

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

I make this statement on behalf of 41 organizations of persons with disabilities and other disability rights and justice organizations and 17 individuals who stand in solidarity with all Palestinians and with Palestinians with disabilities in specific.

At the outset, we want to extend our appreciation to the Committee for organising this imperative discussion on Article 11 in Palestine, Gaza and the West Bank. The State sponsored genocide in Palestine is a catastrophic humanitarian and legal failure and also demonstrates the ways in which States are responsible for mass production of disability.

In Palestine, and especially in Gaza and the West Bank, women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities have endured prolonged systemic violence under Israel's decades long occupation, compounded by repeated military assaults and the deliberate dismantling of healthcare, sanitation, and social service infrastructure. Access to assistive devices, sexual and reproductive health care, and psychosocial support has been routinely denied, with specialized disability services either non-existent or made inaccessible due to fuel shortages, travel restrictions, or destroyed facilities. Israel's settler colonial practices have severely limited access to education, employment, and community life, with women, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities often subjected to isolation, poverty, and heightened risk of gender-based violence. The purposeful fragmentation of Palestinian land and institutions, combined with 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 a catastrophic scale.

As we speak, the genocide Israel is committing against Palestinians has reached an unimaginable point. Multiple reports by UN agencies highlight the challenges women, girls and gender-diverse people with and without disabilities are facing including having to give birth without access to anaesthesia, illegal detention and sexual assault by Israeli occupation forces, no access to menstrual hygiene products, and deadly levels of malnutrition, among many other human rights violations. And this only describes what we know; there is so much about the situation of women, girls, and gender diverse people with disabilities in Gaza and the West Bank that we do not know, because of the Israeli blockage on, inter alia, information coming out of the region. The current genocide which Israel is systematically undertaking against the people of Palestine has also been a mass disabling crime. It has produced large scale disability – both visible and invisible.

In recent months, Israel has deliberately engineered a famine in Gaza, using starvation as a genocidal weapon. This forced starvation is not just a humanitarian crisis, it is a calculated form of violence that disproportionately affects disabled people, many of whom are unable to access limited aid supplies, stand in long queues, or digest limited food that is available. For disabled people, it is about survival under conditions that are structurally designed to eliminate them, constituting a quicker death sentence.

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

We, the endorsers of this statement reiterate our strong solidarity with the people of Palestine and urge the Committee to demand for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. We demand that Israel provide full access to independent sources of aid for all, especially for those with disabilities. We demand that Israel permit immediate access, in Gaza and the West Bank, to accessible 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, girls and gender diverse people with disabilities. We call on CRPD Committee to initiate an independent inquiry into the violations committed by Israel on people with disabilities, with focus on women and girls with disabilities. Most importantly, we demand for an end to the genocide and for Israel to be held accountable for its actions which have been in complete violation of international human rights.