



International Society for Human Rights, Armenia
Forced displacement



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The booklet includes interviews with people forcibly displaced from Artsakh on September 19, 2023.

The interlocutors are forcibly displaced Artsakh women who talk about their family, village, city, blockade, deprivations suffered and forced deportation.

On September 19, 2023, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched a large-scale military aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh, the population of which had been under Azerbaijani blockade for 10 months. The Azerbaijani military aggression was accompanied by ethnic cleansing against the Armenian population.

The actions of the Azerbaijani authorities were aimed at eliminating the ethnic and historical basis of the Armenians of Karabakh

According to the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia, more than 200 servicemen and civilians were killed in Artsakh as a result of the military aggression. About 12 civilians and 30 servicemen are considered missing. There are cases of torture of at least 14 people, of whom 12 are servicemen and 2 are civilians. As a result of military operations, 3 children were killed, 231 servicemen and 80 civilians received varying degrees of bodily injuries.

16 people were taken prisoner, including representatives of the former military-political leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh.

As a result of military operations, the Armenians of Artsakh began to forcibly migrate to Armenia, having neither the time nor the opportunity to take out their property. According to the Investigative Committee, 64 civilian deaths were recorded during the forced deportation and in the period immediately following it.

The authors of the booklet did not set a goal to present the political and historical aspects of the issue. The aim of the booklet is to present to the reader the stories of victims of tragic events, ordinary people who have lived in their historical homeland, Artsakh, for centuries, generation after generation. Their stories and emotions related to the deprivation of their homeland, overcoming the difficulties of wars and blockade have been recorded. In some stories, at the request of the interviewees, names have been changed, photos are not posted, often, in connection with a specific person, images of their place of residence in Artsakh, village, city, are posted.

The booklet also includes exclusive photographs - emigration shots, which were taken during the days of forced displacement.

The following participated in the preparation of the booklet:

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Exclusive footage of emigration by Nare Narimanyan



Armine Gevorgyan

- I lived in Artsakh, Martuni for 31 years.

Armine was born, grew up in Artsakh, married in Karmir Shuka village, has one son. The parents are from Artsakh, mother from Taghavart, father from Martuni.

The parents lived there until the 44-day war, after which they moved to Stepanakert.

During the siege, the relations between the villagers were warm, they shared pain and sorrow together. They helped each other with food products. They overcame the difficulties of the siege with united forces.

It is difficult to speak from the blockade, it becomes difficult to speak

- We have seen very harsh days, but...

When they were in their native land, they did not think about difficulties. It is completely different when you face these difficulties on the land on which you were born and raised. You can face any trials and difficulties in your native land.

- Every morning, as soon as it was light, he went to the market to see what was on the market. We used to buy tomatoes, candy or anything else that was available in the market at that time...

Just pretending that you go to the market not for a specific product, but for an existing product, is already difficult, there is no choice. Basically, purchases, particularly bread, were bought with vouchers, each person received approximately half a loaf of bread. The situation of the families where there were many children was more complicated, naturally, most of it was allocated to the children so that they would not go hungry, and they often spent the night hungry.

They did not think that after so many deprivations, one day they will leave their native land, they did not believe that it is possible to leave their native land one day. On their way back, they left in their own car. At that time, the husband and the husband's brother were in the service.

- My husband and my husband's brother had gasoline saved for a difficult day...

It seems that that difficult day had arrived, and already that gasoline was going to be used to leave one's own land, homeland, graves...

During the evacuation, they left in their own car, that is, they carried out the transportation with their own forces. And the parents - mother, father and sisters went out with the groom in their car. The younger sister's husband was also a soldier who fought heroically in all wars. He died in a gasoline explosion.

The story was a bit mixed, after the explosion Nero (sister's husband) called his brother and told that he got burns due to the explosion and that he was being taken to the hospital. In the hospital, they did not know that Nero's heart had stopped, and since the condition was getting worse, they were taken to Armenia by helicopter, but in the sky of Armenia, in the helicopter, Nero had a cardiac arrest.

Studying the stories of deportation of Artsakh Armenians, we understand that it was difficult to bring the body of the deceased to Armenia in those days. Many Artsakh citizens did not manage to transport the bodies of their relatives to Armenia.

After being transported by helicopter to Goris, Nero's relatives did not have any information for 8 days, then his brother was found in Goris after searching. Nero Melkumyan died at the age of 34...

Nero Melkumyan, a name that during the conversation transferred me to Artsakh, Jebrail, military service. It is more difficult to write down the story about Nero , because a few years ago, we climbed together to the Jebraili strongholds of Artsakh, we served together... I got to know Nero in a short time. He was modest, self-confident, patriotic... It is difficult to describe a person like Nero in words...

It's even more complicated when you talk about Nero in the past tense...

