

Lachin Corridor remains blocked by Azerbaijan



Nagorno-Karabakh - A group of Azerbaijanis block the road connecting Karabakh to Armenia, December 12, 2022.

On December 18 the Lachin Corridor remains blocked by Azerbaijan, the Nagorno Karabakh authorities said.

The Ministry of Interior of Nagorno Karabakh added that law enforcement agencies are on high alert patrolling the capital city and the regions of Nagorno Karabakh given the situation resulting from the blockade.

Azerbaijan is keeping the Lachin Corridor closed since December 12. The Lachin Corridor is the only road linking Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) with Armenia and the rest of the world.

120,000 people of Nagorno Karabakh actually appeared in status of hostage – Armenian PM

The humanitarian situation in Nagorno Karabakh has extremely escalated in recent

days, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said during Cabinet meeting.

“Azerbaijan firstly blocked the Lachin Corridor, and then cut off the gas supply to Nagorno Karabakh. Due to these provocative actions the residents of Nagorno Karabakh have been deprived of the right to free movement, are facing difficulties of heating their homes in winter conditions, thousands of people, including children, are stranded on roads in cold winter, many families have unwillingly separated, appearing in different sides of the blockade.

Citizens having serious health problems are deprived of medicines and healthcare services. There are disruptions in the supplies of food and other essentials. 120,000 people have actually appeared in the status of a hostage.

European Court gives Azerbaijan time until 16:00 CET on Monday to respond to Armenia’s request for interim measure

The European Court of Human Rights gave Azerbaijan time until 16:00 CET on Monday, December 19, to respond to Armenia’s request for interim measures; after the response, the court will make its final decision, the Office of the Representative of Armenia on International Legal Issues informs.

On December 14 Armenia informed the Court about the blockade of the Berdzor (Lachin) Corridor by Azerbaijan and the violation of the rights of the Artsakh people.

At the same time, Armenia requested ECtHR to indicate interim measures against Azerbaijan and obligate Azerbaijan to unblock the Berdzor (Lachin) Corridor.

Gas-heated schools and kindergartens were forced to suspend their operations, as a result of which around 22,000 children have been deprived of the right to education”, the PM said.

Pashinyan called the situation in Nagorno Karabakh a humanitarian crisis.

“Moreover, this crisis was caused as a result of Azerbaijan’s non-fulfillment of its international commitments. As it has been stated repeatedly, the closure of the Lachin Corridor is a direct and gross violation of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 by Azerbaijan, on the simple grounds that

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US was the first to react to blockage of Lachin Corridor: Armenia Parliament Speaker receives outgoing Ambassador Tracy



Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan received on December 16 US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy who is completing her diplomatic mission in Armenia, the

Parliament's press service said.

After exchanging views on productive partnership, the Speaker of Parliament said that the Ambassador's diplomatic mission was at a difficult period for Armenia, however, during her tenure the relations between the two countries have reached a very high level. He added that the Armenian-American cooperation's parliamentary format has sent a new bar. Alen Simonyan highlighted the importance of the activities done by the Ambassador in

diplomatic and public platforms.

"We want to thank the United States for the addressed reaction to the ongoing incidents around the Lachin Corridor. I want to state that the United States was the first to react to the blockage of the corridor", Alen Simonyan said.

At the end of the meeting the Speaker wished success to Lynne Tracy in her future activities, expressing confidence that in all cases the Ambassador will maintain the friendly ties with Armenia.

Armenian FM briefs UN Secretary-General on latest regional developments

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in New York on December 14, the Foreign Ministry reported.

Minister Mirzoyan briefed the UN chief on the latest regional developments, particularly the blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan since December 12, the disruptions of gas supply to Nagorno Karabakh and the serious humanitarian challenges as a result. The necessary for an addressed reaction by the international community to the current situation was emphasized.



The Armenian side has also touched upon the ongoing occupation by Azerbai-

jan of Armenia's sovereign territories, the normalization of the Armenia-Azerbaijan relations and the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Ararat Mirzoyan said Azerbaijan continues its policy of use of force or threat of force, militaristic rhetoric and Armenophobia and maximalist approaches, thus distorting the stability and security in South Caucasus. At the same time, the FM reaffirmed Armenia's commitment aimed at establishing stability and peace in the region.

Armenian FM introduces Indian counterpart on situation following Azerbaijan's blockade of Lachin Corridor

On December 14, Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan, who is in New York on a working visit, had a meeting with Foreign Minister of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said. The interlocutors discussed issues on further deepening the cooperation between Armenia and India and commended the development dynamics of Armenian-Indian relations. In this regard, the role of official mutual visits at the high level was highlighted.

The Foreign Minister of Armenia congratulated his Indian counterpart on the successful presidency in the UN Security

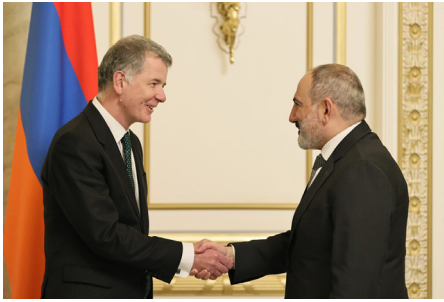
Council. The parties discussed issues related to cooperation and reciprocal support on international platforms.

