

October 19, 2023

Mr. Gerard Quinn
UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons

Request for Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures on the Situation of Disabled People during the Israeli Aggression on the Gaza Strip

Dear Mr. Quinn

Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights writes to highlight the critical plight of disabled individuals in Gaza, a direct result of the ongoing Israeli aggression. The relentless hostilities have disproportionately impacted this vulnerable demographic, resulting in immense suffering, displacement, and gross violations of their fundamental human rights.

Since October 7, 2023, Israeli airstrikes have led to significant civilian casualties, causing over 3,500 fatalities and more than 12,065 injuries. Tragically, an estimated 10-15% of the injured will likely suffer permanent disabilities, further deepening the crisis. There is also the looming threat of a ground invasion by Israel.

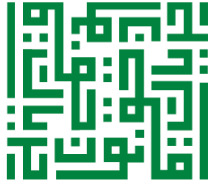
Amidst the chaos, disabled individuals face formidable challenges during evacuations, with only 10 minutes to escape following missile strikes. The urgency of escape often proves insurmountable for those requiring extra time and assistance, leading to unfortunate injury or loss of life.

Moreover, the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, including healthcare facilities, has left disabled individuals without essential medications, medical supplies, rehabilitation services, and support systems. The continuous violence has exacerbated psychological distress and trauma, profoundly affecting their well-being.

Many have lost their homes and crucial assistive devices, further impeding their independence. Public services, food, nutrition, psychosocial support programs, and protective measures, especially for women with disabilities, are now inaccessible.

The electricity outage has further hampered the lives of people with disabilities, impacting assistive devices, communication, and healthcare accessibility, particularly for those dependent on electric equipment. Hospital operations are teetering on collapse, jeopardizing vital procedures like sterilization and dialysis. Mental health patients, approximately 20,000 people, face life-threatening challenges due to the lack of essential medicines and healthcare.

The indiscriminate use of military force, restrictions on basic necessities, and the blockade of humanitarian aid have compounded the humanitarian crisis and inflicted severe suffering on disabled individuals.



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As mass displacement escalates, Israeli forces forcibly deport civilians from North Gaza to the south, creating immense challenges for people with disabilities in movement and humanitarian conditions.

In response to these urgent circumstances, we implore you to promptly initiate the Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures. It is essential to ensure the protection, assistance, and accommodations required by disabled individuals, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Furthermore, I call upon you to engage in diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to facilitate the delivery of vital aid and support services to Gaza's disabled population. This includes advocating for unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations and medical personnel to provide essential care and assistance.

Your prompt attention to this matter will alleviate the suffering of disabled individuals and uphold their rights, in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Issam Aruri
Commissioner-General