



Executive summary

The Security Barometer is an initiative by the South Caucasus Women Think Tank to share the existing and emerging threats and challenges as perceived by Armenians and Azerbaijanis on a range of security, justice and peacebuilding issues. It is aimed to contribute to the advocacy by peace experts towards respective state and international stakeholders, and seeks to facilitate actions for the benefit of all concerned communities from human security and gender equality lens.

Introduction

The South Caucasus region is a hotspot of geopolitical dynamics, characterized by the influence of Russia and Turkey, as well as the security interests of Iran and the European Union. Recent shifts in regional power balances, most notably from Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, have created both challenges and opportunities for stability.

Key challenges and concerns



Negotiations: The negotiation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan remains sporadic, with unclear schedules, milestones and formats. The hope for a peace agreement is so far confined to statements and declarations only, lacking tangible and visible results on the ground as evidenced by the suspension of the demarcation/delimitation processes.



Security threats: The absence of mutually agreed security guarantees and of clear perspectives for peace has led to the spread of rumors and threats in both societies. In addition, the uncertainty among the local populations about the peace process has distanced the two societies from peace prospects, fostering hate speech, reinforcing the enemy image, and increasing alienation between the nations.



Militarization and its consequences on both sides: Increased public spending for weapons, systematic military exercises, and aggressive rhetorics greatly influence public opinion. These developments increase the risks of military escalations and an increase in human insecurity due to reduced funding for health, education, employment, economic security, environmental security and intercultural relations.



Challenges for peacebuilding: After the second Karabakh war, cross border interactions between civil actors ceased, increasing the risk for peace activists in both countries, with women peace activists facing particular dangers. Women across both countries are at the forefront of community cohesion and peacebuilding efforts, and face increased marginalization and insecurity. They bear the brunt of social instability and economic hardship, as their needs and worries are further silenced in the absence of grassroots initiatives. The escalation of disinformation and propaganda limits women's participation in peace processes at all levels, deepening the divide among Armenians and Azerbaijanis and perpetuating cycles of fear and mistrust towards each other and towards efforts directed to long lasting peace.