

## Urgent call for action by the UN Security Council to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh)

---

28 July 2023

**To: State mission representatives at UN Security Council**

**CC: Embassies of US, UK, Russia, France, China, Japan, UAE, Switzerland, Brazil in Armenia  
Embassies of Albania, Ecuador, Ghana, Malta, Gabon and Mozambique to Armenia**

Dear Representatives of States - Members of the UN Security Council,

We appeal to the States – Members of the UN Security Council, as to the primary mandate holder for international peace and security and call for your urgent intervention in relation to the **escalating humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh** caused by the total blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan. The Lachin Corridor is the only lifeline that connects the local Armenian people to the Republic of Armenia as well as to the rest of the world. The blockade aims to create unbearable living conditions for the ethnic Armenians of the region and push them out from their homes. In recent days the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has deteriorated further, with its people now facing the imminent threat of starvation.

As you know, since 12 December 2022, Nagorno-Karabakh people have been under siege because of the blockade of the Lachin Corridor. On 23 April 2023, the Azerbaijani government installed an official checkpoint on the end of the bridge over the Hakari River that separates Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>1</sup> Since 15 June 2023, Azerbaijan completely banned all kinds of humanitarian transportation in both ways blatantly violating its obligation towards ensuring the safe and unhindered passage through the Lachin corridor under the Trilateral Statement of 9 November 2020.

For almost 230 days under siege, the rights of indigenous Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabakh have been systematically violated. Their lives are endangered because of frequent ceasefire breaches by the attacks of Azerbaijani armed forces, shootings in the direction of civilians, houses and schools, usually preceded by aggressive disinformation campaigns creating false narratives that Armenians are the ones violating the ceasefire. Movement of people and vehicles from and to Nagorno-Karabakh is completely banned with rare emergency exceptions for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). There is no gas, and there are rolling blackouts of electricity (for 6 hours per day). A few days ago, the operation of all the public transportation came to a halt given the lack of fuel. There is poor tele-communication and access to information, which contributes to the spread of misinformation from the Azerbaijani side. Azerbaijan's banning the international media from accessing Nagorno-

---

<sup>1</sup> OC-Media, Azerbaijan closes Lachin Corridor to install checkpoint, 24 April 2023, <https://oc-media.org/azerbaijan-closes-lachin-corridor-to-install-checkpoint>

Karabakh prevents any broadcasts on the situation. Most recently, the European Federation of Journalists stated that “it was the Azerbaijani army that prevented us from crossing, in accordance with government orders.”<sup>2</sup>

People in Nagorno-Karabakh are facing a shortage of medication, products of hygiene, clothing and access to medical services. Only the patients in a critical state are transferred by ICRC to the hospitals in Armenia to get the due treatment. The number of early-stage miscarriages has nearly tripled in the past month due to high stress among pregnant women and inability to access a balanced diet amid the blockade.<sup>3</sup>

Farmers are neither able to cultivate their farmland due to shortage of fuel nor feed their cattle given the frequent shootings by the Azerbaijani military, who also damage the agricultural equipment and steal the cattle. The Sarsang reservoir - a major source of irrigation - has almost dried up,<sup>4</sup> making it unable to compensate for water shortages and generate more electricity necessary for the people's survival.

ICRC's recent statement says: “The civilian population is now facing a lack of life-saving medication and essentials like hygiene products and baby formula. Fruits, vegetables, and bread are increasingly scarce and costly, while some other food items such as dairy products, sunflower oil, cereal, fish, and chicken are not available. The last time the ICRC was allowed to bring medical items and essential food items into the area was several weeks ago.”<sup>5</sup>

All the above mentioned are part of Azerbaijan's broader strategy aimed at ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. It is important to stress that any presence of Azerbaijani armed forces as well as checkpoints on the Lachin corridor poses an imminent threat to the security of the Armenians passing through the corridor either to or from Nagorno-Karabakh given the fear of being kidnapped, murdered, imprisoned, tortured or humiliated, as proved in the last two years. Such fears make it practically impossible for the local indigenous people to enjoy any safety, to exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms, to develop in their homeland.

