



Armenian Bar Association

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Via Email: secretary@state.gov

December 19, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
United States Secretary of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

URGENT Re: Humanitarian Crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write on behalf of the 30,000 children who are trying to survive in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).¹ Azerbaijan has trapped them under its heavy heel and these most vulnerable members of the human race remain under siege. As you have undoubtedly heard, they have been blockaded since December 12, 2022, deprived of the only road that links them to food, supplies, and other necessities of life, including medicine.

The Lachin Corridor,² the only land route connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to the Republic of Armenia, was blocked by provocateurs masquerading as Azerbaijani environmentalists but chanting their true intentions to beleaguered Armenians: "Karabagh is Azerbaijani." Many of these so-called "environmentalists" have been exposed to be agents of the repressive Azerbaijani regime.³ As of today, that crucial road remains blocked. While Azerbaijan also cut off the gas supply to Nagorno-Karabakh for several days in freezing temperatures, for the time being, it has been restored.

This blockade is being wielded as a political lever by the Aliyev regime and it has already created a humanitarian crisis that endangers the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable in society (notably the children and elderly). This blockade is also imposed with the intent to paralyze the functioning of administrative and civil infrastructures (schools, hospitals, hospices) in Nagorno-Karabakh and to terrorize the Armenians living there. It must be stopped.

All of the medicine in Nagorno-Karabakh must travel through the closed road. Dire shortages have already been registered, and hospitals have suspended their planned procedures in order to preserve scarce supplies for new emergency patients. In addition, 270 children are separated from their parents, who were temporarily outside of Nagorno-Karabakh when the road was blocked and now cannot return.

¹ Nagorno-Karabakh is an enclave that was part of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic but populated by ethnic Armenians. Because of discrimination by Soviet Azerbaijani authorities, it exercised its right under Soviet law to secede from Soviet Azerbaijan in 1991. While its sovereign status has been disputed by Azerbaijan, we do not address that issue here to focus on the current urgent humanitarian crisis.

² Based on a 10 November 2020 ceasefire statement between the Republic of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, Nagorno-Karabakh was left to be connected to the outside world by a sole road, which was to be protected from Azerbaijan by a peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation. Under that statement, there was to be "road safety along the Lachin corridor of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions."

³ [Aliyev's Puppet Eco-Activists: Who Blocked the Lachin Corridor Leading to Artsakh? - FIP.AM](#)

You can find more information about the illegal blockade by reading the following resources:

- [Karabakh-Armenia Road Still Blocked By Azerbaijan \(azatutyun.am\)](#)
- [Supplies begin to run low as Nagorno-Karabakh blockade continues | Eurasianet](#)
- [Humanitarian crisis in Karabakh worsens, Azerbaijan continues region's blockade for 8th day - CIVILNET](#)
- [The Lachin Corridor: A Looming Humanitarian Catastrophe - EVN Report](#)

This blockade is clearly a ploy by Azerbaijan to use the population as hostages to achieve political demands. Eurasianet recently reported:

Baku is not prepared to wait indefinitely on its demands for the handover of the Zangezur Corridor and the disbanding of Karabakh Armenian forces, a senior Azerbaijani official told Eurasianet. "Diplomatic options have almost been exhausted," the official said on condition of anonymity. "What if we were to install a [border] post at the entrance of Lachin and finish the whole process? How can you breathe with no air?"⁴

With its inimical actions, Azerbaijan has violated the rights of the children of Nagorno-Karabakh under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These include the right to available education (Art. 28), the right of access to health care services (Art. 24), and the right not to be separated from one's parents against their will (Art. 9). Azerbaijan has also violated its obligation under Article 38 to respect the applicable rules of international humanitarian law relevant to the child and to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict. This blockade also violates ICCPR Articles 6 (Right to Life), 7 (Prohibition of Torture), 9 (Right to Liberty and Security), 12 (Freedom of Movement) and 17 (Right to Private and Family Life), among others.

We appealed last week to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child to intercede and act but have received no response.

In addition to asking for the immediate and unconditional unblocking of the Lachin Corridor, we ask that you take steps to mobilize emergency airlifts of international humanitarian assistance to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Emergency airlifts have been deployed in many humanitarian crises from the 1947 blockade of West Berlin to operations in Japan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Haiti and numerous others in the world.⁵ In times of humanitarian crisis, we have shown that the United States puts people first in the face of political tactics of oppression. The organization of international airlifts is even more imperative in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh since Azerbaijan has reportedly threatened to shoot down any flying aircraft⁶ making it impossible for Armenia or Russia to airlift supplies.

You have the power, responsibility and, indeed, moral authority to help the blockaded children of Nagorno-Karabakh. We remain available to discuss these issues with you at any time.

Sincerely,

The Armenian Bar Association

⁴ [Fears for new Nagorno-Karabakh crisis as Azerbaijan threatens key road link | Eurasianet](#)

⁵ [6 of the largest humanitarian missions in US military history - We Are The Mighty: Wings of Hope: The U.S. Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations](#), available at:

<https://www.amc.af.mil/Portals/12/documents/AFD-131018-056.pdf>

⁶ [Supplies begin to run low as Nagorno-Karabakh blockade continues | Eurasianet](#)