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# **Elections 2020**

# **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

# **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

# **Human Rights Committee (HRCttee)**

# **Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

Questionnaire for candidates

Four UN Treaty Bodies (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Human Rights Committee (HRCttee) and Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)) will have elections organised in June 2020.

In order to strengthen the treaty bodies, the International Disability Alliance, Child Rights Connect, IWRAW Asia-Pacific and the Centre for Civil and Political Rights – as part of TB-Net, the NGO network on the UN Treaty Bodies – seek to promote quality, independence and diversity of treaty body membership through transparent and participators nomination and elections processes.

This questionnaire, which is sent to all nominated candidates and is based on the criteria set forth in the relevant treaties and in the GA Resolution 68/268, will enable all States and other stakeholders to better understand the skills, experiences and motivation of running candidates to CRPD, CEDAW, HRCttee, CRC in advance of the elections.

The written responses to the questionnaires will be made available on the website [www.untbelections.org](http://www.untbelections.org/), while the video responses will be shared on a dedicated [YouTube page](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3AE1yyjFFbfT9G9lFKAaTQ).

*This initiative does not imply that we support or oppose any individual candidates.*

## Questions for all treaty bodies candidates

1. Name:

**Rifat Kassis**

2. Nationality:

**Palestine & The Netherlands**

3. Current position:

**I am a free lance consultant runs a consultancy firm called GRIP Consulting**

4. Are you currently holding or have you previously held any position on behalf of, or for, your Government (Executive branch) that may compromise your actual or perceived independence and impartiality? If so, please give details:

**No**

5. Please indicate any current or potential conflict of interest that may prevent you from exercising independence and impartiality in your work as a member of a UN treaty body:

**I don't have any current or potential conflict of interest**

6. Was the nomination process for your candidacy a transparent and participatory process? Was civil society or other relevant stakeholders involved?

**The process of nomination begins with the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) announcement for its desire to nominate a suitable candidate for the CRC elections. This announcement was brought to my attention via DCI Palestine section and I felt encouraged to submit my application. Subsequently I contacted the MoFA and sent them my CV, a cover letter and a track record of my contributions in the field of child rights over the past years.**

**This has prompted DCI’s Board of Directors to send a support letter of my candidacy to the MoFA which was followed by another support letter submitted by Al Haq as another major human rights organization in Palestine and they have held meetings with relevant staff of the MoFA. I understood that my candidacy got supported by several human rights organizations in Palestine as well as some international ones in addition to Palestinian ministries who know me and my work in this field.**

**I knew about another candidate who had submitted his credentials to the MoFA to run for the CRC elections, but at the end I was the one who was selected due to the wider support I received.**

7. During your possible service as a Committee member, what other positions or professional activities do you intend to engage in?

**I am planning to continue working as a free lancer consultant!**

8. The commitments as a Committee member are very time-consuming during and outside session time. Will you have the capacity to dedicate the necessary time to the work of the Committee?

**Yes, I will have the capacity to dedicate the necessary time for the committee! My work as freelancer consultant, gives me more freedom to engage and focus on the work of the committee!**

9. What are the current and main challenges that you see for the treaty body system and what are your ideas for improvement?

**Non-compliance with reporting obligations is still one of the biggest challenges facing the Treaty Body system. Many State parties are challenged by the increase of their reporting and implementation obligations to multiple treaties within the system. This is also considered to be an impact of the non-coherence issue within this ever-growing system, where similar reported on issues would cause overlap and duplication of efforts. This in its turn leads to backlogs in the consideration of States parties’ reports and individual complaints. Therefore, measures should be focused on streamlining and harmonising the efforts to creating a simplified system that would be more coordinated, internally aligned and accessible to states, civil society as well as victims of human rights violations. The essence of improvement should be essentially concentrated on finding methods that are fair, fit for their purpose, economically viable-and most importantly- accessible to stakeholders. This should not only be done through simply creating new monitoring bodies, but also perhaps through creating a sufficient and effective single, unified body and bringing it closer to people in order to tackle all challenges of resources, backlogs, non-compliance, coherence, accessibility to people, among others.**

Link to your full resume: <https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/rifat-cv-aug-2019.pdf>



**Questions for candidates to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

*Please provide responses that are as precise as possible and in no more than 200 words per question.*

1.What motivates you to be a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child? ([video option](https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/crc_guidelinesvideo_en.docx))

2. Taking into account the current composition and expertise of the Committee, what would it be your added value? ([video option](https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/crc_guidelinesvideo_en.docx))

3. What do you think are the emerging issues and challenges in the implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols on a global scale as well as in your country/region?

