



**Report on Weaponizing Starvation for Genocide and Forced Displacement
Systematic Implications on Persons with Disabilities in Gaza**

**Submitted by
QADER for Community Development**

**Submitted to
The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

July 2025

Prepared by

Dr. Isam Abdeen

Expert in International Law and Human Rights

Legal Advisor to QADER for Community Development

Contact Person

George Mansour, Director of Programs & Advocacy Acting Focal Person

Email: g.mansour@qader.org

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For citation, please indicate: ***“Report on Weaponizing Starvation for Genocide and Forced Displacement - Systematic Implications on Persons with Disabilities in Gaza – July 2025”***

QADER for Community Development is a Palestinian non-governmental, not-for-profit, and rights-based organization specializes in the rights of persons with disabilities, and established in 2008 in Bethlehem, Palestine. QADER leads a twin-track approach, dedicated to the empowerment and protection of children, women, and youth with disabilities from marginalization, discrimination, and all forms of disability and gender-based violence. QADER is committed to aligning societal, institutional, and policy contexts with the principles of “disability inclusion” and “leave no one behind” in Palestine. Through this alignment, QADER strives to foster its active engagement and meaningful participation across diverse facets of life and to ensure their full entitlements of rights by local laws and international human rights conventions and standards. In addition, QADER leads its international advocacy efforts through monitoring and documentation of human rights violations and international crimes, legal analysis, and reporting, to foster avenues for accountability and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities (www.qader.org).

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1. Executive Summary

Since 7 October 2023, the Gaza Strip—an area spanning just 360 km² and home to over 2.2 million people—has witnessed one of the deadliest episodes in modern history since World War II, relative to its population size, geographic scope, and casualty rates. Amid the wide-scale Israeli military offensive, marked by grave violations and the systematic targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, **persons with disabilities (Persons with disabilities) have endured a silent and compounded catastrophe**—unfolding in the absence of any targeted protection framework responsive to their heightened vulnerabilities. While they have been disproportionately affected, Persons with disabilities remain largely invisible in international responses.

This paper exposes a **profound breakdown in international protection and accountability mechanisms - most notably the failure of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities to activate their legal mandates** in response to the ongoing aggression. This inaction persists despite the clarity of their responsibilities, the availability of verified documentation and testimonies, and a growing body of national and international human rights reports. The failure cannot be attributed to a lack of resources or information, but rather to a systemic disregard for **disability-inclusive approaches** that lie at the heart of the CRPD. As a result, Persons with disabilities have been effectively excluded from international investigative reports, humanitarian data systems, and emergency responses—undermining the legal and moral credibility of international justice and protection frameworks.

This paper offers a critical examination of the structural shortcomings in the functioning of UN mechanisms—**particularly the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities**. It highlights their failure to establish meaningful coordination with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and Palestinian civil society, to engage with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), and to initiate a fact-finding mission on the serious violations committed in Gaza and their disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities—**despite the clear authority granted to the Committee under Article (6) of the Optional Protocol**. The analysis also underscores the inability of these mechanisms to develop disability-inclusive monitoring tools, to deliver formal briefings to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, and their continued disregard of credible reports submitted by QADER—particularly the organization’s comprehensive documentation of the aggression’s impact on persons with disabilities. Neither mechanism has issued public statements nor conducted field visits to Gaza to assess the situation firsthand. This cumulative inaction has resulted in the absence of disaggregated data, the sidelining of representative organizations, the entrenchment of structural discrimination, and the continued perpetuation of impunity.

The limited public statements issued by the CRPD Committee or the Special Rapporteur - regardless of any initial expressions of solidarity—are neither adequate nor absolving **in the context of nearly two years of ongoing genocide and grave international crimes in the Gaza Strip**. The scale and severity of these violations, particularly their compounded impact on persons with disabilities, demand a substantive and rights-based UN response that goes beyond symbolic or generalized media statements.

Although the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, Francesca Albanese, along with several other Special Rapporteurs, UN entities, and international experts, has explicitly characterized the ongoing crimes in the Gaza Strip as “**genocide**,” both the CRPD Committee and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities have refrained from using this terminology—even in the face of the catastrophic and compounded impact of these violations on persons with disabilities. This conceptual omission underscores the urgent need to critically reassess the prevailing discourse, terminology, methodologies, and the nature of engagement with representative organizations in Palestine.

In light of these findings, this paper sets forth **eight key recommendations addressed to the CRPD Committee, the Special Rapporteur, and relevant UN bodies. These include: the urgent activation of Article 6 of the Optional Protocol** to initiate an independent inquiry; the deployment of a fact-finding mission to Gaza in coordination with Palestinian representative organizations; the adoption of disability-inclusive analytical tools to assess the scope and nature of violations; the integration of these tools into international investigative mechanisms; the formal recognition and utilization of QADER’s Guideline for disability-inclusive monitoring, documentation, and accountability; the training of international investigative teams on its application; and the rebuilding of institutional trust through meaningful and sustained partnerships with representative organizations grounded in mutual respect and clear commitments.

This paper is more than an analytical intervention—it is an **urgent human rights appeal to reframe international monitoring, documentation, and accountability through the lens of disability inclusion**, and to end the entrenched, systematic exclusion of persons with disabilities. The time for action is now. Disability must no longer be treated as a peripheral concern in contexts of conflict and crisis; it is a question of justice, dignity, and international legal obligation. Continued silence in the face of a silent genocide against persons with disabilities not only erodes the moral foundations of international protection, but also strips global human rights frameworks of their legitimacy. That silence must be broken—by placing the rights of persons with disabilities at the center of international justice, not at its periphery.

2. General Context: Aggression, Blockade, and the Silent Genocide

Since 7 October 2023, the besieged Gaza Strip has endured large-scale Israeli aggression characterized by acts of genocide and ongoing international crimes, including **the use of starvation as a method of extermination, forced displacement**, systematic targeting of civilians, and widespread destruction of infrastructure and essential services. This aggression has been compounded by a total closure imposed by the occupying power since 2 February 2025, completely isolating the population from the outside world and severing all humanitarian relief channels—further intensifying the catastrophe to unprecedented levels.

This aggression continues a series of **eight military assaults carried out by the Israeli army on the Gaza Strip since 2006**, resulting in tens of thousands of killings, injuries, disabilities, and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure and essential services. These assaults have occurred alongside **an ongoing blockade since 2007, now entering its 19th year**. The United Nations has repeatedly warned that Gaza has become “**uninhabitable**” (UN News, June 2025). The current aggression is not merely a military escalation but represents a **systematic episode of cumulative collective punishment that causes new disabilities** and erodes any capacity for effective response.

A staggering **85 per cent of the total population of Gaza - 1.9 million civilians - have been forcibly displaced** amid Israel’s military operations, leaving barely a handful of shelters for protection of civilians (UN Security Council, January 2024). According to the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, over 98% of Gaza’s population has been repeatedly displaced since the beginning of the aggression (Euro-Med Monitor, *600 Days of Aggression*, June 2025), with the majority living in inhumane conditions lacking access to **clean water, food, and healthcare** (UN News, 16 June 2025). A joint report issued by the UN and international actors — including 17 UN agencies and NGOs — confirmed that **the entire Gaza Strip is facing a high risk of famine, with hunger and malnutrition worsening severely following the total closure and the Israeli authorities’ prevention of aid entry on 2 March 2025** (UN News, May 2025). UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said “*Gaza has become a land of despair... Two million people—the majority of whom are women and children—are subjected to collective punishment*” (UN News, April 2025).

In this devastated reality, **Persons with disabilities are left to their fate**—without accessible shelters, reasonable accommodations, or evacuation plans. They are being starved without access to food. Life-saving humanitarian assistance for Persons with disabilities has not entered the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the aggression on 7 October 2023, **in blatant violation of their rights, the principle of non-discrimination, and the most basic standards of protection**.

A UN experts’ statement dated 25 October 2024, titled “**A Tragedy Within a Tragedy**,” affirmed that “Many of the Palestinians injured in Gaza—numbering nearly or over 100,000—will suffer long-term disabilities requiring rehabilitation, assistive devices,

psychosocial and social support and other services which are severely lacking.” The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, citing UN experts, noted that “A tragedy within a tragedy is taking place in Gaza, where Israel’s **genocidal campaign** has left persons with disabilities completely unprotected. Persons with disabilities are being killed and injured by indiscriminate attacks despite posing no security threat, epitomizing the deliberate assault on civilians by Israel”

QADER stated in its reports and public briefings that “**it is extremely unlikely that any child in Gaza will escape without acquiring some form of disability, as defined under the CRPD—alongside thousands of women and older persons. Disability has become the defining outcome of this aggression, amid the complete absence of disability inclusion, the use of starvation, the denial of rights, and the blockade on life-saving humanitarian assistance.**” (QADER, *Spotlight on the Rights of Children with Disabilities Under Fire in Gaza*, November 2024).

The most recent report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) (June 2025), established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2021, points to mounting evidence of an organized campaign by Israel **to erase Palestinian life in Gaza**. The Commission’s Chair, Navi Pillay, stated in June 2025 that “Children in Gaza have lost their childhood. With no education available, they are forced to worry about survival amid attacks, uncertainty, starvation and subhuman living conditions” The Commission documented the deliberate destruction of over 90% of schools and universities in Gaza, turning the right to education into an unattainable dream. Particularly alarming is the ongoing failure to **highlight the compounded and catastrophic impact on Persons with disabilities**—despite being among the most at-risk and severely affected groups. This reflects **a clear neglect by the CRPD and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Persons with disabilities**, and their inability to activate their respective **mandates** or coordinate efforts with representative organizations working in Palestine. This absence deepens what can only be described as a “**silent genocide**” and calls for a fundamental reassessment of the performance of these UN mechanisms through the lens of disability inclusion.

Field testimonies reveal that entire families have perished because one of their members was a person with disability who could not move, because a wheelchair could not withstand the destroyed roads, or because the absence of transport during bombardment made staying home a fatal decision. Reports by **QADER**, along with UN and international sources, have documented that **most disability-focused institutions in Gaza have ceased operations entirely** due to direct attacks, the loss of staff, fuel shortages, or funding collapse. (QADER, *Impact of the Aggression on the Rights of Persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip*, April 2024).

UN Security Council Resolution 2735 (2024) explicitly called for the immediate, full, and comprehensive cessation of hostilities, as well as the safe and effective large-scale distribution of humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in need across all areas of the Gaza

Strip. The provisional measures issued by the **ICJ** in the case brought by South Africa against Israel for the crime of genocide—on 26 January, 28 March, and 24 May 2024—affirmed Israel’s obligation to take all necessary steps to prevent genocide and to fully cooperate with the UN to ensure the unimpeded and widespread delivery of humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip, including food, water, medicine, and healthcare, the opening of crossings, and unhindered access for international investigative bodies. In June 2025, the **UN General Assembly adopted**, by overwhelming majority, a resolution condemning the aggression and demanding an immediate ceasefire and unconditional access for humanitarian aid—including for Persons with disabilities (**UN News, 16 June 2025**). Despite these measures, the situation on the ground continues to reflect serious violations by Israeli authorities of UN resolutions and international court rulings, along with the systematic exclusion of Persons with disabilities from relief and protection efforts. **No structured international intervention has been implemented that incorporates disability inclusion**, thereby perpetuating a long-standing pattern of structural exclusion and rendering Persons with disabilities forgotten **victims in an unending catastrophe**.

