

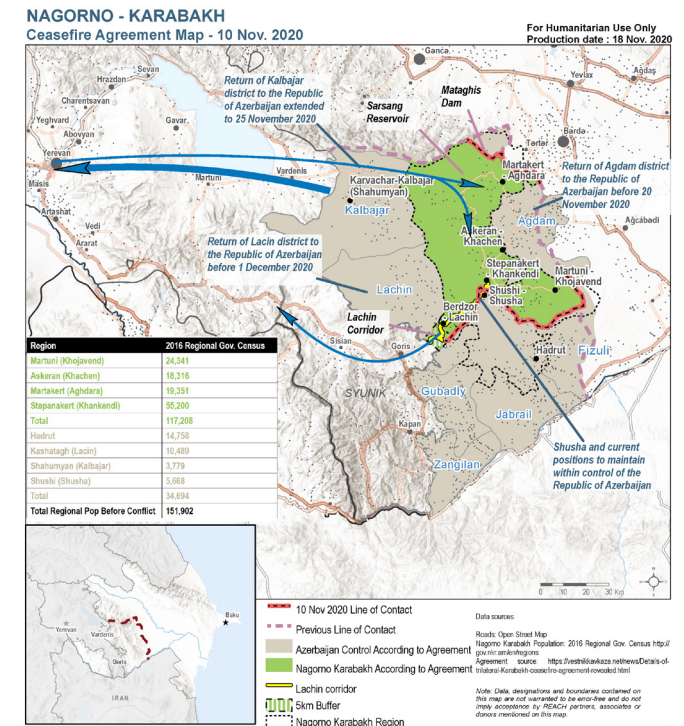
AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA

Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

Following increasing tensions over the past few months, fighting broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh on 27 September and resulted in the largest escalation of fighting and highest death tolls in the area since the previous war ended in 1994. Nagorno-Karabakh (also known as the Republic of Artsakh) is recognised as part of Azerbaijan but has been de-facto controlled by an ethnic Armenian administration. Conflict over the area between Azerbaijan and Armenia and ethnic Armenian forces based in Nagorno-Karabakh has been ongoing for decades (Al Jazeera 12/10/2020). For more than six weeks, fighting and displacement took place in Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding areas, resulting in the deaths of more than 140 civilians and thousands of combatants, widespread destruction to civilian infrastructure, and disruption to services (ICG 14/10/2020; Human Rights Ombudsman via Tom de Waal 09/11/2020; Azerbaijan MoD 09/11/2020). Shelling, rocket fire, and unmanned aerial vehicle attacks have targeted densely populated cities and essential civilian infrastructure such as homes, schools, and hospitals in Nagorno-Karabakh and occupied Azeri territories, as well as in neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan (EASO 10/11/2020; OSCE 05/10/2020; UN OHCHR 02/11/2020).

On 9 November, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia signed a peace agreement to end the fighting, stipulating that Azerbaijan will control the parts of Nagorno-Karabakh that it gained during the fighting, and will also be transferred control of seven Armenian-occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh (Tom de Waal 09/11/2020; Al Jazeera 09/11/2020; BBC 10/11/2020). Armenian forces are required to leave Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories. Ethnic Armenian residents are also vacating the territories that are now under Azerbaijani control (Al Jazeera 15/11/2020; Eurasianet 15/11/2020).



See the map in full size on page 10

KEY OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

- What are the dynamics of returns and relocation to and from Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories that are being transferred to Azerbaijan?
- Will the safety of respective populations who may move be ensured?
- Will they be able to access services in their respective locations?
- How will humanitarian access in Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories change?

IDENTIFIED RISKS

- Approaching cold season will require adequate shelter, heating, and non-food items (NFIs) including blankets and boots.
- COVID-19 remains a serious concern among populations on the move, both in terms of crowded living conditions and lack of access to healthcare.
- Immediate need for mental health support, particularly for children who have experienced extensive violence.
- Protection concerns could be prevalent for both ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani people, linked to relocation and displacement. These could include the existence of unexploded ordinances and other remnants of war.

CONFLICT OVERVIEW

Between 27 September and 9 November, fighting took place in Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas. Cities in Azerbaijan and Armenia were also hit by long-range weaponry fired by both sides (The New York Times 17/11/2020).

Civilian casualties had reached at least 140 by 9 November, with 50 civilians killed in Nagorno-Karabakh (Human Rights Ombudsman via Tom de Waal 09/11/2020; ARKA 16/11/2020), and there have been at least 93 civilian deaths in Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan MoD 09/11/2020). By 14 November, the Armenian army had confirmed the deaths of 2,317 soldiers (The Guardian 14/11/2020), while Azerbaijan has not disclosed military losses. There has also been **massive destruction** to houses and infrastructure, and **displacement** of at least 140,000 people – 100,000 to Armenia and within Nagorno-Karabakh itself and 40,000 along the front line on the Azerbaijani side (Human Rights Ombudsman 09/11/2020; UN OHCHR 02/11/2020).

