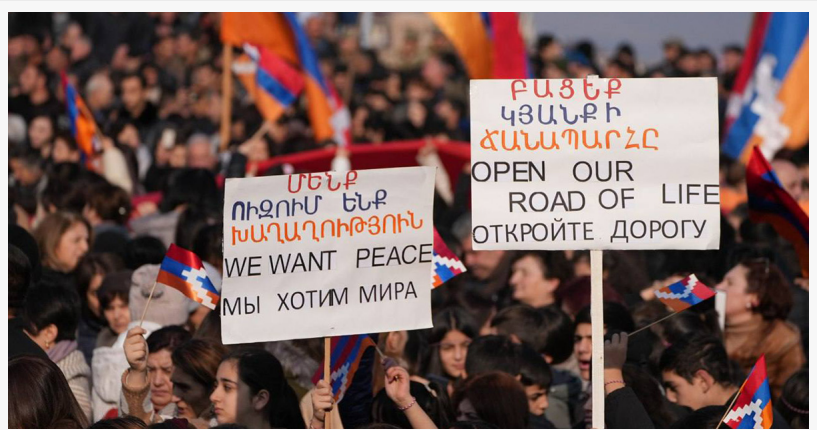


Karabakh Armenians Brace for Third Week of Azerbaijani Blockade

Armenian American-Led Coalition Calls on US to Cut All Military Aid to Azerbaijan; Send Emergency Assistance to Avert Humanitarian Crisis

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, December 30, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) is calling on the White House and Congress to stop all military aid to Azerbaijan and send emergency humanitarian aid to the 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh), which is entering the third week of a devastating blockade by Azerbaijan.



"We Want Peace": Over 70,000 Armenians in Stepanakert, Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) hold Christmas Day rally calling on Azerbaijan to end its blockade, now entering its third week.

"Azerbaijan's strangling the Armenian families of Artsakh, blockading the republic's only road connecting to the outside world, in their latest attempt to ethnically cleanse its indigenous Armenian population," stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "The Biden

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Aram S. Hamparian, ANCA Executive Director

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In an act of defiance, this past weekend saw over 70,000 Armenians take to the streets of Artsakh's capitol, Stepanakert, urging international intervention to press Azerbaijan to lift the blockade.

Since December 11th, Azerbaijan has blocked the Lachin corridor – the sole road linking Artsakh to Armenia, leaving the 120,000 Armenian population without access to food,

medical supplies, fuel and other vital humanitarian goods at the onset of winter in freezing

conditions – threatening a major humanitarian crisis.

During the first week of the blockade, Azerbaijan also cut off gas supply to Artsakh – which runs through territory now under Azerbaijan’s control. In doing so, Azerbaijan left Artsakh without its primary source of heat and power – forcing schools to shut down, and hospitals to rely on power reserves. While gas has since been restored, the extended blockade has caused immediate shortages of food and produce, fuel (namely gasoline and diesel) as well as medical supplies.

The blockade has already taken the life of one civilian – a patient in critical care who was unable to be transported to Yerevan for life-saving treatment. Stepanakert’s central hospital has reported that 11 patients are in intensive care with 4 in a serious condition that requires immediate transport to Armenia for treatment. Stepanakert’s pediatric hospital also reports 10 children are in intensive care, with 1 in a serious condition.

As Artsakh State Minister Ruben Vardanyan explained in a recent interview with the Armenian National Committee of Artsakh, Azerbaijan’s aggression is nothing new – but a “continuation of the strategy of Azerbaijan to slowly push out the Armenians of Artsakh.” Despite the trilateral ceasefire agreement in November 2020 putting an end to active hostilities, Azerbaijan has continued unabated in its belligerency against the Armenian people.

Over 100 Armenian prisoners of war remain in Azerbaijan’s illegal detention where they have been subject to torture. Armenian cultural heritage sites in territories occupied by Azerbaijan have been systematically desecrated and destroyed. The Azerbaijani government continues to propagate anti-Armenian rhetoric throughout all levels of society. And as recently as this past September, Azerbaijan launched a military incursion into the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, where it perpetrated horrific human rights abuses including the mutilation of female soldiers and the execution of unarmed Armenian prisoners of war.

Dozens of U.S. Congressmembers have issued statements and public remarks warning of the risk of humanitarian crisis and urging the Biden administration to take immediate action to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its aggression. On December 21st, 29 members of Congress co-signed a letter circulated by Representative Adam Schiff to President Biden urging his administration use all tools at its disposal to lift the blockade, and hold Azerbaijan to account by immediately suspending military aid to Baku.

That same week, the [ANCA hosted an hour-long Congressional briefing on the blockade](#), where Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and over 50 Congressional offices were joined by [Artsakh’s Human Rights Ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan](#), Advisor to the State Minister of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan, and the Armenian National Committee of Artsakh’s Gev Iskajyan.

Stepanyan concentrated on the humanitarian crisis and its implications resulting from the Azerbaijani blockade, noting that Artsakh currently has 120,000 people – including 30,000

children, 20,000 elderly, and 9,000 with disabilities – who are completely isolated from the world, both by land and by air. “The humanitarian situation is getting worse and a quick response by the international community is more than needed,” stated Stepanyan.

Noting that Azerbaijan’s blockade is both a violation of international law and of the November 9, 2020, tripartite Russia-Azerbaijan-Armenia agreement, Beglaryan called on the international community to apply sanctions on Azerbaijan. “Unless there are serious and strong sanctions against Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijani side will continue its genocidal policy and will one day ethnically cleanse the Artsakh people. Azerbaijan wants Artsakh without the Artsakh people,” stated Beglaryan.

The U.S. continues to send millions of dollars in security assistance to Azerbaijan, emboldening the regime in Baku by rewarding its unabated aggression. As a result, Azerbaijan sees the recourse to military force as an effective means of extracting concessions from Armenia – and has continued undeterred in its belligerency against the Armenian people.

While on the campaign trail, President Biden strongly criticized the Trump Administration for providing over \$120 million in military assistance to Azerbaijan immediately prior to the invasion of Artsakh in September 2020. Since assuming office, however, the Biden Administration has twice reauthorized military assistance to Azerbaijan – despite Azerbaijan’s refusal to release all remaining prisoners of war, and its escalating encroachments along the line of contact with Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia itself.

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) continues to work to raise [awareness about Azerbaijan’s unabated campaign of aggression against](#) the Armenian people with members of Congress, and to ensure Azerbaijan is held accountable for its human rights abuses and war crimes – starting with the full enforcement of Section 907 restrictions on the provision of U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan.

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