



World Council of Churches

WCC statement on the escalation of conflict in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region

28 September 2020

The World Council of Churches is gravely concerned by the renewed and very serious escalation of conflict in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region since Sunday 27 September – reportedly following an attack by Azerbaijan’s military forces – which has already resulted in dozens of casualties including civilians, and which risks provoking a wider armed conflict in the region. I lament the tragic loss of lives, express my sincere condolences to the grieving families, and pray for the recovery of the injured.

To stop this bloodshed, the WCC calls on all combatants to desist immediately from further military action and to return to the table of dialogue and negotiation. On its behalf I appeal for urgent initiatives by the Minsk Group, under the auspices of the OSCE, for progress towards a peaceful solution to this longstanding unresolved conflict.

I am dismayed by the aggressively partisan stance taken by the government of Turkey, which as a member of the Minsk Group should maintain a neutral role, rather than that of an antagonist.

I appeal therefore to our WCC member churches from the countries in the Minsk Group to engage with their governments to convey this message and to encourage urgent and sustained diplomatic efforts for peace in the region.

*Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca
Interim General Secretary
World Council of Churches*



NSW Ecumenical Council Inc.

Rev'd Dr Ray Williamson OAM
President

Very Rev'd Fr Dr Shenouda Mansour
General Secretary

Member Churches:
Anglican Church
NSW Dioceses

Antiochian
Orthodox
Church

Armenian Apostolic
Church

Assyrian Church
of the East

Bruderhof Australia

Congregational
Federation of NSW

Coptic Orthodox
Church

Ethiopian Orthodox
Tewahdo Church

Greek Orthodox
Church

Indian Orthodox
Church

Lutheran Church of
Australia/ NSW
District

Mar Thoma Church

Religious Society of
Friends

Syrian Orthodox
Church

The Salvation Army

Uniting Church
Synod of NSW &
ACT

Observer:

Roman Catholic
Church - NSW
Province

Associated with the
National Council of
Churches in Australia
(NCCA)

Armenia - Azerbaijan Conflict

The NSW Ecumenical Council is extremely saddened by the news that the long-standing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh region has been subjected to a violent attack by Turkey-backed Azerbaijani forces.

The Council expresses its deep concern about this conflict and tragic loss of life and offers prayerful greetings to His Eminence Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian and all members of the Armenian Apostolic Church, one of the Council's member churches.

The heavy military losses on both sides of this armed conflict are deeply distressing, and the NSW Ecumenical Council expresses sympathy to all who are suffering as a consequence. The Council is particularly concerned about the potential destruction within the ancient Christian enclave of Artsakh with its over 5000 monasteries, churches, chapels, and Christian monuments, some of which date back to the 1st Century CE.

The Council is aware of the call by the United Nations and several national leaders around the world for a ceasefire in these current hostilities and adds its voice to that call, especially urging the Australian Government to use its diplomatic influence for that purpose.

Calling on all peoples of faith to pray for peace in the region, this Council's hope and prayer is that the ceasefire will be restored, a truce negotiated and a peaceful settlement achieved under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group as mandated by the UN, so that the people of both countries can live in genuine peace, in the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate (Exodus 34: 6; Qur'an 1: 1).

30 September 2020



The Australasian-Middle East Christian Apostolic Churches Conference (AMEC)

Web: www.melkite.org.au
Email: eparchy@melkite.org.au
Tel: +61 2 9786 3444

Office: 86 Waterloo Road, Greenacre NSW 2190, Australia
Postal Address: PO Box 620, Greenacre NSW 2190, Australia

A Press Release

From: The Australasian-Middle East Christian Apostolic Churches Conference of Bishops. (AMEC)

Subject: The Current Conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Date: 02 October 2020

The geographical and political complexities of the region generally designated as the Caucasus have become increasingly accentuated in the long running dispute centred on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The present disturbances and military activity in the region have impacted upon large numbers of Christians.

As Bishops and representatives of the Australasian-Middle Eastern Christian Apostolic Churches (AMEC), it is incumbent upon us to express our concern at a situation which has the potential to develop into an international crisis. We fear that the especially vulnerable – women and children, the elderly and the infirm – will be caught up in a conflict not of their making.

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the Armenian People have long suffered major disruptions to their communal life. In particular, it must be remembered that the Armenian Nation was subjected to a deliberate, relentless, and merciless assault resulting in what is properly referred to as a genocide. That the successor state to the Ottoman Empire continues to deny the historical reality of the Armenian Genocide surely raises concerns for the safety of Armenian Communities in the disputed territory.

We urge that all involved in the present dispute abide by pertinent international treaties and conventions. Above all, the territorial integrity of the Armenian majority community must be accepted and respected. Already there has been loss of life and collateral damage to property. The situation must not be allowed to escalate.

As representatives of Christian Communities, we abhor injustice and violence, and we call upon all those who determine the affairs of nations to move swiftly and definitively to restore order and to ensure continued peace.

With unshakable confidence in the loving kindness of the Good Lord, we commend to Him all those who have died in the present disturbances, and we implore a speedy and complete recovery for those who have been injured. May those who have been bereaved find in Him, an enduring consolation.

We also invite all our Faithful, to pray unceasingly that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will bestow His everlasting peace upon all humanity, especially nowadays upon in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.



Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh

6 October 2020

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (the ECAJ), the peak representative body of the Australian Jewish community, has been following reports of fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, known locally as Artsakh, with growing concern. The ECAJ deplores the state-sanctioned incitement of racial and religious hatred wherever and whenever it occurs. Many civilians have already been killed, and the UN has so far failed to halt the fighting.

Artsakh is populated mainly by highland people of ethnic Armenian background. Armenian culture and the Armenian Apostolic Church are central to the country's long and rich history. Following an overwhelming vote by its people in 1991, Artsakh declared its independence.

At the time it achieved independence, the right of Artsakh to exist as a State was violently contested by way of a military attack upon it by neighbouring Azerbaijan. Artsakh won its fight for independence and has been a stable and successful democratic State ever since.

Now, for a second time, Azerbaijan has initiated military force, with the backing of Turkey's Erdogan government, with the declared aim of destroying Artsakh as an independent State. The Azerbaijan government has also stepped up incitement of racial and religious hatred against the Armenian people, and promised to divide up the spoils of conquest among Azerbaijanis once Artsakh is militarily defeated and occupied, with the consequent threat to the existing local population.

Given the history of Ottoman Turkey's systematic mass murder and expulsion of 1.5 million ethnic Armenians during the Armenian genocide between 1914 and 1923, this latest move by the Erdogan government of Turkey against the same ethnic group is especially concerning.

We express our solidarity with our friends and colleagues in the Armenian community in Australia. Many Australian Armenians have family in the region and are understandably distressed by recent events.

We call on all governments to do everything in their power to discourage the latest military assault upon Artsakh, and to raise their voices and demand an immediate halt to it.

Contact:

Peter Wertheim AM | co-Chief Executive Officer

phone: 02 8353 8500 | m: 0408 160 904 | fax 02 9361 5888

e: pwertheim@ecaj.org.au | www.ecaj.org.au