



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

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

### **Written statement\* submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, 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.

[27 May 2024]

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



## **Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Including People on Neurodiversity Spectrum**

The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) fully agrees with Ms Tlaleng Mofokeng's (Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health) adoption of a substantive equality approach. As noted in her previous report A/HRC/50/28, persons with disabilities are three times more likely to experience physical, sexual and emotional violence than persons without disabilities particularly in situations of violence.

That underscores the need to ensure true equality in outcomes, which is rendered unattainable where violence prevails. The many different forms of violence, ranging from interpersonal to societal and structural, are often rooted in intersectional forms of discrimination, not only on the bases of age, race, class, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and disability but also in situations of vulnerability: poverty, health or migration status, homelessness and drug use, living in residential institutions or in conflict or post-conflict situations. They do not originate in a vacuum but in contexts of inequality and multiple forms of discrimination. However some forms of disability are often overlooked.

Neurodiversity remains a neglected area of disability. It seems that because neurodiversity is not obvious as a physical disability, little attention is paid to those who are disadvantaged or denied opportunities or are at risk of violence by virtue of being on the neurodiverse spectrum. However, the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) and our affiliates found that this can be addressed by implementing support services, raising awareness and enabling neurodiverse children and adults to engage comfortably with challenging environments.

In November 2020, the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) established its ongoing disability project entitled the Sikh Neurodiversity Network. We have found that both the parents and carers and the children and young persons that we are presently working with are benefitting enormously from this. The children and young persons are engaging with their communities. The community institutions that we are working with, are taking steps to be sensitive to the character of the children and young persons who are on the neurodiversity spectrum. In short, the parents and carers feel that they can look forward to a better future for their child and the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) is hoping that the aforementioned will also translate into better education and skills development options for the children and young people and importantly, promising futures in their careers and jobs.

Our project has shown that increasing awareness in the community, within authorities and within state institutions improves the prospects of children and young people on the neurodiversity spectrum. They are much less likely to face violence as a result. We also find that the communities that we are working with feel more comfortable and happier at understanding the issue and are extremely willing to help.

Our reason for raising the issue here is that we feel that neurodiversity should be made an important issue and persuade Member States to adopt programmes and make commitments to raise general and specific awareness around this issue, set up support systems, encourage employers to understand neurodiversity and state authorities such as law enforcement agencies to be sensitive to the character of children and adults with neurodiverse conditions such as autism. This, in turn, will significantly contribute to redressing the issues identified by Ms Tlaleng Mofokeng.

We also recommend that a specialist team could be set up with the help of the World Health Organization to offer assistance to countries as part of their improving technical skills mandate.

This is an area of disability that requires fewer resources to address but holds enormous potential for the individual concerned, for the community and the State.

This also falls under the Member States National Development Objectives and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals aims and objectives.

Therefore, what we are seeking from the UN HRC and other relevant stakeholders is:

- (1) For the UN HRC and all other relevant stakeholders to persuade Member State Governments to further focus their attention on offering wider and more comprehensive support to families who are currently seeking a diagnosis. Specifically, in terms of the unbiddable waiting times that are prevalent across the globe, the support both financial and otherwise that is made available to families whilst they wait upon a diagnosis both in terms of their child's home life and education.
- (2) For those who have obtained a diagnosis an increase in the availability of support both financial and otherwise that is made available to families with neurodiverse children and adults. We have found that one of the most pressing issues in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a lack of clear information and support for families once they have obtained a diagnosis. In many instances, the families are left to fend for themselves in terms of finding out what support services governmental or otherwise are available to them in their locality. However, this can easily be addressed by the establishment and maintenance of a central online neurodiversity support resources hub and by requiring charities and other organisations who are registered with their state regulatory body and who are currently working in this area of disability to register their services and programmes on the online portal.
- (3) For there to be a renewed focus on our educational systems. Both in terms of the educational and wider support that is made available to neurodiverse children and young adults but also to those who are considered neurotypical. In other words, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland families often struggle to draft, implement and uphold their Education, Health and Care Plans and neurotypical youth often have very little understanding of the challenges and difficulties faced by their neurodiverse peers.
- (4) For employment and vocational skills training opportunities to be enhanced for neurodiverse individuals. Both in terms of providing neurodiverse individuals with alternative routes to finding and obtaining employment such as the allowance of audio and video recorded job applications or CVs, performance of the role interviews, etc... but also ensuring that employers mandatorily provide and uphold the most recent best practice guidance on inclusive workspaces.

The Sikh Human Rights Group is willing to bring its experience and expertise on board to help develop these training programmes.

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