

REPORT ON XENOPHOBIA IN AZERBAIJAN



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NGOs in Armenia: Transparency International Anticorruption Center, Law Development and Protection Foundation, “Protection of Rights without Borders” NGO, Helsinki Citizens Assembly - Vanadzor, Helsinki Association, Human Rights Research Center and Non-Discrimination and Equality Coalition from Armenia

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Summary

This report is developed by a number of human rights oriented civil society organizations, including Transparency International Anticorruption Center, Law Development and Protection Foundation, “Protection of Rights without Borders” NGO, Helsinki Citizens Assembly - Vanadzor, Helsinki Association, Human Rights Research Center and Non-Discrimination and Equality Coalition from Armenia and Union of Artsakh Young Scientists and Specialists, “Vector” youth NGO and Civic Hub from Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh).

The report provides a brief compilation of and references to data and analytical materials to describe situations characterized by xenophobia and discrimination towards Armenians in the Republic of Azerbaijan, which generate an existential threat to the indigenous Armenian people of Artsakh that currently struggle for self-determination to maintain their national identity.

The material covers matters related to racism, racial discrimination, intolerance, indigenous peoples rights, cultural rights, minority rights, ethnic cleansing, religion, freedom of expression, education, use of toxics, environment, health, mercenaries, disappearances, executions, terrorism, torture, inhuman treatment, corruption, international order, promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The report provides the historical background of the Artsakh conflict (Nagorno-Karabagh conflict) begun in the beginning of 20th century under the Soviets’ ‘divide and rule’ policy.

It highlights the episodes of discrimination against Armenians addressed in international reports on Azerbaijan, including the UN and Council of Europe structures which however, have not been resolved over many years.

The document illustrates cases of dehumanization and demonization, which fuel the hatred within the society against the state of Armenia as well as the Armenian minority living in Azerbaijan.

It brings examples of the inculcation of hatred towards Armenians within the educational institutions of Azerbaijan, occurring from young ages, that influenced the views of the new generation of Azerbaijanis and shaped their intolerance towards their Armenian neighbours.

The material narrates examples to demonstrate the atmosphere of hatred within the Azerbaijani society, which glorifies the murder and terror against Armenians.

It also provides examples on how the anti-Armenian propaganda is being used and abused by Azerbaijan’s dictatorial regime as an instrument, on the one hand, to suppress the democratic developments in the country and, on the other hand, to isolate Artsakh from the world.

The report describes the trends of ethnic cleansing through the attempts to erase the traces of Armenian culture from the region through destroying and vandalizing the monuments or appropriating those under the name of Caucasian Albanian heritage.

The document provides a brief account on the criminal acts used during the 44-day war, that lasted from September 27 until November 9, 2020, carried out with support of Turkey, which holds the second largest military force within NATO.

The material describes the rhetoric used for many years to prepare the war with Armenia and how it, over time, subverted the negotiation process within the framework of the Minsk group. It also highlights the current vocabulary and actions expressing the whole xenophobia towards Armenians and the uncovered objective of ethnic cleansing.

The report explains Turkey's role in boosting the genocidal intents of the Azerbaijani government through techniques similar to those utilised by the Ottoman Empire on its own territory against Armenians and other Christian minorities.

In the end the document provides recommendations to the UN Special Rapporteurs with a call to take measures to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh people as well as to ensure their well-being and safety.

Historic background

During the 19-20th centuries there have been a number of ongoing and escalating ethnic and religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims in the South Caucasus. The particular origin of the conflict over Artsakh dates back to 1921, when Stalin - responsible for the nationalities policy of the Bolsheviks' government, pushed for annexation of the Armenian-populated Artsakh to Soviet Azerbaijan. In July 1923, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) was created on the lands of Artsakh within the borders of Azerbaijan with some level of autonomy, while other Armenian regions (e.g. Shahumyan and Khanlar) were included in Azerbaijan without any special status. NKAO was divided from Soviet Armenia with a Kurd-populated strip, called Red Kurdistan Uyezd (district), which was later liquidated resulting in approximately 70% of local Kurds being expelled from the region. As a result, Artsakh appeared to be connected to Armenia through the narrow corridor of Lachin.

Still in 1989, Andrei Sakharov, a renowned Soviet dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner spoke at the Congress of People's Deputies about the "divide and rule" policy of Soviets: *"We have inherited from Stalinism a constitutional structure that bears the stamp of imperial thinking and the imperial policy of "divide and rule". The smaller Union Republics and the autonomous national subdivisions, which are administratively subordinated to the Union Republics, are victims of this legacy. For decades they have been subjected to national oppression. Now these problems have come to the surface in dramatic fashion. But to an equal extent the larger ethnic groups have also been victims, and that includes the Russian people, who have had to bear the main burden of imperial ambitions and the consequences of adventurism and dogmatism in foreign and domestic policy."*¹

¹ Съезд народных депутатов СССР, Выступление академика Сахарова "Кризис доверия народа...", June 9, 1989, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eq5bRh6i0cQ>, minutes 09:05 - 10:05,

For about 70 years under the Azerbaijani rule, the Armenian people of Artsakh were subject to discrimination (e.g., obstacles to study the Armenian language, broadcast Armenian language programs, etc.), which significantly changed the demography of the Armenian-populated areas. E.g. according to the Soviet census of 1926, Armenians composed 89% of the 125,300 people in autonomous NKAO,² whereas in 1989 the number of Armenians was decreased to 77% of the population of 189,085.³

The Armenian population of NKAO had raised its voice several times before Kremlin leaders with a request to join the Armenian SSR to ensure guarantees for preserving their cultural identity, but to no success.

In light of some civic and political freedoms provided by Perestroika, on February 20 1988, Artsakh's regional legislature (Oblast Soviet) officially voted to become part of Armenia.

Peaceful assemblies, petitions and the decision of the NKAO Oblast Soviet were echoed with pogroms instigated by Azerbaijani authorities in Sumgait (February 27-29 1988) and later in Ganja (November 1988) and in Baku (January 1990). The growing ethnic tensions in both countries and unwillingness of Soviet authorities to solve the problem led to an armed conflict.

During his first visit to the US in late 1988, A.Sakharov announced that *"Armenian people are again facing the threat of genocide."*⁴ In 1989, he stressed that *"For Azerbaijan, the issue of Karabakh is a matter of ambition, for the Armenians of Karabakh it is a matter of life and death."*⁵ These quotes of the time of a renowned human rights defender truly describe the situation.

On December 10 1991, along with dissolution of the Soviet Union and before the formation of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan, the Artsakh people held a referendum of independence and established the Republic of Artsakh. At this period of time this process was in line with the Soviet Constitution, which at least nominally allowed for self-determination of nations.⁶

According to the last Soviet census of 1989, there were 390,505 Armenians living in Azerbaijan (total population - 7,021,178),⁷ of which 245,055 - outside of NKAO,⁸ and there were 84,860 Azerbaijanis living in Armenia (total population - 3,304,776).⁹ The conflict

² Demoscope Weekly, *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1926 года. Национальный состав населения по регионам республик СССР: Закавказская СФСР/АО Нагорного Карабаха*, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_26.php?reg=2304

³ Demoscope Weekly, *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1989 года, Распределение городского и сельского населения областей республик СССР по полу и национальности: Нагорный Карабах*, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp_nac_89.php?reg=71

⁴ The Washington Post, *Armenians facing genocide in dispute*, Sakharov says, November 26, 1988, <https://wapo.st/2OGP0uF>

⁵ Noyan Tapan, Collection of quotes, *Андрей Сахаров о Нагорном Карабахе*, 1996, <http://karabakhcenter.com/files/file/saxarov.pdf>

⁶ Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), *"Nagorno-Karabakh: Timeline of The Long Road to Peace"*, February 10, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1065626.html>

⁷ Demoscope Weekly, *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1989 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР: Азербайджанская ССР*, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=7

⁸ Demoscope Weekly, *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1989 года, Распределение городского и сельского населения областей республик СССР по полу и национальности: Нагорный Карабах*, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp_nac_89.php?reg=71

⁹ Demoscope Weekly, *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1989 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР: Армянская ССР*, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=13

between Armenia and Azerbaijan eventually resulted in the displacement of about 220,000 ethnic Armenians from Azerbaijan¹⁰ and almost all ethnic Azeris from Armenia.¹¹

During the war 1992-1994, Armenian forces gained control of Artsakh and the adjacent areas, before a ceasefire was declared in 1994. Later, the peace talks began under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, which, though continued for more than two decades, were not able to provide a long-lasting solution to the conflict.

