

ASA'S DECLARATION ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Access to the health care, educational opportunities and social inclusion required to live a full and meaningful life is a fundamental right of all human beings. This right has been recognized and upheld in every legal culture of the world, in the several codifications of the international community's recognition and commitment to fundamental human rights, and in the bills of rights of virtually every country. But with autism spectrum disorders, pervasive discrimination exists on a global scale. Proper and timely access to medical diagnosis and treatment are typically not available and, in many nations, may be discouraged or simply withheld. When available, services are often within economic or geographic reach. Regardless of ethnicity, economic status, nationality, religion or country, individuals on the autism spectrum and their loved ones are systematically discriminated against and left to fend for themselves to locate the most meager of supports and interventions.

The numbers of those diagnosed with autism are at rates that international organizations typically consider pandemic, and continue to rise unabated. When confronted by the seriousness and consequences of the condition, by the numbers of affected individuals and families, and by the scale and pervasiveness of the discrimination they suffer in the access to proper and timely health care and services, we call on the international community of nations to issue a declaration that people with autism spectrum disorders are entitled to the protection of fundamental human rights.

We call on each and every country and on the international community of states to adopt the following principles into domestic and international law and policies, and to encourage the attitudes and undertake the concrete actions necessary to make them a reality.

People with autism have the fundamental human right to:

- Live an autonomous, independent and meaningful life
- Self-determination and direct involvement in decisions affecting their lives
- Accessible and appropriate education, housing, assistance, care and support services as well as sufficient income
- Freedom from threats, discrimination, social exclusion, and cruel and abusive treatment

Indeed, the data on exclusion, the lack of treatment, identification and access to appropriate care and education that families face requires a new way of thinking. The inadequacy of accommodations, treatment and education for autism in all countries makes assuring rights for those with autism the new human rights frontier of our time. Our societies' reaction to the predicament of those directly affected by autism needs to rise to a greater scale of moral maturity.

Adapted in part from the Charter of Rights for People with Autism, European Parliament, May 1996.