

STATEMENT
by H.E. Mr. Artak Apitonian
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia
at the 71st session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
Geneva, 5 October 2020

Chairperson,
Distinguished High Commissioner,
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The war unleashed against Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and Armenia by Azerbaijan on early morning Sunday, September 27, forced me to alert you about a new humanitarian crisis, which is rapidly escalating and threatening global peace and security and generating new flow of refugees and IDPs.

We appreciate the High Commissioner's prompt public response to this crisis as he urged the parties to heed the calls for de-escalation and calm, expressing concern that the fresh fighting was impacting civilians and making solutions even more difficult. I fully share your remarks made earlier that military actions will not lead to any solution but new flow of refugees and IDPs.

The overt, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal aggression of Azerbaijan with full and direct support of Turkey against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh is being carried out in flagrant violation of the international humanitarian law, targeting hospitals, schools, roads, pipelines, communication systems and other essential facilities. Civilian population has come under deliberate attack, women and children are killed with explosive weapons and cluster bombs in the civilian areas.

Stepanakert, Shushi, Martakert, Martuni, Hadrut and other cities and villages of Artsakh are under large-caliber artillery and missile shelling and air bombardments. Schools, houses and other civilian objects are under targeted attacks by offensive UAVs with very real threat to life and health of the entire civilian population of Artsakh. Azerbaijani heavy artillery strike to Stepanakert targeted the main humanitarian hub in the city, the Center of Emergency Service.

Perpetrated amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan's unlawful, indiscriminate and disproportionate military attacks are heavily affecting the region's critical civilian infrastructure, including the healthcare capacities. It is obvious that the intention of indiscriminate attacks is to cause as much damage as possible, including casualties and destructions.

While restricting press reporting at home, Azerbaijan specifically targets journalists who have open access to Nagorno-Karabakh. As a result of these actions, many journalists were seriously injured, including two French reporters.

Dozens of civilians have already been killed, including children, and many more were wounded. For the ninth day, the entire population of Stepanakert and other towns survive the heavy shelling by spending their days and nights in the shelters.

At the moment, as I am delivering this speech, Azerbaijan continues to shell civilian population and infrastructure in Artsakh.

Mr. Chairperson,

The ongoing military aggression perpetrated against Nagorno Karabakh has put the lives of 150 thousand people under existential threat.

The attacks by cluster munition is an unacceptable military aggression on the peaceful civilians of Artsakh. The Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention on Cluster munitions limits the right to choose the methods and means of warfare, prohibiting the use of such lethal weapons. International legal instruments and customary international law prohibit the use of cluster munitions, considering them lethal and inhumane, endangering the lives and health of the civilian population.

Mr. Chairperson,

Azerbaijan, with the active encouragement and unconditional unilateral support of Turkey, is expanding the geography of hostilities to the territory of the Republic of Armenia, attacking the civilian and military infrastructure in the Vardenis region of Armenia and targeted the civilian population.

I would like to refute the utterly false and disgraceful statement of the representative of Azerbaijan, delivered earlier. This statement proves that for the undemocratic Aliev regime in Azerbaijan, people's lives are not matter of concern.

In contempt of the persistent calls of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries and the entire international community on the immediate cessation of hostilities, Azerbaijan and Turkey jointly continue large-scale hostilities with the aim of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by military means. Moreover, foreign terrorist fighters are recruited and transported from northern part of Syria and Libya to Azerbaijan to be used in this aggressive campaign. This fact has already been confirmed by the President of France, the Russian Foreign Ministry and the US Pentagon. The provocative actions of the Turkish armed forces seriously undermine the regional security and hinder the efforts of the international community to cease the hostilities.

Armenia remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and stands ready to engage with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries to re-establish a ceasefire regime based on the 1994-1995 trilateral agreements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thousands of displaced families face shortage of food, water and access to medical care. We count only on the strength of these people who defend their home to prevent another humanitarian catastrophe that Government of Azerbaijan induces upon them.

As military actions continue to unfold against Nagorno-Karabakh, we request to deliver humanitarian assistance to people of Nagorno-Karabakh affected by the crisis, in accordance with the UN Charter, international human rights and international humanitarian law.

We urge to provide needs-based humanitarian assistance to the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality without discrimination to people in need.

In this context, Armenia is convinced that provision of urgent humanitarian assistance to the population of Nagorno-Karabakh caught in crisis must be carried out regardless of the circumstances, including the status of the territory.

I thank you, Mr. President.