



**Statement by James W. Rawley, United Nations Resident Coordinator,  
on behalf of the United Nations Country Team,  
on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disability**

**Jerusalem, 3 December 2014**

On International Day of Persons with Disability, the United Nations acknowledges the contributions of Persons with Disability to society and highlights the need to continue working to promote their rights.

Around the world, persons living with disabilities face physical, social, economic and attitudinal barriers that exclude them from participating fully and effectively as equal members of society. They are often stigmatized, socially excluded and disproportionately represented among the world's poorest. Typically, they also lack equal opportunities in accessing basic resources and services, such as education and training, employment, healthcare and social and legal support systems.

Globally, there are more than 1 billion persons living with some form of a disability. In the State of Palestine, more than 110,000 persons (2.7 % of the total population) are living with a disability<sup>1</sup>. As the Palestinian population ages and more people suffer from non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, lung disease and cancer, the number of adults with disabilities will increase. Disability also results from conflict. According to early assessments, an additional 1,000 Palestinians have a disability as a result of the devastating 50 day conflict in Gaza during the summer of 2014<sup>2</sup>.

Such barriers and inequalities facing persons with disabilities should be overcome through systematic reforms in policy measures, regulations, programmes, and services that promote and protect their rights while ensuring their social inclusion and reintegration.

<sup>1</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). Disability Survey (2011).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Gaza Crisis Appeal Update. (September 2014).

This year, the State of Palestine also became a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, joining over 150 countries that are working to create a more inclusive environment.

The UN in Palestine is working with the Government towards this same goal. The UN Programme to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNPPRPD)-a partnership of five UN agencies (ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and WHO) focuses on three areas -Legislation, Education, and Economic Empowerment to strengthen the respect for human rights for persons with disabilities to change attitudes and allow them to participate fully in society.

Through this programme, the UN has supported: the legal review of legislation, policies and practices as they relate to the rights of Persons with Disability for the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Education and Higher Education, community awareness and the training of teachers and other education personnel on inclusive education and innovative teaching and learning, ten government schools in Gaza with the equipment of ten speech pathology units, training of teachers and school administrators on inclusive education by using a human rights based approach, screening over 1,700 children for speech and language problems in government schools, and enhanced capacities and promoted effective dialogue among organizations working with persons with disabilities and policy makers to ensure proper representation and mainstreaming concerns of persons with disability in labour market policies.

While recognizing that challenges remain, we reiterate our commitment to do all that we can to ensure the Rights of Persons with Disability are rights respected and their needs addressed.

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