

Karabakh Armenians' right of return a "cornerstone" of peace, UN side event hears

At the Human Rights Council, Swiss MPs promote the Swiss Peace Initiative for Nagorno Karabakh

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, September 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Swiss Peace Initiative](#) for Nagorno Karabakh offers a credible framework for a sustainable peace in the strategically crucial South Caucasus region, a side event at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva has heard. The September 29 event, organized by Christian Solidarity International, comes two years after Azerbaijan invaded the Armenian Christian region and forcibly displaced its 120,000 Armenian residents.



The panel at the UN side event on the Swiss Peace Initiative. from left to right: Abi McDougal, CSI; Nicolas Walder; Artak Beglaryan; Erich Vontobel. photo: csi

Swiss parliamentarians Erich Vontobel, who brought the motion for the initiative in parliament, and Nicolas Walder, outlined the Swiss Peace Initiative to the assembled group, which included diplomats and members of the media. Walder and Vontobel were joined by Artak Beglaryan, the former human rights ombudsman of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh, and Dr. Paul Williams, a world-renowned peace negotiator who participated remotely. The full video of the event can be viewed [online](#).

In March, the Swiss parliament passed a motion mandating the Swiss government to hold a peace forum between Azerbaijan and representatives of the displaced Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, "in order to negotiate the safe and collective return of the historically resident Armenian population."

Vontobel stressed that, unlike the peace agreement initialled by Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington in August, which did not address the issue, a core aspect of the Swiss Peace Initiative is the right of return of the displaced population of Nagorno Karabakh. "The Swiss Peace

Initiative seeks to remind the international community that this problem has not yet been solved. And without a solution there can be no lasting peace.”

“The Swiss Peace Initiative places the right of return at the heart of a sustainable peace,” Walder agreed. He called it “a neutral, credible, and law-based framework to advance lasting peace – not in competition, but in addition to existing bilateral talks” between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

But he said that to achieve results, the Initiative needs the backing of other countries, and recognition from the international community and international organizations. He recalled that two weeks ago, he had addressed the French parliament to urge France and other countries to support the Initiative. “We must work together to create the conditions for a safe return,” he said.

Representing the Karabakh Armenians, Artak Beglaryan told the gathering, “Over 87 percent of our people in Armenia want to return,” citing a recent survey. “We want to return to our homes – not as individuals, scattered and afraid, but as a community, to live securely with dignity, peacefully and sustainably.”

Beglaryan outlined the preconditions for a sustainable and comprehensive peace. These included strong security guarantees, a mandated international presence, reliable and safe land communication with Armenia, the creation of a demilitarized zone around Nagorno Karabakh, and an end to Azerbaijan’s policy of anti-Armenian hate.

“The right of return must be treated, not as a concession to be dealt with at the negotiations table, or bargained away, but as an actual cornerstone of justice and reconciliation,” commented Paul Williams of the Public International Law and Policy Group.

“Switzerland is the perfect country to bring Azerbaijan to the negotiating table within the context of broader international pressure,” Williams said. “The expertise exists in Switzerland to structure a very effective process for the return of refugees.”

“Of all the platforms potentially out there, the Swiss platform is the best platform, the most desirable platform to make that happen,” he concluded.

Commenting on the event, CSI’s director for public advocacy, Dr. Joel Veldkamp, said, “In a world increasingly riven by wars and atrocity crimes, the Swiss Peace Initiative is a rare opportunity – a credible diplomatic mechanism to undo one of the most complete ethnic cleansing campaigns in modern history. The international community should give the Initiative its full support.”

On October 8, members of the Swiss parliament will visit the German parliament in Berlin to discuss the Swiss Peace Initiative. The same evening, the delegation will make a public presentation at the Evangelical Academy in Berlin, which will be [livestreamed](#). On October 9, they will speak at the Hertie School of Governance, Germany’s leading private university for public

policy and international affairs.

The Berlin event follows the visit of a Swiss parliamentary delegation to Washington DC in July to promote the Swiss Peace Initiative to the U.S. government.

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