

Editorial

An end-of-the-year message in turbulent times

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The Nobel Peace Prize is the highest international honour someone can receive. It bestows moral standing on a person, an institution, and their cause. Mother Teresa was awarded it. So did Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. But for all the laureates whose names have become synonymous with self-sacrifice and good deeds, there have been some controversial ones, too (New York Times, 11 December 2025).

Two organisations in the field of disability and development received this prestigious prize as well: Handicap International and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Handicap International (now known as **Humanity and Inclusion**) was a co-recipient of the **1997 Nobel Peace Prize** as a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. They were recognized for their crucial role in advocating for and achieving the Mine Ban Treaty, which prohibits anti-personnel landmines as a source of death and disability.

The Liliane Fonds – based in the Netherlands – was awarded the Wateler Peace Prize in the year 2000 for its special achievement in the field of war and peace. The Liliane Fonds focuses on supporting and empowering children with disabilities in low-income countries. The Wateler Peace Prize is a biennial award managed by the Carnegie Foundation.

The year 2025 was also the year that – in her wisdom – the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) introduced the FIFA Peace Prize award. This prize is due to be bestowed annually on an individual in recognition of their extraordinary action for peace. I don't want to pay too much attention to this award. A sheer contrast with the awards bestowed upon the organisations mentioned: organisations working on the prevention of disabilities, establishing accessible services for people who have been injured due to war and conflict, and promoting equal opportunities for adults and/or children with disabilities.

We live in turbulent times and wonder what the new year 2026 will bring to the world. As a user of X (the former Twitter), I am becoming pessimistic about the situation in the world. The enormous polarisation of ideas and opinions is mindboggling and very worrying. We are heading for a Brave New World where (tech) billionaires and dictatorial governments determine, to an increasingly large extent, how the world should be. For a long time, I had hoped that previously colonized countries would eventually become liberated from their corrupt leaders, but nowadays, I am not too optimistic anymore.

The ever-increasing role and power of social media, major tech companies, and Artificial Intelligence in the world we live in are undeniably present. Blatant lies seem to

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reign more and more. New forms of colonialism are probably more evil than the old forms. We live in uncertain times. Not only the ongoing war in Ukraine, but also the horrific events elsewhere - for example, in the Middle East, Sudan, and Congo - cannot leave us indifferent. Moreover, we are faced with unprecedented geopolitical tensions.

What does this all have to do with disability and/or rehabilitation and thus with this journal? At first, it does not mean much, but when one starts realising that in every war, people are not only being killed but many people (combatants as well as civilians) become permanently disabled. I assume that the reason for writing this editorial becomes clear. Over one billion people worldwide are living with some form of disability, 16% of which are attributable to armed conflict (UNMAS, 28 May 2020).

The editorial board of this journal has no pretensions that we could influence the above-described developments, except that we advise our readers to be vigilant, critical, and above all, to continue to play a role in making this world a better place. We hope that the year 2026 will be a year where the Norwegian Nobel Committee finds it too difficult to select a laureate for the Nobel Peace Award because so many people or organisations deserve this award because of their outstanding work in realising peace.

The Dutch author Rutger Bregman published in 2019 the book *Humankind: A Hopeful History* (Dutch title: *De meeste mensen deugen*, freely translated 'most people are okay'), where he argues that humans are fundamentally mostly decent, and that more recognition of this view would likely be beneficial to everyone, as it would reduce excessive cynicism. I am not sure that I will agree with him because there are also too many people who are not okay. However, let us be the ones who continue to make a difference in the lives of people, disabled or not. I am wishing you, on behalf of the entire editorial board, a healthy and peaceful 2026!

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