Azerbaijan, unwilling to negotiate meaningfully within the Minsk group format and to recognize the independence of Artsakh people, spent almost two decades heavily investing its oil budget into the military and accumulating arms - with the intention of taking over Artsakh by force. This was carried out in parallel with bribing Western officials for keeping silence over its ongoing human rights violations.¹² According to Andre Walker, a British political commentator, the Azerbaijani government has been bribing foreign politicians with anticipation of their support in the possible new war.¹³

In the last decade there were series of escalations on the borders of Artsakh and Armenia with Azerbaijan - reaching the peaks in early April 2016 in Artsakh and mid-July 2020 in the north of Armenia.

On September 27 of 2020, Azerbaijan launched a large-scale aggression against Artsakh under the catchphrase of 'restoring the historical justice.' The war was orchestrated with support from the Turkish military and deployment of mercenaries and jihadists from Syria.¹⁴

Azerbaijan/Turkey launched large scale attack along the entire length of the frontline of Artsakh - using heavy artillery, tanks, aircraft and missiles, including cluster munitions and unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) - targeting peaceful population and civilian infrastructures, schools and hospitals, places of worship and cultural monuments of Artsakh, dehumanized captives and mutilated bodies of fallen soldiers.

The war started in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic, in spite of the worldwide call of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealing to "*...end the sickness of war and fight the*

¹⁰ ECRI Report on Azerbaijan, adopted on 28 June 2002, <https://rm.coe.int/first-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5579>

¹¹ Council of Europe, *Second Report Submitted by Armenia Pursuant to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of The Framework Convention For The Protection of National Minorities*, ACFC/SR/II(2004) 010, November 24, 2004, https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1052022/432_1163080631_pdf-2nd-sr-armenia.pdf

¹² Transparency International UK, *In whose interest? Analysing how corrupt and repressive regimes seek influence and legitimacy through engagement with UK Parliamentarians*, July 2018, https://www.transparency.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/publications/In_Whose_Interest_WEB3.pdf; Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), *The Azerbaijani Laundromat*, September 4, 2017, <https://www.occrp.org/en/azerbaijanilaundromat>; Transparency International, *The impact of the Azerbaijani Laundromat*, October 10, 2017, <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/the-impact-of-the-azerbaijani-laundromat>

¹³ Andre Walker, *Westminster Was Bribed by Azerbaijan Ahead of Armenian Invasion*, October 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrwywlyeLac&fbclid=IwAR1RsFtm4_K5f1S7wOF9PrVEnObyqJaPx2aDTps4EY11QJKgpRxLWLFHrkQ

¹⁴ AsiaNews.it, *Turkey sends 4,000 Syrian ISIS Mercenaries to Fight against the Armenians*, September 28, 2020, [http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Turkey-sends-4,000-Syrian-ISIS-mercenaries-to-fight-against-the-Armenians-\(VIDEO\)-51151.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Turkey-sends-4,000-Syrian-ISIS-mercenaries-to-fight-against-the-Armenians-(VIDEO)-51151.html)

disease that is ravaging our world”¹⁵ and “...a special appeal to all countries with influence on parties waging war to do everything possible for the ceasefire to become a reality.”¹⁶

The war led to about 90,000 (60%) people of Artsakh to leave their homes,¹⁷ of which about 35,000-40,000 have not returned after the war.¹⁸ It further resulted in heavy casualties, including more than 3,500 Armenian soldiers¹⁹ and 72 civilians - 41 of which were killed as a result of targeted strikes and 31 - in captivity.²⁰ About 9,000 were wounded that along with the peaking COVID-19 stretched the capacities of the health systems in Armenia and Artsakh. Several dozens still remain captives in Azerbaijani jails.

Following three failed attempts to stop the war with mediation from the Minsk group co-chairs, the military operations were stopped with an armistice brokered by Russia on November 9, 2020. The defeat of Armenian armed forces left almost half of the territory of NKAO under Azerbaijani control, including more than 120 villages²¹ and 1,456 historical and cultural monuments.²² Armenia/Artsakh also returned without fighting all seven (7) negotiated territories surrounding NKAO.

The history of existence of Artsakh and Armenian-populated areas as part of Azerbaijan during the Soviet rule, the Armenophobic acts of the government of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan towards the Armenians as well as the specific practices applied during and after the 44-day war demonstrate that the root cause of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, as A.Sakharov mentioned in 1988-1989, rests with the xenophobia against Armenians and the genocidal intentions of Azerbaijan’s government. Its obvious aim is the forced displacement and ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population from Artsakh.

Some of the most notable evidences and proofs of Azerbaijan’s fascist and xenophobic policies are discussed below.

¹⁵ UN News, COVID-19: UN chief calls for global ceasefire to focus on ‘the true fight of our lives’, March 23, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972>

¹⁶ UN Press Release, Secretary-General Reiterates Appeal for Global Ceasefire, Warns ‘Worst Is Yet to Come’ as COVID-19 Threatens Conflict Zones, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20032.doc.htm>

¹⁷ ArmenPress, Nearly 90,000 People Displaced, Lost Homes and Property in Nagorno Karabakh, October 24, 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1032601.html>

¹⁸ Armenpress, About 105-110 Thousands of Artsakh People Now Live in Artsakh: Artak Beglaryan (in Armenian), February 15, 2021, <https://armenpress.am/arm/news/1043433.html>

¹⁹ Aysor.am, 3577 Corpses Have Gone through Forensic Examination, 428 Samples Are at Stage of DNA Analysis. Ministry of Health (in Armenian), February 18, 2021, https://www.aysor.am/am/news/2021/02/18/%D6%83%D5%B8%D6%80%D5%B1%D5%A1%D6%84%D5%B6%D5%B6%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%B5%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6-4005/1802726?fbclid=IwAR1-nekP2s3hYqIM67qi4WkXpxs_Dcii3DZcepgAJy7EwwPERnY4awKMIK8

²⁰ The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, Interim Report on the Cases of the Killing of Civilians In Artsakh by The Armed Forces of Azerbaijan, (Updated on January 28 2021), January 29, 2021, https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/785#_Toc59662502;

The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, The Updated Edition of The Second Interim Report on The Azerbaijani Atrocities Against the Artsakh Population In September-October 2020, October 18, 2020, <https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/735>

²¹ Government of the Republic of Armenia Decision N1820-L Appendix, “The List of Settlements and Villages Transferred to Azerbaijan (in Armenian), November 21, 2020, https://www.e-gov.am/u_files/file/decrees/kar/2020/11/1820_1.pdf

²² The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, Ad Hoc Public Report: The Armenian Cultural Heritage In Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh): Cases Of Vandalism and At Risk of Destruction by Azerbaijan, January 26, 2021, <https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/792>

Discrimination against Armenians as addressed in international reports

Different forms of racism and xenophobia against Armenians have been regularly documented in concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,²³ reports of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance,²⁴ opinions of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,²⁵ concluding observations of the UN Human Rights Committee,²⁶ documents of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and reports of the US State Department.

