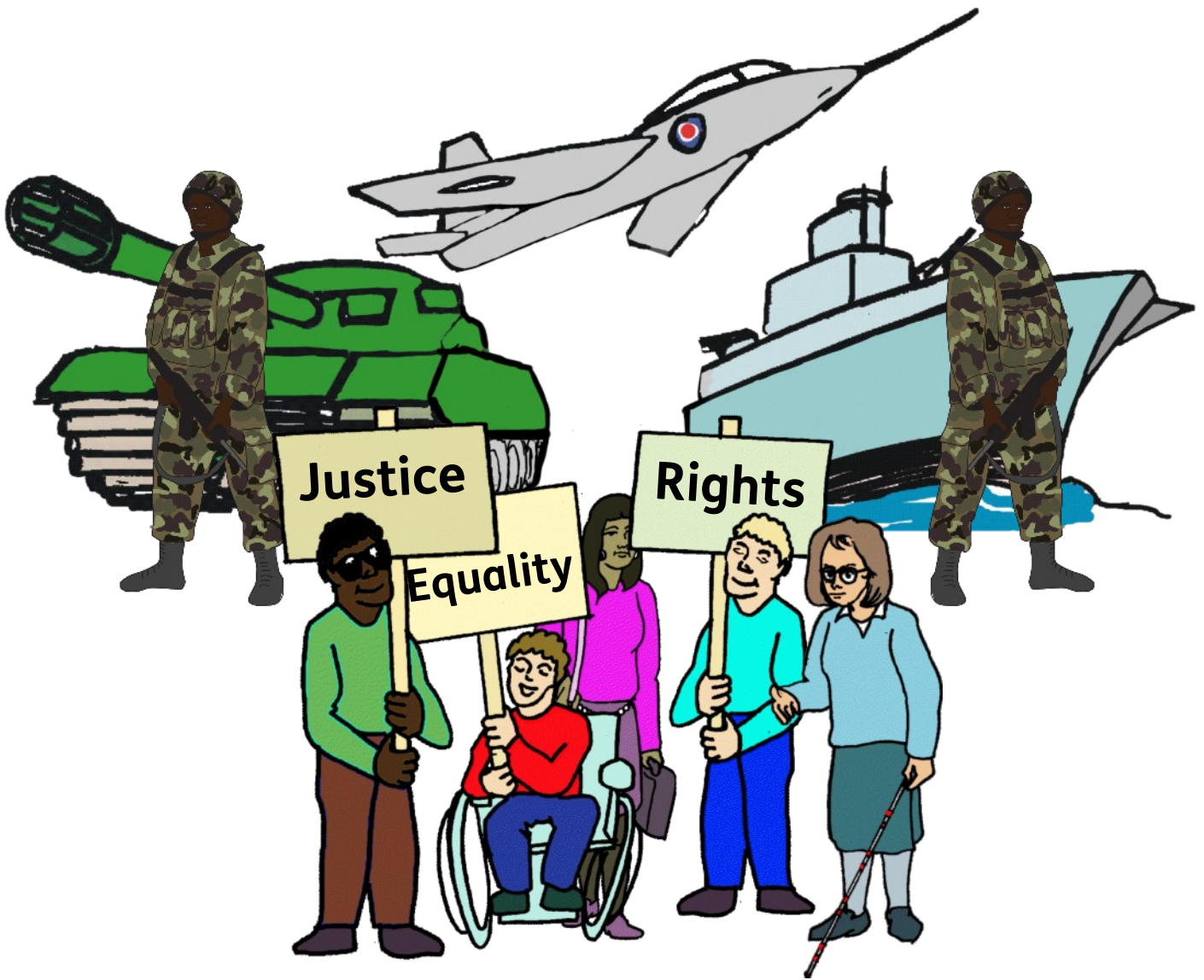




# The rights of people with disabilities



## Protecting the rights of persons with disabilities during armed conflict

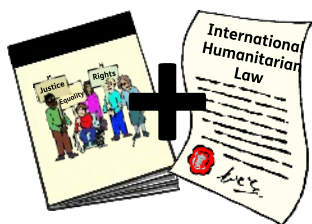


EasyRead version



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# About this report



The **Special Rapporteur** on the rights of persons with disabilities is Mr Gerard Quinn. Mr Quinn helps countries understand how to respect the rights of persons with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities is part of the **United Nations (UN)**.