The CRPD and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Persons with disabilities bear significant responsibilities to engage in close and coordinated cooperation—particularly with representative organizations of Persons with disabilities, Palestinian civil society, relevant UN bodies and specialized agencies, and investigative mechanisms such as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)—to strengthen the protection of Persons with disabilities in situations of risk, armed conflict, and humanitarian emergencies. This obligation is grounded in Article (11) of the CRPD and its Optional Protocol, UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) on the protection of Persons with disabilities in armed conflict, Security Council Resolution 2735 (2024) calling for an immediate and complete ceasefire and the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to Persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip, and the provisional measures issued by the ICJ, which emphasized the duty to cooperate fully with the UN and ensure the unconditional delivery of aid to Gaza.

This highlights the critical need for the **CRPD** to establish a fact-finding mission on the grave violations and catastrophic conditions affecting Persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip, in accordance with (**Article 6 of the Optional Protocol**). It also underscores the importance of close cooperation with representative organizations of Persons with disabilities in Palestine, drawing on their expertise in all aspects of the Committee’s work. The CRPD should develop disability-inclusive indicators for monitoring, documentation, and accountability—building on the guideline developed by **QADER**—and formally integrate it into its activities. In addition, the Committee should leverage **synergies** with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), established by the Human Rights Council in 2021 to investigate all violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the oPt, and deliver briefings to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly using a disability-inclusive approach.

It is equally imperative that **the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities** fulfills her mandate as defined by Human Rights Council resolutions 35/6 (22 June 2017), 44/10 (16 July 2020), and 53/14 (13 July 2023). These resolutions underscore the obligation to engage meaningfully with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), coordinate closely with other Special Procedures, UN mechanisms, and relevant specialized agencies—particularly those focused on disability—and to undertake field visits to Gaza to assess the catastrophic conditions faced by Persons with disabilities. Such efforts must be aligned with the CRPD Committee’s pursuit of a fact-finding mission to Gaza, consistent with both mandates and in accordance with the International Court of Justice’s ruling, which reaffirmed the duty to cooperate fully with the United Nations and to ensure unimpeded access for international investigative bodies to the Gaza Strip. The Special Rapporteur must also provide thorough and substantive briefings to both the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly regarding the catastrophic conditions faced by persons with disabilities since the outbreak of hostilities on 7 October 2023. These briefings should detail the international crimes and grave violations committed against them - including killings, starvation, forced displacement, and the systematic denial of access to life-saving assistance.

The events in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023 constitute a case of genocide, with devastating and disproportionate consequences for persons with disabilities across all types of impairments. This is unfolding under the cover of global silence and the continued failure of UN mechanisms - particularly the CRPD Committee and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Persons with disabilities—to activate their mandates with urgency, consistency, and accountability.

Although the CRPD and the Special Rapporteur have issued some public statements, the absence of effective coordination with OPDs in Palestine and the failure to utilize locally available tools reflect a level of negligence that cannot be justified by procedural or logistical considerations. **QADER** has developed a specialized guideline on disability-inclusive monitoring, documentation, and accountability in the context of armed conflict - considered the first of its kind in this highly specific field. There is a clear need to adopt or build upon this tool as a means of demonstrating the UN’s commitment to developing systematic and in-depth methodologies for monitoring violations and advancing accountability.

Accordingly, this paper calls on the CRPD and the Special Rapporteur to move beyond general statements and engage in concrete and accountable actions in response to the ongoing genocide, including in particular:

- **Invoke Article 6** of the Optional Protocol and **initiate a formal investigation** into the grave violations and international crimes committed against Persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip and the oPt more broadly.
- **Conduct urgent field visits to the Gaza Strip** to directly assess the catastrophic conditions faced by Persons with disabilities and regularly follow up on their life-saving needs and protection concerns.

- **Engage in serious and effective coordination with Palestinian OPDs** operating in Gaza and across the oPt, drawing on their accumulated efforts and expertise, and ensuring they are not sidelined in the context of ongoing genocide.
- **Strengthen collaboration with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)** to ensure that violations against Persons with disabilities are thoroughly documented, analyzed, and reflected in the Commission’s findings, reports, and recommendations using a disability-inclusive approach.
- **Activate effective coordination with relevant UN bodies and specialized agencies operating in the oPt and promote synergies to mainstream disability inclusion** across all monitoring, protection, and advocacy efforts.
- **Deliver formal and comprehensive briefings to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly** about Persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip, consistently reaffirming the necessity of incorporating disability in all frameworks of analysis, reporting, and response.
- **Adopt the guideline developed by QADER as a methodological reference** for establishing disability-inclusive indicators in international accountability processes, and work toward further developing it as part of a roadmap for justice grounded in an inclusive approach.

Silent **genocide against Persons with disabilities** cannot be confronted with general statements or intentions alone, but through documented tools, coordinated collective action, and the institutionalization of protection and accountability efforts based on clear obligations and genuine partnership with OPDs in Palestine.

At the heart of this devastated reality, this paper does not emerge from an ivory tower, but from the ashes of truth. It is not just another report—it is a collection of living testimonies written under fire, with every word carved out of the darkness endured by the most marginalized, first and foremost Persons with disabilities in Gaza. Each paragraph carries the echo of a voice unheard, the pain of a wound left unhealed, and a moral indictment that does not expire with time. Those who fail to hear the call for justice in the urgency of these words will find that their silence holds no weight when confronted by the judgment of conscience and history.

This paper is an urgent call to human conscience and a direct appeal for UN mechanisms to awaken from their inertia. It is presented to the CRPD as a record of evidence—one that cannot be dismissed or delayed—so that no one may one day say: “We did not know.”

3. Starvation Policy: A weapon of Genocide Targeting Persons with disabilities

From the very outset of the aggression on 7 October 2023, starvation was not a byproduct of the assault on Gaza, **but a central tool in Israel’s military strategy**. All crossings were sealed, the entry of food, water, and fuel was blocked, supply chains and warehouses were disrupted, and distribution centers, bakeries, and humanitarian vehicles—including those of UNRWA and the World Food Program—were directly targeted. In May alone, UN agencies reported that 60% of food delivery requests to northern Gaza were denied or obstructed, leaving thousands of displaced people to endure hunger and darkness. (UN News, May 2025).

This systematic policy has denied civilians access to the necessities of life, pushing famine to unprecedented levels, with children now being recorded as victims of hunger. The World Food Program (WFP) reported that Gaza’s population is facing a **“total collapse of food security,”** as health conditions deteriorate and fuel needed to operate bakeries and hospitals remains unavailable—most of which have been destroyed during the aggression on Gaza (WFP, April–May 2025). Since October 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) has documented at least 686 attacks on healthcare facilities in the Strip (UN News, May 2025).

A joint report issued by UN agencies clearly stated that **“the entire Gaza Strip is facing a risk of famine,”** with severe food scarcity, escalating hunger, and worsening malnutrition, as Israeli authorities have continued to close all border crossings into the Strip since 2 March 2025 (UN News, May 2025). The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report released on 12 May 2025 confirmed that **“This includes 470,000 people (22 percent of the population) in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) ... from 11 May to the end of September 2025” —a 250% increase from previous IPC estimates** (UN News, May 2025). OCHA described Gaza as **“the hungriest place on earth”** (UN News, May 2025).

Ajith Sunghay, Head of OHCHR in the oPt, stated that “Israel is imposing conditions that are incompatible with the existence of the Palestinian people as a group in Gaza, reaching the level of ethnic cleansing.” He added, **“Children are being burned alive in shelters. Children are being killed while huddled with their parents in tents. Nine siblings were killed together in their home in a single airstrike while their mother—a doctor—was saving lives in a hospital. This is only a glimpse of the brutality we are witnessing in Gaza.”** (UN News, May 2025).

UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that all aid approved by Israeli authorities following the full blockade imposed on Gaza after 2 March 2025 **“does not amount to more than a spoonful of assistance.”** He affirmed that **“The United Nations has been clear: we will not take part in any scheme that fails to respect international law and the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality”**. He also emphasized that **“the UN has a detailed humanitarian response plan for Gaza”** (UN News, May 2025).

WFP reported that as of 10 June 2025, just over 700 aid trucks had entered the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing—compared to 600–700 aid trucks that were entering **daily** during the ceasefire earlier this year (UN News, June 2025).

QADER highlights that Israeli authorities are **preventing the entry of humanitarian aid through UN agencies, particularly UNRWA, and are actively working to ban its operations. Instead, they insist on allowing only limited quantities of aid through a U.S.-based private company, which distributes assistance at just four locations: three in Rafah, in southern Gaza, and one in central Gaza, in what is known as the “Netzarim military corridor.”** In contrast, UNRWA previously operated **400 distribution points across the Gaza Strip, supported by a comprehensive database and thousands of staff members.** These restrictive policies have resulted **in the killing and injury of hundreds of starving civilians attempting to reach food**—forced to travel long, dangerous distances that are inaccessible for Persons with disabilities. This reflects a deliberate policy of **"militarizing aid" and "engineering starvation,"** both of which violate international law and the principles of neutrality and non-discrimination in humanitarian assistance. The UN Secretary-General, UN Special Rapporteurs, and various UN agencies have all emphasized that this mechanism is in breach of international law and constitutes **the use of starvation as a method of warfare.** **QADER** asserts that **the strategic objective of these policies is to forcibly displace the population of Gaza, including Persons with disabilities, using starvation as a central weapon of aggression. This assessment has been echoed by numerous international organizations and UN Special Rapporteurs, and experts.** (QADER, Submission to the CRPD Committee in response to the List of Issues on the Initial Report of the State of Palestine, June 2025).

In the midst of this collective collapse, **persons with disabilities are bearing a disproportionately devastating burden.** Many—especially children—rely on specialized diets and continuous nutritional support, including therapeutic foods, vitamins, and medically prescribed supplements. With aid completely cut off, countless children with disabilities have suffered severe health deterioration, and deaths have been recorded due to the lack of therapeutic milk, food, essential medications, and condition-specific supplements (QADER, *Spotlight on the Rights of Persons with disabilities Under Fire in Gaza*, November 2024). The destruction of critical infrastructure—including assistive devices like wheelchairs, crutches, and hearing aids—has deepened the crisis. Accessing any of the few remaining aid distribution points often requires traveling several kilometers—an impossible feat for many. These sites are marked by chaos, violence, and repeated fatal incidents, as tens of thousands scramble for survival. The continued denial of aid that addresses the specific needs of Persons with disabilities, the collapse of targeted food assistance programs, the absence of inclusive distribution systems, and the direct targeting of disability service centers all feed into a machinery of silent death—driven by structural exclusion, international neglect, and the physical impossibility of survival under such conditions.

