

PROGRAMME TITLE: Situation update on Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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1. SITUATION OVERVIEW

- As of November 2023, the Migration and Citizenship Service in Armenia has registered **101,848** forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh. Overall, the number of refugees constitute almost 3 per cent of the entire Armenian population. Nearly 70 percent of the refugee population are located in 3 regions near the capital - Kotayk, Ararat and Armavir and in the capital - Yerevan. Nevertheless, mobility across the country is still high. Among the refugee population, 52 percent are women and girls, 31 percent are children, and 16 percent are people with disabilities.¹ The Government of Armenia is leading the response to ensure the protection and lifesaving needs of refugees, including medium- and longer-term plans. UNHCR is leading the Inter-Agency Refugee Response plan for October 2023 – March 2024, in close collaboration and coordination with the UN Resident Coordinators Office.
- According to the assessments, for the forcibly displaced population food, clothes, hygiene supplies, medication, blankets, shelter, core relief items (CRI) remain the most urgent needs.
- The government is providing one-time cash assistance of 100,000AMD (250USD), in addition also 50,000 AMD (125USD) per person/per month for rent and utilities throughout six months. The Government will allocate funds for another cash assistance program (Nov-Dec, 2023) - 50,000AMD (125USD) per person to support the basic needs of the displaced population.
- As of 26 October, the Government passed a decree on granting temporary protection to persons forcibly displaced, approving the description of the identity document of a refugee granted temporary protection and the procedure of issuing it.
- The International Court of Justice ruled Azerbaijan must enable anyone who wanted to return to Nagorno-Karabakh to do so in a "safe, unimpeded and expeditious manner" as part of a set of emergency

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/armenia/unicef-armenia-humanitarian-situation-report-no-7-09-16-november-2023>

measures. The ICJ ordered Azerbaijan to submit a report within eight weeks on the progress of the promises they have made to allow Armenians to return.

- *EU and USAID boost humanitarian aid:* the Commission is increasing its humanitarian funding in Armenia with almost €1.7million in response to the mass influx of people from Nagorno Karabakh. The new funding will aim to further strengthen the existing EU humanitarian response to the displaced people by providing cash assistance, shelter, food security and livelihoods assistance, protection, and health. The European Union, together with its member states, provided more than €50million for urgent assistance to refugees from Nagorno Karabakh. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) also announced \$4.1 million additional humanitarian assistance for people affected by the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

2. CARITAS RESPONSE

- Armenian Caritas started a Rapid Response Appeal (EA28/2023 ARMENIA)² through Caritas Internationalis with the budget of **379,049EUR** for the essential needs (food and Non-Food Items) of 454 displaced households, as well as provision of post-traumatic psycho-social services to 250 displaced persons. The following Caritas Member Organizations have contributed to RRA - Caritas Austria (50.000€), Caritas Denmark (12.500€), Caritas Belgium (50.000€), Caritas Spain (172.290€), CAFOD (22.500€), Caritas Canada (24.375€), Caritas Korea (47.384€).



Figure 1 Caritas Staff visiting the beneficiaries

² <https://community.caritas.org/intranet/documents/#list/16360>

- Several partner organizations supported rapid intervention activities by Armenian Caritas to cover the needs of the displaced population - the Polish Embassy in Armenia supported with food and non-food items, L'Oeuvre d'Orient and Secours Catholique supported recovery activities in Syunik and Lori Regions.



Figure 2 Social work and humanitarian assistance by Caritas staff members

- Caritas Slovakia will support rapid response project with a budget of 100,000EUR to assist 557 households (approximately 2,228 persons) in Gegharkunik Region. The assistance will include provisions of food and non-food items, psychological support. The project will last for five months starting from December, 2023. Caritas Poland is finalizing its pledge of around 45.000EUR to support winterization project for 200 displaced households.
- *CRS Support:* In October Kevin Raabe, paid a visit to Caritas Armenia to explore the situation regarding the displaced population and to meet with the representatives of Ministry of Social Affairs of Armenia for introducing the social housing program of CRS in the Balkans. The meeting was on-line with the participation of the two representatives of the Ministry - Mrs. Yevgine Vardanyan and Mrs. Gohar Khachatryan. The director of CRS Balkan region Mrs. Sanela Imamovich also participated in the meeting and shared important approaches in developing the concept of social housing. In addition, in November, the MEAL senior Officer of the CRS Balkan region Ms. Amna Hodzic visited Armenian Caritas and spent 2 weeks to develop some essential data-base platforms for the beneficiary

registration and the current projects of Armenian Caritas. The work with Amna will continue on-line for the next couple of months.

