



Subject: **International Human Rights organisations and Canadian communities sound the alarm on the ongoing Genocide in Artsakh, call for sanctions on the Azerbaijani regime, demand for humanitarian access in Artsakh, and to recognise the self-determination rights of Artsakh's Armenian population.**

September 7th, 2023

To the Attention of:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada;

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance;

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs;

His Excellency Robert Rae, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations;

Ali Ehsassi, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development;

Garnett Genuis, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development;

Stephane Bergeron, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development;

The Honourable Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs;

Randeep Sarai, Chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights;

Maninder Sidhu, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs;

The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development;

The Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada;

Arif Virani, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development;

Anita Vandenbeld, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development; Global Affairs Canada,

Louise Corbin, Deputy Director Eastern Europe and Eurasia Division (ECE)

**Dear Honourable Minister Joly, esteemed Ministers and government officials,**

International human rights organisations and your united Canadian communities have written this open letter with great urgency to address the unfolding Holodomor/Genocide in the South Caucasus. The Azerbaijani government is actively perpetrating acts of humanitarian and economic terrorism against an Armenian population of 120'000 living in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

Genocide Watch classifies the situation in Artsakh to be at the "Persecution" stage, 8th out of 10 recognised stages of Genocide, and urges for immediate intervention and sanctions to be imposed on Azerbaijan by the world powers.

Distinguished legal expert, Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, former ICC chief prosecutor, asserts that the Artsakh blockade unmistakably constitutes genocide, aligned with the provisions outlined in the Genocide Convention, as in "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction." In a testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission at the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, he clearly warned the USA by stating "US involvement in a negotiation that includes a party, Azerbaijan, which is committing genocide could be characterized as complicity in genocide."

Since December 12th, 2022, the Azerbaijani government has blocked the Lachin corridor, effectively severing the sole connection between the Republic of Artsakh and Armenia, as well as to the outside world. Presently, the lives of over 120'000 innocent civilians, including 30'000 children, hang in precarious captivity.

Furthermore, the Azerbaijani government has unlawfully established an armed checkpoint on the Lachin corridor, a clear violation of the International Court of Justice's order, the resolution adopted by the PACE on June 22, 2023, as well as the tripartite ceasefire agreement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia in November 2020.

Starting from June 14, 2023, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the solitary humanitarian organisation granted access to Artsakh, has been categorically denied entry for the purpose of transferring food and medical supplies. The Russian peacekeeping contingent, entrusted with the safeguarding of this route, have regrettably failed to control the corridor, flagrantly contravening to their obligations as stipulated by the tripartite ceasefire agreement.

The illegal blockade of the Lachin corridor is but the latest in a series of human rights violations committed by Azerbaijan against the ethnic Armenians of the region, which include employing mercenaries for hostile military operations, attacking and occupying sovereign Armenian territory, indiscriminately using force against civilian communities and individuals, abducting and mistreatment of prisoners of war, gruesome beheading and execution of captives. Even within its own borders, they continuously commit human rights abuses against political opposition groups, activists, and journalists, and propagate state-sponsored armenophobia.

President and dictator Aliyev clearly acts with complete impunity, thanks to its unimpeded “laundromat” services of rebranding and exporting Russian oil and gas to Europe, bypassing all western efforts in the Ukrainian war against Russia.

For Canada, this is a defining moment, a litmus test of its dedication to support democracies like Armenia and Artsakh. It is imperative that Canada advocates and introduces sanctions against the dictatorial officials of the Azerbaijani government, who have persistently violated international peace and security while committing gross and systematic human rights abuses.

In accordance with the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect (R2P) commitment, Canada bears the responsibility to protect and shield populations from atrocities such as ethnic cleansing and genocide. This calls for all appropriate interventions, ranging from diplomatic and economic sanctions, to international criminal prosecutions, with military action as a last resort.

In this regard, Canada's response needs to go beyond just implementing sanctions. It should also encompass the recognition of the self-determination rights of Artsakh's Armenian population. Considering the historical context of enduring systemic discrimination, repression and atrocious crimes perpetrated against them, the indigenous Armenian community in Artsakh, with a heritage spanning over 4000 years, inherently possesses the right to self-determination and remedial secession. Even during the Soviet era in 1989, the Artsakh Autonomous Oblast reported directly to Moscow. It is imperative for the international community, particularly Western nations, to safeguard the self-determination rights of the people of Artsakh and take decisive measures to halt this ongoing genocide.

Canada's esteemed history shines bright as a champion of human rights and its pivotal role in shaping the global commitment to R2P. Canada now has the critical duty to urgently spearhead collaborative efforts, rallying the engagement and backing of like-minded nations that prioritise and uphold human rights. It is crucial for vulnerable populations worldwide that Canada, and other prominent countries, consistently engage in multilateral forums and raise their voices in support of them. All states have to uphold their responsibility to protect all populations from atrocities, including the forgotten Armenians in Artsakh. The significance of such a collective effort led by Canada cannot be overstated.

We therefore implore the Canadian authorities to quickly mobilise with their allies and enhance coordination to effectively halt the ongoing genocide of the Armenians of Artsakh. This necessitates the imposition of sanctions on the Azerbaijani regime, opening of a humanitarian air corridor immediately, and forcing the Azerbaijani government to lift their illegal blockade and checkpoint at the Lachin Corridor.

We remain humbly at your disposal for any opportunity to discuss our findings and recommendations, as well to coordinate initiatives with the cosignatories of this letter.

Respectfully,

- *Hayren Partners for Humanity (letter author & coordinator)*
- *Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies*
- *Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention*
- *Genocide Watch*
- *Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)*
- *John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights*
- *Jewish World Watch*
- *Armenian Bar Association*
- *Christian Solidarity International*
- *Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy: GM4MD*
- *Union of Armenian Communities of Quebec, twenty-one registered organisations in Quebec*
- *Family Research Council*
- *Armenophobia.org*
- *TruthAndAccountabilityLeague.org*
- *World Without Genocide*
- *International Christian Concern*
- *In Defense of Christians (IDC)*
- *Yezidi Human Rights Organization - International*
- *Lela Gilbert, Fellow, Hudson Center for International Religious Freedom*
- *Professor Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, PhD, Endowed Chair & Director of Graduate Programs, Department of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Keene State College*
- *Genocide Alert*
- *United Against Inhumanity*
- *UHRP - Uyghur Human Rights Project*

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