The systematic use of starvation as a weapon against Gaza’s civilian population - particularly against persons with disabilities (Persons with disabilities), **as further evidenced by firsthand testimonies and field documentation from QADER’s team on the ground**—must be understood within the framework of international law, especially the obligations of State Parties under the CRPD. Article (11) of the Convention requires States to take “**all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and natural disasters.**” What has unfolded—and continues to unfold—in Gaza constitutes a flagrant violation of this provision. The total deprivation of Persons with disabilities from food, medical care, and essential support services exposes the failure of international mechanisms to uphold this obligation. Despite numerous UN reports and growing evidence identifying starvation as a weapon of war, **the continued silence of the CRPD Committee and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Persons with disabilities** raises profound concerns about the credibility and effectiveness of international protection frameworks **in the face of what can only be described as a silent genocide.** Their mandates are not limited to passive observation. They require active coordination with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in Palestine, **the issuance of urgent communications, the activation of early warning mechanisms, the establishment of a fact-finding mission, the undertaking of field visits, briefings to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly, and the issuance of concrete recommendations to State Parties.** Prolonged silence in the face of mass violations not only undermines the humanitarian legitimacy of these mechanisms—it deepens the trust deficit between victims and the institutions mandated to protect them. What is needed now is not another round of vague statements, but an urgent, principled human rights response to a catastrophe that is disproportionately impacting one of the most at-risk populations: Persons with disabilities—who are dying of hunger and in silence beneath the rubble of Gaza.

4. Malnutrition: A Disproportional Impact on Persons with Disabilities

QADER documented field testimonies directly from the Gaza Strip in the context of its emergency humanitarian response during the ongoing aggression. This was carried out in line with **UN-endorsed monitoring and documentation standards**—particularly those related to data collection on Persons with disabilities—and in accordance with the principles of **confidentiality, safety, do-no-harm, empowerment, and meaningful participation.**

Free and informed consent was obtained from all individuals whose testimonies are included in this paper. They were fully informed of their rights and of the intended use of their statements for advocacy and human rights reporting purposes. All testimonies are securely retained by the organization.

As the **policy of starvation** intensifies and the deliberate obstruction of food continues, the Gaza Strip teeters on the edge of **full-scale famine**, according to the **UN Humanitarian Coordinator** (UN News, June 2025). **Persons with disabilities** are among the groups **most at risk of nutritional collapse**—not only because of **their specific dietary requirements,**

but also due to their dependence on others for preparing and consuming food, and the compounded impact of extreme hunger on **pre-existing health vulnerabilities**.

Data from **the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO)** reveal a sharp and unprecedented increase in the number of children suffering from **acute wasting**—particularly in northern Gaza, where access to food is virtually nonexistent, and conditions prevent the preparation of meals suitable for individuals with physical, motor, or neurological disabilities (UN News, May 2025). **The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor** has further confirmed a doubling of cases involving severe wasting and protein deficiency, with the deadliest consequences observed **among children with disabilities**. These children have been systematically denied access to **therapeutic nutrition, specialized milk formulas, and essential vitamins**. Reported **deficiencies in iron, zinc, and vitamins A and D** are placing their **neurological, visual, and immune systems** at grave risk.

QADER's field team, operating in the Gaza Strip since the onset of the aggression and under extremely perilous conditions where no area is safe, has documented **numerous field reports and harrowing firsthand testimonies**. These accounts reveal the compounded and catastrophic impact of the ongoing aggression and acts of genocide on persons with disabilities across all impairment types—unfolding amid the continued silence and inaction of the United Nations.

1) Mustafa Rami Abu Shamala (24 years old) – Physical Disability (Bilateral Lower-Limb Amputation)

A resident of Block D in Al-Nuseirat Refugee Camp in central Gaza, Mustafa lives in an isolated displacement tent. He uses a severely worn-out wheelchair amidst a devastated environment, with no possibility of replacing it due to the ongoing blockade and closure. He is suffering from extreme hunger and loss of mobility. Mustafa says: *"I can't reach anywhere. Even when there's a distribution of aid, I have no one to take me. I live on one meal every three days, and I silence the hunger with water and sleep. Sometimes I sleep for two days straight so I don't feel the hunger... my body is devouring itself." "The wheelchair I have is useless. It keeps getting stuck in rubble and stones, and even if I want to leave, there's no one to push it. Before the war, I used to visit the association once a week. Now, the only voice I hear is my own echo bouncing off the tent fabric around me."* (This testimony was obtained with free and informed consent, in accordance with UN monitoring standards, and is archived by QADER.)

2) Noha Khaled Abu Saif (42 years old) – Partial Visual Disability

Noha lives with her two children—one of whom is on the autism spectrum—in a devastated low-income neighborhood. She relies on donations from neighbors, has lost her visual assistive devices, and has received no medical or psychosocial support since the beginning of the aggression. She remains confined to her dilapidated home due to the difficulty of moving alone and the absence of any safe space. Noha says: *"Before the war, I could reach*

the clinic or ask someone for help. Today, even walking is dangerous. All I see is darkness and fear. My children are hungry. The little one keeps screaming, crying, and banging his head. And I can't do anything for them. "She adds: "One day it's stale bread, another day water and salt, or just dry air... If I get anything from the soup kitchen or the neighbors show us mercy, I don't eat—I give it to my children. Why is there a criminal punishing us with hunger?"

(This testimony was obtained with free and informed consent, in accordance with UN monitoring standards, and is archived by QADER.)

3) Mohammad Abdel Karim Mansour (33 years old) – Moderate Intellectual Disability

Mohammad lives with his elderly mother, without access to treatment or support. He used to take calming medication, but it has been unavailable since the onset of the aggression, leading to a severe deterioration in his behavioral and psychological condition. His mother says: *"The night is a nightmare for me. I can't sleep. He bangs his head against the wall—we've lost all control. There's no medicine, no specialist. Once, he was bleeding from how hard he hit himself, and I just screamed... but no one could hear me."* She adds: *"He used to take his medication every day. Now, he's like a little wild creature in the house. But I love him—I can't bring myself to give up. I see him cry every day, and my heart cries with him. Beyond that, I can't even give him food. Sometimes I feel like he's going to eat his own flesh and bones from hunger. Oh God, we have no one but You."*

(This testimony was obtained with free and informed consent, in accordance with UN monitoring standards, and is archived by QADER.)

4) Ihab Yousef Al-Madhoun (28 years old) - Hearing Disability

Ihab lives with his mother and receives no support. He has lost all connection to the outside world since the center for the deaf in his area was shut down. His mother says: *"He doesn't understand the news or what people are saying. He can't engage with anything—it's like he's living in another world. When there's bombing, he points at us, confused and frightened. All of that is one thing—but the hunger, that's a second death. Ihab is sinking into silence... and I can't even afford a single basic meal from the market for him."*

(This testimony was obtained with free and informed consent, in accordance with UN monitoring standards, and is archived by QADER.)

5) Jawaher Omar Shahin (50 years old) – Acquired Paraplegia

Jawaher sustained a spinal cord injury that left her paralyzed from the waist down after a sudden airstrike during the early days of the assault on Gaza. She now lives alone on a thin mattress on the ground, having lost her only son—her sole caregiver. She has no wheelchair, suffers from untreated pressure ulcers, and relies on a few neighborhood women who occasionally visit to bring water and help clean her wounds. Jawaher says: *"My body is breaking down from lying still all day. Most of the time, no one helps me. I have no hope of ever moving again. I spend the entire day crying alone. One time, I dragged myself across the floor just to reach the bathroom."* She adds: *"All I wish for in this life is a clean change*

of clothes and a mattress that isn't torn to shreds. I'm not asking for aid—I just don't want to die like this, alone." And she continues: "I crave a meal from the old days... white cheese, cold watermelon, some za'atar and olive oil. They destroyed our lives to the point we're now dreaming of things that used to be easier than a sip of water."

(This testimony was obtained with free and informed consent, in accordance with UN monitoring standards, and is archived by QADER.)

6) Amna Ismaeil Daloul (60 years old) - Diabetes Complications and Partial Foot Amputation

Amina lives with her daughter and grandchildren in a single overcrowded room. She suffers from severe complications related to diabetes, which led to the amputation of several toes on her right foot. She has significant mobility limitations and cannot stand for more than a minute. Her amputated foot is inflamed and untreated—she lacks bandages, medication, and access to any form of medical care. She experiences constant pain in her foot and abdomen. She receives no regular assistance and has no source of income. Amina says: *"If the neighbors hadn't brought me food, I would've been dead by now. I can't stand, can't cook—there's nothing to cook anyway."* She adds: *"Death isn't just a bullet or a bomb. Death can also be an empty plate, missing medication, and someone telling you: 'You're not our responsibility.'"*

(This testimony was obtained with free and informed consent, in accordance with UN monitoring standards, and is archived by QADER.)

7) Rami Nidal Abu Rizq (17 years old) – Congenital Muscular Dystrophy

Rami has congenital muscular dystrophy. During the bombardment and forced displacement, he lost his powered wheelchair. There is no access to a replacement. He now suffers from pressure ulcers and joint pain. He is entirely dependent on his father, who has a herniated disc. His father testifies: "Every day, I carry him on my back—and I have a slipped disc. Once, we went two full days eating nothing but bread and water. Rami's face turned yellow, and his eyes sank. I was afraid he would die in my arms." "Rami doesn't speak—but his whole-body screams. When I try to make him laugh, he smiles... and I fall apart."

(This testimony was collected with free and informed consent, in line with UN monitoring standards, and is documented and archived by QADER.)

Amid the inferno of starvation and silent extermination, persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip face the threat of slow death—of being silently erased—completely cut off from any effective humanitarian response. The so-called military distribution points—what many in Gaza now call “death traps”—are inaccessible. Worn-out wheelchairs and the need for constant assistance make reaching them impossible. Thousands of starving people gather at these points, often met with live fire. For persons with disabilities, accessing food or medicine has become virtually impossible. Each testimony confirms that hunger is no longer a temporary emergency. It has become a silent tool to kill the most vulnerable, in flagrant violation of Articles

(11), (25), and (28) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and of Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019).

Despite the clarity and gravity of these violations—which constitute crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court—the absence of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Special Rapporteur, formal commissions of inquiry, effective engagement with the Human Rights Council, and coordination with representative organizations of persons with disabilities remains deeply troubling. It raises painful questions about the credibility and responsiveness of these international mechanisms. It is long overdue to open urgent humanitarian corridors to allow the entry of therapeutic supplements, assistive devices, and essential medicines. This is not just a moral duty, but a legal obligation that cannot be delayed. Will silence remain the only response to famine? Must they all die before the inbox is checked?

5. Collapse of the Health Sector and Suspension of Life-Saving Care

The ongoing aggression against the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023 has resulted in the collapse of the health sector in all its components—including hospitals, medical centers, health personnel, and infrastructure—causing compounded harm to the most vulnerable groups, particularly persons with disabilities. The repeated targeting of hospitals and care centers, including those providing disability-specific services, has led to an almost complete cessation of life-saving care, particularly in northern Gaza. The collapse has since extended to central and southern areas, amid the total lack of access to essential medicines, medical consumables, electricity, and fuel.

QADER report on the impact of the aggression against Gaza on the rights of persons with disabilities (April 2024) documented that the Israeli occupation targeted the majority of hospitals in the Gaza Strip during its systematic and widespread assault, including those **providing services to persons with disabilities**. **Sheikh Hamad Rehabilitation and Prosthetics Hospital, Al-Wafa Medical Rehabilitation Hospital, the Assistive Devices Center operated by Medical Relief, the headquarters of the General Palestinian Union of Persons with Disabilities in the northern governorates, and Al-Amal Capacity Development Center affiliated with the Red Crescent in Gaza** were all destroyed or severely damaged. **A significant number of associations and centers providing care and rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities were also heavily affected.** These facilities have remained out of service for nearly two years amid the ongoing aggression.

