

Excellency,

On December 12, a throng of Azerbaijani citizens affiliated with, and sponsored by, the government of Azerbaijan crossed the line of contact with the Republic of Artsakh to organize a politically-motivated campaign against Artsakh specifically on the Stepanakert-Goris highway – the Lachin Corridor. The Azerbaijanis thus blocked the only road connecting the Republic of Artsakh with Armenia and the outside world. The Russian Peacekeeping contingent on the ground formed lines to prevent the Azerbaijanis from direct provocations against the people of Artsakh.

The closure of the Corridor has blockaded all of Artsakh and isolated its 120 000 population. It has rendered 1,100 people—including 270 children—stranded and unable to return to their homes. More egregiously still, on December 13, the Azerbaijani government cut off the gas supply to Artsakh through the Armenia-Artsakh pipeline, as a portion of that pipeline lays in the territories currently under Azerbaijani control. As such, it is actively and deliberately depriving the population of Artsakh of heat in the midst of cold winter weather.

These actions of Azerbaijan have created a humanitarian crisis in Artsakh which risks devolving into a patent humanitarian catastrophe. Currently, all the food, medical, and energy supplies to Artsakh are completely halted. Before the blockade, about 400 tons of essential goods—including grain, flour, vegetables, fruits, economic goods, etc.—were imported to Artsakh from the Republic of Armenia daily. The blockage of the only road in and out of Artsakh has also generated a serious medical crisis for Artsakh’s healthcare system. Patients in need of urgent medical care cannot be transported to Armenia for professional care, and scheduled surgeries have been temporarily halted in the Artsakh medical institutions.

Azerbaijan justifies the blockade of Artsakh by fabricated ecological concerns and falsely presents participants of the blockade as environmentalists. However, the leaders of these “environmentalists” have been identified as former members of Azerbaijani special services and members of NGOs directly controlled and maintained by the Azerbaijani government. These cadres are accompanied by Azerbaijani state-sponsored journalists. Notably, representatives of Azerbaijan’s opposition media have been arrested by Azerbaijani police after the attempt to cover the situation on the ground.

Azerbaijan’s continuing blockade of Artsakh represents a flagrant violation of international law and a form of collective punishment of the people of Artsakh. The blockade, moreover, is not a spontaneous or isolated episode; rather, it is the latest among a series of acts of large-scale violence carried out by Azerbaijan against people of Artsakh resulting in numerous victims in the last 30 years. The war of aggression against Artsakh in 2020—a fact admitted by Azerbaijan’s hereditary president—was the extreme manifestation of such policy, and it was undertaken by Azerbaijan with a clear intent to destroy the people of Artsakh. As a result of Azerbaijan’s illegal use of force against Artsakh and occupation of its territories, more than 40 000 people have been forcibly displaced and 38 civilian persons, mostly elderly, who fell under the control of Azerbaijani armed forces were brutally killed. In fact, not a single Armenian civilian in Azerbaijani custody survived.

Having failed to accomplish its criminal mission by use of force in 2020, Azerbaijan intends to complete the destruction of the people of Artsakh by other means—and it does not hide its

intentions. To be clear, Azerbaijan denies even the existence of Nagorno Karabakh which is not merely a geographical name, but a set of national identity, religious belonging and cultural heritage of the people of Artsakh. By denying the very existence of Artsakh, Azerbaijan in fact denies existence of the people of Artsakh and their fundamental rights. It thereby implements its criminal agenda, quite openly, even on a political level.

While continuing efforts to isolate Artsakh from the outside world and preventing international engagement in resolving the yet unsettled conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan doggedly tries to create unbearable living conditions for the people of Artsakh. The blockade of Artsakh and cut off the gas supply in winter conditions is one such Azerbaijani tool in furtherance of its policy. It is also intended to intimidate the civilian population of Artsakh and influence the policy of Artsakh government by coercion. Hence, it also constitutes a terrorist state act against the entire population of Artsakh.

International law is not so primitive to allow such conduct singularly aimed at the destruction of a human population. Massive human rights violations are no longer exclusively the domain of the internal affairs of any state. The obligation to promote and encourage a respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for everyone belongs to international community as a whole. It is well established that universal respect for, and observance of, human rights is a foundational norm for creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations. This is precisely why the UN Security Council—which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security—sees human rights as an crucial factor in the situations it strives to address. The Security Council has even developed effective toolkit to achieve peace and security goals with a direct focus on human rights. Such toolkit must be implemented here.

The Russian peacekeeping contingent is currently the only international actor engaged in the maintenance of the peace and security in Nagorno Karabakh and, frankly, the only force on the ground preventing the commission of mass atrocities against the people of Artsakh. However, the peacekeeping contingent lacks international support in order to fulfill this specific task in a comprehensive manner.

Given the looming humanitarian catastrophe and the resultant human suffering, we request that your respectful Government, as a responsible member of a community of states as well as a member of the UN Security Council, engage in individual and/or collective efforts to resolve the quickly impending humanitarian crisis in Artsakh.

We also ask that your Government take effective and decisive measures to stop Azerbaijan's relentless campaign of violations of human rights of the people of Artsakh which is patently targeting the complete destruction of the Armenian people of Artsakh.