

**120,000 Armenians Under Blockade
Imposed by Azerbaijan**

June 29, 2023 Marks the 200th Day of the Blockade

June 29, 2023



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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.0 Introduction..... | 3 |
| 1.1 The Center for Truth and Justice..... | 3 |
| 2.0 Historical Background..... | 4 |
| 2.1 The 44-Day War..... | 4 |
| 2.2 The Blockade..... | 4 |
| 2.3 European Union Mission Deployed to Armenia..... | 5 |
| 2.4 The International Court of Justice Ruling..... | 5 |
| 3.0 Humanitarian Aid to Nagorno-Karabakh Has Been Stopped..... | 6 |
| 3.1 Testimony: Separation and Death..... | 6 |
| 3.2 Testimony: Travel and Family Reunification Almost Impossible..... | 7 |
| 3.3 Testimony: Fuel, Electricity and Food Shortages..... | 10 |
| 4.0 President Aliyev’s Policy of Ethnic Cleansing..... | 13 |
| 5.0 Azerbaijan in Violation of International Law..... | 13 |
| 5.1 Azerbaijan in Violation of the Trilateral Statement..... | 15 |
| 6.0 Conclusion..... | 16 |
| 6.1 Actions that must be taken by Azerbaijan..... | 16 |
| 6.2 Actions that must be taken by the international community..... | 16 |

1.0 Introduction

On 12 December 2022, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on all transportation routes connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. This blockade has resulted in the cessation of both private and commercial transportation of goods and medicines, leading to the confinement of 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. As a consequence, stores and pharmacies have depleted their supplies, necessitating food rationing through a coupon system. Surgical procedures have been suspended, and only the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), accompanied by Russian Peacekeepers, has been facilitating the transportation of critically ill individuals to Armenia on a sporadic basis. Additionally, Azerbaijan has periodically blocked the supply of electricity and gas, resulting in prolonged disruptions in home heating during winter months, communication and internet access.

To worsen the crisis, on 15 June 2023, Azerbaijan halted the transportation of [all humanitarian aid](#)¹ destined for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Consequently, the 120,000 Armenians residing in Nagorno-Karabakh, which includes 30,000 children, are now deprived of essential necessities such as food, medicines, gas, electricity and internet access. They find themselves living in an open prison, surrounded by Azerbaijani soldiers who frequently engage in gunfire and military attacks against Armenian farmers and residents of Nagorno-Karabakh, inflicting terror and loss of life. On June 27, 2023, the day the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers arrived in Washington, DC for peace talks with mediation from the U.S. Secretary of State, Azerbaijan launched preemptive drone and artillery attacks in Nagorno-Karabakh killing four servicemen.

This report provides testimonial evidence depicting the dire conditions endured by those living under the blockade. To protect their privacy, we will identify these individuals with the following pseudonyms: 23LC-0009, 23LC-0006, 23LC-NK0007, 23LC-NK0002, 23LC-NK0030, and 23LC-NK0028.

1.1 The Center for Truth and Justice

The Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ) is a 501(c)(3) U.S. nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California. CFTJ has been documenting human rights violations and war crimes against Armenians since the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. CFTJ set up fact-finding infrastructure in the region and has been collecting first-hand testimonies from victims. The evidence-gathering methodology CFTJ uses can be found here: [Methodology](#). CFTJ preserves evidence and makes it available for educational purposes, advocacy and potential legal actions. The CFTJ team is composed of attorneys and law students in the U.S., Armenia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as human rights advocates and other professionals.

¹ [Amnesty International reports on food supplies and humanitarian aid cut off from Nagorno-Karabakh](#), (June 28, 2023).

2.0 Historical Background

2.1 The 44-Day War

On 27 September 2020, Azerbaijan, with strong support from Turkey, launched an unprovoked and large-scale military invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh. Over a period of 44 consecutive days, Azerbaijan relentlessly bombed Nagorno-Karabakh, which is home to 120,000 Armenians. This conflict lasted 44 days and resulted in the tragic loss of 5,000 Armenian lives. The majority of these casualties did not occur as a consequence of direct combat; rather, they were primarily attributed to Azerbaijan's extensive employment of artillery strikes and drone attacks. Civilian infrastructure, including churches, schools, hospitals, and even a maternity hospital, became deliberate targets of Azerbaijan's relentless aggression. While Armenia, armed with outdated and outmatched military weapons and systems, endeavored to defend itself against the unexpected assault, Azerbaijan enjoyed the support of military superpowers such as Israel and Turkey, the latter being a member of NATO. Azerbaijan seized control of significant portions of Nagorno-Karabakh. On 9 November 2020, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia signed a ceasefire agreement known as the "Trilateral Statement". Pursuant to the terms of the ceasefire agreement, peacekeeping forces from the Russian Federation are to remain deployed in the conflict zone until 2025, with the possibility of an extension thereafter.

