

Statement by HCA Vanadzor Peace Conference for Prevention of Escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

The rates of ceasefire violation, border subversive acts and the resulting death toll in the conflict zone for the period of January-July 2014 doubled as compared to the rates for the relevant period of 2013.

At the same time, the conflict zone saw a rapid increase of armament and arms race. This process is directly supported by the Russian Federation which has sold to the Republic of Azerbaijan weaponry exceeding 3 billion USD. In its turn, the Armenian side seeks to balance the situation, albeit to a lesser extent.

In fact, one of the key principles of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution, namely the peaceful resolution of the conflict is essentially at risk due to the dangerous policy of an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair country.

Besides, the issues below are also noteworthy to this effect:

- The Azerbaijani authorities exert widespread pressure and oppressions on the civil society institutions and human rights activists, along with groundless criminal prosecution, imprisonment, measures to end the activities of human rights organizations and labeling such organizations as foreign agents via the mass media and other defamatory propaganda methods.
- Upon declining to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union on September 3, 2013, the RA authorities were completely placed under the pressure of the Kremlin and essentially handed over their foreign policy decision-making competence to the Russian Federation.
- The release of the political prisoners related to the events of March 1, 2008 resulted in reduced political persecution. However, upon September 3, 2013, the persecution intensified against the politicians and activists opposing the presidential decree of September 3.

Hence, the militarization of the conflicting countries is accompanied by oppression of civil society activists and political dissidents.

The further developments might have unpredictable and irreversible consequences for the peace-building and human rights initiatives in the region and eventually lead to the rapid deterioration of the situation of human rights and democratic institutions.

While the international political and public attention is focused on the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation in the Eastern Ukraine, the dangerous policy of the Kremlin in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone can lead to an uncontrolled situation and large-scale military actions by the local forces.

As members of the UN, OSCE and CoE, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation assumed certain obligations to both their citizens and the international community. Both Armenia, and Azerbaijan and Russia undertook to reach exceptionally peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, guided by the fundamental principles of human rights.

Given that the current developments appear to threaten not only human rights in general, but also the right to peace of the inhabitants of the region, we believe that the UN, OSCE, CoE and EU are under obligation to take immediate measures on behalf of the international community to prevent any unpredictable developments.

To this end, we hereby call on the UN, OSCE, CoE and the EU and their representatives to convene an international peace conference to the effect of specifying measures to prevent any developments threatening the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and any risks of war.