



UN Security Council adopted its first-ever resolution on protection of persons with disabilities in conflict

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Acting unanimously today, the Security Council adopted its first-ever resolution calling upon Member States and parties to armed conflict to protect persons with disabilities in conflict situations and to ensure they have access to justice, basic services and unimpeded humanitarian assistance.

By the terms of resolution [2475 \(2019\)](#), the 15-member Council called upon all parties to armed conflict to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need of assistance. It further urged them to prevent violence and abuses against civilians in situations of armed conflict, including those involving in killing and maiming, abduction and torture, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The Council emphasized the need for States to end impunity for criminal acts against civilians, including those with disabilities, and to ensure they have access to justice and effective remedies, and as appropriate, reparation. It called upon all parties to armed conflict to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

Encouraging Member States to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy equal access to basic services, including education, health care, transportation and information and communications technology (ICT) and systems, the Council further urged States to enable the meaningful participation and representation of persons with disabilities, including their representative organizations, in humanitarian action and in conflict prevention, resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction and peacebuilding.

Further by the resolution, the Council urged Member States to take steps to eliminate discrimination and marginalization on the basis of disability in situations of armed conflict. It also urged States parties to comply with their obligations under the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Speaking after the adoption, Joanna Wronecka (Poland) welcomed the Council's strong support for the first-ever resolution on "this important but often overlooked" issue. She noted that, since the beginning of negotiations, Council members have had three main goals: strengthening data-collection and reporting on persons with disabilities in conflict; building capacity and knowledge on the rights of persons with disabilities among peacebuilders and peacekeepers; and empowering persons with disabilities in conflict and post-conflict situations. She expressed hope that today's landmark resolution will bring significant changes for persons with disabilities, ensuring they will no longer be left behind.

Cherith Norman-Chalet (United States), noting that her delegation co-sponsored the resolution, emphasized that "this ground-breaking resolution is a significant step forward" in bringing the issue to a part of the United Nations in which not enough has been done to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The text outlines steps that Member States can take to address challenges facing people with disabilities in conflict, she said, expressing hope that the issue will become a regular part of the Council's work.

Sheraz Gasri (France) said the resolution marks a major step forward because 15 per cent of the global population lives with a disability. "We simply must do more to defend the rights of persons with disabilities" and prevent discrimination, notably in armed conflict, she emphasized, calling for universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Jonathan Guy Allen (United Kingdom) expressed special thanks to Poland's delegation, noting that it hosted the decisive Arria formula meeting on the issue. However, he agreed with his counterpart from the Russian Federation that the Council should not create new legal obligations. "We've been careful not to do so," he added. The resolution marks a vital first step for the Council to better understand the disproportionate impacts of conflict on persons with disabilities, he said, emphasizing the essential need for active participation to improve protection in armed conflict situations.

José Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic), also speaking on behalf of Belgium, Germany, Kuwait and Peru, recalled that the Council had the opportunity in April to hear a briefing by Nujeen Mustafa, the first person with a disability to brief members in the organ's history. "Her story about how she left Syria and arrived in Germany in a wheelchair was so compelling that we will remember it for years to come," he said, adding: "Her willpower and resilience is an example to us all." He went on to stress that the situation of persons with disabilities in armed conflict deserves more attention from the Council than it has previously received, pointing out that it touches upon human rights and international humanitarian law, and is inextricably linked to peace and security. The rights of persons with disabilities are enshrined in the Convention — "a landmark of international law" — and they must be able to enjoy those rights free from discrimination and stigma, he affirmed.

Yao Shaojun (China), meanwhile, said the key lies in stamping out the causes of conflict, emphasizing that the Council should prevent conflict through dialogue and consultation so as to minimize potential impacts on vulnerable groups. However, today's resolution should not replace the work of human rights or social welfare agencies dedicated to persons with disabilities, he stressed. Rather, the issue should be dealt with in full observance of all Council resolutions on the protection of civilians, he said, underlining that the countries concerned must shoulder the primary responsibility of assisting such persons, with the United Nations and others playing a complementary role.

Gennady V. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) struck a similar note, cautioning that, while his delegation agrees with the resolution's humanitarian principles, some of its provisions exceed the Council's mandate. The work of protecting vulnerable groups must be carried out strictly in accordance with the United Nations principle of division of labour, he emphasized, pointing out that efforts to protect persons with disabilities are only possible when each United Nations entity acts in accordance with the mandate conferred upon it. He went on to stress that all groups should be protected equally in armed conflict and one should not be protected to the detriment of another. Warning against inventing new international principles and new categories requiring protection under international law, he said the Council should pursue its practical work.