



THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION OF  
PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

&

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION AND RE/HABILITATION  
OF PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT, EUROPE

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF PERSONS  
WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN WAR-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

**The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) & The International Council for Education and Re/habilitation of People with Visual Impairment, Europe (ICEVI-Europe) call for all States Parties to international conventions to ensure the protection and safety of persons with visual impairment, including those with additional disabilities and deafblindness, in all war-affected countries by recognizing:**

- Their obligations under Articles 11, 15, and 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to take “all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters” (Art. 11);
- UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) on Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Conflict, which calls upon “all parties to armed conflict to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need of assistance. . . . [and] to prevent violence and abuses against civilians in situations of armed conflict, including those involving killing and maiming, abduction and torture, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations”;
- International Humanitarian Law and the Humanitarian Principles, which limits the effects of armed conflict on persons not involved in the hostilities, including those with visual impairment, and which applies to all sides involved in armed conflict;
- 3.2% of the world’s population has a visual impairment, suggesting that in any armed conflict, a large number of adults, children, and young people with visual impairment are at risk; and

- Visual impairment presents unique challenges in mobility, literacy, and access to information, requiring specific accommodations targeted to these unique needs.

In any situation of crisis or conflict, persons who are blind or visually impaired face disproportionate risk of abandonment, violence, death, and lack of access to safety, relief, and recovery support. Women with visual impairment are at increased risk of sexual violence, and children with disabilities are more exposed to abuse and neglect. Crucial information on safety and evacuation is often inaccessible, and the UN DESA estimates that 79% of people with disabilities cannot evacuate independently. In addition, visual impairment is often an invisible disability, unknown to anyone except the individual who experiences it, thus creating an additional risk for rescue and evacuation to safety.

We call on the political leadership and all humanitarian actors dealing with any armed conflict to ensure that all persons with visual impairment:

- Have full access to all humanitarian aid;
- Are protected from violence, abuse, and ill treatment;
- Are provided with accessible information about safety and assistance protocols, evacuation procedures and support, in braille, enlarged print, or digital formats;
- Have full access to basic services including water and sanitation, social support, education, healthcare, transportation, and information;
- Have full access to and use of their assistive, mobility, and rehabilitation devices, which provide needed information and support to navigate and adjust to new environments;
- Are accounted for and not abandoned: It is essential that measures are in place that fully incorporate people living in institutions, specialized schools, and orphanages. Relocation and evacuation measures should not result in more isolation for persons with visual impairment than already created by war itself; and
- Are meaningfully involved in all humanitarian action, through their representative organisations, if not themselves.

**The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment & The International Council for Education and Re/habilitation of People with Visual Impairment, Europe implore States and other relevant parties to ensure the protection and safety of all blind, deafblind, and visually impaired persons, including those who may have additional disabilities.**

This statement is based on the 24 February 2022 statement, *Protection and safety of persons with disabilities in Ukraine*, prepared by the European Disability Forum, retrieved from <https://www.edf-feph.org/protection-and-safety-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-ukraine/>.

As organisations involved in the education and re/habilitation of children and young people with visual impairment, we ask that their needs are acknowledged, addressed, and remembered.

**For correspondence, contact the ICEVI Secretariat, Email: [ceo201922@gmail.com](mailto:ceo201922@gmail.com)**