2.2 The Blockade

On December 12, 2022, individuals of Azerbaijani origin, consisting of both civilians and soldiers dressed in civilian attire, masqueraded as “eco-activists” and established tent encampments, effectively closing off the Lachin Corridor for 138 days. This corridor serves as the sole route connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. This initial stage marked the beginning of a blockade that has now persisted for over 200 days, severely restricting the freedom of movement of goods and all Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

As a consequence of this blockade, the general population of Nagorno-Karabakh is unable to travel to and from Armenia. The halt in transit has led to a complete cessation of cargo shipments, including vital supplies such as food products and medicines. The only transit exception which is selectively granted is for those who are critically ill, and even then, they must be escorted by the ICRC and accompanied by Russian Peacekeepers to ensure their safe passage.

The self-proclaimed “eco-activists” were strategically placed along the Lachin Corridor and received full financial backing from the government of Azerbaijan² and tacit support of Russian Peacekeepers. They were sponsored by the Aliyev regime and the environmental issue that they were purportedly protesting was entirely baseless³. There were no genuine

² Mikroskop Research on the Actions Organized by Azerbaijani Government in Lachin Corridor (Jan. 19, 2023), [How much grants did "eco-activists" receive from the government of Azerbaijan?](#)

³ EU Observer (Jan. 18, 2023), [A prominent academic exposed how Azerbaijan science-washed the ongoing “eco-protest” in media outlets.](#)

environmental concerns⁴ in the area where they effectively obstructed all traffic, travel, and transit. It was a campaign sponsored and created by the state, with the sole intention of halting all movement on the Lachin Corridor and unjustly confining 120,000 Armenians residing in Nagorno-Karabakh with the objective to compel the population to submit to Azerbaijani governance or be deported from their homes and homeland.

On December 20, 2022, members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council expressed their concerns and urged Azerbaijan to open the Lachin Corridor and the parties involved to adhere to the terms outlined in the cease-fire agreement signed in November 2020.⁵ The member states reached a general consensus that the blockade would result in severe human suffering, emphasizing the urgent need to restore unrestricted movement without delay. However, as of June 29, 2023, the Lachin Corridor remains inaccessible to both public, private transportation, impeding the delivery of essential goods, including medicines. The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has become so critical that on June 26, 2023, the ICRC airlifted critical medicines by helicopter from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

2.3 European Union Mission Deployed to Armenia

In February of 2023, an European Union (EU) observer mission consisting of forty civilians was deployed on the Armenian side of the border to monitor Azerbaijani troop movements and cease-fire violations.

2.4 The International Court of Justice Ruling

On February 22, 2023, on the 73rd day of the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in the case of Armenia v. Azerbaijan, made the following provisional findings⁶:

The Republic of Azerbaijan shall, pending the final decision in the case and in accordance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions.

Despite the ICJ's ruling, reiterated and confirmed by the UN Secretary General⁷, as well as the EU⁸ and the US⁹, Azerbaijan continues blockading the Lachin Corridor and endangering the lives of 120,000 people.

⁴ TIME (Feb. 22, 2023), [Weaponizing environmentalism to achieve ethnic cleansing](#).

⁵ UN Security on Azerbaijani Provocations and Violations of Trilateral Statement, SC/15154 (Dec. 20, 2022), UN Security Council Meeting.

⁶ Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, Armenia v. Azerbaijan, Order of February 22, 2023, General List No. 180, P. 14, [ICJ files](#).

⁷ UN Secretary-General on the Orders of the ICJ (Feb. 24, 2023), [US Secretary General on the ICJ Ruling](#).

⁸ European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2023 on the humanitarian consequences of the blockade in Nagorno-Karabakh 2023/2504(RSP), [European Parliament Resolution; The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly \(PACE\) Resolution of June 22, 2023 "Ensuring free and safe access through Lachin Corridor" is adopted](#).

⁹ Secretary Blinken Call with Azerbaijani President Aliyev (Jan. 23, 2023), [US State Dept Call](#).

