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The United States International Council on Disabilities Calls for the Protection and Safety of Persons with Disabilities in the Middle East Amid Escalating and Expanding Violence

The United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD) expresses deep concern for the safety and protection of persons with disabilities across the Middle East as violence escalates. Armed conflict consistently places people with disabilities at disproportionate risk. They are more likely to be left behind during evacuations, unable to access emergency communications, cut off from medical care, and excluded from humanitarian response efforts. Armed conflict also creates new disabilities at a significant scale, increasing the need for accessible medical care, rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and greater disability awareness across all humanitarian protection systems.

All countries currently affected by the attacks, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Israel, have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). As States Parties, they have binding obligations under CRPD Article 11, which requires governments to take *“all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and natural disasters.”*

Given the rapidly evolving situation, USICD stresses that these obligations apply to all countries involved at this stage of the conflict, not only those directly experiencing attacks, but also those providing military support, including the provision of weapons or military hardware. This includes countries such as Italy and the United Kingdom, whose actions may influence the trajectory and humanitarian impact of the conflict.

USICD further emphasizes that the United Nations itself has responsibilities to ensure that all humanitarian coordination mechanisms, protection frameworks, and emergency responses are fully inclusive of people with disabilities, consistent with its mandate and with CRPD implementation across the UN system.

USICD calls on all States Parties involved in or affected by the current hostilities to uphold their CRPD obligations, comply with international humanitarian and human rights law, and ensure that people with disabilities are not abandoned, overlooked, or placed at further risk. This includes guaranteeing accessible evacuation procedures, inclusive emergency communications, disability-competent medical care, and the meaningful participation of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in all response and recovery efforts.

Specific Actions USICD Urges Governments and Humanitarian Actors to Take Immediately

- Ensure all evacuation routes, shelters, and transportation are physically and communication-accessible.
- Provide emergency information in multiple accessible formats, including captioning, sign language, plain language, and screen-reader-compatible digital content.
- Guarantee disability-competent medical care, including continuity of medications, assistive devices, and personal support.
- Include OPDs in all planning, coordination, and monitoring processes.
- Establish safeguards to prevent exploitation, trafficking, institutional abandonment, and gender-based violence against persons with disabilities.
- Monitor and report on disability-inclusive compliance with international humanitarian law.

USICD is particularly concerned about the heightened vulnerability of persons with disabilities to exploitation, violence, and abuse during conflict, including sexual violence, trafficking, institutional abandonment, and the collapse of community-based support. These risks are well documented in global humanitarian contexts and demand urgent, coordinated action.

Under CRPD Article 32, States Parties must engage in international cooperation that is inclusive of and accessible to people with disabilities. USICD reinforces this obligation through its global training initiatives. Our [USICD Learning Hub](#) includes a dedicated Article 32 (International Cooperation) course, which includes a lesson on *CRPD Article 11 &*

Disability-Inclusive Humanitarian Action, equipping advocates, responders, and policymakers with the tools to ensure that disability rights are upheld during crises.

USICD stands ready to support OPDs, humanitarian actors, and government partners across the region in strengthening disability-inclusive emergency response, evacuation planning, and protection mechanisms.

USICD urges the United States government, including the Department of State and the Department of War, to ensure that disability rights and protections are fully integrated into all diplomatic, humanitarian, and security responses. We further call on international donors, UN agencies, and humanitarian organizations to prioritize the needs and leadership of people with disabilities and their representative organizations.

People with disabilities must not be forgotten, excluded, or placed at further risk. Their rights, safety, and dignity must remain central to every response effort.

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