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**PEOPLE'S ACTION GROUP FOR INCLUSION AND RIGHTS**  
SECMOL office, Housing Colony Leh-Ladakh 194101

25<sup>th</sup> November, 2009

Sh. Omar Abdullah  
The Hon'ble Chief Minister,  
J&K state

Sub: Creation of a nominated post for a disabled person in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh.

Dear Sir,

Greetings from Leh- Ladakh!

I am writing to you from the People's Action Group for Inclusion and Rights (PAGIR), based in Leh- Ladakh, initiated by disabled persons and families of disabled persons. We are a rights movement working to create a society that is inclusive and free of prejudice. We believe that **it is a matter of right that disabled persons should be a part of mainstream society and access opportunities that exist for other non-disabled citizens.** Our focus is therefore not to create specialized services for disabled persons that are potentially isolating in nature. Instead, we work with government systems, political institutions, NGOs and other community structures to create an environment that ensures inclusion of disabled persons in the mainstream.

Leh district has 3,000 persons with disabilities according to Census 2001. Over the last nine years, since the disability movement **began in Leh, one significant achievement has been the making of a district-specific disability policy.** While this is a landmark achievement, the implementation of this is seriously wanting as is for other policies. Today, therefore, these 3,000 disabled people are largely invisible.

India has ratified the **UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and by this our government has a legal obligation to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.** However, in Leh, so far, the onus of mainstreaming disability has rested on disabled activists. Unless there is an equal force from the policy makers, disabled people will remain in the backyard of development for a long time to come. **Even though disabled people are equal citizens, disability has not become an agenda of the politicians and is still seen as a 'minority' problem.** Yet, 3,000 is a significant number and if multiplied by the number of family members who are directly affected by disability, the numbers would be about 18,000.

Sir, our appeal this disability day has a significant relevance to the above issues. **We appeal to you that the LAHDC allocates an additional nominated seat for a disabled person in the council.** Currently there are 4 such nominated posts. To us, this is the only way that the disability agenda will be heard and be incorporated into the mainstream.

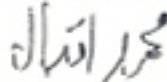
**We disabled persons do not see this as reservation.** We do not want a disabled person to simply 'represent' the council for the sake of projecting disability in the mainstream. Ours is a question of a) addressing disability as a development issue, b) ensuring equitable opportunities in social, economic, cultural and political spheres and ultimately c) ensuring that disabled persons too reach their highest potential.

**We think that disabled politicians will be more committed to this as they have much more stakes on the issue - just as it makes sense for women to hold positions pertaining to their needs and rights!**

We thus appeal to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir that on the occasion of World Disability Day on Dec 3 2009, a nominated seat for a disabled person is created in the LAHDC. **An affirmative action to this effect will ensure the right for persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others,** as outlined in the UNCPRD. **This will also be a trend setter in the country for other states to follow.** With the forthcoming LAHDC elections in Sept 2010, the process needs to begin now and therefore, the timing is crucial.

With regards

Yours faithfully,



Mohammed Iqbal  
President  
PAGIR, Leh

Cc:

1. Minister for Tourism, J & K Government
2. Minister for C.A & P.D & Transport, J & K Government
3. Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC Leh
4. Executive Councilors
5. MLA, Nubra
6. MLC, Leh
7. Chief Secretary, J & K
8. Principal Secretary Ladakh Affairs, J & K
9. Deputy Commissioner/CEO, LAHDC Leh
10. Head of political parties
11. Press/media