

European Center for Artsakh e.V.

On Fundamental Freedoms

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I represent the European Center for Artsakh NGO from Germany, Berlin.

I would like to address the issue of fundamental freedoms from a slightly different angle, namely the acute need for fundamental freedoms in all phases of conflict cycle. I strongly believe that long lasting peace is achievable only in the framework of ensuring the fundamental freedoms, human rights and democratic principles.

In the case of conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh ensuring the fundamental rights and freedoms will lead to working out concrete mechanisms and instruments for the peaceful co-existence of these two independent countries. Respect and recognition of mutual human rights is the only path to reconciliation for the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples.

This can be done only through inclusive dialogue particularly between representatives of civil societies. Last year, I have drawn the attention of this distinguished audience to the grave situation with fundamental freedoms and rights in Azerbaijan, which poses a serious challenge to people to people contacts between civil society representatives of the conflicting sides. It is truly unfortunate that today the situation has gone from bad to worse in Azerbaijan and a number of well-known civil society activists and journalists such as Rauf Mirkadirov, Leyla and Arif Yunusov have been arrested and persecuted. Those were people engaged in peace initiatives at the level of civil society and they were persecuted on the grounds of having contacts with Armenians. This in turn, led to nearly complete halt of any peace initiative at the NGO level.

The existence of political prisoners of peace initiatives in one participating state is a serious challenge to the whole OSCE community since after 40 years of signing Helsinki Final Act peace and human rights activists are arrested and persecuted in the OSCE area.

In conclusion, I would like to make some recommendations:

To participating states and OSCE institutions

- Take adequate measures to ensure the safety of the representatives of civil society and journalists participating in peaceful initiatives.
- Contribute to the restoration of people-to-people contacts between the civil society representatives of the conflicting sides

To OSCE representatives of freedom of the Media

- Organize joint events on freedom of expression with journalists across different sides of the conflict in status neutral manner.

Thank you very much for your attention!