

CALL ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE AGAINST AZERBAIJANI AGGRESSION

Date: 25 August 2021

The undersigned Armenian civil society representatives are deeply concerned vis-à-vis the international response over the continued instability on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in the light of the fact that Azerbaijan has for months been violating the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia in flagrant violation of international law and regularly inciting military clashes. **In this connection, we call on the international community, including the relevant UN bodies, the Council of Europe, OSCE, the European Commission and individual states to urgently condemn the policy of aggression exercised by Azerbaijan.** Calls to “both parties” to pull back troops, reinstate the ceasefire and to de-escalate the situation are misplaced and do not reflect the situation on the ground.

Since the adoption of the ceasefire statement¹ by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia on 9 November 2020, the Azerbaijani aggression along the border with Armenia has not ceased, violating almost all provisions of the trilateral statement. Azerbaijani armed forces have illegally and blatantly invaded into and positioned themselves inside Armenia’s sovereign territory in several areas across the border. Moreover, Azerbaijani military regularly opens fire not only at Armenian military positions, but also at Armenian towns and villages, thus profoundly impacting the lives and livelihoods of the civilian population there. Aside from almost daily shootings, we have witnessed instances of illegal detention of civilians, threatening with firearms, inflicting harm to their property, and stealing their livestock.

In recent days, encouraged by the absence of legal and political consequences to the months-long aggression towards the sovereign territory of Armenia, as well as the absence of a proper international response, the Azerbaijani provocations rose to a new height, leading to new fatalities and casualties. These incidents have been documented by both the Human Rights Defender of Armenia² and local media³. Similar acts of aggression in violation of the November 9 ceasefire statement have also been initiated by Azerbaijan on the border with Artsakh, with the aim of denouncing the peace process and provoking new large-scale clashes.⁴

¹ <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2020/11/10/Announcement/>

² https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1854; https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1851;
https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1852; https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1836;
https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1834; https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1829;
https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1827; https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1824;
https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1826

³ <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/31415004.html>; <https://armenianweekly.com/2021/08/18/two-armenian-servicemen-killed-by-azeri-forces-in-border-attacks/>; <https://armenianweekly.com/2021/07/28/three-armenian-soldiers-killed-in-heavy-border-clashes/>

⁴ <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2021/08/10/Azeri-fire-Shosh-Mkhitarashen/2547556>;
<https://news.am/eng/news/658786.html>; <https://en.armradio.am/2021/08/18/azerbaijani-forces-target-artsakh-firefighters-battling-grassfire/>

These acts of aggression are accompanied by belligerent rhetoric, territorial claims, threats of hostilities at the highest level⁵, disrupting any opportunity for dialogue, discrediting the trilateral statement and propelling further hatred towards Armenians in Azerbaijan and Turkey. The statements of Azerbaijan's high-ranking officials often openly admit that the Azerbaijani forces are located on the Armenian sovereign territory⁶, while on the other hand disseminate misinformation and falsifications about Armenia initiating the attacks. These irresponsible actions do not only affect the lives and livelihood of the Armenian population but threaten the regional peace and security.

Therefore,

welcoming the U.S. House of Representatives principled and bipartisan stand against Azerbaijani aggression and hence the adoption of the Bill⁷ to restrict U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan because of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and the ongoing aggression towards Armenia;

welcoming the joint statement⁸ by the Chair of the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus of the European Parliament, MEP Marina Kaljurand, the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Armenia, MEP Andrey Kovatchev, and the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Azerbaijan, MEP Željana Zovko on acknowledging that the incidents were provocations of the Azerbaijani side that began with the incursion of Azerbaijani troops into Armenian territory on 12 May 2021;

we hereby call on the international community to:

- publicly and urgently condemn the politics of aggression exercised by Azerbaijan towards Armenia, including the blatant violation of Armenia's territorial integrity and the continued use of force against the peaceful civilians of the Republic of Armenia;
- take stringent measures to promote and support an independent monitoring mission under the auspices of OSCE/UN to observe the violations of rights of civilians in the border areas, thus not only preventing acts of aggression but also tackling manipulation of information by collecting unbiased information on the situation on the ground;
- continue to publicly and strongly demand Azerbaijan to return all prisoners of war to Armenia, who are still kept in violation of international laws, are being tried and sentenced in absurd criminal trials, and are effectively being kept as hostages in order to further pressure Armenia as part of their aggressive policy;
- if these acts of aggression continue, consider and put forward targeted sanctions that would stop Azerbaijan's aggressive policy.

5 https://www.asbarez.com/we-are-ready-to-teach-them-another-lesson-aliyev-threatens-war/?__cf_chl_captcha_tk__=pmd_FXEUAx.x2sWA_fw91AXcclQpFfXuHOozsHVfW3vwOAo-1629553870-0-gqNtZGzNAZujcnBszQiR

⁶ <https://a1plus.am/hy/article/408508>

⁷ <https://anca.org/press-release/u-s-house-votes-to-block-u-s-military-financing-and-training-aid-to-azerbaijan/>

⁸ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/238542/20210730_AZ-AM%20border%20clashes_joint%20statement.pdf

Open Society Foundations – Armenia
Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center
“Asparez” Journalists Club NGO
Helsinki Citizens Assembly – Vanadzor
“Protection of Rights without Borders” NGO
Law Development and Protection Foundation
Peace Dialogue NGO
Analytical Center for Globalization and Regional Cooperation
Public Journalism Club
“Martuni Women’s Community Council” NGO
Center for Rights Development NGO
Centre for Community Mobilization and Support
Restart Foundation for Science and Education
Armenian Progressive Youth
Non-Discrimination and Equality Coalition
Union of Informed Citizens