



# General Assembly Security Council

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**General Assembly**  
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Agenda items 34, 71, 72 and 135

**Security Council**  
**Seventy-sixth year**

**Prevention of armed conflict**

**Right of peoples to self-determination**

**Promotion and protection of human rights**

**The responsibility to protect and the prevention of  
genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes  
against humanity**

## **Letter dated 30 March 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic), David Babayan (see annex), in response to the letter of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan ([A/75/778-S/2021/177](#), annex) regarding baseless allegations and manipulations on the threat of landmines.

I kindly ask that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 34, 71, 72 and 135, and of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Mher **Margaryan**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative



## **Annex to the letter dated 30 March 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

### **Letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh addressed to the Secretary-General**

I am writing in response to the letter of the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister on the threat of landmines, which attempts to mislead the international community about the actual situation on the matter and is replete with manufactured allegations and insinuations. Consistent with its past practices, Azerbaijan simply transfers and assigns its own wrongdoings to the Armenian sides.

Allow me to draw your kind attention to the fact that the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) itself has been suffering from massive mine contamination for more than three decades since the 1988–1994 conflict with Azerbaijan. While mines were laid by both the Azerbaijani and the Karabakh forces, after the ceasefire of 1994 it became evident that most of the mined areas were on the Artsakh side of the line of contact. As a result, the people of Artsakh were indiscriminately subjected to the fatal effect of landmines precisely owing to Azerbaijan's refusal to provide maps of the minefields, leaving thousands of mines buried and undiscovered to date.

Furthermore, the mine situation significantly impeded the development of the war-torn Republic owing to the massive contamination of agricultural and pasture lands, as well as urban infrastructure. Mine accidents were occurring on a daily basis, involving mostly children, farmers and shepherds.

And while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) stepped in to support Azerbaijan's efforts to create a national mine action team and actually assisted it both financially<sup>1</sup> and through providing expertise, the young Republic of Artsakh was left to solve its acute mine problem and a myriad of post-war consequences alone, without any specialized support.<sup>2</sup> Again, this isolation was largely thanks to the deprived efforts of the Azerbaijani leadership to block the United Nations or any other specialized international agency from access to Artsakh to address the demining issue and other crucial humanitarian needs caused by the war that had been unleashed against the peaceful population of the newly proclaimed Republic of Artsakh.

On top of that, the four-day aggression in April 2016, unleashed by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Artsakh, only exacerbated the existing mine situation. While ground fighting was confined to areas close to the line of contact, artillery fire penetrated more than 10 km into Nagorno-Karabakh, targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. This included the use of cluster munitions by Azerbaijan, which resulted in new cluster munition contamination in Nagorno-Karabakh,<sup>3</sup> while no

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Azerbaijan, "In Azerbaijan, UNDP and ANAMA (Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action) celebrate 20 years of success in mine action", 18 July 2018, available at [www.az.undp.org/content/azerbaijan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2018/20-Years-of-Mine-Action.html](http://www.az.undp.org/content/azerbaijan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2018/20-Years-of-Mine-Action.html) (accessed on 11 March 2021).

<sup>2</sup> It was not until 2000 that the HALO Trust, a non-governmental organization based in the United Kingdom and focused on demining, funded by state and private donors, came to Artsakh and employed locals to start humanitarian demining in Nagorno-Karabakh.

<sup>3</sup> HALO Trust, "HALO begins emergency clearance in Karabakh", 19 April 2016, available at [www.halotrust.org/latest/halo-updates/news/halo-begins-emergency-clearance-in-karabakh/](http://www.halotrust.org/latest/halo-updates/news/halo-begins-emergency-clearance-in-karabakh/) (accessed on 11 March 2021).

cluster munition contamination was reported on the Azerbaijani-controlled side of the line of contact.<sup>4</sup>

The 44-day war in September 2020, unleashed by Azerbaijan with the support of Turkey and foreign terrorist fighters for the third time, has left the territory of the Republic of Artsakh with more extensive mine and cluster contamination. Most of Azerbaijan's artillery fire again targeted Artsakh civilians and civilian infrastructure far from the line of contact, as evidenced by Human Rights Watch.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) mission in Nagorno-Karabakh has registered 747 cases of landmine victims, of whom 59 per cent were civilians. With a population of about 140,000, the number of cases is patently striking, given that most of the landmine survivors now live with some form of permanent physical disability.<sup>6</sup> These numbers are growing daily, with the HALO Trust reporting 85 fatality cases, including children and women.<sup>7</sup>

As stated before, it has become a well-established tradition for Azerbaijan to ascribe its own wrongdoings, its own blatant disregard and numerous breaches of the norms and principles of international law to the Armenian sides, of course, without any evidence or reference to facts. Its brazen capture of Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and hostages after the 9 November 2020 trilateral statement on ceasefire and its obstinate refusal to repatriate them consistent with the Third Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocols, its fabrication of false cases against them and relabelling them as terrorists are yet another manifestation of Azerbaijan's barefaced manipulation of the accepted norms of international law.

By its usual spurious allegations laden with empty rhetoric and void of evidentiary material, Azerbaijan pursues its well-versed initiative of misleading the international community and distracting the attention from its institutionalized policy of Armenophobia and rampant hate crimes, not to mention its unlawful and indiscriminate attacks against the people of Artsakh during the 44-day war of aggression. Azerbaijan's continued efforts to ban the United Nations and its specialized agencies from entering Artsakh and helping those in need, even today, only testifies to the fact that now Azerbaijan continues to be a blatantly rogue autocracy disregarding international law and international humanitarian law with shameless impunity.

Rather than indulge Azerbaijan's empty rhetoric, we respectfully request that you employ your good offices to urge Member States to compel Azerbaijan to curb its conduct aimed not at peace, but at conflict, military aggression and violence.

(Signed) David Babayan

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<sup>4</sup> Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, Mine Action Report for Azerbaijan, 12 November 2018, available at [www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2019/azerbaijan/mine-action.aspx](http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2019/azerbaijan/mine-action.aspx) (accessed on 11 March 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Azerbaijan: cluster munitions used in Nagorno-Karabakh", 23 October 2020, available at [www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/23/azerbaijan-cluster-munitions-used-nagorno-karabakh](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/23/azerbaijan-cluster-munitions-used-nagorno-karabakh) (accessed on 11 March 2021).

<sup>6</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), "Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: landmines, a disturbing reminder of war", 31 May 2019, available at [www.icrc.org/en/document/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-landmines-disturbing-reminder-war](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-landmines-disturbing-reminder-war) (accessed on 11 March 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Communication dated 10 March 2021 from Programme Manager of HALO Trust, Miles Hawthorn.