3.0 Humanitarian Aid to Nagorno-Karabakh Has Been Stopped

The Lachin Corridor has been blockaded since December 12, 2022. As of June 14, 2023, all transportation, including for those facing life-threatening conditions, and the transit of all humanitarian aid have been completely suspended. This unlawful act by Azerbaijan has condemned the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh to starvation and imminent death.

3.1 Testimony: Separation and Death

Witness 23LC-NK0002¹⁰ was born in 1973 and raised in the city of Barda in Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). She lives in the village of Vank in the Martakert region of Nagorno-Karabakh. She and her family witnessed the Sumgait pogroms¹¹ carried out in 1988 by Azerbaijan against the Armenians who lived in Azerbaijan during the Soviet period. As a result of the atrocities witnessed, her father suffered heart problems and passed away. In order to survive the atrocities the witness and her mother fled from Azerbaijan and ended up living in the village of Vank in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The witness's husband fought in the first Nagorno-Karabakh War which dated from 1988 to 1994. During that first war when Nagorno-Karabakh was fighting for its independence from Azerbaijani rule, the witness's first cousin was taken captive by the Azerbaijani army, and he died while being held as a POW.

The witness's youngest son and her son-in-law fought against Azerbaijan in 2016 when Nagorno-Karabakh was militarily attacked, bombed and shelled for four (4) continuous days. And then again, in 2020, during the 44-Day War, when Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno-Karabakh, her two (2) sons fought again.

The fighting was so severe and unrelenting that on October 15, 2020, the witness had to flee her village of Vank. Her daughter, with her three young children also had to escape to safety, and left behind her home and all their belongings in the village of Tumi, in the Hadrut region. The witness' daughter and three (3) grandchildren cannot return to their home because their village is under Azerbaijani control, and return would mean arrest and death. The Witness 23LC-NK0002's daughter and grandchildren now live in Armenia.

On December 21, 2020, Witness 23LC-NK0002 was able to return home to her village of Vank in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Today, she and her family live under a blockade and have suffered terrible hardships. Her baby granddaughter needs powdered milk/baby formula and diapers. Desperate for baby formula, Witness 23LC-NK0002 started running ads/announcements on social media seeking supplies for her granddaughter.

¹⁰ CFTJ recorded Witness 23LC-NK0002's testimony on February 2, 2023.

¹¹ On the Sumgait Pogrom, a massacre that targeted the Armenian population of the seaside town of Sumgait in the Azerbaijan SSR in late February 1988, see Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (2nd edn, Cambridge University Press 2006) P. 272.

Also, her father-in-law is in poor health and requires medical supervision. However, due to lack of fuel, they are unable to take him to the hospital. She states:

“[T]hey are playing with our lives. And this will have bad consequences.”

She describes how her pregnant daughter-in-law urgently needed to get to the hospital, but due to the lack of fuel and electricity, it was not possible to help her. Again, on December 20, 2022, she needed to go to the hospital for a much needed check-up, but again, due to fuel shortages, they could not get her to the hospital. Sadly, on December 21, 2022, the daughter-in-law miscarried. The doctors told her that if she had been taken to the hospital in time, the miscarriage could have been prevented.

Witness 23LC-NK0002 states:

“[I]t is impossible to endure this pain. We still don’t know the baby’s cause of the death. We still have not received the body of the baby, because an examination is necessary to find out the cause of death, and this can only be done in Armenia. Again, however, because of the blockade, we cannot get the baby to Armenia to have it examined, to establish the cause of death so we can have the body returned to us. During the hospital stay, my daughter-in-law was lying on the table when the electricity was abruptly cut off, leaving her in need of urgent assistance.”

The witness’s ten year old nephew also has health issues. He requires specialized medical attention three (3) times a month, but the specialist is in Armenia. The next scheduled visit for the ten year old was on December 11, 2022. The parents of the ten year old left their other children with Witness 23LC-NK0002 in order to take their son for his treatment in Armenia. But on December 12, 2022, the blockade went into immediate effect, without any advance notice, which caused the separation of the family. The children who were left with Witness 23LC-NK0002 were separated from their parents, indefinitely. On December 30, with the assistance of the ICRC, Witness 23LC-NK0002 transported her brother’s children to Goris, in Armenia, so that they could be reunited with their parents. Witness 23LC-NK0002 lives in Nagorno-Karabakh, in her village of Vank. She states:

“[W]e have elderly and pregnant women that need hospital care. How can we live like this? These are inhumane conditions.”

