

HART VISIT TO ARMENIA

Ten months after the Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire



Marusya (left), an Armenian villager from Davit Bek near the disputed Armenian-Azerbaijani border, tells Baroness Cox (right): ‘This is my home and I will not leave.’



Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)

7-20 September 2021

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Artashes Chillingayan, from Shushi

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Raya Babayan, from Kashatagh region

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Varagan, from Shushi

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Vahik, from Togh village in Hadrut region

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Yerjanik Hambartsomyan

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Vladimir Tonyan, from Drakhtik village in Hadrut region

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Ina Babayan, from Kashatagh region

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Nadejda Sarkisyan, from Hadrut region

INTRODUCTION

Last year's ceasefire in Nagorno Karabakh brought an end to major hostilities. It did not, however, put a stop to human suffering.

As one refugee from Togh village told us: "The situation is very difficult. The Armenian government has not done enough to help the displaced people. Or as Armenia's Human Rights Ombudsman described: "The situation is very difficult. The Armenian government has not done enough to help the displaced people."

- ¥ Over 40,000 ethnic Armenians – 27 per cent of Nagorno Karabakh's population – have been displaced, mostly across the border into Armenia.
- ¥ The World Food Programme estimates that 20,000 people face food insecurity in Armenia. Many are from areas of Nagorno Karabakh now occupied by Azerbaijan.
- ¥ Those who remain in Nagorno Karabakh face the monumental task of rebuilding their towns and villages – an estimated 14,000 civilian structures were damaged or destroyed last year – whilst dealing with the emotional trauma of war and the prospect of future conflict.
- ¥ Armenian detainees and missing persons are vulnerable to killings, torture, indefinite imprisonment or enslavement in Azerbaijan. Family and relatives have little access to justice.
- ¥ There are ongoing concerns over the fate of hundreds of Armenian Christian monuments and cultural heritage sites within Nagorno Karabakh, which are now under Azerbaijan's control.
- ¥ There are also growing concerns about renewed military offensives. Tensions are high in the disputed border regions of Syunik and Gegharkunik where Azerbaijani armed forces have crossed into Armenia.

We visited Armenia to hear first-hand accounts of these urgent concerns. Everyone whom we met expressed a need for a comprehensive international response. Their testimonies were inherently disturbing and build on the evidence from our visits to Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh in November 2020 and April 2021.

All of the points raised come back to one central principle: there must be no impunity for the most serious international crimes. Perpetrators of atrocities must be held to account. We must no longer turn a deaf ear to the suffering of the people of Nagorno Karabakh. Nor should we dismiss the threat to peace caused by Azerbaijan's provocative territorial incursions in Syunik and Gegharkunik, which hitherto have gone unchallenged.



Photo taken in Nagorno Karabakh during the 2020 war: the aftermath of Azerbaijani military attacks

VOICES OF REFUGEES

Approximately 80 per cent of Nagorno Karabakh is now occupied by Azerbaijan. Thousands of ethnic Armenians have been forced to flee their homes, a significant proportion of whom have crossed the border into Armenia. We had the painful privilege of meeting some of these refugees. They shared their stories of loss and grief with detail and courage. Extracts of their testimonies are recorded below.

Nadejda Sarkisyan, from Hadrut Region

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Nadejda Sarkisyan from Hadrut Region

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Irina Galstyan, from Berdzor Kashatagh region

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Irina Galstyan from Berdzor Kashatagh region

Vahik, from Togh village in Hadrut region

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Artashes Chillingayan, from Shushi

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Artashes Chillingayan from Shushi

Yerjanik Hambartsomyan

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Vladimir Tonyan, from Drakhtik village in Hadrut region



Vladimir Tonyan from Hadrut region

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Ina Babayan, from Kashatagh region

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Ina Babayan from Kashatagh region

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The unspoken story



An unspoken story: the expression of a refugee speaks of grief and trauma

There are times when silence speaks volumes. During a meeting with refugees, one woman sat for the whole hour in silence, unmoving. On her chest was a picture of her husband, whom one can only imagine had been killed in the war. She did not react when others shared their stories of violence and grief. She did not speak at all. Her look alone speaks volumes of profound loss and trauma. In so many ways, she represents the silent cries of the unheard majority of the people of Nagorno Karabakh and a quiet despair that words can neither convey the depth of suffering experienced, nor any hope that anyone will listen. Our hope is that by sharing her story, we can begin to enable those silent cries to be heard.

VISIT TO SYUNIK PROVINCE

Last year's ceasefire brought an end to major hostilities in Nagorno Karabakh. However, a new security crisis is unfolding along parts of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, away from the initial conflict zone in Nagorno Karabakh.

During our visit, we heard numerous reports of territorial encroachments by Azerbaijani troops across the international Armenian-Azerbaijani border. We were told that hundreds of Azerbaijani troops are deployed in pockets of territory in Armenia's Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces. In some border villages, Azerbaijani armed units have taken control of strategic positions, farmlands, livestock and water resources. We heard widespread concerns that, without a comprehensive international response, cross-border military incursions will increase, resulting in further loss of life and mass displacement of civilians.

'Our historic lands'

Reports of territorial encroachments should be seen in the context of recent speeches by Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan. He claimed during a victory speech in December 2020 that Nagorno Karabakh – and territories beyond Nagorno Karabakh – "are not ours, but belong to Azerbaijan." He made similar territorial claims in 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2018, promising the return of these lands to Azerbaijan.

