

**Debate Pack**

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# International support for Armenian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh

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# 1

## Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on international support for Armenian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh is scheduled for Tuesday 19 March 2024, from 2:30-4:00pm. The debate will be opened by Carol Monaghan MP.

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## Background

In September 2023 [Azerbaijan launched military action in Nagorno-Karabakh](#), an enclave in Azerbaijani territory that had, at the time, a 95% ethnic Armenian population of approximately 120,000 people. The offensive followed a nine-month blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only road linking the enclave to Armenia, which had resulted in a shortage of food, fuel, medicine and basic supplies. In August 2023, [the UN had already declared a humanitarian emergency](#) in the region.

Nagorno-Karabakh is now under the direct control of Azerbaijan and nearly the entire ethnic Armenian population has fled to Armenia.

While [the International Court of Justice has issued provisional measures](#) (PDF) ordering Azerbaijan to let ethnic Armenians who fled Nagorno-Karabakh return “in a safe, unimpeded and expeditious manner”, those refugees have remained in Armenia. [Most are located in the capital Yerevan and Syunik, Ararat and Kotayk provinces.](#)

The organisation Action against Hunger has estimated that, out of a population of 3 million, [1 in 30 people in Armenia is now a refugee](#), having arrived in the country with practically nothing. More than half are women and girls, nearly one third are children and one fifth are elderly. As such, the group concludes that Armenia “is now faced with an extensive refugee crisis”.

[There is widespread concern](#) over the ability of Armenia’s government to address both the immediate humanitarian needs of Karabakhi Armenians but also the challenges of integrating them into Armenian society in the longer term. In January 2024, Marina Nagai, Caucasus Programme Director at the NGO International Alert said [“The whole of Armenian society is trying to help, but the magnitude of the problem is simply beyond what Armenia can cope with”](#).

In October 2023 the UNHCR launched a \$97 million [Emergency Refugee Response Plan for Armenia](#) setting out relief efforts until the end of March 2024.

The [International Committee of the Red Cross](#), in cooperation with the Armenian Red Cross, [has also been providing support on the ground](#) including healthcare, the provision of food and basic services, and economic assistance

to individuals. The World Health Organisation has also estimated that [thousands will be in need of urgent mental health support](#) and since September 2023 has been [supporting the Armenian Ministry of Health in its refugee response](#), having launched a \$2.9 million emergency donor appeal.

At the end of September 2023, [the UK government announced £1 million of funding for the ICRC](#) to support its humanitarian response in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. In February 2024, [the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said that it continues to liaise](#) with the UN, ICRC and other NGOs to assess humanitarian need in the region.

In December 2023 [France announced additional aid for Armenia](#), taking its total contribution to the emergency appeals of the ICRC, UNHCR and other NGOs to €27.5 million in 2023.

Since September 2023, [the EU has provided €17.5 million in humanitarian aid](#) to assist those displaced in Armenia, and the few remaining people in Nagorno-Karabakh, while [the United States announced a further \\$4.1 million in aid in November 2023](#), taking total US humanitarian assistance to the region to \$28 million since 2020.

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# Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

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### [Armenia struggles to cope with exodus from Nagorno-Karabakh](#)

International Crisis Group  
Olesya Vartanyan  
4 March 2024

### [Despite the warm welcome, Karabakh refugees in Armenia are struggling, unsure where to go next](#)

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty  
Joshua Kucera  
22 December 2023

### [Karabakh refugees in Armenia face uncertainty and poverty in exile](#)

Reuters  
Felix Light  
4 December 2023

### ['Which future do we have?': Stories from refugees in Armenia](#)

Action Against Hunger  
21 November 2023

### [Council of Europe to prepare package of measures in response to refugee influx in Armenia following Special Representative on Migration and Refugees' visit](#)

Council of Europe  
30 October 2023

### [What to know about the refugee crisis in Armenia](#)

USA for UNCHR  
16 October 2023

### [Armenia: UN launches urgent appeal to help refugees fleeing Karabakh](#)

UN News  
7 October 2023

### [Armenia Refugee Response Plan: October 2023 – March 2024](#)

UNCHR  
7 October 2023

**[A refugee crisis is developing in Armenia. A political crisis will likely quickly follow](#)**

Euro News  
Will Neal  
5 October 2023

**[Armenian refugee from Nagorno-Karabakh says her village was given two days to leave](#)**

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty  
Karine Simonian  
3 October 2023

