

REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES

International Day of People with
Disabilities
3rd of December

By Marta Pianta and Gaia Bendinelli



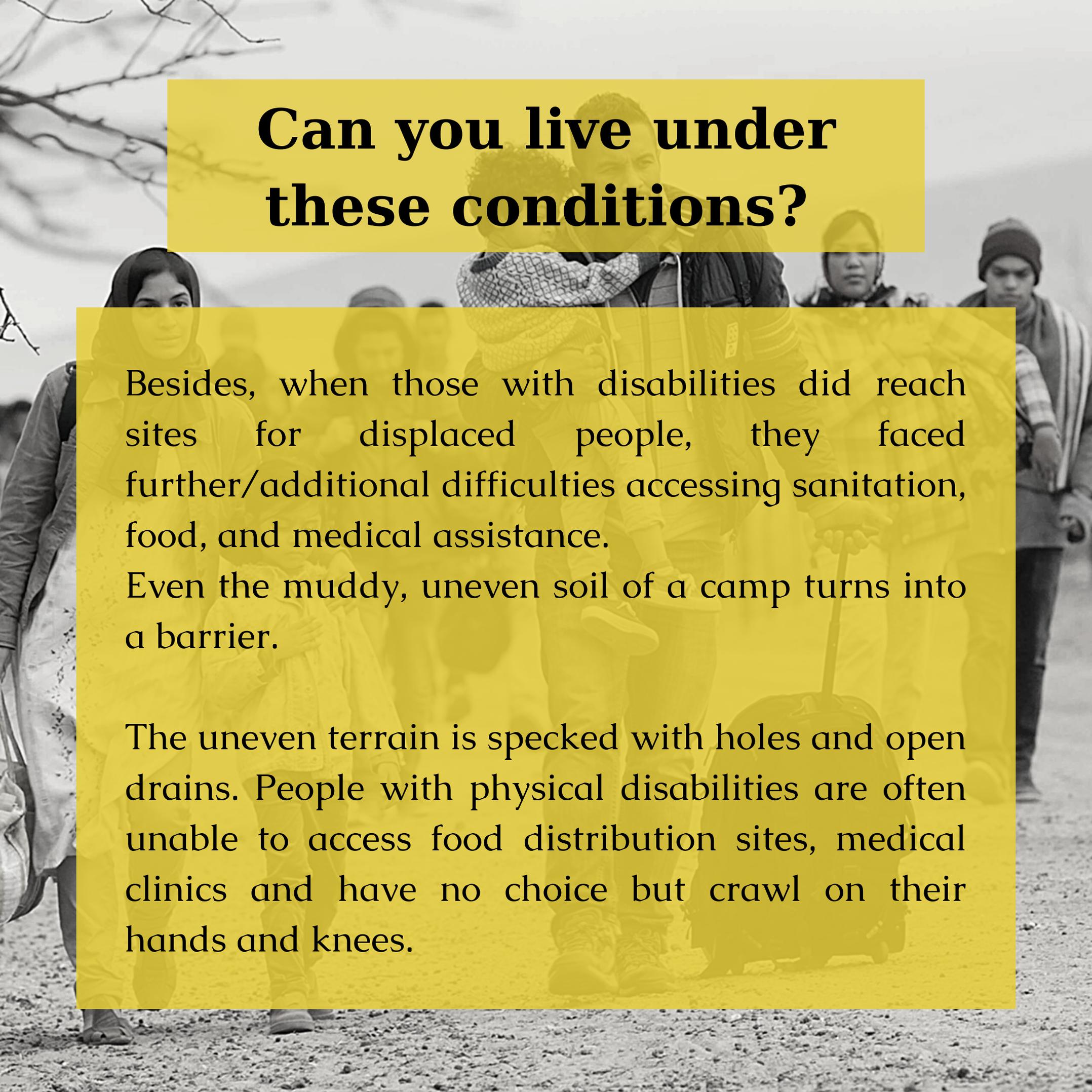
Can you leave?

“Malika, 10, a tiny boy, and his sister Zenebu, 14, who were born paralyzed by polio, sit inside the Catholic Mission in Bossemptele, 300 km north of Bangui. Their parents fled for Cameroon after attacks, leaving them at the Catholic Mission, and promised to return, but have not been back.”



