

<<Forced Displacement>>

<<Artsakh Women Tell Their Stories>>

Part Two

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Nune Galstyan

Nune Galstyan is 38 years old, originally from the city of Hrazdan, Kotayk region of the Republic of Armenia, he was born in Hrazdan.

"I was ten years old when my parents and I moved to Shushi.

I went to school in Shushi, then I got married, I had three children, one girl and two boys.

My married life did not work out, I got divorced, I raised my children alone.

My children are grown up, my daughter is married, I am already a grandmother.

We lived with my mother in my father's house. My sons were engaged in farming, I did not work due to health problems, I was engaged in housework, I took care of the house.

Due to the 44-day war in Artsakh, we had to leave our land, we moved to Stepanakert, but in 2023 we had to leave Stepanakert. but we did not know how long the blockade would last.

Like other Armenians, we came to Armenia. Now we live in Arinj village in Kotayk province. The state gives us 50,000 drams a month, even if it's difficult. we are able to pay the house rent, utility bills, we manage to live on little or no. We are not complaining, we are waiting We believe that one day the state will give us a house, but there are more needy people before us."



Evgenia Khachatryan

My interlocutor is a grandmother from Artsakh, Evgenya Khachatryan, who has lived in Artsakh for 72 years.

The roots are also from Artsakh: the father was born in the village of Hiliz, Askeran region, and the mother was born in the village of Karmir. They lived in Stepanakert. Our lady Evgenia was born and lived in Stepanakert until she was 23 years old.

After graduating from the institute, she was sent to the village of Kolkhozashen, Martunu region, as a teacher of Armenian language and literature. She continued to live in this village until the forced displacement, although she has not worked since 2015 due to retirement.

It is difficult to talk about the blockade. It is difficult to relive what we saw and experienced. The days of the blockade became even more difficult due to health problems. Our heroine has diabetes, these days

despite the fact that the Martuni hospital provided the necessary medicine and medical care, it was quite difficult to get to the hospital because of the lack of fuel in the cars. There was no need to even think about reaching Stepanakert.

Mrs. Evgenia's family is large and despite this circumstance, they managed to endure during the days of the siege. The fellow villagers were also united with each other, he says that they helped each other as much as possible by sharing the food they had. As far as possible, they even helped their relatives living in Stepanakert with agricultural products.

There was more panic when the shooting started. He says that people from the neighboring villages of Karmir Shuka, Taghavart and Machkalashen also gathered in their village. Their house was located right next to the street, and probably due to this circumstance, many guests from neighboring villages visited their house. They hosted 38 people in their house: pregnant women, old people, children. Everything was very difficult: there was no electricity, water, or gas, but with all this there was a will power that made them endure.

On September 25, they learned from the village head that they had to evacuate. During the evacuation, the village head helped by providing fuel for the vehicles. He says they came out with heavy psychological feelings. At that time, the grandson was serving in Askeran, and they came to Armenia without any information about him. Hard mental experiences accompanied Armenia. The whole village left the village together, it was very hard to see that scene.

They received news about the grandson through a fellow villager, whose beloved boy was also from service with their son. He said that he

is fine and is in Stepanakert. After learning that news, they calmed down to some extent.

They left everything in Artsakh: their own two-story house, 7 cows, chickens, geese, ducks, their 50 years of work and property. He says it was very difficult to part with the animals, leaving them there alone. It was difficult to part with the dog itself, which had not even taken bread from the granddaughter's hand for the last day, felt that they were parting and leaving him there. Evgenia tells that her granddaughter came to Yerevan in tears for the dog, and she still gets emotional when she remembers the dog. Ms. Evgenia says that the villagers are mostly very attached to the animals, and the separation itself turns out to be difficult.

