No:002/23, Commentary of the Press Service Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the statement of Armenian MFA dated January 3, 2023

Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs · 4 January 2023

[Transcribed from the original by the Parley Policy Initiative]

The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Armenia dated January 3, 2023 regarding the protests on the Lachin road is completely groundless and aims to create confusion among international partners and artificially create tensions.

Armenia MFA's distorted statement regarding the protests of a group of civil society representatives of Azerbaijan against the looting of our natural resources during the 30-year occupation of our territories by Armenia is not surprising. It seems that the Armenian side is still interested in the continuation of illegal economic and other activities on the territory of Azerbaijan.

Apparently, for more than a year, specifically from November 2021, Azerbaijani government appealed to prevent illegal economic activity in the territories of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed, and last time on December 3-10 Azerbaijan tried to resolve the issue through negotiations. Despite all these efforts, the Armenian side ignored the appeals, blocked the access of relevant institutions to the territory and tried to continue illegal activities. All these actions have caused the legitimate objection of the Azerbaijani public, and a peaceful protest is being held with the demand to prevent the abuse of the Lachin road, which is intended only for humanitarian purposes.

Every opinion voiced against these protests is considered direct violation of the norms and principles of international law such as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, disrespect to the Constitution of the country, which contains the provision that all natural resources existing in the territory of Azerbaijan belong to the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to the rights of the protestors, and it is unacceptable.

Moreover, claims that the protests allegedly resulted in the Lachin road's closure and created a humanitarian crisis are equally groundless. It is an undeniable fact that during the day, vehicles belonging to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the peacekeeping contingent, and medical vehicles pass through the road without hindrance. Also, both Azerbaijani government and the representatives of the civil society declared readiness to promptly solve all the humanitarian needs that the Armenian residents may face.

Despite the appeals of the Azerbaijani side to the Armenian residents that the road is open and can be used according to the Trilateral statement, the fact that the provocateurs presenting themselves as representatives of the Armenian residents living in Karabakh prevent the population from using the road, which proves once again that it is precisely these people who creates a false impression of the protests in order to continue their illegal and dirty deeds.

Regarding the allegations of the violation of the Trilateral statement, we would like to remind the Armenian side the well-known fact that according to this statement signed by the leader of Armenia, Lachin road is not intended for illegal activities such as transportation of illegally extracted natural resources to Armenia, the continuation of the military supply of the Armenian armed forces, which have not yet been fully withdrawn from Azerbaijan, increasing the landmine threat by transferring and placing mines on the territory of Azerbaijan, illegal crossing of third country citizens, etc. and that all these actions are a gross violation of the mentioned statement.

Despite the manipulation campaign of the Armenian MFA regarding the meeting of the UN Security Council (SC) on December 20, 2022, it is known that almost all UNSC member states have called for the fulfillment of obligations under the trilateral statement, as well as mutual recognition and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, thereby confirming Azerbaijan's position without demonstrating support for Armenia's provocations. Armenia's calls to send any mission to the territory of Azerbaijan are considered as another provocation against Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and should be ceased.

Accusing Azerbaijan of deportation and ethnic cleansing by the Armenian MFA is not only absurd, but also an attempt to cover up the systematic and consistent policy of ethnic cleansing committed by Armenians against Azerbaijanis in the territory of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the 20th century. The deportation and ethnic cleansing of nearly 1 million Azerbaijanis and the massacres committed by Armenia against Azerbaijanis since 1987, when the territorial claims against Azerbaijan arose again, are historical facts. At the same time, it is worth to remind that even during the 44-day Patriotic War, the number of Azerbaijani civilians who died in areas far from the war zone was many times higher than the alleged number of died Armenian civilians. All of these are irrefutable evidences that show the side targeting the civilian population.

Azerbaijan once again calls on Armenia to comply with its obligations arising from international law and the trilateral declaration, to refrain from activities directed against Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to stop aggressive political and military provocations. Azerbaijan's position on regional peace, stability and development is principled and consistent, measures based on international law and established international experience will be continued.