In the course of the meeting, regional security issues were discussed. Minister Mirzoyan presented to his counterpart the situation following Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor - the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, and the disruption of gas supply to Artsakh by Azerbaijan since December 12. Foreign Minister of Armenia emphasized the inadmissibility of Azerbaijan's continuous policy of subjecting the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to ethnic cleansing.

On the same day, the Foreign Minister of Armenia participated in the official ceremony of unveiling the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the UN headquarters.



Armenian PM receives the head of UK's Secret Intelligence Service



The chief of Britain's foreign intelligence agency, Richard Moore, met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on December 18 during a visit to Armenia.

In a short statement on the meeting, the Armenian government's press office said Pashinyan and Moore discussed "processes taking place in the South Caucasus."

"Topics relating to regional and international security were also addressed," added the statement.

No other details were reported. Photographs of the meeting released by the office showed that Armen Abazyan, the head of Armenia's National Security Service,

was also in attendance.

Moore, who runs the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) also known as MI6, arrived in Armenia just four days after meeting with Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, in London. According to Grigoryan's office, they discussed "prospects for bilateral se-

curity cooperation."

It was not clear whether the British spy chief is also scheduled to travel to neighboring Azerbaijan or Georgia.

U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns visited Armenia and met with Pashinyan in July. Few details of those talks were made public.



Pashinyan describes silence of several friendly countries over Azeri closure of Lachin Corridor as strange

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan thanked all countries and international organizations that have already reacted and gave an assessment on Azerbaijan's blocking of the Lachin Corridor.

At the same time, Pashinyan said that the silence of some friendly countries is strange.

"I thank all countries and international organizations who have already reacted and gave an assessment to Azerbaijan's policy of blocking the Lachin Corridor and causing a humanitarian disaster in Nagorno Karabakh. I have to say for the record that the silence of several friendly countries in



this regard is at least strange," Pashinyan said.

He added that he fully supports the December 14 statement adopted by the Armenian parliament which called for launching or re-launching international mechanisms

for ensuring the rights and security of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh.

"The parliament also called on the UN Security Council and OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairing and member countries to send a fact-finding mission to Nagorno Karabakh for monitoring the humanitarian situation. I am instructing our diplomatic service, the Foreign Ministry to effectively convey this message of the legislative branch to the addressees," Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan added that he maintains constant contact with the President of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan to assess the developments and discuss possible resolutions.

page 1 ➡ according to point 6th of that statement, the Lachin Corridor is under the control of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno

Karabakh, and the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees the traffic safety of citizens, vehicles and goods along the Lachin Corridor. This is a direct quote from the No-

vember 9 statement, and that statement is a document which has the signature of the President of Azerbaijan", the PM said.

EU monitors to wrap up mission in Armenia by December 19 – Borrell



The EU Monitoring Capacity Mission to Armenia will complete its activities by December 19, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell said during a press conference in Brussels.

The issue was reviewed during the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 December 2022 in Brussels.

“We agreed to withdraw the mission and deploy a team to explore the possible future EU engagement,” Borrell said.

The EU Monitoring Capacity in Armenia became operational on 20 October following the decision by the European Union.

The EU Monitoring Capacity responded to the agreement reached at the quadrilateral meeting between President Aliyev, Prime Minister Pashinyan, French

President Macron and President of the European Council Michel.

Upon proposal of the High Representative Josep Borrell, the decision on the setting up of the EU Monitoring Capacity was taken at the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 October.

The mission’s mandate is to monitor the situation in the border regions between Armenia and Azerbaijan in order to support confidence building between the two countries and allow the EU to better support the work of the border commissions.

MEP urges Azerbaijan to fulfill its obligations under 9 November 2020 statement

Member of European Parliament, Chair of the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus, Marina Kaljurand, has expressed her deep concerns over the actions of Azerbaijan, particularly the blocking of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) with Armenia and the outside world.

“I am gravely concerned by the actions of the Azerbaijani state authorities and purported environmental protesters in the Lachin Corridor on 3 December and again since 12 December, resulting in the blocking of the road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, which is a vital supply line for the Armenian population of the



region.

Moreover, the reported disruption of gas supply to Nagorno-Karabakh via the pipeline passing through Azerbaijani-controlled territory is of utmost concern, adding to the risk of serious humanitarian consequences.

I recall that safe movement through the Lachin Corridor is guaranteed under the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020. I urge the government of Azerbaijan to fulfill its obligations under this statement and call for utmost restraint in terms of both actions and rhetoric.

Once again, I underline the need for a comprehensive peace agreement which needs to provide firm guarantees for the rights and security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. I call for the urgent resumption of negotiations at the highest level, with the facilitation of the EU, and de-escalation of the situation”, the MEP said in a statement.

Discussion of situation in Nagorno Karabakh at UN Security Council already means internationalization of issue-Beglaryan

The United Nations Security Council will discuss the situation in Nagorno Karabakh resulting from the blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan, Security Council Report said on social media. The issue will be discussed at the request of the French Mission to the United Nations.

“This morning (16 December), following the consultations on Libya, UNSC members will discuss the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia - Azerbaijan) under “any other business”, at the request of the French Mission to the UN. No

briefers is expected”, the Security Council Report tweeted.

Commenting on this news, Advisor to the State Minister of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan stated: “It is gratifying that the UN Security Council will discuss the issue of Artsakh on December 18. The discussion will be held in a closed format, but it already means internationalization of the issue. I hope the United Nations will pay greater attention to the solution of both short-term and long-term issues, by fulfilling its commitments and using all possible

mechanisms”.