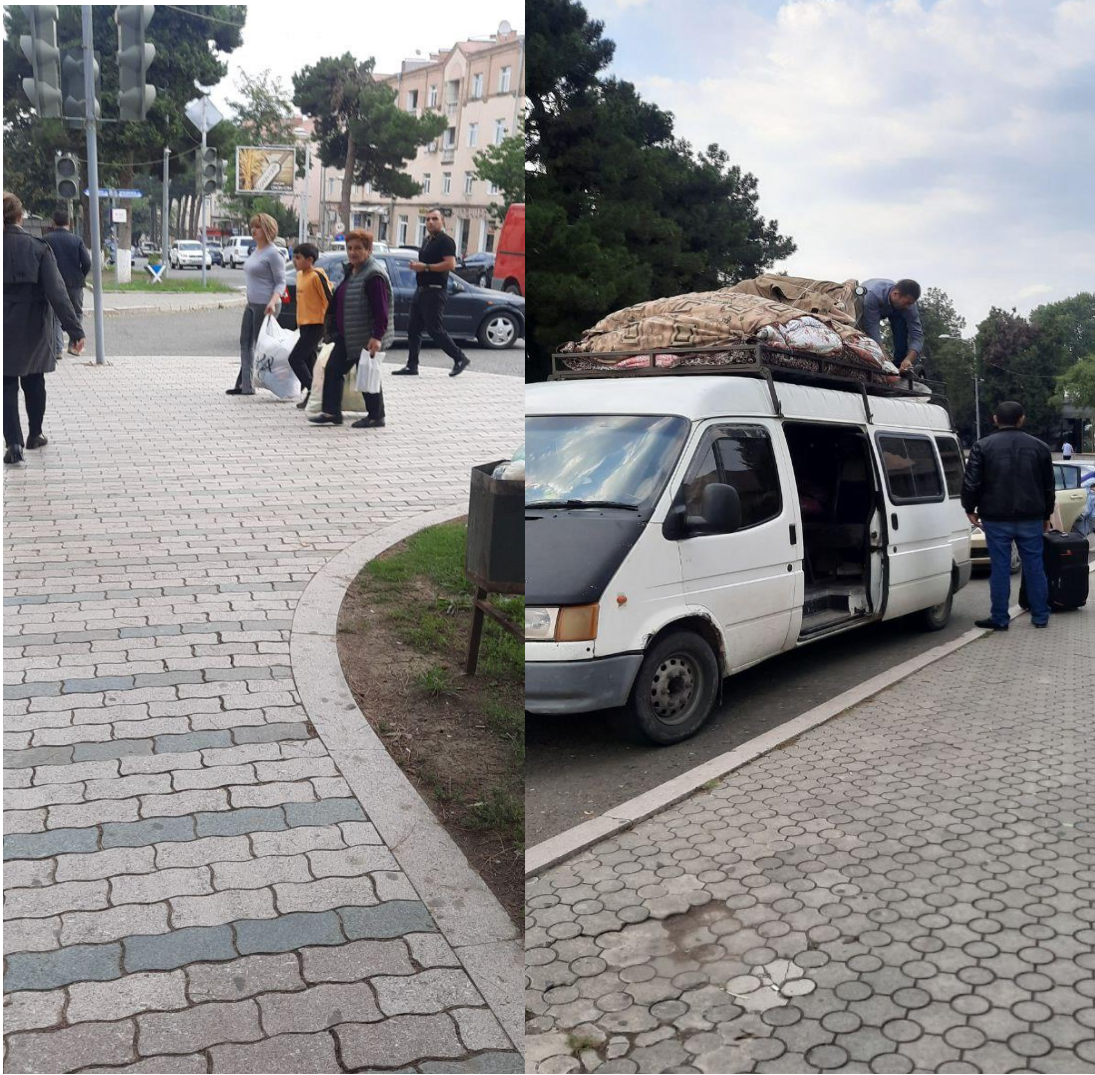
They came empty-handed, taking the pictures of the house with them...

The way to return from Artsakh was, in itself, very difficult, the feeling of uncertainty was added to the psychological hardships, the fact that they have nothing and will start from scratch. While in Goris, the granddaughter called and told them to go to Gyumri immediately.

