



remembered,” Archbishop Justin said in the Armenian town of

Today the Archbishop of Canterbury met with men, women and children who have fled Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus, after it was seized by Azerbaijan nearly three weeks ago.

Archbishop Justin Welby met the refugees in a town called Kecharis in the Armenian province of Tsakhkadzor, which is a well-known tourist region. The Armenian Orthodox Church is providing accommodation for 120 people, in a building usually used as a holiday camp for children and young adults.

Speaking to the refugees, the Archbishop said: “I want to make sure that in Europe, and the rest of the world, you are remembered, and that people know what you have gone through and how you are suffering.” In all 120,000 people have fled Nagorno-Karabakh.

Afterwards he spoke to people both individually and in small huddles, sometimes on his knees so he could be at eye-level with children on their mothers’ laps. One elderly woman described how she and her family fled their home just minutes before being attacked and how they escaped through the forest.

Another said that her three-year-old grandchild is frightened every time a plane flies over, expecting more conflict. One nurse, who had arrived at the accommodation just 2 days ago with her 2 teenage children, told the Archbishop about the injuries she sustained both on the day of the attack (19th and 20th September) and when a fuel depot exploded on Tuesday 26th September.



Speaking after meeting the group, the Archbishop said: “An English speaker in the group asked me, ‘Do they know about us in England?’ I was pierced to the heart by that.”

Earlier during the week, the Archbishop met Ilham Aliyev, the Azerbaijani President, and urged him to take steps towards peace and reconciliation.

The Archbishop said today: “I think there are some very basic things that can be done by Azerbaijan which will help rebuild confidence and be a first, small step. One is the protection of graves and churchyards where people have buried their families, their husbands, their brothers, their sons who have been killed. They must have safe access to them, and graves must never be desecrated.

“Second, cultural heritage must be protected. For Armenians, cultural heritage is the soul of who they are. It’s their very inner being. And so protection of cultural heritage, with independent verification, including protected graves, is something that can be done. Doing this is no security risk for Azerbaijan and it will make a huge difference in making people feel more confident about the future.”





**The Archbishop has this week been visiting Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia - read more about the visit [here](#).**

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