

Armenia - Swiss foreign policy is called upon!

Armenia, the smallest republic in the South Caucasus, is facing new threats following the expulsion of around 150,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan is emphasizing its claim to a corridor in southern Armenia in order to gain direct access to its exclave of Nakhichevan. Swiss foreign policy is called upon to work more decisively for a peaceful solution to the conflict and to help ensure that the situation does not lead to a further military conflict.

The Swiss National Commission for Justice and Peace (J+P Switzerland) and the network of European Justice and Peace Commissions (J+P Europe) are concerned about the current tensions in the South Caucasus. As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, Switzerland is expected to be a committed advocate of human rights and compliance with international law. This membership also entails a political responsibility. If Switzerland wants to do justice to its own principles, its own interests and its more than one hundred years of solidarity with the Armenian population, it must take on a more committed role in foreign policy.

In discussions and exchanges with NGOs, aid organizations and political experts on the ground, Justice and Peace has observed that, despite substantial concessions made by Armenia in ongoing peace negotiations, Azerbaijan's tough positions remain unchanged or are even hardening. The threat of further military force is in the air. Azerbaijan is supported by Turkey, while Russia has not fulfilled its alliance obligations towards Armenia since 2020. This makes the situation on the ground a powder keg.

Armenia's response to the longstanding precarious situation has been an increasing pivot towards Europe, namely the EU, since 2020. Official Switzerland has envisaged to view Armenia from a European policy perspective in the future.

For J+P Switzerland, the following aspects are at the forefront of Swiss foreign policy from an ethical peace perspective.

The Federal Council and - where responsible – the Parliament shall:

- insist on the implementation of all relevant decisions and recommendations of the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights related to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan;
- work to ensure that all prisoners of war and hostages who are being arbitrarily detained by the Azerbaijani armed forces and are unlawfully held in Azerbaijani custody are released;
- exert pressure on the sides and especially on Azerbaijan to resolve all outstanding issues exclusively through negotiations and peaceful means in full respect of each country's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as international law, including refrain from use of violence and the threat to use violence;
- work to ensure that Azerbaijan refrains from discriminating hate speech and continued inflammatory statements degrading the Armenian ethnicity and questioning the territorial integrity of Armenia;
- provide the approximately 150,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in Armenia with integration and economic start-up assistance in line with Switzerland's humanitarian tradition and financial possibilities;
- pursue the goal of safe, dignified, voluntary, and sustainable return of all displaced Armenians to their homeland Nagorno-Karabakh and contribute to their peaceful, free from fear, intimidation and discrimination life in their homeland;
- actively contribute to an UNESCO-led mission of independent international and local experts gaining access to Nagorno-Karabakh to document the state of the ancient sites of Christian faith and ensure their preservation;
- respond to any further violations on the part of Azerbaijan that disregard Armenia's claims to territorial integrity under international law, the internationally required renunciation of armed force and the protection of minorities with the strictest possible legal, economic and political means, including targeted sanctions against the individuals responsible.

With such a stance, Swiss foreign policy can make a credible and preventive contribution to a more stable and peaceful development in the South Caucasus, which is in its own interests.

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Wolfgang B \ddot{u} rgstein, secretary general



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