

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
WORKING SESSION 14

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,

Combating trafficking in human beings

Combating trafficking in human beings is a priority for Armenia. We reiterate our support to the activities of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Starting from 2015 the Commission on identification of victims of trafficking in human beings and exploitation was established as a single body to confirm the status of the victim of human trafficking. It is comprised of both law enforcement and social partners on one hand and NGOs providing assistance on the other hand. It means that, any time that central government or local self-government bodies suspect that a person with whom they are dealing may be a victim of trafficking or exploitation, they refer the person to the Identification Commission. In 2017 6 petitions were submitted to the commission for identification of victims of trafficking for 16 individuals, of which 13 were identified as victims. Assistance was also provided to 3 minor victims of sexual assault. The Identification Commission got 20 petitions for lump-sum monetary assistance for 7 persons and monetary assistance was granted to 5 of them.

In 2017, 17 criminal cases have been investigated in relation to human trafficking or exploitation. Within the first 3 months of 2018, 3 criminal cases have been initiated on human trafficking or exploitation, 2 of them on labor and 1 on sexual exploitation. In 2017 one person (female) was convicted for trafficking in persons to an imprisonment of 12 years under Article 132(3)(1) of the Armenian Criminal Code for sexual exploitation of another woman.

Recommendation: OSCE can serve as a platform for dialogue and cooperation in combating trafficking in human beings between those states, which don't have diplomatic relations. OSCE Special Representative could facilitate such dialogue.

People at risk of displacement

As a result of continued violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms people residing in conflict areas at constant risk of displacement in certain part of the OSCE region.

The people living in conflict areas are deprived from international protection and appear in grey zones with vacuum of human rights. Their isolation from international community is aimed at ensuring impunity for systematic and gross violations of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life.

In regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the indigenous population of Artsakh, is facing constant risk of its physical elimination. 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. We see this policy even here in the HDIM, when representative of Azerbaijan tries to silence voices which it deems to be that of people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Promotion and glorification of hate crimes perpetrated against Armenian people of Artsakh indicates that Government of Azerbaijan is pursuing “final solution”. Hate crimes against people of Artsakh are committed both by Azerbaijani armed forces and irregular criminal gangs with the aim to terrorize people and expel them from their ancient homeland.

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 early 1990s.

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.

Recommendations:

- The OSCE and its institutions should keep high on their agenda human rights and fundamental freedoms of people, residing in conflict areas, including their displaced population by implementing the Vilnius Decision on Conflict Cycle.
- The OSCE and its relevant conflict-related field operations should facilitate humanitarian access of the UNHCR and the UN treaty bodies to the displaced population in the conflict affected areas in the entire OSCE region.
- All the OSCE programmes related to human rights in conflict situations should be inclusive and incorporate all the people affected by conflicts without any discrimination, in line with the commitment on non-discrimination against asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs on the national and ethnic ground under Maastricht Ministerial Council Decision 4/03.
- The participating States should ensure availability of all possible durable solutions to their displaced population, including integration.
- For participating states to refrain from distorting displaced population data in pursuit of political interests and prevent impeding the local integration of displaced population.