



# YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS BRIGADE



Բրիտանական  
դեսպանատուն  
Երևանում

British Embassy in Yerevan



Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor

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# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<b>FORMATION OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS' BRIGADE</b>	
1.1 The Consequences of Conflicts .....	5
1.2 The Ways of Advocating the Interests of Conflict Victims .....	12
1.3 Young Journalists for Peace .....	14
1.4 The Website of Young Peacebuilders' Brigade .....	15
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
<b>THE PROBLEMS OF CONFLICT VICTIMS</b>	
<i>THE STUDIES OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS' BRIGADE</i>	
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Azerbaijan .....	17
2.2 Nagorno Karabakh .....	22
2.3 Armenia .....	28
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
<b>COOPERATION WITH STATE STRUCTURES WITH THE AIM OF SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF CONFLICT VICTIMS</b>	
3.1 Nagorno Karabakh .....	34
3.2 Armenia .....	44
<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>52</b>

## PREFACE

Involvement of youth in peace-building mission is not something new. A number of seminars, meetings, conferences have been organized, where young people from the societies involved in conflicts – journalists, students, NGO representatives - have participated.

The goal of the project “Formation of Young Peacebuilders’ Brigade” was to increase the role of youth and effective participation in the peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict by familiarizing the youth from conflict societies with the problems of conflict victims and teaching them the methods of studying those problems.

This was an attempt to establish a joint team – a brigade of young peacebuilders - which would observe advocacy of conflict victims as a common issue. Thus, we tried to show the youth one of the effective ways of peace-building activity – to present the authorities the hardship of the consequences of the conflict with the aim of promoting its peaceful resolution and to increase their responsibility for solving them.

Of course, the situations in conflicting societies greatly differ and it could have its impact on the achievements of the goals.

I have to mention that at the beginning of the project armed conflict broke out in South Ossetia. It was one of the cases when during the project implementation not only unexpected circumstances arouse but also the frozen conflict became tense, thus causing new victims, Internally displaced people (IDPs), hostages and missing persons.

As far as the meetings of young peacebuilders were planned in Tbilisi, the South-Ossetian war created some difficulties and most of the participants thought it was unsafe to organize the meetings in Tbilisi.

However, they took place, which I think, speaks about the fact that the participants accept peacebuilding activity as a value.

**A. Sakunts**  
Coordinator of HCA Vanadzor

## CHAPTER 1

### Formation of Young Peacebuilders Brigade

#### The Consequences of Conflicts

The young peace-builders met in Tbilisi for the first time on October 1-4, 2008. There were 10 young people from Armenia, 9 from Azerbaijan and 9 from Nagorno Karabakh.

Arzu Abdullayeva (the coordinator of HCA Azerbaijan Committee), Anahit Bayandur (the coordinator of HCA Armenian Committee), Stepan Grigoryan (political scientist and director of Analytical Center of Globalization and Regional Cooperation), Gegham Vardanyan (the producer of Internews-Armenia, [www.echannel.am](http://www.echannel.am)), Avaz Hasanov (the head of Human Research Association of Azerbaijan), and Liana Beria (“Agreement” association) were invited to a three-day discussions as trainers.

The topics of the three-day training were as follows:

- the impact of the unsolved conflict on the social, economic and political development in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh (Stepan Grigoryan)
- the role of civil society in the peaceful resolution of the conflict (Artur Sakunts)
- protection mechanisms for conflict victims (Avaz Hasanov)
- the understanding of the culture of tolerance
- gender in peace-building (Sofia Babayan)
- the principles and ways of organizing peace-building activities (Arzu Abdullayeva, Anahit Bayandur)
- the role of information technologies and public relations in peace-building (Gegham Vardanyan)

The training course started on October 2, and Artur Sakunts opened it. He presented the project, its role, expected results and activities for achieving the goal.

Then Arzu Abdullayeva presented the topic “The principles and ways of organizing peace-building activities.” She told that 20 years ago there was no civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan as Republics of the Soviet Union. It was surprising but pleasant when she was called a human rights defender for the first time, because she was just helping people.



*Teaching the principles of peacebuilding to the young peacebuilders*

*"I'm the citizen of my country; I'm not indifferent to people and to their problems. It is obvious that this conflict was created and well planned and it is clear that all that was done by the security service of the Soviet Union. We shouldn't be enemies and we should do our best to eliminate the conflict. Today we became enemies but we are not enemies in reality and it is a fact. I'm told "If you create peace you are a traitor." She added at the end "I'm sure that at the end of this meeting we will create a group of peace-builders. I think there shouldn't be conflict among intellectual people. We don't want to consider the other party as enemies. You, as youth, learn from our practice, and you should be prepared and clever."*

Then Anahit Bayandur, the coordinator of HCA Armenian Committee, made her speech. She told the young people about Arzu Abdullayeva's and her cooperation and their friendship that formed during the years of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Presenting their joint efforts towards advocacy of conflict victims she emphasized the importance of new relations between the new generations *"we shouldn't sit and watch, but we should take clear steps without being afraid of taking the first step. We should learn to differentiate between the terms of nationalism and patriotism. Today it is very difficult to differentiate between the false and the truth, therefore we should read a lot. If we know something it seems to us that we know everything. I want the Azeri to feel that I really care for them. During the conflict the same events were commented in a different way by the Armenian and Azerbaijani mass media. Nowadays society is cleverer than 20 years ago. And we should do our best not to become enemies. This enmity is sowed through false articles, news and such facts (thefts, murders) which then change into a reason for hostile behaviour and war.*

There are people behind all this who wished to create that hostility among us. But whatever they write, each of us should have our own opinion, values and we shouldn't follow anybody's opinion.

We should have inner desire for the conflict regulation and then there will be everything",-finalized Anahit Bayandur.



*Exchange of Opinions*

Stepan Grigoryan, politician and the director of Analytical Center of Globalization and Regional Cooperation, presented the topic "The impact of the unsolved conflict on the social, economic and political development in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh."

*"We are like each other. If two nations*

*live close they take the traditions and culture from each other and it is natural.” He pointed out a case as an example, when once he introduced a Turkish woman to students and nobody guessed she was Turkish. ”It is natural as she lives close to us and looks like us. There have never been national songs; there are regional songs when people are close to each other. The influence of the government is great on civil society, and as an example I can bring the fact when the Azeri break Armenian cross-stones, Armenians do everything to increase hostile attitude among us, but when the same cross-stones are in bad conditions in Armenia the fact doesn’t bother the government at all. Any conflict leads to refugees, conflict victims or just political consequences. For example, the roads were closed in Armenia due to the South Ossetian conflict. We had economic problems (there was no petrol, and there was less trade). During the Russian-Ossetian war Russian Federation had many economic problems.”*

*Assessing the economic situation in the three countries the political scientist considers that the solution of the conflict and the development of relations are urgent.*

*“In fact due to the unsolved conflict influences democracy, the authorities get great benefits: they get money”,-said the political scientist to the young peace-builders.*

*“I am not against the Karabakh’s self-determination but you have to decide whether or not it is self-determination.*

*Self-determination should be such so that the Karabakh people cooperate with the Azeri without being under the risk of physical extermination. The authorities execute their legitimacy by the unsolved conflict in a non standard way. The role of civil society is to abolish stereotypes. The political field needs to be studied in order to solve the conflict in a right way”.*

To sum up the topic Stepan Grigoryan added: *”Russia can’t be a mediator for the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.”*

The next topic on “Protection mechanisms for conflict victims” was presented by Avaz Hasanov. Any citizen can be a public attorney (an official, political scientist, etc.)

Conflict victims can be:

- soldiers
- refugees (IDPs)
- people being in a conflict zone
- women
- children
- missing persons

It is necessary to create a “public group” for the conflict resolution. The “public group” is a set of actions connected with each other for some period of time and is directed towards a concrete goal and

a solution of a concrete issue. The “public group” is a process, which finds out the public problem and draws the populations’ and individuals’ attention to it and is directed towards concrete changes. For this purpose it is necessary to have correlated activities.



*Teaching the mechanisms of protecting conflict victims*

The activities and the methods should correspond to a country’s culture, religion and political situation.

The “public group” is a teaching and covering Process, which concerns the participants and the leaders of the group and during the process a number of methods and skills may be taught enabling creation of new leadership.

The “public group” should be based on values and principles.

It is important to form correct relationship as all the participants of the group work for one goal and for achieving a good result.

At the initial phase, it is necessary to work on one concrete problem, which unites, develops new skills and promotes for further activities.

Gegham Vardanyan from Internews-Armenia, the producer of [www.echannel.am](http://www.echannel.am), presented the topic “The role of information technologies and public relations in peace-building”. He showed the film “Between War and Peace “which was shot in Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2005-2006.

The film aimed to find out what the Armenian and Azerbaijani citizens thought about the conflict and what their attitude was towards the neighbouring country, about how the Karabakh conflict would be solved and whether or not it was possible for Armenians and Azeri to become friends one day.

