



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
3 September 2020

English only

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda items 2 and 3

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and Reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-11466(E)



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## **Written statement on the Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons (A/HRC/45/14)**

We welcome the report of the Independent Expert on the theme of human rights of older persons and the data gap.

The current pandemic of COVID-19 has revealed the invisibility of older persons, the lack of specific data and the urgent need for an adequate data collection and analysis that reflects the exclusion and discrimination that older persons suffer. COVID-19 has shown to what extent the lack of human rights protection is a question of life and death.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) in his Policy Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons noted the need for the review of disaggregation protocols for data. He called for stronger legal frameworks at both the national and the international levels to protect the human rights of older persons. Older persons have been hit particularly hard by the virus itself but it is the failure to protect their rights in the response, that has led to unnecessary deaths, unmet health and support needs, increased poverty, discrimination and stigmatisation.

Reliable data on experiences of violence, abuse and neglect in later life is largely missing perpetuating the denial of the sad reality that violence and elder abuse is present in all cultures and societies around the world.

Many older persons are forced by circumstances to live in institutions and are exposed to countless risks to their rights every day, including their right to health, and their right to life, as we have seen with the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, data on the real situation of older persons in institutions has not always made public.

Older persons who find themselves isolated – as many have been with lockdowns and visitor bans in nursing facilities, face a higher risk of violence, abuse and neglect with no access to adequate health and social services.

Older persons are also denied their equal right with others to fully participate in society as lockdowns ease, including through returning to work or volunteering in recovery efforts. Member States should develop policies in consultation with older persons that enable them to remain living in and integrated in their communities.

Older women face not just the burden of age discrimination but also the consequences of deep, wide-ranging, and life-long gender discrimination. Today, extended isolation under Covid-19 lockdowns, often based on discriminatory age criteria, has exposed older women to great risk of violence, abuse and neglect, disrupted their access to social protection entitlements, denied them work and access to other means to survive.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in June 2020 that for older women under lockdowns during the pandemic who are “already in abusive situations, gender inequalities and prolonged exposure to their abusers increases the risks of gender-based violence against older women.”<sup>1</sup>

International and national human rights legal frameworks have failed to ensure older persons’ rights are protected before and during this pandemic. This has to change to ensure the rights of older persons are protected now and beyond the pandemic.

We call on Member States, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the UN to

- Collect and analyse data on experiences of violence, abuse and neglect in later life during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Embark on a global UN study on violence, abuse and neglect of older persons. The active participation and involvement of older persons at all stages of research design,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-and-violence-against-older-people>.

data collection, analysis, use and reporting is crucial as is an ethical framework to guide the research.

- Collect and make publicly available data on violence against older women and ensure that all data on women include women of all ages.

We call on Member States to adequately support the OHCHR to bridge the gaps. A new UN convention on the rights of older persons is urgently needed to provide a solid foundation for effective national laws, policies, research, service delivery and behavioural change.

We thank the Independent Expert, Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, for her service to promote the human rights of older persons during her mandate. We welcome Ms. Claudia Mahler and we wish her a successful mandate. We shall support her mandate in any way we can.

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