Peace agreement: Six weeks of intense fighting ended on 9 November, when a peace agreement to cease hostilities was signed by Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, following Azerbaijan's capture of Shusha/Shushi (Greek City Times 10/11/2020; BBC 10/11/2020; Tom de Waal 09/11/2020). Under the agreement, Azerbaijan will maintain control of areas it gained during the fighting and will be transferred control of seven adjacent territories that had been occupied by Armenia since the last war. Armenian forces are also required to leave Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent territories. Although the official peace agreement does not specify whether ethnic Armenian residents in these territories will need to leave, many have immediately started evacuating the areas (Al Jazeera 13/11/2020). According to the agreement, displaced people will be able to return to these territories and to Nagorno-Karabakh, including the ethnic Azerbaijanis displaced by fighting in the early 1990s (ICG 10/11/2020; Tom de Waal 09/11/2020). 1,960 Russian peacekeepers will be deployed along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor – a mountain pass that connects Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia – at 16 “observation posts” for a five-year duration (The Guardian 14/11/2020; Tom de Waal 09/11/2020; Reuters 10/11/2020). It is unclear how long-term return movement from Armenia and Azerbaijan will be coordinated, although some return movement has started. Buses are taking spontaneous arrivals in Armenia back to Nagorno-Karabakh, and approximately 3,000 people returned between 14–19 November (Russian MoD 19/11/2020). Although the ceasefire is holding, tensions remain between the two countries, which could cause protection concerns and lead to future outbreaks of conflict (ICG 10/11/2020).

Protection: Human rights violations, including indiscriminate or deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure and groups of armed people killing civilians and burning houses, has been reported both by displaced people arriving to Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh as well as the region's Ombudsman (Olesya Vartanyan 08/11/2020; Human Rights Ombudsman 09/11/2020). Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have verified evidence of the use of banned cluster bombs by both Armenian and Azerbaijani forces (Amnesty International 29/10/2020; HRW 30/10/2020; HRW 23/10/2020).

Damage: As at 1 November, 160 large and small towns across Nagorno-Karabakh had been shelled, sustaining widespread damage to civilian infrastructure including houses, schools, and hospitals (Human Rights Ombudsman 09/11/2020; Human Rights Ombudsman 28/10/2020). Shelling had also resulted in large population displacement, and military and civilian deaths. Armenia, ethnic Armenian forces, and Azerbaijan all claim that civilian areas have been targeted by military attacks (Al Jazeera 01/11/2020; Massis Post 04/11/2020). Electricity systems, communications, and gas supplies have also been reported as having been damaged by shelling, putting affected populations at risk of exposure to cold winter weather (Al Jazeera 16/10/2020). There were reports that 1,815 hectares of forest within Nagorno-Karabakh was burned down using white phosphorus – a substance widely banned under international law – which potentially endangered civilians hiding out in forests and damaged public health (Human Rights Ombudsman 03/11/2020). Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh's capital, endured heavy bombardment between 27 September and 9 November. As at 5 November, 17,000 civilians – or 30% of the population – remained in the city (EASO 10/11/2020), although many civilians are believed to have fled after this date. Remaining civilians in Stepanakert have been largely residing in bunkers (Al Jazeera 16/10/2020; Azatuyun 28/10/2020).

Shusha/Shushi and the surrounding area endured extensive fighting, resulting in civilian and military casualties, until approximately 8 November when it was captured by Azeri forces (Meduza 06/10/2020; EASO 10/11/2020). A historic cathedral was damaged during the battle (Al Jazeera 08/10/2020; Human Rights Ombudsman 01/10/2020).

Other cities that have suffered damage since 10 October include Hadrut, Martuni, Martakert, Askeran, Karvajar, and Berdzor, and the villages of Taghaser, Vardashat, Spitakshen, Maghavuz Nerkin, Horatagh, Alashan, and Mataghis (Human Rights Ombudsman 09/11/2020).

INFORMATION GAPS

Access to information is a key challenge in this highly sensitive situation. For certain areas there is a lack of existing data, while for others access to the data that does exist is limited. Below are the key information gaps as identified in each specific area.

Information gaps identified for Nagorno-Karabakh:

- Detailed information on the makeup and needs of the population that has remained in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Information on the location of people that have been displaced within the territory.
- Detailed information on how returns for displaced people will be conducted.

Information gaps identified for territories being transferred to Azerbaijan:

- Disaggregated data about the population in the seven territories.
- Detailed information on the movement of ethnic Armenians who have been residing in these territories, where they are relocating to, and what their situation and needs will be at their destination.

Information gaps identified for Armenia:

- Specific information about the number of spontaneous arrivals is lacking, and numbers have not been updated by officials since late October.
- It is unknown whether the ethnic Armenians who were displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh plan on returning or permanently relocating within Armenia.

Information gaps identified for Azerbaijan:

There is limited information available on the specific needs of populations along the border with Nagorno-Karabakh and in cities that have suffered shelling.

THE SITUATION IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Civilian deaths: As at 9 November, 50 civilians had been killed and 160 injured, including children. 25–30 civilians have also been reported missing across Nagorno-Karabakh (Human Rights Ombudsman via Tom de Waal 09/11/2020; ARKA 16/11/2020; UN OHCHR 02/11/2020).

Displacement: Out of a total population of 150,000 in Nagorno-Karabakh, more than 100,000 people – equivalent to two-thirds of the population – have been displaced since the end of September, according to Nagorno-Karabakh government sources (Human Rights Ombudsman 09/11/2020). Up to 90% of those displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh are reported to be women and children as men have been forced or chose to stay behind to fight (DW 07/10/2020). The Government of Armenia confirmed in early November that approximately 40,000 of the 100,000 people displaced had crossed the border into Armenia (UN OHCHR 02/11/2020; Eurasianet 04/11/2020). It is expected that this number has since grown – there are continued media reports of large quantities of people leaving Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions, both before and after the peace agreement was signed. Large numbers of people (tens of thousands according to an ACAPS informant) are crossing into Armenia, notably through the northern route passing through Vardenis (key informant interview 17/11/2020). Extensive displacement out of Stepanakert to Armenia via Vardenis was previously reported after the capture of Shushi/Shusha on 8 November (Forbes 11/11/2020; RFE/RL 08/11/2020).