Despite the dramatic events that the blockade has caused her family, Witness 23LC-NK0002 feels she is lucky because she is able to live in her own village of Vank, in Nagorno-Karabakh.

3.2 Testimony: Travel and Family Reunification Almost Impossible

Witness 23LC-0009¹²

¹² CFTJ documented and recorded the testimony of Witness 23LC-0009 on April 15, 2023.

Witness 23 LC-0009 was born in the Ghazanchi village of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1967 and moved to Talish, a village in Nagorno-Karabakh. In April of 2016, during a military strike by Azerbaijan, she was injured and her house was destroyed. She and her family escaped to Kilikia District in the Martakert region in Nagorno-Karabakh.

On November 20, 2022, Witness 23LC-0009 traveled to Russia. On December 11, 2022, she returned to Armenia in order to travel home to Nagorno-Karabakh. However, on December 12, 2022, the “eco-activists” closed the Lachin Corridor leaving Witness 23LC-0009 stranded in Armenia. She traveled to Goris, the closest city in Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. There were twenty six (26) others like her that hoped to travel to their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh with the help of the Russian Peacekeepers.

They all traveled as agreed, with the escort of the Russian Peacekeepers, but once they reached Shushi, the “eco-activists” would not let them pass. She states,

“[T]hey kept shouting ‘Karabakh is Azerbaijan’”.

The travelers waited in their vehicle for four (4) hours. During this time, tension and fear grew among the twenty six (26) travelers. Three (3) women became critically ill and needed medical attention. The Russian Peacekeeper provided first aid and offered to take them to the hospital in Stepanakert (capital of Nagorno-Karabakh) via a Russian ambulance. But the “eco-activists” blocked them from safe passage, and instead offered to take them to a hospital in Shushi, which had become occupied by Azerbaijan as of the 44-Day War in 2020.

The Russian Peacekeepers did not agree to allow the Armenian women to be taken to Shushi. After many hours of negotiations, two (2) women and one of their daughters-in-law were transported via a Russian ambulance to Stepanakert, and another woman was taken to Stepanakert via an Azerbaijani ambulance.

During these long hours of negotiations and nerve wrecking events, Witness 23LC-0009 had stepped out of the vehicle and was being interviewed by the Russians. A man in civilian clothing spoke to her in Russian and told her that the sick passengers were fine. Witness 23LC-0009 realized that the man speaking to her was in fact an Azerbaijani doctor, but before he could finish his conversation an armed Azerbaijani ordered him to walk away and follow him. That Azerbaijani doctor escorted a sick person to Stepanakert, in an Azerbaijani ambulance.

Alas, Witness 23LC-0009 and the rest of the passengers, who were minutes away from their homes, were not allowed into Stepanakert and forced to return to Goris, in Armenia.

To this date, Witness 23LC-0009 lives in a hotel in Goris. She wakes up every morning, gets dressed, hoping that today will be the day she gets to go home to her family. She’s been denied return to Nagorno-Karabakh since December 12, 2022.

Witness 23LC-0006¹³

¹³ CFTJ took Witness 23LC-0006’s testimony on April 15, 2023.

Witness 23LC-0006 was born in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, and after the 44-Day War moved to the village of Tsaghkashat, in the Askeran Province of Nagorno-Karabakh. On December 6, 2022, she flew to Russia to visit her daughter.

When Witness 23LC-0006 returned to Armenia, she moved to Goris to await transportation to Nagorno-Karabakh, so she could return home. The only way to secure transit to Nagorno-Karabakh was by registering with the ICRC. She was told: “No one could return on their own.”

Witness 23LC-0006 tells the story of how twenty seven (27) Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh were traveling home with the help of the Russian Peacekeepers. But when they reached Shushi, they were stopped by the “eco-activists” who were yelling:

“[K]arabakh bizimdir,”- Karabakh is ours.

An Azerbaijani man entered the bus demanding the passport of one of the Armenian women. He had a list of names, and he checked her passport with that list. The witness was informed by the ICRC representative that a list of names was sent to Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani side would decide whether or not to allow them to return.

Witness 23LC-0006 says:

“[O]ur home was 15 minutes away from us, but we were not allowed to go.”

Witness 23LC-0006 and the rest of the twenty six (26) travelers were told to return to Goris. Due to the high level of stress and anxiety, the health of three (3) women began to deteriorate. The Russian ambulance was trying to take them to a hospital in Stepanakert, but the Azerbaijanis blocked the road. The “eco-activists” were shouting at them and blocking their passage.

