**Republic of Armenia**

**Food, nutrition and the right to health:**

1. ***What are the major factors that challenge quantitatively and qualitatively adequate access to food and nutrition in your country and/or community (including external to your country)? Taking into consideration the underlying determinants of health, in what ways do they contribute to health inequities?***

According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, States parties recognize “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”, while pursuant to article 11.2 they recognize that more immediate and urgent steps may be needed to ensure “the fundamental right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition”. The human right to adequate food is of crucial importance for the enjoyment of all rights.

According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the right to health is an inclusive right, that is there are underlying factors that determine the health status of persons, which include safe food, adequate nutrition, etc.; These are the underlying determinants of health. This implies, that the lack of access to food and nutrition can have a negative and detrimental effect on the right of persons to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) has been under complete blockade since December 12, 2022, when alleged Azerbaijani “environmental activists” blocked the only road (the Berdzor (Lachin) corridor) connecting Artsakh to Armenia, and to the world. This has resulted in the complete stop of movement of people, goods, and vital supplies. Since Artsakh is completely dependent on Armenia for the supply of foodstuffs, and medications, this has resulted in a humanitarian crisis, which has been ongoing for more than 3 months.

The blockade has resulted in the prevention of 32,000 tons of vital supplies and goods from entering Artsakh, resulting in a shortage of supply of foodstuffs in the markets of Artsakh, and in certain cases their complete absence, such as fruits and vegetables.

As a result of the ongoing blockade, the authorities in Artsakh introduced a ration stamp system, which allows for the distribution of certain foodstuffs proportionately, such as eggs, dairy, rice, sugar, and buckwheat, and pasta.

Vulnerable groups, such as children, have appeared under more danger of the lack of access to adequate food and nutrition; for example, the shortage and lack of baby formula led to serious nutritional issues to children. Moreover, as a result of the constant stress caused to breastfeeding mothers of newborn infants, and the lack of intake of the necessary nutrition and vitamins, it has been impossible in certain cases to continue breastfeeding the newborn infants, having a negative impact on their health, since breastfeeding provides protection from life-threatening and chronic illnesses. Moreover, the intake of adequate nutrition by pregnant women is crucial and vital to guarantee healthy fetal development, and protection from serious diseases and illness in later stage of life.

The shortage of foodstuffs has brought forward a serious problem for a number of social groups which are under the care and responsibility of the State, such as children living in orphanages, nursing homes, etc., negatively effecting their physical and mental health. Over the course of the complete blockade of Artsakh, only small quantities of foodstuffs and vital items have been transported to Artsakh the Russian Peacekeepers and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). For example, the ICRC has delivered food parcels to a boarding school for children from vulnerable families, and an institution supporting around 300 older persons living in extreme poverty.

Additionally, as a result of the blockade, 755 business entities (17.7% of the total) have suspended their activities due to the impossible operating conditions, and at least 5,100 people have lost jobs and sources of income. This also would have a negative consequence on their ability to have access to food and nutrition, further deteriorating their health status.