

Violations against People with Disabilities Continue

Courtesy of Palestinian Consultative Staff
for Developing NGOs

Despite Palestine's accession to the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in March 2014, persons with disabilities in Palestine face numerous difficulties and challenges. There is a large gap between the legislation and the actual practice on the ground.

According to studies conducted by the Unit for Monitoring Violations Against People with Disabilities at the Palestinian Consultative Staff for Developing NGOs (PCS), around 28 basic rights for handicapped persons are continually violated, mainly the rights to work, education, health care, and social welfare. A legal researcher at the unit, Abdelhakeem Shibani, related that the latest official statistics from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), published in 2011, indicate that the rate of disability in the West Bank is 2.9% (Jenin has the highest rate with 4.1 percent, followed by Hebron with 3.6 percent, Jerusalem 1.4 percent and Gaza 2.4 percent) and that 76.4 percent of persons with disabilities are not able to use public transportation, 35.5 percent of children with disabilities are deprived of education, 53.1 percent of disabled persons are illiterate, and 87.3 percent are unemployed. Comparing, for example, the illiteracy rate of the general population in Palestine, estimated at 5 percent, leads to the conclusion that "people with disabilities are the least fortunate in receiving education." Shibani stated that the right to work is a priority for persons with disabilities since through work they can fulfill many of their needs. "The problem is that the private sector fails to implement the minimum requirement with regard to the employment of persons with disabilities. This is in violation of the law, according to which persons with disabilities should constitute 5 percent of



Protesters holding a banner that says "Palestine needs all resources, including those offered by persons with disability." Photo courtesy of PCS.

the total number of employees in any given institution," Shibani explained. He stressed the need to implement the law and to fine institutions that deliberately refrain from hiring qualified persons with disabilities.

Activist Mustafa Johari pointed out that the right to health care and treatment for persons with disabilities in Palestine is often violated. He reported that covering the cost of health care and medicine is a priority for the disabled. The Ministry of Health violates the Health Law that was approved by the PLC in 2004, which stipulates that persons with disabilities should be provided with basic health care services, including medicine and physiotherapy. Johari underscored the need for the ministry to revise its policy concerning the treatment of disabled persons and also the need to establish a special unit for the treatment of the physically handicapped. In addition, he called for the establishment of a database to monitor urgent medical needs required for the treatment of



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persons with disabilities and to allocate a budget for that purpose with funds from Arab, Islamic, and international sources.

On another note, the chairman of the Palestinian General Union, Rafiq Abu Sifen, points out that the planning processes for environmental infrastructure do not take into account the needs of handicapped persons,



PCS employee reporting a violation against a person with disability. Photo courtesy of PCS.

and this increases their suffering. Facilities, services, and infrastructure adjustments that are necessary to create a supportive public environment for the handicapped are not a luxury but a must that is required by legislation. “Our problem,” he explains, “is not passing handicapped-friendly laws but the implementation of and compliance with the laws that already exist.”

The accession of Palestine to the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities must compel the Palestinian Authority to develop and amend laws (especially the Palestinian Disability Law No. 4 of 1999) that are in line with

international laws and treaties. Such measures will reflect positively on the quality of services provided to persons with disabilities in Palestine.

Project of Enhancing and Protecting the Rights of people with disabilities in Palestinian Territories

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The views represented in the article do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



Marah Sharqawi received a grant from the Empowerment of People with Disability program and is now raising sheep for a living. Photo courtesy of PCS.