In December 2021, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) adopted an order of provisional measures, stating that the Republic of Azerbaijan must “take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin.”<sup>6</sup> In August 2022, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) published its findings on Azerbaijan, where it confirmed Azerbaijan's coercive tactics and its hateful and antagonistic rhetoric towards Armenia, and stated that the Committee is “deeply concerned about allegations of grave human rights violations committed by the Azerbaijani military forces against prisoners of war and other protected persons of

---

<sup>2</sup> European Federation of Journalists, Azerbaijan: freedom of movement for journalists in Karabakh must be guaranteed, 25 July 2023, <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2023/07/25/azerbaijan-freedom-of-movement-for-journalists-in-karabakh-must-be-guaranteed/>

<sup>3</sup> Factor, Medicines do not reach Artsakh, cases of fetal loss among pregnant women have increased. OSCE discussed the NK issue. News. (in Armenian), 20 July 2023, <https://factor.am/669587.html>

<sup>4</sup> News.am, Sarsang reservoir has dried up, 5 May 2023, <https://news.am/arm/videos/61229.html>

<sup>5</sup> ICRC, Azerbaijan/Armenia: Sides must reach “humanitarian consensus” to ease suffering, 25 July 2023, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/azerbaijan-armenia-sides-must-reach-humanitarian-consensus-to-ease-suffering?ysclid=kkstbyf39645924201>

<sup>6</sup> International Court of Justice, Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia V. Azerbaijan): Order of 7 December 2021, <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/180/180-20211207-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>

Armenian ethnic or national origin.”<sup>7</sup> In February 2023, ICJ adopted another order demanding that Azerbaijan shall, in accordance with its obligations under CERD, take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions.<sup>8</sup>

On 23 July 2023, Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention issued a Red Flag Alert for genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>9</sup> On July 25, ICRC reported: “Despite persistent efforts, we are currently unable to deliver aid via the Lachin corridor & other routes, including Aghdam. With these convoys blocked, our concern is that the humanitarian situation will further deteriorate.”<sup>10</sup> Freedom House issued a statement: “We urge Azerbaijan to allow @ICRC to provide vital humanitarian assistance to Nagorno Karabakh & immediately work to ensure freedom of movement by opening the Lachin corridor, guaranteeing unrestricted movement of individuals, vehicles & cargo.”<sup>11</sup>

**It is crucial that the United Nations Security Council takes the responsibility to protect the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh from the ethnic cleansing as well as from genocide, which is actually underway through the forced starvation.**

**The Security Council shall particularly:**

- Pass a resolution that condemns the blockade and demands to urgently open the Lachin corridor for unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo, in line with the ICJ interim measure.
- Take urgent measures to ensure international peacekeeping mandate inside Nagorno-Karabakh and Lachin corridor to ensure the security of the Armenian population beyond November 2025, i.e. the end of mandate of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, prescribed in November 10, 2020 trilateral statement, until the durable settlement of the conflict is achieved;
- Request the UN Secretary General to commission a fact-finding mission to the region to assess the situation on the ground; and to appoint Secretary General’s Special Representative on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to ensure longer-term presence in the region;
- Request the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to deploy a fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh to assess the situation on the ground and present a comprehensive report to the UN Security Council; and to utilize all pertinent UN human rights mechanisms, including Special Advisors and Special Rapporteurs, to promptly generate reports on the human rights, humanitarian, and human security conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh.

---

<sup>7</sup> UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination publishes findings on Azerbaijan, Benin, Nicaragua, Slovakia, Suriname, United States of America and Zimbabwe, 30 August 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/08/un-committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-publishes-findings-azerbaijan>

<sup>8</sup> International Court of Justice, Order on the Request for the Indication of Provisional Measures, 22 February 2023, <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/180/180-20230222-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, Red Flag Alert for Genocide: Azerbaijan, 22 June 2023, [https://www.lemkininstitute.com/files/ugd/391abe\\_2bdcf33e1e0d4acf95e82292efed03c8.pdf](https://www.lemkininstitute.com/files/ugd/391abe_2bdcf33e1e0d4acf95e82292efed03c8.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> ICRC on Twitter, 25 July 2023, <https://twitter.com/ICRC/status/1683818379428220930>

<sup>11</sup> Freedom House on Twitter, 25 July 2023, <https://twitter.com/freedomhouse/status/1683880665916354574>

- Condemn Azerbaijan’s policy of ethnic hatred against Armenians, which puts at risk any efforts aimed at establishment of peace and security in the region.

Signed by:

Naira Sultanyan, Democracy Development Foundation

Sona Ayvazyan, Transparency International Anticorruption Center NGO

Seda Muradyan, Public Journalism Club NGO

Genya Petrosyan, Law Development and Protection Foundation

Araks Melkonyan, Protection of Rights without Borders NGO

Artur Sakunts, Helsinki Citizens Assembly - Vanadzor

Gayane Abrahamyan, “For Equal Rights” NGO

Edgar Khachatryan, “Peace Dialogue” NGO