

*Concept note*

**Virtual Side event during the 13th session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD**

***Our rights under threat as we grow old:***

*A timely expert discussion on the intersection of disability and age*

**Tuesday, 1 December, 1:15-2:30 pm - NY Time**

**7:15-8:30 pm - GVA Time**

**Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed in tragic ways the combined effects of ageism and ableism on the rights of older persons with disabilities. Both groups – [older persons](#) with or without disabilities, and [persons with disabilities](#) regardless of their age - have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Older persons with disabilities have been hit the hardest.

Pre-existing barriers have both been magnified by the crisis and mirrored in the response. Older persons, persons with disabilities, especially those living in congregate settings, were identified early in the pandemic as persons at particular risk. Yet, the long-term care sector generally, and residential care in particular, have been largely overlooked in the preparedness and response measures. This resulted in the neglect, abuse, and high rates of death of older people in residential care as well as interruption of essential services for older people living at home.

As a result of Covid-19 related lockdowns, older people with disabilities face restrictions to their freedom of movement as well as barriers to food, healthcare, employment, support in tasks of daily living, and emotional connection. These barriers are magnified for those living in areas of armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.

Going forward, it is essential to use the lessons of the crisis to better protect the rights of older persons with disabilities. This includes addressing the chronic neglect of long-term support services and residential care while prioritizing person-centred, integrated, community approaches that put people and their dignity front and centre.

A rights-based approach to ageing and disability also calls for addressing discrimination and empowering people to meaningfully participate in the decisions that affect them.

**Rationale**

The UN Independent Expert (IE) on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons, Ms. Claudia Mahler, dedicated her first thematic report to the impact of COVID-19 on older persons. Her findings and recommendations to States are particularly relevant to older persons with disabilities, including those living in residential care settings.

The newly appointed Special Rapporteur (SR) on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Mr. Gerard Quinn has published recently on the lessons to be learned from the drafting of the UN disability treaty for a possible UN treaty on the rights of older persons as well as on autonomy and legal capacity for older persons. His current research interests include theories of personhood and new technology intersectionality between age and disability and extreme poverty and disability.

## **The event**

This event will include a dynamic high-level moderated discussion between the two UN experts and an interactive discussion with the audience.

Issues to be discussed include:

- Key gaps and challenges in the protection of the rights of older persons with disabilities as exposed and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Overlaps and distinctions in the protection of the rights of older persons and the rights of persons with disabilities
- Can the CRPD respond to the needs and rights of all older persons?
- Main lessons from the CRPD process for the UN Open-ended Group on Ageing on the protection of the human rights of older persons

## **Speakers:**

- Mr. Gerard Quinn, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Ms. Claudia Mahler, UN Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons
- Ms. Kate Swaffer, Chair, CEO & Co-founder, [Dementia Alliance International](#) (DAI)

**Moderator:** Bethany Brown, Human Rights Advisor, International Disability Alliance (IDA)

## **Interactive discussion to follow**

**Organized by:** International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) and Human Rights Watch, in partnership with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Programme on Ageing.

**Cosponsors:** AGE Platform Europe, AARP, Dementia Alliance International, The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People, HelpAge International, International Disability Alliance, International Longevity Center Global Alliance, NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva, NGO Committee on Ageing NY, International Federation on Ageing, and the Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary.

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If you have any questions please contact the convenor, INPEA at [sbsomers5@aol.com](mailto:sbsomers5@aol.com)