In Artsakh, they left the graves of their grandparents, the house, everything remained in Artsakh. They came out empty, without anything. currently they live in Ararat Marz, they are not working because they got health problems due to stress. Armine was interrupted. Armine confidently says that he will work when he recovers.



Anna Petrosyan

Anna Petrosyan was born in Artsakh, they came to Gyumri from Artsakh in 1992, she says

- Back then, a Karabakh citizen would understand a Gyumret better, that's why we came to Gyumri.

In 2000, they moved again to Artsakh. The family was big at first, then they separated, there were 4 people in the family: she, her husband, and two children.

His roots are from Martakert, his parents were born in Martakert, he remembers that his father told him that they moved from Mush.

He answers the question: what was there in Martakert, something special?

- There was a lot of irreplaceable things in Martakert, there was warmth, closeness, kinship, that's what we have lost if we leave the Motherland aside.

He is one of the old residents of Martakert, he remembers his school years, which he also spent in Martakert... He noticed that we always like to complain about our life, now he understands that he had no reason to complain. They worked, they lived, life went on its way, it is also irreplaceable that everything was familiar...

My interlocutor was a teacher, her husband an architect. They overcame the blockade by working and being together. The entire population became one fist, one family, which became a condition for overcoming the blockade. They mainly engaged in agriculture, he fondly remembers...

"If there was an opportunity to plant one tomato plant in the yard or balcony, we did it."

They lived preparing for the winter, collected canned goods, stored other agricultural goods. Along with the difficulties, they did not imagine that the future would be so cruel. He did not imagine that one day he will have to leave his native land. During the 2020 war, they were evacuated and

moved to Yerevan, after the end of the 44-day war, they immediately returned to their native land, forgetting about the danger. On their return, they even imagined the blockade, but not the deportation...

After the war in 2020, they built their own house from the ground up, moved to a new house, with new hope, with new goals...

When talking about the war, it is difficult to describe those cruel days.

When the war started, I had returned home from school, one of my children was still at school. And immediately the shooting started, at 13:10 my husband immediately got into the car and went to look for the child. The girl was 11 years old. After 24 hours, the war stopped, but Martakert was completely surrounded.

Drombon, Chingyatagh, all those roads were in the hands of Azerbaijanis. All villages were displaced. The evacuation was organized by the head of Martakert region, Arsen Avanesyan. The residents have set a condition that they will not leave Martakert until the last man leaves the border line, despite this they also realized that their lives are in even more danger if the boys leave.

The stories of the survival part took me back to the times of the liberation struggle, in the 21st century they experienced the same feelings as our other compatriots in the early 20th century. Even the choice between life and death, existence and struggle, homeland and safe life did not prevent them from staying in their native land.

"There was no defense in the village, we all had a rifle in our house. At night, the boys took turns walking around the city so that the Azerbaijanis would not enter the city and commit atrocities>>.

Martakert was a small town, they learned the news from each other. They also learned the news of leaving the city that way. During the war, they often gathered near the administration building.

The war was so terrible that in rare cases the boys performing the border service survived , it can be said that they were saved by a miracle. The positions were mainly occupied by the residents of the city, who were put on combat duty one by one...

In Artsakh, they left their own house, the rabbit farm they had just established...

In recent days, about 100 of the rabbits were distributed to the population, because there was no food. At the time of handing over, about 100 rabbits were released so that they would not fall into the hands of the Turks.

He already has a job, he works as a teacher. When working with the students, he does not tell about Artsakh, he does not like to talk about Artsakh, he is also afraid that the child living a safe life in Yerevan will not be interested...

He does not think about returning, because he has even seen by studying history that it is difficult to bring back the lost land. Trying to adapt here, create their own, but already here...

Widespread indifference is also difficult in Yerevan, my interlocutor observes.

And as a picture accompanying the material, he wants to have a photo of Martakert, which you have already seen...





Satenik Stepanyan

Satenik Stepanyan was born in 1986 in Gyumri.

After the 1989 Spitak earthquake, the family moved to Artsakh, Togh village, Hadrut district. After graduating from Togh village secondary school, Satenik continued his studies at Stepanakert State University's Department of Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology. However, he got married at the age of 20 and could not continue his education.

Satenik is now a mother of five children, she lives with her family in Kapan after the deportation.

1. Where are you from, where did you study, when did you get married, how many children do we have?

- I was born in Gyumri on August 21, 1986. I was 3 years old when my family, who survived the disaster of December 7, 1989, moved to Togh village of Hadrut district in Artsakh. I graduated from the secondary school of Togh village and continued my studies at the Faculty of Elementary Pedagogy and Methodology of Stepanakert State University, but unfortunately I did not finish it. At the age of 20, I got married in Tumi village of Hadrut region. I am a mother of five children, my eldest son studied at Kapan Vocational College, my youngest is one year old, and the three are studying at N6 school in Kapan.

