



Permanent Mission  
of the Republic of Poland  
to the United Nations  
in New York



United Kingdom  
Mission to the  
United Nations



---

## **Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict: Inclusive Protection Perspectives**

*Co-Organized by the Permanent Missions of Poland and the United Kingdom to the United Nations  
and the European Union with the United Nations Mine Action Service*

**Thursday, 28 May 2020**

**9.00 am - 10.30 am EST**

*Virtual Side Event*

### **Concept Note**

Over one billion people worldwide are living with some form of disability, 16% of which are attributable to armed conflict. Everyone living in the shadow of conflict faces unthinkable challenges in striving to protect themselves and their loved ones. For persons with disabilities, those challenges can be even more daunting. Many come up against additional barriers in seeking protection; some, particularly women and girls with disabilities, are physically unable to flee violence and many are vulnerable to human rights violations, violence and abuse, including sexual abuse. During and after conflict, persons with disabilities face disproportionate hurdles in accessing limited services, such as nutrition, health and psychosocial support. Survivors of explosive ordnance incidents and their families are often left without the support they need – from the provision of prosthetics to socioeconomic reintegration assistance – to rebuild their lives.

International humanitarian, human rights and refugee law require states to protect and assist persons with disabilities at all stages of the conflict cycle. In 2019, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2475 on the situation of persons with disabilities in armed conflict, which acknowledges the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on persons with disabilities, while reinforcing the obligations of all United Nations Member States.

Almost a year after the adoption of this milestone resolution, enormous challenges remain with respect to the promotion and protection of the rights and agency of persons with disabilities in humanitarian, conflict and post-conflict settings. Moreover, emerging trends – including the rise in the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, climate change, and the global health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic - exacerbate existing challenges.

This discussion will highlight the gaps in the implementation of the Protection of Civilians (PoC) agenda with respect to persons with disabilities. It will also explore some of the innovative solutions being developed, implemented and promoted by national institutions, the international community including the United Nations, and civil society. Particular focus will be placed on measures taken to address the additional risks facing women and girls living with disabilities.

Poland, the United Kingdom, the European Union and UNMAS have joined forces to draw to the attention of the international community the specific needs and requirements of persons with disabilities exposed to conflicts, whose conditions are frequently forgotten when the utter complexity of today's conflicts overwhelms international responses.