

Welcome to another edition of the **GRATITUDE IN ACTION** newsletter, which recaps the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative's developments quarterly. For more regular updates, please follow us on [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Our thoughts are with those in the world affected by violent conflicts and human rights violations – like the population of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), where Azerbaijan's seizure of the land led to the forced displacement of thousands of families, and the people of Israel and Palestine suffering from the escalation of an old conflict. In these dark times, we feel that solidarity is needed more than ever, as human plight can only be alleviated if we act together.



\$2 Million from Noubar Afeyan and His Family Foundation to Help the People of Artsakh

Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, and Anna Afeyan, Co-Chair of the Afeyan Foundation, have announced a commitment of [\\$2 million to serve over 100,000 displaced people from Artsakh](#) (Nagorno-Karabakh) who were uprooted from their homes following the deadly attacks by Azerbaijan in September. The donation will be provided by the Afeyan Foundation, which previously teamed up with Aurora to help the people of Artsakh in the aftermath of the 2020 war. The latest financial support will focus on several areas including meeting basic needs, providing medical and psychosocial care, and establishing longer-term educational opportunities.



Global Humanitarian Leaders Stand in Solidarity with Ruben Vardanyan

On September 27, 2023, the government of Azerbaijan arrested philanthropist, businessman, Armenian citizen and Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, Ruben Vardanyan. Detaining the man who has spent the last 20 years dedicated to advancing the socio-economic development of the Nagorno-Karabakh region is outrageous and unjust. The Aurora's humanitarian community has [released a statement](#) encouraging the Azerbaijani government to release Mr. Vardanyan and demonstrate their respect for human rights – his and those of all Armenians of the region.

Collaboration with Refuge Point

On September 20, 2023, during the United Nations General Assembly High-level Week, RefugePoint and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative invited around 100 prominent business and non-profit leaders to join insightful conversations aimed at reshaping humanitarian and refugee response. At the meeting, Sasha Chanoff, Founder and CEO of RefugePoint, [announced the launch of a new initiative](#) that is expected to help one million families reunite over the next five years.



The event was organized at humanitarian chef José Andrés' Nubeluz and featured Susan Sarandon, Academy Award-winning actor and activist; Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative; Tom Catena, Chair of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, and Armine Afeyan, Executive Director of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

"Eight years ago, we were thinking – what do you do a hundred years after the Genocide? And we thought, rather than finding the descendants of the people who had saved our lives, of which there are many, we should find living people who are saving the lives of others today and helping them, in tribute to the people who saved our ancestors' lives a hundred years ago." – Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

The 2024 Aurora Humanitarians Announced

On September 18, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative [announced the three Aurora Humanitarians](#) who have been shortlisted for the 2024 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity. The announcement was made at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) annual meeting in New York City. One of the 2024 Aurora Humanitarians will be named the next Aurora Prize Laureate at a Ceremony to take place in Los Angeles, California in May 2024.



The 2024 Aurora Humanitarians are:



[**Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**](#)
Bahrain / Denmark



[**Nasrin Sotoudeh**](#)
Iran



[**Denis Mukwege**](#)
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Aurora at Clinton Global Initiative

On September 19, Aurora Chair and 2017 Aurora Prize Laureate Dr. Tom Catena took part in a private roundtable event jointly hosted by McKinsey Health Institute and CGI and titled *The Case for Healthy Cities: How to Mobilize Stakeholders to Enable Healthier, Longer Lives*. At the meeting, the invitees discussed how mobilizing private, public, and social stakeholders city by city could be a highly promising path to enable every resident to have healthier, better, and longer lives.



Later that day, 2022 Aurora Prize Laureate and President of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Afghanistan Jamila Afghani spoke at the CGI Panel called *Innovations in Humanitarian Response: How to Support Local Response to Complex Emergencies*. The educator talked about her personal experience with grassroots activists and local NGOs stepping up to provide immediate response during recent crises and the need to connect these nascent efforts with established humanitarian systems to have the greatest impact on the ground.

2023 Innovations in International Philanthropy Symposium



At the event, the Aurora [panelists talked about](#) their mission, impact, and the driving forces behind their humanitarian work.

"It's an occupational hazard to be doing this work. You have to be accessible. More than anyone, we know the risks [of death]. You try to find solace in knowing what you are doing is making an impact." – Ilwad Elman, 2020 Aurora Prize Laureate

2023 Aurora Dialogues Online

Aurora organized a discussion titled ["Fighting for Change: Life Stories of Aurora Modern-Day Heroes"](#) in partnership with [The New Humanitarian](#). The event, moderated by Heba Aly, CEO of The New Humanitarian, featured exceptional human rights and social activists from Aurora's network who have followed in Mandela's footsteps, namely Michael Lapsley (South Africa), founder of Institute for Healing of Memories and anti-apartheid activist; Sunitha Krishnan (India), 2018 Aurora



Humanitarian and co-founder of Prajwala; Mahienour El-Massry (Egypt), 2022 Aurora Humanitarian and political activist; and Marino Cordoba (Colombia), human rights activist and founder of AFRODES. Some of the activists talked about finding inspiration in unusual places and not shying away from negative emotions that are rarely brought to the forefront in the field of humanitarian work.

"Anger has driven me for the last 30 years. It triggered [my activism], it nurtures it, it pushes it, it drives it, it sustains it. At the age of thirteen, when I was gang-raped by several men, it left me with a deep, deep outrage of not the rape per se, but how the world viewed me. That was the trigger of the first anger that made me what I am today,"

– Sunitha Krishnan, 2018 Aurora Humanitarian.

Projects to Be Supported with 2022 Aurora Prize Funds



The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative [has announced](#) the projects that have received funding from 2022 Aurora Prize Laureate Jamila Afghani. Among them are programs implemented by the Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency) that help IDPs, promote peace, and empower women.

Armine Afeyan Rejoins Aurora's Team

In July 2023, Armine Afeyan [rejoined the Aurora team as Executive Director](#). Mrs. Afeyan previously held the role of Director of Communications for the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity in 2015–2016. In her new role, she will oversee the Initiative's day-to-day activities and strengthen Aurora's ties in North America and Europe.



"Above all else, I'm humbled by the opportunity to share Aurora humanitarians' stories with the world. We hoped this wouldn't be the case at our founding, but the world

needs humanitarians now more than ever. I couldn't be prouder to put my gratitude into action by rejoining Aurora at this crucial moment." – **Armine Afeyan**, Executive Director, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

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