FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Government hides from UN over treatment of disabled people**

Disability organisations have criticised the government’s decision not to give evidence to a United Nations inquiry as showing contempt for disabled people.

The inquiry evidence session, taking place in Geneva on 28 August, is part of a follow up to the special investigation carried out by the UN’s committee responsible for the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

The report from that investigation published in November 2016 confirmed that the threshold for grave and systematic violations of disabled people’s rights due to welfare reform and austerity measures had been met.

Issues that the investigation looked at included, among others: the closure of the Independent Living Fund, which supported disabled people with high needs to live in the community; the introduction of the bedroom tax which mainly hit disabled tenants; the role of benefit sanctions in the deaths and suicides of disabled claimants; and the introduction of the Work Capability Assessment, which became the subject of the award-winning film *I, Daniel Blake*.

Martha Foulds from the campaign group Disabled People Against Cuts described “The UK government’s failure to provide an update to the committee” as “the latest demonstration of their contempt for Deaf and disabled people.”

She added: “The government should put its effort into implementing the committee’s recommendations rather than its current commitment to cuts, enflaming hostility against benefit claimants and culture wars.”

The session will still hear from Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations (DDPOs) from across the UK and from the respective equality and human rights commissions.

DDPOs are clear that the situation since 2016 has deteriorated further for Deaf and disabled people.

Tracey Lazard, chief executive of Inclusion London, said: “The evidence is stark – there continues to be significant retrogression of disabled people’s rights since the 2016 special inquiry.

“Having gathered hundreds of pages of evidence over the last 18 months, DDPOs, including Inclusion London, are united in the view that the UK government has not implemented the UN committee’s recommendations to protect our rights.

“Far from it – they have made the situation even worse for disabled people than it was in 2016.

“We will be sharing our evidence and our experiences with the UN disability committee. If our under-funded and over-stretched organisation can gather, collate and provide evidence then why can’t the UK government?”

Deaf and disabled people in the devolved nations are dismayed that the Westminster government is avoiding scrutiny over issues on which they hold reserved powers, such as social security payments, that very directly and too often detrimentally impact their lives.

Rhian Davies, Chief Executive of Disability Wales, said: “The UK Government’s non-attendance at the review session reveals very clearly that the Westminster Government has little that is positive to report and as evidenced in Disability Wales own shadow report, has in fact regressed further on disability equality.

“The austerity regime introduced and cruelly sustained by successive UK Governments has had a devastating impact on disabled people in Wales, increasing poverty, worsening mental health and fuelling hate crime.”

For Northern Ireland there is the added political crisis now threatening the lives of Deaf and disabled people through imposition of an austerity budget that will see disability support services slashed.

Nuala Toman, head of policy at Disability Action, said: “Northern Ireland is currently experiencing austerity in overdrive with public services being cut at an alarming rate.

“It is essential that the Westminster Government takes action to restore government in Northern Ireland and allocates sufficient resources to Northern Ireland for the delivery of public services.

“The UK Government has shown complete disregard for the lives and rights of disabled people in Northern Ireland by refusing to attend the hearing.”

UK Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations will launch the shadow report they submitted to the special inquiry follow up on Monday 28 August to coincide with the UN evidence session.

ENDS

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**Notes**

1. For the 2016 special inquiry investigation findings and recommendations see: <https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2fC%2f15%2f4&Lang=en>
2. In 2017 the then Chair of the UN Committee for the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (CRDP), Theresia Degener described the UK Government’s cuts as causing “a human catastrophe”. The Committee said they had never been as concerned about a country in their 10-year history as they were about the UK.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/britain-disabled-idUKL8N1LH5GI>

1. In 2022 the UK DDPO Coalition published a shadow report under all articles of the Convention which found evidence of further retrogression of Deaf and disabled people’s rights. Among many other issues it highlighted the over-representation of disabled people among mortality statistics both directly linked to COVID and for additional deaths during the pandemic, and raised the unlawful use of Do Not Resuscitate notices on the medical notes of disabled people.

<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/uncrdp/shadow-report/shadow-report/>