THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE LACHIN–KHANKENDI ROAD

Roza Bayramli | Maryam Ismayilova
THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE LACHIN–KHANKENDI ROAD

Roza Bayramli | Maryam Ismayilova

BAKU 2023
# CONTENTS

- Introduction........................................................................................................... 4
- Illicit environmental damage and economic operations of Armenians in Karabakh ........................................................................................................... 5
- Illicit transport of arms from Armenia to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan ........................................................................................................... 7
- The establishment of the “Lachin border checkpoint”........................................... 9
- The meeting of the UN Security Council on the situation around the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan ................................................................. 12
- Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 18
THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE LACHIN–KHANKENDI ROAD

Introduction

According to the Trilateral Statement of the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia, the five-kilometer-wide Lachin corridor would provide communication between the Armenian population of Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia, while the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation was supposed to be deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the region. Despite a statement by Armenia regarding the lack of military infrastructure in Karabakh, its government had been financing the deployment of 10,000 troops within the region, as well as supporting the continuing laying of mines along the perimeter of the “grey zone” over the past three years. In addition, Armenia carried out illegal military transportation to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan before the establishment of the “Lachin checkpoint” by the Azerbaijani side.

On May 18, 1992, Armenia occupied the Lachin district of Azerbaijan, which was the first region occupied by Armenian armed forces outside the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous oblast. Establishing the Lachin–Khankendi route to connect Armenia with the occupied territories of Azerbaijan was a crucial strategic objective of Armenian nationalists as it enabled the supply of the separatists in the region with military equipment. The process of occupation of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan by Armenia was called miatsum (unification), while the Lachin–Khankendi route was named the “miatsum road.”

During the 30-year occupation, the Armenian side mined thousands of square miles of occupied Azerbaijani territory, with the exception of a small area in the center, where a community of ethnic Armenians was connected to the Armenian Republic by a single Lachin–Khankendi road. From the end of the Second Karabakh War to September 2023, 306 Azerbaijanis became victims of Armenian mine terrorism: 251 were injured and 55 killed. Since 1991, the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) has registered 3,385 total victims of mine terrorism.

Even though, at the end of the 44-day war, the Prime Minister of Armenia publicly recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the Armenian side has done everything possible to undermine the peace process and maintain the status of a “grey zone” instead of integrating ethnic Armenians into the political, economic, and social spectrum of life in Azerbaijan. Starting from June 2023, the Armenians were actively trying to assure the international community of a so-called “blockade” and the “impossibility” of delivering food to the region. At the same time, the Armenian residents of Karabakh refused Azerbaijan’s offer to use the Aghdam–Khankendi road, installing concrete blocks on that route to prevent the entry of aid from Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan, on the other hand, tried not to politicize the issue of the delivery of humanitarian aid. Its government has repeatedly declared that it considers Armenian residents of Karabakh to be citizens of the country. At the same time, the Azerbaijani side has made it clear that it will not allow the existence of a “grey zone” within its borders.

The terrorist attacks carried out by illegal Armenian formations in the Karabakh region along the Ahmedbeyli–Fuzuli–Shusha Road and in the Khojavend region marked a turning point in the situation. In response, on September 19, the Azerbaijani side enacted local anti-terrorist measures in the Karabakh region. These lasted 24 hours and resulted in the withdrawal of the

remaining military units and personnel of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia from the territory of Azerbaijan. On September 28, the leader of the separatists declared their intention to liquidate all institutions belonging to the illegal regime by January 1, 2024.

Illicit environmental damage and economic operations of Armenians in Karabakh

Despite calls from the Azerbaijani government to stop illicit economic operations within the region of the temporary deployment of Russian peacekeepers, companies established in Armenia and their subsidiaries, such as Base Metals CJSC, were significantly involved in the mining of valuable minerals and metals within the territory of Azerbaijan. On December 3 and 7, 2022, representatives of the government of Azerbaijan met with the commander of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. They raised the issue of monitoring and assessing the environmental impact of the illicit exploitation of the reserves of Gizilbulag and Demirli. As the Azerbaijani side had fulfilled its commitments according to the Trilateral Statement, the state representatives firmly urged Armenia to do the same and even expressed their willingness to assist the residents of Karabakh of Armenian nationality with their humanitarian needs. As a result of the above-mentioned meetings, a team consisting of experts from the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the State Service for Real Estate Affairs under the Ministry of Economy, and the “AzerGold” Closed Joint Stock Company was supposed to conduct preliminary monitoring of the illegal exploitation of mineral deposits within the territories where Russian peacekeepers were temporarily deployed. These activities did not take place because of the inactivity of the Russian peacekeepers and resulted in prolonged protests by Azerbaijani eco-activists.