The film proved that there still exists unfriendly attitude between the two parties but there were opinions that it is possible to restore the friendship and that there shouldn’t be hostile attitude among youth. If the neighboring countries do not become friends at least the risk of the war should be abolished and the problem should be solved which is necessary for both Azerbaijan and Armenia and of course for Nagorno Karabakh.



Then he presented the work of different websites on how they refer to the topic of conflict and what the role of websites is in the life of people in general, for example the frequently visited websites like [www.xronika.com](http://www.xronika.com), [www.irevan.az.com](http://www.irevan.az.com), [www.gagashev.net](http://www.gagashev.net), [www.peasebuilding.am](http://www.peasebuilding.am), [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), [www.southcaucasus.com](http://www.southcaucasus.com), etc. He also showed such websites by means of which the Armenian-Azeri conflict has been transferred to a virtual world.

The young people said that they made use of almost all those websites.

At the end Gegham Vardanyan said: *"All this is very important and nowadays it is difficult to do without computers or websites."*

The director of "Re studio", Mamuka Kuparadze, showed a film presenting the living conditions of conflict victims - refugees. The Georgian specialist visited Azerbaijan and Armenia, got acquainted with refugees and talked about their future.

On October 3, the second day of the training, a candidate of philology, working in the Russian department in Vanadzor Teachers' Training Institute, Sofia Babayan presented the topic "Gender in peace-building."

"Gender is a science which deals with the relations of women and men. Gender is in itself an accessible status"-she mentioned.

The gender types in society are as follows:

- ➔ matriarchate
- ➔ patriarchate
- ➔ Equality

Gender approaches are:

- ➔ biological
- ➔ biosocial genofund falls on women
- ➔ social - in different societies it is different, people are not born as men or women but they become as such.

Gender criteria are:

- ➔ individual - I am a boy and you are a girl
- ➔ structural - the position of men and women in a given society (education, political life, which depends on the mentality of the country)
- ➔ cultural - what are the ideals that exist in the given society.



*The young peacebuilders are working on their tasks*

She mentioned that if we break the norms accepted by society, a gender conflict will arise. After being familiarized with the understanding of gender, the training was held according to the Hofstede chart. It aimed to find out which level of gender dominates in each participant's country. The questions concerned general norms, family, school, work and politics. As a result, it turned out that Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh are on the masculine level (the man's behavior which is added to increase the gender role of a man). It means that material values, power, high differential roles in families and authority, etc. dominate in these countries.

The young peacebuilders are working on their At the end she underlined: "Gender is a problem and one shouldn't run away from it. We are asked: "If you are so clever why there are so few women in your parliament?"

The next topic was "Perception of the Culture of Tolerance" presented by Liana Beria from "Agreement" association. The discussion was mainly on the Russian-Georgian conflict, its consequences, victims, refugees and the conditions of people among whom there are a lot of women and children. It was mentioned that now the refugees live in schools, nursery schools, in vacant rooms of different institutions and that obviously it is impossible to live in such conditions especially when it is winter. Most of the IDPs live in tents.

At the end she added that just usual people suffer due to the wrong policy of the authorities and they are not guilty but they become the main victims of the conflict.

Arzu Abdullayeva expressed the following opinion during that time: "Never say what you want to. I mean the negative aspect. You should have interest and empathy. Ignoring stereotypes is necessary for peace-building."

Artur Sakunts, the coordinator of HCA Vanadzor, presented the topic "The role of civil society in the peaceful resolution of the conflict."

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The most characteristic features of civil society are open borders, when there is tolerant relationship, trust between each other. Freedom of information, policy making is important for civil society and then the work of civil society will be effective. Democracy is not a humanitarian aid and it is a part of any society. Civil society should be informed and should take part in decision making”-he mentioned.

Arzu Abdullayeva organized a role play which aimed to familiarize the future peace-builders with the terminology of peace-building processes. She mentioned that during the war processes and after them it is necessary to use such words and such expressions which do not offend the opposing party. During the role play she mentioned that one should communicate with the opposite party in a mild tone and one shouldn't say something when he is usually angry.

At the end Artur Sakunts presented the further activities within the framework of the project. Monitoring of the situation of conflict victims such as refugees, relatives of missing persons, and former prisoners of war (POWs) and their families should be conducted, which will then be presented in a report and sent to different structures. A website or a blog should be set up enabling the future peace-builders to talk, to communicate and discuss different topics.

## The Ways of Advocating the Interests of Conflict Victims

The young peacebuilders met again in Tbilisi on November 23-26, 2008. The goal was to familiarize the young people with the skills and techniques of conducting a survey and interviews. 26 peacebuilders from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh participated in this training. This time the trainers were Artur Sakunts, the coordinator of HCA Vanadzor, Avaz Hasanov, the head of Human Research Association of Azerbaijan and Nineli Andriadze, the head of “Molodini” fund (“Expectation”).

The topics of the training were:

- ➔ The tools of studying the problems of conflict victims - refugees, former POWs and relatives of missing persons and the techniques of conducting interviews
- ➔ Different national and international structures dealing with the issues of conflict victims - refugees, former POWs and missing persons
- ➔ The experience of NGOs in dealing with the problems of missing persons and former POWs

“First, we should find out what problems the conflict victims have so that in the future we are able to decide what can be done in this direction”-said Avaz Hasanov, the head of Human Research Association of Azerbaijan, during the meeting. He presented the participants with the methods and peculiarities of conducting a survey.



*The young peacebuilders during the role play*

Taking into account the peculiarities of each group - refugees, former POWs and relatives of missing persons - it is necessary to develop a special approach for each of them.

“We aim to achieve clarity, transparency for revealing the problems of conflict victims, solving more objectively the problems related to their returning or other problems and for supporting them”-said Artur Sakunts, the coordinator of HCA Vanadzor.

During the meetings with people who have lost their relatives and houses due to the Karabakh conflict, who have been taken hostage, the young peacebuilders will get familiar with their living conditions, their social, health, economic and psychological problems, as well as they will work out their recommendations to solve those problems with the aim of presenting them to state structures of Armenia and Azerbaijan and to international organizations.

The Armenian and Azeri young peacebuilders were informed about the activity of international organizations working on the issues of conflict victims. The International Committee of the Red Cross and Klassen Group play a great role in returning the hostages to their countries, as well as in promoting peace.

Nineli Andriadze, the head of “Molodini” fund based in Georgia presented the young peacebuilders with her experience. This organization dealing with the problems of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict showed great assistance in the solution of the problems of both Georgian and Abkhazian missing persons’ relatives by cooperating with their Abkhazian partners.



*The young peacebuilders’ visit to the museum of missing persons*

Nineli Andriadze accompanied the group of young peacebuilders to the museum of missing persons in Tbilisi, where she presented information on people who suffered from the Russian-Georgian war broken out in August 2008, showed the photos of the victims and presented the ways of realizing peacebuilding activity.

The young peacebuilders could watch the film “Hope Dies Last...” by Suzanne Croger, which is about expectations and beliefs of Armenian, Azeri and Karabakhian families of missing persons.

At the end of the training the participants developed the timeframe for studying the problems of conflict victims in the period from December 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009.



*Group work*



## Young Journalists for Peace

On September 19-23 a meeting of young journalists from Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan took place in Tbilisi. The goal of the meeting was to involve youth of those countries in the peacebuilding process and to raise the problems of conflict victims.



*The young journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh and the project staff*

Nine young journalists met in Tbilisi, Georgia, to work together in “Re Studio” association on video materials they prepared in their locations. As a result, a video film was made in the Armenian and Azeri languages, which tells the story of former prisoners of war, refugees and missing persons of the Karabakh war.

The former prisoners of war in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh tell stories about their captivity years, about their hard past and necessity of peaceful future. The refugees miss and remember how they left their homes. Though their memories are still fresh after so many years, they do not feel much enmity towards the conflicting side any more and world peace becomes a priority for them.



*“RE studio”  
Working on video materials*



*The cover of the film*

The film presents the story of the missing persons from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh whose grief is common. Uncertainty is the pain of their relatives. They are hopeless and they can't stand waiting any more.

The video film was shown on “Hamaspur” network (TV companies “Ankyun+3” in Alaverdi, “Lori-TV” in Vanadzor, “Gala TV” in Gyumri, “Kamut TV” in Noyemberyan, «STV1» in Sevan, “Abovyan TV in Abovyan”, “ALT TV” in Armavir and “Sos TV” in Kapan), as well as it was placed on [www.youtube.com /www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVRv0fnbhuo/](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVRv0fnbhuo/).

## The Website of Young Peacebuilders Brigade

Topics related to peacebuilding, formation of Armenian-Azeri relations, opinion exchange, establishment and development of dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan - the blog ([www.hcav.am/blog](http://www.hcav.am/blog)) created in the framework of the project promoted all the above-mentioned.