**[‘It’s a ghost town’: UN arrives in Nagorno-Karabakh to find ethnic Armenians have fled](#)**

The Guardian  
Pjotr Sauer  
2 October 2023

**[Racing to meet the health needs of refugees entering Armenia](#)**

World Health Organization  
1 October 2023

**[Nagorno-Karabakh: Armenia says 100,000 refugees flee region](#)**

BBC News Online  
George Wright  
30 September 2023

**[Karabakh emergency escalates, thousands still pouring into Armenia: UN agencies](#)**

UN News  
29 September 2023

**[Armenians rage as 50,000 flee Nagorno-Karabakh](#)**

Politico  
Gabriel Gavin and Victor Jack  
27 September 2023

**[Nagorno-Karabakh: Thousands flee as Armenia says ethnic cleansing under way](#)**

BBC News Online  
Kathryn Armstrong & Nataliya Zotova  
26 September 2023

**Nagorno-Karabakh: Erdoğan praises Azerbaijan as thousands flee to Armenia**

The Guardian

Andrew Roth and Sam Jones

25 September 2023

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## Press releases

### [Latest situation in Nagorno-Karabakh: UK statement to the OSCE](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

9 November 2023

Deputy Ambassador Deirdre Brown welcomes Armenian efforts to support the 100,000 people displaced by September's military action and calls on Azerbaijan to implement a meaningful reintegration plan for those wishing to return:

Following the end of September's military action in Nagorno-Karabakh, the UK welcomes the access that the Azerbaijani authorities have enabled for the UN and other humanitarian actors to the region. We remain concerned for the welfare of residents affected by the limited access to supplies over the period before September's events, and strongly support the efforts of the UN and other multilateral agencies to address urgent humanitarian needs of those affected by the conflict. We welcome the cooperation Azerbaijan has shown the relevant international agencies to date, and encourage them to continue to support efforts to address need in the region.

Further to this, we also welcome Armenian efforts to support the 100,000 people displaced by the conflict. Some of those displaced may wish to return to homes they have left behind. A meaningful reintegration plan that accommodates the needs of those wishing to return is of paramount importance. We encourage Azerbaijan to implement such a plan, including the protection of their rights and ability to participate in civic and political life, rigorously and in a coherent and transparent manner.

Now is the time to make progress on a lasting settlement for the region overall. We call on both Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve the issues surrounding this region peacefully through dialogue, and in a manner which fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.

### [Concern regarding situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia: UK statement to the OSCE](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

5 October 2023

Deputy Ambassador Deirdre Brown says the UK remains seriously concerned about the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and significant refugee flows into Armenia:

The UK continues to have serious concerns about the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the significant refugee flows from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia.

It is vital that international humanitarian organisations have independent access into Nagorno-Karabakh, so they can assess humanitarian need and

respond appropriately. We therefore welcome Azerbaijan's decision last week to allow UN agencies into Nagorno-Karabakh, to complement ongoing efforts by the ICRC.

On 29 September, the UK government announced that it is giving £1 million to the ICRC to support those efforts. Alongside contributions from others, this will help fund life-saving medication, healthcare, and other essential support to those affected by the recent conflict.

We are also mindful of the significant pressures the movement of over 100,000 refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia will place on support services provided by the Armenian government and international aid organisations. We continue to liaise with the UN, ICRC and others to assess humanitarian need in both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia to determine what further assistance may be required.

We continue to urge both Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue negotiations and to do all they can to reduce tensions and avoid further escalation, including through Azerbaijan making clear its respect for Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and for the rights and security of the remaining ethnic Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh. On 28 September the UK's Minister for Europe, Leo Docherty, had calls with both Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Bayramov and made these points.

We will continue to monitor the situation, in close cooperation with our international partners, and hope to see positive steps soon to continue the substantive negotiations that are the only way to secure a lasting peace, and stability and security for the region.

### **UK funding for humanitarian response to events in Nagorno-Karabakh**

#### **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**29 September 2023**

The UK has announced vital funding to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as it provides life-saving medication, healthcare and other essential support to vulnerable people in Nagorno-Karabakh and the wider region.