On December 12, 2022, a group of Azerbaijani NGO representatives blocked the Lachin–Khankendi road to protest against the fact that the Azerbaijani experts had not been allowed to enter the territory to monitor the illegal exploitation of Azerbaijani deposits. The protests were joined by Azerbaijani volunteers and youth and lasted 138 days in total. Despite the protests, the Azerbaijani side ensured unhindered movement along the Lachin–Khankendi road for ambulances and humanitarian convoys. Nonetheless, the Armenian side accused Azerbaijan of implementing a “blockade.”

Some international observers overwhelmingly expressed their support of Armenia and the residents of Karabakh of Armenian nationality with regard to the “approaching humanitarian disaster” while turning a blind eye to the illegal activities of Armenians on the territory of Azerbaijan and accused the government of Azerbaijan of encouraging the demonstrations on the Lachin–Khankendi road.

During his phone conversation with US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken on January 23, 2023, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, emphasized that, since the beginning of the protests, nearly 980 vehicles had passed through the Lachin–Khankendi road, including those carrying representatives of the Russian peacekeepers and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
The diagram below shows information on the movement of vehicles along the Lachin–Khankendi road between December 12, 2022, and February 12, 2023.

Weekly updates on the number of vehicles passing along the Lachin road from December 12, 2022 (February 13, 2023)

In fact, protection of the environment of the Karabakh region was one of the major concerns of the Azerbaijani side even in the early years of Armenian occupation, including protests in Baku over the destruction of a forest in Shusha by Armenian residents of Karabakh. The OSCE’s subsequent inspections revealed widespread ecological degradation in the occupied territories. Following the 2020 war, Armenian settlers in Lachin burned down houses and cut down trees as they left in line with the Trilateral Statement. These facts indicate purposeful destructive activities of Armenians in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

On January 24, 2023, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, in a speech to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, made provocative statements about the situation concerning the Lachin–Khankendi road, suggesting that the issue might be addressed violently by the Armenian side. In response to Mirzoyan’s provocative speech, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan warned that this statement was interpreted as a threat by the Azerbaijani side, adding that “warmongering by Armenian leaders is not new.”

7 Twitter – AIR Center. (2023, February 13). Weekly update on number of vehicles passed through the #Lachinroad since December 12, 2022 pic.twitter.com/8fxdmaxmbh. Twitter. https://twitter.com/aircenter/status/1625158430238318592
Peaceful protests demanding the prevention of the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the state and their transportation to Armenia, as well as opposing the misuse of the Lachin–Khankendi road, which is the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, were initiated by the citizens of Azerbaijan in response to the illegal activity of Armenia in the “grey zone” it had created.

Illicit transport of arms from Armenia to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan

In June 2021, the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan released information on the investigation of the illegal transportation of weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment in large quantities to the Republic of Armenia, and from there to the Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It was revealed that Samvel Sarkisovich Karapetyan, the head of the Tashir group of companies; David Galustyan, known in Armenia as a “grey businessman” and the owner of the Royalsis Engineering company; Abramyan Ara Arshavirovich, the general director of the COMEX company; and others, at different times during 2001–2021, illegally purchased large-caliber firearms for military purposes and transported them by passenger aircraft, as well as an Ilyushin-76TD cargo plane of the Air Force of Armenia and a similar aircraft purchased by Ara Abramyan, to the Republic of Armenia and the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, occupied by Armenia at the time, for the purpose of illegal supply of the armed forces with weapons, ammunition, explosives, military equipment, and items of military purpose, contrary to the requirements of the TIR Convention (1975) and Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) (1992).

In March 2023, video evidence of the transportation of weapons, ammunition, and fuel from Armenia via the Khankendi–Khalfali–Tursusu road of the Karabakh region, where clashes had taken place a day before, was obtained by the Azerbaijani side.