The blog was created on the domain of the web-site of HCA Vanadzor. It presents information about the activities of the project, the photos of young peacebuilders and materials about the meeting and trainings held in the framework of the project.

The blog was created on the domain of the web-site of HCA Vanadzor. It presents information about the activities of the project, the photos of young peacebuilders

The young peacebuilders from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh are registered on the blog where they discuss topics related to peacebuilding and get informed about peacebuilding processes going on in the world.

The blog is regularly updated with information on the activities held in the framework of the project “Formation of Young Peacebuilders’ Brigade” and meetings related to peacebuilding in the world.

[www.hcav.am/blog](http://www.hcav.am/blog) is a closed system where only the participants of the project and the staff are registered. Each of them can post their topic, express opinions and make others aware of different events related to peacebuilding. Visitors can participate only in the discussions of the peacebuilders by sharing their viewpoints; they cannot post their own topics.

The blog consists of four sections – politics, culture, society and sports. So far twenty topics have been posted on the blog and more than 512 comments have been made.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Problems of Conflict Victims

#### *The Studies of Young Peacebuilders Brigade*

### Introduction

We are presenting the results of the study of conflict victims' problems carried out by the young peacebuilders from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh. Most of them did not have any experience in this sphere.

The book presents both the problems revealed during the study and the steps taken to solve them. We do not insist that the study is thorough, but it aimed to familiarize the youth with the conflict consequences in human fate but also with the methods of study and possible actions directed towards the solution of conflict victims' problems.

However, we may conclude that although the studies are not fully represented, the nature of the revealed problems is the same as of any big and thorough study.

One of the most important issues of the project is to make the youth of conflicting parties understand that the problems of conflict victims in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh are the same.



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## AZERBAIJAN

*\* The material is provided by HCA Azerbaijani National Committee*

*We presented the author's formulations as they were, though there are some to which we do not agree.*

### Missing Persons

The study was held among the relatives of twenty missing persons. The participants of the survey were either parents or close relatives (brother, sister, etc.). All of them were from the occupied territories.

The dates of disappearance were different – from 1990 to 1994, for instance, April 13, 1990, August 27, 1991, January 26, 1992, February 11, 1992, May 8-10, 1992, August 7, 1993, January 4, 1994, etc.

All the relatives of missing persons have been informed about the disappearances. The situations and the places of disappearance were also different. They disappeared during the war, on the way or during the service, etc.

Most of the relatives have not had any concrete information about the whereabouts of their relatives so far. From time to time they received some information, but with no concrete results. Sometimes they had accurate information about disappearance but the reasons for disappearance were verified later.

Many people and structures were engaged in tracing. They were mainly the parents and relatives of missing persons, state structures like Ministry of Defence or the State Commission, NGOs and individuals, for instance, HCA Azerbaijani Committee and Arzu Abdullayeva.

Mostly all the missing persons are considered dead. It has several reasons. First, according to law, some time later these people are recognized dead. Secondly, the status of a dead person gives more opportunities to solve social problems than the status of a missing person. That is the reason why the relatives agree to get a status of a dead person for their relative and in many cases they do their best to get that status.

Almost all the surveyed mention that they did not need to apply to the court in order to recognize their relative dead and the issue was solved without the court.

Though they get this status, they never lose their hope that one day their relative will come back.

The relatives of missing persons and those who have been recognized dead get annual social benefit from the state.

The relatives think that the tracing is not sufficient and they claim to do more tracing and to get more information from the opposite party about the those who are either dead or alive.

The relatives suggest creating a joint public commission with their involvement, which would deal only with tracing.

### ***The Problems of Missing Persons' Relatives***

During the conflict, especially during the attacks of Armenians, who also received support from the Russians, when the Azeri settlements were attacked, the number of missing persons was several thousand. According to the state commission, their number is 5500 today.

Most of the people disappeared in the town of Khojali. According to official data, 613 people died there and thousands of innocent people disappeared.

Besides, in all the occupied cities and districts – Askeran, Khankendi, Shushi, Khojali, Lachin, Kelbajar, Aghdam, Fizuli, Jabrail, Zangelan, Gubadli and a part of Terter – there have been disappearances.

People also disappeared in other cities and districts of Azerbaijan as a consequence of the Karabakh war. They participated in the fight against the Armenian-Russian forces directed towards the Republic of Azerbaijan. Some of the missing persons, 6000 people, were civilians. There are families who do not have a status so far, but they are few and at present actions are being taken for it.

Some of the surveyed believe that there is necessity for a law on missing persons. At present, the families of dead get 100 manat (USD 125) per month and their children get free of charge education.

### ***Problems arisen during the survey***

- ➔ Psychological – some people need psychological assistance
- ➔ Social – they find that the current social security system is improving every year. However, there is need to make it perfect. The laws are good but bureaucracy spoils them.
- ➔ Housing - this issue exists in Azerbaijan but it is gradually reducing. Many families of

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missing persons are also considered displaced people and the state provides them with houses. A number of settlements have been built for the residents of Khojalu, Fizuli, Jabrail and other regions. In big cities, the problems are still unsolved.

- ➔ Occupation - the families of missing persons want an easier system for employing them
- ➔ Legal – many documents are required in case of necessity. They would like to submit only their passport/identification document provided by the state.
- ➔ Educational – they wish the members of their families could get free of charge education.

The twenty surveyed families of missing persons are also considered refugees and displaced. Almost all of them are employed and they work in different spheres and get different amount of salary. They are married and have children. Their children study mainly free of charge. Those who have to pay for their studies are able to find sponsors.

Most of the surveyed are pleased with their housing conditions. Some have their own houses and some live in temporary dwelling places – flats, separate rooms in hostels and temporary huts, which have been built by the state.

All the surveyed have received different types of assistance from the state – financial, free of charge medical treatment, privileges, exemption from fees.

The public attitude towards the families of missing persons is usually careful and kind but there are people who are indifferent and careless. The families usually complain about the bureaucracy of officials.

The relatives of missing persons find that cooperation with NGOs is very important in terms of solving their problems, as well as it is important to create new NGOs which will enable to effectively solve their problems. They also think that legislative changes will help with the solution of their many problems.

## **Conclusion**

The survey carried out in the framework of the project showed that the number of missing persons reaches 6000 and this requires relevant legislation in order to solve their problems.

Until now there is no law on missing persons, there is no document which would regulate all the issues related to the missing persons and their families, which would define their status, as well as all the privileges and which would provide social assistance to the relatives of missing persons.

All the missing persons who have been declared by the state as missing are considered dead, and with a relevant document they can make use of different privileges.

During the interviews, the relatives said they would like the state to adopt a law on missing persons. The adoption of such a law would be both moral and legal assistance for them. It will ensure more opportunities for them, in the sphere of social assistance as well.

To sum up, we may distinguish the following spheres of assistance to the relatives of missing persons:

- ➔ Psychological – these people need psychological assistance. They want to get rid of the feeling of pain.
- ➔ Social – their major difficulty is the bureaucracy of officials. They would like to have such a system of social security, which will reduce bureaucratic delays.
- ➔ Housing - this issue is a priority. These people should have privileges for getting flats or for repairing their houses.
- ➔ Occupation - the families of missing persons should have an easier system of employment
- ➔ Legal – an easy system is needed for the solution of legal problems.

## **Internally Displaced People**

According to Azeri law, those who had to leave their places and have been exiled from their houses, are divided into two groups: refugees and IDPs.

Refugees are those who have come to Azerbaijan from different countries, for instance, from Armenia. IDPs are those people who used to live in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, for instance, in Nagorno Karabakh, but they had to leave their settlements and find a living place in other regions of Azerbaijan.

The survey was carried out among twenty IDPs who came from Nagorno Karabakh. Before they were displaced, they lived in Shushi, Fizuli, Lachin, Jabrail, Khojavned and Aghdam towns. Most of them are employed, but their work is not permanent and it is mostly unstable.

Most of them are married and have children. Before being displaced they worked or studied, but after that most of them changed their profession. Some of them are NGO members. Many of the surveyed have higher education.

### ***When and how did you become IDPs?***

- ➔ On May 8, 1992, when the Armenian-Russian troops occupied the town of Shushi
- ➔ On August 23, 1993 when the Armenian-Russian troops occupied the district of Fizuli

- ➔ On July 23, 1993 when the Armenian-Russian troops occupied the district of Aghdam
- ➔ On August 23, 1993 when the Armenian-Russian troops occupied the district of Jabrail
- ➔ On May 8, 1992 when the Armenian-Russian troops occupied Lachin
- ➔ In 1993 when the Armenian-Russian troops occupied Khojavend

Starting from 1991 until 1993 the Armenian troops together with the Russian forces occupied the Azeri districts one after another. The events developed so fast that people could not take anything with them; they only tried to escape.

At first, they settled in different districts, at their relatives' and then they started to live in other districts for a long time.

### ***Housing Conditions***

- ➔ Hostels in factories, three rooms, average conditions
- ➔ They live on a rich man's farm, everything is normal, but it is far from the town and there is no phone line and other conditions
- ➔ A hostel in an Institute, there are no normal conditions and the residents share everything
- ➔ A house, two rooms, one balcony, a small area and average conditions.

Almost all the surveyed are satisfied with their housing conditions and they do not pay for utilities. The only problem is that the number of family members of all IDPs has increased during the latest years and they do not have enough room.

### ***Obtaining an IDP Status***

These people did not have any difficulties with getting a relevant status. They can exercise their rights and they get information about their rights on TV, from press and NGOs.

The state allocates them an annual financial assistance; each member of their family gets 13.5 manat. For example, a family consisting of six members gets about USD 100.

The public attitude towards the IDPs is mainly respectful though they still have problems related to their occupation, housing, etc.

## **Conclusions**

The survey carried out by HCA Azerbaijani Committee showed that there is still need for changes in the Constitution related to the solution of IDP problems. They are as follows:

- Housing- all the IDPs should be provided with dwelling places
- Social – to create for IDPs and their families an easy system of social security taking into account that they left their documents in their former places of residence
- Educational – IDPs are in need of education. Their level of awareness is low and it is necessary to organize seminars, round tables for them, and at the same time work with them and explain their rights and obligations
- Psychological – IDPs need psychological assistance and help for their integration into society. They should be involved in the solution of their own problems.

## **NAGORNO KARABAKH**

### **The Problems of Missing Persons Families in Nagorno Karabakh**

*The survey was conducted in Stepanakert among five families of missing persons through interviews. One of them has secondary education, one has incomplete higher education and three of them have higher education.*

*Two of the surveyed five relatives of missing persons are parents, three of them are wives.*

*Before disappearance four of the missing persons were married and three of them have children. Currently the children live with their mothers.*

#### ***Conditions of Missing and Their Tracing***

According to the survey, the five missing persons disappeared during 1992-1993.

The relatives received the information about the disappearance immediately from fellow soldiers, the residents of the settlements where there were hostilities.

The relatives, friends and employees of the Ministry of Defence dealt with tracing. Different information on the circumstances of missing, the possible whereabouts and the fate of the missing persons was not confirmed.

One of the relatives said: “We had information that he was in the hospital of Kirovabad, then we learnt that he had been taken to Turkey and was made to work on construction.”

Two of the surveyed five relatives received a document on disappearance only after six months; three of them have not received any official document so far. Four of the missing persons were declared dead by the state.

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At the same time, the relatives expect getting information about the fate and whereabouts of their missing relative. They say: “Maybe it is right when they say that there are still people alive.”

### ***The Housing Problems of the Relatives of Missing Persons***

All five relatives of missing persons participating in the survey are mainly dissatisfied with their housing conditions. Most of their places need repairing and improvement.

A wife of a missing person mentioned: “I have applied to relevant bodies asking for assistance in repairing my house. But they came to us and decided that the house did not need repairing.”

A wife of another missing person said: “Since August 2, 1992 my house has a fourth degree of damage and it is dangerous for living in. The employees of the municipality came to us and then they repaired only the walls. Then I again applied to the municipality and they said that they had already repaired my house once and that they did not have any budget for it.

### ***The Social Problems of Missing Persons’ Relatives***

The relatives (wives and parents) of five missing persons participating in the survey receive AMD 7500 per month for utilities. They do not get assistance in Nagorno Karabakh.

Their children currently study at higher educational institutions, one of them studies free of charge as a child of a died freedom-fighter.

The state does not have any approaches for solving the issue of employing the children of missing persons. As one of the relatives said: “If there are not certain privileges for the children of missing persons, at least there could be some allowance for them until they find a job.”

Only three of the wives are provided with jobs.

In order to make use of state assistance the families of missing persons have to apply to the court for recognizing their missing relative dead.

### ***The following objectives have been formulated based on the results of the survey:***

- ➔ To define a legal status for missing persons
- ➔ To develop state programs with the aim of solving the social and healthcare problems of the family members of missing persons
- ➔ To develop a program of improving the housing conditions of the relatives of missing persons

## **The Problems of Refugees in Nagorno Karabakh**

*The survey was conducted among 20 refugees living in Nagorno Karabakh. 19 of them live in Stepanakert and one lives in the village of Shosh in Askeran region.*

*Six of them have higher education, two have higher incomplete education and the other 12 have secondary education.*

*None of the refugees participating in the survey takes part in the activity of any public or political organization.*

*Before the war, 12 of the surveyed lived in Baku, three in Sumgayit and one in Barda. 16 of the refugees are married. After migration, the number of members in 17 families increased. The family members of the eight surveyed refugees are pensioners and six of them have disabled relatives.*

*Eleven children in the refugee families have higher education.*

*Only five of the refugees taking part in the survey attended training courses.*

### ***The Circumstances of Migration and Obtaining of a Refugee Status***

These people came to Karabakh escaping from the disturbances, harassment and murders in Sumgayit in February of 1988 and in Baku in January 1990. Seven of the 20 refugees managed to exchange their houses before coming to Nagorno Karabakh. The other could not take anything except their clothes.

Just after the migration, twelve refugees moved to Stepanakert where they live until now. At the beginning, they lived in hostels (4 persons), at relatives' (1 person) and in rented houses (3 people).

Nine of the surveyed twenty refugees obtained their status in 2004-2005, three people obtained it in 1988-1991 and five people have not gained a refugee status so far, two people do not remember whether they obtained a status. The status was granted without any obstacles.

### ***The Situation of Refugees' Occupation***

Nine of the surveyed refugees work in different spheres – education, state structures, etc. Their minimum salary is AMD 21500 (about USD 53) and the maximum is AMD 95000 (about USD 230). The average salary of those who work makes AMD 48.000-74.000 (USD 120-180).

Only about 40% of refugees have jobs.



## ***The Housing Problem of Refugees***

Nine of the surveyed 20 refugees live in hostels and the rest have their own houses. However, most of them are very dissatisfied with their housing conditions.

Only one of those 20 people received a flat from the state; three people are waiting for flats that the state promised to allocate.

Nine refugee families having more than three children live in a two or three-room flats, which have insufficient conditions for such families.

## ***The Social Security and Integration Problems of Refugees***

The refugees point out their language problems, which causes difficulties for integration. Public attitude towards them is different. Some of them assess it as indifferent; some say it is respectful and careful

All the refugees mention among the factors that create obstacles for full integration into society their social problems (e.g. homelessness-3 people, unemployment-7 people, social and economic situation-5 people and youth unemployment—one person).

All 20 refugees said they were not aware of their rights and even they did not know where they could learn about them.

They attach importance to state assistance and attention towards their problems.

Only two refugees once received financial assistance from the state and one refugee received medicine.

## ***The following objectives have been formulated based on the results of the survey:***

- ➔ To develop programs which could provide refugees with houses
- ➔ To implement programs of teaching languages
- ➔ To establish an easy way of employing refugees taking into account their language problems
- ➔ To raise refugees' awareness on their own rights

## **The Problems of Former Prisoners of War in Nagorno Karabakh**

***The survey was conducted among ten former prisoners of war (POWs) in Nagorno Karabakh. Two of the former POWs are from Stepanakert and eight are from Astghashen village. They are aged from 40 to 75.***

***Eight former POWs received secondary education and two former POWs received higher education.***

***All the ten former POWs participating in the survey are married and have children. Seven of nine children are studying at higher educational institutions free of charge.***

### ***The circumstances of being taken hostage***

They were taken hostage either at the beginning of the conflict or during the hostilities. The first hostage was taken during the Soviet authorities.

“OMON groups stopped the car and started to check. They deliberately threw bullets into the car and took us to Shushi jail, then to Baku and then to Aghdam” says one of the former POWs.

Most of the men in the village of Astghashen were taken hostage on May 15, 1991: “All of us were gathered in the morning as if to check the passports. We realized that it was organized by the Azeris. We surrendered voluntarily and were taken hostage.”

Most men of this village were taken hostage at that time.

### ***Occupation Problems of Former POWs***

Eight of the surveyed 10 former POWs have jobs in different spheres – they work as a guard, teacher, worker, driver; an employee at the Ministry of Defence. Losing their health, physical and psychological strength in the years of captivity the former POWs say that they are unable to earn enough to keep their family, especially when they have to do physical work they are not able. “I can’t do physical work and I can’t keep my family, the money is not enough”-mentions one of the former POWs.

### ***Health and Housing Problems of Former POWs***

All the surveyed former POWs have a group of disability based on their health problems and they get pension as defined by the state. These people say they gained disability after captivity. The illnesses and health problems they had while being a hostage have essential impact on their health and ability to work. They say that they have nervous disorder, hearing and psychological problems.

