

**Public Statement on peace and human rights along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border**

ACT Alliance welcomes the cessation of direct military action on the Armenian-Azerbaijan border last month. We urge the parties of the conflict to continue to respect the ceasefire and de-escalate the situation in order to avoid further casualties. We deeply regret all loss of lives, and offer our sincere condolences . We stand in solidarity with those who lost a loved one in the hostilities.

We recognize the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs and reiterate our full support to their efforts to peacefully address the situation.

In the current context, with the novel coronavirus pandemic, efforts to ensure peace are more important than ever. As both sides have been badly affected by the pandemic, we are concerned that the threat of violence could exacerbate both the health risks and have heavy socio-economic implications for the citizens living in the border regions. Difficulties with access to water reservoirs and farmland present an increasingly greater risk to the civilians’ livelihood in the area. The hardship faced by civilians reconfirms the need for mutual understanding and cooperation across the border. Such cooperation has to consider the duty to protect all civilians as per commitments to uphold human rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Therefore, ACT Alliance calls for:

* The engagement of faith actors and civil society in peacebuilding efforts along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.
* All parties to continue to respect the ceasefire, de-escalate the situation and avoid further casualties.
* All parties to respect the duty to protect all civilians as per obligations to uphold human rights and International Humanitarian Law.
* All parties to engage in existing opportunities for peaceful negotiations as well as enhanced mechanisms for communication to ensure the safety of all civilians.
* Inclusion of local faith actors and civil society from all sides in dialogue processes that seek solutions to the conflict.