

The OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), 2018

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Working session 14: Humanitarian issues and other commitments

Including:

- combating trafficking in human beings,
 - refugees and displaced persons,
 - persons at risk of displacement.

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, Persons at Risk of Displacement

Mr. Moderator,

Excellencies,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my concern about the continuing lack of attention by the OSCE and its institutions to human rights and fundamental freedoms of people living in conflict areas, especially refugees and displaced persons as one of the most vulnerable groups.

In 1988-1991, attempts by Azerbaijan to violently suppress the right of the Armenian population of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) to self-determination, including massacres and pogroms of Armenians living hundreds of kilometres away from Nagorno-Karabakh, in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad and other cities of Azerbaijan, forced more than four hundred thousand Armenians to flee from Azerbaijan. Almost one quarter of them fled to Nagorno-Karabakh and again found themselves at risk of displacement, since an armed conflict was flaring up there at that time.

In addition, a new wave of displacement was caused by Azerbaijan's large-scale aggression against Artsakh in April 2016, which was accompanied by unprecedented atrocities against both civilians and soldiers of the Artsakh Defence Army.

Unlike other situations, people living in Artsakh, including displaced persons are deprived of international protection and assistance. At the same time, Azerbaijan is making systematic attempts to prevent humanitarian access of international organizations in Artsakh. This situation runs counter to OSCE commitments on non-discrimination against refugees and IDPs, and I believe that the OSCE should make more efforts to engage, primarily in facilitating



the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UN special procedures in addressing the issue of displacement throughout the OSCE region, including unhindered access to conflict areas.

Furthermore, due to the persistent non-compliance by Azerbaijan with its international commitments on the non-use or threat of force, a significant part of the population of Artsakh is constantly at risk of displacement. Any serious escalation of the situation on the ground could lead to new waves of displacement and suffering for the civilian population. To prevent such a situation, the OSCE, whose core task is to prevent conflicts and crises through confidence- and security-building measures, should expand its presence and activities in the area of the conflict.

Thank you for your attention.