To the
President of the European Commission,
Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen
Rue de la Loi/ Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussel

German-Armenian Lawyers Association
French Association of Armenian Lawyers and Jurists
Dutch-Armenian Lawyers Association
Armenian Bar Association
Argentine Armenian Lawyers Association

04 November 2024

Subject: „Cop of ~~peace~~ greenwashing“, Urgent call to action

Dear Madam President,

We, the associations of lawyers of Armenian origin from Germany, the Netherlands, France, Argentina and America are once again addressing you in order to explicitly draw your attention to the policy of concealment or ‘greenwashing’ of the autocratic state of Azerbaijan. By means of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), which begins on 11 November 2024, the dictatorial host is not interested in combating climate change. The only intention is to cure its own reputation to deliberately distract attention from its repressive regime, both internally and externally, and to cover up the serious human rights violations.

As you know, the European Parliament just recently and once again condemned the Republic of Azerbaijan for its human rights violations and aggression against the Republic of Armenia and called, among other things, for sanctions against high-ranking Azerbaijani officials.

The authoritarian state, as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, is responsible for the massive intimidation of civil society in the course of COP29, the suppression of freedom of expression and assembly, the mass imprisonment of individuals for political reasons, the bribery of high-ranking government officials (including the German Bundestag) and non-governmental actors. Above all not to forget the perpetration of the most serious crimes under international law against the Armenian population once living in Nagorno-Karabakh. As President of the European Commission, you have been directly informed of the ethnic cleansing and the

resulting forced expulsion of 120,000 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, beginning on 19 September 2023. Nor did you fail to notice the previous months-long blockade, in violation of international law and against the decisions of the International Court of Justice, by means of which Azerbaijan systematically starved the population. International law experts are not only talking about the offences of war crimes and crimes against humanity but are also examining the applicability of genocide. To this day, Azerbaijan is unlawfully holding at least 23 Armenian prisoners of war, hundreds of political prisoners and civilians in its prisons, while 120,000 displaced Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians are homeless and scattered around Armenia and other countries. The total destruction of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh as a group is an uncontestable fact.

The current 'peace talks' between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan cannot hide the military ambitions of its dictatorial leader, Ilham Aliyev, who is still playing with the seizure of the southern part of the Republic of Armenia to ensure a direct connection to the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhichevan. During the war in 2020, Azerbaijan occupied parts of the province of Syunik in violation of international law and Armenia's territorial sovereignty. Here, too, human rights violations are currently taking place. The autocrat himself publicly refers to Armenia as 'Western Azerbaijan'. Whether in an enforced peace treaty or militarily: 'We are ready, we can give any response, and we should always be ready for it,' said Azerbaijani President Aliyev in one of his parliamentary speeches. Needlessly to say, all his speeches are of public access in the official website of the Presidency of Azerbaijan. We invite to visit them at https://president.az/en.

Mrs. President, in our letter of 5th October 2022, we already pointed out all these possible future scenarios if Azerbaijan's behavior in violation to international law, is not expressly stopped. But you, the European Union and the international community remained silent. The result was further devastating human rights violations that amount to at least two offences under international criminal law. We repeatedly call on you not to close your eyes for a second time. Like other dictators before them, these step-by-step violations of international law and the expected international echo are being tested. The less uproar there is, the further they go in their hegemonic endeavors to incorporate foreign territories. The fact that Putin's threatened invasion of Ukraine and the therewith resulted serious global repercussions should be lesson enough for the EU. Even if the fate of the oldest Christian State does not seem to be on your agenda: 3 million Armenians at the gates of Europe can hardly be in your interest.

We therefore expressly call on you to
- not give in to the autocratic state of Azerbaijan and its attempts at intimidation, but to unite as the European Union and the international community to impose sanctions that severely affect the state.

Furthermore, we call for
- labelling the dictatorship's poor reputation as what it is and to publicly pillory one of the world's most corrupt states for its devastating human rights violations and armenophobic policies.

We also call to
- use the UN Climate Change Conference and thus the gathering of numerous heads of state and civil society groups to exert massive pressure on the autocracy to stop Azerbaijan's illegal approach against the Republic of Armenia and thus to resolutely oppose further crimes under international law and their concealment.

Consequently, Azerbaijan must ensure the following:

- The release of the detained 23 prisoners of war, political prisoners and civilians detained illegally;
- the safe return of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians to their homeland under international protection;
- the cessation of the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage;
- an end to its genocidal politics and hate speech;
- and the acceptance of responsibility for the international crimes committed against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

As the individual responsible, Mrs. President, for implementing the aforementioned demands, you are accountable for ensuring their alignment with your personal political guidelines. You have spoken of transparency, a strong and democratic Europe, upholding the rule of law, the defense of fundamental values and human rights. You speak of a Commission that suits the action to the word and will act decisively when it makes sense. ‘The promise of a Europe that takes the lead internationally when it comes to the great challenges of our time’ - these serious human rights violations and wars of aggression by dictatorial states such as Azerbaijan and Russia are the current challenges and to prevent them makes more than sense, Mrs. President. It is therefore imperative that you 'walk the talk' and cease to be a mere bystander, thereby becoming a supporter of the most serious crimes under international law.

German-Armenian Lawyers Association – DEARJV

Dutch-Armenian Lawyers Association – ANAJA

French Association of Armenian Lawyers and Jurists – AFAJA

Armenian Bar Association – ABA

Argentine Armenian Lawyers Association – O.L.A.A.