Today there are approximately 20,000 Armenians reported to live in Azerbaijan, being almost exclusively - persons married to Azerbaijanis or of mixed Armenian-Azerbaijani descent,²⁷ yet, there is a significant amount of evidence that prove discrimination against these people.

The US Department of State *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for Azerbaijan²⁸ have, at least since 2011, stated that citizens of Azerbaijan of Armenian descent living in the country complain of discrimination in employment, housing, and the provision of social services. Citizens who were ethnic Armenians often concealed their ethnicity by legally changing the ethnic designation in their passports. While official government policy allows citizens of ethnic Armenian descent to travel, low-level officials reportedly often requested bribes or harassed ethnic Armenians who applied for passports.²⁹ Citizens of Armenian descent also reported discrimination in employment.³⁰ The *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Azerbaijan for 2019* states that individuals with Armenian-sounding names were

²³ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 9 of the Convention*, April 12 2001, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2f304%2fAdd.75&Lang=en

²⁴ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *Report on Azerbaijan (fifth monitoring cycle)*, adopted on March 17, 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5581>

ECRI *Report on Azerbaijan (fourth monitoring cycle)*, adopted on 23 March 2011, <https://rm.coe.int/third-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b557e>

ECRI *Second report on Azerbaijan*, adopted on 15 December 2006, <https://rm.coe.int/second-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b557b>

ECRI *Report on Azerbaijan*, adopted on 28 June 2002, <https://rm.coe.int/first-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5579>

²⁵ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Fourth Opinion on Azerbaijan, adopted on 8 November 2017,

<https://rm.coe.int/4th-acfc-opinion-on-azerbaijan-english-language-version/1680923201>,

Third Opinion on Azerbaijan, adopted on 10 October 2012,

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008c664>,

Second Opinion on Azerbaijan, adopted on 9 November 200,

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008c157>,

Opinion on Azerbaijan, adopted on 22 May 2003,

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008bd33>

²⁶ UN Committee on Human Rights, *Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Azerbaijan*, November 16, 2016,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fAZE%2fCO%2f4&Lang=en

²⁷ ECRI, *Report on Azerbaijan*, adopted on 28 June 2002, <https://rm.coe.int/first-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5579>

²⁸ US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Azerbaijan*, 2011, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/186540.pdf>

²⁹ US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Azerbaijan*, 2011, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/186540.pdf>

³⁰ US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Azerbaijan*, 2016, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Azerbaijan-1.pdf>

often subjected to additional screening at border crossings and were occasionally denied entrance to the country.³¹

As recorded in the US State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2019*,³² an entire generation of Azerbaijanis had grown up listening to hate speech against Armenians.

The Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has repeatedly recognized the link between the harsh comments regularly made in Azerbaijan about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the discrimination that Armenians coming under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction encounter in their daily lives.³³

ECRI's first report on Azerbaijan from 2003 read that due to the conflict, there was a widespread negative sentiment towards Armenians in Azerbaijani society.³⁴ As a result, the Armenians living on the territory of Azerbaijan under the effective control of the Azerbaijani authorities tend to shield their ethnic identity or, in any event, avoid exposing it publicly. Armenians were reported to have experienced discrimination in different fields, including employment and the exercise of property rights. One of the main problems remained the seizure of their apartments by Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia, internally displaced persons or criminals. Armenians were also reported to have suffered from harassment at schools and at the workplace and to have been refused pensions or renewal of permits to live in Baku by local government authorities.³⁵

In its second report on Azerbaijan from 2007, ECRI reported about discrimination towards Armenians particularly in access to public services. Discrimination sometimes amounts to harassment which prevents the persons concerned from exercising their basic rights such as the right to pension allowance or the right to work. Judicial proceedings opened by Armenians trying to secure their rights are said to systematically fail due to the general negative climate against Armenians. The Commission, among various forms of discrimination against Armenians highlighted the oral and written inflammatory speech on the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which does not only target Armenia and Armenian citizens, but also portrays Armenians living in Azerbaijan as enemies and traitors.³⁶

ECRI recorded that certain TV channels, some members of the general public, some politicians and even some authorities at local and national levels fuelled negative feelings among society towards Armenians in general, and ethnic Armenians living on Azerbaijani territory in particular. One of the consequences of discrimination and inflammatory speech against Armenians is that many Armenians keep a low profile in Azerbaijan, trying as much as possible to avoid drawing attention to themselves. They often seek to hide their ethnic identity through changing their names. The negative climate not only has an impact on

³¹ US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Azerbaijan*, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/AZERBAIJAN-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

³² US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Azerbaijan*, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/AZERBAIJAN-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

³³ European Commission, *Statement against Racism and Intolerance Concerning the Pardoning in Azerbaijan of a Person Convicted of Hate Crime*, 2012, <https://rm.coe.int/statement-by-the-european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance-co/16808c1ef0>

³⁴ ECRI, *Report on Azerbaijan*, April 2003, <https://rm.coe.int/first-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5579>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ ECRI, *Report on Azerbaijan*, May 2007, <https://rm.coe.int/second-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b557b>

Armenians living in Azerbaijan, but also affects Azerbaijani individuals or NGOs assisting Armenians when trying to exercise their basic rights. They are reportedly victims of anonymous threats, defamation campaigns in some media and harassment by some authorities.³⁷

The ECRI Report on Azerbaijan of 2016 said that *“political leaders, educational institutions and media have continued using hate speech against Armenians; an entire generation of Azerbaijanis has now grown-up listening to this hateful rhetoric. Human rights activists working inter alia towards reconciliation with Armenia have been sentenced to heavy prison terms on controversial accusations.”*³⁸

The Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has pointed out the incidents of *“hostility and discrimination”* against members of the Armenian minority and the existence of anti-Armenian sentiments in Azerbaijan expressing concern about the fact that an entire generation of Azerbaijanis has now been raised with a rhetoric of hate, hostility and victimhood, which may have an impact on prospects of future reconciliation.³⁹

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in its concluding observations on the combined 7-9th periodic reports of Azerbaijan⁴⁰ also expressed concern at the repeated and unpunished use of inflammatory language by politicians speaking about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and at its adverse impact on the public's view of ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan. CERD stressed the limited effectiveness of existing consultative bodies to compensate for the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in political bodies.

Azerbaijani authorities have not only persistently ignored their international obligations but at the highest level have fuelled extremist Armenophobia, inter alia, through promoting impunity of the perpetrators of racist crimes.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has mentioned that the anti-Armenian propaganda and hate dissemination carried out by Azerbaijan are a serious obstacle to the negotiation process. It stated that *“the anti-Armenian propaganda extends to the following main direction:*

- *formation of the image of Armenians as enemy and aggressor, and self-assuring the right of Azerbaijan towards Armenian territories;*
- *deliberate policy on distortion of the fact of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire. To this end, the Azerbaijani authorities invented the idea to declare their own people as “victims of genocide”, and with this in mind President Heidar Aliyev signed in 1998 a Decree “On genocide of Azerbaijanis”. This document, which is full of false accusations, not supported by any reliable sources, credible research or even a single historical document, had another purpose as well, namely to render support in a form*

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ ECRI, *Report on Azerbaijan (fifth monitoring cycle)*, June 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5581>

³⁹ Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, *Fourth Opinion on Azerbaijan*, adopted on 8 November 2017, <https://bit.ly/3bVY8I>

⁴⁰ CERD, *Concluding Observations on the Combined 7th to 9th Periodic Reports of Azerbaijan*, June 10, 2016, <https://bit.ly/39iPnBZ>

of diversion to Azerbaijan's ethnically kin Turkey in the latter's attempt to deny the Armenian Genocide;

- *to create enmity between Armenians and Jews; in this regard efforts are made to prove the "anti-Semitic nature" of Armenians;*
- *searching for Armenian traces and blaming Armenians for virtually all internal failures of Azerbaijan;*
- *resonating to every single negative event in Armenia, in particular when the question is under the attention of the international community.*"⁴¹

The Report of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Armenophobia in Azerbaijan: Organized Hate Speech and Animosity towards Armenians*⁴² and the Report of Human Rights Defender of Armenia and Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Organized Hate Speech and Animosity Towards Ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan as Root Causes of Ethnically-based Torture and Inhuman Treatment by Azerbaijani Armed Forces*⁴³ expose the details of a worrying trend of extremist Armenophobia in all segments of Azerbaijani society, including the facts on anti-Armenian xenophobia in Azerbaijani educational establishments and literature.