Seven of the surveyed say they haven’t received any assistance from the state, three of them received free of charge medical treatment and one of the POWs received a resort treatment.

All the surveyed POWs are provided with houses but most of them need repairing. One of them was allocated a flat, but not as a former POW but as a freedom fighter.

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## ***Integration Problems of Former POWs***

Most of the former POWs (nine people) assess the public attitude towards them as respectful and careful. From the viewpoint of integration into society, the POWs attach importance to restoration of their health and social assistance by the state. As one of them says: "The state does not accept us as a former POW and we don't get any assistance."

### ***The following objectives have been formulated based on the results of the survey:***

- ➔ It is necessary to provide former POWs with a legal status of a war participant and involve them in assistance programs of the state
- ➔ To develop a program of improving the housing conditions of the former POWs
- ➔ To develop a program which would deliver psychological assistance to former POWs and their family members
- ➔ To develop a program for solving the occupation of the former POWs.

## ARMENIA

### The Problems of Missing Persons Families in Armenia

*The survey was conducted among 18 relatives of Armenian missing persons of the Karabakh conflict. 13 of them have secondary education, one has incomplete higher education and four of them have higher education.*

*Five of the relatives are from Vanadzor, 10 from Yerevan, one from Odzun village of Lori region and 2 from Khor Virap village of Ararat region.*

*15 of the surveyed 18 relatives of missing persons are parents, two of them are wives and one is a daughter of a missing soldier.*

*Before disappearance five of the missing persons were married and four of them had children. Currently one of those children lives alone and three live with their mothers.*

*Three of the children of missing persons study at institutions of higher education, one studies free of charge, the other one pays AMD 100 000 (USD 250) per year.*

#### **Conditions of Missing and Their Tracing**

According to the survey, 14 of the missing persons disappeared during 1992-1994 and four of them disappeared during 1995-1998.

The relatives received the first information about the disappearance from different sources and at different periods of time. In particular, three people were informed by the employees of the military commissariat, four people have learnt from fellow soldiers, one person has learnt from the news, two from the commander and one from the law enforcement employees.

A mother of a missing person said: "Soon after the oath ceremony the commanders came to our place, I was invited to the general. He informed me that my son had disappeared and that they were searching for him."

Informing the relatives about disappearances was of unarranged character.

One of the relatives mentioned: "We applied to the Ministry of Defence and there we were informed that my son was in the Gobustan prison in Azerbaijan and after that we haven't received any information."

Mostly the relatives (13 people) dealt with tracing. Ten of the relatives said that the Ministry of

Defence was also engaged. Three people said that the commanders and three people informed that their friends were involved in tracing.

16 of the surveyed 18 relatives informed that they had received an official document on the disappearance.

11 of the missing persons were declared dead by the court upon request from their relatives. The relatives explain it by the possibility for making use of social benefits allocated by the state.

Most of the relatives of missing persons get financial assistance and free of charge medical treatment from the state.

### ***The Social Security, Healthcare and Occupation Conditions of The Relatives Of Missing Persons***

***Only eight of the 18 surveyed relatives are employed. They work in different spheres – trade, service providing, etc.***

***One of the children mentioned that they live on their grandmother's pension, a wife of a missing person gets pension from the state as a wife of a died soldier.***

***Four of the relatives said they had received free of charge medical assistance, thirteen people said they had received financial assistance (from AMD 7000 to 12000 /USD 15-30/).***

***There is no separate legal status for the relatives of missing persons and they are not included in social and healthcare programs provided by the state. Their children do not have privileges for education and employment.***

### ***The Housing and Integration Problems of the Relatives of Missing Persons***

The surveyed relatives of missing persons have their own houses and they are mainly satisfied with their conditions. Only one of them expressed her discontent about conditions: "We live with seven persons in a two-room flat. We have neither good conditions nor work to rent a flat."

Some of the relatives assess public attitude towards them as kind and careful and some say that people are indifferent. One of the relatives says: "I even don't say that my son is missing, because I don't want people to feel pity and I do not like it."

The relatives of missing persons have only one demand from the state – to continue tracing of their

missing relatives, to gain accurate information about their fate and whereabouts.

***The following objectives have been formulated based on the results of the survey:***

- ➔ To define a legal status for missing persons
- ➔ To develop state programs with the aim of solving the educational, social and healthcare problems of the family members of missing persons
- ➔ To increase the effectiveness of verification of information on the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and of their tracing

## **The Problems of Refugees in Armenia**

***The survey was conducted among 26 refugees.***

***17 of them live in rural settlements, the others in towns, either in Yerevan (8 people) or in Vanadzor (one person).***

***14 refugees out of 26 formerly resided in Baku, the others in different villages of Azerbaijan. 21 of the surveyed are married. Out of 23 children of refugees seven currently study at institutions of higher education.***

***After their escape the number of members in 14 families increased. Only five of the surveyed refugees participated in training courses.***

### ***The Circumstances of Migration and Obtaining of a Refugee Status***

21 out of the 26 surveyed refugees migrated during the period of 1988-89 and five of them in 1990-92.

As one of the refugees says: “On June 16, 1992 they came to our village and threw us out of our houses.”

Before migration only 10 out of 26 surveyed refugees managed to sell their houses. All the others left their property and took only the most necessary things with them and managed to arrive at a safe place.

Immediately after migration 16 refugees moved to the places where they currently live. At the beginning they lived in hostels (3 people), at relatives' (one person) and the rest moved to the Russian Federation.

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One of the refugees mentioned: “We’ve lived in one of the schools in Ashtarak for 8 years, and then we moved to the village of Karin.”

They describe that the conditions at first were very unfavourable: “We were placed in a remote place with no normal conditions, where there was nothing.”

All the surveyed refugees obtained citizenship of Armenia but before that all of them had a refugee status which they were granted in 1989-1994.

### ***The Situation of Refugees’ Occupation***

Sixteen refugees are jobless and only ten people are employed. They work in different spheres – agriculture, public work, trade, industry, service providing, etc. Their salary is from AMD 35.000 to 60.000 (USD 81-150). Those who work think that what they earn is not enough to solve their minimal problems.

Those who live in rural settlements are more satisfied with their life: “I have everything. I work. I can earn enough for my family, I am not complaining”-said one of the refugees.

### ***The Housing Problem of Refugees***

Ten out of the 26 surveyed refugees live in temporary dwellings. 16 refugees who have a permanent place to live in rural settlements created their conditions and they do not complain much. Those living in temporary places have complaints: “The conditions are bad, it’s humid and in winter we have to heat the house with fire places. We have sold almost everything to buy bread.”

The state promised to allocate flats only to two refugees residing in temporary dwelling places.

### ***The Social Security and Integration Problems of Refugees***

Public attitude towards the refugees is different. Some of them mention that people are careful to them and some say that they face indifferent attitude.

One of the refugees said: “We were called Turks and were not taken for any job. We were told that nobody had called us here.”

Among the factors which make obstacles for refugees to be fully integrated into society are homelessness (6 persons), not having a permanent job (4 people) and public attitude (2 persons), unkind attitude.

One of the refugees said: "I used to live in the centre of Baku in good conditions, I had a good job, and now I live in bad conditions and I don't have a job."

Three of the 26 surveyed said they had got a car from the state, four people received medicine and free of charge medical treatment and five said they had got financial assistance.

***The following objectives have been formulated based on the results of the survey:***

- ➔ To develop programs which could provide refugees with houses
- ➔ To develop programs which could solve the occupation problems of refugees
- ➔ To raise public awareness on the refugees' problems

## **The Problems of Former Prisoners of War in Armenia**

***The survey was conducted among five former POWs and a wife of a former POW. At present, five of them live in Yerevan and one in Vanadzor. They were aged from 30 to 60. Three of them have secondary education, one has incomplete higher education and two of them have higher education. All of them are married and have children.***

### ***The circumstances of being taken hostage***

The former POWs were taken hostage during the period of 1992 - 1994. They were taken hostage during the hostilities or due to the blockade. One of the former POWs was taken hostage in Tbilisi, Georgia.

One of the former POWs said that in 1993 he went to Baku for his children and was taken a hostage and was kept there for six months.

### ***Health and Occupation Problems of Former POWS***

None of the former POWs is provided with a job. Five of the surveyed six POWs have a group of disability which they have after captivity. They say that they have nervous disorder, lung and kidney problems. One of the women hostages says: "*After captivity I am a disabled of 2nd group, I have poly-arthritis of legs and women's disease.*"

"I cannot live normally or find a job"-says one of the former POWs. Health problem is an obstacle to find a job.

### ***Housing Conditions of former POWs***



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Four of the surveyed six POWs live in their own houses, one lives in a hostel and one of them rents a flat. The houses need repairing. They say that the state does not assist in either solving their housing problems or in repairing their houses.

