



Russian soldiers enforcing a blockade against Nagorno-Karabakh avoid eye contact with a local boy wearing an Armenian flag on his back.
armenian-assembly.org

Unveiled Motives Behind Azerbaijan's Blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh



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**PERSPECTIVE
EXCLUSIVE**

Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenian: Artsakh) is still grappling with the aftermath of the 44-day conflict, instigated by Azerbaijan in 2020. With each passing day, the threat of a humanitarian catastrophe is increasing. Since December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan has dispatched environmental activists to close the Lachin Corridor — the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. This has resulted in more than eight months of blockade, which has affected 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh who now face restricted mobility and disrupted supply chains.

The situation further deteriorated after April 23, 2023. Violating the international commitments made by the leaders of Armenia, Russia, and Azerbaijan in the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020, the Azerbaijani authorities escalated matters by establishing an unauthorized checkpoint in the Lachin corridor within the jurisdiction of the Russian peacekeeping forces.

By subjecting Nagorno-Karabakh to an extended blockade, the Azerbaijani authorities continue to violate not only the aforementioned trilateral statement but also the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights issued on December 21, 2022, as well as the decisions of the International Court of Justice issued on February 22 and July 6, 2023. These rulings mandate that Baku immediately undertake all measures at its disposal to guarantee unhindered movement of people, vehicles, and cargo in both directions along the Lachin Corridor.

Having forsaken its international obligations and under the pretext of "combating the illegal flow of weaponry" into Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan initially restricted and subsequently prohibited the transport of essential items such as food, medicines, and energy resources to Artsakh. Electricity and natural gas supplies were completely halted. Furthermore, from July 26 until the moment of writing this report, a convoy consisting of 22 trucks carrying humanitarian aid for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh has remained stranded at Kornidzor in the Syunik region of Armenia, situated at the threshold of the Lachin Corridor. In effect, the Azerbaijani authorities

have obstructed the transport of humanitarian provisions to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, which includes 30,000 children, 20,000 elderly people, and 9,000 disabled individuals. Consequently, limited internal reserves of food and medicines are swiftly diminishing, plunging Nagorno-Karabakh into a man-made humanitarian catastrophe. The international efforts to avert this crisis are becoming increasingly urgent, but they are delayed as the regime that deprived the Armenians of Artsakh of energy resources continues to be considered a "reliable energy partner" and a "strategic partner" of both the West and Russia.

Azerbaijan initially conditioned the unimpeded functioning of the Lachin Corridor with the establishment of what they refer to as the "Zangezur Corridor". The term was introduced by Baku soon after the 44-day war in 2020, with a deliberate misinterpretation of paragraph 9 of the statement of the leaders of Armenia, Russia, and Azerbaijan issued on November 9, 2020. This distortion aimed to equate the Lachin Corridor, linking Armenia with Artsakh, to a road intended to connect the western part of Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan through Armenian territory. It is important to note that according to the mentioned document, all economic transport links in the region should be unblocked and transport links between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan should be ensured. However, nowhere in the document is there any reference to a "Zangezur Corridor," particularly not within the framework of the extraterritorial logic that Azerbaijan seeks

to convey to the international community through vague statements concerning the road.

Armenia has consistently rejected the possibility of establishing an extraterritorial corridor to link Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan, asserting that it will not grant passage for such a route through its sovereign territory under any circumstances. This stance is a "red line" for Armenia, a violation of which could potentially trigger extremely dangerous outcomes not only for Armenia itself but also for the entire region.

Such a "corridor" is aimed not only at connecting Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan, it also seeks to forge ties across the Turkic world, establishing a connection between Turkey and Central Asian countries. It is worth noting that Azerbaijani and Turkish high-ranking officials have articulated this sentiment multiple times.

Moreover, the objective of the "Zangezur Corridor" is to disrupt the link between Iran and Armenia, to prevent Iran's land access to the Europe and the Eurasian Economic Union market that goes through Armenia. In addition, the establishment of such a passage would inevitably change the balance of power in the Caucasus, increasing the influence of Turkey and Azerbaijan while diminishing the sway of Iran and Armenia. Confronted by resistance from both Armenia and Iran in connection with the "Zangezur corridor," Azerbaijan escalated its blockade of Artsakh. The blockade appears to be part of a strategy aimed at advancing a pseudo-policy of "integrating the population of Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan". The aim is the complete



A graffiti painted on the walls of Yerevan, Armenia, to drum up support for Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenian: Artsakh).
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expulsion of the indigenous Armenian population of Artsakh through forced emigration or deportation.

The humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh proves that the peaceful and secure coexistence of Artsakh as a part of Azerbaijan is not realistic. The international community should clearly address that the rights and security of the Armenians of Artsakh can be ensured exclusively outside of Azerbaijan's sovereignty. Armenia envisions the resolution of this crisis through the implementation of an international mechanism that bolsters fostering a di-

logue between Baku and Stepanakert (the de facto capital of Artsakh).

However, by avoiding direct dialogue with Nagorno-Karabakh and periodically raising the demands in negotiations, Azerbaijan potentially paves the way for future aggression against both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, with the military support of some regional countries, as was witnessed during the 44-day war. The lingering presence of mercenaries who were deployed during that conflict in 2020 further compounds the uncertainty and instability within the region.