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NEW INITIATIVE LAUNCHED TO SETTLE "FROZEN CONFLICT"

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New Initiative was Launched to Settle "Frozen Conflict"

Civil society and academics from Armenia and Azerbaijan have joined forces in calling for an end to the *frozen conflict* of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Six leading representatives from both sides have signed an open letter warning of the *catastrophic consequences* unless the long-running dispute is resolved.

Efforts, including by the OSCE Minsk Group, to end the conflict have proved unsuccessful. In the letter, the six signatories stated, *Armenian and Azerbaijani people are tired of this conflict and do not want to face new losses over and over again.*

It adds, *It is naive to believe that apart from Armenian and Azerbaijani people someone else will be able to solve the conflict.*

The intervention comes amid growing concern following a recent upsurge in military skirmishes between the two sides.

The writers say, *The consequences of the bloody conflict between the two states still continue to prevent the establishment of the sustainable peace and stability in the region.*

The group said that the recent increase in hostilities *once again demonstrated that the resumption of war could lead to the catastrophic consequences.*

Claiming a *civic obligation*, the six-strong alliance write, *It is impossible to express all horrors of war by only providing sheer statistics of moral and material damages inflicted*

during the last decades.

Young Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers in the trenches see each other through the optic scopes of sniper rifles, say the signatories.

All the resources spent for military purposes, they add, could have been used for the welfare and prosperity of two nations.

In the appeal, the six make several recommendations. This includes *serious consideration* being given to a *potential compromise deal* which would see the establishment of a Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Republic within the boundaries of Azerbaijan where all rights as well as the security of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities would be guaranteed.

They call for an *acceleration in substantive and result-oriented talks* while another recommendation is to *eliminate the fact of occupation, which forms the fundamental basis of the current status-quo and ensure the withdrawal of the troops as well as the safe return of IDPs to their native lands.*

The letter concludes, *Azerbaijan is a tolerant, multicultural and developing country, where 30 thousand citizens of Armenian ethnicity live in a free and independent environment and although the conflict they have never become the subject of discrimination.*

It adds, *There are not any obstacles for Azerbaijani and Armenian communities to live again in safety and peace in Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Therefore, ungrounded racist views on incompatibility of Armenians and Azerbaijanis and inability of both nations for peaceful coexistence should firmly be rejected.*

The signatories from the Armenian side are Vage Aventian, a human rights defender; Vaan Martirosian, chairman of the *National Liberation Movement* and Syusan Djaginian, a journalist and vice-president of the human rights non-governmental organization, Meridian.

From the Azerbaijani side, the letter is signed by Rovshan Rzayev, a member of Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh; Kamil Salimov, Professor of Baku State University and Shalala Hasanova, chairwoman of the public union *Support for the Development of Communication with Public.*

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