Dehumanization and demonization

Dehumanization and demonization of Armenians is an instrument of propaganda used by Azerbaijan used to shape public opinion and create deeply rooted damaging stereotypes about Armenians. Dehumanizing language has been consistently used by Azerbaijani high-ranking state officials, public personalities and opinion makers, including human rights activists - portraying Armenians as Azerbaijanis' greatest enemy, drawing parallels with animals or diseases.

Ilham Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, regularly made inflammatory remarks in his statements or interviews and posted sharp comments on Twitter about Armenia and Armenians,⁴⁴ which have been documented since at least 2007.

On November 20 2012, president Aliyev posted an excerpt of his public speech on his official Twitter account which reads: *"Armenia is a country of no value. It is actually a colony, an*

⁴¹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Anti-Armenian Propaganda and Hate Dissemination Carried out by Azerbaijan as a Serious Obstacle to the Negotiation Process*, October 7, 2008, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/b/34195.pdf>

⁴² The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Interim Public Report on Armenophobia in Azerbaijan Organized Hate Speech and Animosity towards Armenians*, September 25, 2018, <https://artsakhombuds.am/hy/document/570>

⁴³ Human Rights Defender of Armenia and Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh: *Ad Hoc Public Report on Organized Hate Speech and Animosity Towards Ethnic Armenians In Azerbaijan As Root Causes of Ethnically-based Torture and Inhuman Treatment by Azerbaijani Armed Forces* (September-November 2020), December 7, 2020, <https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/780>

⁴⁴ European Friends of Armenia, *Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials*, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AliyevWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf; Business Insider, *Azerbaijan's President Used Twitter to Threaten Military Action against 'Armenian Barbarians and Vandals'*, August 7, 2014, <https://www.businessinsider.com/azeri-president-threatens-armenia-on-twitter-2014-8>; EVN Report, *The Mixed Messaging of Ilham Aliyev*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.evnreport.com/politics/the-mixed-messaging-of-ilham-aliyev>; Al Jazeera, *President of Azerbaijan Fires Provocative Tweets during Conflict*, August 7, 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/the-stream/2014/8/7/president-of-azerbaijan-fires-provocative-tweets-during-conflict>; Ilham Aliyev on Twitter, August 7, 2014, <https://twitter.com/presidentaz/status/497364584743718913?lang=en>; Интерфакс-Азербайджан, *"Мы вернулись в Шушу как победители" – президент Азербайджана*, January 15, 2021, <http://interfax.az/view/824535>

outpost run from abroad... Evidence of this is the mass exodus of people from Armenia to other countries."⁴⁵

On May 17 2013, the chief of the political analysis and information provision department of the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration Elnur Aslanov stated at an international forum of research centres of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) *"Armenia is a grey spot on the map of the South Caucasus. It is "cancer" of the region through which the illegal traffic of arms and drugs go.*"⁴⁶

In a speech to his cabinet in April 2015, Aliyev was reported on his government's official website as telling Armenians: *"If you do not want to die, then get out of Azerbaijani lands. [...] We must and we do wage a more active struggle with Armenia. We have isolated it from all international and regional projects.*"⁴⁷

On July 9 2018, during his opening speech before the Cabinet of Ministers meeting Aliyev mentioned *"Armenia is a loser state", "Armenian statehood has suffered a fiasco", "Their heroes, their generals are thieves, their army is any army of thieves".*⁴⁸

During his address to the nation on October 4 2020, Aliyev referring to Armenians, said: *"They thought we were going to put up with the occupation? Now we are going to kick them out like dogs".*⁴⁹

On October 17 2020, during his address to the nation Aliyev said *"For 30 years, it was in the hands of wild beasts, in the hands of predators, in the hands of jackals."* He said *"We will continue to expel these [Armenians] liars. They see who is who now. They see that we were teaching them a lesson they will never forget. ... They have neither conscience nor morality. They don't even have the brain."*⁵⁰

On December 10 2020, Aliyev at the victory parade in Baku delivered a speech, where he stated that *"During the war, I said that our iron fist embodies both our unity and strength. That iron fist broke the enemy's spine and crushed the enemy's head. After that, if Armenian fascism ever raises its head again, the result will be the same. Again, Azerbaijan's iron fist will break their back."* He also declared Armenian *"Zangezur, Goycha [Sevan] and Iravan*

⁴⁵ Ilham Aliyev on Twitter, November 20, 2012, <https://twitter.com/presidentaz/status/270827003521929216>; Hurriyet Daily News, *Azerbaijan Leader Unleashes Anti-Armenia Twitter Tirade*, November 20, 2012, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/azerbaijan-leader-unleashes-anti-armenia-twitter-tirade-35078>

⁴⁶ European Friends of Armenia, *Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials*, July 31, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AlievWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf

⁴⁷ President of Azerbaijan website, *Ilham Aliyev Chaired the Meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers Dedicated to the Results of Socioeconomic Development in the First Quarter of 2015 and Objectives for the Future*, April 10, 2015, <http://en.president.az/articles/14805>

⁴⁸ European Friends of Armenia, *Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials*, July 31, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AlievWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf

⁴⁹ МК.ру, *Алиев выступил с обращением к нации: "Выгоняем их как собак"*, October 4, 2020, <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2020/10/04/aliev-vystupil-s-obrashheniem-k-nacii-vygonyaem-ikh-kak-sobak.html>; Haqqin.az, *Ильхам Алиев: "Азербайджанский солдат прогоняет их как собак"*, October 4, 2020, <https://haqqin.az/oldage/190899: Defence>; Defence.az, *President Aliyev: Azerbaijani Soldiers Drive Them away Like Dogs*, October 4, 2020, <https://bit.ly/38zhQV0>; EVN Report, *The Mixed Messaging of Ilham Aliyev*, October 2020, <https://www.evnreport.com/politics/the-mixed-messaging-of-ilham-aliev>; Вечер с Владимиром Соловьевым on Youtube, October 5, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eAVs7fjUFM>, 04:18 minute

⁵⁰ Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev addresses nation, October 17, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVdWkPPIle4>; <https://defence.az/en/news/147408/azerbaijani-presidentilham-aliev-addresses-nation-on-tv-%C2%A0live>; https://apa.az/en/nagorno_qarabagh/Azerbaijani-President-Remains-of-the-city-of-Fuzuli-are-a-manifestation-of-Armenian-fascism-333178

[Yerevan] districts” as Azerbaijani historical lands,⁵¹ which implied an intent to return those lands.

On December 12 2020, during the meeting with OSCE Minsk Group’s France and the US Co-Chairs, president Aliyev stated, inter alia, that *“If Armenian fascism rises its head once again, we will smash it with an iron fist.”*⁵²

According to the Armenian Ombudsman’s observations, the statements of the President Aliyev became slogans inspiring atrocities against Armenians during the war. Those were also used by the servicemen of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces during the torture of the Armenian military and civilians, while beheading Armenians alive, mutilating the bodies of the victims and committing other atrocities.⁵³

As mentioned above, Armenophobic expressions were frequently used by Azerbaijani public personalities and opinion makers.

