



THE BARONESS COX
HOUSE OF LORDS
LONDON SW1A 0PW

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

26 March 2022

Dear Liz,

We write to you with alarm about recent aggressive actions by the Azerbaijani Government towards the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh. We are gravely concerned that the dictatorship in Baku will take advantage of Russia's disastrous and aggressive invasion of Ukraine to complete its long-intended conquest and ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh. I am sure you will agree with me that it is important for Her Majesty's Government and the whole of the international community to apply the same principles and standards to all acts of aggression against innocent civilians wherever and whenever such heinous acts take place.

On 24 March, Azerbaijani forces took advantage of a gap in the Russian peacekeeping presence in Nagorno Karabakh, crossed the "line of contact," and occupied the village of Parukh in Askeran region. The entire Armenian population of the village was forced to flee.

If there is no forceful international response to this aggression, Azerbaijan may be emboldened to try to take more territory, or even overrun the entire region. Currently, a small Russian peacekeeping mission is the only force separating local Armenian defenders from the encircling Azerbaijani military.

The conquest and occupation of Parukh followed a 16-day period in which Azerbaijan had cut off Karabakh's Armenians from their fuel supply. The main pipeline bringing gas to Karabakh's Armenians was "damaged" in an area under Azerbaijani occupation. For ten days, Azerbaijani authorities refused to repair it. They finally did on 18 March, only for the gas to be promptly cut off again. This fuel cut-off has forced many schools, hospitals, and bakeries to stop operating, and deprived tens of thousands of Armenians of heat and electricity in the bitter winter cold.

Under the Soviet Union, Nagorno Karabakh was an autonomous oblast within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. Its population was overwhelmingly Armenian, as it had been for centuries. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the people of Nagorno Karabakh voted for independence. Azerbaijan responded by sending a military force and attempting to ethnically cleanse the region. With help from the Republic of Armenia, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh successfully resisted the Azerbaijani assault and set up their own independent republic in Nagorno Karabakh, albeit one unrecognized by the international community. Meanwhile, the hundreds of thousands of Armenians living in Azerbaijan's cities were forced to flee their homes by a series of murderous pogroms.

In 2009, as part of the peace process convened by the Minsk Group of the OSCE, both Armenia and Azerbaijan "reaffirmed their commitment to work intensively to resolve the remaining issues, to reach an agreement based, in particular, upon the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of Non-Use of Force or Threat of Force, Territorial Integrity, and the Equal Rights and Self-Determination of Peoples."

In September 2020, however, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev abandoned this commitment to the non-use of force and launched a full-scale invasion of Nagorno Karabakh. In 44 days of war, thousands of Armenians were killed, civilian population centres were repeatedly bombed, and 100,000 Armenians fled their homes. Those Armenian civilians unfortunate enough to be caught behind were taken hostage, tortured, and even extrajudicially murdered by Azerbaijani forces.

When a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement brought Azerbaijan's war of conquest to an end on 9 November, Aliyev boasted that, "We have proved that there was a military solution" to the conflict. To celebrate its victory, Azerbaijan created a war museum in Baku that was decorated with the helmets of Armenian soldiers killed in the war, and featured dehumanizing wax sculptures of Armenian soldiers with exaggerated facial features.

The ceasefire agreement turned over large parts of Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan, uprooted around 50,000 Armenians from their homes, and forced the Republic of Armenia to withdraw its military forces from the region, leaving the remaining Armenians totally dependent on a 2,000 member Russian peacekeeping force for safety. Since that time, Azerbaijan has refused to hand over more than 70 Armenian POWs, held wholly unjust and perverse show trials offending even the most basic of human rights fundamentals, and repeatedly attacked Armenia troops and civilians in Nagorno Karabakh, and even the Republic of Armenia proper. It has also demolished or desecrated several Armenian churches and cemeteries, and announced plans to "remove" Armenian inscriptions from Armenian heritage sites in the portions of Nagorno Karabakh under its control.

Azerbaijan has explicitly embraced a "military solution" to this conflict. It has made clear its intention to erase everything Armenian, whether cemeteries, churches, or people, from the territory under its control. And with both Russia and the international community preoccupied by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is now clearly testing the waters to see how much aggression it can get away with.

We may be on the precipice of one of the worst acts of ethnic cleansing in the Caucasus region in a century. The destruction of the ancient Armenian community of Nagorno Karabakh would be a humanitarian disaster, an incalculable loss for humanity, and a horrifying precedent for other authoritarians in the region bent on consolidating power over disputed regions through force.

We urge you to raise this matter with the Azerbaijani Government at the highest levels, and to publicly affirm that you will not accept any infringement of the right of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh to live safely in their homeland and determine their own political future, as stated in the Madrid Principles of 1997.

Yours sincerely,



Baroness Cox

Lord Green of Deddington

Dr. John Eibner

Lord Alton of Liverpool

Feryal Clark MP

Centre for Armenian Information & Advice (CAIA)