Now they live in Vahramaberd village of Shirak marz. Most people are upset about being unemployed. They have two student grandchildren who study on a paid basis. The daughter of the grandchildren is studying at the Department of European Languages and Intercultural Communication at Yerevan State University. He lived in the "Student's house " in the first year. He will stay in the hostel this year. The boy, who was serving in Askeran during the displacement, is studying at the Information Technology Department of Gyumri Polytechnic University.

One of the problems is that the pension was delayed. The apartment has a utility problem, there is no gas supply in the building, which causes uncertainty in providing heating in winter. The main means of living is her and her husband's pension. Despite the fact that they live in the village, they do not have the opportunity to keep animals or engage in farming. If they have the opportunity, they will be engaged in agriculture with great pleasure.

Our heroine expresses hope that one day they will definitely return to their native Artsakh.



Forced displacement

Arega Balayan

Arega Balayan is 51 years old, originally from the Martuni region of Artsakh.

Arega tells. "I was born in the village of Spitakashen, Martunu region, and my parents are from there. I attended school in the village, then studied needlework for 9 months.

I am married, I have three children: one boy, two girls.

In the village, I took sewing orders at home, kept chickens and pigs, had bees, my husband was engaged in farming, had a greenhouse, and at the same time worked in a gas office.

My son started his family there, they had a baby, he is 1 year and 5 months old.

During the siege, we had no shortage of food, we lived. But, when Azerbaijan attacked the positions, he was a contract soldier, he was injured and was transferred to the hospital in Stepanakert. My husband rushed to Stepanakert with my son and my grandson I arrived in Stepanakert by a neighbor's car. The hospital doctor recommended that we take my son to Armenia. It was September 25 we all came to Goris, and from there to "Muratsan" hospital. My son's leg was amputated, then he underwent rehabilitation at "Soldier's House".

I, my husband and my daughter live for rent in the Malatia-Sebastia administrative district of Yerevan, in the Ararat part, on the second floor of a two-story house, my other daughter is married and now lives in Russia.

My son and his family live separately in Yerevan, in the center, until we find a 4-room house, we all live in one place, otherwise it is very difficult to live with the 50,000 given by the state alone. I work as a cleaner in the store in front of the house, my husband works in construction, my son does not work either, he receives the pension alone.

I hoped until the end that we would stay in our village, but we had to leave and left everything behind."



Photos from Silva Verdian's Artsakh apartment before her son's death

Silva Verdiyan

Silva Verdiyan is from Stepanakert, he lost one of his sons in the 44-day war. We present Ms. Silva's story verbatim

"I didn't want to leave Artsakh until the last day, we thought that there would be help, they would protect us, but when the Turks (Azeris) entered the city, it was clear that we had to run away, save our lives." We came with untold difficulties, we didn't have a car, with the help of friends, we reached the place in different cars. We were on the road for 48 hours, my son's wife is pregnant, the other child is four years old, we were hungry on the way, I was unspeakably afraid for my son at the Hakari bridge, somehow we got through. We were welcomed very well in Armenia.

My husband was killed in the first Karabakh war in 1993, my sons are two and three years old , I raised them with great difficulties. My son was killed in the 44-day war of 2020. The last time I spoke to him was at the beginning of November, and after that we did not hear from him. Some time later, they found the remains of soldiers burned by drone strikes, and we found out through DNA analysis that one of them was my son. I live with my other son, I have a four-year-old grandson, my second grandson will be born on December 25. It was very difficult to leave everything, to leave, but the most painful was to leave my son's grave. Here, at home, I made a corner named after him, I didn't take anything from running away, except my son's photo. Now we live on rent, my son is trying to find a job, I can't work because of disability >>.



