

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
WORKING SESSION 11

Fundamental Freedoms I (continued), including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and associations, national human rights institutions and the role of civil society in protection of human rights, and freedom of movement

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,

We would like to thank the distinguished introducer for his informative presentation.

OSCE as a security organization plays an important role in ensuring freedom of movement not only from purely human rights perspective, but as an important prerequisite for people-to-people contacts, building trust and confidence between participating States and peoples and thus promoting connectivity in the OSCE area.

Armenia, being a landlocked country with 80% of borders in blockade is vitally interested in promoting freedom of movement. Illegal blockade of Armenia is violating freedom of movement in the region. Such policy is in clear violation of the OSCE commitments on open and secure borders.

We would like to reiterate our concern on policy of denial of entrance to Azerbaijan on ethnic grounds. Azerbaijan denies entry to any person of Armenian origin, regardless of his or her nationality. This is the only such case in the whole OSCE area, when a participating State officially implies discriminatory practices on the basis of ethnicity in the field of freedom of movement. Recent case was refusal by Azerbaijan to provide security guarantees to Armenian athletes to participate in the World Judo Chairmanship in Baku. In March this year citizen of Estonia of Armenian origin Ms. Karine Oganessian was denied entry to Azerbaijan. Meantime Azerbaijan makes attempts to impose restrictions on visits of tourists, journalists, NGO's to the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic through its illegal practice of black lists.

Mr. Moderator,

In light of the above, we would like to make the following recommendations:

- Participating States should comply with their commitment to facilitate free and secure movement of persons through ensuring open and secure borders.
- Participating States should remove the illegal restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement of all individuals residing in the conflict affected areas.

ODIHR should further build upon its Baseline Study on Cross-Border Mobility in the OSCE area, in particular study correlation between ensuring freedom of movement and situation with tolerance and non-discrimination.

- Participating States should ensure freedom of movement for representatives of governmental bodies, international organizations, including OSCE and NGOs wishing to visit conflict areas. Any restrictions on freedom of movement should be in line with international standards.

Right of Reply

I would like to exercise my right of reply to Azerbaijan Delegation.

We thank Azerbaijani side for confirming its policy of export censorship to territories beyond its jurisdiction, including Artsakh. Such a policy of prevention of any people-to-people contacts deepens the gap between societies and serves as a major obstacle for resolution of long-standing disputes. It creates conducive ground for the propaganda of hate against Armenians by Azerbaijan and further radicalization of its society, in particular youth.

Azerbaijani Delegation and its team of gongos tried to divert attention from criticism of dire human rights situation in the country by invoking their baseless conflict narrative. I would like to recommend Azerbaijan instead of hiding behind Armenia to have the courage to enter into genuine dialogue with governments and civil society on implementation of its human dimension commitments.

Lastly, Azerbaijani Delegation raised a point of order in regard to the allegedly false title of an NGO from Germany. If we enter into evaluation of titles of NGOs against their correspondence to reality, I am afraid I will have more grounds to raise a point of order on the title of Azerbaijani Institute for Human Rights and Democracy.

Thank You.