The President claims that, according to maps in Azerbaijan's possession, its troops have crossed no border. It is "our duty to liberate these lands." Such statements provoke a deep sense of fear among Armenians in Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces, whose villages are now under serious threat. To date, however, Azerbaijan's provocative claims and territorial incursions have gone unchallenged by the international community.

The village of Davit Bek

We visited a border village of Syunik province, called Davit Bek, described by some commentators as the 'new frontline' of conflict. The village lies a few hundred metres from the disputed Armenian-Azerbaijani border. "We were told.

In the 2020 war, Armenian villagers in Davit Bek endured numerous aerial bombardments, resulting in six deaths and 17 wounded. Almost 100 homes were hit – we witnessed the destruction of property.



Marusya (left) talking to Baroness Cox outside her home in Davit Bek

Much of the village’s grazing lands have since been occupied by Azerbaijan. Any animals that stroll across the border into Azerbaijan are not returned, so the villagers no longer keep livestock. "5)!8-)9!(' !6%7)!. %&!\$(1)!-8(!%1! ' 8, !3, %2&3!P%89-!6%7)! =>) &' \$\$8+2)9!-/(6)!BC, 2; , one villager told us. " <6)/!-(' 1)!(6)!\$(1)!(6%!:) &!(' ! (6).!3, %2&3!P%89- &' !:)!-' D!(6)!,)-(' Q' 8, !\$(1)!%89!& : !9)+ &9!' &%8, 2\$81(8,) &-8(! ' 8, !P%89-!6%7)!=>) &. 8\$6!,)98\$)9!-/(6), 2' \$\$8+%62 &4 !!

Before the war in 2020, the village consisted of 140 families. Following the war, many have moved to the nearby town of Kapan in search of jobs, as they no longer have access to their land, with escalating concerns that their water supplies could be stopped. The exodus of villagers adds to the shortage in local labour, which itself exacerbates Davit Bek’s food insecurity.

‘This is my home and I will not leave’

One villager from Davit Bek, called Marusya, told us:

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"<6)!=' , 9), !2!X-(! 7), !(6%6!62!!Q40) : !68&,)9!.)(.)-!% %R15)!8-)9!(' !6%7)! \$%(1) ✕=8!(6)!BC, 2!6%7)!(%A) &%A!(6)!3, %C&3!P&9-!%&9!: 6) &(6)!\$%(1)!\$, ' --)9! (' !(6). ✕(6)!BC, 2!,)O-)9!(' !,) (8, &(6). 4c 2)!2!9200\$8 I!& : ✕&9!:)!%&)!%Q %29! (6)!BC, 2! : 2!!%A(%\$A!%3%2&4K8(!62!2! !/!6' .)!%&9!#: 2!!& (!1) %7)4 !

Another villager said:

"5 6%6)7), !6%!6%&+) &9!6%!6%&+) &945)X8-(! : %&!(' !I7)!+)%\$(O8!!%&9!6%7)! &! ' ,)! : %@!5)! : %&!' 8, !\$629,) &!(' !3, ' : !8+2&(6)!72!P&45)! : 2!!& (!1) %7)4 DI)%!)!(I!(6)! : ' , P!%& 8(!' 8, !-28%62 &4 !



An example of damage to a villager's home caused by shrapnel

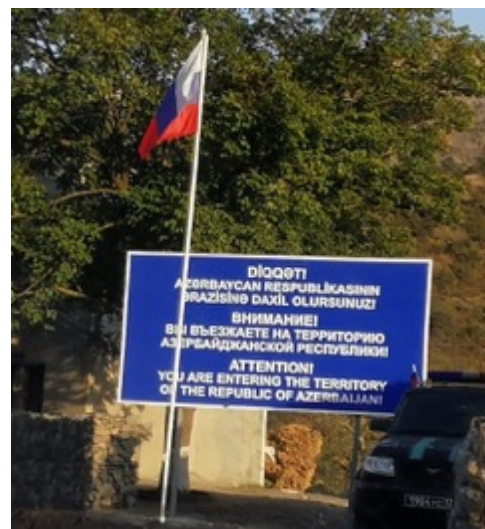
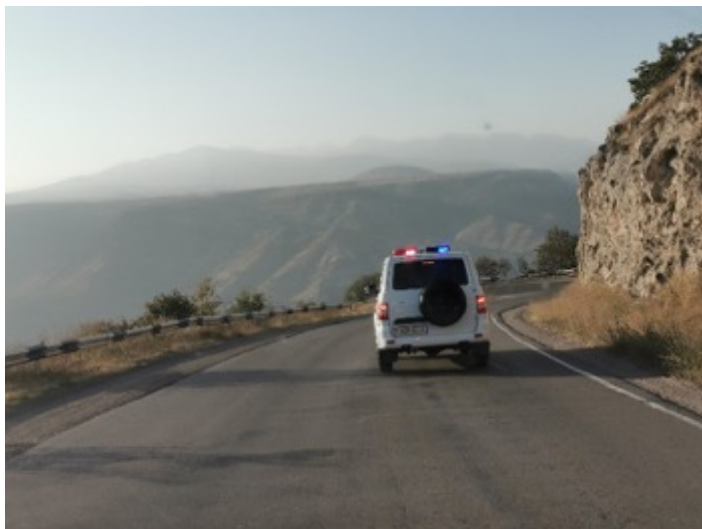
The road from Goris to Kapan

The main route to the village of Davit Bek – via a the 40km road linking Goris with Kapan – traverses along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border through disputed territory. Parts of the road are now ‘officially’ outside of Armenia, enabling Azerbaijan to prevent passage of Armenian traffic. We heard reports that some Azerbaijani checkpoints have started to stop Iranian vehicles inside Armenian territory (the Iranian border is only 15 miles south) and to demand payment for passage.