Since December 12, Azerbaijan has blocked the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia and the outside world.



US calls on restoration of free movement through Lachin Corridor as soon as possible

The closure of the Lachin Corridor has potentially severe humanitarian implications and, quite candidly, sets back the peace process, US State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said at a press briefing.

“The closure of the Lachin Corridor has potentially severe humanitarian implications and, quite candidly, sets back the peace process. We’re pleased that natural gas to Nagorno-Karabakh has been restored. Disruptions to energy infrastructure could precipitate a humanitarian crisis, as I said. And we call on the restoration of free



movement through the corridor as soon as possible, and the way forward to this is through negotiations”, Patel said.

Asked whether the Biden Administration believes that the sides are interested

in signing a peace agreement by the end of the year, Mr. Patel refused to assign a timeline to it. “This is something that you know that the Secretary has a great interest in and has paid very close attention to, other senior leaders across the department have as well, and it’s something that we’re going to continue to remain deeply engaged on and get to cross the finish line”, he said.

Since December 12, Azerbaijan has blocked the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia and the outside world.

United States Assistant Secretary of State explains how US helps people of Artsakh

Access to Nagorno Karabakh is limited which impacts the US ability to engage and undertake some assistance programs, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried said.

At US House hearings, Rep. Susan Wild, noting that her Armenian constituents in Pennsylvania are very concerned about the plight of the Armenians of Artsakh, stated “the Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh continue to face an acute humanitarian crisis, including threats of renewed attacks and chronic shortages of water, energy, healthcare, and food,” and asked Assistant Secretary Donfried for clarification

on amounts of assistance provided in Artsakh, and an accounting that funds reached the intended recipients.

“Access to Nagorno Karabakh is limited, which impacts the US ability to engage and undertake some assistance programs. Despite those limitations, the United States has sought to help those impacted by the conflict, many of whom are in Armenia. And so, much of our humanitarian assistance of 21 million is going to those efforts,” Donfried said.

Donfried clarified that the assistance is provided to the ICRC (2,5 million in



2021 and 12,8 million in 2022) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees office (9 million in 2021 and 3,8 million in 2022). She added that the US has various mechanisms to supervise that the assistance is reaching its addressees.

USAID launches new 5-year project supporting Armenian government to establish fair, equitable justice system

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a new five-year project supporting the Government of Armenia to establish a fair and equitable justice system and increase public trust in the rule of law, USAID said in a press release.

The Justice Sector Support Project is funded by USAID and implemented by Development Professionals, Inc.

“USAID’s Justice Sector Support Project stands ready to help Armenia resolve issues that plague the judiciary, such as an inefficient case management system, a growing backlog of cases, and a lack of

transparency over court rulings,” stated USAID/Armenia Mission Director John Allelo at the launch event.

Project activities will advance the functional independence and effectiveness of the judicial branch by strengthening the effectiveness and capacity of courts, relevant self-regulatory agencies, and educational institutions, as well as by facilitating multi-stakeholder oversight of the implementation of justice sector reforms.

The launch event was attended by high level officials including John Allelo, USAID/Armenia Mission Director; Arman

Dilanyan, Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court; Yeranuhi Tumanyants, Supreme Judicial Council, Grigor Minasyan, Acting Minister of Justice; Sergey Arakelyan, Rector of the Justice Academy; government representatives; and representatives of international, civil society and media organizations.

During the event, participants were invited to gather informally to continue ongoing discussions regarding the current challenges facing the judicial system and opportunities for strengthening the justice sector in Armenia.

PM Pashinyan receives the delegation of the “Amundi Group” company engaged in asset management



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received the deputy executive director of the French “Amundi Group” Bernard de Witt and the delegation headed by him.

The Prime Minister emphasized the involvement of “Amundi Group” in the process of managing pension funds in Armenia, in the person of “Amundi-ACBA

Asset Management” company. Nikol Pashinyan referred to the process of pension reform and noted that the current dynamics of Armenia’s economic growth allows to increase the effectiveness of the reform by implementing new investment programs.

Bernard de Witt thanked the Prime Minister for the high appreciation, effec-

tive cooperation and noted that “Amundi Group” is interested in continuing the implementation of projects that are beneficial to the public, the state and the pension system.

Issues related to the implementation of the economic, social and financial components of the pension reform were discussed at the meeting. The Prime Minister was presented with information on the activity, profitability and current results of pension funds managed by “Amundi-ACBA Asset Management” company. The sides exchanged thoughts on the development of the financial market, raising the level of financial literacy, ensuring social welfare and joint projects implemented in a number of other directions.

Nikol Pashinyan emphasized the importance of active communication with the public, which will contribute to the continuous increase of public awareness, accountability and the effective implementation of the pension reform.

IMF Approves ‘Precautionary’ Loan for Armenia



The International Monetary Fund has approved a new \$171 million lending program for Armenia designed to strengthen the country’s resilience to potential external shocks.

The three-year Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) was unveiled on December 13 seven months after the Armenian authorities received the final installment of a similar IMF loan worth \$415 million.

“The Armenian authorities have indicated that they will treat the arrangement as precautionary,” read an IMF statement.

“The new SBA will serve as insurance in case shocks generate balance of payments needs and will support the authorities’ reform efforts.”

The statement quoted Bo Li, the fund’s deputy managing director, as saying that the country may need such funding despite achieving robust economic growth this year. He cautioned that its economic outlook is “subject to significant uncertainty due to spillovers from Russia’s war in Ukraine, global financial tightening, and a slowdown in major trading partners.”

