

THE BARONESS COX
HOUSE OF LORDS
UNITED KINGDOM

4 June 2023

To the people of the Republic of Artsakh, for whom I have profound affection and deep respect.

I write to you today because 120,000 innocent civilians face an existential crisis. Conditions are now present for genocide against the Armenian Christians of Artsakh.

Your people have suffered, and continue to suffer, the most serious international crimes. I have personally witnessed the results of massacres, atrocities and forced displacement. Yet the world has chosen to turn a deaf ear to your suffering. Even your closest international allies have either not paid attention to, or ignored, the warning signs of genocide.

During this darkest hour, I stand in solidarity with the Armenians of Artsakh. I have great confidence in your ability to overcome this crisis with courage, fortitude, sacrifice and love – not only will you survive but you will create beauty from the ashes of destruction.

I am told that I have visited the Republic of Artsakh 88 times since 1990. I have been privileged to experience the love of your history and your rich culture of music, dance and art – all within the context of the breathtaking beauty of your land's rugged mountains, thick forests, fertile valleys and crystal rivers. I have been blessed to meet a host of wonderful people, many the direct descendants of victims of the Great Genocide in Anatolia, or themselves victims of anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and Baku, and ethnic-religious cleansing in Artsakh. I am struck by the unanimity with which they share a simple common goal: it is to live in peace, dignity and security in their own historic land. This longing continues to fill my heart.

I always carry with me the memory of a young woman I met in a hospital in Martakert in 1992, after I had visited the village of Maragha, which had just been subjected to a massacre inflicted by Azerbaijan. Whilst in the remains of the village, I saw corpses of civilians decapitated by Azerbaijani militants; vertebrae still on the ground; people's blood still smeared on walls; homes that had been set alight were still smoldering. The day I met this woman, she was in agony over the deaths of her son and fourteen of her relatives who had been killed in the

massacre in Maragha. I wept with her. There are no words for a time like that. But when she stopped weeping, I asked her if she had a message she would like to share with the world. She replied, “All I want to say is thank you to those people who have not forgotten us in these terrible days.”

I do not think “thank you” are the words that would have come to my mind on the day I had seen so many of my family killed in such horrific circumstances. That is the dignity of the Armenian people. If I could speak to this woman today, I would tell her: “We love you and we have not forgotten you, even as the dark cloud of the Armenian Genocide, once again, looms over the mountains of your land.”

During the previous war, I met an Armenian man who had seen the body of a five-year-old Armenian girl, cut in two, hanging from the branch of a tree. He wept with horror and vowed revenge. Later, when his section of the Karabakh army captured villages, he could not bring himself to harm an Azerbaijani child. When this story was told at a dinner – in the Armenian style of making speeches – a journalist commended the man for his humanity and dignity. To which he replied: “Dignity is a crown of thorns.” The people of Artsakh have been wearing your crown of thorns with inspirational courage and dignity.

I have never been as concerned about Artsakh’s future as I am today. Azerbaijan’s conquest and ethnic-religious cleansing of two thirds of Artsakh in 2020, with the direct assistance of Turkey and its allied jihadist militias; its detention, torture and killing of Armenian hostages; its subsequent military incursions and occupation of territory belonging to the Republic of Armenia; its current blockade of Artsakh; and its territorial claims on the whole of Armenia all bear witness to this grim reality.

Conditions are present for genocide against the Armenian Christians of Artsakh. However, signatories to the Genocide Convention – including the United States, France and my own Government in the United Kingdom – have refused their legal obligation to prevent the worst from happening, to provide protection to those who need it, and to punish those who are responsible for atrocities. Not one nation appears willing to prevent, provide or protect.

I am deeply disturbed by reports that the Republic of Armenia is being pressured by international powers to contemplate sacrificing your homeland of Artsakh to the Republic of Azerbaijan in return for a so-called peace treaty. If reports are to be believed, those involved in the negotiation process say that the treaty will secure the borders of the Republic of Armenia and allow trade to open up with the Turkish world.

My dear friends, as you are aware, these promises of peace and prosperity come at a price. If the treaty is signed in its current form, you would be expected to surrender your international right of self-determination. You would be expected to concede control over your lives, liberty and land. To use a recent phrase from the Armenian Supreme Spiritual Council: By *“recognising the Republic of Artsakh as part of Azerbaijan, the Armenian authorities will inevitably confront our brothers and sisters in Artsakh with a new genocide and depatriation.”*

If a peace treaty is signed and later broken by Azerbaijan, history has shown that international powers would not be willing to respond. During the Russian-brokered ceasefire in November 2020, Azerbaijan promised to ‘stop at their current positions’ yet its armed forces have since advanced into new positions with impunity. Azerbaijan promised ‘the exchange of prisoners of war’, yet dozens of Armenian military and civilian personnel remain in Azerbaijani custody, many of whom have undergone speedy criminal trials. Azerbaijan has not been held to account for breaking the 2020 ceasefire. One can only suspect that an agreement that results from present-day negotiations, in their current form, will not guarantee peace for the Armenians of Artsakh.

One of my great fears is the annihilation of all Armenian churches, monuments and other cultural and spiritual treasures, which would fall under Azerbaijan’s control. Many Armenian sites have already been targeted and badly damaged since 2020, including the world-famous Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi, an archaeological camp near Tigranakert, and a memorial dedicated to the victims of the previous war. We must not forget the systematic erasure of centuries-old Armenian religious sites in Nakhchivan, including the attack on the Armenian Djulfa cemetery, where Azerbaijani soldiers, armed with sledgehammers and cranes, destroyed hundreds of hand-carved cross-stones. Under Azerbaijan’s control, there are strong grounds for belief that another ‘Nakhichevan’ would be imposed in Artsakh – a priceless part of humanity’s common cultural heritage will be destroyed.

I keep in mind a lesson from the Bible. In the last days of the kingdom of Judah, the Prophet Jeremiah lamented that his countrymen were saying, “‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.” In that case, the consequence of the nation accepting a false sense of peace was the loss of its homeland and exile in a foreign country.

When I was a young child, my own country was isolated and facing its darkest hour. Great Britain was existentially threatened by an ultra-nationalistic, genocidal dictatorship. Our then Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, promised the nation “peace in our time”, but there was no peace. His successor, Winston Churchill assumed the post of Prime Minister promising the nation nothing more

than “blood, toil, sweat and tears”. But the indescribable price of ‘blood, toil, sweat and tears’ resulted in the privilege we now enjoy of living in freedom.

It is my hope and prayer that the long-suffering Armenian nation will continue to strive for the opportunity to live in peace and dignity in your own land. This is the blessing that my family and I, along with all Britons, enjoy. For that great privilege I am deeply indebted to those in my nation who, over eighty years ago, chose to endure a great sacrifice, rather than accepting a false promise of peace.

Please be assured of my continued daily prayers, and of my continued advocacy on your behalf. Every one of you means much to me and to many others around the world.

I pray for God’s blessing on you all and that you will long live in a free Armenia and free Artsakh.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caroline Cox". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

The Baroness Cox