

Mme Catherine Colonna
Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs
Hôtel du ministre des Affaires étrangères
37 Quai d'Orsay, Paris 7e
France

June 22, 2023

Dear Minister,

As we write, Azerbaijan's aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia intensifies. The ethnic/religious cleansing of 120,000 Armenian Christians of Nagorno Karabakh becomes increasingly likely.

Yet another grim prospect also looms ever larger. The Caucasus is in danger of becoming the second front in what Pope Francis perceptively refers to as World War III conducted in a "piecemeal" manner. This cannot be in the interest of the people of the region, regardless of their ethnic and religious identity. Nor can it be in the interest of the people of the member states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), including France.

France holds a mandate from the OSCE to serve as a co-chair of the Minsk Group, together with the United States and the Russian Federation. The Group's declared purpose is to lead a peace process with the goal of settling the long running conflict over the future of the former USSR Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno Karabakh. The agreed Madrid Principles, on which this process is based, are: The Non-Use of Force or Threat of Force, Territorial integrity and the Equal Rights and Self-Determination of Peoples, as found in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan continues to commit with impunity acts of aggression and to openly threaten the people of Nagorno Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia. These acts of aggression include Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor and military incursions into the Republic of Armenia. They have been publicly condemned by the French Government.

Yet, the Minsk Group co-chair countries have manifestly failed to undertake robustly their mandate since Azerbaijan again resorted to war against Nagorno Karabakh in September 2020. The process they have been commissioned to lead has been wound down and is now at a virtual standstill to the detriment of global security. Brute force now prevails over solutions based on the Helsinki Final Act not only in Ukraine, but also in Nagorno Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia.

We urge you to reinvigorate the Minsk Group by calling an emergency de-escalation meeting of the heads of delegation of the Minsk Group countries, and to reaffirm a commitment to search collectively for a political solution to the existential crisis now facing

Nagorno Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia based on the Madrid Principles, including the Right to Self-Determination for the endangered people of Nagorno Karabakh. This appeal is also being dispatched to the foreign ministers of the other Minsk Group co-chair countries.

It is not too late to defy the grisly logic of conflict escalation and return to the constructive statecraft that produced the now endangered Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the foundation of the OSCE. But de-escalation will require exceptional political wisdom and courage.

Respectfully,



Dr. John Eibner
International President
Christian Solidarity International (CSI)



The Baroness Cox
Founder President
Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)