



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA  
TO THE OSCE

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## STATEMENT

**At the 98th Joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation  
On Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security  
Treatment of Prisoners of War: Obligations and Responsibilities  
Delivered by Ambassador Andranik Hovhannisyan**

*25 February 2026*

Madam Chair,

The Delegation of Armenia commends the Swiss OSCE Chairpersonship and the French Chairpersonship of the FSC for convening this joint meeting on the issue of prisoners of war. This topic is highly relevant to peace and security and carries profound humanitarian and human rights implications. Its cross-dimensional character makes it particularly appropriate for discussion within the OSCE framework. It is especially fitting that this discussion is taking place under the Swiss Chairpersonship, given Switzerland's longstanding role as the custodian of the Geneva Conventions.

In his final annual address outlining his priorities, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres emphasized that peace is more than the absence of war; a just peace must be grounded in international law and human rights. Indeed, unresolved humanitarian issues risk perpetuating the trauma of conflict long after hostilities have ceased and peace has been established. The durable peace only wins when these issues are promptly addressed.

This principle is clearly reflected in international humanitarian law. The Third Geneva Convention explicitly provides that prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities. Similar protections exist for civilian detainees.

Under international humanitarian law, POWs may not be prosecuted merely for having taken part in hostilities. Their detention is not punitive in nature, but preventive. Where POWs are charged with criminal offences, they are entitled to due process and fair trial guarantees. They retain their status of POWs and protection under the Geneva Convention until their final release and repatriation.

Collective punishment is prohibited, and individual criminal responsibility must be established through clear and objective proceedings. Trials must be conducted by courts offering the essential guarantees of independence and impartiality.

International humanitarian law further stipulates that POWs and civilian detainees must be protected against public curiosity. Practices such as staged or publicized proceedings only deepen the suffering of detainees and exacerbate the anguish of their families.

Madam Chair,

Violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law during peacetime erode our shared legal frameworks. Yet, the violations during armed conflicts carry even graver consequences, including loss of life and the risk of crimes against humanity.

Torture and ill-treatment of POWs are absolutely prohibited under IHL and IHRL. In situations of armed conflict, torture constitutes a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. International law requires respect for life, dignity, and humane treatment of all detainees in the hands of the party to the conflict.

In this context, we must also address the issue of enforced disappearances and missing persons. The UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance clearly states that no circumstances whatsoever, including a state of war, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances. Parties to a conflict are obliged to account for missing persons and to provide families with information regarding their fate and whereabouts.

Armenia underscores the indispensable role of international organizations, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross, in monitoring detention conditions, facilitating communication with families, and supporting repatriation processes. Full and unhindered access for relevant international humanitarian actors must be ensured. Guarantees for fair trial must be monitored. We believe that humanitarian issues should never be politicized, or weaponized. Addressing the fate of POWs is a matter of legal obligation and human dignity which can further foster peace and reconciliation among the societies.

The OSCE, as a security organization grounded in principles of human rights, cannot remain indifferent to situations where international humanitarian law obligations are not fully implemented. Strengthening respect for these norms, appropriate training of armed forces personnel, and stronger

accountability are important for alleviating human suffering, preventing renewed tensions, fostering sustainable peace, while upholding the credibility of our shared politico-military commitments.

Madam Chair,

Finally, allow me to reflect on our regional context. Following the establishment of peace, Armenia has reiterated its firm commitment to consolidating it through the promotion of trade, connectivity, continued dialogue, and confidence building measures. We strongly believe that the humanitarian issues should also remain under our constant attention. The issue of 19 Armenian detainees held in Azerbaijan requires a resolution. Currently we continue the dialogue with the Azerbaijani side to facilitate their release, in line with our broader commitment to stability and lasting peace in the region.

Thank you.