There are also Armenian media reports of some returns of ethnic Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh residents to Nagorno-Karabakh who had recently left because of the fighting (ARKA 16/11/2020). There have been no new official government reports with updated numbers of spontaneous arrivals of ethnic Armenian inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh who had fled the fighting. Information on the location of and humanitarian needs of those who remained in Nagorno-Karabakh is extremely limited, but the situation is expected to be critical as many may not have access to adequate shelter as winter approaches and as the peace agreement is being implemented.

Humanitarian access

Prior to the recent conflict – although there was physical access to Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia – international organisations had to officially obtain Azerbaijan's permission to operate in Nagorno-Karabakh (ICG 06/05/2020), which restricted access to the region. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was the only international organisation or agency providing support in Nagorno-Karabakh and had reported limited ability to move in the area before the ceasefire, because of the intensity and volatility of fighting (key informant interview 16/11/2020; ICG 06/05/2020; ICRC 02/10/2020). Prior to the ceasefire, the ICRC was only working at 20–25% capacity and had to pull out of the region after fighting worsened (key informant interview 16/11/2020; Tom de Waal 09/11/2020). The ICRC's access to the region under the new ceasefire provisions is unclear (key informant interview 16/11/2020).

Access throughout Nagorno-Karabakh and the ability of civilians and response agencies to leave the region was limited until the Lachin corridor reopened on 17 November (Ruptly 17/11/2020). Access is also likely to be limited by damage to road infrastructure, including in Stepanakert (MSF 22/10/2020; Al Jazeera 16/10/2020). It is unclear if access restrictions will change as a result of the peace agreement.

Anticipated needs

Protection: People who remain in Nagorno-Karabakh face serious protection concerns. The use of cluster bombs and shelling in civilian areas is likely to have led to casualties beyond reported numbers. One anonymous doctor said that he had seen 300–400 dead civilians in three hospitals (Daily Beast 26/10/2020), and remnants and unexploded ordinances will continue to pose a threat to people within Nagorno-Karabakh (Human Rights Ombudsman 09/11/2020; OSCE 06/10/2020). There have been several claims of serious human rights violations perpetrated against civilians and protected military personnel in Nagorno-Karabakh (Forbes 11/11/2020). Following the ceasefire agreement, protected military personnel could face increased protection risks related to retaliation or mistreatment, as there are no explicit statements in the agreement making special provisions for fighters or their families.

Health: Those affected by the conflict require medical services and medicines (ICRC 10/11/2020; WHO 27/10/2020). Health services have been dealing with a high number of people

wounded from the conflict, which reduces service provision for other health issues (Human Rights Ombudsman via Tom de Waal 09/11/2020). Three emergency healthcare workers were injured during a strike on Shusha/Shushi (Human Rights Ombudsman 28/10/2020). A children and maternity hospital was struck in Stepanakert, potentially rendering it unusable and exposing civilians to further health needs (Human Rights Ombudsman 28/10/2020), and Stepanakert's Republican Hospital was evacuated after the maternity hospital was struck. It is unclear if it is also unusable (Human Rights Ombudsman via Tom de Waal 09/11/2020).

Affected people are likely to require psychosocial support, as they may have been exposed to traumatic scenes or suffered violations themselves. There is a particular concern regarding children, who have witnessed excessive violence and will require mental health and psychological support (UNICEF 28/10/2020).

Data on COVID-19 caseloads and deaths in the territory is unavailable, and COVID-19 contact tracing has ceased. Doctors and medical staff have been particularly affected, as there is a severe lack of doctors, resulting in infected hospital staff not being able to adequately isolate and increasing the spread. It has been reported that people with severe cases of COVID-19 have been transferred to Armenian hospitals across the border (RFE/RL 21/10/2020; VOA 23/10/2020). Infectious diseases have been reported among soldiers, including COVID-19 and dysentery (Greek City Times 10/11/2020).

Food security and livelihoods: People in Nagorno-Karabakh are in need of food assistance (ICRC 10/11/2020). According to local authorities, 2,700 public and industrial objects were damaged during the hostilities – although it is unclear what “objects” refers to – including Stepanakert's central market (UN OHCHR 02/11/2020; Human Rights Ombudsman 01/11/2020). This is likely to reduce food access and livelihood options for remaining civilians and eventual returnees. It is unclear if food supply chains will be disrupted because of the ceasefire and its protocols. Many male members of households, including breadwinners, have been mobilised to fight under mandatory mobilisation (Reuters 27/09/2020). Families who have lost male members will probably face future livelihood restrictions. Damage to infrastructure such as factories, hydroelectric power plants, and service facilities is also likely to reduce livelihood opportunities (Human Rights Ombudsman 01/10/2020). Many businesses have also closed, further restricting livelihoods (EVN 06/11/2020).

Shelter and NFIs: Shelter tops the list of concerns within Nagorno-Karabakh, as determined both by interviews with displaced people and by key informants. This will also likely be a primary concern for returnees (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020). According to Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, 13,100 homes have been damaged across the 160 affected settlements in the territory (Human Rights Ombudsman 01/11/2020), leaving people who are currently in the territory and potential returnees with shelter and NFI needs. People remaining in cities have been taking refuge in basements converted into makeshift homes, which are widely reported to be unheated. These people require personal and domestic hygiene items, furniture such as beds, warm clothing, and blankets (The New York Times 18/10/2020; ICRC 10/11/2020).

