

DECLARATION

Adopted on April 29, 2023 during the Conference on Refugees from Azerbaijan, Artsakh, and Nakhijevan titled
“Old and New Refugees of Azerbaijani Aggression: Past, Present, and Future”

We, the authorized representatives of the non-government organizations who have initiated this conference,

- Noting, that since its establishment in 1918, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the Azerbaijani SSR, and the modern-day Republic of Azerbaijan have all pursued and continue to pursue a xenophobic, and particularly and Armenophobic Armenian-persecuting, racist policy, the objective of which was and is to drive out hundreds of thousands of our compatriots from the birthplace of their ancestors, from their homes, or to exterminate them on the ground,
- noting that the state-instigated genocidal acts (the massacres of Armenians in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad, the forced deportations of Armenians in Northern Karabakh accompanied by pogroms) that took place in 1988-1991 in the Azerbaijani SSR, and in 1992 in the Republic of Azerbaijan, have not been subjected to any legal investigation,
- hundreds of thousands of our compatriots were forcibly displaced to Armenia, gained the status of a refugee or sought asylum in other countries as a result of the genocidal acts of Azerbaijan in those years,
- in the course of thirty years numerous complaints addressed to the UN Human Rights Committee regarding the return of Armenian refugees and forcibly displaced persons to their homeland and compensation for their property losses did not receive a legal solution and remained unanswered,
- bearing in mind that according to a number of international agreements, refugees and forcibly displaced persons have the right to voluntary return to their homeland, or the part of the homeland where their physical security, political and civil rights can be ensured, and at the same time the dangerous conditions for Armenian refugees and displaced persons have not disappeared, but contrary to that, after 1988, the state-supported Armenophobia and threats of reprisals intensified in Azerbaijan and Nakhijevan,
- noting that the Armenophobic, racist policies of Azerbaijan have only intensified during the thirty years following 1988-1992, and thousands of Armenians were forcibly displaced from Artsakh and received shelter in Armenia following the 44-day war launched by Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020, with internally displaced people increased in number in Artsakh, leading to a new situation with refugeeism in both the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh,
- noting that the Artsakh refugees of 2020 still do not possess a clear legal status, as a result of which they may be excluded from the scope and protection of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

- taking into account that our compatriots who were forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan and Artsakh and lost their home are in serious need of political, legal, social, economic and humanitarian support, and that the Armenians remaining in Artsakh are under serious threat emanating from Azerbaijani military,
- noting that the authorities of the Republic of Armenia, despite the many requests and demands of refugees from the territories under the control of Azerbaijan and forcibly displaced persons who have taken refuge in Armenia and the non-government organizations representing their interests, a/ have conducted an exclusively humanitarian-social policy towards them in the course of 35 years, b/ did not plan and pursue a legal investigation process for the actions of Azerbaijan's obviously anti-Armenian, racist policies, and, in our opinion, did not even have a strategy dealing with the problems of the return of refugees from the territory under Azerbaijan's control and compensation for the cultural wealth they have left behind and property losses, c/ did not take into account the political interests and prospects of refugees sheltered in Armenia, d/ have been very passive, especially in the fight against the falsification of our history and our national identity, the destruction of our cultural heritage, which has intensified in Azerbaijan particularly in the last 35 years,
- noting that, even in a situation when a new refugee wave has emerged as a result of the aggressive and criminal war in 2020, the decision envisaged by article 7 of the November 9, 2020 trilateral statement signed by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, and the Prime Minister of Armenia, which states that "Internally displaced persons and refugees shall return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent regions under the control of the Agency of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees" is not implemented, while the Azerbaijani authorities are implementing it unilaterally, and the territories abandoned by the Armenians are being populated without any control, by individuals with identities unknown to us,

Declare

- the governments of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh should initiate an international political and legal process (including an international judicial process) to call Azerbaijan responsible for the genocidal actions carried out in Azerbaijan (including the state-sponsored and state-organised Armenian pogroms in the cities of Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad as well as the forced deportation and massacres of Armenians by the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Shahumyan region and Getashen) and claim a compensation,
- the protection of the violated rights and interests of our compatriots who were forcibly displaced and fled from Azerbaijan and Artsakh should be recognized as a priority for the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh.
- all damages caused to refugees and forcibly displaced persons are subject to adequate, fair compensation. The amount and forms of compensation for damages to refugees and forcibly displaced persons should be determined according to internationally recognized principles,
- all Armenian refugees and forcibly displaced people, at least those who want to, should be given the opportunity to return to their homeland, to the place of their choice, and their physical, political and civil security, including their identity security, should be ensured there with all guarantees,

