



September 28, 2023

Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
 United Nations
 UN Headquarters, S-3800
 New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General:

We represent a broad spectrum of organizations dedicated to promoting religious, cultural and human rights protections globally and write to you with urgency regarding Azerbaijan's recent military assault on Nagorno-Karabakh.

The failure to act by global leaders emboldened Azerbaijani Dictator Ilham Aliyev to violate international agreements, numerous cease-fire agreements and two orders from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Aliyev has ignored all calls by you to refrain from using military force against Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The imposition of the so-called "cease-fire" agreement and "integration" of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians under the rule of Azerbaijani dictator Ilham Aliyev is illegitimate, counter to international law and a rebuke of your statements calling for a negotiated settlement.

Condemnations not to use brute force against the subjugated and starving people of Nagorno-Karabakh have never stopped the Aliyev regime, in alliance with Russian President Vladimir Putin, from continuing their ethnic cleansing campaign against Nagorno-Karabakh. This military campaign leaves the vulnerable

Armenian population with no alternative but to be forcibly removed from their ancestral lands, millennia-aged monasteries and cemeteries. Aliyev was never interested in heeding your calls to guarantee any rights and security for Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians.

Credible reports indicate that large-scale massacres, akin to the Russian-inflicted civilian atrocities in Bucha, Ukraine in early 2022, have occurred, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 1,000 civilians. These reports include horrific instances of children being beheaded in front of their parents. In a horrifying display, captures from Azerbaijani social media have been found to offer bounties for decapitated heads and ears of Armenian children in a number of settlements in Nagorno Karabakh—areas where no local or international actor has access. These grave acts contribute to an acute humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, resulting from aggressive military actions by Azerbaijan.

Disturbingly, there are reports that Azerbaijani has a “kill list” comprising 400 to 1,000 leaders and media figures, including U.S. and EU citizens in Nagorno-Karabakh. This brutal military campaign has resulted in the gut-wrenching separation of thousands of families who are unable to contact their loved ones.

Because Azerbaijan was never forced to allow access to Nagorno-Karabakh by international humanitarian aid organizations, Nagorno-Karabakh has become a black box with almost no communication or connection with the outside world.

Azerbaijan’s Intent to Eliminate Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh

Over a century of evidence has documented harassment, discrimination, ethnic cleansing, violence, cultural and religious desecration and genocide by Azerbaijan against Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan's recent military offensive against the besieged region of Nagorno-Karabakh aligns with this regime’s clear attempts to eradicate the Armenian presence, including its history, religion and culture. This cruel military assault against blockaded Nagorno-Karabakh is consistent with its historical actions to eliminate Armenians and all traces of its history and culture.

Aliyev has disregarded decisions from the ICJ and repeated appeals from the United States, the European Union, Canada, Australia, as well as international organizations and other global leaders to cease using violence, hatred, and blockades. In defiance of such appeals, Aliyev used violence and military solutions to impose Azerbaijani rule, for the first time in history, over the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Founding International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo has repeatedly called Azerbaijan’s actions Genocide.

In her September 14, 2023 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Ambassador Yuri Kim said “the United States will not countenance any action or effort—short-term or long-term—to ethnically cleanse or commit other atrocities against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

EU High Representative Joseph Borrell declared: “Azerbaijan bears the responsibility to ensure the rights and security of the Karabakh Armenians, including their right to live in their homes without intimidation and discrimination. Forced displacement of the civilian population through military or other means will be met with a strong response by the EU.”

What is clear is that under no circumstances can the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh live safely and freely under the rule of Azerbaijan.

The violence undertaken by Azerbaijan threatens to engulf the entire South Caucasus region in conflict. Aliyev, Putin, and Turkish President Erdogan continue threatening the Republic of Armenia with more violence and destabilization. Armenia's existence as a democratic, pluralistic society is at risk without decisive action by international leaders.

Under Article I of the Genocide Convention, there is a duty to prevent this genocide. Azerbaijan is also violative of Article II (c) of the Convention by “inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.” Any acceptance of or inaction against Azerbaijan’s and Russia’s actions will make states complicit in this genocide.

We urge the following actions be undertaken immediately:

- Coordinated humanitarian relief operations, including a comprehensive humanitarian needs assessment, to allow unimpeded access to Nagorno-Karabakh under a UN-mandate to ensure that humanitarian aid organizations can deliver aid fast and effectively.
- Urgently dispatch a rapid response mission to Armenia specifically to monitor and assess the situation of the newly arrived ethnic Armenian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh as well as to establish the facts and circumstances in Nagorno-Karabakh following the Azerbaijani offensive beginning September 19, 2023, including possible violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
- Publicly denounce Azerbaijani attacks directed against the population of Nagorno-Karabakh as an act of genocide.
- Public statements that the military attacks causing ethnic cleansing do not provide any basis for a legitimate and permanent solution on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh
- Publicly declare the necessity of an independent international presence in Nagorno-Karabakh for the safeguarding of human rights in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Establishment a mandate for a Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Nagorno-Karabakh by the UN Human Rights Council and collaborate with the President of the Council in spearheading the creation of such a mandate by the Council
- Ensuring the protection and freedom of movement through the Lachin Corridor in accordance with the ICJ Orders
- Unconditional and immediate withdrawal of Azerbaijani security forces and military installations from the Republic of Armenia
- Unconditional and immediate release of all Armenian POWs and civilians from Azerbaijani custody
- Declaring the unacceptability of any military incursion into the Syunik region or any other part of the Republic of Armenia

Your urgent action is requested.

Sincerely,

CC: **H.E. Volker Türk**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
H.E. Václav Bálek, President of the UN Human Rights Council

List of Signatories:

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