

# UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE



*For immediate release*

## **Statement by Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan**

(10 October 2023) The Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, reiterated her concern over the ongoing situation in the South Caucasus region, in which it is now reported that over 100,600 refugees, including 30,000 children, have arrived in Armenia from the region in just over a week: “I call on all efforts to be made to ensure the protection and human rights of the ethnic Armenian population who remain in the area and of those who have left, including the right to return, which should be prioritized,” the Special Adviser stressed. The Special Adviser echoed the call by the High Commissioner for Human Rights that the rights of internally displaced people and of those in a refugee-like situation must be fully upheld, including ensuring that they are able to exercise their right to return in safety and dignity.

Special Adviser Wairimu Nderitu noted the assurances that have been given by Azerbaijan to protect the ethnic Armenian population and to ensure that their rights are fully protected. She also welcomed the initial access given to the UN to assess the humanitarian situation in the area. At the same time, she emphasized the need that active efforts are put in place to guarantee the security of the ethnic Armenian population, both for those who are there now and for those who exercise their right to return. “These positive steps need to be continued, including by permitting full humanitarian access,” said the Special Adviser. “I encourage the Government of Azerbaijan to take steps towards putting in place a comprehensive plan in this regard, including measures to ensure the right to return of those who have fled, as well as concrete steps for ensuring the rights and protections of minorities, which is a cornerstone of international human rights law,” the Special Adviser noted. She further emphasized the need for allegations of violations to be fully investigated, including reports of civilian casualties and, where substantiated, accountability for victims ensured, in line with relevant international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

Special Adviser Wairimu Nderitu also reiterated her call for stepping up dialogue to prevent any further military escalation and violence as well as to promote a sustainable peace for the region: “The region has witnessed cyclical violence for far too long. The impact on civilians has always been devastating. The risk of atrocity crimes remains present. All the people in the region deserve a future free from violence and fear. This requires concrete action to ensure a lasting peace, as well as to address and overcome the deep scars, distrusts and division that exists between communities.”

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