RECENT VIOLATIONS OF AZERBAIJAN AND DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

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A brief on Events in and Around Republic of Armenia / Artsakh in March 2022

Since mid February Azerbaijani forces have been firing at local and civilian targets in several villages of Artsakh. Starting in the second week of March 2022 the Azerbaijani military continued its violation of ceasefire using mortars and automatic weapons targeting local communities. In addition, Azerbaijani troops opened fire along the Western section of Armenia-Azerbaijan border killing one soldier and wounding another on March 7, 2022.

On March 8, 2022 the natural gas supply to Artsakh from Armenia was cut due to damage on the gas pipeline in territory under Azerbaijani control. As a result, 100,000 people, schools, and other entities in Artsakh were left without heating under below zero weather conditions. The Azerbaijani side prevented restorative work to be carried out on the gas pipeline despite efforts made for negotiations by Russian peacekeepers.

Amidst unfolding humanitarian crisis and ceasefire violations during his two day visit to Yerevan on March 14, 2022, Toivo Klaar, the EU's special representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, stated that "The latest developments on the ground are indeed very worrying. I have had numerous conversations with representatives of both Yerevan and Baku over the past days on these issues. Obviously, these developments are of concern to the EU. It would be essential that the gas pipeline is repaired as soon as possible and that the shootings stop."

On the same day Armenia responds to Baku's Five-Point proposal to Yerevan to normalize relations by requesting international mediation for peace talks. Armenia's Foreign Ministry in a statement said: "The Republic of Armenia responded to the proposals of the Republic of Azerbaijan and applied to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship to organize negotiations for the signing of peace agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the basis of the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Helsinki Final Act." Further, in an interview with Armenpress, FM Ararat Mirzoyan stated that "the two countries, having signed the "Agreement on the Establishment of Cooperation of Independent States" on December 8, 1991, in fact have already recognized each other's territorial integrity and accepted that they have no territorial claims towards each other. It should be noted that the provisions mentioned in the proposal do not fully reflect the whole agenda of the existing problems. It is vital for the Armenian side that the rights and freedoms of the Armenians of Artsakh are clearly guaranteed, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is finally clarified. For us, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not a territorial issue, but a matter of rights."

Baku's Five Point Proposal includes:

- Recognize each other's territorial integrity,
- Reaffirm absence of claims to territory,
- Abstain from threatening each other's security,

- Demarcation of the borders,
- Unblock transportation links.

According PM Pashinyan's press office, the PM's phone calls with western leaders, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on March 14, included the escalation of tensions in Artsakh and stressed "the need for stability and peace in the region, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs." Pashinyan held a similar phone call with the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin on March 16, 2022.

On March 19, 2022 French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian stated that France is ready, as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, to support negotiations between Yerevan and Baku aimed at a peace deal. On the same day gas supply had been restored in Artsakh for half the population only to be cut off again on Monday, March 21 with grounds to believe that during repair work "the Azerbaijani side installed a valve, through which it can stop the gas supply any time."

In the March 22 Statement of the Foreign Ministry of Armenia **regarding the actions of Azerbaijan aimed at causing humanitarian crisis in Artsakh reads:**

"Through the blatant interference of the Azerbaijani side, the supply of natural gas from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh was again disrupted in the territory fallen under the Azerbaijani control near the town of Shushi. Thus, in the conditions of unprecedented precipitation and cold weather, about 120,000 people of Nagorno-Karabakh were deprived of vital gas supply.

Just a few days ago, Azerbaijan, for eight days in a row, was not allowing the reconstruction of the gas pipeline that was damaged in the same area under unknown circumstances.

Therefore, in addition to its ongoing efforts aimed at exerting psychological pressure on the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and preventing the entry of international humanitarian organizations into Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan is deliberately disrupting the proper operation of critical infrastructure in Nagorno-Karabakh, obviously leading to humanitarian crisis. We consider this outrageous policy of systematic violence against the Armenians of Artsakh unacceptable.

The current situation emphasizes the urgency of clear response of the international community towards preventing the humanitarian crisis, as well as the immediate and unimpeded involvement of international humanitarian organizations in Nagorno-Karabakh."

According to Artsakh Information Center, on March 24, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces violated the line of contact in the direction of Parukh village of Askeran region. Women and children of Khramort village of Askeran region were evacuated. Hours later the NKR Info. Center further reported that "the situation in the direction of Parukh-Khramort settlements of Askeran region is under the control of the Russian peacekeeping troops deployed in the Artsakh Republic. As a result of the negotiations and additional security measures, the advance of the Azerbaijani armed forces in our territory is

currently suspended, but the enemy has not yet returned to the starting positions."

There are no comments yet.