The Armenian economy is on course to grow by at least 11 percent this year on the back of soaring trade with and remittances from Russia. Local businesses appear to have taken advantage of Western economic sanctions against Moscow, with Armenian exports to Russia more than doubling in the first ten months of this year.

Li commended the authorities for maintaining fiscal discipline, keeping the increased public debt “on a declining path” and planning to further improve tax collection. He also praised the Central Bank of Armenia for significantly tightening its monetary policy in the face of high inflation.

“The financial system is in good health,” added the IMF official.

Incidentally, the Central Bank announced on Tuesday yet another increase in its benchmark interest rate, again citing the need to curb inflationary pressures. Its governing board set the refinancing rate at 10.75 percent, up by 0.25 percentage points.

A statement released by the bank said that although annual inflation in Armenia eased to 8.8 percent in November global “inflation expectations” remain high.

Flyone Armenia announces launch of new TravelOne agency offering variety of options and destinations



FlyOne Armenia Chairman of the Board Aram Ananyan said at a press conference that together with TravelOne they will offer new quality travel services.

“TravelOne will be the best travel agency in its kind. Any airline must start offering travel services when reaching a particular milestone of development and in

this context the launch of TravelOne travel agency is no coincidence. As an airline we cover more than ten destinations. We operate flights to Russia, France, Moldova, Turkey, Georgia, flights to Beirut will launch in the coming days, and we are also expanding our European flight network, including Milan. And for New Year, TravelOne will offer packages to Egypt,” Ananyan said.

TravelOne co-founder and CEO Vahan Hakobyan added that starting December 20 flights to Sharm El-Sheikh will commence. Flights will be conducted twice a week.

“We’ve already launched the Tel Aviv destination. We will have pilgrimages to Jerusalem there. Besides, every week we

will have tours to Dubai for both individual and group programs. Already in March we will start the other Egyptian destination, Hurgada. We plan to have other destinations to Greece, Spain, Albania, Bulgaria and elsewhere,” Hakobyan said.

TravelOne is planning to launch an online option for travelers to organize their holidays with one simple online step.

FlyOne Armenia’s Aram Ananyan added that the travel result offered to citizens must contain innovation, and their objective is to offer interesting, affordable and high-quality travel services.

Recently Flyone Armenia added an Airbus A320 to its fleet. Ananyan said that so far their passenger count is over 400,000 and they expect to wrap up the year with a higher figure. The airline’s goal is to service 1,000,000 passengers in a year.

Government expects real growth exceeding 13,2% of GDP

The Armenian government expects real growth exceeding 13,2% of the GDP as a result of 2022, finance minister Tigran Khachatryan said.

In the three quarters of this year the countries which are traditional trade partners of Armenia experienced gradual decline in economic activity. Metal prices in international markets are also impacting the Armenian economic activity, especially copper and molybdenum. “These two in a positive sense. While international oil prices are having an opposite effect, when they grow they have negative impact on the Armenian economy, it has an effect of increased spending. In January-September average



prices were 54% higher than last year,” Khachatryan explained at a parliamentary committee hearing.

Food prices grew 19,5% which also had negative impact in terms of consumption. “But we could perhaps record positive impact if we think from perspective

of producers. Global developments recorded negative trends. But this has a differing manifestation in case of the Armenian economy. The 9-month economic activity stood at 14,1%. GDP growth is 12,6%,” he added.

He said that the international trade with Russia, the tourism statistics and significant increase in financial transfers from Russia have positive impact on the Armenian economic developments.

“With this impact we expect that both the yearly economic activity and economic growth will record rather high values. We think that we will record real growth exceeding 13,2% of the GDP,” Khachatryan said.

Consequences of aggressive war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh yet to be overcome, Armenia's Foreign Minister says

The consequences of the aggressive war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh have not been overcome to this day, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said at the 4th Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide.

Moreover, he said, in May and November last year and on September 13-14 this year, the sovereign territory of Armenia was attacked by Azerbaijan, resulting in gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including the right to life, prohibition of torture, property, treatment of Prisoners of War.

"The Armenian people faced new security threats which have not been addressed to this day. This situation is an outcome of a lengthy process, when the spread of extreme hatred towards Armenians, the consistent development of military capabilities turned into the use of force," the Foreign Ministry said.

He emphasized that the approach of dealing with foreign policy issues through the use of force, which is manifested by the outbreak of new wars and conflicts in different parts of the world, indicates the crisis of the global security system.

"Without universal norms of peaceful coexistence and international law, without red lines that are not amenable to double standards, the world cannot regain peace



and development. It is also obvious that after the current crisis of multilateralism, we need to reassess international relations and find a new consensus for the coexistence of peoples. Today, it might be difficult to predict all the elements of that international consensus but apparently, the inadmissibility of genocides and ethnic cleansing, religious and national discrimination and hatred, as well as their prevention, the protection of human rights, including collective rights, should become one of the pillars of that consensus," Minister Mirzoyan said.

He stressed that both an individual person and a nation have the right to life, security, in the truest sense of the word, to live safely, and to control their own destiny, and no one, no power can deprive them of these collective and natural rights.

"During the last two decades, the international community, represented by the

United Nations, has done a great work to create new capacities and mechanisms for the prevention of genocide," Ararat Mirzoyan said.