2. Tell us about your village, city, since when did your parents live there, how long do your roots go back?

- My parents are from Togh village, Hadrut region, in 1984. they got married and moved to Gyumri, my mother studied at the Gyumri Technological University until 1989. the earthquake. Togh village was the center of Melikanist Dizak. In 1734 Melik Yegan sat here and built churches: St. Stepanos, St. Hovhannes and St. Kusants Desert. Melik Yegan's residence and tomb were located next to the church and were maintained as a museum by the state and my father worked there as a director.

3. How did you overcome the blockade, how did you secure food?

On September 27, 2020, we moved with our family to the city of Kapan and until now we live on rent. Only my eldest son stayed with my parents and studied at Yeznik Mozyan College. With great difficulty, my parents overcame the blockade and left Artsakh.

4. How did you come, did they help you, did you imagine that you would have to leave the house?

In 2020, my husband was serving in the border guard military unit of the National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia, and I was surrounded with my children. My father helped us and carried us to the Lachin bridge and took us by taxi to the city of Kapan, where I live to this day. We did not think that we would destroy everything, we thought that we would go back.

5. Has removal been arranged?

There were several families left in the village, my eldest son, Armen, took us by car from Tumi village to Togh village, and then my father organized the transfer.

6. How did you know that you had to leave the country, how close was the danger?

There was a commotion in the village of Tumi. we could hear the sounds of cannons, the rumbling of drones, we heard bad news from the positions, they had approached Hadrut, we were very afraid.

7. What did you leave behind in Artsakh?

In 2016, we settled down in the village of Tumi and bought our own two-story house, we had a large number of livestock, house property, our own plots of land , in short, we left everything in Artsakh.

8. Where do you live now, have you found a job, what are your problems?

Now we live in Kapan, building 15, apartment 7 of railway workers, on rent. My husband works in RA. And in the Ministry of Defense, I am a housewife, I raise and teach my five children, who should not forget that great pain, the loss of our homeland, the longing for the native land. It is true that there are difficulties, we cannot meet the needs of the children with only the husband's salary and the child's allowance. I need my own house, it is difficult to buy a house with the money provided by the state.



Alina Sargsyan

Alina, a 62-year-old woman from Artsakh, tells how difficult it was to leave what she had created for so many years and come out, and how many losses she had throughout her life.

62-year-old Alina Sargsyan was born in the village of Chailu, Martakert region of the Republic of Artsakh. He got married at the age of 20 in Chankatagh village, he has 4 children: 3 boys and 1 girl.

He says that the village of Cchankatagh was a border village and the conflict started there for the first time in 1992. She moved to Yerevan with her children, and her husband left for the border. After the end of

the conflict, he returned to Chankatagh village. After returning, he learned that as a result of the conflict, Azerbaijanis occupied his father's village.

Marks

— It was my first biggest loss, because I not only lost my native village, but also my parents. I also left the graves of my relatives and friends, after losing them, at least I was able to visit their graves.

In Chankatagh village, the house where they lived before the conflict was destroyed.

Later, Mrs. Alina and her husband again created a farm, a plot of land, and an animal farm.

He says about September 27, 2020

- We have been through the war many times, but we did not imagine that someone would come out alive from the last war. We managed to escape and leave the village, leaving everything behind, to run away to Yerevan.

After the end of the 44-day war, they returned to Artsakh and settled in Stepanakert.

He says

-Losing Chankatagh village was the second big loss: leaving and leaving everything that I had created with my own hands, the house that I built together with my husband, the land that I farmed every day , the cattle. He regretted that he had left everything created for someone else to enjoy without any effort.

Mrs. Alina spoke with all her heart about the blockade of the Republic of Artsakh, which began in 2022, and told how many nights they slept hungry, because the last food was enough only for the children of the house. And notes:

- I would like to live hungry again, only to stay in Artsakh, in my native land, I miss the icy water of Artsakh and the plot of my home. Although, I am only happy that my children and grandchildren are with me, and nothing happened to any of them.

He remembers the deportation with pain

- Only we know what we went through. Our experiences and what we saw will not be told. We would never have thought that everything could have such an end, that we could lose Artsakh.

He says that when he lies down at night, he remembers everything, the years he has lived come before his eyes. He says that in the depths of his heart he still does not lose hope that he will return to Artsakh.

Now 6 people live in Lernanist village of Kotayk marz.



Khanum Madatyan

Khanum tells

"In 1992, I was 9 years old when the first conflict started. My father left Stepanakert for Shushi. Then my mother and I also joined him. After the conflict, we moved to a permanent residence in Shushi. I was accepted as a spiritual singer in the holy Ghazanchetsots church in Shushi. And from that moment it became my second home.>>

He says that he served in the holy Ghazanchetsots church until 2019. And with tears in his eyes, he told how much his heart hurts that Azerbaijan turned the church into a mosque.

When asked how he left Shush in 2020, he says:

"Before leaving at the last moment, I sang in the holy Ghazanchetsots church and participated in the spiritual liturgy, and before leaving at the last moment, I took a handful of soil and their relics from the graves of my relatives."

