



Family-tracing in Armenia for the refugees from Nagorno Karabakh

General Assembly 3



Shattered Vows: Tracing the Devastation Caused by
Violating Human Rights



Forum: General Assembly 3 (GA3)

Issue: Family-tracing in Armenia for the refugees from Nagorno Karabakh

Student Officer: Vincent Esser & Thijmen Scheltus

Positions: President & Deputy-President of GA3

Introduction

Nagorno Karabakh, a region located between Azerbaijan and its neighbour, Armenia, has faced conflicts resulting in the loss of the lives of countless individuals as well as widespread displacement for its population. The separation of families during periods of conflict has emerged as a poignant and enduring issue that is trying to be solved by various parties in order to reunite families and generally improve the quality of life for the people that have been displaced for various reason. Back in February 1988, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh sought for unification with Armenia and talks began peacefully. Some time later, as the Soviet Union's dissolution neared, tensions gradually grew into an increasingly violent conflict between ethnic Armenians and ethnic Azerbaijanis. This conflict was eventually known as the First Nagorno-Karabakh and it lasted for 6 years. At the end of the war in 1994, Armenia dominated the region however as a result of this initial conflict, an estimated 353,000 Armenians and 500,000 Azerbaijanis were displaced from the region. Following this period of conflict was around 14 years of reduced hostility until once again in 2008 border clashes began. The 2008 Mardakert clashes began on 4 March after the 2008 Armenian election protests, resulting in many wounded and killed, with both sides declaring victory. It was the heaviest fighting between ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani forces since the 1994 ceasefire after the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. Following the incident, on March 14 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 62/243, demanding the immediate withdrawal of all Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Clashes along the border however, didn't stop as there was on and off conflict all the way up to 2020. In September 2020, large scale fighting began once again with an Azerbaijani offensive along the line of contact established in the aftermath of the first war. This ignited a second war in which drones, sensors, long-range heavy artillery, and missile strikes were used by both parties in order to claim the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Numerous ceasefire offers from Russia, France, and the United States failed to stop this conflict until Shusha, the second largest city in Nagorno-Karabakh was captured. Once Shusha was captured, a ceasefire was finally agreed upon, ending all hostilities in the area from the 10th of November 2020. As a result of this second Nagorno-Karabakh war thousands of soldiers loss their lives, but most notably hundreds of thousands of people were once again displaced from the region. This lead to families being split apart between Armenia and Azerbaijan with no way of contacting each other. As a result of the first and now the second war in the region the problem of displaced families is one of the most pressing ones in the region. Despite the second war ending in late 2020, tensions were still apparent in the region with numerous skirmishes outbreaking between then and the present day. This makes it increasingly difficult to solve this issue of dispersed families as family tracing is often interfered by more conflict which prevents safe transport as well as the general safety of civilians in the area. A clear sign of the amount of people that have fled the region is the population count over the years. In 1988, the population within the region was between 700,000-800,000 and in 2015, this population reduced to about 150,000 people. The population now stands at around a fifth of its previous population which highlights the sheer amount of the refugees from these conflicts.



Definition of Key Terms

Nagorno Karabakh region

Region located in Azerbaijan covering the southeastern stretch of the lesser Caucasus mountain range. “Nagorno” coming from Russian meaning “mountainous”, and “Karabakh” an Azeri word meaning “Black Garden”.

Family-tracing

A process whereby disaster response teams locate separated family members and reunite them following natural and human catastrophes like wars or earthquakes.

Republic of Artsakh

The new name for the Nagorno-Karabakh region, though both remain official names. “Artsakh” is an ancient Armenian name for the area. The region is now recognised internationally as a part of Azerbaijan.

Displaced person(s)

A person or people who are forced to leave their home country because of war or persecution therefore making them a refugee.

Shia Islam

The second largest branch of Islam. It holds that the Islamic prophet Muhammad designated “Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib” as his successor and the Imam (spiritual and political leader) after him, most notably at the event of Ghadir Khumm, but was prevented from succeeding Muhammad as the leader of the Muslims as a result of the choice made by some of Muhammad's other companions at Saqifah.

This view primarily contrasts with that of Sunnī Islam, whose adherents believe that Muhammad did not appoint a successor before his death and consider Abū Bakr, who was appointed caliph by a group of senior Muslims at Saqifah, to be the first rightful caliph after Muhammad

Humanitarian aid

Humanitarian aid is assistance that is used to relieve suffering during emergency situations. This aid is often provided to refugees, victims of natural disasters/wars, as well as the homeless.

Refugee

A person who seeks protection from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.