"One of the important steps to ensure the prevention of genocide has become the establishment of the position and the Office of the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General on this matter in 2004, which has gained a great experience over the years and many of the documents

developed by the Special Adviser have become genocide prevention guidelines for the UN member states. We are grateful to Madame Alice Wairimu Nderitu for her participation in this conference and for her continued cooperation," he added. .

Speaking about the structures involved in the genocide prevention, he emphasized that the UN Human Rights Council plays a major role in this matter.

"The 21st century and the development of information technologies could not fail to affect the Genocide Prevention agenda. Today, we evidence the occurrence of both new challenges and new instruments for the advancement of genocide prevention agenda. Within the framework of the work of this forum, I invite all of you to discuss effective mechanisms to fight against the abuse of current new instruments, as well as to harness their advantages," the Armenian FM said.

Lachin Corridor must be re-opened immediately, USAID's Samantha Power says

The Lachin Corridor must be re-opened immediately, USAID Administrator Samantha Power said in a Twitter post.

She said "the closure has the potential to cause a significant humanitarian crisis."

"This corridor is an essential route for the flow of much needed food and medical supplies that must be allowed to flow

freely," Power tweeted.

The only road linking the Republic of Artsakh to Armenia and thus the outer world has been closed since Monday morning after a group of Azerbaijanis blocked the highway, citing fake environmental reasons. Azerbaijan has also cut gas supply to Artsakh.



Artsakh Faces Shortage of Basic Goods



Fuel was in short supply in Nagorno-Karabakh and local residents reportedly stocked up on basic food-stuffs and drugs on December 15 on the fourth day of a road blockade imposed by Azerbaijan.

Karabakh imports food items such as cooking oil, dairies and rice and virtually all of its medicines. These and other imports ground to a halt on Monday after large groups of Azerbaijanis blocked the sole road linking Karabakh to Armenia.

The crisis was compounded by the disruption on Tuesday of gas supplies from Armenia to Karabakh carried out through a pipeline passing through Azerbaijani-controlled territory.

Some shopkeepers in Stepanakert said that they are running out of key groceries because of panic buying.

"People are buying up things like oil,

sugar, buckwheat," one of them, Irina Manasian, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "It's been like that since yesterday."

People working at local drugstores reported a similar problem. They said Stepanakert residents are buying large quantities of medication for fever and high blood pressure as well as painkillers.

"Everything is running out," said one of them. "Demand is very, very strong."

Also, buying fuel was all but impossible in and outside Stepanakert. In accordance with a "saving regime" announced by the Karabakh government on Wednesday, local filling stations sold gasoline and liquefied gas only to ambulances, public buses and other vehicles authorized by authorities.

The authorities also shut down all schools, colleges and kindergartens that use natural gas for heating purposes. For

the same reason, Karabakh's main maternity hospital had to switch to a more expensive and less efficient electrical heating mode.

"It's very cold in the hospital right now," said Pavlina Gabrielian, a young woman who gave birth there earlier this week.

Other Karabakh hospitals decided to cancel non-urgent surgeries to save energy and medicines. They remained unable on Thursday to transport some of their gravely ill patients to Yerevan for further treatment.

The Karabakh premier, Ruben Vardanyan, held another emergency meeting with local officials in the morning. An official statement on the meeting said they discussed, among other things, "measures that will help to minimize a deficit of electricity."

The officials also briefed Vardanyan on Karabakh's current stockpiles of food-stuffs, drugs and other essential items, added the statement. They assured him that "there are enough flour stocks in the republic."

All Karabakh bakeries using gas had to stop their work. According to the statement, the Karabakh officials discussed the possibility of reactivating them with "alternative fuel."



U.S. House Assistant Speaker calls for holding Azerbaijan accountable

Assistant Speaker of the U.S. House, Congresswoman Katherine Clark highlights need for holding Azerbaijan accountable for blocking the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Artsakh with the outside world.

"Azerbaijan's blockade of Artsakh is a humanitarian crisis in the making. Thousands of Armenian lives — particularly the

elderly and children — are at risk if access to food, medicine and heat is not restored. We must help secure peace and hold Azerbaijan accountable", Katherine Clark said.

Since December 12, Azerbaijan has blocked the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia and the outside world. Azerbaijan has also cut off the gas supply to Artsakh since December 13, but restored it only on De-

cember 16.



Protesters in Yerevan draw the attention of international community to the blockade of Artsakh

The incumbent and former Human Rights Defenders of the Republics of Artsakh were joined by youth to stage acts of protests in Yerevan to draw the attention of the international community to the closure of the only road linking the Republic to the world.

Artak Beglaryan, adviser to the Minister of State of Artsakh, joined the protesters after spending the night in front of the UN Office. He says that through acts of civil disobedience, it's necessary to demand targeted statements and actions from the international community to lift the blockade of Artsakh.



"The UN bodies should address this situation, find short-term solutions for the existing humanitarian crisis and provide long-term guarantees for the security and rights of the people of Artsakh and full settlement of the conflict," Artak Beglaryan said.

Speaking outside the US Embassy in Yerevan, Artsakh's Ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan said for four days now Azerbaijan has been keeping Artsakh's lifeline blocked, the gas supply is still suspended. He called this step of Azerbaijan a criminal act and stated that for two years they have been applying to the international commu-

nity, including the United States, saying that Azerbaijan is carrying out a policy of ethnic cleansing in Artsakh.