Education: The conflict has disrupted learning for children in Nagorno-Karabakh (ICRC 02/10/2020). As at 8 November, 71 out of 220 schools and 12 out of 58 kindergartens had been damaged by the conflict. All schools and kindergartens have been closed, affecting over 28,000 children (Human Rights Ombudsman 09/11/2020; Human Rights Ombudsman 12/11/2020; Republic World 09/11/2020; ANI 08/11/2020).

TERRITORIES TRANSFERRED TO AZERBAIJAN

Under the agreement signed on 9 November, all Armenian-occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh will be transferred to Azerbaijan. The Kalbajar/Karvajar district will be transferred on 15 November; the Agdam district and territories held by Armenia in the Gazakh region (Kubatli, Zangelan, Jebail, and Fizuli) on 20 November; and Lachin district on 1 December (Ragip Soylu 09/11/2020; BBC 10/11/2020). The official agreement demands the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces but does not mention whether civilians must vacate or not (Al Jazeera 13/11/2020). During a press conference by Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Advisor on 15 November, an extension of withdrawal out of Kalbajar was given until 25 November. It was also stated that illegal Armenian settlers must leave by this deadline, and that the Armenian settlement of Kalbajar was considered illegal (Al Jazeera 15/11/2020; France 24 15/11/2020). Prior to the recent conflict, approximately 17,000 people were estimated to have lived in Kalbajar/Karvajar, Lachin, Kubatli, Zangelan, and Agdam districts, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG 10/11/2020; BBC 10/11/2020). It is unclear how many people were residing in the remaining areas (Fizuli and Jabrayil).

Pre-conflict, many settlements in these territories faced severe under-provision of public investment and services, including in housing, healthcare, public transport, and road repairs (ICG 20/12/2019).

The majority of IDPs within Azerbaijan were expelled from these territories in the 1990s, and the deal signed on 9 November makes provisions for their return (The Moscow Times 16/11/2020; ICG 11/11/2020). There are no provisions for the safe evacuation of ethnic Armenians, who must leave these territories on their own in accordance with the agreement (ICG 11/11/2020).

Thousands of ethnic Armenians in the Kalbajar/Karvajar district began a mass exodus in the days leading up to the official withdrawal date of 15 November. The Azerbaijani authorities extended the deadline for Armenians to fully vacate until 25 November because of the insufficient capacity of the one road that leads from the district to Armenia. Many residents stripped buildings (including restaurants and gas stations), cut trees usually used for firewood, burned their homes down, and cut power lines before leaving so that Azerbaijani settlers could not use them (The New York Times 15/11/2020; Al Jazeera 15/11/2020; Eurasianet 15/11/2020).

CURRENT SITUATION IN ARMENIA

Spontaneous arrivals: Among the estimated 40,000 spontaneous arrivals in Armenia at the beginning of November, close to 90% were women and children, including children who were accompanied by relatives or people other than their parents (World Vision 02/11/2020; CARE 19/10/2020; Handicap International 15/10/2020; REACH 21/10/2020). Most men have remained in Nagorno-Karabakh to participate in military service or because they refuse to evacuate. The majority of the spontaneous arrivals are from Stepanakert, Hadrut, Martakert, Martuni, Askeran, Shushi/Shusha, and Kashatagh (REACH 05/11/2020). Most displacement has been to the capital Yerevan (population 1.09 million), as well as to the cities of Goris (population of approximately 20,000) and Sisian (population of approximately 15,000) in Syunik region close to Nagorno-Karabakh (World Population Review accessed 11/11/2020; Population City accessed 11/11/2020).

Many of the arrivals are hosted by family members or friends, and the government is also using community centres, schools, and hotels to temporarily host people (The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020). According to an assessment conducted by REACH in Ararat during the last week of October, 71% of the arrivals are hosted by relatives and friends, and the rest are hosted in community halls. A few are renting their own apartments (REACH 05/11/2020). Spontaneous arrivals in Goris and in surrounding communities are staying with hosts or sheltering in public buildings such as schools and community halls (ECHO 28/10/2020). The initial response to these arrivals was strong, but resources are becoming strained (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020). By late October, daily arrivals were averaging 400–600 people (Save the Children 22/10/2020), but it is difficult to predict how this will change with the newly signed peace agreement. Tens of thousands of ethnic Armenian residents in the territories being transferred to Azerbaijan are currently relocating, mainly to Armenia through the northern route via Vardenis, although some may also use the Lachin corridor via Goris or go to areas within Nagorno-Karabakh (key informant interview 17/11/2020).

Role of diaspora: The total population of Armenia is just over three million, but the country's diaspora has been estimated to be at least double this or up to eight million – with the major concentration in the US, as well as in Lebanon, Australia, France, and Russia (The Guardian 03/10/2020; Reuters 16/10/2020). Before the current pandemic and the conflict, remittances made up more than 11% of the country's GDP. Although remittances had declined by more than 20% because of the economic impact of COVID-19, the country's diaspora have played a significant role in raising humanitarian funds for those affected by the conflict. They raised more than USD120 million during the first two weeks of October alone (IOM 08/10/2020; Reuters 16/10/2020).

Humanitarian access

Because of COVID-19, people arriving from other countries to Armenia are required to self-quarantine for 14 days upon entry. Arrivals may choose to take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for COVID-19, which will exempt them from quarantine if the results are negative. There appears to be no exemptions for humanitarian workers. There are also restrictions on arrivals of non-Armenians via land borders, but people working for international organisations and their families are exempt from this (The Government of the Republic of Armenia accessed 12/11/2020). There is a reported gap in the administration of aid delivery to communities, as there are only a limited number of NGOs operating outside of the capital (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020). There is also a reported lack of information sharing with the humanitarian community of updated and disaggregated data on arrival numbers, which complicates the identification of specific needs (key informant interview 17/11/2020).

