Maat for peace, development and human rights inputs to the **Special Rapporteur** on the Rights of Persons with **Disabilities.**

**Introduction**:

Maat for peace, development and human rights is pleased to participate in the work of the special rapporteur on disability and we appreciate all efforts indicated by the rapporteur, and we hope all success in the thematic report.

**-From segregation and invisibility  to inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. Identifying and overcoming barriers to successful deinstitutionalization:[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Maat for Peace would like to point out that there has been nothing new in the system of legislation and instructions for people with disabilities in Syria, since 2015 no modification or development has been added to this system, and this stems from the state’s preoccupation with its institutions and legislative and executive authorities with the security conditions and striving to consolidate power and influence by confronting armed groups .

In terms of our work and our role as defenders of the rights of people with disabilities in Syria, we can say that our work as defenders has become confined to stable areas under the authority of the state, while we find it difficult to work and be in areas outside its control, and therefore our role is almost marginal and weak in intervening to protect people with disabilities In areas where fighting is ongoing or under the control of armed groups.

On the other hand, many of the violations that take place in the areas where clashes and fighting are taking place are not reported by those affected, whether they are people with disabilities or ordinary people, for fear of prosecution and punishment by the armed authorities if they become aware of such behavior, and also there is sometimes another important problem Preventing reporting is the lack of confidence in the ability of civil society organizations to provide assistance to the victims.

Therefore, our inability to be present to monitor and document violations in accordance with United Nations standards and in an objective and impartial manner has prevented us from doing this work, as we refuse to accept any information or news without verifying its authenticity.

Other than that the mechanism for monitoring and documenting the needs of people with disabilities in Syria did not issue any of the recent estimated statistics from 2017, and the latest statistics were issued by the World Health Organization and the International Organization for Persons with Disabilities, which indicated that it is estimated that about 3 million people in the Syrian Arab Republic live with injuries and disabilities Because of the repercussions of the conflict and the conditions of disasters and armed conflicts and the disruption of the wheel of normal life, the work of governmental and non-governmental institutions in providing the necessary support becomes very difficult, not to mention the difficulty of conducting accurate statistics and this has already happened for Syrian governmental and non-governmental institutions, according to old statistics of 2012 reported The statistics of the Ministry of Social Affairs that 4,638 persons with disabilities are registered in 59 social care institutions, of which 27 are government institutions, distributed among those with blindness, deafness, cerebral palsy and physical disability, a large number of associations, most of them are ineffective and do not cover the needs of persons with disabilities

Unlike the economic burden that the circumstances of the year 2020 placed on Syria in general, and the Syrian family in particular, it was heavy. Syria, like all countries in the world, has suffered the brunt of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has brought the global economy to a halt and the movement of import and export to a halt. Several new packages of Western sanctions against Syria also entered into force in the so-called Caesar Act, which in turn exacerbated the deteriorating economic situation; Due to the war and the situation related to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tightening of sanctions imposed on the country has prevented it from importing basic requirements; Such as medicines, fuels and basic foodstuffs such as wheat and other vital materials, which posed a painful challenge to the local economy, directly reflected on the living situation of the population in the country, and complicated the issue of securing an appropriate social environment for the care and support of people with disabilities and special needs within the standards and conditions set by the relevant international and local laws. Protecting the rights of people with disabilities and people with special needs, which put pressure on families of people with disabilities with regard to treatment costs, which range between 2 to 3 dollars per month, and this is very expensive for the family, because some families believe that this amount reduces food expenses, and this is in parallel with the absence of support from non-governmental institutions Governmental and governmental authorities regarding the provision of treatment, which has become an obstacle between Syrian civil society and families to treat persons with disabilities as a number and not as a human condition that requires sympathy and rehabilitation and the application of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, which states that inclusion, empowerment and inclusion within societies, including, for example, Yasmine Badran from Damascus has a hearing problem, she has delayed cognitive abilities, the world champion in badminton started Her awards march in 2010 and won gold and silver medals in badminton in the Special Olympics at the level of the Syrian Arab Republic, and in 2012 she won two gold and silver medals in badminton in the Special Olympics in the Sultanate of Oman in 2015 she won second place and two silver medals at the world level in sports Badminton is in the Special Olympics in the United States of America, and she has multiple hobbies, including drawing and arts, and has won several prizes in drawing at the level of the Syrian Arab Republic. Currently, Yasmine works on training children with Down syndrome on the game of badminton and drawing.

The war came and deprived her of her most basic rights, which is to play sports and participate in world championships because of the sanctions applied to Syria, which made her psychological condition worsen. Yasmine’s sister tried to change her psychology with internal tournaments, so Corona came and she was the judge who deprived her of everything, even integration into society with normal people and even people who From the same condition, which made her live in complete isolation, and her family sent a letter to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Why don't the United Nations-sponsored bodies act to support the needs of people with disabilities? We don't know why? We strive to change her psychological state, which was shattered after this isolation.

**-Challenges and Recommendations:**

In Syria, persons with disability are facing many challenges since the start of the conflict in 2011.