Military incursions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border are frequent. Opposing military positions are separated from one another by only 30-100m, whereas before the

2020 war they were hundreds of metres apart. A new road connecting Goris with Kapan is being built in an attempt to ease tensions and to guarantee Armenian trade routes. Many fear, however, that a new road will in effect cede the current road – and control of its neighbouring villages and land – to Azerbaijan.

Reports of cattle raids are common, not just in Davit Bek. An Armenian woman from Tegh village (north of Davit Bek in Syunik province) had bought a herd of 120 sheep on credit, all of which were stolen. In Kut village (Gegharkunik province), 80 cattle were stolen from five villagers. We also heard reports that Azerbaijanis have shot the cattle of local Armenian villagers and, in one instance, had a barbecue with the slaughtered meat near the village.



(Left) The HART team travels along the road to Goris (Right) Signs show the newly-determined Azerbaijan border

Governor of Syunik Province

The Governor of Syunik province, Melikset Poghosyan, fought in all three wars in Nagorno Karabakh (1990-1994, 2016 and 2020). When his baby son was killed in the first war, he was unable to attend the funeral because he was serving. He described the emerging security crisis in Syunik province and its impact on livelihoods.

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"<6),)!%)!-(211' `x]` !92+P\$)9!+) ' +)!Q' . !B, (-%A6!FH%8' , &!b %%%A6G2& (6)!E/8&2A,) 32 &AI ' -(!' Q(6)!92+P\$)9!6%7)!,) (8, & 9!(' !B, (-%A6400e!+) ' +)! Q' . !E/8&2A: ,) !A211)9!98, 283!(6)!OPOP!: %4<6)!BC, 2!>= . =>9!(6)!=' , 9), ! 72IP8)-!%89!A211)9!\$(1)4E/8&2A6%! . %&!92-%(1)9!+) ' +)!Q' . !(6)!: %&8(!&! ,) 6%-212%(2 &-), 72\$)-4

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: 26!BC, =%2/4#&\$8, -2 &!2&' !B, .) &2/!(, , 2' , /!%! &3!(62!=' , 9), !2&!)!%!
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5 6,)7, ! :)! 6%7)! 2&\$8, -2 & 2(6)! BC, =%2/4&2! 6%7)! %!)%&!' \$' &(, 8\$()9!
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The HART team meets with Melikset Poghosyan, Governor of Syunik Province

WAR ON CHILDREN

During the 2020 war, civilians in Nagorno Karabakh endured almost daily military offensives by heavy artillery missiles, combat unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), aerial bombs, cluster munitions and Smerch multiple rocket launchers – weapons incapable of precision targeting – in breach of international humanitarian law and Geneva conventions.

Many children were killed or injured, with countless others suffering the psychological impact of exposure to rocket and missile attacks. Tens of schools and pre-schools were

damaged, including in Stepanakert, Hadrut, Shushi, Aygestan and Mataghis. For security reasons, all 220 schools and 58 pre-schools were closed during the conflict, which meant that all 24,000 children in Nagorno Karabakh were deprived of their Right to Education and the opportunity to attend school – in addition to the 4,000 pre-school children.



A young patient at the Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre in Nagorno Karabakh

Civilians also suffered widespread destruction of other non-military objects, including medical emergency service centres and ambulances, food stocks, crops, livestock, electricity and gas plants, and drinking-water installations and supplies.

All such attacks on non-military objects are attacks on children. Of the thousands of families who have been forced to flee, the majority are children. According to Save the Children, many are showing signs of anxiety and sleep deprivation, especially those who do not have a family member with them or who have been separated from their parents and sent to stay with extended family or friends.

During our visit, one mother called Raya Babayan from Kashatagh region told us:

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 b %6%(%86!,)32 &: 6),)!#3,): !8+4!H' : !#% !%. '(6), !%89!(6)!-' ,/!2!(6)!
 -%)4Y2(' ,/!2!)=)2&3!,)+)%)94!BQ), !(6)!Q-(!: %!%:)!(, 2)9!('!: ', A!0, !(6)!
 ,)32 &(' !=)\$' .)!. ',)!+, ' -+), ' 8-4#6%7)!)=) &%() %\$6), !0 , !VW/) %-4K8!(6)!
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"I /168- =/89!: %!%1) %0), !' 0(6)!\$. . 8&2/!/89!6 I+)9", 3%82)!(6)! 7%88%62 & ' 0(6)!\$629,) &4H' &!' 0(6)!2&6%-2%8-!' 0(6)!,) 32 &6%7!)!-\$%+9!(, %8. %10' . ! (6)!: %4!



Raya Babayan from Kashatagh region: 'The sound of the drones was so terrible that the children didn't know where to hide from them.'

"Z7),/' &!2!%00 \$()94BQ),!(6)!\$629,) &:),)!)7%88%6)9+-'.)!' 0(6)!: '.)& ,) (8, &9!(' !9)0 &9!B, (-%A6!FH%3', & !b %%%%A6G! /!68- =/89!(' A!+%(!2&(6)! B+, 2!OPVW: %!=8(!%836(!%192)%)!%89!929!' &(6)!9%!' 0(6)!-2&2&3!' 0(6)! +)%\$)!%3,).)&4!