To coordinate the humanitarian efforts within Armenia, the UN has established a flexible coordination structure led by the Resident Coordinator's office and the UNHCR. As at 15 November, 15 UN agencies, four foundations, one international organisation, 20 international NGOs, and 19 local NGOs were participating in this. There are five operational working groups: shelter and NFIs, protection, food security and nutrition, health, and early recovery, as well as sub-working groups on child protection, education, and cash. Specific working groups with actors in Armenia have also been established (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). According to the Ministry of Emergency Situations, humanitarian aid is organised through communities in administrative districts and the regional administrations (Ministry of Emergency Situations 19/10/2020).

Anticipated needs

Shelter and NFIs: Shelters are close to reaching full capacity, and arrivals are living in overcrowded conditions that lack heating and reliable electricity (Save the Children 22/10/2020). In early November, it was reported by some communities that host families had reached full capacity and were unable to host further arrivals. Adequate accommodation and means to cover costs of rentals and heating were identified as priority needs (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). The cost of heating is very high in Armenia, which will pose further problems for Armenians who are hosting additional relatives and friends in their homes (The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020).

The onset of winter and cold temperatures will significantly intensify shelter and heating requirements, as well as the need for warm blankets and clothes. In assessments conducted in Ararat, Syunik, Armavir, Kotayk, and Shirak, winter clothes, boots, blankets, and heating fuel were the most commonly reported needs, with 50% reporting a need for heating fuel (REACH 21/10/2020; REACH 05/11/2020). Many arrivals are in immediate need of winter clothing and shoes as they were unable to bring these items with them (UN Armenia 15/11/2020).

Food security and livelihoods: In an assessment conducted in mid-October in Yerevan, Si-sian, and Goris, 55% of spontaneous arrivals stated that they will be unable to cover their food costs beyond November 2020 without support. Among host families, 25% of those interviewed stated that beyond November their financial capacity will be limited to helping only with basic food. Host community financial strain was echoed in a later assessment (UN Armenia 15/11/2020; Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020). Although the government has stated that spontaneous arrivals may collect their pension in Armenia (Eurasianet 04/11/2020), arrivals face unemployment and informal workers may not have access to benefits. Economic and agricultural activities have also been disrupted in border regions with conflict-affected areas (UN Armenia 15/11/2020).

Health: The Ministry of Health has stated that all spontaneous arrivals will receive free access to health facilities and are allowed to use any state clinic in Armenia (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020; Eurasianet 04/11/2020), although many spontaneous arrivals are unaware of the services available (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). There are reports that the health system in Armenia has pre-existing issues, and that hospitals are overwhelmed from receiving patients injured by the war coupled with increasing COVID-19 patients (Le Monde 26/10/2020; The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020). As at 19 November, Armenia had registered 120,459 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 1,839 deaths (WHO accessed 19/11/2020) and the situation has worsened significantly since the start of the conflict, with increased hospitalisations. The Ministry of Health stated that health authorities are seeking to increase the nationwide hospital capacity to deal with the increase in infected people, and that hospitals may soon not have the capacity to treat all people in urgent need of medical aid (Radio Liberty 25/10/2020). There were reports that, as at 6 November, there were only five intensive care beds available nationwide for COVID-19 patients (Reuters 10/11/2020); oxygen supplies are also limited (key informant interview 17/11/2020). Deaths from COVID-19 have grown dramatically since the start of the conflict: an average of 3–8 deaths per day in August and September has increased to between 20–40 deaths per day from mid-October onwards (Worldometer accessed 17/11/2020). There is a need for PPE and hygiene items, and information on their proper use, to ensure COVID-19 prevention among arrivals (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). Spontaneous arrivals have their temperature checked and are provided with face masks, but, in early November, only people displaying symptoms were being tested for COVID-19 (Eurasianet 04/11/2020). According to an assessment conducted in mid-October by Mission East, COVID-19 prevention measures are weak and living conditions are crowded, with multiple households sharing living spaces – which is likely to increase the spread of COVID-19 (World Vision 02/11/2020). According to the assessment, the WHO stated that the conflict has increased COVID-19 cases in Armenia. The deputy director of the Ministry of Health's National Center for Disease Control and Prevention stated that the war is overshadowing the pandemic and resulting in people not wearing masks (Radio Liberty 15/10/2020).

There are general concerns about the mental health of those displaced, though some mental health services are being provided by the Armenian Red Cross Society and government

social workers (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020). A Save the Children assessment in the town of Goris found that children who have recently arrived from Nagorno-Karabakh are showing signs of anxiety, stress, and trouble sleeping (Save the Children 22/10/2020). There is still a reported gap in providing spontaneous arrivals with specialised services including psychological support, and there is limited access to sexual and reproductive health services or specialised support to mothers and newborns, as well as a lack of feminine hygiene products (World Vision 02/11/2020; Save the Children 22/10/2020).

WASH: Water is available in nearly all locations in Armenia, and in the recent Mission East Assessment no participants indicated problems related to access to water (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020; key informant interview 17/11/2020). People staying in temporary shelters lack access to adequate sanitation facilities however (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). Host community donations of hygiene items have significantly decreased, at the same time as needs have increased (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020).