It has increased vulnerability and the prevalence of impairment, leaving a tremendous

Number of war-born injuries that are considered as a problem in both health and socioeconomic sectors. The staggering levels of need persist for people across Syria as it remains a major protection crisis, with civilians exposed to multiple protection risks related to ongoing  hostilities; the effects of new and protracted displacement; dire conditions in sites and  collective shelters hosting IDPs; and the depletion of socioeconomic resources triggering   harmful coping strategies (e.g. child labor and early marriages).   In support of national and local efforts, the humanitarian community will strive to contribute to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable people, enhance the prevention, mitigation and response to protection needs; and increase resilience, livelihoods and access to basic services.

Persons with visually impairment and mobility challenges are highly challenged by the difficulty of the urgent evacuation of places attacked during conflict. No help is given to them to let them leave this place quickly.

The war has resulted a high number of internally displeased persons in Syria specially persons with wheel chair, and visually impairment, they do not have houses, and they lost jobs.

The war has been caused a high number of disabled persons; many people acquired disability due to being injured, which led to increasing the number of persons with disability witch are unable to work or even to live independently.

Currently, the ministry of health has reported that 26% of hospitals in Syria are not functioning due to damage and distortions by wars.

The health situation in Syria continued to deteriorate. People most at risk include people living with chronic diseases and/or disabilities, those in need for mental health and psychosocial support, and survivors of trauma, including the war wounded.   To cover the emerging needs, the number of Non-Governmental Organizations NGOs, Based Organizations FBOs and International NGOs has increased greatly in all aspects.

The United Nations has widened its scope of partnership to benefit and use new fired up parties. In addition, taking advantage of the Syrian community will and determination and the governmental and international attempts to promote the public weal makes today the best   time to direct these actions into disability matters and blaze a trail for behavioral and thinking changes.

It is worth to mention, that, Syria has signed the CRPD convention in 2006, and they indicated the law no30 for 2007, for persons with disability and the PWD rights to employment and access jobs.

Although, during the crises, the situation is now deteriorating, many of persons with disability, specially, who acquired their disability during the war, they are currently not acknowledged in the governmental database, they are not registered in the system of their municipalities, and they don’t have access to any kind of assistance.

The registration of persons with disability is ceased during war and conflicts there, and they feel afraid of registering themselves as disabled. They do not receive any assistance or services; they lack health care, livelihood services, and monetary aid.

Even DPOs in Syria, they are not having a full access to their actual numbers, or the places where they live.

Also, due to the fragmentation of Syria, humanitarian organization are not granted the access to some areas, which are under the control of the Syrian government or nun state actors, and turkey, specially eastern and north Syria.

Concerning military services, persons with disability are excluded from the military work on the base of their disability, not allowed to serve as military persons, they are exempted from the obligatory services and there are no modifications conducted in this rule.

Generally, persons with disabilities experience more hardship than persons without disabilities such as less education, poorer health, and higher poverty rates. Along with   multiple obstacles regarding their social inclusion like inaccessible physical environments, the unavailability of assistive devices and technologies, gaps in service delivery, and   discriminatory prejudice and stigma in society.  The National Study on Disabilities   conducted by United Nations Children Fund UNICEF and World Health Organization WHO   and United Nations Development Programmed UNDP in 2017 provides some insights on   people’s perception of PWDs, their ability to be included in society, and the stigma, misinformation and judgmental attitudes that exist. For example, some of the most common   perceptions in the Syrian society is that PWDs are viewed as a burden inside their families.

In employment, more than 58 % of persons with disability are not working while they are seeking jobs, and according to the world bank, about 20% of the poor persons in Syria now are with disabilities, or living in a family witch include a persons with disability.

The lack of employment is a huge threat against the dignity and the feeling of empowerment by the disability persons. In addition, it is now clear that, poverty is interrelated and parallel to the fully enjoyment by persons with disability to their rights.

Lastly, it is hard to irradiate poverty unless with supporting disability rights and providing them with the essential needed services for their stability.

To sum up, Vulnerable groups including children, pregnant women, elderly, sick and persons with   disabilities are usually insecure towards multiple forms of violence especially in humanitarian    situations due to their special needs and status as they have greater difficulty in attaining   assistance not to mention basic services such as food, water and health care.  Besides, it    is more likely that PWDs are separated from their families or assistive devices. Their   exclusion compounds the already existing risks, such as sexual, social or economic   exploitation.

In spite of the frequency and the familiarity of the vulnerabilities of PWDs, international    humanitarian interventions still possess a gap in acquiring PWDs needs which makes   accessing the much-needed support unapproachable.

Maat for peace is recommending that, the humanitarian organizations should be granted access to all areas in need for assistance, all restrictions on movement by authorities controlling the Syrian territories should be removed to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to persons with disability.

Maat for peace is also remarking the importance of raising awareness about the disability refugees, who need different types of assistance, specially who suffer from war traumas, the humanitarian organizations should give them more focus in humanitarian discussions, and to give them priority in their interventions on ground.

1. Information received by Ruba al-Atrash; an applied behavior analysis specialist and a behavior modification trainer at UNRWA [↑](#footnote-ref-1)