On October 24 2020, Toghrul Mammadli, an official at the Council of State Support to NGOs under the auspices of the President of Azerbaijan, referring to an Armenian wedding held at Shushi’s Holy Saviour Ghazanchetsots church amid the war, stated that *“it was the last wedding of yours [Armenians] in occupied territories”*.⁵⁴

On October 26, 2020, Mete Turksoy, an Azerbaijani political activist claimed that *“Not a single civilian should be left alive in Nagorno-Karabakh.”*⁵⁵

On October 28 2020, Nurlan Ibrahimov, the head of the press service of “Qarabag” football club of Azerbaijan, published a Facebook post, which, translated from Azerbaijani, stated *“We must kill the Armenians. It does not matter whether a woman, a child, an old man. We must kill everyone we can and whoever happens. We should not feel sorry; we should not feel pity. If we do not kill (them), our children will be killed.”*⁵⁶ For this he was banned for life by UEFA considering it *“racist behaviour.”*

On November 10, 2020, Sabir Mamedov, People’s Artist of Azerbaijan stated that *“Armenians are a tribe, self-destroying ethnos. And today, when we beat them again, they again scream to the whole world. Very miserable and ungrateful creatures who tramped our bread.*

⁵¹ The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, *At Baku Victory Parade, Aliyev Calls Yerevan, Zangezur, Sevan Historical Azerbaijani Lands, Erdogan Praises Enver Pasha*, December 11, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2ZkKDay>

⁵² Asbarez, *Aliyev Says Visiting Minsk Group Co-Chairs Were Not Invited to Baku*, December 12, 2020, <https://asbarez.com/199161/aliyev-says-visiting-minsk-group-co-chairs-were-not-invited-to-baku>

⁵³ The Human Rights Defender of Armenia Arman Tatoyan on Facebook, January 17, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=792041051395102&id=100017676420633

⁵⁴ Twitter post by Toghrul Mammadli, October 24, 2020, <https://twitter.com/toghrulmammadli/status/1320065085218357248?s=20>

⁵⁵ Mete Turksoy on Twitter, October 26, 2020, Post removed, screenshot available at <https://twitter.com/TheArmenite/status/1320793046422679555?s=20>

⁵⁶ Nurlan Ibrahimov on Twitter, October 30, 2020, Post removed, screenshot available at <https://twitter.com/ThatchEffendi/status/1322205800836857857?s=20>; «Мы должны убить армян. Ребенка, женщину, старика – без разницы, надо убить» - Нурлан Ибрагимов, 31 октября, 2020, https://infoteka24.ru/2020/10/31/73857/?fbclid=IwAR3wy00Vo-P7nhY0XvCGnR1nUizznC8Im_apY5aJqtemhJBUR659_3OzAYU; Football Federation of Armenia, *FFA demands to exclude FK Qarabag from European club competitions*, October 31, 2020, <https://www.ffa.am/en/1604159474/page/3>; Inside World Football, *UEFA hands Qarabag’s Ibrahimov life ban for ‘kill’ all Armenians’ social post*, November 27, 2020, <http://www.insideworldfootball.com/2020/11/27/uefa-hands-qarabags-ibrahimov-life-ban-kill-armenians-social-post>

...Armenians are such a deceitful, cowardly, arrogant and hypocritical people that it is beyond words.⁵⁷

Hate speech against Armenians in Azerbaijan targeted even the children. For example, an open photo of an Armenian child is posted in Azerbaijani social networks and the following question asked: *"Will you kill an Armenian child?"*. Polls targeting children with violence and calls for violence have been widely spread in social networks.⁵⁸

Armenophobic propaganda was fuelled only through mere 'emotional' statements and expressions of its officials and public personalities, but also state-run initiatives.

On October 22 2020, Azerbaijan announced production of new UAVs and named those "ItiQovan", which in Azerbaijani means *"dog chaser"*.⁵⁹

After the war, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of Azerbaijan released stamps depicting an Azerbaijani agent 'disinfecting' Karabakh from its Armenian population similar to eradicating the virus.⁶⁰

Hate education

As recorded by the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and US State Department, an entire generation of Azerbaijanis has been raised with a rhetoric of hate and hostility towards Armenians.⁶¹

Incitement to hatred and calls for violence against ethnic Armenians have been sparked by the statements of high-ranking officials of Azerbaijan,⁶² but also those injected into the population from early childhood.

The latter is well proved by a video displaying an Azerbaijani kindergarten where children are asked a question *"Who is our enemy?"* and according to a taught lesson they shout together

⁵⁷ Trend News Agency, *"В Азербайджане празднуют победу, а в Армении – траур и беспорядки. Вот, что значит наша сила! – народный артист Сабир Мамедов"*, November 10, 2020, <https://www.trend.az/life/interview/3332521.html>, https://www.ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1495

⁵⁸ The Human Rights Defender of Armenia and the Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Ad Hoc Public Report "Organized Hate Speech and Animosity Towards Ethnic Armenians In Azerbaijan As Root Causes of Ethnically based Torture and Inhuman Treatment by Azerbaijani Armed Forces (September-November 2020)"*, December 7, 2020, <https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/780>

⁵⁹ Sabah, *Last minute: Azerbaijan gave this name to UAVs! Very clear message to the occupying Armenia ... (in Azerbaijani)*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2020/10/22/son-dakika-azerbaycan-ihalara-bu-ismi-verdi-isgalci-ermenistana-cok-net-mesai>; Abdullah Çiftçi on Twitter, October 22, 2020, <https://twitter.com/abdullahciftci/status/1319367163417972737?s=21>; Cavid on Twitter, October 22, 2020, <https://twitter.com/cavidaga/status/1319158918908698625?s=21>

⁶⁰ EAFJD - European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy on Facebook, January 11, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/European.Armenian.Federation/photos/a.519193791431244/4368468266503758>; The Calvert Journal, *Azerbaijani Postal Stamps Accused of Spreading Anti-Armenian Propaganda*, January 12, 2021, <https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/12442/azerbaijan-stamps-nagorno-karabakh-war-anti-armenian-propaganda>

⁶¹ Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, *Fourth Opinion on Azerbaijan*, adopted on 8 November 2017, <https://bit.ly/3bVY8Jl>; US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Azerbaijan*, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/AZERBAIJAN-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

⁶² Armine Adibekyan, Anzhela Elibegova, *Armenophobia in Azerbaijan*, 2015, https://www.academia.edu/19420142/ARMENOPHOBIA_IN_AZERBAIJAN

“Armenians”, “who have killed their soldiers”.⁶³ Another video posted by the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh shows the contrast of perceptions of enemies in Stepanakert pre-school, where the Armenian kids see a dragon or a spiderman as their enemies.⁶⁴

Website AzeriChild.info, is a catalogue of modern Azerbaijani literature and authors, including fairy tales, poems, children's games, excerpts from textbooks on various disciplines approved by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education and included in the school curriculum, that exposes Azeri children to multiple episodes of hatred of the Azerbaijani people towards Armenians.⁶⁵

History textbooks for 10th and 11th grade students, approved by the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan in 2000, include discriminative and derogatory words used to address Armenians, describing them as main enemies of Azerbaijanis, using the wording *“Armenian terrorist”, “Armenian fascist”, “Armenian bandit”, “Armenian separatist”, “Armenian barbarism”* and adjectives such as *“nasty Armenian”* and *“fascist Armenian.”* Much of the course is devoted to describing Armenia and Armenians as main enemies of Azerbaijanis and as a continuous adversary for Azerbaijan for almost a century. It should be noted that history classes are compulsory in all schools of Azerbaijan and there are no alternative textbooks allowed.⁶⁶

Promotion of murder and terror

Hate speech against Armenians has been voiced throughout many years by many official circles in Azerbaijan, hence it is not surprising that this boosted more hostility, murders and later war crimes against Armenians based on their ethnicity.

