



Resolution 2085 (2016)¹
Provisional version

Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly reminds all its member States that the right to water is essential to life and health, in accordance with the Helsinki Rules of 1966 and the Berlin Rules of 2004 on water resources, and thus constitutes a prior condition for the enjoyment of other human rights. The Assembly emphasises the obligation of States to secure their population's access to sufficient, safe and affordable water resources.
2. The Assembly regards unimpeded access to drinking water, which cannot be restricted by the existence of borders, as a basic right, a source of life and an asset of strategic importance to every State. The Assembly confirms that deliberate deprivation of water cannot be used as a means to harm innocent citizens.
3. The Assembly considers that the deliberate creation of an artificial environmental crisis must be regarded as "environmental aggression" and seen as a hostile act by one State towards another aimed at creating environmental disaster areas and making normal life impossible for the population concerned.
4. The Assembly deplores that the occupation by Armenia of Nagorno-Karabakh and other adjacent areas of Azerbaijan creates similar humanitarian and environmental problems for the citizens of Azerbaijan living in the Lower Karabakh valley.
5. The Assembly recalls that, in their statement of 20 May 2014, the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs expressed their hope that the sides would reach an agreement to jointly manage these water resources to the benefit of the region.
6. The Assembly notes that the lack of regular maintenance work for over twenty years on the Sarsang reservoir, located in one of the areas of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia, poses a danger to the whole border region. The Assembly emphasises that the state of disrepair of the Sarsang dam could result in a major disaster with great loss of human life and possibly a fresh humanitarian crisis.
7. In view of this urgent humanitarian problem, the Assembly requests:
 - 7.1. the immediate withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the region concerned, thus allowing:
 - 7.1.1. access by independent engineers and hydrologists to carry out a detailed on-the-spot survey;
 - 7.1.2. global management, throughout the catchment area, of the use and upkeep of the Sarsang water resources;
 - 7.1.3. international supervision of the irrigation canals, the state of the Sarsang and Madagiz dams, the schedule of water releases during the autumn and winter, and aquifer overexploitation;
 - 7.2. the Armenian authorities to cease using water resources as tools of political influence or an instrument of pressure benefiting only one of the parties to the conflict.

1. *Assembly debate* on 26 January 2016 (3rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 13931](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Milica Marković). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 26 January 2016 (3rd Sitting).

8. The Assembly firmly condemns the lack of co-operation of the Armenian parliamentary delegation and the Armenian authorities during the preparation of the report on this issue. The Assembly regards such behaviour as incompatible with the obligations and commitments of a country which is a full member of the Council of Europe. The Assembly will consider what measures to take in this case and in any similar cases which may arise during the terms of office of its parliamentarians.

9. The Assembly calls on all sides concerned to step up their efforts to co-operate closely in the joint management of the resources of the Sarsang water reservoir, as such co-operation can constitute a confidence-building measure necessary for the solution of any conflict.