



INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

RightOn – 27 May 2020

Moderated by **Mr Alfonso Barragues (UNFPA)** and **Ms Silvia Perel-Levin (NGO committee on Ageing)**.

Dr Claudia Mahler - Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons:

Challenges posed by COVID19 were visible way before the crisis. COVID19 will not be the last crisis. The priority of my mandate in light of the pandemic is to **keep the cause of older person a top priority** in the international agenda. I will present a **report to General Assembly this fall**, on COVID19 and older persons.

It is the first time that older persons receive such a **worldwide attention**. The pandemic exposes not only the challenges, it exposes concrete protection gaps. The world is discovering now that there is an **urgent need to help older persons. Human rights and human dignity do not decrease with older age.**

Ms Nena Georgantzi - Policy Coordinator Human Rights & Non-Discrimination at AGE Platform Europe:

When it comes to ageing, we tend not to perceive and label as human rights violations the discriminations aiming the older persons. **We failed to see how ageing is a factor for more human rights violations.**

We need to **change our narrative** from seeing older people as vulnerable. Older people are not weak by definition. We should refer to them as people with high-risk factors. We must make sure older people are **part of the recovery** and have the opportunity to participate.

Mr Klemen Ponikvar - Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the UN in Geneva:

The COVID19 pandemic showed how wrong our perceptions on the rights of older persons were. During COVID19, **older persons experienced every possible violations of their human rights.**

We do have mechanisms for older people, but we are not using them. At the Human rights council, we created a **group of friends for rights of older persons**. We work actively to elaborate resolutions.

Mr Rio Hada - UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):

Older persons have been identified as **one of the highest risk groups of population**. It is important to create dialogue and partnerships both at the international and national level through advocacy.

Traditionally, older persons have received **less attention from the UN at the country level**. The COVID19 is changing the situation. it is now an **opportunity to sustain our current attention** on older persons.

Ms Bridget Sleep - Senior Rights Policy Adviser at HelpAge International:

The pandemic exposed the **need for a fundamental shift on how we understand dignity** in older age. All actions must be in the best interest of older persons.

Human rights are part of the solution to rebuild a fair society for everyone, including for older persons. **A new UN convention on the rights of older persons** would provide the solutions that are needed now.

Dr Rachel Snow - Chief Population & Dvlpt Branch at United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):

Any governments have access to **demographic data**. We need to make sure demographic data are used in order to consider the **right of older persons**.

Other aspect of demographic data is to pay attention to **who is living alone**. We see some interesting numbers: older women are disproportionately **more likely to live alone than older men**. Older men seem to be **more vulnerable** but at the same time there are more **older women living in extreme poverty**. We have different vulnerabilities among older persons.