

## **Statement regarding the obstruction to the coverage of the events in Lachin Corridor**

**27 December 2022, Yerevan**

The December 12, 2022, closure by Azerbaijan of the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Armenia to Artsakh, has not only created a major humanitarian crisis for 120 thousand Artsakh residents, but has also made it impossible for Armenian media representatives to work in that hot zone ever since. The latter are deprived of the opportunity to move freely, see the situation in the thick of things and cover the problem.

In particular, the camera crews of “Azatutyun” radio station, “Factor.am” and “Civilnet” news portals, “Asparez” journalists’ club, as well as other media and specialized organizations did not manage to reach the part of Lachin region, where a large group of Azerbaijanis, presented as “eco-activists” by official Baku, has blocked the “road of life” of the people of Artsakh. Journalists and cameramen traveling from Yerevan to the scene of events were not allowed to pass beyond Goris by the RA Police and National Security Service officers, and in case they managed to overcome that groundless ban, the crews reached maximum up to the village of Lisagor, where the Russian peacekeepers, in turn, forbade them to continue on their way.

As a consequence, neither the Armenian media audience nor the international community have an opportunity of receiving objective information on the situation. In the closed area of the Lachin Corridor, only the representatives of Azerbaijani media operate unhindered. Often, carrying out official Baku’s propaganda, they distort plain facts in their publications and mislead both their own society and the international community with false claims that they are not obstructing the communication between Armenia and Artsakh.

Taking into consideration this alarming situation and expressing our deep concern about it, we, the undersigned organizations, demand:

- the RA Government, to immediately initiate negotiations with the command of the peacekeeping mission and, if necessary, also with the heads of the Russian Federation state structures in charge, in order to clearly regulate and facilitate the visits of Armenian media representatives to Nagorno-Karabakh. This problem appeared after the 44-Day War and is especially felt when the situation escalates;
- the RA National Security Service and the Police to stop the unreasonable obstacles and to support the Armenian media to the maximum extent in covering the situation in Artsakh, since this is also in our state and national interests;
- international organizations, especially the UN, the European Union and the OSCE, to send observation missions to the Armenian-Azerbaijani contact zone, including the

Lachin Corridor, to objectively monitor the situation and present it to a wider public through a report.

We also call on the world's leading media to send their reporters and camera crews to the Artsakh conflict zone, to actively cover the severe humanitarian crisis caused by the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, and thereby prevent the disinformation of Azerbaijani propaganda in the international arena.

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

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**MEDIA INITIATIVES CENTER**

**PUBLIC JOURNALISM CLUB**

**JOURNALISTS' CLUB "ASPAREZ"**

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER**

**MEDIA DIVERSITY INSTITUTE-ARMENIA**

**"JOURNALISTS FOR THE FUTURE" NGO**

**"JOURNALISTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS" NGO**

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