As highlighted in **QADER** Report, numerous firsthand testimonies from Persons with disabilities and service providers within the Gaza Strip reveal a **severe shortage of essential items, including prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, crutches, hearing aids, medical mattresses, nutritional supplements, disability-related medications, medical devices, clothing, sanitary pads, medical consumables, and other critical needs.** These life-saving necessities continue to receive insufficient attention from United Nations bodies, particularly the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special

Rapporteur. This neglect has exacerbated the grave deterioration of the health conditions of a large number of Persons with disabilities—especially children—and has contributed to increased mortality rates among them. These findings were documented in a report produced by QADER, whose field team continues to monitor and collect evidence and eyewitness testimonies of these violations.

The collapse of the health system has been accompanied by **the spread of epidemics and infectious diseases within overcrowded shelters**, resulting from the breakdown of water and sanitation infrastructure and **the lack of access to clean water**. This has significantly increased the risk of diseases such as hepatitis, tuberculosis, and fever, particularly among children, the elderly, and Persons with disabilities. In a statement dated 16 June 2025, WHO confirmed that more than (10,000) patients in the Gaza Strip require urgent medical evacuation outside the Strip to receive treatment that is no longer available domestically due to the total collapse of the health system.

Many Persons with disabilities have been forced to travel long distances on foot or by rudimentary means to access food and water, within a repressive environment where civilian gatherings and groups—including those moving in search of food—are deliberately targeted. United Nations reports have documented direct attacks on civilian groups congregating around aid trucks in multiple locations in the northern Gaza Strip, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries from repeated targeting, including among Persons with disabilities.

The Head of Communications at Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Inas Abu Al-Khalf, reported in an Al Jazeera interview on 27 June 2025 that **over (500) individuals suffering from starvation have been killed to date while attempting to access food distribution points located at four military sites within the Gaza Strip. Additionally, more than (4,000) starving persons have been unlawfully shot with live ammunition.** MSF, relying on extensive documented testimonies from within Gaza, highlighted **the repeated targeting of starving civilians—many of whom travel long distances under extreme duress to reach scarce food supplies—describing this pattern of attacks as ongoing massacres. These civilians remain trapped “between the hammer of starvation and the anvil of death.”** MSF condemned these acts as **a profound stain on the international community’s conscience.**

Children in the Gaza Strip—especially **children with disabilities** - face grave health risks due to the failure to receive **essential vaccinations** on schedule, notably against poliovirus. Confirmed cases of poliovirus have emerged among children, exacerbated by the catastrophic conditions in Gaza, the ongoing full-scale Israeli military aggression, systematic targeting of civilians and civilian objects, widespread destruction of health system capacity, repeated displacement, and the obstruction by occupation authorities of vaccine delivery and health personnel deployment. In a joint statement issued in August 2024, **UNICEF and WHO** have officially underscored the critical importance of resuming

polio vaccination campaigns in Gaza, warning that failure to do so endangers children's health, particularly children with disabilities who rely on continuous healthcare services.

United Nations data indicates that the obstruction of humanitarian aid is depriving the Gazans of the fundamental means of survival, amid the proliferation of communicable diseases and escalating levels of malnutrition. Louise Wateridge, UNRWA Emergency Officer, warned of the rapid spread of disease and the severe shortage of essential medicines across the Gaza Strip. She stated: **"The garbage is out of control, and there is sewage, rodents, pests, rats, and mice - all these animals are moving between the buildings where people are taking shelter."** she said. **"As the days hot up, disease is spreading. There is not enough medicine."** (UN News, April 2025). She further highlighted a critical solid waste management crisis, with uncollected garbage accumulating in the streets and displacement sites throughout Gaza.

The situation in the Gaza Strip represents not only a humanitarian emergency but a deliberate and systematic dismantling of the care infrastructure and the medical and social protection systems, with particularly devastating consequences **for persons with disabilities**. Far from being afforded the heightened protection guaranteed to them under international humanitarian and human rights law, persons with disabilities are now subjected to conditions that **threaten their very survival - physically, mentally, and socially - due to widespread neglect, enforced starvation, the collapse of the health system, isolation, and systemic exclusion from the international response**. This reality imposes a profound responsibility on the CRPD Committee, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, and the broader international community to take **immediate, coordinated, and disability-inclusive action**. A radical shift is required to realign the response with the principles of the CRPD, and to prevent further irreversible harm.

6 International Responsibility for the Crime of Starvation in the Context of Disability

Since 7 October 2023, the Gaza Strip has been subjected to systematic siege and starvation as a central tool of aggression and forced displacement of its population. This has occurred alongside the destruction of supply chains and the obstruction of humanitarian aid, resulting in an **unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe**. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) stated: "Israel, through its siege of Gaza and hindrance of humanitarian aid, together with targeted attacks and the killing of civilians and aid workers, and despite repeated UN appeals, binding orders of the International Court of Justice, and Security Council resolutions, is intentionally causing death, starvation, and serious injury, **using starvation as a method of warfare and imposing collective punishment** on the Palestinian population" (UN News, November 2024).

In its latest statement (June 2025), **the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)** confirmed that: **"The weaponization of food for civilians, in addition to restricting or preventing their access to life-sustaining services, constitutes a war crime"**. It further emphasized that: "Depriving civilians of food, medicine, and water, and

preventing the entry of aid, is a form of **collective punishment**, especially when practiced under conditions of armed conflict and prolonged occupation."

Field data and documentation from “**QADER**” (2024) indicate that this crime has had a disproportionately severe impact on persons with disabilities. The limited humanitarian aid that entered the Strip lacked essential items related to disability, including assistive devices, medications, and life-saving care supplies. Many persons with disabilities were forced to **travel long distances under extremely dangerous conditions** to reach the few available distribution points - described by the United Nations as “**death traps**” (UN News, May 2025), **referencing the hundreds killed and injured** while attempting to access or leave these areas.

Data presented in “**QADER**” report (The Impact of the Aggression on Persons with Disabilities) revealed that the aid delivered after the blockade did not include any **specialized nutritional components for children with disabilities or address the needs of persons with disabilities related to mobility or cognitive disabilities**. No safe corridors or reasonable accommodation to ensure access were provided, despite the obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requiring States Parties to guarantee accessibility and protection in situations of conflict and emergencies. Similarly, United Nations documents, including statements by **Secretary-General António Guterres, have described the situation in Gaza as a betrayal of humanity** (UN News, May 2025). Nevertheless, **international mechanisms have failed** to ensure the entry of independent investigation committees or to facilitate access for international journalists, despite the International Court of Justice’s explicit call to remove all obstacles hindering investigation and accountability committees.

Here again, **the failure of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) is evident, as it has not established a commission of inquiry** regarding serious violations and international crimes that have disproportionately affected persons with disabilities in Gaza nearly two years after the onset of the aggression (Article 6 of the Optional Protocol). The Committee, **along with the Special Rapporteur**, has also failed to undertake field visits to Gaza to assess the catastrophic conditions faced by persons with disabilities there. Furthermore, **there has been a lack of coordination between the Committee, the Special Rapporteur, and the representative organizations of persons with disabilities and Palestinian civil society, in violation of their mandates** and contrary to the measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) emphasizing the importance of allowing international investigation committees access to Gaza - measures reaffirmed by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) in its latest report (July 2025). This failure also contravenes the provisions of Article (11) of the CRPD and Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) regarding the protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflicts, as well as the briefings to the Security Council by the UN Secretary-General.

In light of these violations, the historic resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/ES-10/24, September 2024), based on the landmark advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the illegality of the occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its legal consequences, stands as a **pivotal document - a roadmap for justice**. This resolution affirms the illegality of the Israeli occupation over the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and reinforces the legal principle prohibiting the acquisition of territory by force. It calls for the immediate cessation of all settlement activities and the evacuation of all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It includes **core mechanisms** such as the establishment of an **international register of damages, an international mechanism for reparations, the dismantling of the apartheid regime, accountability, and effective remedy for violations committed by the occupation since 1967**. The resolution obliges all States and organizations **not to provide any support that would entrench the occupation, including through diplomatic, political, legal, military, economic, trade, or financial dealings with Israel**. It further mandates that **the Secretary-General submit reports to the General Assembly on the extent to which States and entities are complying with the resolution**.

There are significant responsibilities incumbent upon the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, in effective coordination and cooperation with representative organizations of persons with disabilities in Palestine, relevant United Nations entities and specialized agencies, States, and international organizations, to ensure the “disability-inclusive” implementation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion on the illegality of the occupation and General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-10/24 (September 2024), including the critical mechanisms it contains, which together constitute a “roadmap” grounded in disability inclusion for the enforcement of the opinion and the resolution.

In addition, Security Council resolution 2735 (2024), which called for an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional entry of humanitarian aid, and Security Council resolution 2475 (2019), which emphasizes the need to protect persons with disabilities in armed conflict, have not been implemented in the context of Palestine. Amid the ongoing genocide, the deliberate starvation of the civilian population, the complete collapse of infrastructure and services, the continuing siege and collective punishment, and the grave and escalating violations against persons with disabilities across all types of disabilities, **the failure of the United Nations is starkly evident. The international human rights protection system now faces an existential and deeply alarming test.**

Thus, it becomes clear that **the policy of siege and starvation in the Gaza Strip—and its compounded catastrophic impact on persons with disabilities—does not merely represent a humanitarian failure, but constitutes grave international crimes as defined under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**. These crimes are being committed **with complete impunity** and represent **a stark test for the international community, the United Nations and its agencies, including the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of**

persons with disabilities, regarding their commitment to the principles of justice and the protection of the most marginalized groups, foremost among them persons with disabilities.

Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court explicitly states that **“intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including willfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions”** constitutes a war crime. However, international criminal responsibility does not end with this provision. The **systematic use of starvation as a method to commit intentional killing, forced displacement, and acts of genocide on a widespread and systematic scale against the civilian population** constitutes multiple categories of **international crimes** under the same statute. Intentional killing is defined as a **war crime** under Article 8(2)(a)(i) and as a **crime against humanity** under Article 7(1)(a), while forced displacement is considered a **war crime** under Article 8(2)(a)(vii) and a **crime against humanity** under Article 7(1)(d).

Referring to **the crime of genocide** under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, it includes five distinct acts, each of which constitutes genocide when committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such. Among these acts are: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, and deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. According to United Nations reports, there is clear evidence of a systematic policy that deliberately targeted the killing and injuring of hundreds of starving civilians in the Gaza Strip—repeatedly—during their attempts to access food at the four designated distribution centers in the southern and central parts of Gaza. UN experts had previously condemned, in a statement dated 5 March 2024, the Israeli military’s opening of fire on crowds of Palestinians gathering to collect flour, in what became known as the “Flour Massacre,” which resulted in the killing of (112) civilians and the injury of (672) others. That same statement documented (14) incidents of gunfire, shelling, or targeted attacks against civilian crowds waiting for food. UN bodies, agencies, Special Rapporteurs, and independent experts have consistently affirmed the militarization and systematic engineering of starvation and the creation of death traps.

