

Armenia Urges Putin to Take Action Over Karabakh Blockade

By [AFP](#)

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A Russian peacekeeper at a camp of Azerbaijani environmental activists in the Lachin corridor. **Nikita Novak / NEWS.ru / TASS**

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to take the steps "necessary" to reopen a key transit corridor between Armenia and the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Since mid-December, a group of Azerbaijanis has been blocking the only road into Karabakh from Armenia to protest what they claim is illegal mining by the region's Armenian population.

As a result of the blockade, the mountainous region of some 120,000 people has been running short of food, medicines, and fuel.

Armenia has repeatedly expressed its dismay at what it sees as Moscow's unwillingness to put

an end to a "humanitarian crisis."

During phone talks with Putin on Tuesday, the Armenian leader "stressed the importance of Russia taking the necessary steps" to overcome the crisis, his office said without being more specific.

"In this context, the activities of the Russian peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh were discussed," Pashinyan's office said in a statement.

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The Kremlin, in a terse statement, said the two leaders discussed the current situation, stressing the importance of implementing all Russia-mediated agreements.

Moscow is seeking to maintain its role as a powerbroker between the former Soviet republics despite being bogged down in its own offensive in Ukraine. The Kremlin hopes its delicate balancing act in the South Caucasus will ensure good relations not only with its traditional ally Armenia but also Azerbaijan and its backer Turkey.

Armenia has accused arch-foe Azerbaijan of conducting a "policy of ethnic cleansing" and forcing ethnic Armenians to leave the breakaway region.

Azerbaijan has rejected accusations it orchestrated the blockade, insisting civilian transport and goods can move freely to and out of the region.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ethnic Armenian separatists in Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan. The ensuing conflict claimed around 30,000 lives.

Another flare-up in violence in 2020 claimed more than 6,500 lives and ended with a Russian-brokered truce that saw Armenia cede territories it had controlled for decades to Azerbaijan.

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