

**IN OUR OWN RIGHT:  
JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON DISABILITY RIGHTS AND  
DISARMAMENT**

**UNGA First Committee on Disarmament and International Security  
October 17, 2025**

**Delivered by Janet E. Lord, University of Baltimore School of Law & Harvard Law School  
Project on Disability**

Last October, I had the honour of delivering the first ever statement on Disability and Disarmament at the civil society segment of the United Nations First Committee. On behalf of a diverse coalition of organizations, scholars, and stakeholders, I welcomed the opening of “a new chapter of common cause between the international disability and disarmament communities”. Since then, our coalition has grown – but so, too, has the already intolerable level of death, suffering and trauma experienced by persons with disabilities in armed conflict.

These uniquely at risk and valuable members of the human family deserve a voice, a seat at all the tables – and in all the Committees – where their fate is so often decided. Given the demonstrable and essential link between disability rights and disarmament, we reiterate our call for disability rights language to be included in many existing First Committee resolutions, and to form the basis on a new resolution on *Disability, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation*.

We also want to address state delegations on the key issue of why the First Committee needs to take up this issue, in addition to the Third Committee on Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Issues, or the Human Rights Council, or the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). While all these venues are vital, the First Committee is uniquely qualified to consider disability in relation to disarmament. Doing so would also help in moving the First Committee into overdue alignment with the fundamental obligations and provisions – including the right to meaningful inclusion and participation – enshrined in the CRPD, adopted nearly 20 years ago, to which all but one First Committee states belong.

Our belief is that, at a time of dangerous global divisions, disability rights can act as a bridge between issues, states, and regions. As clarified by the UN’s own Disability Inclusion Strategy (2019), and reaffirmed in the Pact for the Future last year, the rights enshrined in the CRPD need to be respected and applied across the UN system, including *this* part of the UN system, dealing with some of the most important issues facing persons with disabilities in the world today.

We have a platform to build on. In 2019, UN Security Council Resolution 2475 established the protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict as a matter of core concern, one clearly related to the First Committee’s goals and agenda. To a limited extent, disability issues are minimally and/or implicitly addressed in First Committee resolutions related to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas, and in texts on a range of humanitarian disarmament treaties and initiatives. There is growing recognition of the differential and disproportionate impacts of all forms of armed violence, from handguns to H-bombs, on women, girls, and other groups, especially those enduring multiple forms of prejudice and

marginalization. The horrific prevalence of gender-based violence in war is also receiving more attention.

There are energizing synergies and compelling complementarities between movements to protect and enhance women's rights, children's rights, Indigenous people's rights, among other groups, in relation to disarmament and armed conflict, and all these quests for peace and justice directly involve and impact millions of persons with disabilities. But as the CRPD exists to make clear, disability rights are not a subset of other rights: they are rights *in their own right*, and they deserve explicit, not implicit, recognition.

In this building on June 10, Heba Hagrass, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, addressed the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of States Parties to the CRPD, lamenting “the dire reality for persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict” in Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, and elsewhere. She reflected that in Gaza, persons with disabilities “feel utterly abandoned – cut off from the most basic necessities like crutches and hygiene items. They said [to me] there is no dignity left, only death.”

Delegates, disarmament is integral to restoring dignity to all persons, and persons with disabilities should be integral to all national, regional, and international disarmament processes and efforts. Like all human beings, they deserve freedom *from*, and well as protection *in*, armed conflict, and they can help design and build the war-free world envisioned in the United Nations Charter. We thus urge all delegations to end the virtual invisibility of disability in the First Committee's crucial work by:

- underscoring the importance of disability rights in their statements;
- revising all relevant existing resolutions to include language on disability;
- supporting a new resolution dedicated to the topic, to align with UN Security Council resolution 2475

Thank you for your attention.

## Statement Issued by:

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Michael Stein, Harvard Law School Project on Disability, USA

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## Endorsing Organizations (45)

Able South Carolina  
Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)  
Arab Human Security Network  
Association for Empowerment for Persons with Disability in Viet Nam  
Campagna Italiana Contro le Mine  
Campaign Against Arms Trade  
Campaign to Stop Killer Robots – Hungary  
Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos – Mexico  
Colombian Campaign Against Landmines (CCCM)  
Conflict and Environment Observatory  
Development and Ability Organization (DAO)  
DFG-VK – German Peace Society-United Conscientious Objectors  
Disability Rights International  
Facing Finance (German member of Stop Killer Robots)  
Inspiring Girls Mexico  
International Campaign to Ban Landmines – Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC)  
International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative (IHLI)  
International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) – Canada  
International Peace Bureau (IPB)  
International Peace Research Association (IPRA)  
Handicap International/United Against Inhumanity  
Hunter Peace Group, Australia  
Latin American Network of Associations of Survivors of Antipersonnel Mines, Explosive Remnants of War and other Persons with Disabilities (RED-LAT)  
Legacies of War  
Mines Action Canada  
Nonviolence International  
Norwegian Peace Association  
Peace Movement Aotearoa  
Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending  
Women, Peace and Security National Network, Aotearoa New Zealand  
Aotearoa New Zealand Network on Explosive Weapons

Norwegian People's Aid  
Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities  
Ofogh: Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls, Iran  
PAX  
Perú por el Desarme  
PROTECTION, France  
Reaching Critical Will, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)  
Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)  
Soka Gakkai International  
SPADO (Sustainable Peace and Action Organization), Pakistan  
Stop Killer Robots  
Tangata Group  
United States International Council on Disabilities  
Vision GRAM-International  
West Virginia Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Bombs  
Women with Disabilities Development Foundation  
Women's International Network for Peace - Germany

### **Individual Endorsements (20)**

Dr. Becky Alexis-Martin, pacifist academic, University of Bradford, UK  
Joaquin David Rogriguez Álvarez, Autonomous University of Barcelona  
Habbouba Aoun, Landmine Resource Center, University of Balamand -Lebanon  
Edward Chaka, Executive Director, Peoples Federation for National Peace and Development (PEFENAP), Malawi  
Anne Delorme, Humanité & Inclusion Canada  
Alex Garcia, Gaucha Association of Parents and Friends of Deafblind People and People with Multiple Disabilities (AGAPASM), Brazil  
Professor Paul Harpur OAM, The University of Queensland, Australia  
Amal Haza'a, Yemen Paralympic Committee  
Bill Kidd, Member of the Scottish Parliament, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND)  
Maulaivao Maima Koro, Pacific Research Fellow, University of Adelaide, Australia  
Branka Marijan, Project Ploughshares, Canada  
Kate McInnes, Principal, Arendt Chambers, Canada  
Dr. Alex Munyambabazi, Amputee Self-help Network Uganda (ASNU)  
Dr. Stacey Pizzino, The University of Queensland, Australia  
Professor Gerard Quinn, Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
Yerdaulet Rakhmatulla and Aigerim Seitenova, co-founders, Qazaq Nuclear Frontline Coalition (QNFC)  
Yerdaulet Rakhmatulla, JASA  
Maricarmen Sequera, Executive Director, TEDIC Paraguay  
Dr. Magdalena E. Stawkowski, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of South Carolina, author of *Atomic Collective: Radioactive Life in Kazakhstan*  
María Eugenia Villarreal, Human Security Network in Latin America and the Caribbean (SEHLAC)