Education: According to the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia, the Ministry of Education is allowing all children who have arrived from Nagorno-Karabakh to attend any school in Armenia (Eurasianet 04/11/2020). There is reported low enrollment by these children however, because of a variety of factors including stress, trauma, lack of school items, and language/dialect barriers (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). As at early November, all schools in Armenia were closed for in-person learning because of COVID-19. Schools in Armenia opened on 15 September after having been closed since early March because of COVID-19 (Mirror-Spectator 24/09/2020); as a result of increased COVID-19 cases in schools across the country they were closed again until 12 November (Radio Liberty 15/10/2020; Armen Press 27/10/2020). On 13 November, primary schools reopened while secondary schools remained virtual (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). There is a need for child-friendly spaces and school supplies for displaced children (Mission East Assessment 10–17/10/2020), particularly as the number of spontaneous arrivals is increasing (UN Armenia 15/11/2020). In Goris, all of the town's kindergartens have been converted into shelters for arrivals, reducing options for both arriving children and host communities (ECHO 28/10/2020).

Protection: Eight unaccompanied minors among spontaneous arrivals were identified by 15 November; six have been reunited with their families. Generally, responders lack access to government data on arrivals' profiles that they need to identify people vulnerable to protection risks. Referral systems to transfer government data to police – to support issuance of documentation to spontaneous arrivals in order to ensure access to services and basic rights – have also not been put in place (UN Armenia 15/11/2020).

CURRENT SITUATION IN OTHER AFFECTED AREAS OF AZERBAIJAN

Civilian casualties: According to the Government of Azerbaijan, as at 9 November 93 civilians had been killed and 407 injured by the fighting (AzerNews 09/11/2020). Heavy artillery attacks have affected several cities in Azerbaijan, causing civilian casualties and damage to houses and infrastructure (AzerNews 09/11/2020). On 28 October, Barda – a town 30km from the front lines – was hit by rocket attacks, resulting in 21 civilian deaths and 70 people injured (UN OHCHR 02/11/2020). On 24 October, Ganja – the second biggest city in Azerbaijan and far from the front lines – was struck by a missile strike, resulting in 13 civilian deaths and 45 injuries (BBC 18/10/2020). Tartar – located 20km from the front lines – also received multiple artillery strikes resulting in 16 deaths and 50 injuries (AzerNews 09/11/2020; UN OHCHR 02/11/2020).

Displacement: According to Azeri authorities, approximately 40,000 people have been displaced away from front-line areas within Azerbaijan as a result of the recent conflict (ICG 14/10/2020; UN OHCHR 02/11/2020). In January 2020, there were more than 652,000 IDPs within Azerbaijan (UNHCR 01/09/2020). 90% of these IDPs are from the seven territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, which will now be transferred to Azerbaijani control (UNHCR 10/2009; The Moscow Times 16/11/2020). The ceasefire and deal brokered on 9 November makes provisions for IDPs to return to Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding territories, including ethnic Azerbaijanis displaced by fighting in the early 1990s (ICG 10/11/2020).

A significant number of people in Azerbaijan have been exposed to the conflict. 150,000 people are estimated to live within 10km of the line of contact; they are receiving some aid from local NGOs, government responses, and the Azerbaijani Red Crescent Society and ICRC (The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020).

Humanitarian access

Humanitarian presence in affected areas in Azerbaijan is limited and civil society organisations operate in a restricted space, although some have been able to distribute aid in areas near the line of contact (key informant interview 07/10/2020; The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020). The government has led aid operations with support from the Azerbaijani and Turkish Red Crescent and the ICRC (The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020). A volunteer from the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society was killed during the shelling in Barda on 28 October (ICRC 28/10/2020).

There are additional administrative constraints because of a complex registration process for NGOs and a review process for foreign grants (ICNL 30/09/2020).

COVID-19-related travel restrictions in and out of Azerbaijan by air or land are in force until 1 December, with the exception of cargo and charter flights and a limited number of commercial flights. Land borders with Georgia and Iran are closed until 1 December. A reduced flight schedule is still operating with flights to Turkey, England, Belarus, Germany, UAE, Russia, and

Kyiv. People entering Azerbaijan must present a negative COVID-19 test and are screened for COVID-19 symptoms on arrival. All arrivals must complete a 14-day self-quarantine in their own accommodation. In cases of suspected infection, passengers are subject to a 14-day quarantine in a specially designated facility (Azerbaijan Travel accessed 11/11/2020; Republic of Azerbaijan 11/06/2020).

Anticipated needs

Shelter and NFIs: Almost 40,000 people have been displaced in Azerbaijan, most of whom were displaced to Barda. 16,000 displaced people were staying in temporary shelters and the rest with family members or other hosts (Republic of Azerbaijan 09/11/2020). Since the ceasefire, some displaced people are returning home. Needs have not been fully assessed but it is likely that there will have been significant property damage to displaced people's homes, people will have lost assets, and will be exposed to winter weather (key informant interview 16/11/2020). NFI needs will probably include blankets, warm clothing, kitchen items, and materials for housing repairs.

According to the Azerbaijan General Prosecutor, 3,326 houses, 120 apartments and 440 civilian facilities were damaged in the hostilities (Azerbaijan General Prosecutor 09/11/2020). Displaced people whose houses have been destroyed are likely to remain in temporary shelters until their houses are rebuilt and will require assistance (key informant interview 16/11/2020). Needs include blankets and warm clothing for the upcoming winter season, and hygiene kits because of the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission in overcrowded, shared living spaces (ECHO 30/10/2020).

WASH: Displaced people in communal shelters have reported a lack of access to WASH facilities including showers and hot water (key informant interview 16/11/2020). This increases risks of COVID-19 transmission.

Health: People injured in the fighting require urgent medical treatment. ICRC is delivering medicine and other medical supplies, including dressing kits and bandages, to vulnerable communities near the line of contact (UK Government 31/10/2020).