Arms transportation from Armenia to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan captured on camera (March 2023)  

According to information revealed by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the intensification of illegal construction and improvement works by Armenians on the Khankendi–Khalfali–Tursusu and Khankendi–Kosalar–Mirzaler–Tursusu roads in the north of the region was recorded by the technical surveillance tools of the Azerbaijani Army in March 2023.

11 Ibid.
These roads were also used to secure and supply the combat positions of illegal Armenian armed groups within the territory of Azerbaijan. Despite numerous requests from the Azerbaijani side and discussions held in this regard, the required measures were not taken to prevent the transportation of weapons and other military equipment.\(^\text{12}\)

In April 2023, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan revealed that, after the military units of the Azerbaijan Army took control of the unpaved roads to the north of the Lachin–Khankendi road, the Armenian side made attempts to transport manpower, ammunition, mines, and other military equipment from Armenia to illegal Armenian armed groups on the territory of Azerbaijan. Furthermore, Armenians made attempts to identify new intersecting roads for this purpose. It was noted that, on the morning of April 21, the movement of military vehicles, accompanied by the Russian peacekeeping contingent, carrying supplies to the combat positions of illegal Armenian armed groups was observed by technical means.\(^\text{13}\)

\[\text{Pictures of arms transportation from Armenia to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan (April 2023)}\]\(^\text{14}\)

At the same time as the above-mentioned violations, Baku spotted Iranian fighters, among others, entering the Karabakh region with the goal of training local separatist troops. In July 2020, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned that fighting around the Karabakh region could evolve into a “regional war,” stating Iran’s intolerance to the presence of foreign militants next to its northern border in the vicinity of the Karabakh “conflict zone.”

In September 2022, a group of Iranian citizens illegally infiltrated the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. By the end of October of the same year, Iran had supplied Armenia with 600 Iranian-made missiles: 500 Dehlavieh antitank guided missiles and 100 Almas missiles. By transferring weapons to Armenia, the Islamic Republic of Iran was supporting Armenia’s “grey zone” tactics on Azerbaijani territory; the state representatives were fully aware of the intention of Armenia to maintain a separatist regime within the territories of Azerbaijan, as prior to the 44-day war, and in September of 2019 Armenia held large-scale military drills in the occupied Azerbaijani territories, including live firing and assault training, using the weapons transferred from the Iranian side.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) AzeMedia. (2022, December 8). Iran gave Armenia 600 missiles and sent fighters to karabakh: How
The establishment of the “Lachin border checkpoint”

On April 23, 2023, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan announced the establishment of a checkpoint by Armenia on the Lachin–Khankendi road without coordination with Baku and in violation of the Trilateral Statement of November 10, 2022. On April 22, 2023, surveillance cameras of the Azerbaijani army installed in the Lachin region recorded the movement of a convoy of vehicles belonging to Armenia consisting of 2 KamAZ trucks with a residential container on each, 1 KAMAZ truck crane, 1 UAZ-3151, and 1 UAZ Patriot. The video recordings showed that the convoy, moving from the direction of the village of Kornidzor in Armenia, first crossed the bridge over the Khakari River on the provisional Azerbaijani–Armenian border and entered the territory of Azerbaijan. Through observation, it was established that the vehicles, on their way back, made a stop on the territory of Armenia, and, with the help of a truck crane, two residential containers were unloaded into a pre-prepared place located on the border with Azerbaijan, at the junction of the Lachin–Khankendi road. Thus, the establishment by the Armenian side of a border checkpoint on the border with Azerbaijan, at the entrance to the Lachin–Khankendi road, was confirmed.\(^\text{16}\)

---

**Screenshots of video recording published by MoD of Azerbaijan (April 23, 2023)**\(^\text{17}\)

The above-mentioned developments resulted in the establishment of a border checkpoint by Azerbaijan on its sovereign territory at the beginning of the Lachin–Khankendi road on April 23, 2023. According to the MFA of Azerbaijan, “the establishment of [a] border control mechanism at the starting point of the Lachin road would serve to enforce transparency over the movement along the road, the rule of law, and thus ensure the security and safety of … movement.” The statement continued: “In line with obligations of the Trilateral Statement, in the framework of this measure of security guarantee by the Republic of Azerbaijan for

