

Statement by the EU-Armenia Civil Society Platform on the blockage of the Lachin corridor

Since 12 December 2022, the Lachin corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabagh with Armenia, has been blocked by Azerbaijani 'environmental activists', with the silent support of Russian peacekeepers. This has obstructed the free movement of people, goods and services between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh, and left over 120 000 Armenians of Nagorno-Karabagh in dire humanitarian conditions. The blockade is accompanied by regular obstructions of gas flows from Armenia to Azerbaijan, exacerbating the crisis caused by the severe shortage of basic necessities, such as food, hygiene items, and medication, among others.

The trilateral statement signed on 9 November 2020 between the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia requires the Republic of Azerbaijan to guarantee the safe movement of people, vehicles and cargo in both directions along the Lachin corridor (para. 6). It also envisages the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces along the Lachin corridor (para. 3).

As developments and investigations have illustrated, the 'activists' that have blocked the corridor are either representatives of various GONGOs or special forces of Azerbaijan, and the reasoning behind the blockade is to put further pressure on the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and to weaken Armenia's negotiation position.

Despite numerous statements and calls from international organisations, parliaments, governments, human rights defenders and humanitarian organisation, the blockage continues.

In view of this, the EU-Armenia Civil Society Platform:

- strongly condemns the blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan and Russia's failure to fulfil its peacekeeping obligations;
- urges Azerbaijan to restore the free movement of people and goods along the Lachin corridor and stop further discreditation of the Azerbaijani civil society; in this respect, calls on the Azerbaijani civil society to speak up against this shameful act of its discreditation;
- welcomes the adoption of Resolution 2023/2504 by the European Parliament, including its recommendation on urgently negotiating replacing Russian peacekeeping contingent with OSCE international peacekeepers under a UN mandate;
- calls on all relevant international partners to exercise additional measures of pressure, such as monitoring missions, investigations, in light of Azerbaijan ignoring all statements, expressions of concerns and attempts for constructive resolution of the situation;
- calls on all international partners to develop and implement additional tools and mechanisms to ensure the security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh;
- calls on the partners in EU institutions to mobilise a mission to Nagorno-Karabagh to assess the situation on the ground and to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance; in this regard, welcomes the recent Council's decision to establish a civilian European Union Mission in Armenia under the Common Security and Defence Policy.