"#&OPOP>' 8,!6' .)!:%!eA !Q' . !(6)!Q' &12&4 <6)!72!P%3)!: %!(%3)()9! =/ 9, ' &-!%89!6' 8-)-!:-),)!=8, &9! =/!(6)!-6) 112&3>=8(!+) ' +1)929&7!: %&!(' !1) %7)4 <6)!/!(%3)9!8&2!!(6)!P%(!9%!' 0)7%88%62 &4#&b %6%6%36!,) 32 &9, ' &-!:-),)! %(!%A2&3!)7) &' &(6)!9%!' 0(6)!12&1%3,).)&4!

"<6)!-' 8&9!' 0(6)!9, ' &-!:- %!-' !(), , 2=1)!(6%!(6)!\$629,) &929&7!A& : !: 6),)!(' ! 629)!Q' . !(6). 4L)-+2)!(62 >:)!,). %2&%4-(, ' &3!+' +1)4!5)!:- 2!11& (!-8, ,) &9), 4 M8, !-(,) &3(6!2!2&' 8, !&68,)4!#?-!%172\$(' , /!2&2-) 10(6%!(6,))!' 0(6)!\$629,) &

6%7)! =) &%\$\$) +() 9!2&' !8&27), -22)-4!5)! : 2!!\$%, /! &A<6)!BC, 2! : 2!!& (!=,)%A
' 8, !-+2 2!%89! 8, !17)-4 !

Children who remain in Nagorno Karabakh, or who have fled and returned, also face the problem of landmines – leftover from the previous war in the 1990s – with their gardens and playgrounds now covered in other explosives and hazardous devices. According to HALO Trust, there have been more landmine accidents per capita in Nagorno Karabakh than anywhere else in the world.

WAR OF TERROR

During our visit, we were urged not to underestimate Azerbaijan and Turkey’s provocative statements and recent territorial incursions. Many Armenians regard escalating tensions as part of a long and ongoing process of genocide, or a ‘War of Terror’.

The genocide process began with massacres of Armenians in Turkey in the late 19th century, and reached a peak during the First World War in Turkey, in the great Armenian genocide. The anti-Armenian religious-ethnic cleansing extended into the South Caucasus and continued there after the war’s end. Armenians were massacred in the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, in 1918, and in Shushi in 1920. The process was suspended for a time by the imposition of Soviet power in the early 1920s. As the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, in 1988, it erupted again with the massacre of the Armenian residents of the city of Sumgait, near the Caspian Sea. This set in motion a chain reaction of violence, which produced the full-blown Azerbaijani-Armenian war of religious-ethnic cleansing from 1990-94. With Azerbaijan and Turkey’s joint war on Nagorno Karabakh in 2020, the process continued.

Cases of anti-Armenian rhetoric, or ‘Armenophobia’, continue to escalate among Azerbaijani and Turkish officials, state-dominated media outlets, non-state public figures and across social media. For example, President Aliyev regularly incites hatred. He pardoned and then promoted Armed Forces Lieutenant Ramil Safarov for the murder of Armenian Lieutenant Gurgen Margaryan during a NATO-sponsored training seminar, which as outlined by Amnesty International, signalled "%&!) 89', -).)&!' 0
) (6&2\$%A/T ' (27%) 9! 72 1) &); and "(6%! 72 1) &!)! %8%2&(! B, .) &2&! 2! & (!' & /!
%\$\$) +(%-1) 2-8(!,): %9) 94 !!

President Aliyev also incites hatred in public statements, referring to a “hypocritical, global Armenian conspiracy with Western politicians, who are embroiled in corruption and bribery,” reminiscent of Adolf Hitler’s “global Jewish conspiracy” thesis, reiterated many times in Nazi speeches as a pretext and justification for the Holocaust. He refers to Armenia as a “country of no value” and to Armenians as “savages”, “barbarians” and “dogs”.

Children in Azerbaijan are exposed to and taught Armenophobia. History syllabuses in Azerbaijani schools are, in places, flagrantly anti-Armenian. Curricula and textbooks depict Armenians and Christians as an ‘inferior enemy’ who intend to harm Islam and Azerbaijan. Violent events such as the Baku Pogrom of 1990, which virtually cleansed Baku of Armenians, has been either removed from textbooks or re-written as a history to be proud of. Such policies fuel anti-Armenian xenophobia and point to Azerbaijan’s violation of Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: protection against any discrimination and against any incitement to such discrimination.



Photo taken during the 2020 war: Smoke rises from an exploded shell behind the Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre in Stepanakert

Such rhetoric cannot be dismissed as being merely for domestic consumption within Azerbaijan or Turkey. Nor should it be treated as a means by which these states ‘achieve some minor border adjustments’ or ‘a matter that can be resolved quickly by simple

negotiations between Governments'. The language of superiority and the denial of dignity to an 'inferior enemy' is the precise language of genocide.

There is a fear within Armenia that Azerbaijan and Turkey are testing the response of the international community. Yet their provocative claims, refusal to release Armenian prisoners and territorial incursions continue to go unchallenged. Neither state has been held to account for its words or actions, despite clear evidence of past, recent and ongoing atrocities.

MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS

We held meetings with the President of Armenia, the Human Rights Ombudsman of Armenia, the World Food Programme's Country Director and the UK Ambassador to Armenia among others. We also participated in the International Religious Freedom and Peace Conference in Etchmiadzin. Extracts from some of these meetings are recorded below.

Government of Artsakh

Officials within the Artsakh Government speak of a "68. %&2%2%& 92-%(), ; in Nagorno Karabakh. Despite their best efforts to provide rented accommodation and social support for displaced civilians, there is no external humanitarian support from international governments (beyond Armenia) to address the people's complex needs. "M8, !2&), &62 &4! 2' P62 & 2! \$' &2&8' 8-; , said Artak Beglaryan, the Minister of State, before our visit.

His colleague Davit Babayan, the Foreign Minister of Artsakh, told us:

" 5)!%)!2&(6)! . ' -(!9202\$8I!-28%62 &:)!6%7!)! 7), !0\$)9>\$), (%2&V!-2&8)! (6)! VJV^!3) & \$29)45)!6%7)!-800),)9!2,)7), -2=!)!I --)-g!(6' 8-%&9-!' a/' 8&3!.) &7 : ' .) &%&9!\$629,) &+), 2-6)9!2&(6)! : %4U' , !%6-. %11!&62 &12A)! 8, ->(62!2!%6 \$' & 29), %6V!-(, ' &3!=I : 4#!2!%6), 2 8-!\$6%11) &3)!(' ! 8, !2&9) +) &9) &!(-%6)6' ' 9! %&9!-) \$8, 2/!/-(-). 45)!127)!8&9), !(6)! *2(-) &2d!(6,)%6! 03) & \$29)4

" 5)!%)!12A)!%6+), -' &: 6' !6%!I' -(!12 =4K8(!:)!%)!-(211!%127)4#0:)!%)!%127) > 2! .)%&!(6),)!2!%6\$6%&8)!0 , !,)\$' 7), /4!K8(!:)!\$%&& (!9' !(6%6!" &' 8, !' : &45)! &9)9!-8++', (4U2 -(2(6)!-8++', (!' 0(6)!B,.) &2&: ' , 194B&9!-) \$' &9! 8, !0 2) &9-! 2&), &62 &11/4!

" <), , , !%&9!, %02\$%12. !%)! ,)-8. 2&34!<6)/!\$%&+)& (, %6)! 7), /: 6),)45)!6%7)! (' !-(' +!(6). 45)! : %&!(' !=)!)!%&9!(' !127)! ' &' 8, !' : &P&94!<6)!2&), &62 &4! \$' . . 8&2/!\$' 819!9). ' &(, %6)!%6. ' ,)!+, 2&82+1)9!%(289)!(' : %9-!+), -)\$8(2 & %&9!, %02\$%12. 4!

"B, (-%A6!2!,) \$' 7), 2&3!-() +! =! - () +4 <6)! E(%6)! 2! \$%, / 2&3!' 8(!+, ' X\$(-(' !=829!
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%&9!+,)-, 7)! B, .) &2& & 2&B, (-%A64<6)! BC, 2! %&)!(, / 2&3!(' !. %A)! +)' +I)! I) %7)!
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U) 9), %62 &A!

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-2&8%2 & : 2! I! =) 19, % %62\$%A! / \$6%&3) 9>: 26!. 8\$6!3,) %& , !-+%\$)! 2&(6)! E' 8(6!
S %8\$%8-! 0, !, %02\$%2-. 4 E' ! (6),)! 2! %63)' + I Q2\$%A! 2&),)-(! 2& -8++', (2&3!
B, (-%A64#(! %&! =)! -. %A! =8(! 2! 2-2 +', (%&! 0, ! (6)!) &2)! S 6, 2(2& & : ' , 9! N! =8(!
(6)! BC, =%2& & B, (-%A6! \$' &02\$(2! & (!%4) I32 8-! \$' &02\$(4#! 2! %4, (833I) !=) (:) &
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%&9! +)' +I) 4 M8, ! 8&6%A0=I)! 026! 2! (6)! 38% %&)! ' Q ' 8, ! -8, 727%A! %&9!
9) 7) I +.) &4 !

Sergey Ghazarayan, the Artsakh Government's representative in Yerevan, told us:

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)' +I)! 6%7) !=) &92+P\$) 9!(' !B, .) &2A<6)! /! 6%7)! I' -(! 0% 2V! .) . =, -! 2&(6)! : %64
<6),)! %&)! ,) 38P%! 2&3, -2 & ! 2&' !B, .) &2& P/ &9-4BC, =%2& & \$' &, ' I(6)! =, 9), !
,) 32 & 4BC, 2-' 192, -! %&9! +! I\$) ! 2&2 29%)! I \$%A! +)' +I) 4<6),)! 2! I2 2) 9! %\$) --!(' !
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,) 38P% V! 72 P62&3!(6)! \$) %& Q)! %3,) .) &4BC, =%2& & 6%! %A' ! 8-) 9! 2&), &62 &A!
() , , ' , 2(-4<6)! 2&), &62 &A! \$' . . 8& /! -6' 819! =) ! 7' 2&3!(6) 2! \$' &3), &4 !

