



The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

23rd August 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you to seek the urgent intervention of His Majesty's Government in stopping an act of cruelty and aggression that is leading to suffering and deaths of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh.

Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor, now in its ninth month, has created a situation described earlier this month by a former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court as follows: "Starvation is the invisible Genocide weapon. Without immediate dramatic change, this group of Armenians will be destroyed in a few weeks."* The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has a "Red Flag Alert for Genocide" about the current situation, and Genocide Watch issued a "Genocide Warning" as early as September 2022.**

Since 12th December of last year, 120,000 Christian Armenians, including elderly people, women and 30,000 children, have been suffering the consequences of the devastating blockade imposed by Azerbaijan in violation of the terms of the ceasefire agreement signed in November 2020 by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia, which ended the 44-day war of that year.

For many months now, and throughout the harsh winter and hot summer of the Caucasus mountains, food, medicine, gas, and other vital supplies have been prevented from

reaching Nagorno Karabakh. Hospitals are severely affected and cannot carry out planned surgical procedures; miscarriages and stillbirths have risen by a reported 30%. Malnutrition is widespread, and cases of death by starvation are being reported. All evacuations of the critically ill have been suspended, and dialysis machines stand idle for want of necessary blood products. Mass starvation is likely in the coming months. Our fears are also increasing for the lives of the 30,000 children and pregnant women affected by this unjustifiable and intolerable situation.

Moreover, as was confirmed at the recent meeting of the UN Security Council, Azerbaijan has recently prevented the International Red Cross from entering the region and has blockaded a dirt track from Armenia to Nagorno Karabakh, which was being used for emergencies and to deliver medical supplies. The government in Baku has ignored calls from the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights, and other international organisations, as well as calls from the UN Security Council member, states, including the United Kingdom, to restore freedom of movement across the Lachin Corridor. There are no supplies of any sort (including of food and medicine) entering Nagorno Karabakh.

The Gospel says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). As Christians and religious leaders, we are deeply alarmed by the worsening humanitarian crisis.

Prime Minister, we urge you and His Majesty’s Government to take decisive action to open the Lachin Corridor to prevent the genocide of the population in Nagorno Karabakh. We trust that your actions will be timely to save the lives of tens of thousands of people on the verge of dying as a direct result of the current blockade.

As church leaders we come to you to place this crisis in its humanitarian context and hope that you will use your good offices to relieve our Armenian sisters and brothers who are being deprived of any assistance.

Yours sincerely,

BISHOP HOVAKIM

Primate of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland and Pontifical Legate

ARCHBISHOP ANGAELOS

Archbishop of London Coptic Orthodox Church and Papal Legate to the United Kingdom

THE RT REVD CHRISTOPHER CHESSUN

The Lord Bishop of Southwark (Church of England)

THE RT REVD DR CHRISTOPHER COCKSWORTH
The Bishop of Coventry (Church of England)

The Rt REVD David Walker
Bishop of Manchester

ARCHBISHOP NIKITAS
Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain
President of the Conference of European Churches

ARCHBISHOP KEVIN McDONALD
Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark (Catholic Church)

BISHOP MIKE ROYAL
General Secretary, Churches Together in England

ARCHBISHOP ABRAHAM MAR STEPHANOS
Metropolitan of UK- Europe-Africa Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

ARCHBISHOP ATHANASIOS TOMA
Syriac Orthodox Archbishop in the UK

THE RT REVD AND RT HON DR ROWAN WILLIAMS
The Lord of Oystermouth (Church of England)

* <https://oc-media.org/former-icc-prosecutor-accuses-azerbaijan-of-genocide-in-nagorno-karabakh/>

** <https://www.lemkinstitute.com/single-post/a-serious-risk-of-genocide-recent-developments-in-nagorno-karabakh>