

**PROGRAMME TITLE:** Situation update on Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

**PROGRAMME LOCATION** (if applicable):

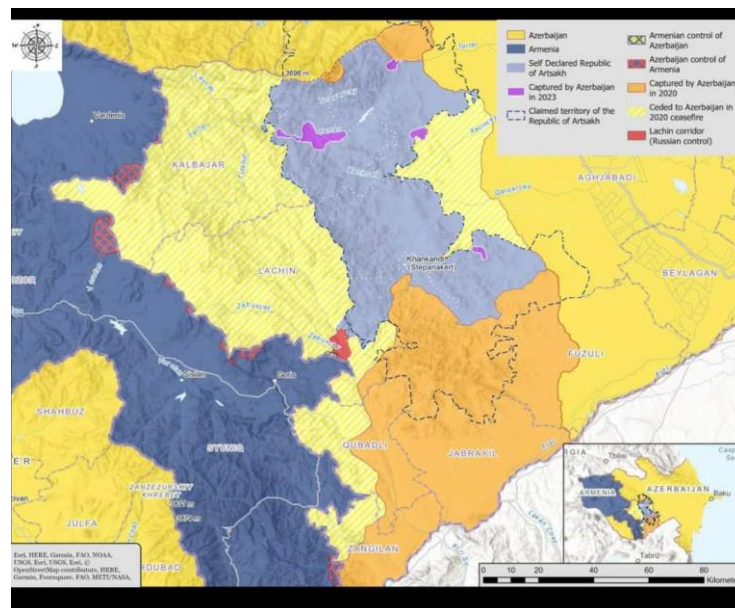
**DATES COVERED:** As of September 21, 2023

**SITREP NUMBER:** 01

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## 1. SITUATION OVERVIEW

- Afternoon September 19, 2023 Azerbaijani Armed Forces launched a wide-scale military offensive against Artsakh (aka Nagorno-Karabakh - NK). There were reports of shelling on the entire Line of Contact, in the residential areas of the capital Stepanakert, also in other towns and villages. Defence Ministry of NK reported that Azerbaijani forces were trying to advance into the depths of NK.



- Although Azerbaijan announced its military offensive as an “anti-terrorist activities”, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces targeted also residential buildings and houses and peaceful population of NK using heavy artillery, UAVs and drones, etc. Azerbaijan’s claimed that it would also evacuate the Armenian population from “dangerous areas” which triggered instant fears of ethnical cleansing.



Figure 1 Residential houses damaged by shelling in NK

- According to the official reports, there are casualties among civilian population. According to NK Human Rights Defender Office there are at least 200 deaths and more than 400 wounded persons. The number of injured people among the civilian population exceeds 40 persons, among whom 13 are children. There are 10 confirmed civilian deaths at the moment, among whom 5 are children. These numbers are expected to rise as communication in NK is severely restricted.



Figure 2 Affected children and elderly

- Azerbaijani Armed Forces managed to take control of some strategic heights and roads of NK, as well as several communities. They also cut off road connections between some parts of NK, creating additional local blockades in all the regions. The Azerbaijani Armed Forces captured 150 civilians from Taghavard village, there are unofficial reports also about mass killings. There is a growing risk of peaceful population to be subjected to massacres.
- According to Gegham Stepanyan – Human Rights Ombudsman in NK, over 7000 people have been evacuated from 16 civilian communities of Askeran, Martakert, Martuni, Shoushi regions of NK. According to some reports, civilians around 20,000 are caught up in Martakert town, unable to evacuate, reportedly under siege now.
- According to unofficial reports, around 10.000 people are stuck in the Stepanakert airport without water, food, and other essential supplies. According to unofficial sources, Azerbaijan have handed over to NK authorities a list of citizens who should be handed over to Azerbaijan on the condition to open the humanitarian corridor. The list includes the names of former leaders of NK, state and military figures, etc.



*Evacuated people at the airport of Stepanakert, NK*

- The leaders of U.S., France, Germany and the European Union urged an immediate halt to the Azerbaijani offensive. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Baku must “immediately stop the attacks and return to diplomacy.” The European Union condemned the military escalation along the Line of Contact and in other

locations in Karabakh, called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and for Azerbaijan to stop the current military activities.

- The UN Security Council on 21<sup>st</sup> of September scheduled an urgent meeting as France and the United States led efforts to stop a military operation by Azerbaijan in NK.
- Pope Francis on Wednesday called for an end to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh – “Yesterday, I heard the disturbing news from Nagorno Karabakh, in the Southern Caucasus, where the already critical humanitarian situation is now aggravated by additional armed clashes," said the Pope.

### **Security/political situation**

- On September 19, thousands of protesters have taken to the streets of the Armenian capital Yerevan after Azerbaijan launched a full-scale military assault. The protesters blamed Prime Minister Pashinian for the Azerbaijani offensive and demanded that Armenia intervene to prevent a mass killing and deportation of Karabakh’s ethnic Armenian population.

## **2. CARITAS RESPONSE**

Armenian Caritas is closely observing the developments and will respond to the situation accordingly if any kind of humanitarian assistance is required. Disaster response team of Armenian Caritas called an ad hoc meeting to discuss the situation and its response actions. The following steps were suggested to be undertaken to meet the needs of the people believed to be evacuated from Artsakh:

1. To provide regular updated information to all our Partners on the situation;
2. To participate in the national coordination meetings of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is responsible for the coordination of the emergency response efforts;
3. To participate in the regional coordination meetings, to be organized by the regional governments;
4. To do local needs assessments on the number of displaced populations, moved to different regions;
5. To design a Rapid Response Concept Note and start fundraising;
6. If needed, to modify the running Emergency Response projects and to allocate some budget lines for the humanitarian response before the fundraising efforts bring results.
7. To develop international advocacy activities, as the risks, that people’s rights will be violated in Artsakh in terms of banning their evacuation to Armenia.

## **3. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Links to resources**

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/20/nagorno-karabakh-death-toll-azerbaijan-armenia-attack-conflict-russia-us>

[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/azerbaijan-statement-high-representative-military-escalation\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/azerbaijan-statement-high-representative-military-escalation_en)

<https://www.rferl.org/a/karabakh-azerbaijan-offensive-un-calls-halt/32600704.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1019458479200576>

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-09/pope-francis-appeal-end-of-arms-in-upper-karabakh-audience.html>

<https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/ceasefire-announcement-in-nagorno-karabakh-eu-is-watching-the-situation-very-closely/>

<https://twitter.com/CharlesMichel/status/1704497520376693145>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/20/asia/nagorno-karabakh-russia-ceasefire-intl/index.html>

<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230920-un-meeting-set-as-us-france-seek-to-halt-karabakh-fighting>

<https://www.armenpress.am/eng/news/1120072.html>

#### 4. KEY CONTACTS

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