Suddenly, an Azerbaijani ambulance arrived to take the women to a hospital in Shushi. Both the Armenians and the Russians refused this offer. An Azerbaijani ambulance transported one of the women, whose health was in critical condition, to Stepanakert and the Russian ambulance transported the other two (2) women and the daughter-in-law of one of the women to Stepanakert in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Witness 23LC-0006 was asked to step out of the vehicle to be interviewed by the Russian side. She wanted to express her feelings about the situation, but instead, she and the rest of the travelers, all twenty two (22) of them, were forced to return to Goris in Armenia

Witness 23LC-0006 feels fortunate because she was able to return home to Nagorno-Karabakh three (3) days before Azerbaijan established an official checkpoint on the Lachin Corridor, which was on April 23, 2023.

Witness 23LC-NK0007¹⁴

Witness 23LC-NK0007 lives in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh. He was appointed by the Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh as the main liaison to the Russian Peacekeepers to communicate and collaborate with them to facilitate the transportation of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. He states:

“[S]ince December 12, 2022, when the blockade went into effect, travel of Armenians has been very limited, and sometimes there is absolutely no travel or transit. Even the transportation of the most seriously ill, whose medical treatment is only possible in the Republic of Armenia, is carried out with the help of the ICRC in cooperation with the Ministry of Healthcare of Nagorno-Karabakh.

While Azerbaijan claims there is no blockade, very limited transportation through the Lachin Corridor is only carried out with the accompaniment of ICRC employees or the Russian peacekeepers. This does not mean the blockade has ended; travel is only managed for those who have urgent medical needs. Before this cooperation with the ICRC, it was impossible to transport Nagorno-Karabakh people from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

While the so-called “eco-activists” created this blockade, they have also caused a whole host of ecological disasters for us. Due to them cutting us off our supply of electricity and gas, which came from Armenia, we now rely on alternative sources of energy. Since the damage to the electrical cable, Nagorno-Karabakh has relied on limited local electricity production. Namely, the region is currently relying on the Sarsang hydropower plant but its capacity is limited. The demand for electricity is also heightened due to the fact that Azerbaijan regularly cuts the natural gas supply to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Worst of all is the food shortages we are experiencing. For the past 6 months, the only food coming into Nagorno-Karabakh has been by the Russian Peacekeepers. But this supply is only 10% of what used to be imported before the blockade. This has caused severe inflation in the economy in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

3.3 Testimony: Fuel, Electricity and Food Shortages

Witness 23LC-NK0002

Witness 23LC-NK0002 describes the disruption in the supply of gas and electricity. She states it started in March of 2022, but since the blockade, the supply of gas is frequently shut with rolling blackouts for six to eight hours a day. Witness 23LC-NK0002 states:

“[W]e are in a blockade in every aspect. People suffer. Everything is scarce. Without electricity, without gas. They are playing with people. Currently, there is no electricity, so we are sitting in darkness. They do not let people live normal lives, to

¹⁴ CFTJ recorded the testimony of Witness 23LC-NK0007 on June 5, 2023.

have electricity. So much depends on electricity. Because of the lack of gas and electricity, children are unable to attend school for weeks on end. We can't even do basic household chores, let alone live like normal people.”

Witness 23LC-NK0030¹⁵

Witness 23LC-NK0030 is a 47-year-old man, who was born and raised in the city of Sumgait in Azerbaijan SSR. He lived in Sumgait until 1988, when the pogroms¹⁶ began. The witness and his family had to flee their home in Sumgait and seek refuge in Stepanakert in Nagorno-Karabakh. Witness 23LC-NK0030 lives in Stepanakert. The witness served in the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army for a significant period of time and held the position of brigade commander and commander of a military unit until 2019. The witness was a participant in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (early 1990's), the 2016 War, and the 2020 War. Witness 23LC-NK0030 speaks about how gas and electricity is turned off 3-4 times a day, which has caused dramatic problems in the winter months, when the weather is sub-zero with snow on the ground. He states:

“[A]bout 4,700 people have lost their jobs. The Lachin Corridor is not just a road, it is the main artery that delivers food and necessary goods. The international community should not be waiting for people to die in their backyards. This could turn into the blockade of Leningrad.”

