



SOS Alert - Artsakh #2

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing a second SOS alert for the Armenians of Artsakh, who are currently under the yoke of the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan and are in critical danger of genocide.

Following a series of airstrikes, drone attacks, and the mass shelling of civilian-inhabited areas by Azerbaijan on September 20th and 21st, the terrified residents of Artsakh are finding themselves hostages of the Azerbaijani military with no exit routes that would allow them to flee the enclave.

At this moment in time, conditions on the ground are unclear. Azerbaijan has cut all electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication services (telephone, internet) in Artsakh.

There are unconfirmed reports of atrocities and massacres. Azerbaijani social media channels have openly threatened civilians with abuse, ranging from bounties on missing children to images and reports of massacres of residents who refused to leave their homes, leading to frantic civilian efforts to evacuate ahead of the arrival of the Azerbaijani military.

A meeting of the United Nations Security Council on September 21st, 2023, reached no consensus. No action was taken by the Security Council to address the ongoing, constantly changing crisis. .

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention urges the international community to act immediately to help ensure the safety of the people of Artsakh, including both civilians and disarmed members of the Artsakh Defense Army—who have committed no crime and must be given unhindered access to exit routes along with the civilian population in full accordance with Azerbaijan’s obligations under international humanitarian law.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has stated that he is “only” targeting what he calls the “criminal junta” of the democratic government of the Republic of Artsakh. The government of Artsakh is an elected body that has committed no crime. Azerbaijan likewise claims that soldiers in the Artsakh Defense Army and the noncombatant general population of Artsakh (often extending to the Armenian world population as a whole), are “terrorists” and “illegal separatists.” These claims are false and are belied by the history of the region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

There is a high probability that any former members of the democratically-elected Artsakh government and the Artsakh Defense Army who fall into Azerbaijani hands will be brutally abused, tortured, and murdered. Azerbaijan has committed atrocities against almost all Armenian civilians and POWs it has captured in the wars of 2016, 2020 and 2022. There is no reason that its forces would behave differently in 2023. Imbued with genocidal Armenophobia, the Azerbaijani military has not prosecuted any members within its ranks who have committed atrocities motivated by this form of ethnic hatred. There are no indications that this will change in the future.

The international community should insist that all members of the Armenian population of Artsakh are protected and given unrestricted access to exit corridors. Given the vulnerability of men and older boys at the hands of the Azerbaijani military, there is no case in which they should be separated from women and children. We strongly urge Artsakh women and children to refuse to be separated from men and older boys.

The Lemkin Institute is horrified by what the world has allowed to happen to the Armenians of Artsakh, despite years of warnings from almost all genocide prevention experts and NGOs who foresaw the disaster taking place amid the willful blindness of the international community. We are committed to not only bearing witness to the mass atrocities currently taking place in Artsakh, in which many world leaders and powerful stakeholders are complicit, but also ensuring that Artsakh's population receives justice for the mass atrocities taking place in the South Caucasus.