

## **STATEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS**

### **ADDRESSED TO THE UN OFFICE IN ARMENIA**

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, are writing to express our grave disappointment with the indifference of international organizations in regards to the war crimes and atrocities being perpetrated on the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh).

On September 27 2020, Azerbaijan started a war with Artsakh, disregarding the call of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in March and a subsequent UN resolution in June 2020 that urged for a global cease-fire in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On September 28, 2020, a group of civil society representatives, joined by 100 organizations, issued a [call](#) to the international community demanding that it take urgent and effective measures to put an end to the Azerbaijani military aggression and to resume negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

On October 1, 2020, there was another [call](#), which stressed that if the international community did not react in a timely and appropriate manner to the instigated war, it had to share the responsibility for the atrocities and destabilization that would occur in the region. This call was precipitated by the existence of solid evidence regarding the engagement of Turkey in the war through its military personnel and equipment as well as deployment of mercenaries, including terrorist groups, recruited from Syria. This [call](#) was signed by more than 200 organizations and individuals and a petition was delivered at a civic action in front of the UN building in Yerevan.

To date, there has been no reaction from any international partners. As Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, stated 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.'

Meanwhile, the systematic indiscriminate shelling, with the use of cluster munitions, ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles, of Stepanakert and other peaceful settlements, has resulted in the loss of human lives and life-changing injuries, significant damage to civilian infrastructures, such as schools, kindergartens and hospitals, and cultural objects, but also in the displacement of a significant part of the civil population of Artsakh.

Ombudspersons of both Artsakh and Armenia have documented paramount evidence of war crimes resulting from the attacks of Azerbaijan/Turkey in their reports on Artsakh (dated [October 1](#) and [October 10](#)) and Armenia (dated [October 1](#)). Ombudspersons have also repeatedly extended calls to the international community to intervene to stop the ongoing violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

While in Armenia the international community was mostly silent in regard with the situation in Artsakh, in Azerbaijan, representatives of international organizations and diplomatic missions visited Ganja to personally witness the consequences of the conflict. The UN Resident Coordinator in Baku made an apparently biased [statement](#) that they want the Azerbaijani community to return to Nagorno Karabakh. Representative of UNICEF in Baku has made a [statement](#) on that they will provide support to children, injured during an Armenian missile attack in Ganja.”

The majority of the international organizations are not permitted to visit Artsakh, because of it being a “non-recognized state.” Vardenis and Artsvanik, however, are in the territory of the

internationally recognized Republic of Armenia, and the international actors did not go there to observe the damage caused by the Azerbaijani shelling that resulted in civilian casualties.

Drawing parallels, we consider the current stance of international organizations, and particularly the UN structures in Armenia, as an unprecedented negligence of their mandates, values and responsibilities. The war is in its 19<sup>th</sup> day and we have yet to witness a single effective action of international organizations to condemn and prevent the actions of the autocratic leaders of Azerbaijan and Turkey, one of whom is ready to sacrifice his own people's lives in order to maintain his power and wealth earned through corruption, while the other tries to return to the boundaries of the Ottoman empire through the same genocidal techniques as did his predecessors. A century ago, there were no organized international organizations to adequately react to the violence of dictators, but now the existing multiple organizations are idle and silent and act as mere spectators of the demonstration of the newest weaponry and death of innocent people in the battlefield of Artsakh.

The people of Artsakh have been abandoned and left completely alone with their tragedy, facing an existential threat. Even more tragic is the impending humanitarian crisis, which may not even be documented by the eligible organizations given their bans for entry to the 'non-recognized' state of Artsakh. These non-actions are totally in breach with the UN's major promise of the UN Sustainable Development Goals that requires that we "leave no one behind".

It is needless to say how shocked and frustrated we are to witness the complete inaction of international organizations working in Armenia and particularly the UN agencies represented in the country. We are certain that the UN Office in Armenia understands clearly who started this war and what is currently happening to the indigenous people of Artsakh who merely want to live on the land of their ancestors who have built a historic, cultural and political heritage for many centuries. And people in Artsakh deserve to live a peaceful and dignified life in their homeland.

We believe that the spirit of the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, internationally recognized norms and principles, including the absolute prohibition of war crimes under the international customary law creates both the moral and legal authority for all UN entities to speak for the peoples of unrecognized territories as well. Human lives matter regardless of politics, money and boundaries. The potential ethnic cleansing and humanitarian crisis should be prevented, no matter if the respective territory is recognized or not.

We highly appreciate the timely statements of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, yet we know that the events on the ground require more active and in-depth engagement without further delay in order to prevent additional human suffering.

We appeal to the UN in Armenia to act in line with its mandate - taking an active stance in stopping the war, resolving the conflict through negotiations and preventing the humanitarian crisis in the region.

