

Recently transferred Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians allegedly unaware they were being sent to Armenia, sources say

Arshaluys Barseghyan · OC Media · 2026-01-27

Eleven Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians who have recently been transferred to Armenia have reportedly claimed they were not informed of their final destination, despite Armenian officials and Azerbaijani pro-government media claiming the 11 had submitted petitions for their transfer.

The 11 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians were handed over to Armenia on 23 January.

On Monday, Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian Tigran Petrosyan wrote on Facebook that their transfer to Armenia was 'the final act of ethnic cleansing'. Petrosyan had left the region years before, likely in 2023.

Petrosyan dismissed official statements claiming that the 11 Armenians had petitioned for their transfer, instead citing those Nagorno-Karabakh residents as saying they 'weren't even told where they were being taken'.

'During the expulsion, they weren't even told where they were being taken. They were brought to the Hakari Bridge [previously connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia], where they were made to sign papers and then they were handed over to the Armenians', Petrosyan wrote.

Additionally, Petrosyan described the conditions in which Armenians were held in Stepanakert as being 'colonial-like'.

'They were forbidden from moving anywhere, meaning that in recent months, they were essentially held as captives', Petrosyan elaborated.

In a comment to RFE/RL, Petrosyan said that he learned the information from his acquaintance who was among those transferred on 23 January.

On the way, they even thought that they were being taken to be killed, with some of them 'sobbing in terror', Petrosyan said.

Musheg Grigoryan, who previously appeared in Azerbaijani propaganda videos, as well as reportedly testifying against the region's former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan in 2025, reportedly refused to move to Armenia and was sent back from the Hakari Bridge.

Armenia's Labour and Social Affairs Minister Arsen Torosyan had claimed the day of the transfer that all of those moved had submitted individual requests to both the authorities in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

However, it remains unclear how the individuals contacted the Armenian side, particularly given that most were elderly and that some reportedly have mental health issues.

'Under state protection'

On Monday, Nver Kostanyan, the spokesperson of the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry, told News.am that the 11 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians were under 'state protection, [and] undergoing the necessary medical examinations and psychological support'.

RFE/RL reported that Armenian authorities did not contact the relatives of those transferred. Instead, family members said they obtained information only after making repeated attempts to reach officials and learn about their relatives' condition and whereabouts.

According to RFE/RL, the majority of the recently transferred individuals have been placed at a hotel in Aghveran, Kotayk Province. The Health Ministry confirmed that three of them were in psychiatric facilities for medical evaluations and that none were in serious condition.

A relative of one of the individuals told RFE/RL that their family member had signs of beatings and abuse.

Amid a lack of transparency surrounding the transfer of the individuals, a number of allegations have emerged regarding the possible reasons behind it.

The handful of Armenians who had remained in Nagorno-Karabakh after Azerbaijan's assault on the region in 2023 allegedly had not previously expressed a desire to relocate to Armenia, even when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) still maintained a presence in Azerbaijan.

The ICRC had facilitated the transfer of some Armenians who remained in the region until it was forced to suspend its activities in September 2025.

Lawyer Ara Ghazaryan, who represents Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), suggested that the return of the 11 individuals may be linked to increased Azerbaijani pressure following the arrest of Karen Avanesyan in Stepanakert.

In December 2025, four months after his arrest, Azerbaijan sentenced 58-year-old Avanesyan, who reportedly has mental health issues, to 16 years in prison on charges of 'terrorism'.

In the absence of independent observers on the ground, it is impossible to determine the exact number of Armenians left in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The vast majority of the region's Armenian population was forced to flee to Armenia after Azerbaijan's September 2023 assault on the region and the surrender of its authorities.

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