

## ***European Center for Artsakh e.V.***

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### **Refugees in Nagorno Karabakh Republic**

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to draw your attention to the fate of the most vulnerable groups – refugees and displaced people, in particular those living in de-facto states. For example, unlike refugees in Azerbaijan and Armenia, refugees living in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (Artsakh Republic) do not have any international status as such, depriving them of international protection and aid and imposing further difficulties on this part of the population.

More than 30 thousand refugees and IDPs of Nagorno Karabakh are either part of displaced Armenian population of Azerbaijan or originate from the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh which is ethnically cleansed and currently occupied by Azerbaijan. They compose 20 percent of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. Unlike its neighboring state, Karabakh did not set camps for refugees and didn't make a show for political gains, rather it did everything to integrate those people into the society, despite the fact that those people remain neglected by the UNHCR and other international organizations dealing with the issue of displacement.

Regrettably, the Azerbaijani authorities continue denying humanitarian access of the UNHCR and others to the territory of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and prevent any international assistance to the Armenian displaced population. As a result these people are being subjected to collective punishment for the mere reason of living in an unrecognized country.

To eliminate injustice towards Armenian refugees living in Nagorno Karabakh and to ensure reciprocity by restoring human equality and fairness, one should bear in mind that the issue of displaced people came about as a consequence of the conflict that arose in response to the desire of the Armenian majority of NK to live in freedom and equality. And to find a comprehensive solution to this issue it is necessary to address the issue of the displaced people in the context of finding a durable solution to the conflict itself. Without it, refugees and IDPs will fall hostage to continuous uncertainty.

Speaking loudly on durable solution for one group of displaced population and denying basic needs of humanitarian protection to another group goes against the very principle of human equality, so much needed for conflict resolution.

In conclusion, I would like to recommend ensuring to specialized agencies, in particular UNHCR with free access to all refugees and displaced people irrespective of their places of residence and the status of the country they took refuge in.