

PROGRAMME TITLE: Situation update on Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

PROGRAMME LOCATION (if applicable):

DATES COVERED: As of September 26, 2023

SITREP NUMBER: 02

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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) heavily shelling the entire Line of Contact, the capital Stepanakert, targeting residential buildings and using heavy artillery, UAVs, aviation, cluster munitions. NK Defence Ministry reported that Azerbaijani forces had advanced into the depths of NK and some of the regions and communities were cut off from other regions, some of the villages falling under siege.



Figure 1 Purple patterns - areas captured by Azerbaijan during the offensive on 19-20 September, 2023

- According to the official reports, there were 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. The Office of the Human Rights Defender and other relevant state bodies of NK received more than 600 calls and requests to find their missing family member and relatives.

- Armenian government set up a humanitarian station in Kornidzor, Syunik Region of Armenia at the beginning of the Lachin Corridor. The station will address the humanitarian crisis in NK, unite the efforts of international organizations and support the work of human rights organizations, international media.



- A mass exodus of Armenians from NK to Armenia started on September 25th as there is high risk of ethnic cleansing. As of September 26 afternoon, around 19.000 displaced people from NK moved to Armenia.



Figure 2 Displaced people from NK moving to Armenia. Photo credit to Government sources.

- A powerful explosion destroyed a fuel depot near Stepanakert on September 25, 2023, killing at least 20 and injuring 290, many people are still missing. They were waiting in a queue line to get fuel for their cars to leave NK.



Figure 3 Explosion of around 100 tons fuel in Stepanakert

Security/political situation

- Anti-government protests continue in Yerevan, special forces had begun detaining demonstrators who blocked roads in Yerevan. Police were also stationed outside the main government building, which houses the prime minister's offices, demonstrators trying to break into.
- Senior Biden Administration officials, including U.S. Agency for International Development chief Samantha Power, arrived in Armenia. Power will reportedly meet with top Armenian officials to “discuss measures to address the humanitarian crisis” in Nagorno-Karabakh. USAID will provide aid to Nagorno-Karabakh’s residents taking refuge in Armenia.

2. CARITAS RESPONSE

Armenian Caritas is closely observing the developments and will respond to the situation accordingly. It is anticipated a huge number of displaced people to enter Armenia within coming weeks (more than 100.000 people). Caritas Armenia is preparing a Rapid Response Appeal according to the initial needs of the displaced population to apply to CE/CI MOs for financial support. Communication with other AC partner organizations is ongoing to provide updates on the situation.

3. HUMAN STORY

The worst thing is to take a deep breath before saying goodbye

Since September 24, 2023 the flow of cars moving from Artsakh to Kornidzor (Armenia) has not stopped - the number of forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh who arrived in Armenia was big. For many families, the priority at this moment is to send their families and children to Armenia the sooner the better. The integration presented by Azerbaijan is unacceptable, the people living in Artsakh are sure about it.

Until now, the first to leave Artsakh are the villages that have already been occupied by the Azeri soldiers, the others, especially those who live in Stepanakert, are trying to find a solution on their own initiative. Those who have cars and fuel already moved. We are still trying to find fuel" says Arev Danielyan, reminding that as a result of Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor, neither food nor fuel entered Artsakh for nine months, the existing reserves have long been used up.

"We are waiting for fuel, as soon as we can find it, we will move immediately. I have three children and it is impossible to stay with the Azerbaijanis. Our neighbors are also in a similar situation: who is looking for fuel, others are trying to take essential items from home with them," said Arev barely keeping her tears. She said that she is in this situation for the third time, but this time she already knew that there is no way back. "The worst thing is to take a deep breath before saying goodbye", she added.

4. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Links to resources

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2023/sep/25/refugees-armenia-nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan-live>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/armenia-calls-un-mission-monitor-rights-nagorno-karabakh-2023-09-24/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-66905581>

<https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/752093/chaos-exodus-and-explosion-in-karabakh-amid-ethnic-cleansing/>

<https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1120489/>

<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/sep-25-2023-administrator-samantha-power-arrives-armenia>

5. KEY CONTACTS

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