INTRODUCTION

There is a historic trend of underrepresentation of disabled forced migrants in academia, the media, and in the work of humanitarian organisations. They are often hidden and voiceless amongst the discourse and debate. Throughout the journey of a disabled forced migrant many experience violence, harassment and discrimination. Those who wish to seek refuge in other states face additional barriers. This research incorporates ‘forced migrants’ rather than just ‘refugees’. The legal definition of refugee is very restrictive and it can be harder for those with disabilities to attain this status. WHO estimate that approximately 15% of the world’s population (more than 1 billion) live with a disability (WHO, 2016). If we apply this percentage to the numbers of forcibly displaced worldwide, the numbers with a disability in this population is approximately 23 million. This figure is likely higher. For those attempting to migrate to countries in the global North, they often face multiple barriers within hostile systems. There is often a negative perception of the potential ‘burden’ they may place on the country.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

• When adopted in 2006 it represented a huge shift in how disabilities are viewed from ‘objects of medical attention to right-bearing humans. ’
• Article 11 obliges states to take ‘all necessary measures to protect persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.’
• Debate over its application to non-citizens
• Both UK and Canada are signatories

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• What support is in place to provide ‘reasonable adjustments’ in line with the CRPD for people with disabilities making asylum claims?
• How does this differ for those who do not meet the refugee criteria?
• How do the countries compare with one another?

DISCUSSION

In accommodating for persons with disabilities in the asylum process, the Canadian government provides significantly more assistance than the UK. The Joint Assistance Sponsorship scheme is especially effective as it increases the chances for integration and continued support. However, for those who do not qualify as refugees and have to apply through the normal visa process, this accounts to a significant drop in both assistance and the chances of residing in Canada. It can and has been argued that Canada’s policy of rejecting migrants on the basis of their disability is discriminatory. It is counter to rules of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to which it is signatory.

REFERENCES