Stepanyan said that as a result of blocking of the road, he is incapable of fulfilling his duties as he can't return to Artsakh. "This must be condemned and receive a clear reaction by the international community, and the impunity of Azerbaijan must not continue, the criminal must eventually be sanctioned," he said.

The protesters rallied in front of the UN Office in Armenia, the Embassies of the United States, Russia, China, UK and France, as well as the Office of the EU Delegation to Armenia.



U.S. Congressmen call on Biden Administration to impose sanctions against Azerbaijan

A powerfully worded U.S. Congressional letter to President Joe Biden, spearheaded by Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA), called for decisive U.S. action in response to Azerbaijan's blockade of Artsakh, a bipartisan reaffirmation of demands to stop U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan and restart humanitarian assistance to the Armenians of Artsakh, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) reported.

Since December 12th, Azerbaijan has imposed a blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) to Armenia. The effect has been devastating to the population, rendering 120,000 individuals without access to the route that provides much of Artsakh's food, medical supplies and transport, and other essential goods, and depriving them of their right to free movement. Additional



reports allege that Azerbaijan has also shut off one of the major sources of natural gas for civilians in the territory, potentially leaving tens of thousands without heating as temperatures plummet.

"If this situation continues, a humanitarian crisis with potentially tragic consequences is imminent. Further, Azerbaijan's actions are a direct violation of the trilateral ceasefire statement of November 9, 2020,

which outlines an obligation to guarantee the secure movement of citizens, vehicles, and cargo in both directions through this route known as the Lachin Corridor", the Congressmen said in the letter.

They stated that despite "Congressional calls for much-needed direct U.S. humanitarian assistance for the people of Artsakh, the Administration has, to date, failed to provide adequate aid, which makes decisive action by the Administration now all the more urgent".

"We urge the Administration to use all tools at its disposal to ensure the safety of the people of Artsakh, now and in the future, including cessation of financial support to Azerbaijan and imposition of sanctions. We cannot allow Azerbaijan's policy of aggression and intimidation to continue", the Congressmen said.

Washington Post Reveals Azerbaijan's Hiring of Two Retired U.S. Generals

By Harut Sassounian

The Washington Post published last week a lengthy investigative article titled: "Air Force feared generals' foreign consulting jobs would cause scandal" by journalists Craig Whitlock and Nate Jones. The article disclosed Azerbaijan's offer to hire two retired U.S. Air Force generals. The Post went to extensive legal battles with the U.S. Air Force to reveal the concealed details of this scandalous transaction.

Between 2016 and 2021, the Post submitted four Freedom of Information Act requests to the U.S. government seeking the documents in this matter. However, the Air Force either did not respond or claimed that it could not find any documents. Finally, the Post had to file a lawsuit in court which resulted in the judge ordering the Air Force to release 400 pages of internal documents revealing the details of these two generals' attempts "to profit" from their previous military contacts with Azerbaijan and "Pentagon's struggles to police such behavior," according to the Post.

The Washington Post wrote that "during the height of war in Afghanistan, U.S. military leaders flocked to...Azerbaijan to embrace its president, Ilham Aliyev" who was compared by the U.S. Embassy in Baku to the "mafia boss in the 'Godfather.'" The newspaper added: "Corruption flourished under the Aliyevs, with the CIA describing it as 'pervasive' and the State Department calling it 'systemic.'" Nevertheless, the Pentagon persuaded Aliyev to open its airspace to U.S. and NATO military supplies to go to Afghanistan. "In exchange, U.S. officials promised a closer diplomatic partnership with Aliyev and steered \$369 million in defense contracts to Silk Way Airlines, an Azerbaijan cargo carrier that U.S. investigators say was controlled by the government."

"Two U.S. Air Force generals—Duncan McNabb and William Fraser III—who oversaw the supply routes from 2008 and 2014, after retirement, tried to cash in on their Azerbaijan connections," the Washington Post wrote. The United States Transportation Command (Transcom) "had awarded 2,230 cargo airlift missions to Silk Way during McNabb's tenure, plus 1,117 missions while Fraser was in command, for a total cost of \$369 million." Upon retir-

ing from active duty, the four-star generals negotiated valuable consulting deals with Silk Way Airlines.

McNabb told the Washington Post: "he once hosted a Silk Way executive for dinner at his home at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois." After retiring from the Air Force in December 2011, "he said, officials with Silk Way Airlines contacted him about a possible business venture."

The U.S. military routinely approves such jobs after retirement, however, it denied permission to General McNabb, because it had serious concerns that it would be "a potential embarrassment and a risk to national security...fearing that the consulting jobs would trigger a scandal" according to Air Force internal documents. General McNabb went to great lengths to fight the Air Force's rejection of his job. According to a 2015 memo, General Fraser warned the U.S. military that "if the U.S. government prevented him from working for Silk Way, it would face 'blow-back' from Azerbaijan, and that Aliyev's government might even block U.S. and NATO supply routes to Afghanistan in retaliation."

Philip Deaver, a civilian Air Force lawyer, wrote in his objection that since the U.S. had given Silk Way Airlines \$369 million, and since the two generals had managed the supply routes via Azerbaijan, it might look like McNabb and Fraser knew "that a perk of office is a lucrative advisory contract from Silk Way upon retirement." McNabb said he had visited Azerbaijan five or six times.