As at 19 November, Azerbaijan had confirmed 79,158 cases of COVID-19 and 1,005 deaths (WHO accessed 19/11/2020). The pandemic is reportedly "deprioritised" because of the conflict, which may indicate a lack of resources towards treating COVID-19 (The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020). Displaced people in collective shelters are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 transmission (ECHO 28/10/2020). Since the conflict began, the number of daily cases has steadily increased from around 100 per day in late September to more than 1,000 new cases per day in November – with over 1,500 new cases on 17 November. There has been a steady increase in deaths from COVID-19, from 1–2 daily deaths from mid-August to mid-October – when the curve started to rise rapidly – to 22 new deaths reported on 13 November, the highest number since the outbreak began (Worldometer accessed 17/11/2020; Our World in

Data accessed 17/11/2020). This threatens to aggravate the health conditions of vulnerable, conflict-affected people and overwhelm a weak and underfunded healthcare system (ECHO 28/10/2020; IWPR 09/07/2020). Displaced people have also reported difficulties in accessing healthcare services (key informant interview 16/11/2020).

Protection: Populations in cities subjected to shelling face protection concerns as civilian areas have been hit in indiscriminate attacks (UN OHCHR 02/11/2020). These people have been exposed to high levels of trauma and are likely to require psychosocial support, particularly children (key informant interview 16/11/2020). Unexploded ordnance, mines, and rocket and missile components resulting from former and recent hostilities also pose protection risks to those living in and returning to conflict-affected areas (The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020).

Food security and livelihoods: Many affected and displaced people have limited access to food. Displacements and damage to business infrastructure caused by the conflict have disrupted livelihoods, compounding income losses linked to COVID-19 restrictions and related economic shocks (IOM 08/10/2020; UNICEF 22/06/2020).

Education: More than 9,500 children under the age of 15 have been displaced – amounting to almost 25% of the total number of displaced people (Republic of Azerbaijan 09/11/2020). Children in emergency shelters need educational support, as remote schooling has been difficult to provide (The New Humanitarian 05/11/2020). According to the Ministry of Education, ten students were killed, more than 17 injured, and approximately 50 educational buildings damaged because of the conflict (MoE 22/10/2020; MoE 07/11/2020). Azerbaijan began to partially reopen schools from 15 September. After increasing COVID-19 case numbers however, all classes moved online again from 2 November until at least 1 December (UNICEF accessed 11/11/2020; UK Government accessed 11/11/2020).

KEY OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS AND IDENTIFIED RISKS

Humanitarian conditions:

- There are several outstanding questions related to humanitarian conditions in the region, considering recent developments.
- What is the extent of damage in areas that have been exposed to fighting and what are the associated security risks with civilians remaining in or moving to these areas?
- Will there be changes in humanitarian access into Nagorno-Karabakh and the newly returned territories? Will humanitarian organisations be able to access Nagorno-Karabakh? Will responders be able to operate without contributing to tensions?

Nagorno-Karabakh

What are the dynamics of returns and relocation to Nagorno-Karabakh?

The two largest cities in Nagorno-Karabakh – the main Armenian city of Stepanakert and Shusha/Shushi, now under Azerbaijani control – are just 13km from each other. Ethnic Armenians displaced by recent fighting and ethnic Azerbaijanis displaced by conflict in the 1990s are expected to return to these two cities (Reuters 16/11/2020; Daily Sabah 16/11/2020; AA 16/11/2020). Contact between the two communities is unavoidable and likely to cause tension (Carnegie 11/11/2020).

Will ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh remain or relocate to Armenia?

Will those who have already gone to Armenia return now that the peace agreement is in place? If they remain in Armenia, what will the support system look like?

Specific provisions for ethnic Armenians who want to remain in or return to Nagorno-Karabakh are unclear, as it is the responsibility of Russian peacekeepers to guarantee their safety in the region (ICG 11/11/2020). Some ethnic Armenians have already returned to Nagorno-Karabakh according to Artsakh authorities, with no reported protection issues (Arka News 16/11/2020). There have been reports of thousands of ethnic Armenians leaving Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories for Armenia before these areas are transferred to Azerbaijani control (BBC 12/11/2020; Eurasianet 08/11/2020). There are safety concerns relating to the two roads leading out of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia (Eurasianet 08/11/2020). It is unclear where these people will go and if there is capacity in Armenian host communities to support them.

Will displaced Azerbaijanis from the 1990s return to Nagorno-Karabakh? What provisions are in place to support them? How will the use of ethnic Armenian property be legally handled? Will this be done in a way that will avoid future conflict?

Are these areas safe? Is the safe passage of Azerbaijanis assured? What guarantees are in place?

It is unclear when and how many displaced Azerbaijanis will return to Nagorno-Karabakh. Competing property claims between ethnic Armenian and returning Azerbaijanis risk triggering more violence and protection concerns (ICG 11/11/2020).

What will the governance structure look like in Nagorno-Karabakh?

The new deal does not address the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. This is a deliberate omission but neglects the issue at the centre of the conflict, and makes long-term stability very precarious (Carnegie 11/11/2020).

What will access to services be like? What will access to key infrastructure (such as centralised heating and electricity) be like? Will services be available to both ethnicities?

Many hospitals, schools, and homes have been destroyed by fighting, and people risk exposure in the winter without weatherproofing of buildings and/or access to centralised heating, adequate shelter, and winter items including blankets, warm clothes, and boots.