The consistent data and reports issued by the United Nations regarding the impact of the ongoing aggression on the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023 include the statement by the UNRWA Commissioner-General that **“Gaza is a place of despair, and two million people are being subjected to collective punishment”** (UN News, April 2025). UNICEF has stated that **“Gaza has become a graveyard for children,”** reporting that more than (950) children were killed in airstrikes in just the past two months alone, since the beginning of the full blockade on 2 March 2025 (UN News, May 2025). The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, issued on 12 May 2025, states that **“the entire population of Gaza is facing the risk of famine”** (UN News, May 2025). These findings strengthen the body of evidence that the policy of systematic starvation has constituted a prominent criminal act in the commission of genocide in its multiple forms.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, *Francesca Albanese*, confirmed in her report to the UN Human Rights Council dated 23 March 2024 (document number A/HRC/55/73) that there are “**reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza has been met.**” She stated that “**the horrifying number of deaths, the irreparable harm inflicted on survivors, the systematic destruction of every means of sustaining life in Gaza—from hospitals to schools, from homes to agricultural land - and the specific harm endured by hundreds of thousands of children, pregnant women and girls cannot be reasonably understood as anything other than the intentional destruction of the Palestinian people as a group.**” She further emphasized that: “**The threshold indicating the commission of genocide has been met. This determination is based on the facts and a reasonable interpretation of the law, and entails a responsibility to prevent, punish and redress this crime.**” She noted that Israel’s actions and patterns of violence in Gaza were “**buttressed by statements amounting to dehumanization of Palestinians by senior Israeli officials, often mirrored in the conduct of the troops executing the assault.**” This provides **strong and compelling evidence that genocide is being perpetrated.**

Despite the fact that the systematic starvation policy **has constituted a central tool in the commission of numerous international crimes** as defined under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court—most notably, starvation as a war crime in its own right—and has played a decisive criminal role in multiple forms of war crimes and crimes against humanity, especially in acts of willful killing and forced displacement, reaching the threshold of genocide in the form of killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s physical destruction in whole or in part (the population of the Gaza Strip), and despite the compounded impact of these crimes on the most vulnerable groups—particularly persons with disabilities—the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has not announced the establishment of a formal commission of inquiry pursuant to Article 6) of the Optional Protocol, and there has been no observable serious action from the Committee or the Special Rapporteur, in contrast to the active engagement of Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese and other UN bodies.

This failure by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities - along with the lack of coordination and intersectionality - has been starkly reflected in UN reports and statements, where disability-related issues have remained marginal or altogether absent. This is despite the clear legal foundations for criminalizing violations against persons with disabilities under international criminal law, constituting further evidence of the existence of the specific intent (*dolus specialis*) required to establish the crime of genocide.

The deliberate use of starvation constitutes one of the most prominent material elements (*actus reus*) of international crimes, especially when employed to inflict severe suffering or to destroy a specific segment of the population. Its severity reaches its peak when directed against persons with disabilities, who face compounded impacts due to their specific nutritional and medical needs and their inability to access food, water, and healthcare - adding a discriminatory and systematic dimension that aggravates the nature of the violation. These practices warrant criminal investigation and international accountability, and they underscore the urgent need for a leadership-driven response by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, in full and effective coordination with representative organizations of persons with disabilities and relevant UN bodies and agencies, to ensure protection, effective redress, and an end to impunity.

7. Exclusion of Persons with Disabilities from the International Humanitarian Response

7.1 Absence of a Disability-Inclusive Approach in International Response

Despite the unprecedented deterioration in the situation of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023, and despite the repeated warnings issued by United Nations bodies and specialized agencies regarding an "**unprecedented**" humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, **disability has been clearly absent** from the core of the international humanitarian response. No emergency interventions or operational plans specifically addressing the needs of persons with disabilities have been documented. Their presence in UN statements and programs has remained limited to marginal references and tokenistic language, failing to reflect **the magnitude of the crisis** they are enduring on the ground.

This absence constitutes a **systemic failure to adopt the disability-inclusive approach** mandated by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), particularly **Article (11)**, which obliges States Parties and international organizations to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. This failure also extends to **the UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019)** on the protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict, which serves as a legally binding framework for all United Nations actors.

Nevertheless, field evidence and human rights documentation by “QADER” during the aggression on Gaza clearly demonstrate that persons with disabilities were not considered at any stage of planning or implementation—whether in needs assessments, intervention design, or resource allocation. This includes the United Nations announced Humanitarian Response Plan, mechanisms for aid distribution, or the provision of safe and accessible displacement shelters. Such exclusion **constitutes a blatant violation of international**

obligations and underscores the collective failure of the UN system to integrate this highly vulnerable group into the emergency response—amounting to **structural neglect**.

7.2 Absence of Disability-Disaggregated Data and Indicators

The absence of disability-disaggregated statistical indicators and data is one of the clearest manifestations of **the structural failure in the international humanitarian response**. Humanitarian reports issued by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNRWA, UNICEF, and other UN agencies lack any systematic references to the situation of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip, or their access to essential services such as food, water, healthcare, education, and protection. These reports also fail to include performance indicators based on a disability-inclusive approach, or quantitative and qualitative analyses that reflect the multidimensional discrimination and challenges faced by this most marginalized group—both prior to the onset of the aggression and to this day. This same shortcoming is reflected in the most recent report of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) and in previous reports on violations.

This **statistical obscuration** does not merely reflect a technical gap or a flaw in data collection—it constitutes **an act of systemic institutional marginalization that effectively erases persons with disabilities from the record of victims of genocide and other international crimes in Gaza. It renders them effectively invisible in the international humanitarian response**. This erasure undermines any possibility of building evidence-based interventions and obstructs the ability of actors to design fair policies that address the real needs of the most vulnerable groups. It also hampers the prospect of conducting transparent and equitable accountability for the grave violations suffered by this population and entrenches the reality of structural exclusion and multidimensional discrimination against persons with disabilities in both humanitarian and international criminal contexts.

This failure constitutes a flagrant violation of **Article (31)** of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which obliges all parties to collect disability-disaggregated data as a foundation for policymaking. It is also directly linked to **Article (11)**, which mandates protection in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. Furthermore, it contravenes the core principles of **UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019)**, which emphasizes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian responses in conflict settings based on the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, and accountability.

7.3 Failure of Relevant UN Mechanisms to Fulfill Their Mandate

Despite the broad legal mandate entrusted to **the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities** under Human Rights Council Resolutions 35/6 (2017), 44/10 (2020), and 53/14 (2023)—**which includes** consulting with States and stakeholders, including UN bodies and agencies, organizations representing persons with disabilities, and civil society organizations; monitoring violations using a disability-

inclusive approach; submitting thematic reports; undertaking urgent interventions and country visits; and providing advisory services, technical support, and capacity building—the response during the Israeli aggression on **Gaza remained weak and limited to brief, general statements**, without activating the follow-up and accountability tools available under the mandate.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) has not yet announced the initiation of an investigation pursuant to Article (6) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, despite nearly two years having passed since the start of the aggression and the availability of a vast amount of documented information and testimonies indicating serious violations and international crimes against persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip.

Both the Committee and the Special Rapporteur disregarded the detailed reports and analytical papers submitted by “QADER” as a leading and representative organization of persons with disabilities in Palestine. These professionally and independently documented the catastrophic impact of crimes of willful killing, starvation, repeated forced displacement, inaccessibility, and the absence of life-saving humanitarian needs since the start of the aggression on the Gaza Strip—which intensified following the full blockade and closure of all crossings on 2 March 2025—as well as the emergence of new disabilities resulting from limb amputations, starvation, the destruction of institutions, and the denial of access to health and rehabilitative care.

7.4 Exclusion of Disability from Relief and Protection Plans in Gaza

Despite the statement by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres that the UN and its partners have a **detailed five-phase plan to assist the people of the Gaza Strip**—based on UN principles and including the delivery of aid, inspection at crossing points, preparation for distribution, and transportation to those in need—this announcement, repeatedly affirmed by the UN, **made no reference to measures ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities** or consideration of their specific needs.

The Secretary-General rejected the current distribution mechanism implemented by "**Gaza Humanitarian Foundation**," which operates through only **four distribution points** in Rafah and the central area (the Netzarim military axis) managed by former U.S. military personnel, considering it a mechanism that fails to respect international law and the principles of neutrality, humanity, and impartiality (UN News, May 2025). UNRWA expressed similar concerns, noting that this mechanism **replaced more than 400 distribution points** previously managed by the agency through thousands of local staff in the Gaza Strip, and that it has resulted in **the killing and injuring of hundreds of starving Palestinians** during their attempts to access food.

However, none of these UN plans or statements have included any humanitarian interventions that consider **disability inclusion requirements**, whether in protection

programs, psychosocial support, rehabilitation services, or the preparation of shelter and displacement centers. Consequently, **persons with disabilities have been left at the mercy of genocide**, without any plans or tools enabling their survival, recovery, or reintegration, despite the fact that accommodation and accessibility are fundamental rights—not luxuries—under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

7.5 Exclusion of Disability Inclusion from the International Commission of Inquiry

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) has not adopted a disability-inclusive approach in its reports or investigations since its establishment pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution on 27 May 2021. Although the mandate in the resolution clearly includes investigating all violations and breaches of international human rights law (**including the CRPD and its entitlements**) and international humanitarian law (**including Article 11 of the Convention**) that occurred prior to 13 April 2021 and since that date, encompassing the collection, consolidation, and analysis of evidence on violations and breaches, working to ensure accountability and prevent impunity, and full cooperation with the United Nations system and its relevant bodies and agencies, the Commission’s reports — including the latest report (June 2025) — continue to ignore the devastating catastrophic impact of the aggression on the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023 on **persons with disabilities in Gaza**. They have not included an analysis of the compounded impact of international crimes on this most vulnerable group exposed to **silent genocide**, nor any recommendations regarding accountability and redress related to disability.

In contrast, although the resolution establishing the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (A/HRC/RES/30/1), issued on 27 May 2021, explicitly emphasizes in paragraph 5, among other things, close cooperation with the United Nations system—“**urging all relevant United Nations organs, bodies, and specialized agencies to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry and to respond promptly to any request made by the Commission, including those relating to the provision of all information**”—the lack of cooperation and coordination between the Commission of Inquiry and both the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities has resulted, and continues to result, in the **exclusion of persons with disabilities from the Commission’s reports**. This also applies to the statements and reports issued by specialized UN bodies and agencies such as UNRWA, OCHA, UNICEF, WHO, the World Food Programme, and others, which consequently keeps persons with disabilities excluded from justice and accountability processes.

The exclusion of disability strips justice of its meaning, leaving the most vulnerable groups outside the path of justice and equity. It also misses opportunities to document the complex crimes committed against persons with disabilities and to hold perpetrators accountable—especially in light of **the existence of robust national reports and investigations provided by organizations representing persons with disabilities in Palestine**, which ought to have been seriously considered and built upon.