General McNabb told the Washington Post, "he once hosted a Silk Way executive for dinner at his home at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois." After retiring from the Air Force in December 2011, he said, "officials with Silk Way Airlines contacted him about a possible business venture. Silk Way wanted to modernize its operational control center at Heydar Aliyev International Airport in Baku. The firm invited McNabb to return to Azerbaijan in June 2013 for a visit and offered to hire him as an adviser." That same month, "he set up a consulting firm, Ares Mobility Solutions, partnering with a retired Air Force colonel and a captain in the Navy Reserve who had worked in the airline industry. Ares signed a contract with Silk Way that paid a monthly retainer of \$10,000 plus expenses,

documents show. Under the deal, McNabb was expected to travel to Baku every three to five months to work for a few days at a time."

After assuming his Air Force position at Transcom in 2011, General Fraser flew to Baku and met with Pres. Aliyev. "Over the next three years, Fraser met with Aliyev twice in Azerbaijan and once in New York, according to the Azerbaijan's government."

In April 2014, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the United States, Elin Suleymanov, visited Scott Air Force Base in Illinois to tour Transcom headquarters. He told Fraser, who was nearing retirement, that "there are many opportunities for future military and commercial cooperation" between the United States and Azerbaijan, according to a U.S. military press release.

Within days of his retirement, Fraser received a job offer from Silk Way Group. Fraser sought in advance permission from the Air Force, stating that he "would be a consultant/advisor providing subject matter expertise" and would "help develop future business opportunities" for the pay of \$5,000 a day. However, the Air Force rejected his request. Fraser submitted a second application which was also turned down. "Fraser did not mention in his application that his son, William Fraser IV, also worked in the aviation business in Azerbaijan," the Washington Post wrote. His son, "a former U.S. Marine sergeant had taken a job two years earlier as an assistant to the president of Azerbaijan Airlines, the state-owned carrier, as a public relations and strategic communications specialist."

U.S. federal law requires that military personnel, who served at least 20 years, obtain permission before they accept anything of value from a foreign government or companies controlled by foreign governments. When the Air Force found out that McNabb had not sought permission in advance of his work in Azerbaijan, his subsequent application was denied. He was told that he had violated U.S. law. "There is no criminal penalty for breaking the law, but the military can withhold retirement pay from those who do so. McNabb confirmed that the Defense Department docked his pension but declined to say how much," the Post wrote.

Armenia, UAE sign MoU on cooperation in employment sector

Armenia and the United Arab Emirates signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the area of labor and employment.

The MoU was signed by Narek Mkrtchyan, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia and Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratization of the UAE.

Gulf Business quoted Al Awar as saying, "UAE seeks to strengthen its relations with countries around the world, and these relations are based on respect and mutual understanding. The UAE safeguards the rights of



workers from all over the world to work in the UAE based on the human values that govern its foreign and national policies."

He added, "We are on the verge of a new phase of a talent cooperation with Ar-

menia. We look forward to seeing this cooperation develop in the coming years."

Minister Mkrtchyan said Armenia is keen to "strengthen the cooperation between the two countries across various fields to serve common interests".

The MoU regulates the entry, residency, and employment of Armenians in the UAE in accordance with the country's legislations.

It includes cooperation in use of technology, exchange of information and studies in employment, strengthening legislations to combat human trafficking and other areas.

ANIF's new contribution investment in the agricultural sector



Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) subsidiary "Entrepreneur + State" Investments Fund is launching a new investment project jointly with the "K&G" company. The joint project "Berrymount" company will start large-scale production of strawberries for export.

The partner company "K&G" was founded in 2015 and already has two greenhouses with a total area of 6 hectare. The third greenhouse will be built as a result of the implementation of a joint project of ANIF with the "Entrepreneur + State" investment fund. The company exports almost all of its products. Greenhouse equipment is supplied by the

French company "Richel", which is one of the leaders in the industry. Strawberries are grown hydroponically without pesticides and chemical treatments.

The new greenhouse, which will be built as a result of ANIF's investment, will double the company's waste collection capacity. Investments of the "Entrepreneur + State" fund is amount to 960 million AMD.

Director of the Entrepreneur + State



investment fund Bella Manukyan, commented: "Our joint investment in Berry-

mount with a well-established company provides an opportunity to increase the export of Armenian agricultural products and expand our export market. It is especially important for us that the company we have partnered with has many years of successful experience in this area."

According to Dmitry Alekseenko, founder and director of the partner company K&G, ANIF's investment will help

the company implement the company's expansion strategy. "We consider this cooperation not just a government support for business, but also a joint efficient and viable business investment for both our company and ANIF. Demand for quality agricultural products is growing and Armenia's competitiveness in this sphere has great potential for growth."

The construction of the greenhouse is scheduled to be completed in August 2023.

Katill Armenian-made cleaning supplies are already available to consumers



Recently posters with inscription “Azdum e” (“It affects”) across Yerevan have quickly spread on social networks, turning into a viral campaign. While everyone was trying to guess what that campaign was actually about, “Khachatryan” Group of Companies announced a production of a new brand – Katill cleaning supplies.

Founders of “Khachatryan” Group of Companies Artur and Karen Khachatryan and chemical technologist at the company Virab Stepanyan tell about the idea of starting an Armenian production and the advantages of the brand Katill.

It has been quite a long time since we decided to produce our own products instead of an imported product. In our car washes we have been using our own products for a long time. We import the raw materials from Europe, but the entire production process is happening here.

