

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 12, 2023

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to express our deep concern with the month-long Azerbaijani blockade on Nagorno-Karabakh and the rapidly-worsening humanitarian crisis that has been created for the region's ethnically Armenian population. Despite claims that the blockade has been formed by "eco-protestors", it appears that the Aliyev regime in Azerbaijan bears ultimate responsibility. Furthermore, Russian forces entrusted with keeping the peace have clearly failed in their duties.

This blockade is imposing devastation on an already vulnerable region, which is still reeling from the aftershocks of Azerbaijan's 2020 attack on the population of Nagorno-Karabakh. According to the Armenian government, Baku is denying 120,000 Nagorno-Karabakh residents freedom of movement, effectively holding them hostage in an effort to advance its own objectives.¹ The Armenian Ombudsperson has already reported the death of a Nagorno-Karabakh resident who was prevented from accessing medical care in Armenia.² Many more lives are at risk due to an increasing shortage of food and medicine. Two weeks ago, local officials in Nagorno-Karabakh reported that the region's supply of fruits, vegetables, grains, and sugar were about to run out, with shortages of eggs, oil, flour, and rice also causing alarm.³ Today the situation is certainly more dire.

The United States cannot stand aside while the Aliyev regime callously threatens the lives of Nagorno-Karabakh's citizens, and must hold Azerbaijan to account for blocking a civilian population's access to food and basic necessities.

We were pleased to see the Department of State Spokesperson recently "call on the Government of Azerbaijan to restore free movement" in Nagorno-Karabakh.⁴ While we welcome the recognition that Azerbaijan is responsible for the blockade that is causing the

¹ https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2023/01/03/mfa_statement_lachincorridor/11803

² <https://twitter.com/OmbudsArmenia/status/1610647226799341569/photo/1>

³ <https://oc-media.org/food-and-festivities-in-short-supply-as-nagorno-karabakh-enters-new-year-under-blockade/>

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-december-13-2022/>

ongoing humanitarian crisis, the United States must also take action to resume the free flow of humanitarian and basic goods to this besieged population. We must support organizations working to provide relief, and work with our like-minded partners across Europe who have also expressed concern over Baku's actions to pressure the Aliyev regime to stop this unacceptable blockade.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your prompt response and to working with you to help end the blockade in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator