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## Nagorno-Karabakh. Garen Nazarian (Armenian ambassador). “Grave humanitarian crisis. Region at risk of another genocide”



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. briefed SIR on the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, shortly after Pope Francis' plea at the end of the Angelus prayer on Sunday, November 1. “I would like to reiterate my heartfelt appeal to the parties responsible in the conflict to intervene as soon as possible to stop the shedding of innocent blood”, the Pope said. “May they not think of using violence to resolve the controversy, but dedicate themselves to sincere negotiation with the help of the international community.”

**Ambassador, what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh?** We are facing daily bombing of civilian areas by Azerbaijan's armed forces with weapons banned by international conventions, including cluster bombs and more recently white phosphorus munitions, also banned, on the large forests in Artsakh. This is a serious violation of international humanitarian law, of the norms and principles of customary law, of the Geneva Conventions and of the Convention on Prohibitions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons. Several military experts confirmed that never in the 21st century have there been so many large-scale military operations involving the use of all types of modern weapons against Artsakh, including tanks, manned fighting vehicles and drones, as well as different artillery, missiles and rockets, aviation - helicopters, airplanes - and a large number of troops deployed in the battlefield. In this tense situation, to what extent could Pope Francis' appeal for the conflicting parties to engage in peace negotiations have an impact? The fact that His Holiness Pope Francis has once again drawn the attention of the international community is extremely important. The Pope asked not to forget “what is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh where armed clashes are taking place amid a fragile truce.” He then denounced the tragic increase in casualties, the destruction of homes, infrastructure and places of worship. As you may have heard, the Holy Saviour Cathedral in Shushi was attacked twice by targeted missile strikes fired by Azerbaijan's armed forces. What would you like to say to the international community? The

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people of Nagorno-Karabakh are facing a severe humanitarian crisis that should be seriously addressed by the international community. If not, the people of Artsakh risk falling victim to a genocide. And I'm saying this in full knowledge of the exact meaning of the term "genocide." We expect stronger leadership roles and firmer measures from international partners to be implemented right now, before the loss of more innocent lives. In particular, we call on the European Union and NATO member states to exert economic and diplomatic pressure on the Turkish and Azerbaijani governments with a view to resuming the process for a peaceful resolution. *In this context we reiterate once again the words of His Holiness: sincere and substantial negotiations must be initiated to stop this carnage as soon as possible.* We expect international media to give accurate and truthful coverage of the war crimes that are taking place, to intensify the voice of the victims of the ongoing conflict and expose to the world the unspeakable atrocities of beheadings, assassinations and ethnic cleansing by the Azerbaijani-Turkish criminal alliance with the involvement of foreign terrorists in the conflict zone. **Is there a possible solution to achieve a stable and long-lasting peace?** While the Azerbaijani authorities, supported by Turkey and international terrorists, go unpunished and intentionally boycott the peace initiatives of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group of Russia, France and the United States, the only effective way to halt the escalation of violence, save lives and achieve stable and long-lasting peace in the region is the international recognition of the independence of the Artsakh Republic.

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