A very typical example of the promotion of extreme racism was the case of Ramil Safarov, an Azerbaijani officer who brutally murdered a sleeping Armenian officer - Gurgen Margaryan - with an axe during a NATO seminar in Budapest, Hungary in 2004.⁶⁷

Following the murder, Elmira Suleymanova, the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, stated that *“R.Safarov must become an example of patriotism for the Azerbaijani youth”* (source: “Zerkalo”, 28 February, 2004). Agshin Mehdiyev, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe stated that he *“does not advise Armenians to sleep safely until Karabakh conflict is settled. Incidents like in Budapest cannot be ruled out”* (source: Zerkalo, 23 February, 2004). An Azerbaijani businessman Nadir Aliyev established a special fund for Safarov. Siyavush Novruzov, MP from the ruling “Yeni Azerbaijan” party said: *“If the conflict is not solved in the near future, then the incidents similar to the one happened in Budapest may happen everywhere where there are Armenians and Azerbaijanis, including the Council of Europe”* (source: “Zerkalo”, 27 February, 2004). Obviously, the murder of an

⁶³ *Five Minutes of Hate in Azerbaijani School*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7q56wAbY-fg&feature=emb_logo

⁶⁴ The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Perception of Enemies in Baku and Stepanakert Preschools*, March 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-vtd5MKav4&feature=emb_logo;

⁶⁵ AzeriChild.info, <http://azerichild.info/en/index.html>

⁶⁶ Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation, *Armenian Image in History Textbooks of Azerbaijan*, April 1, 2012, <https://caucasusedition.net/armenian-image-in-history-textbooks-of-azerbaijan>

⁶⁷ ECtHR, *Case of Makuchyan and Minasyan v. Azerbaijan and Hungary*, Application no. 17247/13, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-202524>

Armenian officer was greeted with approval by extremist non-governmental organizations.⁶⁸ Zeynab Khanlarova, People's Artist of USSR, Milli Majlis deputy said *"Ramil Safarov is not only the hero of Azerbaijan, but the hero of the whole world. Monuments should be erected in his honor. Not every man is able to do what he did. There are two heroes: one is Mister Ilham Aliyev and the other is Ramil Safarov. If I were in Ramil's place, I would do the same. He took an Armenian's life, and he was right to do so."*⁶⁹

In 2012, Azerbaijan lodged a request for Safarov's transfer from Hungary, where the killer was sentenced and jailed. In the same year, Safarov was transferred to Azerbaijan where the government pardoned him, released, promoted him to major, gave him eight years of back pay, a new apartment and venerated him as a *"hero."*⁷⁰

The shocking reception of Safarov in his homeland resulted in a broad critique by the international community. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in its latest report on Azerbaijan voiced concerns on the facts of pardoning, releasing and promoting Ramil Safarov by the Azerbaijani authorities *"without taking into account the risk of cultivating a sense of impunity for the perpetrators of racist crime."*⁷¹

UN CERD condemned this act stating that *"by welcoming a citizen of the State party convicted of murdering an Armenian as a national hero and by pardoning and releasing that person upon transfer, the State party condones racial hatred and hate crimes and denies redress to victims."*⁷²

The case of the brutal murder of an Armenian Army officer was appealed in the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which in its judgment, dated 26, May 2020, found a violation of Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) in conjunction with Article 2 (right to life) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights indicated that Safarov *"was treated as an innocent or wrongfully convicted person and bestowed with benefits that appear not to have had any legal basis under domestic law."* The acts of Azerbaijan *"in effect granted R.S. impunity for the crimes committed against his Armenian victims."* Additionally, the Court found it *"particularly disturbing"* that the ethnically driven acts of the Azerbaijani officer receive official glorification by the State of Azerbaijan, and its high-ranking officials. It also deplored the fact that a large majority of statements made *"by a number of Azerbaijani officials glorifying R.S., his deeds and his pardon"* *"expressed particular support for the fact that R.S.'s crimes had been directed against Armenian soldiers, congratulated him on his actions and called him a patriot, a role model and a hero."* Eventually, the Court concluded that the measures taken by the Azerbaijani authorities in respect of the Azerbaijani army officer were *"racially motivated."*⁷³

⁶⁸ OSCE, *Anti-Armenian Propaganda and Hate Dissemination Carried out by Azerbaijan as a Serious Obstacle to the Negotiation Process*, October 7, 2008, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/b/34195.pdf>

⁶⁹ Website to honor Ramil Safarov, <http://safarov.org/en/index.html>

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ ECRI, *Report on Azerbaijan (fifth monitoring cycle)*, adopted on March 17, 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5581>

⁷² CERD, *Concluding Observations on the Combined 7th to 9th Periodic Reports of Azerbaijan*, June 10, 2016, <https://bit.ly/39iPnBZ>

⁷³ ECtHR, *Makuchyan and Minasyan v. Azerbaijan*, Application no. 17247/13, [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-202524%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-202524%22]})

Another judgment of the European Court of Human Rights relates to a resident of an Armenian border village - 20-years-old Manvel Saribekyan, who was tortured and murdered in Azerbaijani captivity in 2010. The Court found that Saribekyan – who had been taken into custody in good health and died while under the exclusive control of the Azerbaijani authorities – died as a result of the violent actions of the personnel at the Military Police Department in Baku, where he was kept in captivity. Azerbaijan’s responsibility for his death was confirmed. Coming to the qualification of the ill-treatment described, the Court stated that it *“was in no doubt that it involved very serious and cruel suffering and that it was carried out intentionally on a detained person under the exclusive control of the authorities.”* *“The Court has taken into account the general context of hostility and tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia and found that the investigation into the death of the applicants’ son had been inadequate in several respects, including its failure to consider whether ethnic hatred had been a contributing factor in his death and the torture to which he had been subjected.”*⁷⁴

Numerous cases were also brought before the ECtHR in the context of the 4-day war in April 2016, launched by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh. The cases related to the killings of peaceful civilians,⁷⁵ mutilation of corpses of Armenian soldiers and the beheadings of servicemen of the Artsakh Defence Army.⁷⁶ Videos and pictures depicting the cruel treatment were widely circulated on social media sites and the perpetrators were glorified.

In one particular case, Armenian soldier Kyaram Sloyan was beheaded, and his head extensively demonstrated to the soldiers and to the Azerbaijani general public via social networks (in particular: VKontakte).⁷⁷ The Azerbaijani officer who decapitated K. Sloyan has become a national hero in Azerbaijan, after that country’s president, Ilham Aliyev awarded him a medal after he and his wife, Mehriban, toured the border regions.⁷⁸

A later case pending before the ECtHR concerns peacetime killings of three Armenian soldiers in late 2016, which were again driven by ethnic hatred. The perpetrator who killed the three Armenian soldiers in a situation when there were no military activities was praised by the Azerbaijani government and was posthumously given the title of national hero of Azerbaijan and had a street named after him.⁷⁹

After the 44-day war of 2020, Azerbaijan awarded a medal to Kamil Zeynalli,⁸⁰ who was one of the organizers of attacks on Armenians in Moscow in July 2020. He called for the spilling of

⁷⁴ ECtHR, *Saribekyan and Balyan v. Azerbaijan*, Application no. 35746/11, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22fulltext%22%3A%2235746/11%22%22itemid%22%3A%22001-200439%22%22%7D>

⁷⁵ ECtHR, *Khalapyan v Azerbaijan*, Application no. 54856/16, communicated on November 25, 2016, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-169756>

⁷⁶ ECtHR, *K.S. and N.A. v. Azerbaijan and 21 other applications*, communicated on November 25, 2011, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-169755>

⁷⁷ The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Interim Public Report on Atrocities Committed by Azerbaijani Military Forces against the Civilian Population of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and Servicemen of the Nagorno Karabakh Defence Army* on 2-5, April 2016, <https://artsakhombuds.am/ru/document/560>

⁷⁸ Asbarez, *Aliyev Awards Officer Who Decapitated Artsakh Soldier*, May 2, 2016, http://asbarez.com/149796/aliyev-awards-officer-who-decapitated-artsakh-soldier/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Asbarez+%28Asbarez+News%29
Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Interim Public Report on Armenophobia in Azerbaijan Organized Hate Speech and Animosity towards Armenians*, September 25, 2018, <https://artsakhombuds.am/hy/document/570>; The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Second Interim Report on Atrocities Committed by Azerbaijani during the 2016 April War*, 2016, <https://artsakhombuds.am/hy/document/568>

⁷⁹ *Narayan and Boyajyan v Azerbaijan*, Application no. 54363/17, communicated on March 15, 2018, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-182155>

⁸⁰ OSCE, *1277th Plenary Meeting of the Council*, July 30, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/7/463593.pdf>; Zartonk Media, *Kamil Zeynalli, Who Participated in the Beheading of an Old Man during the War, Awarded a Medal in*

Armenian blood, claiming that “President [Aliyev] is with us [them],” saying “even if you’re deported, you’ll return as heroes.”⁸¹ He is also believed to be one of those who beheaded an Armenian elder.⁸²

The described cases of murders and glorification of murderers by the Azerbaijani authorities, instead of condemnation and prosecution, unquestionably details the fascist motivations and policies of the government.