We particularly urge the UN Office in Armenia

1. To fully explore and clearly condemn the military offensive and deployment of mercenaries in the region by Azerbaijan and Turkey and act to stop their aggression leading to the ethnic cleansing in Artsakh;
2. To prepare grounds and facilitate the visit of international representatives to the territory of Artsakh in order to collect and document evidence on the breaches of the international humanitarian law and atrocities in its peaceful settlements;

3. To provide help to the Government of Armenia to overcome the problems caused by the accelerated spread of COVID-19 as a result of the Azerbaijan/Turkey instigated war;
4. To ensure due humanitarian assistance is made available for the Government of Armenia to ensure relief for the displaced people of Artsakh;
5. To work with Baku-based counterparts and elaborate a program for the neutralization of hatred, hostilities and war propaganda in the region, as stipulated under Article 20 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights.

### **Signatories**

<b>Name in English</b>	<b>Status in English</b>
1. Democracy Today	NGO
2. Public Journalism Club	NGO
3. Seda Muradyan	Private entity
4. "Human Rights Research Center" NGO	NGO
5. Women's Support Center	NGO
6. Transparency International Anticorruption Center	NGO
7. Vardine Grigoryan	Public administration specialist
8. "Agate" Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities	NGO
9. Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor	NGO
10. Seda Grigoryan	ալիստ
11. Sossi Tatikyan	Independent consultant
12. Karen Hakobyan president of "Huys" /Hope/ NGO	NGO
13. Tsovinar Nazaryan	Woman of Courage 2012 awardee
14. For Equal Rights NGO	NGO
15. Open Society Foundations - Armenia	Foundation
16. Armenian Youth League	NGO
17. Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies	NGO
18. Heriknaz Harutyunyan	journalist
19. Pink Human Rights Defender NGO	NGO
20. Gayane Shagoyan	Fellow researcher
21. Non-Discrimination and Equality Coalition	NGO
22. Nune Balyan	Social Protection expert
23. Child Protection Network	NGO
24. Moument of Farmers NGO	NGO

25. Arpineh Zargarian	Corporate Affairs Specialist, IT sector
26. Lusine Voskanyan	NGO
27. ARI Literature Foundation	Foundation
28. Shoghakat Mlke-Galstyan, Mihr Theatre	NGO
29. Astghik	Master of Science
30. Hasmik Gevorgyan	Documentary film director
31. Eva Voskanyan	Musician
32. Rima Tigranyan	Musicologue
33. ARI Literary and Talent Agency	Literary agent
34. Noyemi Andreasyan	Journalist
35. Ani Avagyan	Cultural Heritage Expert
36. Children Assistance Fund	NGO
37. Recourse Center for Women's Empowerment	NGO
38. Muzanav Cultural NGO	NGO
39. Communities Finance Officers Association	NGO
40. Sose Women's Issues NGO	President
41. Lilit Bleyan	Singer-songwriter
42. "Centre of Economic Right"	NGO
43. Tamara Gevorgyan "Center for Perspective Development" NGO	NGO
44. Journalists' Club "Asparez" NGO	NGO
45. Country Water Partnership	NGO
46. Movses Aristakesyan	Citizen of RA
47. "Consumers' Consulting Center"	NGO
48. Elen Babalyan	Journalist
49. Anna Gevorgyan	Researcher
50. Law Development and Protection Foundation	Foundation
51. Alin Demirdjian	Musician. Singer-songwriter
52. Civic Forum	NGO
53. Lusine Kharatyan	RA citizen
54. "Hazarashen" Armenian Center for Ethnological Studies	NGO
55. ALIQ MEDIA Armenia	NGO
56. "Youth for Change" Civil Society Development	NGO
57. "Shogher Union" Social-educational NGO	NGO

58. Gayane Gharagozyan	Event Coordinator
59. Hasmik Aslanyan	social expert
60. Progress of Gyumri CSDC	NGO
61. Alex Mirzoyan	Art Director
62. Armenuhi Karapetyan	Accountant
63. Hasmik Matinyan	accountant
64. Restart Student-Civic foundation	NGO
65. Lusine Gevorgyan	HRM specialist
66. Heghine Yeghiazaryan	Economist
67. Yerevan Press Club	NGO
68. Varduhi Hakhverdyan	Accountant
69. Society Without Violence	NGO
70. Shushan Matinyan	Accountant
71. Hermine Hakobyan	Auditor
72. Gevorg Aristakesian	NGO
73. Shushanik Boyajyan	Regulator
74. Varduhi Semerjyan	Lawyer
75. Tumanyan law firm Limited liability company	Limited liability company
76. Human Rights House Yerevan	NGO
77. Socioscope	NGO
78. Sona Vardanyan	Project Manager
79. NGO Ecoteam	NGO
80. Peace Dialogue	NGO
81. Real World, Real People NGO	NGO
82. Women's Empowerment Center NGO	NGO
83. "Cinemart" youth NGO	NGO
84. Hovhannes Margaryants	Economist
85. "Elegia" Educational-Cultural NGO	NGO
86. Stella Chandirian	International and European Comparative Law Expert
<b>See the update on signatures <a href="#">here</a></b>	