Sergey Ghazarayan said that negotiations within the Minsk framework (for the resolution of border issues, displaced people, Prisoners of War) are "(6)! & /! %\$) +(%&I)! ' +2 & . He highlighted several obstacles to the process, including:

- ¥ Azerbaijan and Turkey have not been held to account for past or continuing atrocities. There is great fear that impunity will continue. There is little incentive to comply with any future settlement, especially as each country has significant economic and geopolitical influence, with considerable resources to spend on propaganda.
- ¥ The November 2020 ceasefire agreement has been broken by Azerbaijan without consequence. Azerbaijan refuse to return many Prisoners of War, thereby ignoring an integral part of the ceasefire agreement. Azerbaijan continues to destroy Armenian churches and monasteries. Azerbaijani military frequently encroach into Armenian territory and use gunfire to intimidate the Armenian population.

- ¥ The presence of foreign mercenaries, including Turkish-backed Syrian mercenaries who were deployed to shore-up Azerbaijan’s military operations during the 2020 war and who have settled in Nagorno Karabakh.
- ¥ The ceasefire agreement insists upon a Russian peacekeeping presence in Nagorno Karabakh for five years (renewable). There is great fear about what will happen when the Russians leave.

Arman Tatoyan, Armenian Human Rights Ombudsman



Baroness Cox and Arman Tatoyan, Armenian Human Rights Ombudsman

Arman Tatoyan is an independent official responsible for defending and advancing human rights in Armenia. He told us:

"<6),)!. %!=)!%&2 +,)--2 &(6%!(6)!: %!2!" 7), ✱=8!(62!2!& !(6)!\$%) 4B\$(27)! . 2D%/!6' -(2D2)-!6%7)!-' ++9!=8!(6)!: %!,). %2&4E6' ' (2&3-!%&9!2&&8, -2 & !=!(6)!BC, =%2&2!" &(6)!=' , 9), -!\$ &2&&)%&9!(6)!0) D&3!" 02&)\$8, 2/!,). %2&4 <6)!\$6%11) &3)-!%)9))+ &2&3!%&9!3, ' : 2&34!d 2 P%2 &!=/!BC, =%2&2!%)! ' ,)! (%3)(19✱8\$6!%)9) D=), %6) 1!-)((2&3!12) -!&)*(!' !721P/3)-!\$%8-2&3!9)-(, 8\$(2 &(' !

) &72 ' &) &!%&9! +%(8,)->3, %-P&9-!)(\$4 %! :) III %!(%3)()9! -6' ' (2&3-!' & \$2722&6' .)-4!

" <6,)! %)! 9' \$8.) &)9! %&)-!' Q A2I2&3! ' Q B, .) &2/&! %&9! ' Q (' , (8,)! %&9!)*) \$8(2 & 4 #! 9')-&2! . %&(, !: 6)(6), !(6)! +, +)(, %' , -!%&)! = , 9), !38%9-!' , ! %&.) 9!0, \$)-@!(6)!(,) %&.) &!2-!(6)!-%) 4<, %&2&3%&1/ &!=) %&8-)! ' Q-) \$8, 2/!2-8)-> %&1! ' (6), !68. %&2, 236(-!2-8)-!%&)! => 2&3! %&9! & 94 U , !) *% +1) & : ' .) &2-! , 236(-&) 9, 1/ & 92-%2&1/ &- ' \$2&1 :) 10%& @!(6)-)! %&)! & (! %& +%&(! ' Q +8=12\$! 92\$' 8, -)!%&!(6)! . ' .) &4K) \$&8-)! ' Q(6)! : %& &(6),)!2-!' .)!9%&3), ' 8-192\$' 8, -)! 2&B, .) &2&4(6%&68. %&2, 236(-!%&9!9). ' \$, %&8/!\$' &, %&92&3(-)\$8, 2/4<6%&72): !2! 9)-(-, '/2&3!(6)!\$' &8) +(! ' Q9). ' \$, %&2&3!2&2&3(2 & 4!

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Bishop Vrtanes Abrahamyan, Primate of Artsakh Diocese

As recorded in our previous reports, serious concerns remain over the fate of hundreds of Armenian Christian monuments and cultural heritage sites, which are now under Azerbaijan's control. The sites include 161 churches, the ancient city of Tigranakert, Azokh Paleolithic Cave and the Nor Karmiravan tombs. Bishop Vrtanes Abrahamyan, Primate of Artsakh Diocese, said:

" #!(2!%&9)) +!+%&2&0 , !8-!(6%&!(6)!Q2-(! \$' 8&, /!(' !%&9' +!S 6, 2(2&2/!2&(6)! : ' , 19! 2-1!) Q!%&2 &!2&(6)! : ' , 194!H' !2&3), &62 &2! , !-)\$8P%&! , !S 6, 2(2%&' , 3%&2-%&2 & 6%&!. %&9)!%&2!-() +!(' ! \$' &9). &(6) 9)-, 8\$2 &' Q S 6, 2(2&2&6), 2%&3)!2&B, (-%&64

" #!2!0&2!(' !-))!(6) 9)-, 8\$2 &%&9!9)-) \$, %&2 &' Q \$) &8, 2-! ' 19!S 6, 2(2&2+P&8)-! %&9!(' ! & ()!(6)!-2! &\$)! ' Q(6)! &2) !S 6, 2(2%&: ' , 19k!#!2-!(2)!0 , !(6)! : ' , 19!(' ! 8&2)!0 , !(6)!+,)-, 7%&2 &' Q' 8, !S 6, 2(2&2&6), 2%&3) 4 <6)! : ' , 19?-!S 6, 2(2&2! -6' 8!9!8&2)!%&9' 8&9!,)-+)\$(!0, !,) 122 8-!Q)) 9' . !%&9!(6)!+, ' () \$2 &' Q(6)! S 6, 2(2&2\$' . . 8&2-4!h 2)!8+%&9!-29)!0 , !X8-(2\$) 4 !