The foregoing reveals more than just shortcomings in the UN system's performance; it exposes an institutionalized pattern of structural marginalization and exclusion that perpetuates discrimination against persons with disabilities amid the ongoing genocide and crimes in Gaza. This pattern becomes a **silent crime, rooted in the absence of a rights-based approach founded on evidence, intersectionality, and accountability.**

In this context, meaningful reform in humanitarian and human rights action cannot be achieved without **effective, institutionalized coordination with organizations representing persons with disabilities in Palestine, recognized as leading stakeholders in this field. We proudly highlight QADER for Community Development,** which has produced numerous detailed reports, analytical and legal papers during the course of the aggression. Through a highly active field team in Gaza, QADER has monitored violations, documented firsthand testimonies, and developed practical accountability frameworks. Moreover, the organization has pioneered a national guidance manual on the fundamentals of international law, monitoring, documentation, and accountability tools from a disability-inclusive perspective — the first of its kind at the regional and international levels — constituting a vital reference to strengthen capacities and guide interventions aligned with the State of Palestine's obligations under the CRPD.

8. Failure of International Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms to Include Disability

Despite the unprecedented crimes committed in Gaza since 7 October 2023, and the issuance of numerous human rights and field reports—including specialized reports by “QADER” documenting the compounded catastrophic impact of the aggression on persons with disabilities—relevant international mechanisms have clearly failed to fulfill their core duties as assigned by their official mandates.

8.1 Lack of Field Monitoring by the Special Rapporteur and Neglect of Submitted Testimonies

The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities holds a direct responsibility, under her official mandate from the Human Rights Council, to conduct field visits, collect testimonies from victims, engage with reports from independent organizations, and provide briefings to the Council and the General Assembly. However, despite the magnitude of the crisis in Gaza, the Special Rapporteur has not announced any field visit to Gaza, nor has she responded to appeals and submitted reports, including legal analyses and detailed testimonies documenting serious violations against persons with disabilities. This neglect **constitutes a breach of her mandate and undermines confidence in the credibility of the special procedures.**

8.2 Failure to Activate Article (6) of the Optional Protocol by the UN Committee

Article (6) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (OP-CRPD), which the State of Palestine acceded to on 10 April 2019, grants the **CRPD Committee direct authority to initiate independent investigations** upon

receiving reliable information regarding serious and systematic violations of the Convention. Independent human rights reports concerning the Gaza Strip have clearly demonstrated that the criteria set forth in Article (6) have been met since the early months of the aggression. Nevertheless, the Committee has failed to activate its mandate and has not announced any investigative measures, constituting an **unjustified obstruction of core competency**. This perpetuates a pattern of impunity grounded in hesitation and bureaucratic inertia.

8.3 Absence of a Disability-Inclusive Approach in the Work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry

Although the **Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)** was established pursuant to a resolution of the Human Rights Council with a mandate to investigate grave violations in the occupied Palestinian territory and determine accountability, it has thus far failed to adopt a disability-inclusive methodology. The Commission's **reports lack any in-depth or specialized analysis of the compounded impact of the hostilities on persons with disabilities**. There is no indication of targeted interviews with persons with disabilities or assessments addressing their specific protection concerns, despite the catastrophic conditions they face in Gaza. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether the investigative team includes disability rights experts. This omission represents a serious gap in the comprehensiveness and credibility of the inquiry and perpetuates the exclusion of disability from international recognition, protection, and accountability frameworks.

8.4 The UN System's Failure to Provide Disability-Inclusive Monitoring Tools

UN agencies—including OCHA, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and others - have failed to develop field monitoring tools that reflect a **disability-inclusive approach**. None of these agencies have incorporated qualitative or quantitative indicators that disaggregate data on victims and aid recipients by disability status. There has been no documentation of accessible shelter locations, no tracking of the number of children with disabilities affected, nor any assessment of the conditions of persons with disabilities in displacement camps. This has led to a severe data gap that obscures the living realities of persons with disabilities and reinforces their systematic exclusion from humanitarian response planning.

8.5 Lack of Engagement with National Efforts to Develop Specialized Monitoring Tools

QADER for Community Development, a leading national Palestinian organization specializing in the rights of persons with disabilities, is developing a **specialized guidance manual on monitoring, documentation, and accountability from a disability-inclusive perspective**. The manual incorporates accessibility considerations, disaggregated performance indicators, analytical methodologies grounded in cumulative discrimination and marginalization, and questionnaire designs that account for both disability and gender. This initiative constitutes a strategic step toward addressing the significant knowledge and technical gaps in the field.

“QADER” has previously submitted comprehensive analytical reports to both the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur, containing field testimonies, legal analyses, and qualitative data on the compounded violations faced by persons with disabilities during the aggression in Gaza. However, no response has been received from the relevant UN mechanisms, sending concerning signals about the effectiveness of institutional cooperation—despite “QADER’s” consistent efforts to engage and operationalize such collaboration in alignment with international mandates.

The experience clearly highlights an urgent need to activate the core functions of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur, particularly with regard to **effective consultation and coordination** with representative organizations of persons with disabilities. This includes supporting the development of national standards and indicators, as an integral component of their international obligations—commitments that must not be overlooked or sidelined.

8.6 The Need for a Fundamental Shift in Monitoring Tools

The atrocities and genocidal acts committed in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023 have not simply exposed a momentary lapse but rather unveiled **a deep-rooted structural failure within the UN monitoring and accountability system when it comes to persons with disabilities**. The exclusion of disability does not merely sideline victims—it distorts the truth and weakens the foundations for evidence-based justice. No international mechanism can claim credibility or impartiality without acknowledging that disability is a core pillar of inclusive and equitable justice.

Therefore, rebuilding trust in the UN system and restoring the credibility of its mandates requires the following:

- Strengthening communication and effective coordination with representative organizations of persons with disabilities;
- Initiating independent investigations under Article (6) of the Optional Protocol;
- Integrating monitoring and classification tools that adhere to the requirements of disability inclusion;
- Recognizing and adopting evidence-based, disability-inclusive methodologies such as the guide developed by QADER;
- Ensuring the representation of persons with disabilities and their experts in investigative and documentation bodies.

The exclusion of persons with disabilities from monitoring, documentation tools, and accountability mechanisms not only denies them protection but also places them outside the law and its frameworks. It perpetuates marginalization through means that should have ensured their inclusion rather than their invisibility. This exclusion does not arise from a lack of information or tools but stems from **a deep, ongoing structural flaw within the UN monitoring system**, marked by the absence of a serious commitment to applying **disability inclusion** as a guiding principle in conflict and disaster contexts. Continuing this

flaw risks undermining the credibility of UN mandates and emptying the principles of justice and accountability of their ethical and human rights meaning.

Accountability that is not based on documentation grounded in a **disability-inclusive approach** is inherently flawed; it conceals the truth, weakens justice, and perpetuates dynamics of marginalization rather than breaking them. There can be no discussion of transitional justice or humanitarian protection in the context of aggression unless persons with disabilities are integrated at every stage of the justice cycle—from monitoring, to investigation, to accountability and redress. Disability is not a technical add-on, but a fundamental lens for understanding impact, assigning responsibility, and achieving redress. If this exclusion continues, the UN system will remain incapacitated to grasp catastrophic reality and unable to respond effectively.

9. QADER's Efforts: Field Documentation and Testimonies on Aggression

Since the early days of the full-scale aggression on the Gaza Strip, “**QADER for Community Development**” has undertaken systematic field interventions to document the international crimes and violations committed against persons with disabilities. These efforts followed an **integrated approach** that included: the production of specialized analytical and legal briefs highlighting the catastrophic impact of the aggression on persons with disabilities; the development of disability-inclusive documentation tools to strengthen rights-based methodologies; formal engagements and correspondence with United Nations mechanisms and bodies to demand a serious and comprehensive assessment of their response and ensure disability inclusion in international plans; and the development of a pioneering, high-quality guidance manual on the fundamentals of international law, and tools for monitoring, documentation, and accountability from a disability-inclusive perspective—considered the first of its kind at both the national and international levels—all in response to the ongoing failure of international actors to protect the most marginalized populations.

9.1 Legal Briefs and Analyses During Aggression

In April 2024, “QADER” published a comprehensive field-based analytical report entitled: **“The Impact of the Israeli Aggression on the Gaza Strip on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Monitoring Violations, Legal Analysis, and Avenues for Accountability and Effective Remedies.”** ([Full Report](#)) The report examined the broader context of the Israeli occupation's violations of the rights of persons with disabilities, both prior to and during the ongoing aggression, covering all military assaults on Gaza since 2006. It also reviewed the findings of UN-established fact-finding and inquiry commissions related to eight successive military offensives over nearly (19) years, including the latest aggression that began on 7 October, which has resulted in tens of thousands of killings, injuries, and disability cases among civilians, alongside massive destruction of infrastructure and all aspects of life. The report offered a detailed analysis of the patterns of violations, based on **dozens of field documentations collected by QADER's field team in Gaza over six months of work under fire**. These patterns included: targeting of civilians and civilian objects, deliberate killings, forced displacement, arbitrary detention, violations of the right to health, starvation and food insecurity, and the targeting of women and children. The

report concluded with an in-depth legal analysis of collected data and monitoring findings in light of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law, highlighting the absence of accountability and remedy, and putting forward practical recommendations.

In October 2024, “QADER” developed a study titled: **“The Reality of the Rights of Palestinian Children with Disabilities under Israeli Colonial Occupation – Patterns of Violations, Accountability Pathways, and Redress.”** ([Full Report](#)) The study focused on the broader context of the situation facing children in Gaza under the ongoing aggression, as well as in the West Bank, which has also seen an escalation in violations resulting from the spillover of hostilities. It documented and analyzed patterns of grave violations and international crimes committed against Palestinian children—especially children with disabilities—including killings and intentional harm, starvation and forced displacement, persecution and apartheid, arbitrary detention, and torture and ill-treatment. The study provided legal analysis of these serious violations and crimes in accordance with international law, highlighting the responsibility of States, the United Nations, and its agencies. It also assessed the United Nations’ Early Recovery Plan for Gaza, examining the extent to which it addressed the needs and rights of children with disabilities, and concluded with concrete recommendations.

In parallel, “QADER” developed a focused policy brief in October 2024 titled *“Reflections on the Rights of Children with Disabilities Under Israeli Fire in the Besieged Gaza Strip.”* ([Full Report](#)). The paper examined the challenges of interpreting “disability” (difficulty) in accordance with the CRPD, and how the expansive definitions used in UN reports and mechanisms lead to unrealistic indicators and figures that fail to capture the scale of the catastrophe—what many have called a “silent genocide”—faced by children with disabilities and those newly disabled in Gaza’s child population. The brief cited data from UN experts and highlighted the catastrophic collapse of the health sector in Gaza and its devastating impact on persons with disabilities, particularly in light of the acute shortage of supplies and services essential for survival and rehabilitation.

In August 2024, “QADER” submitted its report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in response to Israel’s combined fifth and sixth periodic reports on the situation of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, since 7 October 2023 (CRC/C/ISR/Q/5-6/Add.1). ([Full Report](#)). The submission provided detailed findings, substantiated by credible evidence, verification processes, and legal analysis, and was framed in reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Israel’s obligations thereunder regarding the rights of Palestinian children under occupation. The report addressed the devastating consequences of the military assault on Gaza since 7 October 2023, as well as the escalation of violations in the West Bank and Jerusalem, with a particular focus on their disproportionate impact on children with disabilities. It responded directly to the List of Issues raised by the Committee, emphasizing the grave crimes committed against Palestinian children, including the killing and maiming of thousands; the alarming rise in disability among children due to targeted attacks; the widespread and systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza, especially homes,

schools, and hospitals—and its compounded impact on children; the spread of famine and food insecurity; forced displacement; environmental collapse and the spread of disease; and the arbitrary detention of children, including incidents of torture and ill-treatment.