Tsaghik Margaryan

"We are from the Krkjan district of Stepanakert, which is right on the border of Azerbaijan. That day, when the shooting started, I was at home, my daughter-in-law, my grandchildren, my cousin's family - his wife, children and grandchildren. There was no man at home, we remained huddled together, the children were with us, for a long time, because of the blockade, they did not go to kindergarten, we did not know what to do, where to hide. We had a car, but since we at home didn't know how to drive, we couldn't use it, the neighbor's boy, 15 years old, came and said, "I'll take you by car, the church was quite far from us, that boy somehow got us to the basement of the church, one day from my husband and we had no news from my sons. Then my husband came with questions and experience and found us, the children, we were all hungry there for several days. My husband said that even if they kill me, I should go and bring food from home. After that, when the intensity of the fire had decreased, we decided to go to Khojaly, where the Russian peacekeepers were. The Russians did not accept us there, they said go back to your places, we cannot protect you. After that we went to the basement of the Stepanakert Institute and stayed there for five days. We

crossed the bridge very scared, we had burned all the documents. We had so much fear, but we passed relatively easily. Here we came to Goris, we were received very warmly, we were counted, on the first day we were sent to Ghapan, then we came to Yerevan. Then we found a house in Artashat/Ararat marz/. This house is very similar to my house in Krkjan, of course, it was very well-kept there, but there are the same facilities for animal husbandry and farming. There is also a chicken nest and a rabbit nest in this house. The children have not yet found a job. We left a one-story house there, with three entrances, all separate, with a vineyard, beehives, we kept chickens and rabbits. Although we rent the house here, but the owner of the house is not in the country, we can stay for a long time. If they support us, we buy animals, I am ready to keep animals here, bees, chickens, rabbits. I only took my medicines from home and the pictures in my phone, look at my economy...>>



In the photo, Marine Ghukasyan with her husband. Ani Sukiasyan, vice-president of the ISHR Armenia, is handing over support items

Marine Ghukasyan

"There are six of us, my husband was in positions during the war, we went through all the horrors. Somehow we survived the siege, we simply starved. My husband's parents moved to the village in order to support our existence by farming. We did not think that after enduring so much, we would simply have to leave our house, everything was really terrible, we cannot describe the reality. In Armenia, of course, they welcomed us very well, we had relatives in New Kharberd, we lived in their house from the beginning, but they are a big family, it is not possible to stay long, now we have moved to Etchmiadzin.



Elen Petrosyan

Elen Petrosyan is 17 years old, she was born in Hadrut, she is currently studying at Shushi Technological College, which has now moved to Yerevan. Elen tells that on September 20, she and her family fled to Stepanakert, on the body of a truck, because there was no other way,

now the family is in Ghapan (Syunik region) and Elen is in Yerevan with her aunt's family. The aunt and grandmother now live in Yerevan, in a dormitory, in difficult domestic conditions.

Venhanush Hovsepyan

The story of Vehanush Hovsepyan is particularly exciting. she gave birth to her first child on September 19, when Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno Karabakh. Various media have covered the story of Vehanush. The doctors operated on the woman under explosions, in the basement of the hospital, where after staying for four days, the woman had to flee from Karabakh with the newborn Sofei.

"Sofi is the first child of Vehanush Hovsepyan. He was born on September 19, 2023, when there was a war in Nagorno Karabakh. The mother dreamed of the birth of the baby in the new building of the "Mother and Child Health Care Center" in Stepanakert, but due to the complete blockade by Azerbaijan, it was not possible. After overcoming the blockade days, Sophie was born amid the sounds of bombs and explosions, and then 3 The family has taken refuge in the Republic of Armenia. In a few days, Sophie will be two months old.



Hamest Shirinyan

Shirinyan Hamest is 77 years old, from the Drombon village of Martakert, lost his son in the first Artsakh war in the nineties, now lives with his daughter and grandchildren. They reached Stepanakert with great difficulty, on the day of the gas station explosion, their daughter, Anush Petrosyan, was in the area of the gas station and received first-degree burns, some parts of her face were burned, now they are trying to find means to rehabilitate the burns abroad. The family, with six people, was accommodated in one room of the former student dormitory.