President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

Alen Simonyan, President of Armenia’s National Assembly, expressed his commitment to peace and a desire to avoid conflict, ") 7) & ABC, = 22& 8++', () 9! = / < 8, A) / > %)! 9' 2& 3!) 7) , / (6 2& 3!) (6) / ! \$ % & (' ! (% A) ! % ! . 8 \$ 6 ! % ! (6) / ! \$ % & @ ! 5) ! : 2 1 1 8 -) ! % A ! + ' -- 2 = 1) ! .) % & ! (' ! % \$ 6 2 7) ! +) % \$) ! % & 9 ! X 8 - (2 \$) 4

Regarding Prisoners of War, he said:

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Chair of Standing Committee on Foreign Relations in the Armenian Parliament

Eduard Aghajanyan, Chair of the Committee, said:

" I % 2 & % 2 & 2 & 3 ! - (% 2 1 2 / ! 2 ! % + , 2 , 2 / 4 M 8 , ! . % 2 & .) -- % 3) ! % & 9 ! 3 ' % A 1 2 ! P % (2 & 3 ! +) % \$ 4 J) ! (6) ! . % 2 & % 2 ! ' 0 B C , = 2 2 & 2 ! (' ! 9) 1 3 2 2 2 -) ! (6) ! \$ ' & 8) + ! ' 0 +) % \$) ! = (:)) & B C , = 2 2 & 2 ! % & 9 ! B , .) & 2 4 < 6) / ! \$ ' & 2 & 8) ! (' !) - \$ % P %) ! () & 2 & 4 B C , = 2 2 & 2 ! & (! 6 ' 1 9 2 & 3 ! (' ! (6) ! (, 2 P %) , % A ! % 3 ,) .) & ! ' 0] ! H ' 7) . =) , ! O P O P ! ' , ! V V ! [% 8 % / ! O P O V > : 6 2 \$ 6 ! 2 & 8 \$ 1 8 9) 9 ! (6) ! ,) 1) %) ! ' 0 % A ! ! \$ % (2 7) - ! : 2 6 ' 8 (! + ,) \$ ' & 9 2 2 & ! % & 9 ! (6) ! ,) ' +) & 2 & 3 ! ' 0 \$ ' . . 8 & 2 \$ % 6 2 & \$ 6 % & & 1 ! (6 % !) * 2 () 9 ! 2 & E ' 7 2) ! (2) - 4 # & 8 8 , - 2 & ! % & 9 ! \$ 8 8 + % 6 2 & ' 0 0 8 , (6) , ! B , .) & 2 & P % & 9 ! 2 ! % 1 & : ! % & 9 !) - \$ % P (2 & 3 ! - 2 8 % 6 2 & 4 < 6) ! 2 &) , & 6 2 & A ! \$ ' . . 8 & 2 / ! 6 % ! & ! 3 , ' 8 & 9 - ! (' ! - 8 + + ' , (! B C , = 2 2 & 2 ! - 2 & 8) ! 2 ! 2 ! % \$ (2 & 3 ! % 3 % 2 & (! 2 &) , & 6 2 & A ! P % >) - \$ % P (2 & 3 ! \$ ' & 0 1 2 \$ (! % & 9 ! \$ ' . . 2 (2 & 3 ! \$, 2) - 4 !

Alternative political voices

There is widespread dismay at the international community’s lack of support for Armenia during the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and an increasing sense that it may be more advantageous for Armenia to forge closer links with Russia who may be the better ‘friend’ to Armenia than the West.

During meetings with senior figures at the Armenian National Congress, leaders of the Opposition and the International Centre for Development, we heard repeatedly that: " B C , = 2 2 & 2 ! % & 9 ! < 8 , A) / ! . 8 - (! =) ! 6) 1 9 ! (' ! % \$ \$ ' 8 & ! 0 , ! : % ! \$, 2) - ! \$ ' . . 2 () 9 ! 2 & H % 3 ' , & ! b % % % 2 1 6 @ ! D , 2 ' & , - ! ' 0 5 % ! . 8 - (! =) ! ,) 1) %) 9 @ ! (6) ! . ' , % A ! ' 0 (6) ! \$ ' 8 & , / ! 2 !) * (, .) 1 / I : ! % & 9 ! (6) ! +) ' + 1) ! %) ! 9 2 7 2) 9 @ ! 5) ! %) ! I ' - (4 5) ! %) ! = , ' A) & 4 5) ! &) 9 ! (' ! ,) \$ ' 7) , 4 !

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International Religious Freedom and Peace Conference

We participated in the International Religious Freedom and Peace Conference, hosted by the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, 8-12 September 2021.

The conference brought together religious leaders, academics and humanitarian workers to reflect on the preservation of spiritual, cultural and historical heritage. Among the crises discussed was the fate of Armenian Christian churches, monuments and cultural heritage sites in Nagorno Karabakh, which are now under Azerbaijan's control. The sites include 161 churches, the ancient city of Tigranakert, Azokh Paleolithic Cave and the Nor Karmiravan tombs.