General Overview

Family tracing for refugees from the Nagorno-Karabakh region is a complex and sensitive process aimed at reuniting the people who have been separated due to conflict. The ultimate goal is to provide emotional and physical support by reconnecting family members and rebuilding the social fabric that has been disrupted by the conflicts and tensions in the region. The process of family tracing involved numerous key steps such as, data collection and registration, identification and documentation, hotlines and communication channels, awareness campaigns, legal support, monitoring, and finally psychological support. To start tracking down families that have been displaced, a centralised database is needed in order to collect and store information about displaced individuals and families. As well as this the database can be used to gather other relevant data on family members including, names, ages, last known locations, and any other important information that could aid the tracing process. The most effective method to then continue the search for missing people is by spreading awareness and using communication channels such as hotlines. Communication channels can receive information from individuals seeking to trace their family members and can also provide clear guidelines as to how individuals can report information and request assistance in the family tracing process. In addition to these channels, awareness campaigns within refugee communities to inform individuals about available family tracing services can be made in order to reach a wider audience. Through these effective steps family tracing can be carried out and eventually the hundreds of thousands of people that were displaced can potentially one day be reunited with their families.



Figure 1 - Nagorno-Karabakh Region

Figure 1 clearly depicts the location of the Nagorno-karabakh region and shows the many location in which people may have ended up due to the conflict and hostilities in the area. Refugees may have fled to Armenia, Azerbaijan or even southwards, to Iran. Once again this highlights the challenging nature of tracking down these refugees with the aim of reuniting them with their families.



Major Parties Involved

Government of Armenia

The Armenian government is responsible for coordinating efforts related to refugee assistance, including family-tracing initiatives. They often work through relevant ministries and agencies to provide support and services to refugees, including those from Nagorno-Karabakh.

International Organizations

Various international organisations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), may be involved in assisting with family-tracing efforts. These organisations often have expertise and resources to help reunite separated families and provide humanitarian assistance to refugees.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs play a crucial role in supporting refugees and displaced persons. They may work on the ground to facilitate family-tracing efforts, provide humanitarian aid, and advocate for the rights of refugees.

Local Authorities

Local government authorities in Armenia, particularly those in regions hosting refugee populations, may be involved in coordinating assistance and support services for refugees, including family-tracing initiatives.

Community and Religious Organisations

These groups often play a role in providing support to refugees, including helping with family-tracing efforts, providing shelter, and offering other forms of assistance.

Families and Individuals

The refugees themselves, as well as their relatives and acquaintances, are also actively involved in family-tracing efforts. They may provide information to relevant authorities or organisations to help locate missing family members and facilitate reunification.

Timeline of Events

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Ongoing | Resettlement and Reconstruction Efforts: Ongoing efforts to resettle displaced populations and reconstruct infrastructure in Nagorno-Karabakh continue to be major focal points in the region's recovery process. There's no specific date for this ongoing process, as it extends beyond specific events. |
| 2020 | International Aid Efforts: International aid efforts to assist refugees and displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh intensified in the wake of the |



2020 conflict, with various organisations providing assistance and support to those affected.

- 2020 **Humanitarian Crisis:** The humanitarian crisis resulting from the 2020 conflict intensified throughout the year, with significant displacement, loss of life, and infrastructural damage occurring during the hostilities.
- November 9, 2020 **Russian-brokered Ceasefire:** Ilham Aliyev, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the President of Russia Vladimir Putin, and ended all hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region from 00:00, on 10 November 2020 Moscow time.
- Mid-July 2020 **Escalation of Tensions:** Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan escalated in July 2020, leading to border clashes and skirmishes prior to the full-scale resumption of hostilities in September.
- September 27, 2020 **Resumption of Hostilities:** In September 2020, hostilities erupted once again between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The six-week war resulted in significant casualties and displacement, with many families being separated once more.
- November 9, 2020 **Ceasefire Agreement:** A ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia in November 2020 halted the fighting, but it also led to significant territorial concessions by Armenia, including parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding territories. This further exacerbated the displacement crisis and increased the need for family-tracing efforts.
- May 12, 1994 **Ceasefire Agreement:** The ceasefire agreement signed between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in 1994 brought an end to the active phase of the conflict. However, it did not resolve the underlying issues, including the status of displaced persons and separated families.
- February 20, 1988 - May 12, 1994 **Nagorno-Karabakh:** The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region resulted in large-scale displacement and the creation of refugee populations on both sides. Many families were separated during the conflict, leading to the need for family-tracing efforts to reunite them.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

CSCE Minsk Process (1992-present): The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now known as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE) established the Minsk Group in 1992 to mediate the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Co-chaired by France, Russia, and the United States, the Minsk Group has been the primary forum for negotiations, peace talks, and mediation efforts. Despite numerous meetings and proposals, a final settlement has not been reached.



Bishkek Protocol (1994): The Bishkek Protocol was signed in May 1994, following talks between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. It reaffirmed the ceasefire established earlier that year and called for negotiations on a comprehensive settlement. However, it did not result in a lasting peace agreement.