### ***Social Security and Integration Problems of former POWs***

Public attitude towards the former POWs is different. Four people assess public attitude towards them as careful and two assess it as indifferent.

Only one of the POWs says that he has received financial assistance from the state, the others did not get anything. One of the POWs stated: *“Sometimes I don’t say I have been a hostage, because I don’t want people to feel pity for me.”*

In order to be a full member of society the former POWs attach importance to their employment (2 people), housing issue (1 person) and assistance from the state (3 people).

### ***The following objectives have been formulated based on the results of the survey:***

- It is necessary to provide former POWs with a legal status of a war participant and involve them in assistance programs of the state
- To develop a program of improving the housing conditions of the former POWs
- To develop a program for solving the occupation problems of the former POWs

## CHAPTER 3

### Cooperation with State Structures with the Aim of Solving the Problems of Conflict Victims

#### NAGORNO KARABAKH

The results of study of the problems of missing persons and their relatives, of former POWs and refugees were sent to Arayik Harutyunyan, the prime-minister of Nagorno Karabakh, to Mr. A. Ghulyan, the chairman of NK National Assembly, to Mr. M. Hakobyan, NK Defence Minister, to Narine Azatyan, NK Minister of Social Security, Mr. Marat Musayelyan, the secretary of the National Security Council.

Responses were received from NK Government, National Assembly and the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Ghulyan, the chairman of NK National Assembly mentioned in his letter dated October 23, 2009 that: “NK National Assembly adopted NK laws “On Refugees” and “On the Military and Social Security of Their Family Members”. According to point b) of part 3 of article 3 of the law “On the Military and Social Security of their Family Members”, those provisions of the law, which concern the families of victim (dead) militaries, also concern the families of persons missing during their duty, as well as the families of those soldiers who have been declared absent or dead as defined by NK law.

What concerns former POWs, they have no special legal status, and according to the law “On Persons Subjected to Repression” a relevant commission is working on their problems, which is established by the president of Nagorno Karabakh.

As far as the social programs foreseen for people with such status are implemented by the executive, you can turn to the government of Nagorno Karabakh for other questions”-it is said in the letter.

And in his response dated December 3, 2009, the chairperson mentioned that there had never been any draft laws on former POWs and the relatives of missing persons put into circulation. The former prisoners of war aren't equal with the status of people subjected to repression and if they wish they can apply to the relevant commission to define the status.

The head of government staff S. Grigoryan stated in his letter of September 26, 2009 that NK government undertook solution of the refugees' housing problems in 1990s and that even during the war time this issue was in the focus of attention. The Government has projects already worked out

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and some that are underway, which are directed towards the solution of refugees' housing problems.

Since 2009 until now the housing problems of more than twenty refugee families have been solved and this process is still a priority for the state.

Integration was a fast process and we may say that there are no problems connected with integration. Refugees like other citizens of Nagorno Karabakh, make use of all state and charity programs, they can be engaged in entrepreneurship, obtain citizenship of NK, participate in the elections of local governmental bodies in accordance with their constitutional right, and in case of having registration in Nagorno Karabakh they can participate in other elections.

In some cases the language problem hinders the process of integration, though the state does not ignore it. Annual free of charge language courses are organized with duration of three months by the State Language Department.

Refugees' rights in the educational system are equal to those of NK citizens, apart from that, for the children from the families speaking Russian there are free Russian public schools.

As of 'formation of tolerance' there is no such a problem at all. The society treats the representatives of any nation well; they are more tolerant to the refugees as they are not guilty for having this status.

Relevant state structures are working on public awareness raising on the refugees' problems and their solution and this is done through public TV and other media outlets.

The social security and pension for the families of missing persons' is provided according to the procedure defined for the members of families of died soldiers. Their families are also getting free psychological support.

Related to the housing problem, however complicated it is, it is always in the focus of authorities' attention. In accordance with the Government resolution the houses, which need repairing, are done in turn and those who do not have flats are provided with them.

Since 1999 there has been a commission working on the issues of missing persons, hostages and prisoners of war. The commission is working with the NGO "Association of Relatives of NK Missing Freedom-fighters" in the direction of tracing and returning of missing persons, POWs and civilian hostages.

The hostages taken during the war time who came back are given a status of a person subjected to repression. Taking into consideration that these people are back in a psychologically depressed state, meetings with psychologists are organized for them. Monthly financial assistance from the state budget is given to a person subjected to repression for making use of transport and utilities service. The amount of assistance has been defined AMD 7200 since January 2009.

Mr. A. Danielyan, colonel, head of administrative group, assistant to the commander of NK Defence Army, stated in his letter dated July 16, 2009 that: "The Defence Army is not dealing with the problems of former POWs and missing persons. There are social programs in the Defence Army which are directed towards the assistance to the families of missing persons.

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## **The Meeting of Young Peacebuilders with State and Public Structures of Nagorno Karabakh**

Meetings were held in Nagorno Karabakh on December 14-17, 2009 with A. Ghulyan, the chairperson of the National Assembly of NK, Members of Political Parties, independent Member of Parliament - Gegham Baghdasaryan and Vera Grigoryan, the head of the NGO "Union of the Relatives of Missing Freedom Fighters of Nagorno Karabakh" and with a group of relatives of missing persons.

The goal of the visit was to get additional clarifications on the results of the study of conflict victims and on the reactions and information provided by the state structures of Nagorno Karabakh.

The staff of HCA Vanadzor and the young peacebuilders participated in the meetings.

Ashot Ghulyan, was concerned that the cooperation between the NGOs and the state bodies is insufficient and if there was good cooperation then the activities carried out towards the solution of the conflict victims' problems would be more effective.

The chairperson of the National Assembly mentioned that they refer to the problems of those people as much as the state funding allows. The only source for solving the problems of conflict victims is from the state, the role of the international institutions is reduced to zero due to the unclear legal status of Nagorno Karabakh.

The international commitments leave out Nagorno Karabakh. They demand from us to do this or that about the problem of Nagorno Karabakh but at the same time, nobody wants to take up a responsibility.

For example, when an Azerbaijani appears in our territory we at once inform the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross but the Azeris do not. It means there is misbalance between the two countries. There is a lack of information exchange from Azerbaijan.

All this is performed by the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

According to the data provided by the chairperson of the National Assembly of Nagorno Karabakh the number of the refugees was 7-8 thousand at the first stage of the conflict.

All the refugees who moved to the Republic of Armenia have always been in the focus of attention of international structures, but no such support was provided for the refugees of Nagorno Karabakh.

Most of the refugees settled in Nagorno Karabakh during 1988-1989 have been provided with flats. The others have been settled in temporary dwelling places. The state allocates flats when it is possible.

Nagorno Karabakh gives dwelling places to the families of died freedom fighters, people who were subjected to repression and persons having a first group of disability. "It is an additional burden for our state and no international structure supports. They make an excuse that Azerbaijan is against it", - mentioned A. Ghulyan. "When we allocate the budget, we think whether to build a school or an information service. The society of Nagorno Karabakh needs information, there is no signs of will. We can't say the same about the refugees of Azerbaijan, they are always getting support in Azerbaijan", - continued A.Ghulyan.

The chairperson of the National Assembly of Nagorno Karabakh drew the participants' attention to the following issue: "There is another point, all the three categories such as the missing persons, refugees and former prisoners of war are mixed together. For example, a family can have both a missing person and a refugee at a time".

Coming back to the problems of missing persons the chairperson said that there should be one condition so that Azerbaijan opens its all structures. We do everything (we open all the prisons for them to come and see) but we don't get the same. We ask nothing, and it turned out that we took a one-sided commitment.

"Nagorno Karabakh should participate in all the problems, which include the issue of Nagorno Karabakh,"-announced A. Ghulyan, and went on saying,-"The country which declared itself independence should have the same international standards".

Speaking about the problems of missing persons the chairperson of the National Assembly of Nagorno Karabakh said that we don't solve the problem of missing persons with the adoption of the law on them. We can't solve their problems until we have information database from Azerbaijan. But Azerbaijan is very closed and it is impossible to get reliable information.

The chairperson of NK National Assembly suggested sending the draft law "On Missing Persons" worked out by HCA Vanadzor to different structures (state and private institutions) for hearings.

At the beginning of the meeting with Gagik Petrosyan, the member of the party "Azat Hayrenik" he mentioned that Nagorno Karabakh lacks such structures that could deal with the problems of conflict victims.

The NGOs and state structures ought to handle with these problems. There is financial support, but there are no relevant specialists to take up the problems.

In response to our question about the bases of selecting the refugees who get flats, G. Petrosyan said that the list is defined by NK Ministry of Social Security of.

G. Pertosyan underlined that women in the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh face problems in finding jobs. This is an important problem which remains out of many organizations' attention.

He said that there should be suggestions directed to the solutions of the existing problems and that the result of the monitoring can be a good basis for that.