In early January of 2023, during the winter months, food shortages became a crisis¹⁷. The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities implemented a food rationing system and introduced a coupon system. Witness 23LC-NK0002, states:

“[S]ince the blockade we have had severe food shortages. People stand in long queues regardless of the weather conditions. I stood in line for four hours to get five (5) eggs. Later, people were given food coupons, but we still have to stand in queues. In Stepanakert, my parents and brother stand in queues for groceries every day. Two (2) days ago my brother stood in line for several hours to bring home one (1) kilogram of carrots for our sick mother.”

¹⁵ CFTJ recorded the testimony of Witness 23LC-NK0030 on January 25, 2023.

¹⁶ On the Sumgait Pogrom, a massacre that targeted the Armenian population of the seaside town of Sumgait in the Azerbaijan SSR in late February 1988, see Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (2nd edn, Cambridge University Press 2006) P. 272.

¹⁷ Amnesty. Azerbaijan: Blockade of Lachin Corridor putting thousands of lives in peril must be immediately lifted - Amnesty International (Feb. 9, 2023), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/azerbaijan-blockade-of-lachin-corridor-putting-thousands-of-lives-in-peril-must-be-immediately-lifted/>.

Witness 23LC-NK0028¹⁸

Witness 23LC-NK0028 is a 75-year-old man, who was born in Askeran, Nagorno-Karabakh. He was raised in Askeran and witnessed the Askeran clash in 1988.¹⁹ The witness participated in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War in the early nineties. Witness 23LC-NK0028 has many health issues. He relies on his home garden and greenhouse for sustenance, but is unable to maintain it because all raw products come from Armenia, and he says with the blockade, he has no fuel to use his car or buy the necessary items. He states:

“[G]iven my age, it is a significant challenge for me to walk one kilometer to cultivate my land. I lack the fuel to drive there by car. I also work on the land and provide food for my family. I have farms in different locations. I had plans to grow tomatoes, cucumbers, potatoes—basically everything we need. However, the problem is that today I cannot obtain the seeds. These hybrid seeds are only available in Armenia. To yield a harvest, chemicals are necessary to combat pests. Every year, I travel to Armenia to bring all of these supplies. Without organic mixtures and fertilizers, the soil won't produce a harvest. Even local fertilizers cannot be transported due to the lack of fuel. There are no bags available to purchase the mixtures. Greenhouses require drip irrigation systems and strings, which are currently unavailable. These are the factors necessary for farming and survival. I have workers on the farm who are not left unemployed.”

The witness spoke about his friend who also maintains a greenhouse that is fuel-based. Due to the blockade his friend has suffered huge economic losses. The witness states:

“[H]is greenhouse is approximately half a hectare in size, and its heating relies on fuel. Where will he find it? Since I'm in touch with him, I know that he is facing substantial losses at the moment. I know that the government is assisting him because his greenhouse already has well-developed plants such as tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers that could be sent to the market in a month. However, he is still incurring significant losses because taking care of the plants requires substantial expenses.”

He states:

"[T]his road is our only hope. We are headed to our death. This will lead to genocide."

The testimonial evidence demonstrates the Azerbaijani-imposed blockade has left an entire population in a state of humanitarian crisis. Nagorno-Karabakh's economy has been severely affected which has caused food shortages, poverty, decreased production and trade, budget deficits, reduced tax revenues, unemployment, inflation, desperation, anxiety, stress, illness

¹⁸ CFTJ recorded the testimony of 23LC-NK0028 on January 27, 2023.

¹⁹ The Askeran clash was the prelude to the Sumgait pogroms in February of 1988. Two days of pogroms with Azerbaijanis, armed with iron bars and other makeshift weapons, attacking Armenian residents, see Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, P. 63.

and death. Since the 44-Day War that ended with a cease-fire in November of 2020, Azerbaijan's policy of forcing the removal of all Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh has been systematically planned and the blockade is just one of many steps being implemented to complete the ethnic cleansing of Armenians from their indigenous lands.

4.0 President Aliyev's Policy of Ethnic Cleansing

Azerbaijan's state policy of removing Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, their policy of ethnic cleansing, has been very clear from the start of the 44-Day War. Despite the international community's statements calling on Azerbaijan to open the road and unblock the Lachin Corridor, the Aliyev regime is intent on completing its plan of removing all Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

On January 20, 2023, President Aliyev's stated²⁰:

“[T]herefore, whoever does not want to become our citizen, the road is not closed; it is open. They can leave whenever they want; no one would stop them.”

