

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
WORKING SESSION 11

Humanitarian issues and other commitments, including combating trafficking in human beings, refugees and displaced persons, persons at risk of displacement

As delivered by Mr. Davit Knyazyan, Head of the OSCE and Conventional Arms Control Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

Mr. Moderator,

First, let me start by welcoming the inclusion of the topic of persons at risk of displacement in the HDIM agenda. This category of persons encompasses first and foremost people living in the conflict areas, which are most affected by conflicts and escalations.

Systematic and gross violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of these people, use of force and economic coercion against them, lack of international protection are among main factors, increasing the risk of displacement.

In regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the indigenous population of Artsakh, is facing constant threat to its physical security. The Government of Azerbaijan is conducting a policy of total isolation of the people of Artsakh from the international community, its dehumanization, and rejection of any human rights protection including access to justice, promotion and glorification of crimes perpetrated against them. The last year April large scale military offensive of Azerbaijan against Artsakh, which was accompanied by atrocities, led to forced displacement of thousands of people from borderline settlements, including Talysh.

The April aggression of Azerbaijan confirmed that the ultimate objective of Azerbaijan is forced expulsion of the people of Artsakh from its ancestral homeland.

It should be mentioned that even before this aggression Azerbaijani subversive groups tried to infiltrate into the conflict area and terrorize the people living therein. The killing of Smbat Tsakanyan, 17 years old civilian along other killings were perpetrated by a criminal group of Hasan Hasanov, Dilgam Askarov and Shahbaz Guliev back to 2014 is a sad case in point.

The Republic of Armenia jointly with international partners, in particular the UNHCR has addressed the humanitarian needs of displaced population from Artsakh, in addition to more than 400 thousand refugees, which were forcefully displaced from Azerbaijan in the end of 1980-s and early 1990-s. Since recent years my country is facing new wave of displacement from Syria. Armenia is hosting more than 20 000 refugees from that country.

Despite the economic and other hardships, including blockade of its land borders, Armenia has made considerable efforts to integrate refugees and internally displaced people. In tackling this issue, the human rights of displaced population have come first for our authorities. Armenia has never built refugee camps though it received much more refugees per capita than Azerbaijan.

Finally let me submit recommendations.

- The OSCE should keep high in its agenda human rights and fundamental freedoms of people, residing in conflict areas including their displaced population.
- The OSCE should facilitate humanitarian access of the UNHCR and the UN special procedures to the refugees and internally displaced people in the conflict affected areas in the entire OSCE

area and fully implement the Maastricht Ministerial Council Decision 4/03 by upholding commitment on non-discrimination against asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs on the national and ethnic ground.

- The participating States should not prevent local integration of refugees and internally displaced persons in order to gain political advantages, including in conflict resolution.
- The displaced persons should not be misused as shield to justify violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Combating trafficking in human beings,

We would like to reiterate our support to the activities of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Combating trafficking in human beings is a priority for Armenia. We have made considerable progress in this regard, which was acknowledged by the international community, academia and civil society.

We commend close and constructive cooperation between the Government of Armenia and the Office of the Special Representative. We thank Ambassador Jarbussynova for her visit to Armenia, which was an important opportunity to review implementation by Armenia of its OSCE commitments in the field of trafficking and exchange views on further streamlining of the activities of relevant government agencies. The visit gave new impetus to the activities of the authorities in this field. We are pleased that Ambassador Jarbussynova positively assessed the initiatives of the Government to address the challenges in this field and also acknowledged the political will of the authorities to cooperate with the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The Special Representative highlighted in the course of the visit needs of more than 20 thousand refugees from Syria and positively assessed efforts of the Armenian authorities to provide various protection and assistance mechanisms to the refugees from Syria. The Armenian side will carefully study recommendations made in result of the visit.

Right to Reply to Azerbaijan

Mr. Moderator,

If we believe official statistics of Azerbaijan, the number of its displaced population of early 90s is constantly growing, which indicates that in almost quarter of century this country has violated their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to integration. The topic of IDPs is also constantly misused by Azerbaijan in international fora to justify dire human rights situation in the country and distract attention from criticism of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank You.