G. Petrosyan spoke about the legislative shortcomings that prevent to solve many problems.

Gagik Petrosyan, the member of party "Azat Hayrenik" suggested applying to political actors for concerns, organizing meetings.

People undertake some liabilities occupying this or that position, but in fact, they are not relevant to their position. It is necessary that the NGOs study the activity of those people and it will be clear that they occupied the position illegally. "The bureaucracy is too much",- informed the member of Parliament.



*The meeting of young peacebuilders with the member of the political party "Azat Hayrenik"*

G. Petrosyan also informed that the NK law "On Dual Citizenship" is sent for expert review.

The young peacebuilder Alexander Badalov spoke about the information war between the Armenians and the Azeris in which, according to him, the official viewpoints of Azerbaijan prevail. In particular, when trying to get information about Nagorno Karabakh

from the website Google it automatically opens [www.google.az](http://www.google.az), and it turns out that "We are in Azerbaijan and many tourists, who want to learn something about Karabakh, such as sightseeing, facts, etc./ think that the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh is on the border of Azerbaijan, thus they get disinformation and we can't do anything to correct the mistake",-mentioned the young peacebuilder.

According to Gagik Petrosyan the reason is that, the authorities of Azerbaijan invest a lot of money for anti-Armenian propaganda.

Alexander Badalov talked about educational problems. He applied to many funds, which give funding for education abroad but they refuse him learning that he is from Karabakh. Therefore, the youth in Nagorno Karabakh have no possibility to receive education.

In response, G. Petrosyan stated that there is already such an idea, a developed project, for which they have funding.

Gegham Baghdasaryan, independent Member of Parliament, the head of Stepanakert press club - "The primary problem connected with the categories of missing persons, former prisoners of war, refugees, is the absence of the law "On Citizenship."

G. Baghdasaryan presented the following problem "We are applying to others for recognizing our independence, but when the law does not exist how can we be independent? For instance, the refugees' rights aren't regulated, they can't participate in national elections. If the problem of the citizenship does not get its solution, then it is senseless to speak about other problems. It is absurd for the country not to have a law "On Citizenship."

During the meeting the following issues that need urgent solution were formulated:

- the adoption of NK law "On Citizenship"
- solution of the language problem for refugees

For this second problem we mentioned in the report that some refugees have difficulties to submit applications to state structures because they can do it only in Russian. We also mentioned that according to the response from NK government Armenian language trainings are held for people who have Russian education.

According to G. Baghdasaryan, it was necessary to give the older generation the right to make their applications in Russian, in spite of the fact that the state language of Nagorno Karabakh is Armenian. And it would be better to allow their children to attend Russian schools, who would in parallel learn Armenian.

Nowadays the refugees are provided with flats that are in the suburbs and very often they prefer to stay in the temporary dwelling places than to move to flats with normal conditions.

On the other hand, according to G. Baghdasaryan, there shouldn't be a district for refugees, or a building for died freedom fighters, it is a shame. It is not integration; it only underlines their peculiarity,



their vulnerability. The approach should not only focus on allocation of flats but also on creation of a relevant environment.

Related to former prisoners of war G. Baghdasaryan said: “Those who have been taken a hostage before the hostilities should get a status of people who were subjected to repression, and the war participants should get the status of a freedom fighter”.

The independent MP attaches importance to the participation of NGOs in the solution of these problems. He thinks that relevant organizations should be established that could deal with the problems of conflict victims by involving them in the cooperation with various state structures. Thus, self-regulation, self-integration in the solution of their own problems is very important.

Armen Sargsyan, Member of Parliament, member of “Armenian Revolutionary Party-Movement 88” alliance mentioned that the refugees in Nagorno Karabakh have no problems.

“They mainly came to their homes; the state offered them the option of resettlement. The state offered them houses or helped them in repairing the houses”.

Related to the language problems, Russian language classes opened in Stepanakert, where they could study for 3 years and then the children could go to Armenian schools.

A. Sargsyan considers that the language problems existed during the war but they were solved shortly after the war.

“Most of the refugees don’t want to accept citizenship, as they have some privileges having a refugee status”,- mentioned A. Sargsyan.

As for the problem of privatization of refugees’ flats, there is no problem, as they mainly resided in Nagorno Karabakh before.

A. Sargsyan informed that there are few former prisoners of war.



*The meeting of young peacebuilders with the member of “Armenian Revolutionary Party-Movement 88”*

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In his opinion it is wrong to give the same status to the war participant who was taken a hostage during the war and the person who was taken a hostage while escaping.

He informed that most of the budget is allocated to the benefits and pensions. And in order to exclude different forms of corruption, NK president invited different doctors from the Republic of Armenia who checked the documents of those having a group of disability to find out whether these people are relevant to the standards of the support provided by the state.

As a result, a lot of violations have been revealed, which will enable the state support to be more effective and it will be given only to those who need.

So, it is necessary to have a separate legal status for those who became vulnerable in different situations.

Meeting with Vera Grigoryan, the head of the “Union of the Relatives of Missing Freedom Fighters of Nagorno Karabakh” and mother of a missing soldier, the young peacebuilders collected some data about missing persons.

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She united the relatives of missing soldiers and created a museum in Stepanakert. Apart from this, she is trying to solve the social problems of the relatives of missing persons. According to her data,

in Nagorno Karabakh and nearby settlements (they are either in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan or after the war Azerbaijan took over them) the number of missing persons is 780, out of which 400 are civilians.

“Three times a year the families of missing persons in Nagorno Karabakh get financial assistance in the amount of AMD 16.000. Besides, by the Government’s resolution some individual problems have been solved connected with healthcare, medical treatment, and that is why they ignore the fact that there are unsolved problems”-mentioned V. Grigoryan.



*Meeting with the head of the Union of the Relatives of Missing Freedom Fighters of Nagorno Karabakh*

The film “Conflict Victims” was presented to the relatives of missing persons in the office of the “Union of the Relatives of Missing Freedom Fighters of Nagorno Karabakh.”

## ARMENIA

The results of study of the problems of missing persons and their relatives, of former POWs and refugees were sent to RA Government, RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RA Ministry of Defence, RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Department of Migration and Refugees at RA Government, RA Yerkrpah Union of Volunteers and the NA Standing Committee on Social Issues.

Responses were received from RA Ministry of Defence, RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and RA Migration Agency of the Regional Governance.

Mr. Sedrakyan, the head of legal department at the Ministry of Defence mentioned in his letter dated on July 28, 2009: "According to point b) of paragraph 3 of article 3 of RA law "On the Military and Social Security of Their Family Members" all the provisions concerning the families of war victims also concern the families of persons missing during their duty.

What concerns former POWs, I would like to state, that if they are declared disabled by the Medical Social Examination Agency they have the right to make use of the privileges and guarantees defined for disabled military by RA law "On the Military and Social Security of Their Family Members."

At the same time, he stated that the members of the families of missing persons and POWs submit certain documents for getting pension and making use of the social security rights and guarantees, the list of which was approved with RA Government's Resolution #778 on November 27, 2000.

Sh. Avagyan, the Secretary General at RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded in his letter dated July 21, 2009 that Armenia joined the following international treaties related to the abovementioned sphere:

- Convention (III) on the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949 – In Armenia it entered into force on December 7, 1993
- The Geneva Convention on Refugees. Geneva, July 28, 1951 - In Armenia it entered into force on October 7, 1993
- Protocol of the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Geneva, October 4, 1967 - In Armenia it

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entered into force on August 16, 1994

- Treaty on Support to Refugees and Forced Migrants signed in Moscow on 24 September 1993 - In Armenia it entered into force on November 21, 1994
- Treaty of collaboration between RA Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights signed on November 22, 2004 - In Armenia it was ratified on March 20, 2006 and entered into force on April 6, 2006.

For information, it should also be mentioned that the below mentioned treaties also include provisions related to refugees and POWs:

- Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field - In Armenia it entered into force on December 7, 1993
- Protocol Additional (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts - In Armenia it entered into force on December 7, 1993
- Protocol Additional (II) to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts - In Armenia it entered into force on December 7, 1993
- Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea of August 12, 1949 - In Armenia it entered into force on December 7, 1993
- Convention to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949 - In Armenia it entered into force on December 7, 1993

In response to the letter sent to RA prime-minister Mr. T. Sargsyan, the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs stated: “By the order of RA President on April 18, 2000 a state Commission on Hostages, POWs and missing persons was established in order to coordinate the work directed towards tracing, returning of missing persons, hostages and POWs and supporting their families was established.”

At the same time we were informed that they are going to start drafting a law “On Missing Persons” in September 2009, for which a working group has been established with the participation of all relevant departments and NGO representatives. The law will regulate many issues related to the status of those people, ensuring social guarantee for their families and other organizational and legal issues.

