D.A - Feminist Response in Disability Activism
7. Disabled Women Ireland
8. Yellowdot
9. Autism Inclusiveness Direct Action Group
10. Disability Justice Network of Ontario
11. European Network on Independent Living – ENIL
12. Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA)
13. Taiwan Mad Alliance
14. Arab Foundations Forum
15. National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD), India
16. Paschimbanga Rajya Pratibandhi Sammilani, West Bengal, India
17. Vikalangalu Hakkulu Jatiya Vedike, Telangana, India
18. Differently Abled Welfare Federation, Kerala, India
19. Tamil Nadu Association for the Rights of All Types of Differently Abled & Caregivers, Tamil Nadu, India
20. Haryana Viklang Adhikar Manch, Haryana, India
21. Madhya Pradesh Viklang Adhikar Manch, Madhya Pradesh, India
22. Delhi Viklang Adhikar Manch, Delhi, India
23. Tripura Pratibandhi Adhikar Mancha, Tripura, India
24. Karnataka State Disabled & Caregivers Federation, Karnataka, India
25. Vikalangalu Hakkulu Jatiya Vedike, Andhra Pradesh, India
26. Palestinian Deaf Federation
27. Tunisian Association of Disabled People
28. Women Spaces Africa

- 29. The Unsound Project, India
- 30. U.S. Gender and Disability Justice Alliance

Individuals:

- 1. Vijay Kishor Tiwari
- 2. Dr. Tanya Titchkosky
- 3. Dr. Victor John Cordeiro
- 4. Pamela Molina
- 5. G Ravi
- 6. Subhash Chandran K R
- 7. Naila Farouky