

SET MY PEOPLE FREE INTERVENTION



Warsaw Human Dimension Conference
Session 1: Humanitarian Issues I
Tuesday 1st October 2024

1 October 2024

Thank you Mr. Moderator, Dear Colleagues, Excellencies.

Set My People Free is working to repeal Islamic anti-apostasy and anti-blasphemy laws which affect the freedom of conscience, religion and belief of 1.3 billion people. 11 countries sanction the death penalty for apostasy/blasphemy - leaving or questioning Islam - and over 20 countries criminalise expressions of non-belief or questioning of Islamic laws.

Over a year has passed since Azerbaijan forced 120,000 Armenians to flee Nagorno Karabakh. Christian Solidarity International (CSI) reports at least 23 ethnic Armenians – and possibly as many as 100 – are still being detained by the government of Azerbaijan, in violation of international calls for their release. Genocide Watch reported how Azerbaijan intentionally shelled civilian towns in violation of ICC Statute Art.8 2b(i). Azerbaijan has also systematically targeted and destroyed Armenian Christian churches and holy sites.

SMPF previously joined a letter with 19 members of the IRF RT to Secretary Blinken calling in 2021, calling on the US to:

- Ensure Azerbaijan immediately releases all its prisoners of war and captive civilians
- Condemn Azerbaijan's destruction of religious sites and to place pressure on Azerbaijan to ensure the protection of the remaining religious sites in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Apply Global Magnitsky Sanctions or similar measures on state officials who have been involved in war crimes in



Nagorno-Karabakh or called for the eradication of Armenians.

- Work to effectively combat speech which dehumanizes Armenians, especially in schoolbooks.
- Review the Waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act With Respect to Assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan.

We urge that Azerbaijan before COP29 to ensure Azerbaijan immediately releases all remaining prisoners of war and captive civilians. We also call on Azerbaijan and OSCE member states to hold accountable the leaders responsible for the torture and murder Armenian POWs- some accounts we have heard about today - including the murder in May 2021 of 19 POWs, twelve of who were civilians, including four women.

We join CSI in urging Azerbaijan to “work with UNESCO and the Armenian Apostolic Church to ensure preservation of and access to religious sites in Nagorno Karabakh, so that Armenian Christians may exercise their religious freedoms” and reiterate the - Human Rights Watch - call for the need of an international monitoring mechanism.

Separately we call on all OSCE states providing humanitarian assistance in conflict areas [also outside the OSCE] to:

- **Ensure aid is provided without discrimination especially in regions with known persecution of minorities, including religious, such as in Yemen;**
- **Train local staff in human rights values, including freedom of conscience and belief, noting systemic documented violence and threats against apostates from and reformers of Islam. OSCE states must ensure that aid is not weaponized;**

- We have received reports from Yemeni Christian converts of discrimination in and outside the country of Yemen.
- **Ensure humanitarian assistance is sustained and coupled with transitional justice support.**
 - We note Sudan before the coup, the need for continued OSCE and international attention; and legal challenges for IDPs fleeing genocidal violence returning to their homes in Syria/Iraq. We also note the denial of religious registration for Yazidi children born of ISIS rape.

Resources (in order of reference):

Christian Solidarity International: <https://www.csi-int.org/news/csi-to-highlight-plight-of-armenian-detainees-in-azerbaijan-at-un/>

Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan) Request for the indication of provisional measures: <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/202558>

Genocide Watch: <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/genocide-and-forced-deportation-nagorno-karabakh>

International Religious Freedom Roundtable letter to Sec. State Blinken : https://jubileecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Azerbaijan_Armenia-Nagorno-Karabakh.pdf

Dr Ewelina Ochab, *Let the Children Be Yazidis*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2019/04/03/let-the-children-be-yazidis/>

“OUR GENERATION IS GONE” BEARING WITNESS TRIP REPORT
- The Islamic State’s Targeting of Iraqi Minorities in Ninewa



<https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Iraq-Bearing-Witness-Report-111215.pdf>

Religious Freedom Challenges in Iraq 10 Years after ISIS's Genocide: <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/2024%20Iraq%20Genocide%20Issue%20Brief.pdf>