



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
3 June 2024

English only

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by "Association of Women with University Education" Social Organization, 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.

[6 February 2023]

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



## Violations of the Rights of Children Living in Nagorno-Karabakh

On December 12, 2022, a group of self-proclaimed environmentalists from Azerbaijan backed by the Azerbaijani government blocked the humanitarian corridor (also known as the Lachin Corridor) that connects Nagorno-Karabakh (largely Armenian populated enclave in the South Caucasus) to the outside world. The only road remains closed for over 50 days, as a result of which 120,000 population of Nagorno-Karabakh, including 30,000 children and 9,000 persons with disabilities, are suffering numerous hardships and face a high risk of malnutrition and frostbite, among other rights violations. (1) The de-facto authorities of Nagorno Karabakh had to introduce vouchers for the essential food. The local population is not able to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access to adequate and sufficient food corresponding to their basic needs, as required by international human rights law. (2) Even with food rationing, there is acute shortage of most of the dairy products, eggs, children formula; food for people with specific dietary needs, including children with diabetes is not available. Pregnant women and around 30.000 children are not able to get vegetables and fruits necessary for adequate diet for their age and health condition where “potatoes are a luxury, bananas are a dream”. (3) This leads to malnutrition and under-nutrition of children, especially in light of winter conditions and avitaminoses. Access to food is effectively instrumentalized by the Azerbaijani Government for political reasons, as the President of Azerbaijan is clear about his aim to ethnically clean Nagorno-Karabakh. On one occasion, President Aliyev even states that whoever does not want to become their citizen, road was not closed, it was open for them. (4)

As of February 3, 2023, the basic right to education, enshrined in the Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is systemically violated, as 41 kindergartens and 20 public schools have been closed due to the worsening food shortage under the blockade. 5,528 children are no longer able to attend kindergarten and are being deprived of the opportunity to receive proper care and nutrition. The General Comment No.13 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Azerbaijan is a member-state, prescribes that education must be available, meaning “functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity within the jurisdiction of the State party, which is secured for the children of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The UNCRC, ratified also by Azerbaijan, obliges the states to recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. Furthermore, the states shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services. (5) Nevertheless, one of the fallouts from the Lachin corridor blockage are shortage of necessary medical treatment for the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. Specifically, 568 people have been deprived of the opportunity to receive necessary medical treatment due to suspensions of planned surgeries in all medical facilities, and 7 children are in the neonatal and intensive care units of the children’s hospital (as of January 30, 2023).

70% of the hospitals of Nagorno-Karabakh are heated by gas. With the supply cut and prolonged blackouts, medical facilities had to operate under extremely difficult conditions. All planned operations are cancelled, patients requiring serious treatment and medication that is no longer available are evacuated by the ICRC to Armenia. The overall energy infrastructure of Nagorno-Karabakh is vulnerable to possible interventions by the Azerbaijan government.

The blockage of the Lachin corridor by the Azerbaijani “environmental activists” led to separation of 236 children from their families, which has enormous implication on the mental health of the children. Unwillingness of the Azerbaijani Government to open the Lachin corridor contradicts the international obligations of Azerbaijan under the UNCRC (Article 9 and 10) regarding prevention of unlawful separation of a child from his/her parents and enhancing family reunification. On one occasion, when a group of stranded teenagers-residents of Nagorno Karabakh were allowed by Azerbaijan to return to Nagorno Karabakh, they were harassed and their privacy violated by the government-backed protesters who attacked the peacekeeper’s vehicle carrying children.

As of now, the international calls, including by international human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Freedom House , for and attempts at reopening the road have not been successful. Only vehicles of the ICRC and Russian peacekeepers deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh based on the Tripartite statement between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation are allowed to pass the Lachin corridor. A number of governments, including the member-states of the UN Security Councils, repeatedly called upon Azerbaijan to immediately unblock the road for the free movement of people and restore commercial traffic on the Lachin corridor. UNICEF made a regional statement, echoing the appeal of the UN Secretary-General to ensure freedom and security of movement along the Lachin corridor, in line with previous agreements to ensure “that international obligations to protect children are met”. UNFPA also made a statement to ensure that the basic needs of the affected population, including women and girls, young people, people with disabilities and older persons, are met. The statement highlighted that freedom and security of movement along the corridor are vital for securing continued access to essential sexual and reproductive health supplies and services, and for ensuring that women can give birth safely.

## Recommendations

- Restore the unhindered passage of people, all forms of vehicles and goods through Lachin corridor,
- Cooperate with the office of the UNSG in good faith and not to hinder international fact-finding mission to Lachin and Nagorno-Karabakh to document and report human rights situation on the ground,
- Secure unhindered access of international media and journalists to the region to cover the situation.

- 1) Link to webpage: <https://mailchi.mp/3349d95bf517/day54eng?e=%5bUNIQID;>
- 2) UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (Art. 11 of the Covenant), 12 May 1999, para. 6, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4538838c11.html> [accessed 17 January 2023]
- 3) ‘Humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh: Potatoes are a luxury, bananas are a dream’, <https://www.europeantimes.news/2023/01/humanitarian-crisis-in-nagorno-karabakh-potatoes-are-a-luxury-bananas-are-a-dream/>

4) <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3693367.html>

One of the Azerbaijani members of parliament Elman Mammadov commenting on the blockade stated: “From the very first day it started, it has been giving results to this day. Armenians clearly understood what they are already deprived of and what situation they have fallen into. They realize what position would they be in if the Russian peacekeepers do not bring them daily food, fuel, etc., and the International Committee of the Red Cross does not come to their aid and transport their patients here and there. Now the Armenians should ponder what could happen if Azerbaijan tightens these issues up a bit? In other words, the protests in Karabakh are very important, very important, beneficial, and necessary for us. We welcome the actioners and express our gratitude to them.”;

Translation of the statement of the member of parliament available here:

<https://twitter.com/cavidaga/status/1618015667156049921>

During the meeting with representatives of the so-called "Western Azerbaijan" the president of Azerbaijan not only threatened Armenia with the use of force and territorial demands, but also admitted that the Lachin Corridor has been blocked by the authorities of Azerbaijan as “their legitimate right”; Official Twitter Account of President of Azerbaijan,

<https://twitter.com/azpresident/status/1606739238908821506?ext=HHwWhIC83eW0pMwsAAAA>

5) UN CRC, Article 24; <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>