

## Blue Shield Statement on fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh

The Blue Shield notes with great sadness the resumption of armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh and hopes that a peaceful solution to the current crisis can be found quickly and amicably.

The Blue Shield notes that both Armenia and Azerbaijan have ratified the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and both the Convention's Protocols of 1954 and 1999. Those who adhere to these international instruments acknowledge that damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all humankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world. States Parties to the Convention and its Protocols commit to trying to safeguard and respect all cultural property located in areas where armed conflict is taking place, and to avoid using or targeting cultural property as part of their military operations.

The Blue Shield notes that there are reports of fighting around, and damage to, cultural property in Nagorno-Karabakh, known to be of significance to the communities that live there. We urge both sides to adhere to their commitment to the 1954 Hague Convention and both its Protocols and to the laws of armed conflict, highlighting the high threshold under which cultural property may become a necessary military objective. We urge them to take the opportunity to employ the full range of measures to protect such cultural property included in the 1954 Hague Convention, its Regulations, and its Protocols. We further urge them to recognise the need to not only prevent avoidable or unnecessary damage to the cultural sites of the region, but also to proactively strive to safeguard and respect all cultural property within the area where fighting is taking place.

The Blue Shield  
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The Blue Shield is an international advisory body to UNESCO on the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict. It has 27 national committees (with more under construction) across the world and an international board composed of elected members and representatives of ICA, IFLA, ICOM, ICOMOS, the major international organisations responsible for cultural heritage. The Blue Shield is "*committed to the protection of the world's cultural property, and is concerned with the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster*". See <https://theblueshield.org/>