

To:

Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

CH-1201 Geneva (Switzerland)

January 15, 2023

The Plight of 30,000 Children in Artsakh under the Azerbaijani aggression.

As of December 12th 2022, the Lachin corridor, the only route connecting the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) to Armenia and the outside world, has been blocked by a group of Azerbaijanis pretending to be "eco-activists", along with Azerbaijani military servicemen. Basic necessary supplies such as food, baby formulas, medicine, and now, even humanitarian aid are being purposefully denied to a population of over 120,000 civilians, 30,000 of which are children. The world is on the verge of witnessing and allowing a major humanitarian catastrophe.

Until now, only 10 tons of medicine and baby items were provided to the hospitals by the Red Cross. This momentary trickle, is a stark contrast to the usual 400 tonnes of products were imported on a daily basis. There are no more fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and general food left in stores. As stated in the recent CNN article, potatoes have become a luxury¹. The shortage of food in shops has led to widespread starvation in the region, with the government of Artsakh implementing emergency measures of rationing, and controlling the distribution of food and supplies to those most urgently in need. However, these measures are not enough and will not be able to sustain the population for much longer. Many children are suffering from malnutrition and lack of access to essential items.

The situation is particularly distressing for children who are running low on life-supporting medication due to the blockade. A specific example of this is a 9-year-old boy suffering from epilepsy in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, whose mother is desperately seeking help as medication supplies have fully run out.

According to the Human Rights Defender of Artsakh report for December 12 2022 - January 13, 2023, more than 11 children are in intensive and neonatal care deprived of being transferred to Armenia. There are many children suffering from heart and respiratory diseases registered in the national dispensary, who usually receive periodic examinations and treatments in medical institutions of the Republic of Armenia, but they have been unequivocally blocked from the opportunity to receive this proper medical care for more than a month. The constant electricity cut offs compounds the challenge, making it impossible for hospitals and clinics to function, further exacerbating the health crisis for children and their families².

¹ 'Potatoes are a luxury': Vital supplies dwindle as 'eco-activists' blockade a breakaway region guarded by Russia; January 12, 2023; CNN

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/12/europe/armenia-azerbaijan-nagorno-karabakh-lachin-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR3BoVtJUT4Imz4d305ZBEoEv9NJkgP54RIkdTdTn8aqJu9RcXk88zxPttc>

² Azerbaijan Also Cuts Internet Connection to Artsakh; January 12, 2023; Asmarez
<https://asbarez.com/azerbaijan-also-cuts-internet-connection-to-artsakh/>

Based on the information gathered by the Human Rights Defenders' Offices, 270 children accompanied by their teachers, were attending the Junior Eurovision Song Contest in Armenia. Now unable to pass through the Lachin Corridor and return home, 70 of them, between the ages of 9 and 14, are left without their parents. These 270 children are now temporarily accommodated in Goris, Syunik province and in Yerevan and started attending local schools in Goris and Yerevan.

Additionally, 50 children are left without any parental care in Artsakh. Among the children are minors, left alone to navigate this difficult time. In the Msmna village of Artsakh, two youths aged 11 and 13, were left without a guardian because their parents had left for Armenia before the road was closed to participate in the funeral of a relative and have not been able to return till this day.³

This ongoing blockade imposed by Azerbaijan, with its publicly announced genocidal agenda, has a devastating impact on the 30,000 children of the region, leaving them without access to essential resources, as well as depriving them of their right to education. Because of food shortages, 41 kindergartens, 56 pre-school groups, and 20 all-day schools have been closed, leaving 6,828 children unable to attend school and being deprived of adequate care, and education.

The examples of the horrific realities of families and children each day are countless and absolutely unjust. They all highlight the critical need for access to essential resources such as medicine, food, and education.

It's imperative to mention that the children of the democratic Republic of Artsakh already carry a deep wound, as they just witnessed the horrors of the 2020 Artsakh war, lost their fathers and homes, and are still constantly terrorised by the Azerbaijani dictatorial government officials⁴ who intentionally use anti-Armenian rhetoric and carry out their planned ethnic cleansing.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) must monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Artsakh by immediately sending international experts to evaluate the situation on the ground, as well as provide assistance to organisations focused on helping the children affected by this crisis.

