

19 September 2026

Ms Magdalena Grono
European Union Special Representative
for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia
European External Action Service
9A Rond-Point Schuman
1046 Brussels
Belgium

Dear Ms Grono,

Dignity, human rights, and democracy are enshrined in the founding treaties of the European Union as values the Union is bound to uphold. Azerbaijan has repeatedly and gravely violated these values, both against its own citizens and, more relevant to the present occasion, against the Armenian population of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh, forced out from their ancestral homes, churches, schools, and villages.

The gravity of what occurred is not a matter of Armenian characterization alone. In September 2024, the International Association of Genocide Scholars described Azerbaijan's blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh as involving genocidal acts and the subsequent forced removal of its Armenian population as ethnic cleansing and a crime against humanity.

It is against this backdrop that you visited these same towns, villages, and religious sites on 11–12 September. Your presence lent credibility to a narrative in which the organizers reportedly dismissed centuries-old Armenian manuscripts as “fake” and treated Armenian Christian heritage — part of Europe's broader Christian heritage strategically erroneous. Indeed, only days after your departure, Azerbaijan's president Aliyev — with open derision.

Following your trip, by framing the origins of Armenian religious heritage, embodied in Gandzasar and Dadivank monasteries, as merely “diverging views” and referencing newly invented Eastern Zangezur region you have become complicit in historical revisionism. Armenians, Ukrainians, and many Europeans know well where such manufactured narratives can lead — to territorial claims and irredentism. The EU itself has repeatedly rejected the manipulation of history to justify aggression.

Genuine contribution to lasting peace is not compatible with obscuring the cultural heritage of the indigenous Armenian population of lands that you and other diplomats walked through, nor the diplomats' apparent tolerance of racist and derogatory remarks made by

Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev during the tour. Appeasement of dictatorship is decried the European Parliament as “a nest of corruption”.

We address this letter specifically to you - even as the conduct of other participating diplomats remains equally troubling – to also emphasize the negative impact of these actions and words on the EU’s standing among the Armenian people, adding fuel to cognitive campaigns.

It is our firm view that, even where participation in a visit of this nature could not be avoided, one of the central obligations of an EU Special Representative on such an occasion is to raise, clearly and publicly, the ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population of Artsakh and the concrete arrangements required to secure their safe and dignified return.

Ms Grono, the position you hold carries significant responsibility, and with it the obligation to account for the choices made. A visit to Artsakh that produced no clear public message, no direct question, even, as to where its Armenian population has gone, sends a disturbing signal of effective admissibility of the use of force to resolve conflicts. Indeed, only a few days before your visit to Azerbaijan, the Russian president stated that the exodus of Armenian population from Nagorno Karabakh was unfortunate but perhaps it opens new economic opportunities.

As an institution dedicated to analyzing security and hybrid war threats in this region, we are concerned that such missteps erode European credibility and provide openings for malign actors. Lasting peace will not be built through guided tours showcasing the outcome of forced displacement. It requires principled European engagement: defending the right of return, protecting Armenian cultural heritage, demanding accountability, and ensuring that short-term economic interests do not come at the expense of Europe’s values and long-term strategic interests.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with your office directly and remain available for further engagement on the matters raised in this letter.

Respectfully,

Ara N. Araz

Chairperson, Board of Directors

[Institute for Security Analysis](#)