



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
**Civil Society Forum**  
AZERBAIJAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

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We would like to inform that illegal exploitation of natural resources is being carried out in the territories of Azerbaijan, where the peacekeeping troops of the Russian Federation is temporarily stationed. The illegal exploitation is taking place in the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan that have been under Armenian-Russian military units for nearly 30 years.

Banning free access of Azerbaijani officials and representatives of civil society to the areas where our natural resources are looted and hindering monitoring by limiting the legal management opportunities over Azerbaijani sovereign territories recognized by the international law principles is in full violation of the provisions stipulated in the trilateral statement signed by the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia and the Prime Minister of Armenia on November 10, 2020, and the commitments undertaken by the Prime Minister of Armenia in Prague and Sochi on respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan.

Pursuant to the agreement stipulated in Article 4 of the November 10, 2020, statement, total of 1,960 "peacekeepers" of the Russian Federation should be deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces. At the same time, per Article 9 of the statement, all economic transport corridors in the region should be restored. Armenia undertook a commitment to provide unhindered transportation connection in both directions between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan, which is living under a blockade for 30 years. However, the obligations under Articles 4 and 9 stipulated in the agreement have not been fulfilled by the military contingent of the Russian Federation, nor by Armenia.

No doubt, these developments represent a serious concern for the population, the state of Azerbaijan and the civil society sector. There were attempts to conduct a preliminary monitoring of the deterioration of the ecological situation in the mentioned areas with the participation of representatives of Azerbaijan's state institutions and experts. However, access to those areas was blocked. This sparked a protest of civil society representatives and environmentalists calling to stop the illegal exploitation of natural resources and urging to follow national legislation and due process in using those mines. This is a legitimate claim of Azerbaijan's civil society and environmental activists, who united their efforts on the section of Shusha-Lachin road and this position has to be taken into account. These developments are driven by the well-grounded concern of the Azerbaijani public.

We believe that the claims of the Armenian side on alleged closure of the Lachin road, that is causing humanitarian disaster in the region and paves the way to ethnic cleansing are slanderous and do not reflect the truth. The road was and is fully open for the movement of goods and passengers, including food, household, construction and other materials, but not for smuggling weapons, mines, militants, drugs and illegally mined resources, something Armenia and its proxies are notorious about. Moreover, because of the peace action, the gas supply to the territories inhabited by Karabakh Armenians was not stopped and transportation of vital goods is unhindered. Azerbaijani civil society representatives are solely trying to prevent the illegal transportation of looted natural resources.

EaP CSF Azerbaijani National Platform declares that the statements and documents unilaterally adopted by the Board of the Forum, including the distortion of the national names of Azerbaijani cities and towns, and the use of Armenian toponyms (Gorus-Stepnakert, Mardaket-Vardenis) damage opportunities for sustainable peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia and has an opposite effect.

EaP CSF Azerbaijani National Platform believes that the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan shall be fully and unconditionally restored within the framework of the principles of international law including the areas within Karabakh economic region, i.e., Khankendi, Khojaly, and Agdara regions, which are still under occupation. Armenian military units and militant shall immediately leave the territory of Azerbaijan. In order to put an end to the use of the Lachin corridor for military purposes, check points of Azerbaijani border service and customs authorities should be established on the border with Armenia. There should not be any peacekeeping troops of either Russia or the OSCE within the borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, the EaP CSF Azerbaijan National Platform is calling and urging the Forum participants and other representatives of the international community to refrain from publishing statements made on the basis of unverified, biased and one-sided information; recommends that oral and written rhetoric be based on reliable information, including terminological distortions, taking into account the sensitivity of the issue; and demands that all the parties recognize the right to territorial integrity of Azerbaijan based on the principles of international law.