Anti-Armenian propaganda as an instrument to suppress local democracy

For many years the Azerbaijani government has been using its anti-Armenian propaganda as a tool for repressions against its own pro-democracy dissidents and peace-building activists, as their work was continuously met by groundless accusations of having Armenian ancestry or being a part of a wider Armenian conspiracy against the Azerbaijani state. The ECRI *Report on Azerbaijan* from 2016 stated that “human rights activists working inter alia towards reconciliation with Armenia have been sentenced to heavy prison terms on controversial accusations.”⁸³ Along with suppressing freedoms or violating human rights, such measures naturally fuelled more and more Armenophobic sentiments inside Azerbaijan.

Akram Aylisli, a prominent writer and a member of the Union of Writers of Azerbaijan since the Soviet era has also been a target of a hostile campaign of intimidation. He wrote a novel *Stone Dreams* at the end of the Soviet era, when the two countries engaged in armed conflict. The novel included a description of violence by ethnic Azeris against Armenians during the 1920s in Agulis, Nakhichevan, and Aylisli viewed the book as an appeal for friendship between the two nations. It was published in *Friendship of Peoples* - a Russian literary journal, in December 2012. On January 29 2013, officials from the Yeni Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan’s ruling party, publicly called on Aylisli to withdraw the novel and ask for the nation’s forgiveness.⁸⁴ On February 10 2013, the protesters in western Azerbaijan (Ganja) burned books by the novelist, calling him “a traitor of the Azerbaijani nation.”⁸⁵ Later it was reported that the wife and son of Aylisli were fired from their public sector jobs in early February amid a smear campaign against the novelist.⁸⁶

Arzu Geybullayeva, a prominent Azerbaijani blogger and journalist (awardee for 2014 *Vaclav Havel Journalism Fellowship* with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty) has been subjected to a growing campaign of intimidation and labelled as “traitor” for expressing criticism against the

Azerbaijan, <https://zartonkmedia.com/2021/02/06/kamil-zeynalli-who-participated-in-the-beheading-of-an-old-man-during-the-war-awarded-a-medal-in-azerbaijan/>

⁸¹ Zartonk Media, *One Of The Organizers Of Moscow Attacks Declares, “President [Aliyev] Is With Us,”* July 24, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=624971041472433>

⁸² Yeghia Tashjian on Facebook, February 5, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/YeghiaTashjian/posts/10158716828491391>

⁸³ ECRI, *Report on Azerbaijan (fifth monitoring cycle)*, June 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5581>

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Azerbaijan: Stop Harassing Writer*, February 12, 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/12/azerbaijan-stop-harassing-writer>

⁸⁵ RFE/RL, *Azerbaijani Writer’s Books Burned over His Controversial Novel*, February 11, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijani-writer-books-burned-akram-aylisli/24898784.html>

⁸⁶ US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Azerbaijan*, 2013, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/220465.pdf>

Azerbaijani government, working in the field of conflict transformation and collaborating with Armenian newspapers and NGOs. In 2010, Arzu Geybullayeva joined a small non-for-profit organization, “Imagine” Center for Conflict Transformation that worked with youth from Armenia and Azerbaijan bringing them together for a dialogue retreat.⁸⁷ Geybullayeva started receiving death threats in 2014, when her work for “Agos”, a Turkish-Armenian newspaper based in Istanbul, resulted in an extensive online abuse campaign against her. The intimidation campaign started because she said, in an interview with Azerbaijani news site modern.az, that she was respected in the office where she worked and where many Armenians worked with her.⁸⁸

Journalist Rauf Mirgadirov, who reported on political developments and key human rights issues in Azerbaijan and Turkey, was deported from Turkey in April 2014 and arrested in Azerbaijan on allegations of “espionage,” namely by providing Armenian intelligence services with the information collected, together with photographs and technical drawings, and by deliberately providing them with assistance, so that this information could be used against the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁸⁹ On December 28, 2014, a court in Baku sentenced him to six years imprisonment, which later was converted to a five-year suspended term. Rauf Mirgadirov's arrest was condemned by international organizations, such as the Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders and others.⁹⁰

Renowned Azerbaijani human rights defenders Leyla Yunus and her husband Arif Yunusov were arrested on July 30, 2014 and sentenced respectively to 8.5 and 7 years in jail on August 13, 2015.⁹¹ L.Yunus is the director of the Institute of Peace and Democracy (IPD), an organization promoting the rule of law which is involved in conflict resolution and peace-building between Azerbaijan and Armenia. A.Yunusov is the head of the Conflictology Department of IPD and has been informing people about the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh linking it also to the patriotic education that holds a significant place in the Azerbaijani textbooks and comes from the doctrine of “fighting the enemies”. One of his publications entitled, *The Myths and the Images of the ‘Enemy’ in Historical Science and in the History Textbooks of the Independent Azerbaijan* notes that amid the Karabakh conflict, the schoolbooks in Azerbaijan had the mission of “breeding patriots who know how to distinguish friend from foe and are prepared to take part in another conflict if need be.”⁹² L.Yunus was eventually charged with ‘treason’, “large-scale fraud”, “forgery”, “tax evasion” and “illegal business”, while A.Yunusov was charged with “treason” and “fraud”. The court, however, never explained the basis for the charges and the punishments ranging from heavy fines to life in

⁸⁷ OBC Transeuropa, *Journalists under Threat, the Geybullayeva Case*, July 2015,

<https://www.balkanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Azerbaijan/Journalists-under-threat-the-Geybullayeva-case-162963>

⁸⁸ Index on Censorship, *Azerbaijan: Journalist Arzu Geybullayeva Threatened*, October 10, 2014,

<https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2014/10/azerbaijan-journalist-arzu-geybullayeva-threatened>

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Turkey/Azerbaijan: Journalist Deported, Imprisoned*, April 24, 2014,

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/24/turkey/azerbaijan-journalist-deported-imprisoned>;

Freedom House, *Azerbaijan: Journalist Rauf Mirgadirov Sentenced to Prison*, December 27, 2015,

<https://freedomhouse.org/article/azerbaijan-journalist-rauf-mirgadirov-sentenced-prison>;

ECtHR, *Case of Mirgadirov v. Azerbaijan and Turkey*, Application no. 62775/14, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-204584>;

⁹⁰ Freedom House, *Statement on the Declining State of Freedom of Expression in Eurasia*, September 22, 2016,

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/0/266831.pdf>; Reporters without Borders, *Rauf Mirkadyrov Should Not Be in Prison!*, July 18, 2014, <https://rsf.org/en/news/rauf-mirkadyrov-should-not-be-prison>; Human Rights Watch, *Dispatches: Good News from Azerbaijan (For a Change)*, March 17, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/17/dispatches-good-news-azerbaijan-change>

