

## WRITTEN STATEMENT

### OHCHR INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON YOUTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Submitted by

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As a participant of the International Care Leaver Convention last year, I would like to bring to your attention one of the [11 highly important Key Takeaways](#), notably the demand of an *International Care Leavers Day* approved by the United Nations. With a day dedicated to care leavers, allows the marginalized group of young people growing up in care to finally achieve to step out of the invisibility they occupied for too long and participate in the public space where they have their respective place as well and the chance to speak up for themselves.

Care leavers are a part of the society not less than anybody else. It is important that people all over the world do know what a care leaver is and what they are struggling with in life. It is so important that it is clear for everyone that it is never the child's fault in which complicated family situation he or she was born, but it is the responsibility of the authorities, of policy-makers and higher institutions to grant to every of these children the best possible way to live their childhood and to start their life as adults. When the society does not know enough about these children and young people, will anything change?

Secondly, there is the need for them to be involved into the decision-making processes on all matters concerning them. No one should forget that there are a lot of people, organizations, and authorities out there who are deciding about matters that have a great impact on the lives of care leavers, and all this without living or having lived the life of a care leaver. These young people must be included into these processes, even more now in times of the COVID19 pandemic when young care leavers are one of the most highly affected groups of governmental decisions and restrictions, such as housing and education. These days, they are getting more and more included in different changing processes, and we can all see the benefits on both sides: Care leavers who are so wonderfully engaged and motivated to participate, and the policy-makers and organizations who are benefitting from their enriching perspectives and experiences. So, why not giving care leavers the possibility to engage directly with the UN to push forward changes?

What more? The United Nations to have a special fund for care leavers which is accessible to the different Care Leaver Networks in the world. In my home country, Austria, a country of 9 million people, around 1000 care leavers leave care every year. 1000 in 9 million. And in all the other countries around the world the numbers are quite similar, some have more, some have less Care Leavers. But how could it be that these few people are not granted a safety network consisting of psychological, financial, housing, juridical and educational help, when care leavers have no one to turn to when they face difficulties in life after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday?

Maybe it is because a care leaver is, up to this day, still a term the average person does not know about. Not knowing about is equal to not caring about and so nothing will change. That is the point why it is so important for care leavers to be acknowledged by the United Nations and to be given a proper day on which they have the possibility to step out of the unknown, the

unrecognized and be the center of our society and our awareness, and most importantly, have the possibility to use their voice and to speak out!

For a change in the life of care leavers!