Marine Harutyunyan with four children in Yerevan during our visit

Photos by Ani Sukiasyan

Marine Harutyunyan

"We had no idea that we would have to leave Artsakh, no one told us anything, we saw neither a Russian peacekeeper, nor an order from the president. It was an ownerless, headless situation, we didn't know how to get out, nothing was known. On September 20, I heard that the road was open, we had to leave. People fled to Khojaly, to the Russians, as if it was safe there, but they sent them back, saying it was dangerous here. On September 25, we also went out, I was driving the car, my husband was also in a serious condition, I brought him with great difficulty. I drove for thirty-five hours. Only in Armenia, in Kornidzor, they helped us. Nine months in the blockade, we were deprived of everything, the children missed bread. From Goris, when the buses came to meet us, the others brought food, bread, sweets. We had not seen white bread for 9 months. Before that, when we got out of the car, we hadn't reached the border yet, my little child asked for bread, I couldn't give it, the greeters didn't show up yet. There were two women

in the distance, I approached, I said do you have bread, they said, it is a piece of our child's bread, we will share it, they were also from Martakert, it was dry bread, black in color, we shared it with the children before we got to the buses. But when we reached Kornidzor (Armenia, a border village), it was as if you fell into heaven, because our Karabakh was made hell for us, there was no electricity, no gas, no flour, they gave us half a loaf of bread, black, made with pig feed, dry. We used to stand in line for that bread, often it was not enough for everyone. We burned corn, made black coffee to drink, I cut cherry branches, colored the water to give tea to the children, and my blood pressure dropped because of that. There was no sugar, there was nothing, but until now I don't get out of that stress, I always go into supermarkets and say: it's full here, nothing has reached Karabakh. The Turks (Azerbaijani) brought the car through Aghdam, saying they were bringing flour, and the next day they attacked us.>>



Photo: Nare Narimanyan, Artsakh, forced deportation

Anahit Khachatryan

Mrs. Anahit from Vank (Gandzasar) village of Martakert region, through tears, tells that the Gandzasar monastery complex is a 13th century structure with Armenian inscriptions and wall paintings, and that it is registered in the UNESCO list of historical and cultural values.

Mrs. Anahit is 75 years old, she was born and lived in Gandzasar village of Martakert district of Nagorno-Karabakh, after getting education, she got married and worked as a teacher in the village school. He has four children who also have children and grandchildren. Mrs. Anahit says that they overcame a lot of difficulties, the attack of the 90s, the war, but they

resisted and never thought of leaving their sleepy birthplace, but this time, they were on the verge of physical annihilation. He says that their house was located at the edge of the forest, that day, September 19, the house came under shelling, the children were taken and moved to the cave near the forest, the youngest of the children is 9 months old, he says that we were afraid that the child's voice would be heard. "We know very well how they treat Armenians, they slaughter without looking at age and sex, they even rape and mutilate little girls, there are many such cases, our We don't have information about many of the villagers, there are many missing persons.>> Eight people were displaced, he says that they lived in their house for fifty-five years, they created an economy and a house, he remembers with tears that now the dogs are homeless and hungry there.

The next day, when the intensity of the fire decreased, the villagers said that the Azeris entered the village, the village was protected by men, including his two sons. The boys somehow managed to get down to the village and get themselves out of the village. There was no time and opportunity to organize an organized evacuation, they took the first thing that happened, they always kept the documents in one place, because they had already escaped once during the 2020 war. They were able to move to Stepanakert with their car. They did not mention the support of the peacekeepers, only two days later, when it became clear that the enemy was entering Stepanakert, the peacekeepers offered to move to the airport, where they spent two days hungry and tormented in the yard. The Russian peacekeepers did not let the Armenians into the airport area, they were outside, hungry and cold. "It was Calvary that we went through, we endured hunger, cold and darkness for nine months, but we didn't want to leave our paradise Artsakh, but under the threat of annihilation and humiliation, we were driven from our homes and our biography was taken away from us," says the old woman. At the Lachin checkpoint, they were very afraid that the boys would not be released, because many of them were detained or captured, but after some time,

the boys were released. They did not manage to take anything with them, except documents.

They arrived in Armenia in thirty-two hours, he says that the reception was very warm, "from the first moment we got peace of mind, we had distant relatives in Yerevan who rented us a house for a month in Yerevan, now we are here, we live with eight people, so it was possible, they helped us, but we have to think about what to do, how to live afterwards, every support is important for us, I thank God



that my children are alive.>>

The interviews can also be read by visiting



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