The United Nations (UN) is a group made of 193 countries. It works to keep peace between countries, get countries working together, and make sure people get their human rights.

<b>2022</b>		
Jan	Feb	Mar
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Mr Quinn wrote a report in 2022 (A/77/2969) on the rights of persons with disabilities in **armed conflict**.

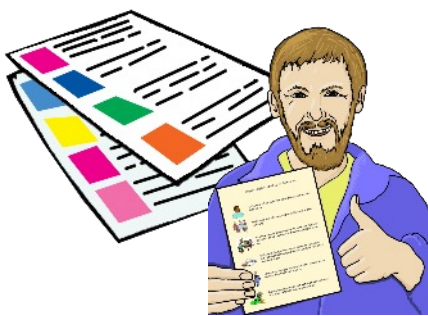


When there is armed conflict:

- there might be guns and shooting
- there might be bombs
- people may have to leave their homes
- people might be hurt or killed.



Mr Quinn's report tells you about the first time that people from the military came together with organizations of persons with disabilities to talk about looking after the rights of persons with disabilities during war and conflict.



This is an Easy Read version of Mr Quinn's report. The Special Rapporteur thanks everyone who helped with the ideas and recommendations of this report.

2021			
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
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In a similar report in 2021 Mr Quinn found that persons with disabilities are **invisible** during conflict or war.

**Invisible** means countries do not think about persons with disabilities:



- when there are very big problems like conflict or war



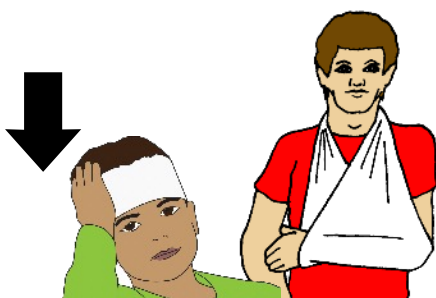
- when they work out ways to stop conflict



- when they help people leave war-torn areas



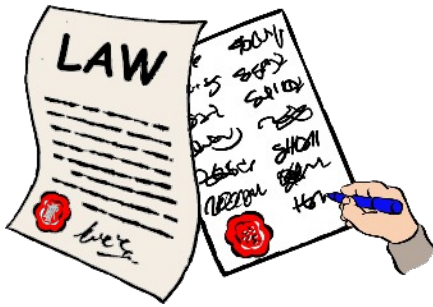
- during peacekeeping and peacebuilding.



So this report looks at ways to reduce the number of persons with disabilities who are hurt or killed in armed conflict.



# International Humanitarian Law and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



There are agreements and laws about what countries should do when there are very big problems like conflict or war.



## 1. International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law is sometimes called **IHL**.

IHL is about protecting people who are not taking part in armed conflict.



People not taking part in fighting may be:

- sick people
- wounded people



- prisoners



- **civilians.**

**Civilians** are people who do not take part in a war.



International Humanitarian Law says each party to a conflict must work out which people are fighting and which people are civilians. They must not hurt civilians, including persons with disabilities.



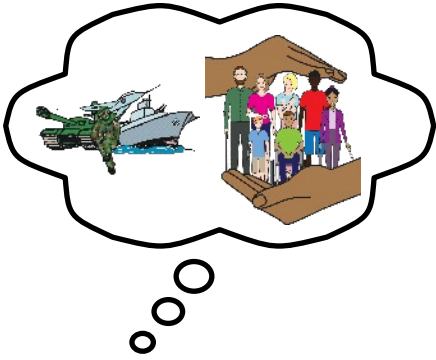
## 2. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an agreement that sets out what countries must do to make sure persons with disabilities:



- have the same human rights and choices as everybody else in how they live and take part in their communities





- are kept safe in a way that is fair and accessible. So countries need to think about ways to keep persons with disabilities safe in a conflict.



We think the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) can work together to make life better for persons with disabilities during armed conflicts.



## Groups that are looking at ways the CRPD and IHL can work together



Many groups are looking at ways that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) can work together to make life better for persons with disabilities.



- The UN Security Council holds meetings for countries and organizations of persons with disabilities where people can share ideas safely.



- Each year the UN Secretary-General's report looks at protecting civilians and children with disabilities.



