

**The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) Statement  
Regarding Violence Against Civilian Communities in Nagorno-Karabakh**

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Committee

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AMWA is deeply concerned about violence against civilian communities. As the crisis currently escalates in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, AMWA remembers that in 1915, the Armenian people suffered a genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Empire with a loss of over 1.5 million lives. During that time, women physicians of the American Women's Hospital Service (a program of AMWA), including Dr. Mabel Elliott, provided humanitarian relief and medical care to displaced refugees and orphans.

With an increasing number of displaced families and civilian casualties, the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh are experiencing a humanitarian crisis. Since September 27, Azerbaijani armed forces, launched a large-scale military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh (an autonomous region with an ethnic Armenian majority), starting a war amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The forces have been targeting peaceful settlements, including civilian residences, educational institutions, hospitals, and cultural and religious sites. With the targeted destruction of these infrastructures, communities are losing access to healthcare, safe shelter, and education. The Armenian Ministry of Education reports that over 33,000 children and youth have been deprived of education since 18 schools and 6 kindergartens have deliberately come under attack. Upon evaluation, the Human Rights Watch has verified the use of cluster munitions and has stated that "The continued use of cluster munitions shows flagrant disregard for the safety of civilians" and The Genocide Watch has issued a Genocide Emergency Alert.

The clashes have reportedly displaced half of Nagorno-Karabakh's population (around 70,000 people). Most of these refugees are women, children, and elderly folk. During this time, Armenian women have assumed many roles in the frontlines--providing medical care for the elderly, wounded and sick, caring for displaced or orphaned children, joining Armenian men on the battlefield, and playing a vital role in advocating for the recognition of their human rights.

War has been shown to affect public health by exposing children to irreversible trauma, and causing the destruction of health, safety, and sanitation infrastructures. The implications of these events include but are not limited to negative impacts on population mental health, increased disease transmission, and reduced reproductive health for women.

Since the conflict began, the seven-day rolling average of daily new COVID-19 cases has increased 7-fold in Armenia. With a positive testing rate of 45%, the increased incidence of COVID-19 is proving to be an additional threat to the Armenian people. The cases are rising in Nagorno-Karabakh as well, since constant shelling forces civilians to stay grouped together in underground bomb shelters, allowing no opportunity for those infected to self-isolate. Due to these conditions, many doctors in Nagorno-Karabakh have also been infected; but in the midst of war, with wounded soldiers flooding into hospitals, they are left with no choice but to continue to fight this battle.

As AMWA did 100 years ago, we amplify the voices of international communities who, in the midst of humanitarian crises, stand with the people of Armenia who face constant conflict. AMWA stands

with the bipartisan members of the US Congress who have put forth a resolution expressing their “deep concern with Azerbaijan’s renewed aggression against Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) and the rising possibility of a wider conflict with Armenia” and have asked that the U.S. “use all available diplomatic tools to reduce tensions, end the fighting, and restrain Azerbaijan from further offensive actions...”

AMWA, like the Association of Public Health Schools of Europe (ASPHER), recognizes that “war is a man-made public health problem.”

### **New Sources:**

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<https://ncdc.am/coronavirus/confirmed-cases-by-days/>

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-statement-nagorno-karabakh-conflict>

<https://escs.am/en/news/7335>

<https://www.evnreport.com/spotlight-karabakh/the-women-of-artsakh-our-children-are-being-deprived-of-the-right-to-life>

- “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.”

UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2

<https://torontohye.ca/women-of-artsakh-a-tale-of-heroic-resilience/>

[https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/23/azerbaijan-cluster-munitions-used-nagorno-karabakh?fbclid=IwAR2fUhJUiSdugZ4ZuDfY-539sLOoQWIQEPtyFtxO1a4r-sPMnOKxMG\\_GdXA#](https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/23/azerbaijan-cluster-munitions-used-nagorno-karabakh?fbclid=IwAR2fUhJUiSdugZ4ZuDfY-539sLOoQWIQEPtyFtxO1a4r-sPMnOKxMG_GdXA#)

- **Entire Quote by HRW:** “The continued use of cluster munitions – particularly in populated areas – shows flagrant disregard for the safety of civilians,” said Stephen Goose, arms division director at Human Rights Watch and chair of the Cluster Munition Coalition. “Cluster munitions should never be used by anyone under any circumstances, much less in cities, due to the foreseeable and unacceptable harm to civilians.”

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fighting-nagorno-karabakh-us-mediation-73801875>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-04/death-toll-230-in-nagorno-karabakh-clash-armenia-azerbaijan/12729744>

<https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-pandemics-azerbaijan-armenia-europe-14f519a45ce899c2c7a52cba7c876850>

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- <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/10/2/kocharian-rostomian-saint-armenia-two->

- [battles/?fbclid=IwAR3U85elyqzqfD4WfzAHx2ij6TNvUDdygFRvWg\\_hMRkpwhRF C1j8PufbmaA](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/01/world/middleeast/turkey-azerbaijan-armenia-war.html)
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/01/world/middleeast/turkey-azerbaijan-armenia-war.html>
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  - [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-azerbaijan-airplane-idUSKBN26L1O5?taid=5f7462e9d07f4900012b468a&utm\\_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm\\_medium=trueAnthem&utm\\_source=twitter](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-azerbaijan-airplane-idUSKBN26L1O5?taid=5f7462e9d07f4900012b468a&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter)
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- [Press Conference Rep Adam Schiff & Mayor Garcetti](#)