- In the beginning of November 2023, Thomas Hackl from Caritas Romania had a short study visit to learn about the humanitarian situation in Armenia and the intervention activities that Caritas Armenia is currently implementing. He also visited several displaced households from Nagorno Karabakh and listened to their stories. Caritas Armenia and Caritas Romania also discussed about collaboration activities and prospective on new projects – winterization, women empowerment, disaster risk reduction and preparedness activities, etc.

3. HUMAN STORY

Having lost everything in Artsakh, Rafik Sargsyan gained a grandson in Kornidzor...

It took more than 24 hours for a 60-year-old Rafik Sargsyan to travel from Berkadzor (Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh) and to safely arrive to Kornidzor (Armenia) with the help of his horse - Buyan.

"September 19 was an ordinary day, I was going to take the cattle to the field when all of a sudden, sounds of shelling were heard. Shootings continued for two days in a row and then it was announced that we must leave the village," Rafik Sargsyan recalls.

For the fourth time in his life, he left his home and farm in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh). First Karvachar, then Akna and Askeran. He mourns nothing more than the graves of his wife and two sons left there. In 2014, Rafik's wife passed away and was buried in Karvachar while his sons, 28 and 22 years old, who were servicemen, were killed during the 44-day War back in 2020. They were buried in a common military cemetery in Stepanakert. "I don't regret what I left behind, but that my children are there..." says Rafik with tears in his eyes.

During the 44-day War, he himself received a shrapnel wound and lost his one eyesight. The shrapnel injuries remind him of the carnage, but the pain of losing his family's graves and native land is more unbearable.

Before reaching Kornidzor, the Azerbaijani checkpoint servicemen hit him on the leg with a stick, cursed at him, and attempted to take his horse, but he did not let go.

Grigor Ghahramanyan who was distributing food to the people fleeing from Artsakh near the Hakar bridge, saw a man with a wounded leg coming on a horse and decided to give him shelter under his roof. His wounded leg was finally treated and in a short time, Rafik not only found a warm corner in Kornidzor, but he also found a new family. Most importantly, he found a grandson, the youngest of the house - Oleg who calls him "Grandpa," and says, "I will not let him go anywhere from our house." According to Oleg, now everyone calls Rafik "Grandfather."

"Now our "Grandfather" is the joy of our house. We got familiar a lot, we love and respect him. He is a very modest and kind person," says Nelly, from hosting family.

Seeing the hospitality and kind attitude of Kornidzor people, Rafik sees hope in the corner of his heart: the world has not ruined, there is still humanity. "I am grateful to all of those who can reach out and share my difficulties," adds the "Grandfather".

Currently Rafik’s wish is to be able to be grateful to the family that hosted him and his Buyan, and to keep few animals both to help the family and to have a kind of a job for himself.

Armenian Caritas was one of the first to provide food and non-food items for Grandfather Rafik, and this was not the only support. In the near future, Rafik Sargsyan will also be under the attention of Caritas team in Syunik Region.



Figure 3 Rafik Sargsyan sharing memories and some details of his new life in Kornidzor

4. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Reference links

US Mission to OSCE - The Situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh	https://osce.usmission.gov/the-situation-in-and-around-nagorno-karabakh/
UN Court Decision	https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231117-azerbaijan-must-allow-safe-return-to-nagorno-karabakh-un-court
EU boosting humanitarian aid	https://eu4armenia.eu/eu-boosts-humanitarian-aid-to-displaced-karabakh-armenians-with-almost-e1-7-million/
UNHCR Operational Data Portal	https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/arm
Reuters: Karabakh refugees in Armenia face uncertainty and poverty in exile	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/karabakh-refugees-armenia-face-uncertainty-poverty-exile-2023-12-04/
Caritas Response	
CNEWA’s post	https://cnewa.org/armenian-refugees-find-safety-at-ordinariate-camp/

Human Story about Caritas Armenia staff member	https://www.caritas.eu/the-humanitarian-agronomist/
CAFOD's Support to Caritas Armenia	https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=741280284705429&set=pcb.741280451372079
Caritas Romania FB Post for Fundraising	https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=728213842668783&set=a.623269686496533
Huibre Venter impressions shared about Toros Summer Camp where refugees found shelter	https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=722634713234132&set=a.634999345331003

5. KEY CONTACTS

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