

H.E. Josep Borrell Fontelles

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy

European Union

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Geneva and Brussels, 19 December 2022

Your Excellency,

The World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches denounces the blockade by Azerbaijan of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh, as a violation of the tripartite agreement that ended the six-week war of 2020, of international humanitarian and human rights law, and of the most fundamental moral principles. By its actions in obstructing the humanitarian Lachin corridor, and by temporarily cutting gas supplies to the region just at the onset of winter, Azerbaijan is deliberately creating a humanitarian emergency for the 120,000 ethnic Armenian residents of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh, seeking to force Armenia into accepting a settlement on Azerbaijan's terms, and trying to terrorize ethnic Armenians into abandoning their ancient homeland.

This follows a clear pattern of behaviour by Azerbaijan that contradicts any claims of goodwill and humanitarian responsibility on its part. Increasing Azerbaijani attacks on sovereign Armenian territory prompted the UN Security Council to call an emergency meeting on 15 September 2022. Growing evidence of gross violations of human rights against Armenians by Azerbaijan's military and security forces compelled Human Rights Watch to accuse Baku of war crimes. Accountability for such crimes and violations has not been pursued. Moreover, Armenian religious and cultural heritage in the region remain largely unmonitored, unprotected and at risk.

In these circumstances, Armenian fears of renewed genocide against them cannot be discounted, and the already week-long blockade of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh is a context in which those fears are greatly and understandably exacerbated.

We therefore write to urge you to pursue all possible diplomatic initiatives to ensure that Azerbaijan re-opens the Lachin corridor and provides appropriate guarantees that it will remain open. Further, we appeal to you to do all in your power to secure extension of the mandate of the existing EU monitoring mission at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border to include the Lachin corridor, in order to provide independent civilian monitoring of the situation along the corridor.

We look forward to your response, and to your swift action to address these urgent humanitarian and human rights concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca
Acting General Secretary
World Council of Churches



Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen
General Secretary
Conference of European Churches

Copy to:

Ms Luisa Ragher - Head of Human Rights Division, European External Action Service