

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**The United States International Council on Disabilities Calls for the Protection and Safety of Ukrainians with Disabilities**

It has been thoroughly documented that people with disabilities suffer disproportionate harm in situations of armed conflict. They can be left behind in the planning and evacuation efforts and are often unable to access emergency communications, medical aid, and humanitarian aid. The United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD) calls for full inclusion of Ukrainian organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in rapid response teams and evacuation efforts. Ukrainians with disabilities must not be forgotten, abandoned, and ignored.

Ukraine ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010, thereby expressly recognizing via CRPD Article 11 (situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies) that they assume protection obligations in the context of armed conflict. Both the Federation of Russia and Ukraine must respect the CRPD, international humanitarian, and human rights law.

USICD is particularly concerned about the negative impact on Ukrainian organizations of persons with disabilities as they work on a response, and the evacuation and protection of the several thousands of individuals living in group homes, orphanages, and institutions across the country. Their needs should be prioritized as State Parties and the international community rushes to respond with humanitarian aid and other support.

Often, in times of conflict, people with disabilities are also victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. We urge the United States Congress and the responding Federal Agencies (Department of Defense, Department of State, USAID) to work together on addressing the protection and human rights of Ukrainians with disabilities during this urgent humanitarian crisis.

USICD has met with the Global Alliance for Disaster Resource Acceleration (GADRA) and the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, and is communicating with OPDs in the Ukraine and bordering countries to identify their immediate needs.

**Additional Resources:**

- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: The rights of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict](#)
- [UN Security council resolution 2475](#)
- [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [Disability Rights International: No Way Home: No Way Home: The Exploitation and Abuse of Children in Ukraine's Orphanages](#)
- [European Disability Forum Open letter to the Head of the European Institutions, European, Russian and Ukrainian Heads of State and NATO 24 February 2022](#)

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