



THE BARONESS COX
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19 September 2023

Your Excellencies,

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

As you are gathered together in New York for your annual meeting, I am sure that you have all received the disturbing news that Azerbaijani forces are undertaking a military offensive in Nagorno Karabakh which has all the hallmarks of a full-scale attack. These attacks, against innocent women, children and men have been described by Azerbaijan as "anti-terror operations" but early reports indicate widespread shelling of civilian areas including Stepanakert, Askeran, and other settlements. Civilians have been injured and there are reports of fatalities including children.

I am further concerned that these offensives follow reports of the recent withdrawal of Russian Peacekeeping forces. Additionally, the civilians of Nagorno Karabakh are particularly vulnerable due to a nine month blockade of the region by Azerbaijan which has resulted in widespread malnutrition, a lack of medical supplies, and a denial of basic human services.

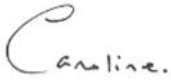
The conflict needs to be considered in the context of the 2020 war imposed by Azerbaijan against the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh. There are ongoing reports of damage to sacred and other cultural heritage sites by Azerbaijan. The brutality of Azerbaijan, including the continuing detention of prisoners of war in violation of the November 2020 ceasefire agreement, and its holding of other hostage prisoners, is already a matter of record. Given this history, there is a high likelihood of further atrocity crimes being committed if you allow this conflict to continue. Under international law, these actions could be considered a war crime or crimes against humanity which place a duty on member states to act.

I therefore implore all members of the UN General Assembly to use every diplomatic and political option available to you to bring about an immediate cessation of Azerbaijan's military aggression and to restore peacekeeping initiatives to protect the civilians of Nagorno Karabakh. Such action should include the provision of international observers to monitor for signs of atrocity crimes, and measures to ensure that Azerbaijan's policy of aggression does not grow still further. There is a real danger that this may happen if the current aggression is not robustly challenged by the international community.

The United Nations Security Council has already announced its intention to hold a meeting tomorrow to coincide with this 78th UN General Assembly. I am aware that the UNSEC meeting was planned to concentrate on the desperate situation in Ukraine. However, I would humbly ask each of you to use your good offices to ensure that the scope of the UNSEC meeting tomorrow is widened to include the

very urgent crisis unfolding in Nagorno Karabakh. There is now the chance to stop another genuine international catastrophe from happening if you all act now.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroline".

The Baroness Cox

Independent Member of House of Lords

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT BARONESS COX:

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