



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE
Advancing Hospice & Palliative Care Worldwide

Multi-stakeholder meeting on the human rights of older persons
Statement of IAHPC Session 3, August 30, 2022

Over the years, the NGO colleagues in this human rights movement have taught me about the protection gaps experienced by us older persons, which we seek to overcome in a binding international instrument, including a right to palliative care. What they have taught me about the right to be counted, to dignity, autonomy, employment, and independence, have confirmed my belief that community based palliative care, provided upstream, at diagnosis, as well as through the course of serious illness, can support those rights.

Any binding instrument under consideration must include a right to palliative care, which provides pain relief, as well as psychological, social, and spiritual support for patients and their caregivers, many of whom are older women. The Inter-American Convention has paved the normative way for this.

Palliative care provided in the home and the community can operationalize the right of the person with a serious diagnosis to work, to go to school, to participate in the community, in political life, in the family, and in the arts. The right to palliative care supports the right of older persons to enjoy those **other** rights, to paraphrase Hannah Arendt.

Young adults in LMICs who need to earn a living are forced to leave their towns of origin and ageing parents alone and vulnerable to the intersectionality of illness brought on by aging and depleted social support systems. The pandemic lockdowns highlighted this great suffering of isolated older persons and brought the need for community based palliative care, such as that provided by Pallium India, to the fore.

We have few statistics on older persons with failing health needs, but experts in the UK estimate that **by 2060**, 67% of people who die with cancer and experience serious health-related suffering will be over 70 years old, compared to 47% in 2016.

We urgently need age-disaggregated data on serious health related suffering to plan for publicly provided palliative care and adequate procurement of palliative care medicines such as morphine, unavailable in more than 85% of the world.

We call on the international community to fund multistakeholder advocacy for a binding convention on the rights of older persons.

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