---


\(^{17}\) Ibid.
the movement of citizens, vehicles and cargo through the Lachin road, proper conditions will be ensured for the transparent and regulated passage of Armenian residents living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan from this checkpoint to Armenia and Azerbaijan in both directions.\textsuperscript{18}

According to information provided by the Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, statistical details on persons who passed through the “Lachin border checkpoint” in the period from April 23 to September 1, 2023, are as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>1797</td>
<td>2,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Refugee Convention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia (ICRC employees)</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus (ICRC employees)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary (ICRC employees)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan (ICRC employees)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela (ICRC employees)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,327</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,360</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,687</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical data of persons crossing the “Lachin” checkpoint\textsuperscript{19}

These data once again indicate that Azerbaijan ensured free movement across the border for both Armenian citizens and foreigners. Therefore, from the beginning of the operation of the “Lachin border checkpoint,” the necessary conditions were created for the movement of vehicles across the state border by passing through proper border and customs controls. However, employees of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan had identified repeated attempts to smuggle various types of contraband on vehicles belonging to the ICRC:

- On July 1, 2023, Azerbaijani border guards found and detained 15 undeclared mobile phones hidden among the hand luggage in the cabin of a Renault vehicle with the license plate 35VX480, driven by Armenian citizen Artunyan Garik (passport: AT0573343, date of birth: 06/17/1976), on his way from Armenia to Azerbaijan.


\textsuperscript{19} The official letter of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Center of Analysis of International Relations. (2023, September 6).
On July 3, 2023, Azerbaijani border guards found and detained 115 undeclared mobile phone screens, 10 mobile phone circuit boards, 120 mobile phone power supplies, and 1 screen adhesive in the hand luggage in the cabin of a UAZ vehicle with the license plate 768UU22, driven by Armenian citizen Grigoryan Vrezh (passport: AU040291, date of birth: 04/12/1977), on his way from Armenia to Azerbaijan.

On July 5, 2023, at about 16:10, 848 packs of cigarettes of 17 types and 320 liters of gasoline hidden in a spare fuel tank were found and confiscated from the interior of an Iveco brand cargo vehicle with license plate 711FF11, driven by Armenian citizen Harutyunyan Sasun (passport: AU0219416, date of birth: 04/26/1981), on his way from Armenia to Azerbaijan.

On the same day, 125 packs of cigarettes of 5 different types and 1,000 liters of gasoline hidden in a spare fuel tank were found and confiscated from the interior of a DAF cargo vehicle with license plate 37FF609, driven by Armenian citizen Musaelyan Vakif (passport: AU031091, date of birth 12/04/1959), on his way from Armenia to Azerbaijan.

In addition, since the establishment of the “Lachin checkpoint” up to September 2023, four Armenian citizens were detained for previously committed crimes.

On July 27, 2023, the citizen of Armenia Vagif Khachatryan (date of birth: 10/28/1955) was detained on his way from Azerbaijan to Armenia for the serious crimes he had committed against Azerbaijanis during the First Karabakh War.

On August 28, 2023, Armenian citizens Levon Grigoryan (date of birth: 05/17/2003), Alen Sargsyan (date of birth: 07/05/2001), and Vahe Hovsepyan (date of birth: 06/12/2003) were detained on their way from Azerbaijan to Armenia for desecration of the national flag of Azerbaijan and propagation of national hatred and hostility.²⁰

Although the ICRC was warned about these violations through official channels, smuggling attempts occurred repeatedly in the absence of necessary steps to stop them. The State Border Service of Azerbaijan reported that the use of vehicles belonging to the ICRC for smuggling is a gross violation of Azerbaijani law, as well as an abuse of Azerbaijan’s trust in the humanitarian organization. The above-mentioned events resulted in the opening of a criminal case under the relevant articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and until the necessary investigative measures were taken, crossings through the Lachin checkpoint on the state border were temporarily suspended.²¹

In a subsequent statement, the ICRC acknowledged the transportation of “unauthorized goods” along the Lachin–Khankendi road and announced the termination of contracts with those involved in these illegal activities.

