



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
4 June 2024

English only

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda item 4

### Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

## **Written statement\* submitted by Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 February 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **New Discovery of Armenian-produced Landmines in the Territory of Azerbaijan**

On November 10, 2020, a tripartite statement signed by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Russian Federation include the following important aspects to maintain stability and peace in the region:

- Along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor, a peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation is deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces. a peacekeeping center is also being deployed to control the ceasefire.
- By agreement of the Parties, in the next three years, a plan for the construction of a new route along the Lachin corridor will be determined, providing communication between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, with the subsequent redeployment of the Russian peacekeeping contingent to protect this route.
- Azerbaijan guarantees the security of the movement of citizens, vehicles, and goods in both directions along the Lachin corridor. Internally displaced persons and refugees are returning to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent districts under the control of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Russian Federation brokered a cease-fire to end the 2020 war. It sent a peacekeeping force of 2,000 troops to maintain order. The new Lachin road was built and designed to use for only humanitarian purposes.

## **Ongoing Massive Mine Contamination in Violation of the Tripartite Agreement**

Since the end of the 44-day war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020, nearly 280 Azerbaijani citizens have become victims of mine explosions, while 46 people were killed by landmines, including 35 civilians, of which 3 were journalists. In total, the number of victims of landmines and cluster munitions in the last 30 years stands at 3,358. However, mines continue to cause superfluous injuries and suffering to civilians. Since August 2022 mine clearing forces of Azerbaijan have discovered and neutralized 3,166 Armenian-produced landmines (the production year 2021) in the Lachin ( 1,671), Kalbajar (935), Dashkasan (560) districts as well as Karabakh Economic Zone. In addition, Azerbaijan has discovered explosive booby traps, made of military equipment such as hand grenades and landmines activated by trip wire, purposely hidden in civilian houses in settlements in the Lachin District.

Statistics collected by the International Crisis Group, a multinational NGO monitoring the conflict, have documented victims of mine explosions from both sides, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Meanwhile, organizations like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines have expressed “grave concern” about the risk anti-personnel mines pose to civilians.

Based on reports evidence has emerged that Armenia deliberately continued to lay landmines in or after 2021 in civilian zones to which displaced Azerbaijanis are slated to return. In October 2022, during the mine-clearing process conducted by the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), booby traps have been discovered in civilian homes that were planted or facilitated by Armenia's forces. This new evidence unquestionably demonstrates Armenia's recent placement of these landmines in areas they were required to leave under the terms of the tripartite statement of November 10, 2020.

The trilateral statement signed on 2020 November 10, shows that the Russian peacekeeping contingent stationed in the Karabakh economic region of Azerbaijan has not fulfilled its tasks for the past 2 years. Newly planted and Armenian-produced landmines and booby traps in civilian areas after signing the agreement in the presence of Russian peacekeepers give a clear example for claiming so.

Armenia's destruction of houses, combined with its deliberate and specific targeting of civilian properties with explosive devices, continues to prevent [Azerbaijani] displaced families and communities from returning to their former homes and land over thirty years since they were forced to flee as a result of Armenia's illegal occupation.

The new Lachin road was built and put into operation by Azerbaijan in August of this year to replace the traditional Lachin route, which connects Armenia with the Nagorno-Karabakh (Garabagh) region of Azerbaijan. The highway is designed only for humanitarian purposes.

However, Azerbaijani media cited an unnamed source in early November as saying that the Russian peacekeepers temporarily deployed in some parts of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region are supplying weapons to the Armenian separatists through the Lachin road.

Various reports have surfaced of illegal shipments and visitors passing through the Lachin highway, which are meant to be prevented by the Russian peacekeepers. Armenia was still planting landmines in Azerbaijani territories and committed systematic human rights violations on the Lachin road. This includes landmines manufactured by Armenia in 2021 that were transported into Azerbaijan through the Lachin road, in direct violation of the Trilateral Statement.

Back then, the Baku-based Caliber.az news service reported that the transfer of weapons has been disguised as "peacekeeping humanitarian aid." The list of the arms transferred to the zone of temporary responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping mission included anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines, automatic small arms, including easel machine guns, sniper rifles, 122mm mortars, ATGM (anti-tank guided missile) "Fagot" (10 units), ATGM "Coronet" (10 units), grenade launchers, portable communication devices, and ammunition.

## Results

Unexploded land mines as well as other explosive war remnants pose a serious and ongoing threat to civilians. The ensuing isolation of the communities circumscribed by minefields exacerbates poverty and underdevelopment and creates difficulties for the implementation of SDGs. In other words, the isolation hampers entrepreneurship and the emergence of bottom-up sustainable development – adverse effects which make many people lacking behind in the development process and deteriorate their rights in life and development.

Anti-personnel landmines are prohibited under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (or Mine Ban Convention), adopted in 1997. No conceivable military purpose can explain the planting of landmines or booby traps in unequivocally civilian areas.

Use of antipersonnel landmines by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances is unacceptable and triggers an international outcry.

The Anti-personnel Landmine Convention, or the Mine Ban Convention, bans the stockpiling, transfer, and use of anti-personnel landmines, and requires countries to clear them on their territory while prescribing States in a position to do so to assist affected countries. the majority of victims are civilians

## Conclusion

The international community is requested to support Azerbaijan in the mine-clearing process for the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of forcibly expelled Azerbaijanis to their places of origin.

International support to Azerbaijan will accomplish several important humanitarian and development tasks along with serving regional peace and cooperation. Providing a safe environment for the voluntary return of more than 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and ensuring their well-being through the implementation of necessary programs will be a significant step toward the elimination of the consequences of the past conflict.

Mines present a humanitarian threat globally, any discrimination in distributing assistance aggravates the humanitarian threat that landmines pose and devalue the cause of global efforts against mines. International assistance to Azerbaijan will make a significant contribution to the global campaign against landmines.

Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement (IRDG) calls UN action as Nagorno-Karabakh landmine row escalates. Urgent action is needed to stem the mounting casualties and preventive measures caused in recent months by Armenia's actions. Requests additional provisional measures to prevent irreparable harm to the rights at issue in this case, or to prevent further aggravation of the dispute between the Parties.

Moreover, Institut International pour les Droits et le Développement (IRDG) calls to reduce the escalation of threats along the Lachin road and stop using the humanitarian route for illegal purposes.

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