With tears in his eyes, he spoke about how he had left everything: his hometown, Shushi, the graves of his relatives, his house, and as he mentioned, perhaps the most important, the Ghazanchetsots church.

In 2020, they settled in Stepanakert with their father and mother.

"With difficulty, we were re-creating everything we could live on, we had barely started to make ends meet when the blockade started."

To the question of how they procured food, he answered:

"We could hardly find food for the day, because there were few food products, the shops were empty, and if we were able to find food products, they were very expensive, and we didn't even have any money saved. We would never have imagined that a day would come when we would go to the store and see complete emptiness. We had moved to Stepanakert not long ago, we had not managed to cultivate a normal vegetable garden, if the neighbors' harvest that day was good, it was a lot, then we used their vegetable garden, but we realized that no matter how much they are ready to help us, they also have in need of food, we had to stay hungry for days.>>

He says that at that moment they understood how important and precious Artsakh is for them, for which they were ready for so many

difficulties, just to not lose Artsakh. They did not even imagine that one day they could leave their homeland and go out.

He says

<<I miss the statue of Dedo Babo. In Armenia, I make clay and give it as a gift only to my close friends so that they never forget about Artsakh.>>

At the last moment, he did not forget to collect the things, to take with him the soil and some relics left from the graves of his relatives in Shushi, as well as a handful of soil from Stepanakert, which he now keeps as the last and only souvenir from his homeland.

To the question whether he had any idea that he could leave his homeland, he answers:

"Even when I heard that we have to leave, I didn't believe it, I thought they were just talking to each other, but when they came, they said to pack your things, we have to leave, if you don't want to live in the Republic of Azerbaijan and risk your life. speed up... everything happened so fast that I didn't realize it, I just took everything that was important, because we didn't have much room, and we quickly left.>>

He says that during the forced displacement, he witnessed deaths , events that were unimaginable, from death to birth.

At the end, he mentioned that he would not want anyone to witness such cases, which he himself was.



Alvard Petrosyan

Mrs. Alvard is a mother of nine children. Until 1996, the family lived in Vardenis.

On December 1, 1996, they were moved to Charektar village, Shahumyan region of Artsakh Republic. They lived there for 1 year and moved to Drmbon village of Martakert region of Artsakh Republic. They lived in Drombon for 26 years, established their farm, built a house.

Due to a serious illness, the next time he was in Stepanakert hospital, he was transferred to Yerevan with the help of the Red Cross in order to receive the necessary medical care.

When asked how he overcame the blockade, he found it difficult to tell , he remembered with pain how they faced such conditions and how they provided food for the day. He says that they ate only from the harvest of the garden and no one helped them. The boy brought only bread, because he worked in a bakery, and if he couldn't bring it, they baked it, and borrowed other food products. Ms. Alvard was not told about the occupation of Artsakh, as she was in a difficult situation, she says that they spared her and did not tell the truth. He was informed that he is only coming to Yerevan for 1 month to receive treatment and medicine and then he will return to Artsakh. During that 1 month, Ms. Alvard was operated on and only after being discharged from the hospital did she learn from the family members that the people of Artsakh were forcibly displaced.

Alvard could not hide that he was in deep pain, that he had lost his country, and that he would only like to return and create everything again. Now the large family lives on rent in Vanadzor.



Photo by Nare Narimanyan



Gayane Sargsyan

On September 24, 2023, Gayane and his family moved to Armenia as their main residence.

He spent his childhood years, up to the age of 10, in Hrazdan, then settled in Artsakh with his family and 7 sisters, where he got married and gave birth to three children: two boys, one girl.

He lived in his homeland, Shushi, for many years. Gayane's grandfathers moved to Artsakh after the 1988 war. Until the war of 2020, they lived in Shushi, then they moved to Stepanakert, they lived on rent.

They have always felt good in Shushi, happy, on a familiar land, "you've lived, it's your homeland, how can you not love it?" Gayane insists.

During the months-long blockade, they somehow overcame all the difficulties.

"There was a person who lived with savings, there was a person who didn't have anything, but he still lived, we helped each other again. We mostly had savings, it wasn't too bad for us, if we ran out of some things, we didn't find them, we waited for the roads to open, but... in the end it became a fight."

They lived half an hour away from Turk in Stepanakert.

"Whoever managed to escape, who doesn't, I don't know by what means he came. Personally, I came with my sister's family, her husband, 7 children, well imagine I have 3 children too, how did we fit in that car, I don't understand either. We didn't come in the last few days, the roads were relatively open, we came for 24 hours, we didn't take any bread or water, we thought we would arrive in about 3-4 hours. My other sister went out on the last day with her family with 9 children. The Turk had already reached their village, Chartar. I always say that they were lucky that they were not harmed," says Gayane.

Now living in Armenia, their fears have not disappeared yet. When children play in their neighborhood, when they see an airplane, they hide in fear every time, they say, "Mom, the enemy has come."

Gayane has not found a job yet, because he has health problems related to the nervous system. says - "I get angry, I feel worse, my hands start shaking, before it was a little mild, now I even take medicine." I haven't applied for a job, but I've been standing for 3 hours, I'm already getting worse. The monthly amount to be received from the state is about 50,000 drams and the children work, my two sons, in the service sector, we manage to live somehow. My daughter is also married, I already

have a grandson. We still have many problems, but we are working so that everything will be fine."



Mary Davtyan

Mary's whole life was spent in Artsakh. He was born in Mokhratagh village of Martakert region. He graduated from secondary school,

continued at Artsakh State University, then got married, and since 2009 they have lived in the city of Martakert. She worked as a teacher.

His roots in Artsakh go back a long time, at least his grandfather's grandfather was born and lived in Artsakh. He never wanted to leave his birthplace, neither his father's family, nor even more so, his own. They are a young family, they have two daughters. The husband is a soldier, he always emphasized that he should be at the border, to see his enemy, that's why they had no intention to even have a small house or property in Armenia. They came here several times a year to relax and then return to their homeland.

They were in Martakert during the entire blockade. On the fateful day, September 19, they were in class at school when everything started. They moved from basement to basement. Following the husband's calculations (after some pause, the shells fall again), they moved from the basement of the school to the basement of the building, so they left in the morning and came to Stepanakert.

"In general, in all wars, we left very late," says Mary, "because my husband was always in position, he didn't come after us, so we stayed like that until he came." And this time, when they said, whoever can afford it, let him go to Stepanakert, we will send him by plane from there, it didn't happen, of course, at that time my husband said angrily, "girl, I won't come, take the child." So we left early. Already on September 23 it was possible, we came to Armenia. For those few days, we lived in hotels, in the corridors of the university, on chairs," says Mary.

The last months of the blockade were already very difficult, even the bread was gone. "If we had stayed a couple of weeks, it wouldn't have

happened, because there was no gasoline, gas to transport cars, we had no washing powder, no water for the garden, there was not enough wheat. Do you know how it was, whoever they knew was able to deliver the portion, they brought it by force, we had to take it to Stepanakert to grind it: there was no black flour, there was no white flour. In short, it was terrible."

After 2020, the Turks had made a good calculation, they were stuck in Martakert, they were very close, approximately 3 km away, but Mary's family members were already used to both shootings and photo-taking bayraktars, Mary also emphasizes that they were free. because they were in their land, in their birthplace. They had absolutely no idea that it would be like this.

They were told to temporarily move to Stepanakert for security reasons, they would return after some time, but in the middle of the journey they were told that they would not go back. They could not move anything from the house. He says, "I just got a new textbook called History of Artsakh from class. I took it. To tell the truth, I never wanted to keep that small bag (documents, important things, children's clothes) ready and did not take it, because I would always look at it and think that I should take it and go out. But this time the children were a bit older, they sorted out their passports and papa's diplomas and we took what we needed."

Mary's family settled in Charentsavan after receiving a teacher's job offer, and her husband is still in the military. They live on rent, at least they strive to have their own, and certain documentation issues are still being resolved.



Nune Galstyan

Nune Galstyan is 38 years old, originally from the city of Hrazdan, Kotayk region of the Republic of Armenia, he was born in Hrazdan.

"I was ten years old when my parents and I moved to Shushi.

I went to school in Shushi, then I got married, I had three children, one girl and two boys.

My married life did not work out, I got divorced, I raised my children alone.

My children are grown up, my daughter is married, I am already a grandmother.

We lived with my mother in my father's house. My sons were engaged in farming, I did not work due to health problems, I was engaged in housework, I took care of the house.

Due to the 44-day war in Artsakh, we had to leave our land, we moved to Stepanakert, but in 2023 we had to leave Stepanakert. but we did not know how long the blockade would last.

Like other Armenians, we came to Armenia. Now we live in Arinj village in Kotayk province. The state gives us 50,000 drams a month, even if it's difficult. we are able to pay the house rent, utility bills, we manage to live on little or no. We are not complaining, we are waiting We believe that one day the state will give us a house, but there are more needy people before us."



Evgenia Khachatryan

My interlocutor is a grandmother from Artsakh, Evgenya Khachatryan, who has lived in Artsakh for 72 years.

The roots are also from Artsakh: the father was born in the village of Hiliz, Askeran region, and the mother was born in the village of Karmir. They lived in Stepanakert. Our lady Evgenia was born and lived in Stepanakert until she was 23 years old.

After graduating from the institute, she was sent to the village of Kolkhozashen, Martunu region, as a teacher of Armenian language and literature. She continued to live in this village until the forced displacement, although she has not worked since 2015 due to retirement.

It is difficult to talk about the blockade. It is difficult to relive what we saw and experienced. The days of the blockade became even more difficult due to health problems. Our heroine has diabetes, these days

despite the fact that the Martuni hospital provided the necessary medicine and medical care, it was quite difficult to get to the hospital because of the lack of fuel in the cars. There was no need to even think about reaching Stepanakert.

Mrs. Evgenia's family is large and despite this circumstance, they managed to endure during the days of the siege. The fellow villagers were also united with each other, he says that they helped each other as much as possible by sharing the food they had. As far as possible, they even helped their relatives living in Stepanakert with agricultural products.

There was more panic when the shooting started. He says that people from the neighboring villages of Karmir Shuka, Taghavart and Machkalashen also gathered in their village. Their house was located right next to the street, and probably due to this circumstance, many guests from neighboring villages visited their house. They hosted 38 people in their house: pregnant women, old people, children. Everything was very difficult: there was no electricity, water, or gas, but with all this there was a will power that made them endure.

On September 25, they learned from the village head that they had to evacuate. During the evacuation, the village head helped by providing fuel for the vehicles. He says they came out with heavy psychological feelings. At that time, the grandson was serving in Askeran, and they came to Armenia without any information about him. Hard mental experiences accompanied Armenia. The whole village left the village together, it was very hard to see that scene.

They received news about the grandson through a fellow villager, whose beloved boy was also from service with their son. He said that he

is fine and is in Stepanakert. After learning that news, they calmed down to some extent.

They left everything in Artsakh: their own two-story house, 7 cows, chickens, geese, ducks, their 50 years of work and property. He says it was very difficult to part with the animals, leaving them there alone. It was difficult to part with the dog itself, which had not even taken bread from the granddaughter's hand for the last day, felt that they were parting and leaving him there. Evgenia tells that her granddaughter came to Yerevan in tears for the dog, and she still gets emotional when she remembers the dog. Ms. Evgenia says that the villagers are mostly very attached to the animals, and the separation itself turns out to be difficult.

They came empty-handed, taking the pictures of the house with them...

The way to return from Artsakh was, in itself, very difficult, the feeling of uncertainty was added to the psychological hardships, the fact that they have nothing and will start from scratch. While in Goris, the granddaughter called and told them to go to Gyumri immediately.

Now they live in Vahramaberd village of Shirak marz. Most people are upset about being unemployed. They have two student grandchildren who study on a paid basis. The daughter of the grandchildren is studying at the Department of European Languages and Intercultural Communication at Yerevan State University. He lived in the "Student's house " in the first year. He will stay in the hostel this year. The boy, who was serving in Askeran during the displacement, is studying at the Information Technology Department of Gyumri Polytechnic University.

One of the problems is that the pension was delayed. The apartment has a utility problem, there is no gas supply in the building, which causes uncertainty in providing heating in winter. The main means of living is her and her husband's pension. Despite the fact that they live in the village, they do not have the opportunity to keep animals or engage in farming. If they have the opportunity, they will be engaged in agriculture with great pleasure.

Our heroine expresses hope that one day they will definitely return to their native Artsakh.



Forced displacement

Arega Balayan

Arega Balayan is 51 years old, originally from the Martuni region of Artsakh.

Arega tells. "I was born in the village of Spitakashen, Martunu region, and my parents are from there. I attended school in the village, then studied needlework for 9 months.

I am married, I have three children: one boy, two girls.

In the village, I took sewing orders at home, kept chickens and pigs, had bees, my husband was engaged in farming, had a greenhouse, and at the same time worked in a gas office.

My son started his family there, they had a baby, he is 1 year and 5 months old.

During the siege, we had no shortage of food, we lived. But, when Azerbaijan attacked the positions, he was a contract soldier, he was injured and was transferred to the hospital in Stepanakert. My husband rushed to Stepanakert with my son and my grandson I arrived in Stepanakert by a neighbor's car. The hospital doctor recommended that we take my son to Armenia. It was September 25 we all came to Goris, and from there to "Muratsan" hospital. My son's leg was amputated, then he underwent rehabilitation at "Soldier's House".

I, my husband and my daughter live for rent in the Malatia-Sebastia administrative district of Yerevan, in the Ararat part, on the second floor of a two-story house, my other daughter is married and now lives in Russia.

My son and his family live separately in Yerevan, in the center, until we find a 4-room house, we all live in one place, otherwise it is very difficult to live with the 50,000 given by the state alone. I work as a cleaner in the store in front of the house, my husband works in construction, my son does not work either, he receives the pension alone.

I hoped until the end that we would stay in our village, but we had to leave and left everything behind."



Photos from Silva Verdian's Artsakh apartment before her son's death

Silva Verdiyan

Silva Verdiyan is from Stepanakert, he lost one of his sons in the 44-day war. We present Ms. Silva's story verbatim

"I didn't want to leave Artsakh until the last day, we thought that there would be help, they would protect us, but when the Turks (Azeris) entered the city, it was clear that we had to run away, save our lives." We came with untold difficulties, we didn't have a car, with the help of friends, we reached the place in different cars. We were on the road for 48 hours, my son's wife is pregnant, the other child is four years old, we were hungry on the way, I was unspeakably afraid for my son at the Hakari bridge, somehow we got through. We were welcomed very well in Armenia.

My husband was killed in the first Karabakh war in 1993, my sons are two and three years old , I raised them with great difficulties. My son was killed in the 44-day war of 2020. The last time I spoke to him was at the beginning of November, and after that we did not hear from him. Some time later, they found the remains of soldiers burned by drone strikes, and we found out through DNA analysis that one of them was my son. I live with my other son, I have a four-year-old grandson, my second grandson will be born on December 25. It was very difficult to leave everything, to leave, but the most painful was to leave my son's grave. Here, at home, I made a corner named after him, I didn't take anything from running away, except my son's photo. Now we live on rent, my son is trying to find a job, I can't work because of disability >>.



Tsaghik Margaryan

"We are from the Krkjan district of Stepanakert, which is right on the border of Azerbaijan. That day, when the shooting started, I was at home, my daughter-in-law, my grandchildren, my cousin's family - his wife, children and grandchildren. There was no man at home, we remained huddled together, the children were with us, for a long time, because of the blockade, they did not go to kindergarten, we did not know what to do, where to hide. We had a car, but since we at home didn't know how to drive, we couldn't use it, the neighbor's boy, 15 years old, came and said, "I'll take you by car, the church was quite far from us, that boy somehow got us to the basement of the church, one day from my husband and we had no news from my sons. Then my husband came with questions and experience and found us, the children, we were all hungry there for several days. My husband said that even if they kill me, I should go and bring food from home. After that, when the intensity of the fire had decreased, we decided to go to Khojaly, where the Russian peacekeepers were. The Russians did not accept us there, they said go back to your places, we cannot protect you. After that we went to the basement of the Stepanakert Institute and stayed there for five days. We

crossed the bridge very scared, we had burned all the documents. We had so much fear, but we passed relatively easily. Here we came to Goris, we were received very warmly, we were counted, on the first day we were sent to Ghapan, then we came to Yerevan. Then we found a house in Artashat/Ararat marz/. This house is very similar to my house in Krkjan, of course, it was very well-kept there, but there are the same facilities for animal husbandry and farming. There is also a chicken nest and a rabbit nest in this house. The children have not yet found a job. We left a one-story house there, with three entrances, all separate, with a vineyard, beehives, we kept chickens and rabbits. Although we rent the house here, but the owner of the house is not in the country, we can stay for a long time. If they support us, we buy animals, I am ready to keep animals here, bees, chickens, rabbits. I only took my medicines from home and the pictures in my phone, look at my economy...>>



In the photo, Marine Ghukasyan with her husband. Ani Sukiasyan, vice-president of the ISHR Armenia, is handing over support items

Marine Ghukasyan

"There are six of us, my husband was in positions during the war, we went through all the horrors. Somehow we survived the siege, we simply starved. My husband's parents moved to the village in order to support our existence by farming. We did not think that after enduring so much, we would simply have to leave our house, everything was really terrible, we cannot describe the reality. In Armenia, of course, they welcomed us very well, we had relatives in New Kharberd, we lived in their house from the beginning, but they are a big family, it is not possible to stay long, now we have moved to Etchmiadzin.



Elen Petrosyan

Elen Petrosyan is 17 years old, she was born in Hadrut, she is currently studying at Shushi Technological College, which has now moved to Yerevan. Elen tells that on September 20, she and her family fled to Stepanakert, on the body of a truck, because there was no other way,

now the family is in Ghapan (Syunik region) and Elen is in Yerevan with her aunt's family. The aunt and grandmother now live in Yerevan, in a dormitory, in difficult domestic conditions.

Venhanush Hovsepyan

The story of Vehanush Hovsepyan is particularly exciting. she gave birth to her first child on September 19, when Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno Karabakh. Various media have covered the story of Vehanush. The doctors operated on the woman under explosions, in the basement of the hospital, where after staying for four days, the woman had to flee from Karabakh with the newborn Sofei.

"Sofi is the first child of Vehanush Hovsepyan. He was born on September 19, 2023, when there was a war in Nagorno Karabakh. The mother dreamed of the birth of the baby in the new building of the "Mother and Child Health Care Center" in Stepanakert, but due to the complete blockade by Azerbaijan, it was not possible. After overcoming the blockade days, Sophie was born amid the sounds of bombs and explosions, and then 3 The family has taken refuge in the Republic of Armenia. In a few days, Sophie will be two months old.



