ERD Organization

Amplifying Young Women's Voices in Sudan Peace Processes and post Conflict Future Initiative

AYWV-SUDAN INITIATIVE — ONLINE PANEL SERIES

PANEL 03

The Absence of Voices of Women with Disabilities: Forgotten in War, Marginalized in Politics

Date	Thursday, 4 June 2026
Time	7:30 PM EAT
Platform	Google Meet
Speaker	Zeinab Salih Adam, Singer and Disability Rights Advocate
Moderator	Rayan Nabil, Feminist Activist and Human Rights Advocate
Attendance	35 participants
Organized by	ERD Organization & AYWV-Sudan Initiative

Introduction

ERD Organization and AYWV-Sudan's third panel addressed one of the most overlooked intersections of Sudan's crisis: the situation of women and girls living with disabilities. Speaker Zeinab Salih Adam brought together thirty-five participants — including activists, policy advocates, and civil society representatives — for a discussion that traced how disability intersects with war and political exclusion to create compounded and largely invisible harm.

Part One: Forgotten in War

The panel opened with the internationally recognized categories of disability — physical, visual, auditory, intellectual, and psychosocial — and examined how each is compounded in conflict conditions into barriers that can isolate individuals entirely from emergency rescue, basic services, and social participation.

Heightened Vulnerability in Displacement

Women with disabilities are disproportionately at risk when conflict erupts. Evacuation and rescue plans systematically fail to account for their requirements: accessible corridors are absent, emergency communications are not produced in sign language, and crisis protocols are designed without this population in mind. The panel documented cases in which women with mobility impairments were left behind during displacement events.

Collapse of Essential Services

The destruction of hospitals and rehabilitation centers has cut off access to essential medication, assistive devices, and specialist care — causing significant deterioration in the health and wellbeing of women with disabilities. The loss of assistive devices in particular can mean the loss of functional independence entirely.

Gender-Based Violence

The panel documented the rise in violence and exploitation targeting women with disabilities in displacement camps, where protection mechanisms are absent and privacy does not exist. The combination of physical vulnerability and social isolation creates conditions of acute risk that existing GBV response frameworks rarely address.

War-Acquired Disabilities

A growing number of women have acquired permanent disabilities as a direct result of bombardment and military operations. These women enter the displaced population already trauma-affected, in an environment with no adequate infrastructure to support newly disabled people, and without the social networks that longer-term disabled women may have built.

> *"Women with disabilities are not absent from the war. They are absent only from the rooms where decisions about the response are made — and that is a choice, not a circumstance."*

Part Two: Marginalized in Politics

The panel's second focus examined the structural and political dimensions of disability exclusion. The consensus: invisibility in humanitarian response during wartime is a predictable consequence of systematic exclusion from political life during peacetime.

Absent from Peace Processes

Women with disabilities are absent from negotiating delegations, political committees, legislative and constitutional drafting bodies, and the electoral law reform processes that shape participation frameworks. Their exclusion is not incidental — it reflects the structural assumptions that exclude them from public life more broadly.

Physical and Communicative Barriers

Party premises and electoral facilities remain physically inaccessible. Campaign materials are not produced in accessible formats — no Braille, no sign language. Political processes are not designed to include this group, and there is no accountability mechanism for this failure.

The "Charity, Not Rights" Framing

A persistent cultural inheritance frames women with disabilities through a charity or welfare lens that forecloses recognition of their political capacity, leadership potential, and right to participate as full agents in public life. This framing must be actively countered — not accommodated.

Recommendations

Humanitarian response

Design emergency and humanitarian plans — national and international — that explicitly account for the needs of women and girls with disabilities: accessible evacuation routes, fully equipped and physically accessible shelters, and emergency communications in accessible formats including sign language and Braille.

Political inclusion

Establish mandatory quotas or other binding inclusion mechanisms to guarantee the representation of women with disabilities in local councils, national parliaments, political committees, and peace negotiation delegations. Voluntary inclusion has not worked.

Capacity building

Support organizations and coalitions led by women with disabilities; provide training in political advocacy, rights-based approaches, and documentation of violations. Fund these organizations as peer leaders, not as service recipients.

Data systems

Build accurate, disaggregated data systems — by sex and disability type — covering both peacetime and conflict periods, to provide the evidence base on which effective and realistic policy can be built. The current absence of data is itself a form of exclusion.

ERD Organization and AYWV-Sudan will incorporate the findings of this panel into their disability-inclusive programming and submit the recommendations to relevant Sudan humanitarian and political coordination mechanisms.