



DECEMBER 14, 2022

HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE LACHIN CORRIDOR BLOCKADE

1. On December 11, 2022, a group of Azerbaijanis in civilian clothes, presenting themselves as environmental activists, under made-up environmental concerns in Artsakh blocked the Lachin corridor – the only road, connecting Artsakh with Armenia and the entire world.
2. The road, which is under the control of the Russian Peacekeeping contingent is used only for the passage of people and goods intended for the civilian population of Artsakh. The blockage of the Lachin corridor in fact constitutes a blockade of the entire Artsakh with 120 000 population. Additionally, due to the blockage of the road, Artsakh communities Lisagor, Mets Shen, Hin Shen, and Eghtsahogh have found themselves in complete isolation from the capital Stepanakert and the rest of Artsakh.
3. This is already the second time of blocking the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan in the last 10 days. On December 3, 2022, a group of Azerbaijanis once again blocked the Lachin corridor under the same fabricated ecological pretexts. The road was deblocked as a result of more than three hours of negotiations with the involvement of the Russian peacekeeping contingent.
4. As the Lachin corridor is, first and foremost, a road of humanitarian importance for the life support of the Armenians of Artsakh, its disruption even for a short period of time is fraught with irreversible and catastrophic humanitarian consequences. About 400 tons of essential goods, including grain, flour, vegetables, fruits, economic goods, etc., are imported to Artsakh from the Republic of Armenia daily. Currently, food, medical, and energy supplies to Artsakh are completely stopped.
5. In cold winter conditions, around 1100 civilians, including women, the elderly, and 270 children, are stuck in limbo on the Lachin corridor, not being able to return back to their homes and families in Artsakh. Apart from the fact that they are separated from their families, they are also deprived of the right to education.
6. The blockage of the only road in and out of Artsakh has also generated a serious medical crisis for Artsakh's healthcare system. According to the information provided by the Stepanakert Republican Medical Center and the Ministry of Healthcare of Artsakh, due to the continuous blockage of the Lachin corridor, the transfer of patients in critical condition for urgent treatment and hospitalization in the republican medical centers of Armenia has become impossible. Representatives of the human rights defender visited patients in critical condition and recorded that the lives of these patients are at high risk due to the ongoing terroristic act, currently implemented by Azerbaijan.

7. There is undeniable evidence that the campaign is orchestrated by the government of Azerbaijan. First of all, the so-called “ecological” campaign of Azerbaijan is being accompanied by a number of Azerbaijani journalists, who ensure full coverage of the ongoing events in real time. Moreover, the journalists constantly try to provoke the Russian peacekeepers and disrupt their mission by attempting to break into their positions and even push them. Some of those who present themselves as environmental activists are representatives of some NGOs, which are financed by the Azerbaijani government or Aliyev's fund. Moreover, there is evidence that representatives of the Azerbaijani special services are also among those blocking the road.

8. On December 13, at 18:00, the Azerbaijani side deliberately shut off the gas supply in the entire territory of Artsakh, which repeats the events of March-February 2022, and leads to a number of adverse humanitarian consequences, such as: (1) disruption of the educational process at the schools heated by gas; (2) disruption of the work of state agencies and vitally important institutions heated by gas; (3) inability of people to heat their homes by gas; (4) loss of the access of many households to hot water, (5) disruption of the work of hospitals heated by gas, (6) lack of fuel for vehicles, etc.

9. Artsakh's Ombudsman once again reminds that the uninterrupted operation of the Lachin corridor, which predominantly serves humanitarian purposes, is guaranteed by the Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020. In particular, article 6 of the Trilateral Statement states:

The Lachin corridor (5 km wide) which will ensure the communication between Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia and at the same time will circumvent the city of Shushi, shall remain under the control of the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation.

The Azerbaijani side grossly violates the provisions of the Statement and thus fails to fulfil its international obligations assumed by it.

10. It should be also noted that free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores is also guaranteed by international humanitarian law, precisely the Geneva Convention IV relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Blockage of the Lachin corridor constitutes a manifest breach of the Convention.

11. Blockade of Artsakh is not an isolated episode but must be seen as part of the widespread and systematic policy of Azerbaijan aimed at the complete expulsion of the people of Artsakh from their native land. Since the establishment of the ceasefire guaranteed by the Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020, Artsakh's Ombudsman has repeatedly reported on the recurrence of similar threats and provocations from the Azerbaijani side. Over the past two years, Azerbaijan has (1) deliberately and numerously attacked the infrastructure of Artsakh with the aim of terrorizing and intimidating the population of Artsakh; (2) left the entire population of Artsakh without gas and water supplies for weeks; (3) disrupted the seasonal agricultural work by targeting the villagers; (4) constantly subjected the Armenian communities in close vicinity to their military positions to psychological pressure by loudspeakers; (5) tried to spread disinformation and

panic among people by carrying out cyber-attacks on the state outlets of Artsakh.

12. The paramount reason behind this boundless behavior of Azerbaijan is the lack or even absence of a proper reaction by the international community and its main actors. The international community must urgently take a unanimous and unambiguous stance, as well as targeted actions to condemn, punish and prevent Azerbaijan from continuing to act with a sense of absolute impunity and realizing its ultimate goal – the destruction of the people of Artsakh.