



Ref.: 11.15.003

27 October 2020.

Dear Sirs,

We, The Appointed Committee for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of the Parallel Parliament of the Republic of Cyprus, would like to bring to your attention the following situation currently taking place in the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh (Nakorno-Karabakh) in the Southern Caucasus.

Brief History of the Region: The State of Artsakh is a small enclave of a predominantly Ethnically Christian Armenian populated area (11,500 kms with 150,000 population), which was handed over to the newly founded Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan in 1920 by a Decree signed by the Caucasus Regional Commissar Stalin in the early days of the creation of the Soviet Union. For around 70 years there was an attempt to change the demography of the region, which increased the percentage of local Tatar (Azeri) population, which have never surpassed 25% based on the various historical Soviet Census Data.

Upon the breakup of the Soviet Union in the late 1980's and early 1990s, the Armenian population – through an official referendum – requested independence from the hostile State of Azerbaijan having experienced pogroms in various Azerbaijani cities such as Baku, Sumgait and Kirovabad whereby the Armenian population was beaten, murdered, looted and expelled from their homes causing 400.000 ethnic Armenians to be displaced. Demonstrations led to conflict and after a period of 5 years of strife, a truce was signed in 1994. For almost 30 years relative stability existed with the exception of a daily sniper war which never stopped but also slightly bigger episodes of the 4-day April war in 2016 as well as more serious clashes in July 2020.

On 27th of September 2020, the Azerbaijani side, with the diplomatic and military support of Turkey, as well as thousands of terrorist mercenaries from Syria and Libya launched a massive offensive towards all directions of the Artsakh Front Line in an attempt to recapture the region and bring it under Azerbaijani control.

Heavy use of artillery-fire, rocket-fire, attack drones and UAV's, cluster bombs etc have been used against both military and civilian infrastructure. Weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction have been used leading to a mass internal displacement of the local population which

has either fled to the Republic of Armenia or still taking refuge in bunkers as most civilian settlements as well as major cities such as the capital Stepanakert have been literally razed to the ground. Schools, kindergartens, hospitals and homes have been struck causing disruption of all forms of civilian life. Furthermore, historic sites and monuments have been destroyed in an attempt to erase all traces of the historic Cultural Heritage of the area where numerous churches, cathedrals and monuments have existed as early as the 4th century AC.

More specifically the Holy Cathedral of Ghazanchetsots in the city of Shushi, built in the 4th century AC and listed in the Heritage list of UNESCO has been targeted twice within hours in a clear attempt to cause its destruction.

Needless to say, that civilians taking refuge in the basement of the church lost their lives in the above episodes.

We hereby condemn this destruction of human life, civilian infrastructure as well as the destruction of the local Christian Armenian Cultural Heritage which is being targeted with unseen intensity and aggression in A wider agenda of Ethnic Cleansing being undertaken with the overt military, diplomatic and propaganda support by A UN/NATO member state, Turkey, via its controlled and leveraged state of Azerbaijan run by the Aliyev Family dynasty since 1993.

We request and expect that the Honorable Bodies being addressed hereby, take the appropriate measures in their capacity to bring an end to this despicable war carried out by unconventional and illegitimate methods against the peaceful local population of the Republic of Artsakh (Nakorno-Karabakh) who face a real **Existential Threat** and the "Syriafication" of yet another region in the Middle East by the same terrorist militias specialised in this format of total destruction as seen recently in the cities of Der Zor and Palmyra in Syria.

Sincerely Yours,



Sofoklis Fyttis
President

The Committee of Preservation of Cultural Heritage
of the Parallel Parliament for Culture