



ICRC

Geneva, 9 December 2020

OP_EURASIA 20/00140/NFU/nkd

Dear Dr Derderian,

Thank you for your letter of 4 December 2020 (Ref. No.: 1-0234 Var. 151).

In accordance with our internationally recognized mandate, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been monitoring the plight of all those affected by the recent military operations related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which escalated on 27 September 2020. As such, we are aware of the issues of humanitarian concern you mention in your letter. We lament the loss of life, the suffering of those who have been wounded or deprived of their liberty, and the distress of all the families affected by the conflict.

As you know, the ICRC is an exclusively humanitarian organization whose mission is to protect and assist victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. In keeping with our principles of neutrality and impartiality, we do not take sides with any party to conflict but maintain a constant bilateral and confidential dialogue with all of them.

This dialogue is an essential means for us to address issues of humanitarian concern. We document such issues – especially pertaining to violence affecting civilians or their property, the treatment of prisoners of war and the rules on the conduct of hostilities – in order to broach them with the relevant authorities, aiming to minimize the negative impact of hostilities on the people living on both sides of the line of contact and on people deprived of their liberty. Where possible, we try prevent this negative impact altogether.

Nyree Derderian, PhD
Chairperson
Armenian Relief Society

Sent by email to: ceb@ars1910.org

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, this letter will be sent only by email.

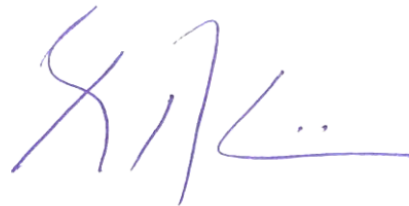
The bilateral and confidential nature of our dialogue means that we do not share the content of our discussions with any third parties. Since alleged violations of international humanitarian law are only discussed with the party concerned, the ICRC cannot comment on the specific issues you mention in your letter.

Under international humanitarian law (IHL), prisoners of war must be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities. In the absence of detailed stipulations to that effect in any agreement concluded between the sides to the conflict, they must each establish a plan of repatriation themselves and execute it without delay. This ICRC has repeatedly offered its services as a neutral intermediary to facilitate exchanges.

IHL also stipulates that, in the framework of an international armed conflict, the ICRC must be granted regular access to all persons deprived of their liberty, with a view to verifying the conditions of their detention and to restoring contacts between those persons and their families. This obligation is binding upon all sides, regardless of the legal status of the person deprived of their liberty. The ICRC has visited detainees both in Armenia and in Azerbaijan and we are working tirelessly to try to ensure we have access to all detainees held in relation to the conflict.

Rest assured that the ICRC remains committed to alleviating the suffering of those affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including those who have been deprived of their liberty.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Mardini
Director-General