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Original

Minute on consequences of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war

Following six weeks of intense fighting for Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, in late 2020, the WCC executive committee adopted a statement praying for wisdom, unity and calm, and grieving “with all those who have suffered terrible losses not only in the renewed fighting since 27 September, but throughout the long history of the struggle for self-determination in the region, entrenching antagonism more deeply with each precious life lost.” The WCC condemned the use of chemical weapons and cluster munitions, the targeting of civilians, hospitals and public infrastructure, and all other war crimes, beheadings, torture and other atrocities witnessed during the conflict. The WCC also appealed for respect for the holy sites and cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, in light of numerous reports of the desecration of such sites.

Almost two years after the end of the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, hundreds of ethnic Armenians are still illegally held by Azerbaijan, in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. While the world’s attention is fixed on the conflict in Ukraine, Azerbaijani forces are reported to have launched new assaults on indigenous Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh as well as on the sovereign borders of the Republic of Armenia, with further loss of innocent lives and more prisoners taken.

Moreover, accountability for war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law - repeatedly reported by Human Rights Watch, BBC, the Guardian and many other international media outlets - has not been achieved or pursued.

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany,

Appeals to the United Nations, the European Union and the authorities of Azerbaijan for the immediate release of all Armenian civilian hostages and POWs in accordance with international law.

Reiterates concern for holy sites and Armenian cultural heritage in the region, and **urges** UNESCO and all members of the international community to take all possible and appropriate measures to protect these sites.

Calls for the start of meaningful dialogue for a just and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

Requests the WCC and all member churches to remain engaged in Christian solidarity with the churches and people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in their search for a just and sustainable peace.