Hamest Shirinyan

Shirinyan Hamest is 77 years old, from the Drombon village of Martakert, lost his son in the first Artsakh war in the nineties, now lives with his daughter and grandchildren. They reached Stepanakert with great difficulty, on the day of the gas station explosion, their daughter, Anush Petrosyan, was in the area of the gas station and received first-degree burns, some parts of her face were burned, now they are trying to find means to rehabilitate the burns abroad. The family, with six people, was accommodated in one room of the former student dormitory.



Marine Harutyunyan with four children in Yerevan during our visit

Photos by Ani Sukiasyan

Marine Harutyunyan

"We had no idea that we would have to leave Artsakh, no one told us anything, we saw neither a Russian peacekeeper, nor an order from the president. It was an ownerless, headless situation, we didn't know how to get out, nothing was known. On September 20, I heard that the road was open, we had to leave. People fled to Khojaly, to the Russians, as if it was safe there, but they sent them back, saying it was dangerous here. On September 25, we also went out, I was driving the car, my husband was also in a serious condition, I brought him with great difficulty. I drove for thirty-five hours. Only in Armenia, in Kornidzor, they helped us. Nine months in the blockade, we were deprived of everything, the children missed bread. From Goris, when the buses came to meet us, the others brought food, bread, sweets. We had not seen white bread for 9 months. Before that, when we got out of the car, we hadn't reached the border yet, my little child asked for bread, I couldn't give it, the greeters didn't show up yet. There were two women

in the distance, I approached, I said do you have bread, they said, it is a piece of our child's bread, we will share it, they were also from Martakert, it was dry bread, black in color, we shared it with the children before we got to the buses. But when we reached Kornidzor (Armenia, a border village), it was as if you fell into heaven, because our Karabakh was made hell for us, there was no electricity, no gas, no flour, they gave us half a loaf of bread, black, made with pig feed, dry. We used to stand in line for that bread, often it was not enough for everyone. We burned corn, made black coffee to drink, I cut cherry branches, colored the water to give tea to the children, and my blood pressure dropped because of that. There was no sugar, there was nothing, but until now I don't get out of that stress, I always go into supermarkets and say: it's full here, nothing has reached Karabakh. The Turks (Azerbaijani) brought the car through Aghdam, saying they were bringing flour, and the next day they attacked us.>>



Photo: Nare Narimanyan, Artsakh, forced deportation

Anahit Khachatryan

Mrs. Anahit from Vank (Gandzasar) village of Martakert region, through tears, tells that the Gandzasar monastery complex is a 13th century structure with Armenian inscriptions and wall paintings, and that it is registered in the UNESCO list of historical and cultural values.

Mrs. Anahit is 75 years old, she was born and lived in Gandzasar village of Martakert district of Nagorno-Karabakh, after getting education, she got married and worked as a teacher in the village school. He has four children who also have children and grandchildren. Mrs. Anahit says that they overcame a lot of difficulties, the attack of the 90s, the war, but they

resisted and never thought of leaving their sleepy birthplace, but this time, they were on the verge of physical annihilation. He says that their house was located at the edge of the forest, that day, September 19, the house came under shelling, the children were taken and moved to the cave near the forest, the youngest of the children is 9 months old, he says that we were afraid that the child's voice would be heard. "We know very well how they treat Armenians, they slaughter without looking at age and sex, they even rape and mutilate little girls, there are many such cases, our We don't have information about many of the villagers, there are many missing persons.>> Eight people were displaced, he says that they lived in their house for fifty-five years, they created an economy and a house, he remembers with tears that now the dogs are homeless and hungry there.

The next day, when the intensity of the fire decreased, the villagers said that the Azeris entered the village, the village was protected by men, including his two sons. The boys somehow managed to get down to the village and get themselves out of the village. There was no time and opportunity to organize an organized evacuation, they took the first thing that happened, they always kept the documents in one place, because they had already escaped once during the 2020 war. They were able to move to Stepanakert with their car. They did not mention the support of the peacekeepers, only two days later, when it became clear that the enemy was entering Stepanakert, the peacekeepers offered to move to the airport, where they spent two days hungry and tormented in the yard. The Russian peacekeepers did not let the Armenians into the airport area, they were outside, hungry and cold. "It was Calvary that we went through, we endured hunger, cold and darkness for nine months, but we didn't want to leave our paradise Artsakh, but under the threat of annihilation and humiliation, we were driven from our homes and our biography was taken away from us," says the old woman. At the Lachin checkpoint, they were very afraid that the boys would not be released, because many of them were detained or captured, but after some time,

the boys were released. They did not manage to take anything with them, except documents.

They arrived in Armenia in thirty-two hours, he says that the reception was very warm, "from the first moment we got peace of mind, we had distant relatives in Yerevan who rented us a house for a month in Yerevan, now we are here, we live with eight people, so it was possible, they helped us, but we have to think about what to do, how to live afterwards, every support is important for us, I thank God



that my children are alive.>>

The interviews can also be read by visiting



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