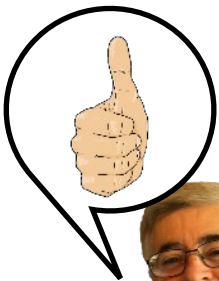
- UNICEF cares about how war hurts children.



- The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy asks countries to check how they protect civilians with disabilities in armed conflict.



- The CRPD Committee looks at how the CRPD and IHL can work together to protect persons with disabilities during armed conflict. The committee knows it has more work to do.



- The Special Rapporteur Mr Quinn has said well done to the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for doing good work on disability inclusion.



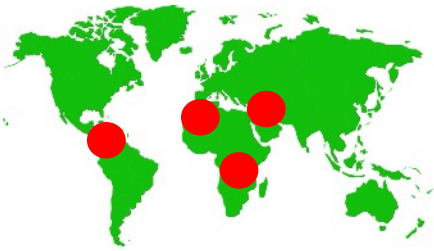
- Universities have been doing work on how armed combat affects persons with disabilities.



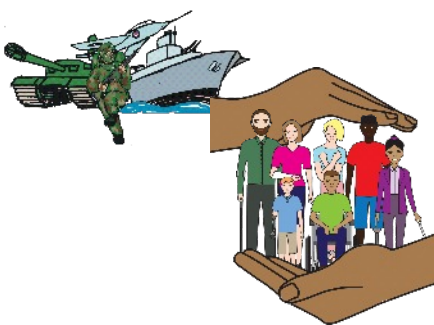
## Regional meetings of the military and OPDs



Mr Quinn had 3 workshops with the military and **organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)** to talk about how to protect the rights of persons with disabilities during war and conflict.



He met with people from Africa, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa.



They talked about:

- ways to protect persons with disabilities during an armed conflict



- helping organizations of persons with disabilities or OPDs get stronger



- helping military groups learn about disability



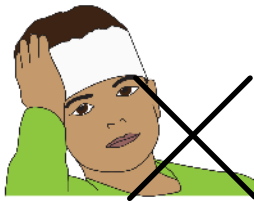
- setting up ways that OPDs and the military could meet and keep talking.



# What the military and OPDs found out at their meetings

## 1. Training military troops

International Humanitarian Law expects military leaders to:



- avoid hurting or killing civilians and



- protect things that belong to civilians.



International Humanitarian Law (IHL) protects all civilians. Some civilians will be persons with disabilities but the military fighting in a conflict are often not aware of where persons with disabilities live or what their needs are.



Military groups say they do not have information about where persons with disabilities live or about their needs. But we know that 15 people in every 100 people have disabilities. We think this is a good starting point for the military to talk to OPDs.



The way that countries train their military groups does not say how to protect persons with disabilities in armed combat.



## 2. Communication problems and accessible information

Military leaders can warn civilians to leave a conflict area. When persons with disabilities don't move away, the military may think they are being stubborn.



So it is important that the military give warnings to leave in a way that persons with disabilities can understand.

Examples:

- a deaf person signs but the soldier does not understand
- people are warned to leave their homes for their safety but the warning is not in a form they understand.



### 3. Persons with disabilities who are left behind when there is danger

Persons with disabilities can be left behind during conflicts. Examples:



- people living in care facilities or hospitals cannot get to safety



- camps for people who have to leave their homes are not accessible or do not meet their needs.

### 4. Women and girls with disabilities

Examples:



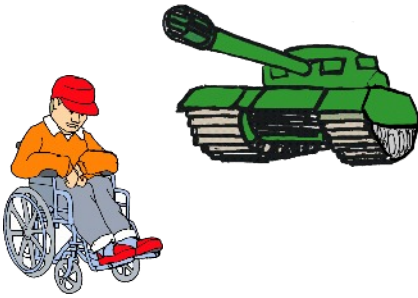
- troops may not know how to speak with women with disabilities



- the help of humanitarian organizations is often not accessible to women and girls with disabilities.



## 5. Modern weapons are smart



Some weapons use artificial intelligence or AI. Persons with disabilities can be hurt if the weapon cannot tell the difference between a person's equipment and another weapon.

## 6. The military does not speak with persons with disability



We think the International Committee of the Red Cross can help with this.