While President Aliyev's plan is clear, to have all Armenians leave Nagorno-Karabakh, it is in fact false that they are allowed to travel. And despite Aliyev's rhetoric, the road remains under blockade by Azerbaijan with the tacit support of Russia.

As documented by CFTJ in its report [On the Dire Humanitarian Crisis in the Villages of Mets Shen, Hin Shen, and Yeghtsahogh in Nagorno-Karabakh](#) the people are facing imminent risk of starvation. Similar to the three (3) villages discussed in the report, the rest of Nagorno-Karabakh, which depends on Armenia for food and medicines, is on the verge of starvation. The residents of the above named villages had estimated that unless the blockade was lifted, their food supplies would last them to the end of May.²¹ Given the continued closure of the Corridor and the absence of any recent updates from these villages, it can be inferred that these communities are facing severe food shortages and possible starvation²².

5.0 Azerbaijan in Violation of International Law

The Armenians residing in Nagorno-Karabakh have been effectively isolated from Armenia due to the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan. The closure of the Lachin Corridor has resulted in the isolation of 120,000 individuals, depriving them of basic human rights, including freedom of movement and travel, the right to life, physical and mental health, education, an adequate standard of living, work, and family life. These rights are recognized under international law. Even in situations of armed conflict, the fundamental human rights obligations outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) remain applicable. Article 12.1 of the ICESCR acknowledges that state parties recognize "[t]he right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of

²⁰ President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Ilham Aliyev was interviewed by local TV channel (Jan. 10, 2023), <https://president.az/en/articles/view/58555>.

²¹ [The Knife Has Reached the Bone, Report by CFTJ on villages in dire humanitarian crisis](#) (Apr. 24, 2023).

²² Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention (May 7, 2023), [Limkin and Artsakh Activity and Observations](#).

physical and mental health," while Article 12.2 highlights the steps to be taken to achieve the full realization of this right.

The right to health encompasses not only access to healthcare but also factors that contribute to health, such as safe food, nutrition, and healthy working and environmental conditions.²³ Therefore, the rights to life, food, work, education, human dignity, non-discrimination, equality, assembly, movement, and other rights and freedoms are integral components of the right to health. The right to health is recognized in Article 5 (e) (iv) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965 (ICERD).

As a state party to the ICESCR and ICERD, Azerbaijan is obligated to respect, protect, and fulfill these rights. Azerbaijan is also bound by Article 2 of the ICERD, which requires the condemnation of racial discrimination and the pursuit of policies to eliminate it in all forms. Additionally, Article 5 (e), subparagraph (iv) of the ICERD obligates Azerbaijan to guarantee economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly the right to public health, medical care, social security, and social services. Therefore, any actions or restrictions by Azerbaijan on the free movement along the Lachin Corridor, including the import of essential humanitarian goods such as food and medicine, have a detrimental impact on the lives of individuals. Azerbaijan's violation of these obligations as a party to the CESCR, and ICERD signifies a violation of several fundamental UN agreements.

The closure of the Lachin Corridor has left the people of Nagorno-Karabakh isolated, deprived of basic human rights such as freedom of movement and travel, the right to life, the right physical and mental health, the right to education, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to work, and the right to family life all recognized under international law²⁴. Even under situations of armed conflict, fundamental human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) still apply²⁵. Under article 12.1 of the ICESCR, state parties recognize "[t]he right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health", while article 12.2 enumerates "[s]teps to be taken by the States parties ... to achieve the full realization of this right". The right to health extends not only to adequate health care but also to the underlying determinants of health, including an adequate supply of safe food, nutrition,

²³ CESCR General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art. 12), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 11 August, 2000. Para 11.

²⁴ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989.

²⁵ Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Advisory Opinion) [2004] ICJ Rep 136, para 106; Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda) (Merits) [2005] ICJ Rep 168, para 216; Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Georgia v. Russian Federation) (Provisional Measures) [2008] ICJ Rep 353, para 112; William A Schabas, 'Lex Specialis? Belt and Suspenders? The Parallel Operation of Human Rights Law and the Law of Armed Conflict, and the Conundrum of Jus ad Bellum' (2007) 40 Israel Law Review Pp. 592, 598.

healthy occupational and environmental conditions.²⁶ Thus, the rights to life, food, work, education, human dignity, non-discrimination, equality, assembly and movement and other rights and freedoms address integral components of the right to health. It is impossible to discuss basic human rights without ensuring the right to health. The right to health is recognized, *inter alia*, in article 5 (e) (iv) of ICERD.