The £1 million funding will also support ICRC as it works to transport the wounded and help displaced families keep in contact.

Following a military operation by Azerbaijan to take full control of the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh, a significant portion of the ethnic Armenian population has left Karabakh for the neighbouring Republic of Armenia and face acute humanitarian challenges.

Minister for Europe, Leo Docherty said:

The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has placed communities under immense pressure.



The UK's financial package will help to protect families and provide crucial assistance to the most vulnerable people.

In calls with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan this week, Minister Docherty urged both sides to return to dialogue and ensure unfettered humanitarian access to vulnerable people and communities affected by events in Nagorno-Karabakh.

### **UK Minister for Europe makes his first visit to Armenia**

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office press release  
22 May 2023**

During his first visit to Armenia this week (22-23 May), the UK's Minister for Europe, Leo Docherty, will urge for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh as negotiations continue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

He will call on both sides to continue substantive negotiations to resolve all outstanding tensions – including the closure of Lachin Corridor – in a peaceful and sustainable way.

He will also say that immediate action needs to be taken to restore the flow of goods and people into Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ahead of the visit, Minister Docherty said:

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is affecting thousands of people, and while we are supporting humanitarian efforts, the only way this will end is through both sides continuing to engage fully in good faith negotiations.

The UK is committed to supporting Armenia's democratic and economic reform agenda. I am proud that the UK is funding programmes to protect freedoms and boost prosperity.

While in Yerevan, Minister Docherty will reiterate the UK's long-standing support for Armenia's democratic and economic development. During meetings with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, he will also discuss security, defence and the strengthening of trade relations.

He will announce the launch of a Strategic Dialogue that will take place between the two countries later this year as well as underline a desire to sign a Comprehensive Enhanced Partnership, an agreement which will enhance our countries economic relationship.

In addition, Minister Docherty will meet Members of Parliament and the Minister of Economy. He will also visit representatives from across civil society and business, including companies with ties to the UK. The Minister will

discuss opportunities to strengthen the UK-Armenia trading relationship and grow both of our economies.

Minister Docherty will visit a Research and Training Centre at the Armenian Parliament and a project developing the textiles industry. They are both part of the UK's programme to support Armenia. The UK funded programmes worth nearly £4 million supporting Armenia's democratic and economic reform agenda in 2022.

As well as contributing to humanitarian efforts related to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, UK funding is also supporting Armenia's efforts towards green transition; tackling disinformation by promoting media self-regulation and effective cooperation with the state authorities in regulating the sphere; promoting conflict resolution through facilitation of dialogue, enabling healthy debate and promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

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## PQs

### [Armenia: Azerbaijan](#)

27 Feb 2024 | 15244

**Asked by: Andrew Rosindell**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of changes in relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

**Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK welcomes the recent meeting between President Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan in Munich on 17 February; meaningful direct dialogue is the only way to secure stability and security for the region. I [Minister Docherty] underlined the UK's support for negotiations to conclude a final peace settlement during my visit to Yerevan and Baku in November 2023. Officials are delivering this message in their ongoing engagements with Armenia and Azerbaijan. We urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue full negotiations as soon as possible.

### [Nagorno Karabakh: Humanitarian Aid](#)

06 Feb 2024 | HL1849

**Asked by: Baroness Cox**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much they have contributed financially since September 2023 to humanitarian support for the estimated 120,000 ethnic Armenians who have fled Nagorno-Karabakh.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK has provided £1 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide life-saving medication, healthcare and other essential support to those affected by September's conflict. We liaise with the UN, ICRC and others to assess humanitarian need in the region.

### [Armenia: Azerbaijan](#)

30 Jan 2024 | 10695

**Asked by: Tim Loughton**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Azerbaijan on its proposal for a corridor through Armenia.

**Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK strongly supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Azerbaijan and Armenia. Addressing challenges in regional connectivity and resolving any remaining border disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan are matters to be resolved between the two countries as part of peace negotiations; I [Minister Docherty] discussed these matters with the Governments of both countries during my visit to Baku and Yerevan in November 2023. Direct dialogue is the only way to both secure stability and security for the region, and promote peaceful co-operation between both countries in the future.

**Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh: Humanitarian Situation**

**20 Nov 2023 | 1945**

**Asked by: Clive Lewis**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment his Department has made of the level of humanitarian need in (a) Nagorno-Karabakh and (b) Armenia since September 2023.

**Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK remains concerned for the welfare of those in Nagorno-Karabakh affected by limited access to supplies following September's military action in the region. We welcome Azerbaijan's decision to grant UN access into Nagorno-Karabakh and encourage them to continue supporting international efforts to address humanitarian need. We also welcome Armenian and international assistance provided to the 100,000 or more people displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia. The UK is providing £1 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide life-saving medication, healthcare and other essential support. We are liaising with the UN, ICRC and others to further assess humanitarian need in the region.

**Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict**

**17 Oct 2023 | 200499**

**Asked by: Stephen Doughty**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the humanitarian and security situation in Nagorno-Karabakh; and when he last spoke to his counterparts in (a) Armenia and (b) Azerbaijan.

**Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The security situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has improved since the 20 September ceasefire, which has held since 23 September. However, the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the significant refugee flows from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia, has placed local communities under immense pressure. It is vital that international humanitarian organisations have independent access into Nagorno-Karabakh, so they can assess humanitarian need and respond appropriately. We therefore welcome Azerbaijan's decision on 1 October to allow UN agencies into Nagorno-Karabakh, to complement ongoing efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Foreign Secretary spoke to his Armenian counterpart on 10 and will speak to his Azerbaijani counterpart on 18 October. I [Minister Docherty] spoke to both Foreign Ministers on 28 September".

**[Nagorno Karabakh: Refugees](#)**

**16 Oct 2023 | HL10444**

**Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Coventry**

To ask His Majesty's Government what (1) humanitarian assistance, and (2) financial support, they are offering the government of Armenia to meet the needs of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK is providing £1 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide life-saving medication, healthcare and other essential support to those affected by the recent conflict. The UK has also deployed medical staff, through the British government's official Emergency Medical Team, to help treat those injured in the fuel depot blast in Nagorno-Karabakh on 25 September. We are liaising with the UN, ICRC and others to assess humanitarian need in the region and if further UK assistance is required.

**[Armenia: Azerbaijan](#)**

**16 Oct 2023 | 199995**

**Asked by: Chris Law**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

**Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK continues to monitor the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the significant refugee flows from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia. On

29 September, the UK Government announced that it is giving £1 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Alongside contributions from others, this will help fund life-saving medication, healthcare, and other essential support to those affected by the recent conflict. We continue to urge both Armenia and Azerbaijan to do all they can to reduce tensions and avoid further escalation, and to return to substantive peace negotiations. We will continue to monitor the situation, in close cooperation with our international partners.

### **Nagorno Karabakh: Humanitarian Aid**

**04 Oct 2023 | HL10354**

#### **Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Coventry**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the humanitarian needs of Armenian Karabakhs in Nagorno-Karabakh, following the latest military offensive of 19 September, and what assistance they are providing to meet those needs.

#### **Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has placed local communities under immense pressure. We welcome the news that the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have access into Nagorno-Karabakh. The UK is providing £1 million to the ICRC to provide life-saving medication, healthcare and other essential support to those affected by the recent conflict. The funding will also support the ICRC to transport the wounded and help displaced families keep in contact. We are liaising with the UN, the ICRC and others to assess humanitarian need in the region and what further UK assistance is required.

### **Nagorno Karabakh: Development Aid**

**13 Sep 2023 | 197899**

#### **Asked by: Sarah Olney**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking further steps to support people living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

#### **Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK Government has publicly highlighted the importance of re-opening the Lachin Corridor into Nagorno-Karabakh and addressing the humanitarian needs of the local population, including at the United Nations Security Council on 16 August 2023. The UK has a strong record of supporting humanitarian responses in this region and FCDO officials are in close contact with

humanitarian agencies. The START FUND, a humanitarian response fund to which the UK is a significant donor, has allocated £350,000 to the region. The UK continues to encourage both Armenia and Azerbaijan to make further progress in negotiations to secure an historic peace agreement.

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## Debates

### Lachin Corridor and Nagorno-Karabakh

24 Jan 2023 | House of Commons | 726 cc228-253WH

Motion, That this House has considered closure of the Lachin Corridor and the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Agreed to on question.



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