

October 1, 2020

CALL OF THE ARMENIAN CIVIL SOCIETY TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

TAKE ACTION NOW: STOP Azerbaijani Aggression and Turkish Militaristic Expansionism in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh)

In the early morning of September 27, 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, in contempt of the call of the UN Secretary-General for a worldwide ceasefire, with the blatant support of the leadership of Turkey, Azerbaijan launched a large-scale attack along the entire line of contact of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh).

This attack is unprecedented in its size and the scope of the military arsenal engaged. Over the first two days, 80 soldiers fell victim to the war, and families of hundreds of soldiers live in nightmarish worry. There are over a dozen civilians killed, wounded, and living in shelters. The military attacks are not only in Artsakh, but also on the territory of Armenia.¹

It is clear that engaging along the entire length of the frontline could not have been an operation countering an Armenian attack, but rather required premeditated moves and strategic positioning of armed forces and heavy equipment. This outrageous all-out attack has now come to be distinguished with unprecedented and total support of Turkey. Top Turkish officials, including President Erdogan, ruling political parties/fractions in the Parliament and Minister of Foreign Affairs Cavusoglu have openly expressed their full support of Azerbaijan's actions.² There is emerging evidence of deployment of Turkish military personnel and use of equipment against Armenian forces. There are numerous reports of Turkey having deployed paid mercenaries from Syria and Libya to Azerbaijan to help fight the war.³ This once again speaks not only of outrageous interference but also advanced planning and preparation for the war.

Recent history of Turkey's expansionist politics in the region has shown its devastating impact on regional and international security. In previous conflicts, Turkey's military operations have led to uncontrollable armed clashes, exacerbated by gross violations of human rights, involving paramilitary groups and more dangerously, those that fight for the Islamic State. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, from January 1 to September 14, 2020, at least 116 civilians died and 463 were injured as a result of improvised explosive devices (IEDS) used by unidentified perpetrators and explosive remnants of war (ERW) in the areas of Syria controlled by Turkish forces or by Turkish-affiliated groups. Turkish-affiliated armed groups have also seized and looted people's houses, land and other private and commercial properties without any apparent military necessity and moved their own families into many of these properties.⁴ Turkey has engaged in large-scale recruitment and transfer of Syrian fighters to take part in hostilities in Libya.⁵

¹ <https://horizonweekly.ca/en/362754-2/>

² <https://jam-news.net/turkish-president-erdogan-harshly-condemns-the-west-demands-armenia-be-held-accountable-for-war-in-karabakh/>, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/armenias-withdrawal-only-solution-to-karabakh-issue/1989461>

³ <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/monitor-turkey-sending-syrian-fighters-azerbaijan>
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/syrian-rebel-fighters-prepare-to-deploy-to-azerbaijan-in-sign-of-turkeys-ambition>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26258&LangID=E>

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25970&LangID=E>

Erdogan's aggressive denial of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, coupled with ongoing expansionism does not leave much hope that he will shy away from repeating the atrocities and makes the citizens of Armenia, mostly Genocide survivors (including former Ottoman minorities Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Kurds and Yezidis) relive the horror of imminent threat to their existence.

Our region has for long been the target of the radical militant groups, and with this escalation spiraling out of control, and with an open support from Turkey, no-one is guaranteed from witnessing total violation of the principles of humanitarian law and unpredictable outcomes for people in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the wider region.

We, the undersigned, strongly condemn the Turkey-backed aggression by the Azerbaijani regime and the engagement of foreign militants. We appeal to the international community to decry war crimes perpetrated by Azerbaijan and Turkey, and to take actions that go beyond generic diplomatic statements, but rather impose strict sanctions against the aggressors, as well as concrete measures to bring the belligerent party to the table.

We believe that if the international community does not react in a timely and appropriate manner, it will have to share responsibility for imminent, long-term serious atrocities and destabilization in the region.

We call on the UN, governments, international organizations, human rights groups to take immediate action to stop Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression and prevent any further violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

At this moment the international community bears a responsibility to stop the bloodshed and prevent dangerous regional developments.

SIGNATORIES

Organizations:

Human Rights Research Center
Pink Human Rights Defender NGO
Transparency International Anticorruption Center
Aliq Media Armenia
Public Journalism Club
Youth for Ararat civil educational NGO
Helsinki Association

Individuals:

Anahit Simonyan
Anton Ivchenko
Lusine Kharatyan
Nikolay Hovhannisyan
Hasmik Petrosyan
Tatevik Gharibyan
Nina Karapetyants
Karine Torosyan
Arayik Papikyan