



**Humanitarian
Aid Relief Trust**

Joint Statement from Baroness Cox and Dr John Eibner

On the 30th anniversary of the publication of *Ethnic Cleansing in Progress: War in Nagorno Karabakh*, and on their return from the frontlines between Azerbaijan and Armenia

Yerevan, September 15, 2023

Background

Baroness Caroline Cox is a member of the UK House of Lords, and the founder and president of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART). Dr John Eibner is the president of Christian Solidarity International (CSI).

Between 1990 and 1993, Baroness Cox and Dr Eibner led a series of aid and fact-finding missions to Nagorno Karabakh in the darkest days of the war. Based on these visits, in 1993, they published the report *Ethnic Cleansing in Progress: War in Nagorno Karabakh*, providing incontrovertible evidence of atrocity crimes perpetrated by Azerbaijani forces against ethnic Armenians in the region, amounting to a “genocide process that is now underway.”

This report concluded with the words, “It is especially important to try to avert the current avowed intention of Azerbaijan to achieve a military solution, which could result in a genocide of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh. Surely, the international community will not stand by and condone another genocide?”

Today, thirty years after the publication of this report, this remains an open question.

A New Phase of the Armenian Genocide is Under Way

For over nine months, Azerbaijan has subjected the civilian population of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) to a medieval-style siege. A deliberately-orchestrated humanitarian catastrophe is playing out before the eyes of the world. Azerbaijan is carrying out an ethnic cleansing campaign, using hunger and deprivation as its weapons of choice.

The week after this blockade began, we signed a joint Genocide Warning for the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, noting that all 14 risk factors for atrocity crimes identified by the UN Secretary General's Office of Genocide Prevention were present. The situation has deteriorated since then. Other human rights defenders, most notably the former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, have recently issued similar warnings.

Azerbaijan's dictator, Ilham Aliyev, makes it clear that the conquest of Nagorno Karabakh and the subjugation of its population is his objective. This is highly likely to end in massacres, and sure to end with the physical destruction of Nagorno Karabakh's Armenian population.

As recently as September 7, Elchin Amirbayov, the representative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, stated in an interview with Deutsche Welle, "A genocide may happen if this clique of separatists continue to hold hostage their own population."

The Last Thirty-Five Years of Ethnic Cleansing

This siege is consistent with the Azerbaijani state's practices since the 1988-1994 war for Nagorno Karabakh. For over 35 years, it has sought to destroy Armenian lives and heritage in the territory it claims:

- Between 1997 and 2011, Azerbaijan systematically erased every trace of Armenian cultural heritage from the region of Nakhichevan.
- In 2016, Azerbaijani forces briefly captured the Armenian town of Talish, torturing and murdering the Armenian civilians they found there.
- In the 44-day war of 2020, Azerbaijan attacked civilian population centres with drones and cluster bombs, and Armenian civilians caught behind Azerbaijani lines were consistently executed or kidnapped.

Ancient Armenian towns like Shushi and Hadrut were cleansed of their Armenian populations.

- In the wake of the 2020 war, Azerbaijan set about destroying or defacing Armenian churches, graveyards, and heritage sites in the territory it had conquered.
- During Azerbaijan's attack on the Republic of Armenia itself in September 2022, Azerbaijani forces executed Armenian soldiers who had surrendered, and raped, murdered and mutilated several female soldiers.

These acts of ethnic cleansing are a continuation of a much larger genocide process that began with the Ottoman Empire's massacres of Armenians in 1894-1896 and Genocide of 1915-1923.

Self-determination: A Human Right and an Urgent Necessity

The Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh can only live in peace and dignity in their ancient homeland if their right to self-determination is affirmed and enforced by the international community.

The right of peoples to self-determination is enshrined in the first article of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The 2007 Basic Principles adopted by the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group established self-determination as a basic principle for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Moreover, the people of Nagorno Karabakh themselves have exercised this right. On September 2, 1991, a joint session of the elected deputies of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region and Shahumyan region declared their independence from the Soviet Union, a decision that was ratified in a referendum on December 10, 1991. Since that time, they have maintained self-government and democratic elections.

Yet as Azerbaijan has renewed its ethnic cleansing campaign against Armenians over the past three years, states involved in efforts to resolve this conflict have backtracked from affirming this crucial right. The U.S. and EU-mediated peace talks between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan presume that Azerbaijan will take full control of Nagorno Karabakh as part of a final peace settlement.

Let us be very clear: such a settlement will lead inevitably to the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh.

And the genocide process will not stop there. On this trip, we witnessed for ourselves Azerbaijani outposts built on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, territories which are now ethnically cleansed of Armenians.

The Armenians of Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh are heirs to one of the oldest continuously-existing communities in the world. The magnificent churches and cross-stone of Nagorno Karabakh, some dating to the fourth century, testify to this, as does the passionate devotion of the Armenian people to this land. The destruction of this ancient community would entail the loss of a priceless part of humanity's common cultural heritage, as well as enormous human suffering.

Today, we urge all states concerned by this conflict to reaffirm this basic human right for the people of Nagorno Karabakh. They must be free to determine their own political future, without threats of violence, deprivation, and genocide.