As a state party to ICESCR and the ICERD, Azerbaijan bears the responsibility to adhere to certain obligations. These obligations include the duty to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights outlined in the ICESCR, the obligation to denounce racial discrimination and actively work towards its eradication as stated in Article 2 of the ICERD, and the obligation to ensure economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to public health, medical care, social security, and social services as stated in Article 5 (e), subparagraph (iv) of the ICERD. Consequently, any actions or restrictions imposed by Azerbaijan on the freedom of movement, which is safeguarded by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1996, along the Lachin Corridor, including limitations on the import of essential humanitarian goods such as food and medicines, have severe consequences on the well-being of individuals. By virtue of being a party to the CESCR, ICCPR, and ICERD, Azerbaijan is in violation of these agreements. Thus, Azerbaijan's actions represent a breach of its commitments under several fundamental UN agreements, and need to be held accountable.

5.1 Azerbaijan in Violation of the Trilateral Statement

The blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which has now exceeds 200 days, violates the trilateral agreement²⁷ signed at the end of the 44-Day War by Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Provision 6 of the Trilateral Statement delineates a 5-kilometer wide Lachin Corridor to facilitate communication between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh while bypassing the city of Shushi, which is now under Azerbaijan's control, and one-hundred percent devoid of Armenians. The Trilateral Statement also stipulated that the Russian Peacekeepers would retain control of the Lachin Corridor to secure the safety of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. However, since the signing of the Trilateral Statement, Azerbaijan has forced all Armenians that lived on the Lachin Corridor off their lands, stopped all travel and shipments that use the Lachin Corridor, and has erected a checkpoint on the Lachin Corridor with concrete blocks and armed military personnel. Russian peacekeepers are unable or willing to stop Azerbaijan from humiliating, terrorizing, starving and killing Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan has ignored the calls of the international community, including the ICJ, the UN, the EU and the US (see 2.0), to cease hostilities and open the Lachin Corridor. Rather, it has

²⁶ See supra note 23.

²⁷ Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation (Nov. 10, 2020), <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>.

an defiant attitude while implementing its policy of ethnic cleansing because the country has not yet faced any sanctions for their actions.

Azerbaijan's sustained blockade of the Lachin Corridor not only contravenes the terms agreed upon in the Trilateral Statement but also disregards international obligations and legal provisions, leading to the violation of various agreements and impeding the transportation of crucial humanitarian assistance.

6.0 Conclusion

Government, international organizations and NGOs must be unified against Azerbaijani aggression. Just two (2) days ago, on June 27, 2023, four (4) Armenian servicemen in Nagorno-Karabakh were killed by a preemptive strike launched by Azerbaijan while the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan were meeting in Washington, DC negotiating a US-brokered peace plan. Words of concern and sympathy were expressed by the US and the international community, and yet, Azerbaijan has not been held accountable for the violence it pursues in Nagorno-Karabakh.

This report is meant to call upon international organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations to stop the deprivation of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

6.1 Actions that must be taken by Azerbaijan

- Open the Lachin Corridor and resume freedom of movement and travel between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia;
- Allow the transportation of food and medicine;
- Allow unimpeded the transit of humanitarian aid through the Lachin Corridor;
- Comply with the terms of the November 9 Trilateral cease-fire agreement;
- Cease all military aggression including shootings and drone attacks on the people of Nagorno-Karabakh;
- Pursue directly talks with Nagorno-Karabakh.

6.2 Actions that must be taken by the international community

- Impose sanctions on Azerbaijan including Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act;
- Cease all military sales to Azerbaijan;
- Impose the binding provisional orders of the ICJ;
- EU Mission should publicly report its findings on Azerbaijan's violations of the cease fire and occupation of Armenia proper;
- Demand international access to the Lachin Corridor and Nagorno-Karabakh to assess the humanitarian needs of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh;
- Insist on Deployment of international peacekeepers to the Lachin Corridor;

- Demand the immediate and unconditional release of Armenian POWs.²⁸

Armenians are resilient and will persevere, however the Aliyev regime must be held accountable for persistent violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws. The international community still has a chance to uphold the universal principle of stopping and deterring the ethnic cleansing of indigenous people from their homeland - in this case the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

²⁸ [CFTJ report on torture and other cruel/inhumane or degrading mistreatment of Armenian POWs](#) (Oct. 28, 2022); [CFTJ White Paper on the torture and mistreatment of Armenians POWs](#) (Sept. 1, 2021).