



**UN Security Council Arria Formula meeting on persons with disabilities
in armed conflict**

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Speech Anne Hery, Advocacy and Institutional Relations Director, HI

Thank you Madam Chair, and thanks to the missions of Poland, and the other sponsors of this meeting and all the briefers.

It is very positive that such a discussion can take place within the UN Security Council.

As an organization, Humanity & Inclusion, the new name of Handicap International, has been working with persons affected by armed conflicts, and among them persons with disabilities, for more than 35 years. Today, 21 out of the 60 countries in which we are present are directly concerned by armed conflicts.

I was particularly convinced by the importance of this issue during an evaluation conducted between Tanzania and DRC, along with the refugees previously displaced by conflict and returning to their places of origins in South Kivu. I listened to stories about the tremendous challenges experienced by persons with disabilities when trying to flee the fighting; I saw the very concrete difficulties just to climb in the trucks taking the refugees back from the camps in Tanzania. It was clear that to address these specific challenges, humanitarian stakeholders had to acknowledge the scope of the issue, make the necessary efforts to listen to persons with disabilities, involve them in the response, and systematically improve humanitarian practices.

Recent research by HI and partners show that **in Northern Syria there are 30% adults with disabilities**, and that **61% of households of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan have at least one member with disabilities**. The increasing use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and the levels of contamination with Explosive Remnants of War lead to long term impairments, and create particularly acute challenges for persons with disabilities relating to access to health, forced displacement and destruction of basic infrastructures.

Deliberate action is required. It is an obligation under international human rights law, in particular the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also has to do with the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality. The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in



Humanitarian Action and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines are instrumental to spur concrete change.

Council Members and Member States have a critical responsibility to **ensure that all civilians are fully protected during hostilities and that the humanitarian response leaves no one behind.**

Systematic attention should be given to the situation of persons with disabilities in reports and briefings to the Council on specific crisis, during the Protection of Civilians debate, open debates and Council Members' missions. UN agencies should make all efforts to highlight the situation of persons with disabilities in their briefings to the Council and in Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans. The collection of disaggregated data by age, gender and disability should be systematically used to inform a more inclusive response.

Inclusive humanitarian action will only happen with a change in mind-set and field practices and this requires collective efforts from all those concerned: persons with disabilities themselves, local and international NGOs, donor and crisis affected States, and the UN institutions at large.