We were informed that with the aim of improving their housing problems the office of Swiss cooperation in Armenia supported to build two social houses in Kanaker-Zeytun community of Yerevan and in Goris in 2008. Most of the inhabitants are lonely refugees who used to live in hostels with no basic living conditions. And it is planned to continue the program in 2010 and to build another social house in Goris in order to solve about 70 refugees who are living in temporary dwellings.

According to point b) of paragraph 3 of article 3 of RA law “On the Military and Social Security of Their Family Members” all the provisions concerning the families of war victims also concern the families of persons missing during their duty, as well as the families of those soldiers who have been declared absent or dead as defined by law.

Therefore, the families of the person missing while performing service duties have the right to get pension when losing the bread-winner and other social guarantees as defined by law.

According to sub-point b) of the second paragraph of point 2 of the Government resolution N 778 (adopted on November 27, 2000) on “Calculation of the total period of military service as well as the list, order of registration and conditions needed for appointing pension for Militaries’ long-term service” the years of captivity are considered as years of service (one month of service is considered two months) if the captivity has not been voluntarily and did not commit any crime against Armenia during the captivity.

They also informed that according to point 20 of the Government resolution N2317-N (adopted on December 29, 2008) if the score of the family of victim soldiers is not high enough to get a social benefit, then the score for this family is increased so that the family can receive social benefit.

Mr. G. Yeganyan, the head of the Migration Agency responded in his letter dated July 8, 2009 related to the refugees residing in Armenia: “Due to the interethnic tension and conflict in 1988-1992, over 408 thousand refugees and IDPs migrated to Armenia from Azerbaijan and 60 % left their property and houses.”

According to the listing in 1997 the number of refugees and IDPs in Armenia was 311 thousand (the rest left for other countries, mainly to the Russian Federation) and 30000 people went back to their former places of residence - to Karabakh.

From the very beginning the government and local authorities did huge work for accepting, settling of the migrants and for solving their main problems.

In the 1990s, when it became obvious that the return of refugees and safety was not real RA government adopted an integration policy. Different international and non governmental organizations, countries

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and individuals made great contribution to the process by implementing projects to help the refugees and to reduce tension in the country.

In spite of all the work there are many social-economic problems that did not get their solution.

As the researches show the level of unemployment among refugees is higher by 1.5 times than among the local inhabitants, there are fewer refugees involved in business (by 1.7 times) and the number of people who have permanent jobs is three times less.

To generalize the problems of refugees we can divide them into several groups: housing, occupation, legal protection and social-domestic problems.

### ***Housing Problems***

The solution of the refugees' housing problems is of utmost importance. It is closely related to the integration of refugees and their becoming a full citizen of their motherland.

So far the housing problems of refugees have been solved in two ways: on the account of the state budget of Armenia and with the financial assistance from international organizations and donors.

At present, there are 9-10 thousand refugee families who do not have flats (variation of the number of needy families is due to the high migration activeness of refugees).

Taking into account the amount of financial resources (over USD 50 million) necessary for the solution of a common problem, RA Government considered purposeful to solve the issue not in the framework of one program but according to the level of poverty and according to sub-programs, which is more realistic.

By its 747-N resolution made on May 20, 2004, RA Government approved of the program of providing refugees with houses and the beneficiaries were the refugees living in temporary dwellings (hostels, hotels, resort centers, rest-houses, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, other public establishments) and in wagon-huts, who were registered by the former department of Migration and Refugees on August 1, 2003. Their number reached 3.3 thousand families. The program is state funded.

In 2005-2008 the program was implemented in the regions of Armenia and in 2009 it was implemented in Yerevan. The number of beneficiaries in Yerevan is more than 1000 families.

By RA Government 118-N resolution made on February 5, 2009, this year 50 refugee families who

lived at Moldovakan 70/1 and Teryan 107 in Yerevan, were included in this project.

The dates of project implementation are based on the financial resources planned by yearly State budget.

### ***Occupation Problems***

The economy of our country, especially industry does not work with all its power. There is great lack of work places.

About 65% of refugees able to work are unemployed and do not have any source of income.

In 1990s, with the aim of creating work places for refugees the UN offices showed assistance by providing loans and grants, financial resources for development programs, but the solution of refugees occupation problems are far from being sufficient.

It is worth mentioning that according to RA law on “Social Security of Population in case of Occupation and Unemployment” it is defined that the refugees are making use of additional guarantees for non-competitive groups in the market with the aim of assisting them in professional training and employment.

### ***Problems related to Legal Protection***

With the aim of legal protection, in 1993 RA joined the UN Convention “On the Status of Refugees” and the same year became a member of the International Migration organization.

In 1999 RA law “On Refugees” was adopted and then amended in line with current requirements and internationally accepted legal acts and in November 2008 RA National Assembly adopted the law “On Refugees and Asylum.”

A number of laws, sub-legislative acts, government resolutions have been adopted so far which are directed towards the solution of refugees’ legal and social-economic problems.

Improvements and amendments in the legislative field are ongoing.

RA Government work on clarifying the ways and mechanisms of ensuring the application of laws and organizing the events aimed to solve the problems.

### ***Social-domestic Problems***



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A lot of serious work is done to assist the refugees in solving their many social, domestic, moral-psychological problems and activate the process of their integration into society.

82.500 refugees obtained citizenship of Armenia according to data of July 1, 2009.

In spite of well-known objective reasons, RA Government takes all possible measures to solve the daily problems of refugees.

## Meeting with Stepan Safaryan, the Head of Heritage Party

The young peacebuilders had a meeting with Stepan Safaryan, the head of “Heritage” party, on March 3, 2010.

The goal was to discuss the reports made on the results of the monitoring of the problems of conflict victims in Armenia. The reports also present recommendations for the solution of the problems of refugees, former prisoners of war (POWs) and the relatives of missing persons.

At the beginning of the meeting the coordinator of HCA Vanadzor, Artur Sakunts, presented briefly the contents of the reports and the importance of the solution of the mentioned groups’ problems from the viewpoint of humanitarian law.

Stepan Safaryan attached importance to such initiatives and especially to the role of NGOs. He appreciates the bilateral Armenian-Azeri contacts, which help to prevent the restart of the war and give hope to solve the problem with political ways. Such projects are very important and have more obvious results.

“Being aware of the analyses of Karabakh conflict, I can say that no matter how many analyses are done, a complete analysis is impossible to do, because even it is not very clear what consequences the conflict had in terms of social, psychological, economic aspects. Abolishing those consequences is complicated, we do not see any wish, and everybody goes on playing with the rules of some game and none of the parties benefit. The society is depressed and is in an atmosphere of fear. The unsolved conflict had its impact on politics, too.”

Getting familiar with those groups the young peacebuilders pointed out that all of them needed state support. They are displeased with the fact that the state remembers them only when they want to, but then it again forgets about them.

Speaking about the missing persons and their problems, Artur Sakunts said that the state did not reveal the circumstances because of which people had disappeared. Mr. Safaryan added that missing persons are a part of the big cost paid for the war. He told about researches that other countries do trying to make clarifications in this issue. For instance, a girl from Bosnia and Herzegovina, with



*Meeting with the head of “Heritage” party*

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whom Mr. Safaryan got acquainted at one of the international meetings, deals with DNA analysis. This is very hard work and it is a hope for the relatives that one day they can find at least the body of their missing relative or even the remains of the body. The others deal with restoration of memories for the future generations.

The study showed that for the POWs the major issue is the absence of a separate status, their occupation, restoration of their health and psychological assistance. Related to these problems, Mr. Safaryan said: “We do not have relevant psychologists who can work with such people. The status can be regulated by the legislation and it will define privileges for them.”

The young peacebuilders mentioned that the main issue for the refugees is the solution of their housing problem and integration into society. In spite of the long time, society does not accept them. The refugees also regret for gaining citizenship. All the 26 surveyed refugees are not considered refugees any more as the Republic of Armenia provided them with citizenship. By getting a citizenship they were deprived of all the privileges they had. On the one hand the refugees were integrated and on the other hand they were deprived of assistance.

One of the young people mentioned: “At the beginning there were 200 refugee families in the village of Karin and now there are only 40-50 families. Everyone left and they were resettled without taking into account the conditions.” The refugees live in unfavourable conditions; most of them live in hostels.

For the solution of refugees’ employment problems A. Sakunts suggested adopting legislative norms, by which while employing a refugee, the employer will pay less taxes. Then he added that even if the problem does not get a solution, it will at least be on the agenda.

Mr. Safaryan welcomed such initiatives and promised that they will take steps for the solution of the abovementioned problems.

## Conclusions

This book is the result of the joint work of the youth from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh.

All the activities implemented within the framework of the project gave the young people the opportunity to get familiarized directly with the problems of refugees, former POWs, relatives of missing persons, which were due to the Karabakh conflict.

The meetings of the youth, preparation of the film, the creation of the blog helped the young people to overcome their stereotypes, to form friendly relations and develop communication between them.

The meetings with the state structures promoted the formation of advocacy skills among young people.