

19 March 2024

UK Government presenting a “smokescreen” to UN on disability rights

The UK Government has been accused of presenting half truths, untruths and smokescreen after giving evidence to the United Nations Committee for the Rights of Disabled People.

Representatives of the UK government were questioned on the UK’s “grave and systemic” violations of the UNCRDP when they attended an oral evidence session yesterday (18 March). The government initially refused to attend the same session in August 2023, requesting a delay until March.

The UK rapporteurs, who sit on the UNCRDP stated that the evidence presents a clear account of violations including a regression on disabled people’s rights. In respect of social security the current system was said to be “trauma inducing”, particularly for those in mental distress or victims of domestic abuse.

Disability Rights UK said that the UK government response “lacked any substantive answers”. The Disability Action Plan and Disability Strategy were said to offer little in the way of transformative change and impairment-specific provisions such as the BSL Act were dismissed as “performative” with no promised funding to support it. Other government plans, such as the [reintroduction of Employment Tribunal fees](#) are also likely to disproportionately affect disabled workers, and have been condemned by PCS.

Chair of PCS's national disabled members' forum, Hannah David said "We know the government is failing disabled people, and that things are only getting worse. We see it in our workplaces where so many schemes allowing access to work have been scrapped and where schemes such as the Disability Confident Leader status are often not worth the paper they are written on. Our members are amongst the great campaigners and trade unionists holding them accountable. It's about time the government faced up to the consequences of their poor policies."

Ann Galpin, from the TUC's disabled workers' committee said "The government spokesperson talked about closing the pay gap, yet has done nothing to implement mandatory disability employment and pay gap reporting which the TUC, unions and deaf and disabled people's organisations have been campaigning for years."

Initiative such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act was given by the government as an example of improvements to access to justice but additional police powers and attacks on the right to protest has, in practice further eroded the rights and safety of disabled people.

Kamran Mallick, CEO of Disability Rights UK said "Accessing our basic support is not a luxury - whether that be getting a GP appointment on the day that you call, or having a social security system that works for all of us. Just because our government refuse to take responsibility on their failure to deliver this, that doesn't mean that it's not unacceptable."