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N 67-08C

To the Ambassador of Republic of Cyprus

in Russian Federation

His Excellency Mr. Andreas Zenonos

Dear Honorable Ambassador,

On September 27, Azerbaijan, with support of Turkey and mercenary fighters from terrorist groups, unleashed a large-scale war against Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh).

As known, on the 4th of July, 1921, during the formation of Soviet Republics on the South Caucasus, Nagorno-Karabakh (95% of the population of which being Armenians at that moment) became the part of Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), but the very next day, with direct meddling of Stalin, Nagorno-Karabakh was forcibly incorporated into Azerbaijani SSR as a Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region. This was an arbitrary decision, and today it can be seen as a relic of the colonialist policies of soviet imperialism. Moreover, such decision led to mass violation of human rights of the population of the Region.

Throughout the entire period of existence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region as part of the Azerbaijani SSR, the Azerbaijan's leadership was conducting deliberate policies of expulsion of the Armenian population from the Region, by systematic violations of their rights and restriction of the economic development of the Region, while at the same time promoting the immigration and establishing settlements of Azeri population into the Region.

The most acute discriminatory policies were targeted to the national and cultural identity of the Region's population. Majority of the Armenian churches were shut down, while the mosques continued to operate. The Armenian language was excluded from the official communications. Cultural ties with Armenian SSR were banned, along with the teaching of Armenian history in schools. The number of Armenian schools were cut and there were no textbooks available in Armenian. The outcome of such policies was a demographic shift towards an increase of the Azerbaijani minority in the Region. Despite all the efforts of the Azerbaijani SSR, to the moment of the USSR collapse, the Armenian population still constituted 80 % of the total Region's population.

Getting hopeful from the liberalization and “perestroika” reforms brought to USSR by Mikhail Gorbachev, in the 1988 the Armenian population of the Autonomous Region expressed its demand to be separated from Azerbaijan and to join Armenia, to put the end to the decades-long discriminatory policies.

However, in response to the demand of the Armenian population to exercise its right to self-determination and declaration of its independence, a wave of pogroms were organized by Azerbaijani authorities targeting Armenian nationals in the cities of Sumgait and Baku, accompanied by unprecedented massacres, violence, robbery and force deportation. Hundreds of Armenians were brutally killed, thousands were injured, about 450 thousand were evicted from their homes and became refugees. At the end, the right to self-determination turned into a large-scale war, which caused to horrible consequences for both countries.

Nagorno-Karabakh, therefore, according the conducted referendum, had been separated from Azerbaijan even before the Azerbaijan became an independent, UN-recognized state in 1991.

Although the Republic of Artsakh has not received an international recognition, it has been de-facto existing for almost 30 years now. It is a country with its own constitution, with government, with all the attributes of a democratic republic, and with developed civil society.

During all these years Azerbaijan never stopped its intention to return the administrative control over Karabakh by military means, referring to the principle of territorial integrity and internationally-recognized borders, but disregarding the desire and the right of the Karabakh population for life and self-determination.

Currently, violating international humanitarian law, the Turkish-Azerbaijani army, using banned weapons, such as cluster and phosphorus munitions, using huge number of high-tech drones and other military equipment, deliberately targets cities and towns of Artsakh, destroying the civilian population, attacking civilian structures: hospitals, schools, kindergartens, attractions, cultural sites and churches; elderly, women and children are being killed. More than 90 thousand people became refugees, 33 thousand children lost their right to education. The Azerbaijani army commits horrifying war crimes, including massacres of residents, executions of doctors and journalists, cruel and inhuman treatment of Armenian war captives and their bodies.

Participation of the Turkey makes the war particularly concerning for us, as Turkey, which went unpunished for committing the genocide of Armenians on their historical homeland, today once again claims its intention to accomplish the crime that it started 100 years ago. In front of the eyes of the whole civilized world a new genocide of the people of Artsakh is happening.

The fact that the international organizations and heads of states address both sides of the conflict with the equal calls and observe neutrality, gives Azerbaijan a *carte blanche* to continue this aggression. The defending sides – Armenia and Artsakh are not able to simply stop the self-defense, while the attacking sides – on behalf of Azerbaijan, Turkey, and terrorist fighters – are continuing the attack.

The situation in the region risks getting out of control very soon. The number of citizens killed in the region is growing by alarming rate. According to various estimates, during last month almost ten thousand people have already died on both sides in total. In the Republic of Artsakh alone, Azerbaijani forces attacked more than 160 civilian settlements, destroying, or damaging 15 000 private facilities and about 2 700 public facilities, including industrial buildings, hospitals, 61 schools and 10 kindergartens.

Along with the shelling the settlements, the Azerbaijani armed forces deliberately set the forests of Artsakh on fire, using banned weapons with white phosphorus. According to preliminary information, 1815 hectares of forests have already been set on fire, and the fires continue to spread. Given the size and geographical coverage of the burned forests, the population of the Artsakh Republic is facing an environmental disaster that undermines the ecological safety of the whole region and has dangerous long-term consequences for the life and health of the citizens of Artsakh. In addition, with this inhuman method the armed forces of Azerbaijan intend to harm the civilians who might be sheltered in the forests.

The inaction and silence of the international community creates a distrust towards the international organizations, the international community itself, the international law, and the European values among the region's population. The reputation of international humanitarian and human rights laws suffers. This already leads to radicalization of societies, to the rise of nationalist and supremacist sentiments and political destabilization both in Armenia and in Azerbaijan. The humanitarian and economic disaster will contribute to mass migration of the population of region to more stable countries.

WE, the sectoral trade unions of Armenia, representing around 150 000 workers and their families, ***urgently call your government to use every opportunity and available tools to immediately take the Turkey out of the conflict and stop the war.***

Everything that happens in Artsakh right now once again proves that the *only long-term guarantee of the safety for the people of Artsakh is the international recognition of the independence of the Republic*. Any other status given to it as part Azerbaijan will threaten the life and security of the people of Artsakh, and this has been confirmed multiple times throughout the history. Even the establishment of the status-quo will not be able to ensure the physical safety, not to mention the civil and political rights of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

WE URGE the authorities of your country *to recognize the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination, which is necessary to save the lives.*

Signees:

Union of state, local government, and public service employees of Armenia

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of workers of health sector of Armenia

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of the culture workers of Armenia

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of miners, metallurgy, and jewelry workers of Republic of Armenia

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of the employees of municipal economy and public utilities of Republic of Armenia

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of workers of education and science of Armenia

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of employees of financial institutions and professional employees of banks of Armenia

The republican branch union of trade union organizations of industrial workers of Republic of Armenia

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of the workers of agricultural industry sector

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of commerce, catering, consumer cooperatives and entrepreneurship workers of Armenia

“Electro-union” – a Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations

Republican Branch Union of trade union organizations of workers of light industry of Armenia

Branch Republican Union “Miabanutyun” of Professional Organizations of information technology, aviation and means of communication workers of Armenia