Eleven months ago, UNESCO proposed to undertake an independent mission to draw a preliminary inventory of significant cultural properties, as a first step towards safeguarding the region's heritage. However, a response by Azerbaijan is still awaited for UNESCO to proceed with the sending of a mission to the field. The lack of response from Azerbaijan is a serious cause for concern, especially in light of the previous systematic erasure of centuries-old Armenian religious sites in Nakhchivan, a historically Armenian land relocated by Stalin into Azerbaijan.

Destruction of monuments in Nakhchivan included an attack in 2005-06 on the Armenian Djulfa cemetery, where Azerbaijani soldiers, armed with sledgehammers and cranes, destroyed hundreds of hand-carved cross-stones. The soldiers reportedly dumped the debris into a nearby river. In total, an estimated 28,000 monuments were destroyed at Djulfa cemetery between 1997-2006, including 89 medieval churches, 5,840 cross-stones and 22,000 ancient tombstones. According to a recent study, the cemetery has been replaced by a military rifle range, although this is difficult to corroborate as the Government of Azerbaijan refuses entry to international inspectors.

DISABILITY REHABILITATION: UPDATE FROM OUR PARTNER IN NAGORNO KARABAKH

We received a thorough update from HART partner Vardan Tadevosyan, Founder and Director of the Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre in Nagorno Karabakh, who reported that the Centre is fully operational despite escalating challenges.

The health facility provides hope and healing to over 1,000 patients every year. Its inspirational staff are helping to break the stigma of disability prevalent throughout the former Soviet Union. Therapeutic services include physiotherapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy, as well as a state-of-the-art hydrotherapy pool and a new Day Care Centre for children with autism.



Patient receiving treatment at the Rehabilitation Centre

Last winter, we were overjoyed to raise more than £71,000 for the Centre during our Emergency Appeal. Since February, these funds have supported:

- ¥ Monthly home visits to 150 patients;
- ¥ Vital salary support for the Centre’s disability therapists, nurses and doctors;
- ¥ Patient daily meals;
- ¥ Weekly social events for child patients;
- ¥ Medical supplies.

Vardan summarised the Centre’s current priorities:

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Patient receiving treatment at the Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre

CONCLUSION

The Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh – and in parts of Armenia, including Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces – face an urgent humanitarian and security crisis. Everyone we met expressed a need for a comprehensive international response.

- ¥ **Azerbaijani military offensives:** Incursions into Armenian territory, away from the primary conflict zone in Nagorno Karabakh, have increased in recent months. In some instances, troops have advanced 10km into Armenian territory. Such encroachments cause great concern for the local Armenian population, especially as Azerbaijan has been granted impunity for historic and continuing attacks.
- ¥ **POWs:** The well-documented mistreatment of Armenian Prisoners of War and civilian detainees by Azerbaijani forces, including humiliating treatment, torture, beheadings and desecration of corpses, are war crimes. All remaining Armenian detainees in Azerbaijan should be released and repatriated without further delay. Perpetrators of atrocities must be brought to justice.
- ¥ **Destruction of sites of Armenian culture and history:** During the 2021 International Religious Freedom and Peace Conference, concerns were raised over the fate of hundreds of Armenian Christian monuments and cultural heritage sites in Nagorno Karabakh, which are now under Azerbaijan's control. There is well-documented evidence of the complete erasure of at least one church. It is essential that UNESCO honours its proposal to send an independent mission to investigate all Armenian cultural and religious sites to ensure their physical preservation and to guarantee the rights of Armenian clergy and religious communities to continue to run them and live in them. The OSCE Minsk Group should define these sites and artefacts as vulnerable targets and ensure that measures are in place for an immediate response to an attack.
- ¥ **Impact on families:** Armenian officials speak of a 'humanitarian disaster' in Nagorno Karabakh. An estimated 40,000 civilians are displaced because of the war, 27 per cent of the entire population. There are grave concerns over the psychological trauma and practical challenges among the thousands of families – especially children – who have endured the anguish of the loss of fallen soldiers, missing persons and injured persons. They also face a loss of water resources, agricultural lands and hydro-electrical infrastructure, whilst trying to rebuild towns and villages destroyed by war.

There is an urgent need to end the impunity with which Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey, has carried out such systematic, wide-ranging and brutal violations of human rights. To date, neither state has been held to account for its actions by the international community, despite clear evidence of past, recent and ongoing atrocities.

As one Government of Artsakh spokesperson told us:

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Perpetrators of atrocities must be held to account. We must no longer turn a deaf ear to the suffering of the people of Nagorno Karabakh. Nor should we dismiss the threat to peace caused by Azerbaijan's provocative territorial incursions in Syunik and Gegharkunik provinces, which hitherto have gone unchallenged.



A refugee from Nagorno Karabakh, whose son was killed during the war, stands next to a collection of photos of fallen soldiers

Genocide of Armenians ‘a very real possibility’

During the 2020 war in Nagorno Karabakh, human rights group Genocide Watch issued a ‘Genocide Emergency Alert’, which classified Azerbaijan at Stage 9 (extermination) and Stage 10 (denial) of the ten stages of the genocidal process. Similar warnings were issued by other genocide scholars, including the International Association of Genocide Scholars:

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The phrase 'never again', endorsed by signatories of the 1948 Genocide Convention, rings very hollow. States must fulfil their treaty obligations to prevent and protect. Effective action is needed to end Azerbaijan and Turkey's impunity and to prevent further bloodshed.