



**OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
PUBLIC RELATIONS UNIT**



A number of villages in Gegharkunik province have been deprived of water, people are facing deprivations as a result of Azerbaijani criminal incursions: Details of the fact-finding activities

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The issue of drinking water remains a serious problem. The Azerbaijani armed forces, after their incursion into the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, have positioned themselves near reservoirs and natural springs; in certain cases, they are under the blatantly unlawful control of Azerbaijan.

For example, it was reported in Norabak village that 5 of the 6 natural springs that provide water to the village are now under Azerbaijani control. They also control the village water supply reservoir, and around 2.5 km of water line.

According to the residents, the subsidy programs of the government before the war envisaged solving the water problem in Norabak (Sotk, and in a number of other villages) by laying water lines from the reservoir, but the work could not be completed as a result of the Azerbaijani incursions and criminal acts.

Residents of Norabak village do not have water in their houses, there are only four places in the village where the water reaches, and it is not supplied fully. From there, the villagers have to bring drinking water and water for household needs in buckets almost every day on foot, by car or through other means.

The reservoir which provided water to Jaghatsadzor, Geghamabak, Ayrk, Nerkin Shorzha, Verin Shorzha villages, and which is located in the sovereign territory of Armenia, have also come under Azerbaijani control.

For example, facing great difficulties, the residents of Geghamabak village the residents even have to bring drinking water and water for household needs from a neighboring village located on a distance of more than 1.5 km away, in buckets and on foot, by car, etc. There was water in Jaghatsadzor village before the Azerbaijani incursions, however after May, 2021, the residents have been facing serious difficulties.

There are serious water issues in Sotk village as well. The reservoir from which water is supplied through the water line, is under the control of the Azerbaijani armed forces.

After the Azerbaijani incursions in Jaghatsadzor village, 100 hectares of pastures are their surveillance, which has made it impossible for people to use those areas.

In almost all the villages, people mentioned that they had to sell their animals or some of them because they could not gather the necessary stock of grass for the winter; If they were able to solve some of the issues in the first year, this year the complications are increasing. Moreover, as spring approaches, people are

concerned about safety issues, and the impossibility of cultivating their lands and grazing their animals in the pastures.

For example, in Norabak village, according to the estimation of the residents, they have lost 1,300 hectares of pasture, arable land and grassland. In addition, 200 hectares have become unusable. These are the lands that in the immediate vicinity of the Azerbaijani positions, but people cannot use them because they are under the surveillance of the Azerbaijani servicemen, who regularly conduct shootings. In other words, the villagers were deprived of their legal property rights.

In addition, the villages are under the surveillance of Azerbaijani armed serviceman (especially Kut, Norabak, Sotk and a number of other villages). for example, during the visit of the Human Rights Defender, evidence was obtained that the sounds of shootings conducted by Azerbaijani servicemen can be heard every day. Moreover, Azerbaijani servicemen flash projector lights towards the village to intimidate the residents. These acts are concerning to the residents, since they are directly related to the rights to life, security, and other fundamental rights.

For example, in Kut, Sotk, and Norabak villages Azerbaijani shootings occurred when people were grazing their animals. Moreover, the residents mentioned that they had heard on various occasions how Azerbaijani servicemen were drunk in their opinion, and were cursing, and arguing with each other and were conducting shootings.

That is, the evidence demonstrate that the issue of security remains a priority, while social issues have worsened, making people's normal life impossible.

During the meetings, individual issues were raised, which will be processed according to the Defender's competence.

During these visits, the issues raised by the complaints addressed to the Human Rights Defender, and the data provided by the Regional subdivision of the Office of the Human Rights Defender were analyzed on site.

The real solution to the violations is to remove the Azerbaijani armed forces from the vicinity of our villages and roads, to guarantee the rights of the peaceful population.

This is a fundamental issue.

Moreover, this refers to all their deployments, and not only the incursions that occurred on May. For the purpose of guaranteeing the rights of the residents of Armenia, the Human Rights Defender has proposed the creation of a demilitarized security zone around the borders of Armenia, until the end of the demarcation and delimitation process of the borders with Azerbaijan.

This proposal of the Human Rights Defender has been reflected in the PACE resolution of September 27, 2021.

this does not imply a decision on which side controls which territory: That would be decided by a demarcation and a delimitation process, meanwhile, however, everything should be done to restore the security and normal life of the people.

These approaches are directly derived from the OSCE, UN, and other international requirements and international experience.

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