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DISCUSSIONS ON KARABAKH AT THE UNSC AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS IN SOME CIRCLES

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The dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the administration of the Lachin Corridor continues. As it will be recalled, Article 6 of the agreement signed between the two countries after the 2020 Karabakh War states the following:

> "[...] The Lachin Corridor (5 km wide), which will provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia while not affecting Shusha, shall remain under the control of the Russian Federation peacemaking forces [...] The Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees the security of citizens, vehicles, and goods moving along the Lachin corridor in both directions".

In recent months, Azerbaijan had set up a customs checkpoint on the Armenian border of the Lachin Corridor due to illegal trade and arms smuggling, which Armenia interpreted as a violation of the afore-mentioned article. This tension between the two countries has continued to grow. In this context, Armenia accused Azerbaijan of blocking access to food and medicine to Khankendi and "causing a human tragedy". Azerbaijan, on the other hand, declared that Armenia's allegations were groundless. Upon these developments, the Armenian government brought the issue before the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with a call for an emergency meeting.

Speaking at the UNSC meeting, Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan claimed that Azerbaijan was using the situation as a "method of war". Mirzoyan called on the UNSC to "condemn the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, which is prohibited by international law".

The representative of the United States, who chaired the meeting, stated that under the current circumstances, the free passage of food, medicine, etc. should not be prevented and that all commercial and humanitarian transit should be allowed.[1] The

representative of the European Union who attended the meeting, contrary to the proposal to deliver humanitarian aid via the Aghdam-Khankendi road (which was previously mentioned by EU President Joseph Borell and Azerbaijani officials), argued that this path could not in any way serve as an alternative to the Lachin Corridor and therefore that the Lachin Corridor should be opened.[2] The representative of the Red Cross organization, whose vehicles were found to be carrying smuggled goods during a shipment via the Lachin Corridor in recent months, drew attention to the necessity of delivering humanitarian aid to civilians via Lachin or another suitable route.[3] On the other hand, Russia, which has peacekeepers in the region according to the agreement of 9 November 2020 between Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia, informed that they made proposals to open the Lachin and Aghdam roads in a parallel fashion.

At the meeting, the representative of Azerbaijan stated that the allegations made by Armenia were political propaganda based on baseless information. In connection with this, he stated that the lawsuit filed by Armenia a couple of months ago for similar purposes before the International Criminal Court regarding the removal of the checkpoint established by Azerbaijan was rejected. Azerbaijan reminded that it acts were within the framework of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.[4] In response to the allegation of an ongoing famine in Karabakh, Azerbaijan showed photos taken in recent days in restaurants and cafes there that were uploaded to social media by users, stating that the actual situation is different from what is being reflected in some reports.[5] As a result, the UNSC did not adopt any resolution on Armenia's allegations.

This initiative at the UNSC is not Armenia's first attempt. Last December, Armenia also appealed to the UNSC, claiming that Azerbaijan had violated the trilateral agreement and that the Lachin Corridor was blocked by Azerbaijan.[6] This was during the period when Azerbaijani activists organized demonstrations on the Lachin Corridor to protest the Armenian separatist regime's destruction of Azerbaijani natural resources. However, no binding resolution was adopted by the UNSC.

Some circles in the Armenian press have interpreted no resolution being adopted at the UNSC in favor of Armenia as a failure of the Armenian government. It has been stated that Armenia could not present a well-prepared text at the UN meeting, that Armenia's claims seemed baseless, and that Armenias attempt was therefore a complete failure.[7] Others circles, however, have argued that the future would be in favor of Armenia because, for the first time, Azerbaijan had to defend itself before the UN.[8] Scrutinizing both of the interpretations reveals that the Armenian side intends to drag the dispute over Lachin into an unresolved situation. Thus, it seems that the Armenian side continues to hope for the creation of an international environment in which the separatist aspirations of the Armenians in Karabakh can be supported.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan did heed the call of the Red Cross organization at the UNSC meeting and mobilized aid convoys through Aghdam. Through the Red Crescent, an international humanitarian organization, Azerbaijan wanted to send grain aid to the Armenian settlers in Khankendi via the Aghdam Road,[9] but the convoy was prevented from passing by the Russian Peacekeeping Force at the request of the Armenian

separatists. This situation indicates that the alleged humanitarian situation is being deliberately exploited for political purposes.

Image: "Yashar Aliyev, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the UN, rejected Yerevan's claims. Referring to photos posted by Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh on social media as evidence, Aliyev said that the claim that people are starving does not reflect the truth and that people are eating cakes and cookies in cafes and living in very good conditions." - Source: Hürriyet

[1] Lachin Corridor Must Be Reopened for Humanitarian Aid, Security Council Hears, as Speakers Urge Armenia, Azerbaijan to Normalize Relations, United Nations, August 16, 2023, https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15384.doc.htm.

[2] Lachin Corridor Must Be Reopened for Humanitarian Aid…, United Nations.

[3] Lachin Corridor Must Be Reopened for Humanitarian Aid…, United Nations.

[4] Lachin Corridor Must Be Reopened for Humanitarian Aid…, United Nations.

[5] BMGKda İlginç Laçın Polemiği, *Hürriyet*, 18 Ağustos 2023, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/bmgkda-ilginc-lacin-polemigi-42316666

[6] Despite Glimmer of Hope in Armenia, Azerbaijan Conflict, Escalating Tensions Threaten to Derail Fragile Progress, Senior Official Tells Security Council, *United Nations*, August 20, 2023, https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15154.doc.htm.

[7] Harut Sasunyan, Armenias incompetent actions at the UN did more damage than good, *Armenian Weekly*, August 23, 2023, https://armenianweekly.com/2023/08/23/armenias-incompetent-actions-at-the-un-did-more-damage-than-good/.

[8] The future belongs to Armenia more than Azerbaijan Armenian analyst, *JAM News*, August 21, 2023, https://jam-news.net/richard-kirakosyan-on-the-armenia-azerbaijan-issue/

[9] Azerbaycan Kızılayının Karabağdaki Ermeni asıllı insanlara gönderdiği insani yardım konvoyu Ağdam-Hankendi yolu üzerinde bulunuyor, *az24saat.org*, Accessed: September 6, 2023, https://tur.az24saat.org/2023/08/31/azerbaycan-kizilayinin-karabagdaki-ermeni-asilli-insanlara-gonderdigi-insani-yardim-konvoyu-agdam-hankendi-yolu-uzerinde-bulunuyor-2/

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