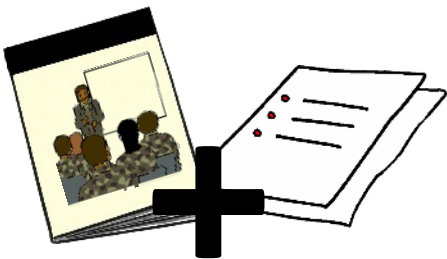
## Benefits of OPDs and the military talking to each other



People at the workshops found it helpful to talk with each other.



Military people said they now understand how important it is to talk to OPDs about the CPRD and IHL.



They will add this information to their training materials.



This will help them protect civilians including persons with disabilities.



## Important things to think about



The protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict is just as important as the protection of children and older persons.



Military troops need training on how to identify and protect persons with disabilities during armed conflict.



Countries should put together information about persons with disabilities for the military. But the military should still protect all citizens.



Each country's militaries and OPDs need to talk. We know this helps to build safety for persons with disabilities during armed conflicts.



## What should happen next?

### This is what we think countries to do



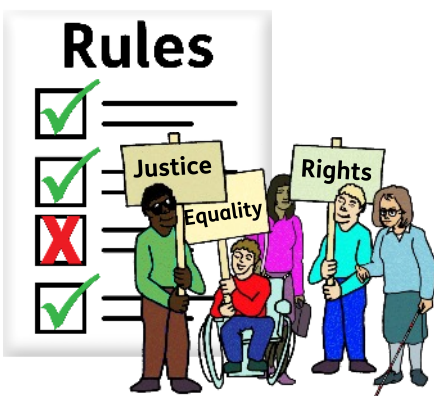
- Build understanding

Persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in different countries should work together to fix big problems.



- Collect data

Countries should get information about persons with disabilities, older people, women and girls so they can work out where there are barriers or accessibility problems.

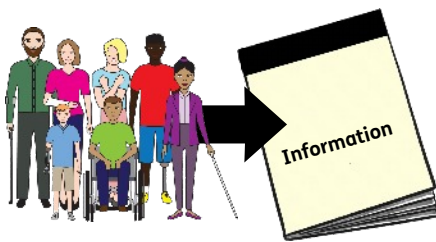


- Agree to follow the rules of human rights treaties.

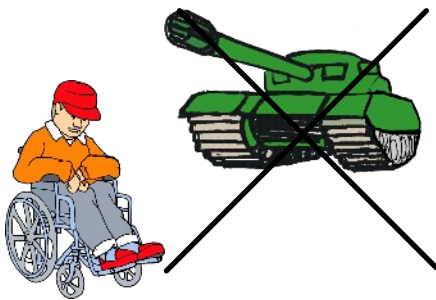


- International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

International Humanitarian Law groups should ask persons with disabilities to work with them.



Make sure IHL information includes persons with disabilities.



- Keep persons with disabilities safe from modern, artificially intelligent weapons.

## **This is what we think militaries should do**

- Train their troops



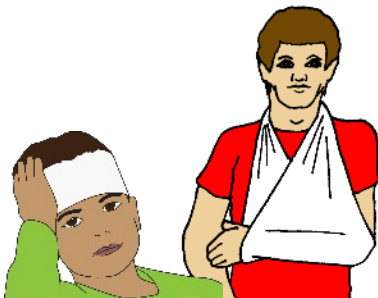
Talk with OPDs about ways to protect persons with disabilities, women, children and older persons in armed conflict.



Teach their troops about International Humanitarian Law and explain how they must be sensitive to the rights of persons with disabilities during conflict.

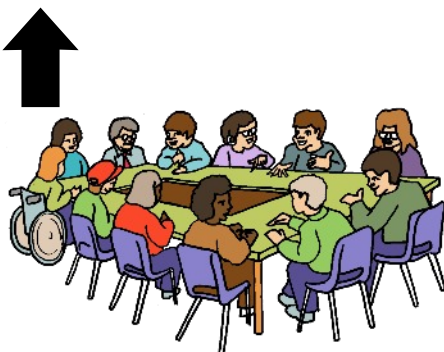


- Understand that about 15 in every 100 people are persons with disabilities



- Look at what happens when persons with disabilities are hurt in a conflict. Use this information to work out ways to protect persons with disabilities.

## **This is what we think the United Nations should do**



- The UN Security Council should have more meetings for countries and organizations of persons with disabilities where people can share ideas safely.