**The implementation of child rights standards remains too weak in many States due to outdated or insufficient legislation, inadequate resource allocation or a lack of resources, and weak governance, including lack of monitoring and baseline data. To address implementation challenges, States should prioritise child participation and consultation with civil society and non-governmental organisations. Meaningful consultation and cooperation would enhance public education and awareness on child rights standards, strengthen legislation, and help ensure policies and programs are efficiently designed and effectively implemented to enhance child rights.**

**In our region, nearly half of all children are deprived of basic rights and necessities, with over 29 million children experiencing extreme poverty. While some states try to combat these realities, generally child rights are not prioritised and there are limited state expenditures on health care, education, child protection, and other programs that would support and strengthen these sectors. Here, enhancing child participation and cooperation with civil society and non-governmental organisations would help boost awareness, understanding, and implementation of the CRC, and, at the same time, reduce the burden on many national human rights organisations so they can more effectively utilise their expertise in child rights to address the most pressing issues children face.**

4. What do you think are the areas where the Committee needs to strengthen international child rights standards?

**The Committee can strengthen international child rights standards concerning the climate crisis and migrant and refugee children. Given the existential threat that climate change presents to humanity, the Committee should work to strengthen international child rights concerning its impact on children and prioritise in the review process assessing State parties’ policies and practices to address the climate crisis.**

**The Committee could play an active role in developing strategies and standards to reduce risks for children affected by climate change and calling for the mainstreaming of child-specific and child-sensitive risk reduction strategies within national plans on climate change.**

**The Committee can recommend that State parties pursue child rights-oriented policies that promote child survival, development, protection, and participation concerning the climate crisis and propose State parties amend laws and policies to ensure the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in assessing the costs and burdens of climate change mitigation and adaptation.**

**The Committee should provide child-focused guidance concerning the relationship between child rights and the environment, including connecting child rights standards with environmental protection.**

**The Committee should work to establish norms to enhance child protection during mass environmental migration, including the detention and expulsion of migrant and refugee children.**

5. How do you envision the work of the CRC Committee in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?

**It is imperative that the Committee works to contextuali****se the challenges and solutions of sustainable development from a child-rights perspective concerning the situations, needs, rights and roles of children. We know that children are made the most vulnerable by any gaps in sustainable development, so a child rights-based approach is necessary to successfully and fully implement the Sustainable Development Goals to protect the most vulnerable persons. It should be emphasised that only a holistic approach that recognises all of the SDGs are integral to the rights of children will lead to the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It should be further emphasised, as the CRC stated, that there is an inextricable link between inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development and the realisation of children’s rights.**

6. How do you think the Committee could advance the standards and practices on child participation and particularly children’s right to participate in political life?

**Children must be informed and empowered to share their ideas and opinions through child-friendly means and methods that allow them to engage with and influence decision-making processes. Thus, international child rights must protect and guarantee rights that enable and make it possible for all children, taking into consideration all ages and abilities and prioritising participation by marginalised communities, to meaningfully participate. Participation is a cross-cutting issue and should be enabled by all persons, including parents, educators, and policymakers, by addressing inequities that limit participation, such as children experiencing poverty or living without access to the Internet.**

7. What can the Committee do to further strengthen its engagement with civil society?

**There is a need for a stronger and more effective mechanism to facilitate deeper and more constructive dialogue with civil society partners and to increase civic space at the UN. The Committee should work to provide an effective platform for advocacy and accountability and can work more closely with civil society actors to solicit specific and culturally relevant inputs to General Comments that would strengthen the implementation of the CRC on the ground.**

**The Committee should work to adopt and implement strategies that would allow civil society actors to improve assistance to child victims when submitting complaints, establish policies on third-party interventions, and publish and regularly update a list of pending cases. Working to ensure the jurisprudence database is updated in a continuous and timely manner would also help strengthen engagement with civil society. The Committee and civil society can collaborate more closely to improve child-focused and child-led activities that aim to ensure child protection and tangible compliance with the CRC.**

**The Committee can play an integral role by amplifying civil society inputs so traditionally state-centric law-making processes become more inclusive of civil society demands, which would promote full implementation of the CRC.**