



## **Red Flag Alert for Genocide**

### **Azerbaijan #6**

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On the 53rd day of the criminal blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azeri pseudo-environmentalists, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing a new Red Flag Alert for Genocide for Azerbaijan. The blockade of this corridor, the only land route connecting the Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) with Armenia proper, has caused a humanitarian crisis with the isolation of 120,000 people, including over 30,000 children, 20,000 elderly people, and 9,000 people with disabilities. Armenians in Artsakh are running low on food, essential medicines (such as insulin), baby formula, essential female hygiene products, and other necessities. The serious humanitarian crisis caused by the blockade worsens daily with constant gas, electricity, and internet cuts by Azerbaijan in the middle of the harsh Caucasian winter. The responsibility for this humanitarian crisis lies solely with the Azerbaijani state and particularly with the regime of President Ilham Aliyev.

The Lemkin Institute has repeatedly warned that this blockade is part of the broader genocidal aims of the Azeri leadership, supported by its staunch ally Turkey, as well as a continuation of genocidal acts carried out by the Baku regime against the Armenian community. The blockade is, therefore, not an isolated act but one occurring in the context of a war, at times latent, that Azerbaijan unilaterally began in September 2020 and that has as its aim the takeover of historic Armenian lands in the Republic of Artsakh and in the Republic of Armenia along with the forced displacement (“ethnic cleansing”) of the Armenian populations in Azeri-acquired territory. The Lemkin Institute takes the position that such aims are genocidal in that they seek to permanently destroy the Armenian identity in these regions.

The 2020 war, far from being over, has only deepened in the past year with Azeri attacks on Armenia and further land occupation – including 140km of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. In September 2022 Azerbaijan once again breached the Tripartite Agreement that ended the 44-Day War in 2020 by launching an aggressive war against the Republic of Armenia, during which Armenian POWs were once again tortured, humiliated, and massacred. Statements made by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have confirmed fears that Azeri land claims will not end with the territory of Artsakh, which is over 99 percent Armenian and has been inhabited by a majority of Armenians for thousands of years. Observers should expect any genocide against Armenians in Artsakh to be accompanied or followed by aggressions against Armenia proper, particularly the southern Syunik region where Azerbaijan and Turkey would like to build a “Zangezur corridor” linking the two countries and excluding Armenians. This corridor would cut Armenia off from

its southern border, further weakening its geopolitical position and rendering it even more vulnerable to attacks from its hostile neighbors.

In recent days, various media outlets have suggested that Azerbaijan is using the blockade as a psychological tool in order to gradually but steadily expel Armenians from Artsakh by making life impossible for them. This would not surprise us at the Lemkin Institute. The so-called “environmentalists” who have blocked the Lachin corridor have shown themselves to be little interested in environmentalism. They chant “Karabakh is Azerbaijan” and carry signs supporting Aliyev and the Azerbaijani military. Human rights organizations have linked many of them with the Azerbaijani government and the Azerbaijani military, and several protesters have flashed the sign of the terrorist, anti-Armenian Grey Wolves organization. This is all a far cry from what one would see at an environmental protest; rather, this behavior is aligned with official Azerbaijani policies of denying the indigeneity of the Armenians of Artsakh, of destroying the Armenian cultural heritage in the South Caucasus, and of repeatedly threatening the expulsion of the Armenians from the entire region, even from Armenia proper, because the territory should belong to Azerbaijan.

The Lemkin Institute is also highly concerned about the global implications of Azerbaijan’s anti-Armenian policies and rhetoric, which are promoted worldwide with complete impunity. For example, anti-Armenian flyers were posted on the morning of 29 January 2023 around an area of Los Angeles, California where the Armenian diaspora was planning a demonstration against the blockade of Artsakh. The text of the flyers called for genocide, reading: "Azerbaijan + Turkey + Pakistan + Israel = 4 BROTHERS WILL WIPE Armenia OFF the MAP Inshallah!!!!" The flyers used religious symbols next to each country in order to give the call for genocide an anti-Christian character. In addition to calling for genocide, the religious symbology included in the flyers denotes an attempt to change the nature of a primarily territorial conflict into a civilizational one. These flyers are now being shared and celebrated on Azeri social media, just as videos of atrocity crimes against Armenians in the wars of 2020 and 2022 were similarly disseminated. Hate speech of this type must be investigated and not ignored by local and national authorities.

Although the Lemkin Institute welcomes the European Parliament Resolution of 19 January 2023 that requests that Azerbaijan immediately end the blockade, this resolution is not enough if it is not accompanied by concrete measures to put an end to the criminal behavior of the regime of Ilham Aliyev as reflected by the blockade and in other acts, such as the war of aggression in 2022, the permanent violations of the human rights of the Armenian inhabitants of Artsakh, the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage, the atrocity crimes committed by Azeri soldiers against Armenian civilians and POWs, and the hate speech and ideology the Azerbaijani state encourages in its population from an early age on.

Because of the continuing lack of concrete action by any state or multilateral institution, we call on the European Parliament, the international community represented in the United Nations, NATO, and the different states of the world committed to peace and security, to intervene forcefully and diplomatically in this conflict in order to build peace in the region and protect the Armenian identity from a second genocide. Azerbaijan and Turkey should be economically and diplomatically sanctioned and isolated if they do not immediately and publicly pull back from

their belligerent threats against Armenia and Armenians, their sponsoring of terrorism, their continued genocide denial, and their fanning of the flames of hate in the region. Perhaps most importantly, states such as Israel, the USA, and Ukraine, each of which claims to support democracies, must immediately cease all military and economic support for the dictatorship in Azerbaijan. By granting Azerbaijan abundant military support, these states are tipping the scales forcefully against Armenia and could be complicit in genocide. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention takes complicity very seriously and will pursue any legal case that proposes itself should the world turn a blind eye to the plight of the Armenian people and oversee another genocide against them – this one wholly preventable.

The stakes are high not only for Armenians the world over, but also for the future of democracy, regional and global security, and the principle of multilateralism. Neither the United Nations nor its member states can ignore the principles that were established back in 1945 to forge an egalitarian and peaceful international community: equal sovereignty, the right to self-determination, and territorial integrity. Failure to comply with any of these principles defeats the core purposes for which the UN was created, and therefore their breach should result in immediate sanctions and further actions to cease hostilities and protect the lives and human rights of all individuals and groups equally.