Key West Talks (2001): Organized by the OSCE Minsk Group, the Key West talks in 2001 brought together the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Robert Kocharyan and Heydar Aliyev, respectively, for negotiations on a peaceful resolution. While progress was made on some issues, the talks ultimately did not lead to a final settlement.

Possible solutions

Seeing as this issue is a current and ongoing one, there are many possible solutions to this ever-changing issue. Conflicts and tensions in the region, will always cause disruptions and families will continue to be split apart if a true ceasefire and peace in the region is reached. In previous years many international organisations offered aid to the refugees from the region in both a physical and mental state however the issue still looms. Despite these interventions from other nations and international organisations, even if some were successful on a smaller scale, the issue is still apparent, making it difficult to identify the most effective solution to this problem. Some of the solutions can be inspired by other nations in which families were split apart and displaced from their homes, however this specific example is arguably much more challenging as it has changed many times and has been going on for over 25 years now. Some ideas for some possible solutions to this issue though include:

- Further collaboration with international organisations
- Centralised database system in which the names and the last known locations of missing people are stored
- Counselling services
- Support for refugees
- Legal support for the documentation of refugees and separated families
- Psychosocial support services
- Family Reunification Hotlines

There are many more potential ways of solving this issue however due to the fact that this problem is ongoing and has been for decades around the Nagorno-Karabakh region, there is no definitive idea and answer for which direction to focus on with regards to family tracing for the refugees of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Useful documents

"Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Visual Explainer"

This document provides a visual overview of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including maps, timelines, and key events, to help readers understand the historical context and current status of the conflict.



"The Madrid Principles: A Framework for Peace in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict"

This document outlines the Madrid Principles, a set of proposed principles for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, endorsed by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. It provides insight into the proposed framework for negotiations and potential pathways to peace.

"UN Security Council Resolutions on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict"

This document compiles relevant UN Security Council resolutions pertaining to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, providing insight into the international community's engagement and efforts to address the conflict through diplomatic means.

"Humanitarian Impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Assessment Report"

This document presents an assessment report on the humanitarian impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including findings on displacement, casualties, infrastructure damage, and humanitarian needs. It offers valuable insights into the humanitarian consequences of the conflict and informs response efforts.

"Voices from Nagorno-Karabakh: Perspectives on Peace and Conflict"

This document features interviews, testimonies, and perspectives from individuals living in Nagorno-Karabakh, offering insights into their experiences, aspirations, and views on peace and conflict resolution. It provides valuable grassroots perspectives on the human dimensions of the conflict.

Bibliography

BBC News. "Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict." BBC, www.bbc.com/news/topics/c77jz3mdgjt/nagorno-karabakh-conflict.

Al Jazeera. "Nagorno-Karabakh." Al Jazeera, www.aljazeera.com/tag/nagorno-karabakh/.

The New York Times. "Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict." The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/topic/destination/nagorno-karabakh.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Nagorno-Karabakh." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, www.carnegieendowment.org/regions/81.

International Crisis Group. "Nagorno-Karabakh." International Crisis Group, www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh.

"Nagorno-Karabakh Profile." *BBC News*, BBC, 30 Jan. 2024, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18270325.

Matveeva, Anna. "Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 5 Feb. 2024, www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagorno-



[Karabakh conflict#:~:text=The%20demand%20to%20unify%20with,ethnic%20Armenians%20and%20ethnic%20Azerbaijanis.](#)

Action, Against Hunger. "Which Future Do We Have? Stories from Refugees in Armenia - Armenia." *ReliefWeb*, 22 Nov. 2023, www.reliefweb.int/report/armenia/which-future-do-we-have-stories-refugees-armenia#:~:text=After%20a%20nearly%2030%2Dyear,in%20the%20town%20of%20Goris.

Minority, Rights Group. "Nagorno-Karabakh (Unrecognized State)." *Minority Rights Group*, 16 Jan. 2024, www.minorityrights.org/country/nagorno-karabakh-unrecognized-state/.

Scheffer, David. "Ethnic Cleansing Is Happening in Nagorno-Karabakh. How Can the World Respond?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 4 Oct. 2023, www.cfr.org/article/ethnic-cleansing-happening-nagorno-karabakh-how-can-world-respond.

Edwards, Christian. "Nagorno-Karabakh Will Cease to Exist from next Year. How Did This Happen?" *CNN*, Cable News Network, 28 Sept. 2023, www.edition.cnn.com/2023/09/28/europe/nagorno-karabakh-officially-dissolve-intl/index.html#:~:text=President%20Samvel%20Shahramanyan's%20decree%20called,existence%2C%E2%80%9D%20read%20the%20decree.

Britannica, Editors. "Nagorno-Karabakh." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 5 Feb. 2024, www.britannica.com/place/Nagorno-Karabakh.