

## **Ombudsman's Statement on the protests held by civil society members and social activists on the Lachin-Shusha Road**

Armenia's ecoterrorism policy against Azerbaijan, along with its ethnic-based genocide, occupation, and terrorism policies, which had lasted for three decades, seriously damaged our country's nature, biodiversity, the flora and fauna, water reservoirs, including the environment of our formerly occupied territories, as well as in general, the ecosystem of the entire region. Consequently, international eco-terrorism was committed. Different species of rare plants and animals have been destroyed and stopping the self-regulation processes in rivers and lakes has led to the transformation of water bodies into a dead zone, harmful to all living organisms. The transboundary River Okhchuchay was subjected to heavy pollution in the territory of Armenia for many years, which also adversely affected the quality of the water sources in the Araks River, which is the second largest river in the South Caucasus.

This has to be noted that Armenia's ecological terrorism against Azerbaijan is continued by the date. So, the illegal exploitation of mineral deposits in the areas of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed, especially the "Gizilbulag" gold and "Demirli" copper-molybdenum deposits is causing serious ecological consequences.

We regret to inform you that the delegation of Azerbaijan, which included the specialists of the corresponding public institutions, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the State Service for Property Issues under the Ministry of Economy, and the "AzerGold" Closed Joint Stock Company wished to conduct preliminary monitoring of the illegal exploitation of mineral deposits and all related ecological and other consequences in the areas of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed, however, the monitoring was not able to be conducted due to the provocations by both sides as a result of inactivity of the peacekeepers.

In protest to all of these incidents, civil society members, NGOs working for the protection of environmental rights, and social activists using their rights, proclaimed by the existing international human rights documents, and national legislation, especially the rights to live in a healthy environment, right to freedom

of assembly, right to freedom of movement, freedom of speech and expression express their just concerns about circumstances that cause environmental consequences that directly affect the violation of rights.

For that reason, I strongly condemn the attempts of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, which is temporarily deployed in the areas of Azerbaijan, to hinder the peaceful protest of civil society members and activists, implemented in compliance with international and national legislation, and call on them to fulfill the requirements stated in the tripartite Deal signed on 10 November 2022 by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia, as well as to act within their mandate.

As the Ombudsperson of Azerbaijan, I support our citizens who are holding action related to the protection of human rights and freedoms and the elimination of environmental terrorism committed by Armenians and demand Armenia to end its similar actions causing environmental degradation and plundering our resources in the territories of Azerbaijan and call on the world community, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations to support this action that serves to the protection of human rights and freedoms.

**Sabina Aliyeva**

**The Commissioner for Human Rights  
(Ombudsman)  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**13 December 2022**

*This Statement is addressed to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Office of High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, European Union, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, International and European Ombudsman Institutions, Asian Ombudsman Association, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Ombudsman Association of its member states, Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, International Peace Bureau, foreign ombudsmen and national human rights institutions, embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the foreign embassies in Azerbaijan, as well as to the Azerbaijani Diasporas.*