

Down Syndrome International (DSI) and the European Down Syndrome Association (EDSA)

Press release

For immediate release

DSI AND EDSA DENOUNCES USE OF WOMEN WITH DOWN SYNDROME IN SUICIDE BOMBINGS

February 2008 – Down Syndrome International (DSI) and the European Down Syndrome Association (EDSA), are federations of organizations and individuals advocating for the human rights of people with Down syndrome worldwide. DSI and EDSA denounces the disturbing incident in Baghdad, which reports allege involved two women with Down syndrome who were used as “suicide” bombers and decries the use of vulnerable people in any act of violence. While it is unclear whether these women were acting voluntarily; whether they understood their actions or whether they were simply victimized by extremists due to their disability, there can be no justification for the abuse of innocent people in acts of violence.

This is not an isolated incident as reports suggest the use of other disabled people in numerous suicide bombings. These attacks and the specific targeting of people with Down syndrome in their actions are abhorrent human rights abuses.

The new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities specifically commits to protection in situations of armed conflict *“States parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.”*

DSI and EDSA calls on world leaders and all parties in conflict situations to desist from further victimizing people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. We appeal to all parties who are contributing to the increased risk and vulnerability of people with Down syndrome to respect the human rights of people with this and other intellectual disabilities. We look to join efforts with others to protect the human rights of people with disabilities, especially those people in armed conflict.

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