Sincerely,
HAYREN Partners for Humanity

³ Artsakh Human Rights Defender report, December 12 - January 13, 2023
<https://ombuds.am/images/files/8015e970b4e618c7e518be045acd382b.pdf>

⁴ The president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev stated that Armenians should not forget the lessons of the second Karabakh war in 2020.
<https://twitter.com/presidentaz/status/1590307637035683840?t=ZzoEFZSM7aB3aTJdsR8TZg&s=19>

The Canadian government officials and international human rights organisations call to reopen the Lachin Corridor and prevent genocide.

In Canada, we have heard statements for action from Honorable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs⁵, MP Stéphane Bergeron⁶, MP Heather McPherson, MP Garnett Genuis⁷, MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos⁸, MP Han Dong, MP Michael Chong⁹, MP Annie Koutrakis, MP Fayzal El-Khoury¹⁰, MP Rachel Thomas¹¹, and several other Députés to reopen the Lachin corridor. Sadly, these statements for immediate action seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

Numerous human rights organisations also urged Azerbaijan to unblock the Lachin corridor and stop the humanitarian catastrophe in Artsakh. Among those organisations are the Genocide Watch¹², Amnesty International¹³, Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention¹⁴ and Helsinki Commission¹⁵.

⁵ Global Affairs Canada statement condemning Azerbaijan and urging to reopen Lachin corridor
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0GkJGyXChuq2vHDvdvDEcxBd1EJj4kvgvJevZCqSmb8SLdU7dQW1eLYpn5tYPccUGI&id=100064689606526&mibextid=Nif5oz

⁶ MP Stéphane Bergeron statement supporting the reopening of the Lachin Corridor and Canada's opposition uniting for this cause
<https://twitter.com/sbergeron/status/1614647352110841856?t=Sum869Ulu7--C0U-8PuGrg&s=19>

⁷ MP Garnett Genuis statement to reopen the Lachin corridor
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0o1XKQoJWfWMLbsn6rNyKM8zJCUi9sGrQVXkouYJYuPcVwTHbL2to4S3ofwuusoAtl&id=100044137974349&mibextid=Nif5oz

⁸ MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos statement to reopen the Lachin corridor
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0nKShMexKnwCGFypfUZeMN6JZoATwznzqAwixAPXmvm4eoUuq6eUapg8pEjFUKcDI&id=100044156543251&mibextid=Nif5oz

⁹ MP Michael Chong statement to reopen the Lachin corridor
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02v72UMEF9LF7bHFZk6jX9AKU3DhQtXMBWongdL67ogPEazoksTBzvTCe9w1PEMsxLI&id=100045136352171&mibextid=Nif5oz

¹⁰ MP Fayzal El-Khoury statement to reopen the Lachin corridor
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0zAhjM3W42Nzbi6oWXXg67pMchDnqtUbGzL2H4GX3wg5ecKENJWWJoAHkWXJ7Sj8Jl&id=100057864917800&mibextid=Nif5oz

¹¹ MP Rachel Thomas statement on the need to reopen the Lachin corridor
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02LwBSs2qKAwz27e32KYEytiqskwFXgLB4CK3MKBc3eJ9bSuxJk1SkJ4z8rN3am8Twl&id=100044306262380&mibextid=Nif5oz

¹² Genocide Watch statement on the need to reopen the Lachin corridor
<https://www.facebook.com/104170307689/posts/pfbid0dgVnS1z7N7X9a1qJ1RK1AGKkyFEEH7hKK95zz1p7KJ5ee3ZWWRasiLCSzL7Ppxfil/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

¹³ Amnesty International statement to reopen the Lachin corridor
<https://twitter.com/amnestypress/status/1613202615076020224?t=LWn9rn8pwcHwICJIZLkvRQ&s=19>

¹⁴ Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention RED FLAG to stop genocide
<https://twitter.com/LemkinInstitute/status/1610506503710031874?t=xv5FgjrueumDfOV94mwXaA&s=19>

¹⁵ Helsinki Commission statement to reopen the Lachin corridor
<https://twitter.com/HelsinkiComm/status/1612832664221896708?t=7hSs3s7l1nOeD89zw9qF7g&s=19>