In response to these events, Armenian residents of the Karabakh region started illegal “protests” in the city of Khankendi. Armenians presented the suspension of movement along the Lachin–Khankendi road as a “blockade” and called on the international community for

²⁰ The official letter of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Center of Analysis of International Relations. (2023, September 6).
assistance. The separatist leaders also joined the protests with appeals to stop the alleged “Armenian genocide.”

In July 2023, Arayik Harutyunyan, the former head of the separatists in Karabakh, joined the illegal protests and declared a “sit-in strike.” By this action, Arayik Harutyunyan tried to urge Armenia, Russia, the USA, France, the European Union, and the UN Security Council to end the “blockade” of the so-called regime. After a few days, Harutyunyan ended the action and decided to “return to his duties.”

In response to Azerbaijan’s offer to transport humanitarian aid and other goods by the alternative Aghdam–Khankendi route, Armenians living in Karabakh blocked the road by placing concrete barriers on the way to the Asgaran settlement.

At the end of July 2023, 400 tons of humanitarian aid were sent from Armenia to the separatists in the Karabakh region, despite the decision of the Azerbaijani government to suspend movement along the road. Humanitarian aid was to be sent by 20 trucks to the village of Kornidzor, and from there to the Karabakh region via the Russian peacekeepers. Although the parties had agreed to use the Aghdam–Khankendi road for sending humanitarian aid during a tripartite meeting with the participation of Charles Michel, the Armenian side objected to the agreement. Therefore, the trucks sent were stopped at the village of Kornidzor.

In addition, representatives of the separatist regime rejected the proposal of Russia to establish a direct dialogue between Baku and the Armenian residents of Karabakh, calling this proposal “biased.”

The scale of Armenian propaganda continued to grow. At the request of Arayik Harutyunyan, a former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, prepared a “report” claiming that Armenians living in the Karabakh region had been subjected to “genocide.” At the end of August, on the initiative of Anne Hidalgo, the mayor of Paris, “humanitarian support” financed by different regions of France was to be delivered to the Armenian residents living in Karabakh via the Lachin–Khankendi road by means of 10 trucks. But, due to the suspension of vehicle movements via the road, the trucks were stopped at the state border.

The meeting of the UN Security Council on the situation around the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan

On August 11, 2023, Armenia applied to the UN Security Council with a request to hold a meeting on the situation in the Karabakh region. The meeting took place on August 16 and included discussions on the situation in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The members of the organization made their individual statements, but the meeting resulted in neither a resolution nor an official statement.

In his speech, Yashar Aliyev, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, raised the issues of Armenia’s continuous dissemination of misleading content in its efforts to deceive and influence the global community, and conveyed the stance of Azerbaijan on this matter: “What Armenia tries to present as a humanitarian matter, is in-
A deed [a] provocative and irresponsible political campaign to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.”

Categorically rejecting all the unfounded and groundless allegations of a “blockade” or “humanitarian crisis” made by Armenia against Azerbaijan, the Permanent Representative said:

*It is Armenia that for almost 30 years had blatantly disregarded the relevant four resolutions of 1993 and a series of Presidential Statements of the Security Council that unequivocally demanded full, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from the territory of Azerbaijan. Against this backdrop, Armenia’s actions are nothing but the embodiment of designed political hypocrisy and its appeal to the Security Council is a part of the campaign that it has been pursuing over the months to manipulate and mislead the international community.*

Armenian propaganda regarding the humanitarian catastrophe raised a large number of doubts for many reasons. These include the rejection of direct talks between the Armenian residents of Karabakh and representatives of Azerbaijan, as well as the refusal of any assistance from the Azerbaijani side. At the end of August 2023, the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society (AzQAC) sent 40 tons of humanitarian aid to Armenian residents of Karabakh via the Aghdam–Khankendi road. However, this assistance was not allowed to reach the city of Khankendi.

At the beginning of September 2023, the Russian side sent a truck with food to the Armenian residents of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The cargo was sent at the initiative of the Russian government and in accordance with the memorandum of cooperation between the AzQAC and the Russian Red Cross Society via the Aghdam–Khankendi road. This time, the Armenians accepted the aid.

This behavior prompted the question: why could alternative roads not be used if the scale of the “humanitarian catastrophe” was so great? First of all, as mentioned, the Lachin–Khankendi road was the only route for the transportation of military supplies from Armenia to the separatists in Karabakh. As a consequence, strict supervision over this route was a necessity for Azerbaijan’s national security.

