



**Intersessional Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and
Socio-Economic Reintegration
9 May 2006 Geneva, Switzerland**

Statement by Jesús Martínez and Omara Khan

My name is Jesus Martinez and I and my colleague Khan are part of a group of landmine survivors participating in these intersessionals through the Raising the Voices programme. We are from all the regions of the world, and have since the Zagreb meeting been monitoring, and where possible, participating in the very important process of the Victim Assistance Questionnaires.

We applaud this initiative, and strongly urge the co-rapporteurs of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance to continue to engage as vigorously as Nicaragua, Norway, Afghanistan and Switzerland.

Now to consider the Victim Assistance Questionnaires that have been presented. For most of us, we feel that if what was written was true we would be living in survivor paradise! When we discussed this, we actually agreed that we do not need paradise, we just need our governments to implement their victim assistance obligations.

There are many issues we could highlight, but for this presentation we have restricted to four main concerns:

First, for some of us and despite our best efforts to find answers to this question:

Who?

We do not know who completed these questionnaires. In at least one case, not even the government knew who completed the questionnaire.



Second, the majority of the countries within the 24 have not included landmine survivors in the process of completing the questionnaire. We would like to remind our countries that the Nairobi Action Plan, specifically Action Number 38 calls for States Parties to “ensure the effective integration of mine victims in the work of the Convention.” The process of setting plans, and priorities within those plans, to implement Victim Assistance obligation is an integral part of the work on the Convention. We have two questions: How can you know the status of Victim Assistance in your country without asking survivors about it? How can you legitimately plan for effective Victim Assistance without talking to us?

Third, it also appears to us that within the governments, the people who are most involved with implementing aspects of Victim Assistance, whether it is physical rehabilitation, psycho-social support or economic inclusion, have not been involved in the process of completing the Victim Assistance Questionnaires. As the Nairobi Action Plan, and the questionnaires themselves show, Victim Assistance is not a disarmament issue for defense to address or for foreign affairs to handle. It is an issue for the labour ministry, for the ministry dealing with disability, for the finance ministry, for the social development ministry, for the health ministry, for the human rights ministry. If Victim Assistance is truly going to work, these actors have to be involved so proper planning, including budgetary planning, are done.

Before I pass on to my colleague Khan, I would like to say that our rights have no price. Thank you.

My name is Khan and will complete the presentation on behalf of the survivors present at this meeting.

Our fourth point, other aspects of the Victim Assistance Questionnaires misrepresent the reality. For example, there are claims about the availability rehabilitation centres. Yes, there are rehabilitation centres, but a) they often do not provide quality product and service, and b) many are private. When landmine survivors are among the poorest of the poor in many countries, what good is a private rehabilitation center when we do not have the means to pay?



We know you do not want to hear only the negative, nor do we. So in our discussions, we have found a very positive example of how a better job can be done. In some of our countries, a coordination body has been established to address disability related activities. The process of the victim assistance questionnaires falls neatly within this mandate. In some cases this works, and in some cases not. We have carefully looked at the differences between these coordination bodies in our respective countries to see what makes one function and the others not. We see two separate but related issues. First, power or authority. If the coordination body is not given authority or does not include decision makers, or is not located in the right place within the government, nothing will be done. So we call on our governments to make sure they a) establish coordination bodies or mechanisms, and b) these coordination bodies or mechanisms have the power and authority to implement their Victim Assistance obligations. Second, political will. We hear this phrase for all the obligations in the treaty. But as one of our countries shows, where the political will is there, things can move. So we call upon all of you to make things move, and include us in the process, we can give you our form of survivor assistance.

Nothing About Us Without Us. Thank you.