Most recently, **“QADER” submitted its report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in response to the List of Issues concerning the initial report of the State of Palestine (CRPD/C/PSE/Q/1).** The report underscored the deepening structural discrimination and marginalization experienced by persons with disabilities across Palestine and included a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the ongoing aggression on their rights. It addressed all issues raised by the Committee, grounded in the principles and obligations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), with particular focus on Article (11) regarding the protection of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, as well as UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) on their protection in armed conflicts and the responsibilities of States.

“QADER” consistently emphasized, in its in-person meetings with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the occupied Palestinian territory and its advisers, with the United Nations Resident Coordinator, as well as in its virtual engagements with UN Special Procedures, and in its official public statements, the urgent need to conduct a serious assessment of the UN’s performance with respect to persons with disabilities. “QADER” repeatedly called for strengthening cooperation and partnership with relevant UN mechanisms - particularly the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities - especially in light of the escalating aggression since 7 October 2023. QADER formally addressed both the CRPD Committee and the Special Rapporteur through detailed submissions reflecting its ongoing monitoring and grounded in the State of Palestine’s obligations under the CRPD and its Optional Protocol. However, despite the clarity and credibility of the documented violations, no preventive or documentation-based action has been undertaken by the UN bodies. This constitutes a direct failure to uphold their legal mandates and further entrenches the exclusion of disability from the international protection priorities amidst ongoing acts of genocide.

All of this has taken place alongside **“QADER’s” continued efforts to develop a comprehensive and specialized reference guide entitled: “*Fundamentals of International Law and Tools for Monitoring, Documentation, and Accountability from a Disability-Inclusive Perspective*”** in contexts of conflict and peace. This guide serves as a normative tool aimed at addressing existing gaps in international human rights practice and at promoting a more inclusive and equitable response for the most marginalized groups - especially in light of the persistent inaction and failure of UN bodies to fulfill their mandates.

9.2 Fieldwork Amid Catastrophe: Urgent and Unpostponable Documentation

Since the onset of the Israeli aggression on Gaza on 7 October 2023, **QADER’s field team embarked on one of the most complex and dangerous human rights documentation missions in the world**. Operating under relentless bombardment, amidst a total blockade and the collapse of humanitarian systems—and in a territory where, as the United Nations has affirmed, *no place is safe*—this documentation effort transcended professional duty. **It became a lifeline for those still surviving, and a living testimony to ongoing crimes against a profoundly vulnerable population that has been abandoned without protection or refuge.**

The firsthand testimonies and field reports—collected on an ongoing basis by **QADER’s** team operating in the Gaza Strip—reveal the **immense scale of the tragedy and the compounded vulnerabilities experienced by persons with disabilities**, whether pre-existing or newly acquired as a direct result of the aggression. These firsthand accounts have served as a **cornerstone for QADER’s legal analyses**, policy briefs, and international communications, exposing the growing chasm between UN mandates and realities on the ground.

QADER’s field documentation, grounded in the disability-inclusive approach, continues unabated—while the fire still rages. Despite numerous letters and reports addressed to the relevant international bodies, **silence has prevailed, and abandonment has been the only response**. Any failure to act on these testimonies is not a mere technical lapse, but **a complicit silence in the face of ongoing genocide**.

9.3 Field Documentation and Testimonies Under Fire

Qualitative Interviews, Quantitative Indicators, and Field Findings

The field team of **QADER for Community Development** continues to carry out **frontline documentation efforts under fire**, operating in an extremely high-risk and complex environment to monitor violations and crimes committed against persons with disabilities. This process is grounded in locally developed tools based on the **disability-inclusive approach**, resulting in high-quality reports that feature **firsthand interviews, precise quantitative indicators, and compelling live testimonies from the heart of the tragedy**. These findings form a cornerstone for analysis and the development of rights-based and policy-oriented frameworks grounded in inclusion. Below, we present additional firsthand testimonies, complementing those previously featured in this submission.

Field reports compiled by **QADER’s team in Gaza**—particularly researchers **Raed Eshniora, Suheila Abu Shaaban, and Bashar Sallout**—reveal that the scale of violations against persons with disabilities far exceeds initial estimates. The data indicates that **at least one new disability has resulted from airstrikes each day, alongside harrowing accounts of the devastating impact of the aggression on persons with disabilities**, including the denial of access to life-saving care, rehabilitation services, and essential needs. The documentation highlights that persons with disabilities are facing **a compounded**

humanitarian catastrophe under the ongoing genocide, driven by systematic destruction, starvation, and targeted attacks.

These ongoing field operations—carried out with extraordinary determination despite grave security threats and the complete absence of protection in one of the most dangerous places on earth (**Gaza**) - serve as the **backbone of all legal analyses and policy papers produced by “QADER”**. They stand as a **clear moral and legal indictment of the international community’s apathy and inaction** in the face of overwhelming evidence, well-defined mandates, and the alarming scale and severity of violations, with catastrophic consequences for thousands of persons with disabilities across the entire Gaza Strip.

9.4 Examples of Firsthand Testimonies from Gaza

Voices from Under Siege: “We No Longer Have a Wheelchair... Nor Bread”

Below are excerpts from additional firsthand testimonies **documented by QADER’s field team operating in the Gaza Strip**. These accounts vividly capture the profound suffering of **persons with disabilities at the heart of the crisis** and give voice to stories that risked being lost were it not for the team’s determined efforts to document them:

“We no longer have a wheelchair... nor bread, no medicine, and no hope... My son cannot hear, see, or walk... and we don’t know how to protect him.”

(Testimony of a mother of a child with a disability, Nuseirat Refugee Camp)

“We were displaced five times; each time, we lost something. My husband has both legs amputated and cannot move, and I cannot carry him alone.”

(Testimony of a woman caring for her husband with a disability, Khuza’a)

“I work at a rehabilitation center... most of our equipment was destroyed, people cannot reach us, and staff cannot come... new disabilities are rapidly increasing, and we are helpless.”

(Rehabilitation service provider, Gaza)

“There were seven of us; my father and mother were killed in a direct strike on the house we had displaced to. Only my two siblings, my sister, and I survived. My brother was hit by shrapnel in his back and abdomen and kept calling for ‘Dad, Dad’... I was hit by shrapnel in my neck, causing complete paralysis.”

(From the testimony of Israa Al-Batniji – Al-Shuja’iya)

(Israa Al-Batneej – Al-Shuja’iyya)

“The case of Ms. Israa Al-Batneej left a profound and deeply painful impact on me. She is not just a statistic in a report, but a living embodiment of the human tragedy

that alters a person's life. Losing her parents and becoming completely paralyzed in the same incident, while fully conscious of what is happening, is beyond human endurance and speaks to the magnitude of trauma and irreparable harm."
(Field researcher Suheila Abu Shaaban's reflection after documenting Israa Al-Batneej's testimony)

"My equipment was burned... I relied on an electric wheelchair, and now I cannot leave my room... We are not counted among the martyrs, and our suffering is never mentioned, as if we are outside this world."

(Testimony of a young man with a physical disability, northern Gaza)

"At the center... every child carries a new scar: on the body or in the soul. One does not speak, another cannot move, and a third has lost their entire family. Each disability has become a story of delayed death."

(Psychologist, Gaza Strip)

These first-hand testimonies, along with dozens of other meticulously documented accounts, are presented in our reports **as a documented and substantiated human outcry**. They hold United Nations bodies, committees, and Special Rapporteurs **directly accountable—both legally and ethically**—for the significant failure to intervene and the persistent neglect of their duty to protect, despite repeated reports and ongoing correspondence from **"QADER"** within the framework of the United Nations' mandates and obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

Under relentless bombardment, QADER's field team has captured firsthand evidence—testimonies forged amid the chaos and danger—ensuring that the truth about the ongoing genocide is witnessed and cannot be dismissed. Their documentation stands as a powerful challenge to attempts to ignore or deny the crisis through silence and complicity.

In this context, field documentation was not merely a human rights activity—it was an act of human resistance that deserves recognition and support, not neglect or erasure. Every moment of delay in response is complicity in an ongoing crime. The time for accountability is now. Justice must begin in Gaza, with voices that still breathe—waiting to be translated into truth, redress, and accountability.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations: From the Silence of Genocide to Pathways of Justice

This submission exposes a **structural failure within the international system of monitoring, documentation, and accountability**. Since October 7, 2023, persons with disabilities have not only been at the center of grave human rights violations but have also remained marginalized in the global response—excluded from protection mechanisms, absent from monitoring frameworks and indicators, and effectively omitted from international justice processes.

The lack of consistent adherence to institutional mandates, the failure to activate relevant authorities, and the exclusion of disability-inclusive classification tools have entrenched a pattern of **systemic and repeated neglect in times of crisis**. This has deepened the vulnerability of victims and significantly undermined the credibility of the United Nations' response mechanisms. It also reflects the broader incapacity of the international system to address the intersecting and compounded harm experienced by persons with disabilities, despite clear and binding legal obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol.

In this regard, the CRPD Committee's failure to activate Article (6) of the Optional Protocol (OP CRPD)—despite the existence of well-documented and credible criteria warranting an inquiry into serious violations and international crimes against persons with disabilities—represents a **missed opportunity to uphold accountability**. It signals a worrying disregard for the substantial field-based evidence and qualitative documentation submitted to the Committee, including detailed reports and testimonies presented by **QADER**, a specialized organization working with and for persons with disabilities in Palestine.

The same applies to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, who has not meaningfully exercised the functions of the mandate conferred by the Human Rights Council resolution. These include the conduct of country visits, the analysis of field testimonies, and structured dialogue with representative organizations of persons with disabilities in Palestine—particularly within the context of an aggression widely recognized as among **the most severe since the Second World War**.

This shortcoming is not merely a procedural failure; it constitutes a **departure from the spirit and obligations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**—notably the principle of effective consultation and partnership outlined in Article 4(3); the obligation to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies (Article 11); the requirement to collect and utilize disaggregated data to inform policy and action (Article 31); and the commitment to undertake international cooperation in support of quality, inclusive national efforts (Article 32).

The persistence of such dysfunction effectively places persons with disabilities outside the reach of legal protections and accountability mechanisms, reinforces their systemic

marginalization within justice systems, and strips the processes of monitoring, documentation, and accountability of their human rights and humanitarian substance. Accordingly, the recommendations that follow do not reflect aspirational ideals alone; they constitute urgent legal and ethical imperatives and serve as a roadmap toward restoring the integrity and inclusiveness of international justice.

First: Findings

1. Disproportionate and Devastating Impact on Persons with Disabilities

The large-scale and systematic aggression launched by the Israeli occupation against the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023 has confirmed that persons with disabilities are among the groups most severely and structurally affected. This is due to both the direct military targeting and the total collapse of protection systems and essential life-saving services—including access to food, water, shelter, healthcare, mobility, and rehabilitation. These conditions have profoundly worsened their daily suffering and elevated their vulnerability to unprecedented levels by global standards

2. Clear Failure of International Mechanisms to Fulfill Their Mandates

Relevant United Nations mechanisms—most notably the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities—have failed to exercise the functions of their mandates as outlined in the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Despite the availability of credible evidence of grave and systematic violations, and the clear scope of their mandates, no independent investigation has been initiated, nor has effective field monitoring been undertaken. This inaction has significantly undermined trust in the capacity of the international protection system to ensure accountability and redress—particularly among victims and their representative organizations.