The issue is that the leaders of the separatists in Karabakh had been pushing for independence while the Armenian government seemingly recognized the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, but at the same time promoted “remedial secession” via other platforms and through third parties. Obviously, they could not expect Azerbaijan to allow such a development.

Nevertheless, during the period of the “humanitarian crisis,” residents of Karabakh of Armenian nationality posted photos and videos on social media contradicting the claims of “hunger.” They were holding weddings as well as throwing parties while calling for help.

Some of these posts are presented below.

23 Shafiyev F., (2023, July 27), Twitter: https://twitter.com/shafiyev_farid/status/168448319646720001?s=48&t=32QYUxtiGF9ofCBsC1VBa
THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE LACHIN–KHANKENDI ROAD

Taken from @_my_name_is_bella_im_13 Instagram account

26 https://www.instagram.com/p/CwKpvFCLdxt/

27 Ibid.
THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE LACHIN–KHANKENDI ROAD

Taken from @lilishxanyan Instagram account

Taken from @_armo_35350_ Instagram account

28 https://www.instagram.com/p/CwdSOdKs9Tv/
29 https://www.instagram.com/p/Cvy5kiZMWgn/
Beauty salons also continued to operate:

Taken from @brunette__nail Instagram account

Taken from Лариска Мелкумян Facebook account

30 https://www.instagram.com/p/CwinqdroIyO/?img_index=1
31 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0277pGzxbWyB7weeam6MmcwR3xRdf-GH3GC8vRuhDgcEHJWzjatXeZB89rLMB11I&id=100015275919831
Conclusion

On September 19, 2023, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan announced that it had begun local anti-terrorist measures in the Karabakh region. According to the statement of the MoD, throughout its activities, the Azerbaijani army did not attack civilians or civilian infrastructure. In order to ensure the evacuation of the population from the danger zone, humanitarian corridors and reception points were created on the Lachin–Khankendi road and in other directions. The Ministry of Defense of Armenia, in its turn, declared the absence of its armed forces, military equipment, or personnel in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, accusing the Azerbaijani side of making false statements. Nevertheless, according to the agreement reached through the mediation of the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, the Armenian side agreed to withdraw the remaining units and military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia from the territory of Azerbaijan. Anti-terrorist measures were preceded by a series of events, but the culminating moment was the terrorist attacks committed by separatists in the Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

On September 28, 2023, Samvel Shakhramanyan, the last leader of the separatists, signed a so-called “decree” approving the liquidation of all institutions belonging to the separatist regime by January 1, 2024.

The former leaders of the separatists, such as Arayik Harutyunyan, Arkady Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan, David Ishkhanyan, Lyova Mnatsakanyan, Davit Babayan, and Ruben Vardanyan, were detained for the crimes they committed against peace and humanity, as well as war crimes and acts of terrorism.32

The purpose of the anti-terrorist measures was to ensure the sovereignty of Azerbaijan in the territories where, as a result of the Second Karabakh War, Russian peacekeepers were temporarily deployed. The liquidation of Armenian armed formations on the territory of the Karabakh region was a mandatory point in the framework of the Trilateral Declaration of November 10, 2020.

Azerbaijan has always been in favor of a diplomatic solution and had been patiently working with international mediators for twenty-eight years. After the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan advanced a draft peace treaty based on mutual respect and recognition of the two countries’ territorial integrity. Furthermore, Baku urged Karabakh Armenians to start a dialogue on their reintegration—a call that was rejected consistently between March and September 2023 by Armenian separatists.

Azerbaijan consistently demonstrates respect for the mediation efforts of various parties across different platforms. Armenia, in turn, has persisted in engaging in political manipulation and distorting interpretations of the situation.

With the end of 30 years of occupation, a historical opportunity has arisen for the improvement of Azerbaijan–Armenia relations, the endorsement of a peace agreement, and the conversion of the South Caucasus region into a peaceful and cooperative area. The opening of the Zangezur Corridor is the next step on the road to peace, for which this route holds significant potential.

THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE LACHIN–KHANKENDI ROAD

Roza Bayramli | Maryam Ismayilova

BAKU 2023
THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE LACHIN–KHANKENDI ROAD