Territories transferred to Azerbaijan

What are the dynamics within the territories being transferred to Azerbaijan? Will ethnic Armenians remain or relocate to other areas of Armenia? If they go to Armenia, what will the support system look like?

Ethnic Armenians are vacating the territories being transferred to Azerbaijan by the dates stipulated in the deal. There are no provisions in place for their evacuation but there are reports of mass exoduses from these territories in the lead up to withdrawal deadlines. It is unclear where these people will go in Armenia and what provisions will be available to them. Some may also go to parts of Nagorno-Karabakh (Al Jazeera 15/11/2020; Eurasianet 15/11/2020; key informant interview 16/11/2020).

Will Azerbaijanis displaced in the 1990s return to these areas?

Are these areas safe? Is their safe passage assured?

Is there infrastructure in place to support large numbers of returnees?

What are the major protection and security concerns for Azerbaijani returnees?

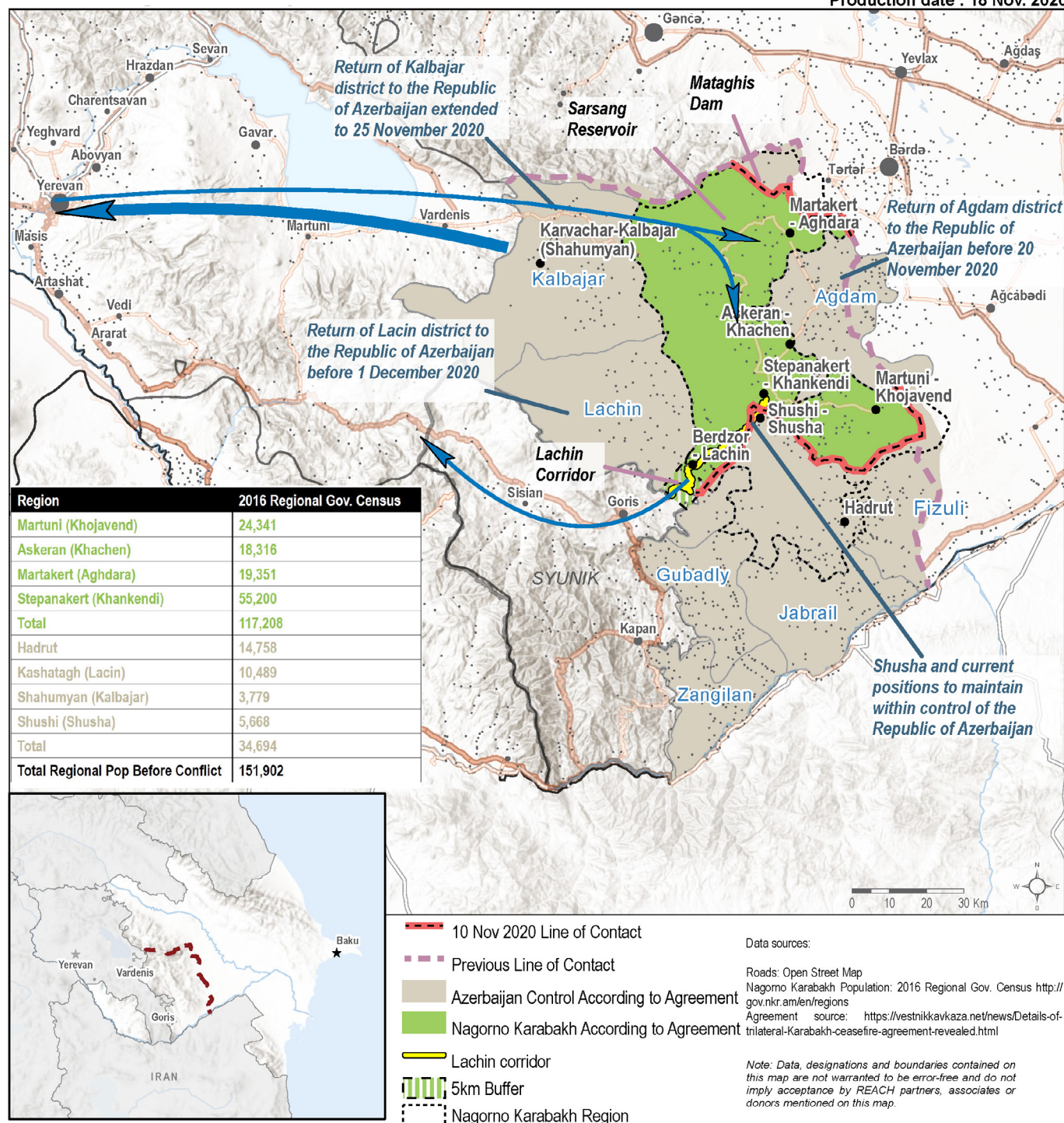
Because of the territory gained by Azerbaijan, more than half a million Azerbaijanis displaced in the 1990s may now return to the areas of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding territories (The New York Times 11/11/2020). It is unclear if, when, and how many of these people will return and there are many challenges facing those who choose to resettle. High numbers of returns would face significant challenges as infrastructure is unlikely to be sufficient to support them. Prior to the recent conflict, these areas were sparsely populated and had limited services and infrastructure. Damage caused by conflict and reports of ethnic Armenians stripping buildings and burning down their homes before leaving areas now under Azerbaijani control will further reduce infrastructure provision. Because of the challenges posed by resettlement, many displaced Azerbaijanis may not return (Al Jazeera 15/11/2020; Tom de Waal 15/11/2020).



NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Ceasefire Agreement Map - 10 Nov. 2020

For Humanitarian Use Only
Production date : 18 Nov. 2020



REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT