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NEW INITIATIVE LAUNCHED TO SETTLE "FROZEN CONFLICT"

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New Inıtiative 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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CONFLICT

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