**Can you leave? or “simply”
walk for days?**

**And get over the barbed
wire?**

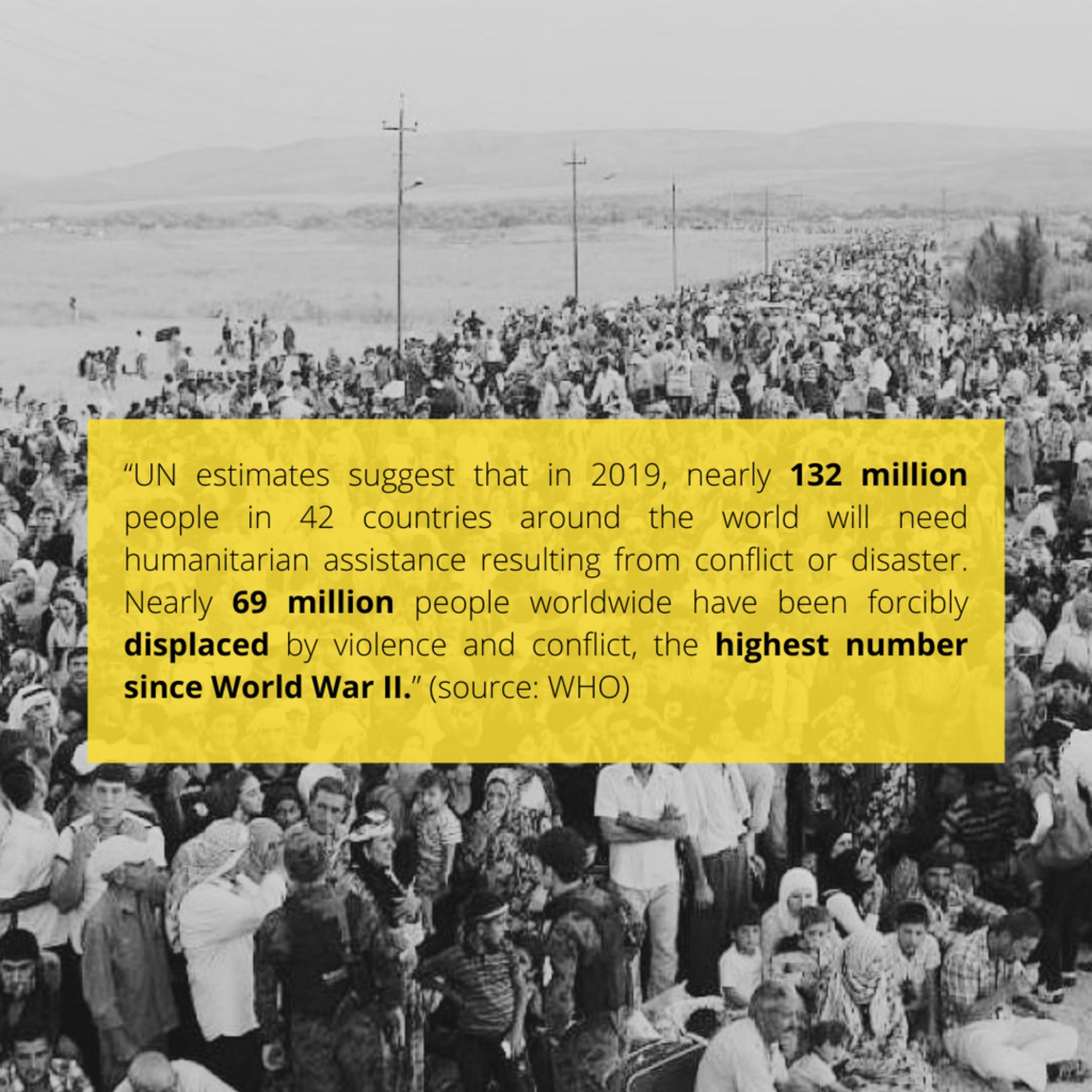


Can you live under these conditions?

Besides, when those with disabilities did reach sites for displaced people, they faced further/additional difficulties accessing sanitation, food, and medical assistance.

Even the muddy, uneven soil of a camp turns into a barrier.

The uneven terrain is specked with holes and open drains. People with physical disabilities are often unable to access food distribution sites, medical clinics and have no choice but crawl on their hands and knees.



“UN estimates suggest that in 2019, nearly **132 million** people in 42 countries around the world will need humanitarian assistance resulting from conflict or disaster. Nearly **69 million** people worldwide have been forcibly **displaced** by violence and conflict, the **highest number since World War II.**” (source: WHO)

The **WHO** supports the coordination of the mental health response in an emergency situation. It collaborates with **IOM**, the **UNHCR** to meet the mental health needs of migrants and refugees.

- Migrants and refugees (estimated 272 million in 2019) can be exposed to various stress factors which affect their mental health and well-being **before** and **during** their migration **journey** and **during** their **settlement** and **integration**.
- The prevalence of common mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) tends to be **higher among migrants exposed to adversity** and **refugees** than among host populations.
- **One person in five** is living with some form of mental disorder, from mild depression or anxiety to psychosis. **Almost 1 in 10** is living with a moderate or severe mental disorder.

***WHO**: World Health Organisation

***IOM**: International Organization for Migration

***UNHCR**: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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- Many migrants and refugees **lack access to mental health services** or experience **barriers** in accessing these. They also face **disruptions** in continuity of care.
 - Migrants and refugees contribute **positively** to society, but they **cannot reach their full potential** unless they are in good physical and mental health.
 - The topic of mental health is **only a decade old**: Indeed, the mental health program guidelines were initially developed in **2009**.
 - These disorders often impair their ability to function – so access to care isn't just about improving mental health, it can be a matter of **survival**.

Photos and information retrieved from:

<https://wearesolomon.com/mag/on-the-move/refugees-with-disabilities-the-most-overlooked-among-the-invisible/>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/mental-health-conditions-conflict-situations-are-much-more-widespread-we-thought>

https://www.theplaidzebra.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Africans-with-Mental-Illness_1.jpg

<https://ourselvesblack.com/journal/2017/4/29/z88v4uykgi0i8yqf9n8pz8jhx0xnmv>



The Refugee Paralympic Team



Meet Alia Issa

"I would like to tell people that if they have a disabled child like me, don't keep it hidden at home. Encourage him to play sports."



Alia Issa is the **first woman** taking part in the Refugee Paralympic Team, and, so far, the only one.

Aged 20 years old, she's the daughter of **Syrian refugees**. Her life changed when, at a young age, she developed **physical and intellectual disabilities**, after contracting smallpox.

During high-school, she was scouted by her physical education teacher, and she started competing in the **club throw**.



She started collecting success after success, first nationally in the **Panhellenic Championship**, and then internationally in the **World Grand Prix of athletes with disabilities** in Switzerland and in the **Pan-European Championship** in Poland.

In parallel with her athletic path, Alia dreams of **being a doctor**. She also aspires to gain Greek citizenship and to compete **for Greece**.

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PHOTO OF THE YEAR



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