- Keep reminding UN bodies to watch that international humanitarian laws are being followed during conflict.



- Work with OPDs on making training material about protecting civilians during conflict and in peacekeeping.



- Work with UNICEF on protecting children with disabilities during armed conflict.



## This is what we think the CPRD Committee should do

- Work out ways to help countries understand the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



- Ask countries to report back how they are going with IHL.

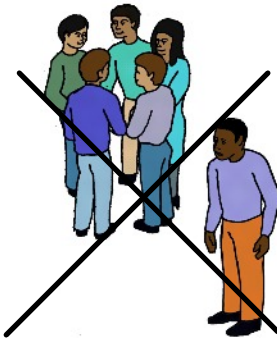


- Point out when countries do not follow the rules of IHL.

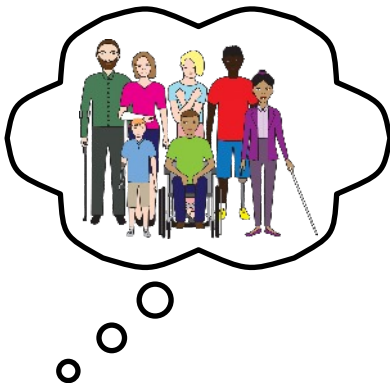
## This is what we think the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent should do



- Be sure they understand and help where they see disability inequality.



- Make sure their humanitarian work does not increase discrimination of persons with disabilities.



- Remind countries that they must think about and protect persons with disabilities.



- Work closely with OPDs and other to build their understanding of IHL.



## **This is what we think civil societies and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) should do**



- Help OPDs work with countries, military organizations and others on disability rights and IHL.

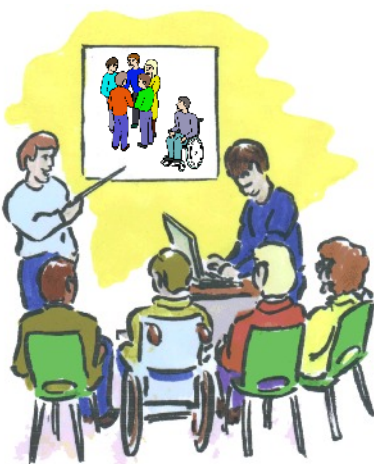


- Do research on how militaries can follow the rules of IHL and the CRPD.



- Remind militaries and UN bodies to talk about disability inclusion.

## **This is what we think universities and research bodies should do**



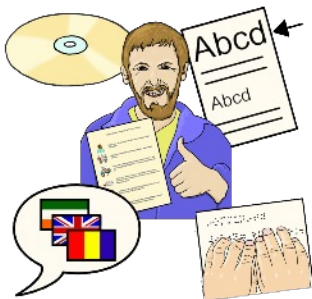
- Make sure students of IHL learn about disability discrimination and what countries must do to follow the rules of IHL.



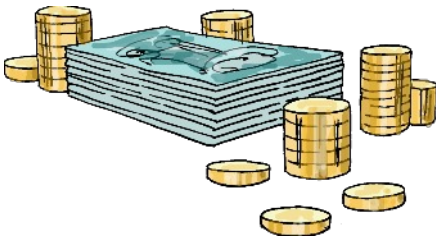
- Encourage research about:
  - International humanitarian law and the CRPD



- how armed conflict affects persons with disabilities, women, older persons, children



- Share the information in accessible formats.



- Seek funding for research into IHL and disability.



## What the words mean

**Civilians** are people who do not take part in a war.

**The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** is an agreement that sets out what Countries must do to make sure persons with disabilities have the same rights as everybody else. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is sometimes called the CRPD.

**Human rights** are the rights everyone should get.

**Humanitarian work** is work caring for people when there are risky situations.

**International Humanitarian Law is sometimes called IHL**  
IHL is about protecting people who are not taking part in armed conflict such as sick people, wounded people, prisoners and civilians.

**Organisations of persons with disabilities** are sometimes called OPDs. OPDs are organizations that have an understanding of disability. Many of the people who work at the OPDs have a disability or have a family member with a disability. OPDs help people with disability have their say.

**Special Rapporteur** is a job with the UN in charge of work about human rights.

**United Nations** is an organization that aims to keep peace between countries, get countries working together, and make sure people get their human rights.

**Universities** are places where people learn. Most people who go to university have finished school.



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