3. The Systematic Exclusion of Disability from the United Nations Reports

Specialized and comprehensive addressing of the situation of persons with disabilities has been notably absent from the majority of international reports issued by United Nations bodies, including the reports of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on Palestine, humanitarian relief assessments, and statements issued by mandate holders. This neglect reflects a systematic pattern of exclusion that has effectively erased disability from the prevailing human rights narrative.

4. Lack of Disability-Disaggregated Analytical Classification

United Nations monitoring tools have failed to include quantitative or qualitative indicators disaggregated by disability—such as the classification of victims, accessibility of centers and assistance, or availability of disability-inclusive shelter. This omission has resulted in the exclusion of disability as a fundamental analytical component in impact assessments and response planning, thereby undermining the ability to develop equitable and urgent programs and interventions that address the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups

Second: Recommendations

1. Activate Article 6 of the Optional Protocol to the CRPD

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must immediately exercise the functions of its mandate under Article (6) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention by initiating a formal inquiry into the grave violations and international crimes committed against persons with disabilities during the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. Credible and reliable information is available—including analytical reports submitted by national representative organizations—documenting a systematic pattern of targeting, neglect, starvation, and denial of essential services. This body of evidence constitutes a sufficient legal basis for the activation of an inquiry procedure. Failure to fulfill this obligation undermines the moral and legal integrity of the Committee’s mandate and sends a dangerous message that some victims are excluded from justice on the basis of their disability—thereby entrenching discrimination rather than combating it.

2. Dispatch an Independent Fact-Finding Mission to Gaza

We recommend that the Committee, in cooperation with the Special Rapporteur, dispatch an independent fact-finding mission to Gaza that adopts a disability-inclusive approach to monitoring and analysis, and fully coordinates with representative organizations of persons with disabilities in Palestine. The mission’s mandate should include:

- **In-person field interviews** (facilitated interviews) using reasonable accommodation and facilitated arrangements.
- **Intersectional analysis** of lived experiences during the conflict, disaggregated by type of disability, age, gender, and geographic location.
- In the event that field access is denied by the unlawful colonial Israeli occupying authorities, the mission should shift to the use of **open - source digital investigation tools (OSINT)**, including satellite imagery, publicly available visual content, and recorded testimonies—applying a disability-inclusive methodology.

Failure to undertake such measures would reinforce the exclusion of persons with disabilities and deepen the culture of impunity for perpetrators. It would also transform the denial of documentation and investigation into an additional crime of silence that perpetuates injustice instead of confronting it.

3. Evaluating the Implementation of the Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, as an independent international mandate holder, bears direct responsibility for leading an effective human rights response to the violations and crimes committed against persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip—nearly two years into the unprecedented and comprehensive aggression that began on 7 October 2023. It is expected that the mandate takes urgent steps, including:

- **Conducting an emergency visit** to the Gaza Strip for field follow-up, documentation of the devastating impact on persons with disabilities, hearing their testimonies, and observing their lived experiences—using digital alternatives in the event of denial of access.
- **Publishing a dedicated, detailed report** based on both field and digital interviews with victims, as well as analysis from representative organizations.
- **Briefing the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on the violations**, using a disability-inclusive lens that recognizes disability as a structural component of the conflict.
- **Leading a rights-based advocacy effort to expose and denounce the violations** and the restrictions imposed by the occupying power on investigative and accountability processes.
- **Establishing a permanent mechanism for digital engagement with relevant local actors** to enable the collection and analysis of information and data on international crimes and violations, their impact on persons with disabilities, and to catalyze timely and coordinated responses.

Continued neutrality or silence in the face of such grave violations and international crimes—and their disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities across all types of disabilities—constitutes both institutional and moral failure. It risks transforming the mandate from a tool of justice into a symbolic façade that drains rights of their substance and undermines the confidence of victims and their representative organizations in the legitimacy and effectiveness of international justice mechanisms.

4. Ensure that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) integrates disability as a cross-cutting dimension in its investigative methodology

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (COI) must recalibrate its analytical framework and operational methodology to ensure that disability inclusion is integrated as a core analytical dimension in its reporting, rather than relegated to an annex or marginal note. This should include:

- **Systematic analysis of compounded violations against persons with disabilities**, recognizing them as among the most disproportionately affected groups, with particular attention to the intersection of multiple forms of violence—physical, psychological, institutional, and displacement-related.
- **Conducting direct interviews with survivors with disabilities**, using reasonable accommodation and inclusive methodologies that account for individual differences and disability contexts, repositioning these testimonies at the heart of the justice narrative.
- **Utilizing open-source digital investigation tools (OSINT)**, geospatial data, imagery, and video testimonies to trace specific incidents involving the targeting of persons with disabilities or their exclusion from protection mechanisms.

- **Including clear, detailed analyses, findings, and recommendations related to criminal accountability** for crimes committed against persons with disabilities across disability types, with identification of both individual and institutional responsibility.
- **Publicly acknowledging prior shortcomings in monitoring processes and** explicitly recognizing the absence of disability inclusion in previous reports as a structural flaw that must be corrected—not overlooked. This must be accompanied by full coordination with the Committee and the Special Rapporteur, as mandated under the obligation for effective coordination across the United Nations system.

Rebuilding trust with victims and their representative organizations requires, at a minimum, that persons with disabilities feel genuinely included in the justice process and that their voices are amplified as rights-holders—not merely forgotten numbers. Without such foundational inclusion, investigative reports—no matter how rigorous—will remain **ethically deficient and legally insufficient** to achieve truly inclusive justice that leaves no one behind.

5. Develop Humanitarian Monitoring Tools to Effectively Include Disability

The exclusion of disability from humanitarian response reports represents one of the most glaring forms of structural bias against the most marginalized populations. To bridge this critical gap, United Nations entities and humanitarian actors must urgently:

- **Design humanitarian response tools that apply intersectional classification of target groups** - including disability, gender, age, geographic location, and degree of vulnerability - to ensure comprehensive analysis and inclusive interventions.
- **Integrate accurate and measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators into monitoring and evaluation systems**, covering access to assistance, safety of centers, rehabilitation, nutrition, healthcare, and other essential services.
- **Shift from tokenistic approaches to meaningful analysis of violations and international crimes from a disability perspective** within humanitarian reporting, ensuring that disability is treated as a core analytical and decision-making component - not as a cosmetic or marginal add-on.

The failure of monitoring and documentation tools to reflect the catastrophic reality experienced by persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip **effectively results in** the reproduction of structural discrimination within the relief system itself, undermining the principles of equity and justice that humanitarian action is meant to uphold

6. Ensure Genuine Representative Participation in Accordance with the CRPD

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in Articles 4(3) and 33(3), obliges all relevant United Nations entities to ensure sustained partnership with **representative organizations of persons with disabilities**, recognizing such engagement

as the cornerstone of any serious human rights effort. In this regard, the following measures must be undertaken:

- **Ensure the participation of representative organizations** in the design, implementation, and evaluation of monitoring and investigation processes, as active partners in decision-making.
- **Respect the local expertise and contextual knowledge** developed by representative organizations of persons with disabilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and promote local ownership of the human rights process through genuine partnerships based on complementarity—not substitution or disregard - ensuring that field actors are placed at the center of disability-inclusive justice efforts.
- **Allocate independent and sustainable financial resources** and strengthen international cooperation and technical assistance to enable Palestinian representative organizations to fully exercise their legitimate, CRPD-based role in justice and accountability processes.

7. Adoption of the Palestinian Guideline as an Operational Reference

- The national guideline developed by “QADER” on the **fundamentals of international law, monitoring, documentation, and accountability from a disability-inclusive perspective** constitutes a professional, specialized reference rooted in the disability-inclusive approach. It represents a pioneering Palestinian experience in the protection and defense of the rights of persons with disabilities, one that can be replicated regionally and globally. Accordingly, we recommend:
- **Formally recognizing the guideline as a reference document** in the work of the Committee, the Special Rapporteur, and all relevant UN agencies operating in Palestine and beyond, with periodic updates based on accumulated expertise. This would serve to reinforce the genuine and sustained partnership envisioned under Articles 4(3) and 33(3) of the CRPD.
- **Implementing specialized training programs** for members of commissions of inquiry and humanitarian response teams based on the guideline, in parallel with its ongoing development, in order to transform it into an operational tool that strengthens the disability-inclusive monitoring and analysis.
- **Enhancing recognition of such national tools** as expressions of local ownership over the human rights process, and as authentic partners in evidence production, violations analysis, and the formulation of alternative justice pathways from a disability-inclusive lens. This must go beyond the current patterns of neglect or tokenistic engagement with national expertise.

8. Recalibrating the International Response and Rebuilding Trust from a Disability-Inclusive Perspective

The Palestinian experience—particularly amid the ongoing aggression and acts of genocide in the Gaza Strip over the past two years—has exposed a deep structural gap in international justice as it pertains to persons with disabilities. This reality necessitates a comprehensive recalibration of the UN’s approach based on principles of equity and accountability.

Accordingly, we call upon relevant international bodies, particularly the Committee and the Special Rapporteur, to:

- **Publicly and explicitly acknowledge the systemic neglect** of the rights of persons with disabilities within UN monitoring, documentation, and accountability mechanisms, as a first and necessary step toward restoring trust and correcting the course.
- **Consider issuing a formal apology to victims with disabilities** - individuals who were structurally marginalized during the brutal aggression on Gaza, despite being subject to compounded forms of gross neglect and direct targeting.
- **Integrate disability as a core analytical lens in all future UN monitoring and investigative reports**, to move beyond superficial or marginal references and toward a structural understanding of the legal, psychological, and social impacts of the aggression on the population with disabilities in Gaza.

These recommendations are not a set of technical proposals, but rather an urgent legal and moral call to restore the rightful status of persons with disabilities—not as marginal figures, but as central actors in the pursuit of justice. The harrowing experience throughout the colonial aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip has laid bare the UN system’s failure to integrate disability as a core component of its monitoring, response, and accountability priorities—an institutional failure that cannot be justified, nor met with silence. It is time to move from marginalization to meaningful partnership, from exclusionary frameworks to inclusive justice that sees and serves all. Justice must be for all—or it is not justice at all.

The testimonies collected and documented by “QADER” from within the aggression clearly affirm that the magnitude of harm inflicted upon persons with disabilities in Gaza exceeds what has previously been recorded in modern conflict contexts. This field-based documentation was not merely an act of monitoring—it was a form of defending life against silent extermination. The continued disregard of these testimonies by UN bodies is not only humanitarian and legal abandonment, but a manifestation of cumulative failure to engage with crises through a disability-inclusive lens. Now is the time to break the cycle of silence—not with statements, but with tangible action that begins with recognition, continues with accountability, and culminates in a fundamental shift in the UN protection system. In Gaza, disability was not weakness—it was a mirror reflecting the profound dysfunction of the international order. From under the rubble, the testimonies still cry out: Do not extinguish the light of truth.