



## **Oral Statement**

Human Rights Council 55<sup>th</sup> Session  
Agenda Item 4  
General Debate  
Delivered by Mr. Joel Veldkamp

21 March 2024

Tuesday marked six months since the armed forces of Azerbaijan attacked and conquered the territory of Nagorno Karabakh. Over 100,000 Armenian Christians, virtually the entire population, were forced to leave their homeland in just a few days.

Under Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh have the absolute right to return to their homeland. The International Court of Justice ruled on November 17 last year that Azerbaijan must “ensure” that the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh are able to return in a “safe, unimpeded and expeditious manner.”

The National Assembly of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh continues to meet in exile in Armenia, and has appointed a Committee for the Defense of the Fundamental Rights of the Artsakh People, led by former Armenian foreign minister Vartan Oskanian, to secure the right of return for Karabakh Armenians.

We urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to work with this Committee to negotiate a framework that will allow the residents of Nagorno Karabakh to return to their homes peacefully and safely, with international guarantees. We urge the Human Rights Council and all UN member states to support this effort. There is still time to undo the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh.

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