- we propose to the UN Security Council to discuss the policy of Azerbaijan, which continuously gives birth to refugeeness, and the threats emanating from it,
- we request and suggest that the international structures, of which both the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan are members, act as mediators to solve the problem of refugees,
- to demand the restoration of the Armenian historical-cultural and architectural buildings, churches, at least the cemeteries with historical-cultural value, sacred areas destroyed by Azerbaijan, the re-establishment of their falsified identities,
- all Artsakh residents and internally displaced persons who became refugees as a result of the military aggression of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan in 2020 should be given the opportunity to return to their native places, receiving the real long-term guarantees they demand,
- that process can start only after the implementation of the Point 6 of the November 9, 2020 trilateral statement signed by the Presidents of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, and the Prime Minister of Armenia, according to which "the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees the safety of movement of citizens, vehicles and cargo in both directions through the Lachin Corridor". In fact, it has been already 6 months that the connection between Artsakh and Armenia through that corridor is disrupted, which leads to the danger of a humanitarian disaster. At the moment, the population of Artsakh is a hostage of Azerbaijan, and the way of return of Artsakh refugees and forcibly displaced persons is practically closed.
- according to the point 7 of the same statement, "Internally displaced persons and refugees return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent regions under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees." We appeal to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whether they are aware of the actions of unilateral resettlement of internally displaced persons from Azerbaijan and do they monitor the process, do they know who is being resettled there and why Azerbaijan has started this process unilaterally,
- we ask and suggest to the authorities of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh to start an international legal process, in relation to the acts of vandalism towards our cultural heritage in the territories populated by Armenians before 1988 but now deprived of their Armenian population,
- we request and suggest to the RA National Academy of Sciences as well as the universities of the Republic of Armenia to prepare a serious package of publications on the facts of falsifications in the books, articles and sources published under the name of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, to inform the the scientific community, the national science academies and universities of other countries of the objectives of Azerbaijani academia and their large-scale efforts to make the science serve their racist political goals and ethnophobia. In this matter, we are talking not only about the falsification of the history of the Armenian people, but also about the falsification of the history of the indigenous Caucasian and Iranian-speaking peoples of Azerbaijan and the history of all countries neighboring Azerbaijan, and thus of the falsification of the history of the Azerbaijanis as well.

At the same time, we insist that,

without the direct participation of the Republic of Armenia and international support, it is impossible to secure through societal and civil initiatives or activities the protection of the political and civil

rights, or the restoration of the violated rights and interests of Armenian refugees and our compatriots who have been forcibly displaced from the territory of Artsakh as a result of Azerbaijani aggression,

In this context, we urge,

the Government of the Republic of Armenia, led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, to establish a competent state body, organization or a structural unit within a state body dealing with "Refugee Issues", with the help of which in a short period of time a draft strategy or concept paper for the national or state policy strategy on the issues of Armenian refugees will be developed and presented for public discussion to the stakeholders. This strategy or the concept paper will then become a part of the policy implemented by the Republic of Armenia and a guideline not just for the diplomatic missions of the Republic of Armenia, but also for non-government organizations and civic initiatives dealing with refugee issues.

We make a separate appeal to the authorities of the Republic of Artsakh and urge them

to accept a complete political responsibility not just for the refugees that have sought shelter in Artsakh or the people of Artsakh that have been expelled from their homeland as a result of Azerbaijani occupation, but also for the protection of the interests and rights of all our compatriots around the world who have been forcibly displaced and are de facto refugees from Azerbaijan.

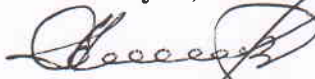
1. We appeal to international organizations, in particular the UN Security Council, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the authorities of the OSCE Minsk co-chair countries, the heads of the diplomatic missions accredited in Armenia, to support the solution of the problems raised by us and to involve us in an effective cooperation in this context.
2. We make a special appeal to our compatriots that have been subjected to forced displacement from Azerbaijan, Artsakh, and Nakhijevan at different times and took refuge in different countries of the world, their descendants, as well as to the non-governmental organizations that have been dealing with Armenian refugee issues for years, offering to unite in one single platform and unite our efforts and resources for the sake of our fellow refugees and the fight for the common interests of the displaced, ensuring the protection of their rights.

We hereby announce the goal of forming a common platform for the realization of that idea.

Mariam Avagyan, Coordinator of the Forum of Refugees from the Azerbaijani SSR



Lianna Petrosyan, President of "Dizak ART" cultural NGO



Eleonora Asatryan, Coordinator of the Civil Society Network "Refugees and International Right"



Meri Khachatryan, Director of A.D.Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Centre NGO

