

# Leprosy and Human Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Report of the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen´s disease) and their family members.**

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# About the report



This report is about how persons affected by leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, should be treated fairly and equally. Leprosy is a disease that can cause skin problems, nerve damage, and even disabilities if not treated. Although it can be cured, persons affected by it still face discrimination and are still excluded from society.



This report focuses on making sure persons affected are treated as equal human beings with rights.



The United Nations is a group of 193 countries that work together to make sure that the rights of every person in the world are protected.



In 2017 the United Nations approved the creation of the Mandate on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease) and their family members.



The Special Rapporteur is Beatriz Miranda-Galarza. Her work is to promote the defence of the rights of persons affected by leprosy/Hansen's disease and their family members by advocating and providing information to governments, international organizations, and UN bodies and offices.



As part of her work, she presents two reports about the rights of persons affected by leprosy a year. One in New York and another in Geneva.



To write them she consults governments, local and international organizations of persons affected, as well as experts in different topics related to leprosy.



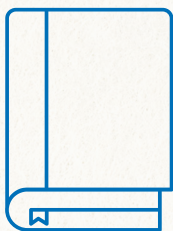
The terms 'leprosy' and 'Hansen's disease' are used in these reports as they are commonly used by persons affected worldwide.



In this report, Beatriz looked at the impact of the mandate in the life of persons affected by leprosy around the world. She also presents the main challenges they face together with their families and that will be reported during her mandate.

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## 2. From Exclusion to Rights



For a long time, persons affected by leprosy were treated unfairly. Many believed that leprosy was a punishment from God, which led to isolation and stigma. In the past, governments and scientists separated persons affected by leprosy from their families and communities. But today, the focus is on treating them as persons with rights, just like everyone else. The United Nations and other organizations are working to make sure that laws are changed to protect the rights of persons affected by leprosy and their families.

## 3. Work of the Special Rapporteur (2017-2023)



The Special Rapporteur is a person who works with the United Nations to help end discrimination against persons affected by leprosy. From 2017 to 2023, she spoke with persons affected by leprosy and their families, listened to their stories, and worked with governments to create better laws. She helped make leprosy a human rights issue, meaning that persons affected by leprosy should be protected from discrimination.

## 4. Leprosy Today: Key Issues



There are still many problems that persons affected by leprosy face today. These are the key issues:



**Support and Care:** Persons affected by leprosy need more than just medical treatment. They need emotional and social support to live full lives. Many families take care of their loved ones with leprosy without enough help from the government.



**Marginalized Groups:** Certain groups, like women, children, and the elderly, are often treated even worse when they have leprosy. They face more challenges because of their age, gender, or status.



**Social and Cultural Issues:** Stigma, or negative attitudes, toward leprosy still exist. This makes it harder for persons affected by leprosy to get jobs, education, and healthcare. Governments need to help change these attitudes.



**Legal and Economic Issues:** In many places, there are still unfair laws that discriminate against persons affected by leprosy. They also face financial difficulties because leprosy can stop them from working and earning money.



**Environment and Conflict:** Persons affected by leprosy are often overlooked in times of conflict or environmental crises, like wars or natural disasters. This puts them at even greater risk.

## 5. Vision for Change (2024-2026)



The Special Rapporteur has a plan to continue helping persons affected by leprosy. Her vision includes:



**Listening to Affected Persons** : It's important to hear from persons affected by leprosy directly. Their voices should guide the actions of governments and organizations.



**Better Care Systems**: She wants to create systems that provide support not just to the persons affected by leprosy but also to their families.



**Partnerships**: The Special Rapporteur plans to work with other groups, including governments, health organizations, and local communities, to make sure persons affected by leprosy are treated fairly.

## 6. Conclusion



The report concludes that while there has been progress in treating leprosy as a human rights issue, much more needs to be done. Governments, communities, and international organizations must continue to work together to end discrimination and provide care and support for persons affected by leprosy and their families.