Our professional team has gained quite a great experience, we had the necessary resources, which are the most important, and we had a big desire to have an Armenian-made product. That’s how we decided to unite our capacities and efforts and launch a production of household chemicals. Our primary goal was to create a competitive product that would be of domestic production and at the same time almost equal to the European products.

Katill affects the stains, not the nerves

Katill entered the market with an in-

teresting advertising campaign, the purpose of which was to show the quality and effectiveness of our production. At the moment, liquid hand soaps, dishwashing liquids, carpet, glass, wood surface cleaners, air fresheners and universal cleaners are already available to our consumers. The types of cleaning supplies will expand soon, and we will have also shower gels, shampoos, disinfectants, laundry detergents and softeners. In addition to quality, there is also one more important feature for us: in order to highlight that our products are made in Armenia, they have been created with unique and distinctive aromas, as pomegranate, apricot, lilac. I think this feature is typical only to our products.

High-quality raw materials and advanced technologies are used in production of Katill

The main feature of our production is that the focus is greatly paid on the quality: the raw materials are exclusively European, are imported from Germany, Belgium, Italy and the Czech Republic. The second important factor is the technology. We are working with a very experienced chemical technologist, who, despite his age, is very enthusiastic, creative and is always in touch with the chemical plants that produce the raw materials. Once the formulas are created, they are sent to our Italian partners who change or further improve them if necessary. Then, they are undergoing a testing stage. In addition to promoting made in Armenia, the purpose of creating Katill was also to spread and present made in Armenia abroad. Therefore, the products will be exported as well, and the first destination will be Georgia. Mass spreading of Armenian production in a foreign market is very important for us.

Technology and formulas of cleaning

supplies meet the international standards

I joined the “Khachatryan” Group of Companies two years ago. At the very beginning we were engaged in the production of automotive chemicals. Of course, it also has its features, but starting Katill and the production of household chemicals was another challenge. Here we already deal with human health, and such formulas were needed that would have been both effective and safe for skin.

Many factors are being taken into account while developing the formulas: first of all, the characteristics of different types of stains are being examined, then the substances that affect them. It is also very important on what surface the given cleaning product must be used. After all this, it is already decided which active substances must be used, what effect their combination will have on the abovementioned factors. Choosing a correct dosage is also very important because the combination of substances must have a synergetic effect. The samples are being tested, the recommendations are being taken into consideration, works are being done to eliminate the possible defects and comparisons are made with the best samples existing in the market.

As a specialist I can assure that our products are as effective and powerful as many higher price European products available in the market. We do the utmost to present the best domestic production to the Armenian consumer.

Karen Khachatryan, Co-founder of “Khachatryan” Group of Companies

We are planning to expand our team, the production volumes and the geography of representation in the future. I hope the products will be appreciated by the consumer, which will inspire us to always come up with innovations.

Armenian director's movie included in int'l competition program of Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival



included in the International Competition Program of the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, the National Cinema Center of Armenia said.

The festival screenings will be held from January 27th to 4th of February.

Director and scriptwriter-Ophelia Harutyunyan, producer-Nare Leone Ter-Gabrielyan, coproducer-Lydia Indjova (Belgium), production Company-Fermata Film

Cast-Nanor Petrosyan, Liana Vardanyan, Ani Khachikyan, Astghik Abajyan, Siranush Barseghyan, co-production countries: Belgium, USA, France.

A state-financed short film *It Takes a Village* by Ophelia Harutyunyan has been

Use of Smart Solutions at Financial Companies: Ameriabank Partners Silicon Mountains 2022

Yerevan hosted the 4th Silicon Mountains 2022 International Tech Summit, which brought together representatives of financial and technological companies and this time was dedicated to the use of smart solutions in various industries.

Eduard Musayelyan, Executive Director at the Union of Employers of Information and Communication Technologies, the event planner, assured in his welcome speech that they would not use technical terminology during discussions to assess the present and talk about the future: “Together with business sector representatives participating in our panel discussions, we will consider the advantages offered to businesses by smart solutions and the prospects for development.”

Four panel discussions were held during the event - on smart governance, smart economy, smart banking, and smart infrastructure.

When discussing smart banking, Artak Hanesyan, CEO of Ameriabank, partner of the event, touched upon the digital transformation path of Ameriabank that started back in 2018:

“It’s a long journey that has a start but no end. It’s a continuous process, in



which companies also go through transformation to react to various situational changes,” said Artak Hanesyan and added that owing to those changes, among other factors, Ameriabank was recognized as the best bank in Armenia by 3 prestigious magazines during the current year - Global Finance, Euromoney and the Banker Magazine of the Financial Times.

The participants of the panel discussion shared their experience and vision, as

well as spoke of the global trends in digitization, the place and role of Armenia in those development processes, etc.

Emphasizing the impact of such meetings, Armen Baldryan, Chairman of the UEICT, stated that the notion developed as a result of the discussions would be presented to the RA Government, the private sector and all stakeholders, as a package offer.

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Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID)

network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

Ensure the security and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

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The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող
ԼՏ Հոլդինգ ՍՊԸ

Ծավալը՝ 2.25 մամուլ, տպագրանակը՝ 1500
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993

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Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**

Computer Design: **Ashtot Khalapyan**

Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ.Հարությունյան

ISSN 1829-0604

Գրանցման վկայականի համարը՝
03U898368, տրված՝ 11.01.2013թ.
Registration certificate and the date:
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

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