⁹¹ Front Line Defenders, *Case History: Leyla Yunus*, April 19, 2016,

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-leyla-yunus>

⁹² Armine Adibekyan, Anzhela Elibegova, *Armenophobia in Azerbaijan*, 2015,

https://www.academia.edu/19420142/ARMENOPHOBIA_IN_AZERBAIJAN

prison.⁹³ Both human rights defenders had serious health conditions and were released in November-December 2015 from jail and their prison terms were replaced with suspended sentences of five years.⁹⁴

Terror against foreign citizens as an instrument to isolate Artsakh

Azerbaijan's policy of hatred against Armenians is also extended towards visitors to the territory of Artsakh or expressing such an intention. Particularly, Azerbaijan condemns any visit by foreign citizens to Artsakh and the surrounding territories as well as to the former Azerbaijani enclaves now inside Armenia's territory unless a visa or an official warrant is issued by Azerbaijani authorities. Azerbaijan considers entering these territories through Armenia a violation of its visa and migration policy and as a punishment permanently bans these individuals from entering Azerbaijan. The list of *persona non grata* was first released by the Azerbaijani MFA in 2013 based merely on the fact of a visit to Nagorno-Karabakh, and since has been repeatedly updated, currently counting about 130 people.⁹⁵ European officials, including members of EU Parliament, researchers, journalists among others were also added to Baku's 'black list' over their visits to Nagorno-Karabakh.⁹⁶ A recent addition is the head of the HALO Trust de-mining program in Artsakh.⁹⁷

Besides being officially banned through the 'black lists', there are cases when foreign citizens are threatened in order to be prevented from travelling to Artsakh or from covering stories from their trips. E.g. Sascha Duerkop, an employee at the Confederation of Independent Football Associations was threatened by the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Berlin before and after his visit to Nagorno-Karabakh. Threats were sent to his wife from an employee at the Azerbaijan UN Mission, requesting her to convince her husband to cancel an event organized in Nagorno-Karabakh.⁹⁸

Alexander Lapshin, a Russian-Israeli travel-blogger and journalist has been declared wanted by Azerbaijan due to a tourist visit to Artsakh. There have been several attempts to kidnap him in different locations throughout the globe. Eventually, he was arrested in Minsk by Belarussian authorities and extradited to Baku, where he was imprisoned. His case has evolved into an international scandal encompassing five states, including Russia and Israel,

⁹³ OMCT, *Azerbaijan: Prominent Human Rights Defender Leyla Yunus, IPD Director and a Member of OMCT General Assembly, Sentenced to Three Months Pre-trial Detention*, July 31, 2014, <https://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/azerbaijan/2014/07/d22777/>

⁹⁴ Front Line Defenders, *Case History: Leyla Yunus*, April 19, 2016, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-leyla-yunus>

⁹⁵ Azernews, *Foreign Ministry releases list of personas non grata*, August 5, 2013, <https://www.azernews.az/nation/57769.html>; APA Press Agency, *Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry Releases Names of Persons Declared Persona Non Grata for Paying Illegal Visits to Occupied Territories - full list*, August 13, 2013, <https://bit.ly/3qsfWfB>; Wikipedia, *List of people declared personae non gratae in Azerbaijan*, updated in November 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_declared_personae_non_gratae_in_Azerbaijan

⁹⁶ RFE/RL, *Baku Blacklists EU Lawmakers, Researchers Over Karabakh Visits*, February 23, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijan-blacklist-eu-lawmakers-researchers-karabakh/28326645.html>; Caucasian Knot, *Azerbaijan Includes a MEP in "Black List"*, August 28, 2019, <https://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/48260>; Armenian Atlantic Association NGO and Public Council for Foreign and Security Policy NGO, *Alternative Report on The Implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by Azerbaijan*, September 2016, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/AZE/INT_CCPR_CSS_AZE_25224_E.pdf

⁹⁷ Wikipedia, *List of people declared personae non gratae in Azerbaijan*, updated in November 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_declared_personae_non_gratae_in_Azerbaijan

⁹⁸ Sascha Duerkop on Twitter, October 9, 2020, <https://twitter.com/SaschaDuerkop/status/1314520217196863489?s=20>

hence Azerbaijan was forced to free him. He applied to the ECtHR accusing Azerbaijan of attempted murder, torture and illegal imprisonment. On December 15 2018, the Court notified that it had begun communication with the Azerbaijani authorities, having decided that the evidence presented about his attempted murder in a Baku prison and the infliction of grievous bodily harm and torture was enough to initiate proceedings against Azerbaijan.⁹⁹

Additionally, Azerbaijan restricts the entrance into the country of people having Armenian ethnic backgrounds or that are somehow related to Armenians. More notably, in 2008, the Azerbaijani authorities refused to allow Armenian soccer players to travel to Baku for the qualifying matches between Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite the fact that their Armenian colleagues stated their readiness to secure Azerbaijani team's visit to Yerevan.¹⁰⁰

In May 2019, at UEFA's Europa League final to be held in Baku, Arsenal Football Club decided not to include its player of Armenian origin – Henrikh Mkhitaryan as Armenians were not allowed to enter Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, the fans of Arsenal wearing T-shirts "*Mkhitaryan #7*" were being stopped and checked by the local police.¹⁰¹

Erasing traces of Armenian culture

Armenophobic policies of Azerbaijan ran in parallel with its attempts to erase the traces of indigenous Armenian culture hence proving the genuine goal of removing Armenians from the region. Azerbaijan is actively engaged in historical revisionism and is using three major methods - destroying the cultural heritage of indigenous Armenians, vandalizing the historical monuments and/or appropriating the heritage to other people from the region.

Artsakh hosts vital immovable historical and cultural monuments, including important archaeological resources, of which 1,456 items were left under Azerbaijani control, including about 161 churches and monasteries, 591 khachkars (cross-stones), 345 valuable tombstones, 108 cemeteries and sacral sights, 43 fortresses and palaces, and 208 other types of monuments.¹⁰²

Armenians recognize these places as important relics of their ancient heritage and are concerned that they will be destroyed, vandalised or misused. Such concerns are not unfounded as Azerbaijan has a track record of engaging in this kind of activity before, whereas the related facts are described below.

⁹⁹ ECtHR, *Lapshin v. Azerbaijan*, Application no. 13527/18, communicated on December 4, 2018, <https://laweuro.com/?p=3115>

¹⁰⁰ OSCE, *Anti-Armenian Propaganda and Hate Dissemination Carried out by Azerbaijan as a Serious Obstacle to the Negotiation Process*, October 7, 2008, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/b/34195.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Sport Bible, *Arsenal Fans Stopped by Police in Baku for Wearing Henrikh Mkhitaryan Shirt*, May 28, 2019, <https://www.sportbible.com/football/news-arsenal-fans-stopped-by-police-for-wearing-henrikh-mkhitaryan-shirt-20190528>; BBC News - Russian Service, *Фанатов с армянскими фамилиями не пускают на финал Лиги Европы в Баку*, May 18, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-48284124>

¹⁰² The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Ad Hoc Public Report: The Armenian Cultural Heritage In Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh): Cases Of Vandalism and At Risk of Destruction by Azerbaijan*, January 26, 2021, <https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/792>

During the war Azerbaijani armed forces deliberately shelled St. Holy Saviour Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi¹⁰³ - a masterpiece of 19th century Armenian architecture, spiritual and cultural center of Artsakh. After the war they assaulted Kanach Zham (Green Church) - whereby its dome and the bell tower were destroyed.¹⁰⁴

Following the declaration of the armistice signed on November 10 2020, Azerbaijanis entered Shushi city and desecrated the Cathedral of Ghazanchetsots with graffiti on the external and internal walls of the Cathedral.¹⁰⁵ Other damaged monuments in the post war period include the Holy Mother of God church in Jabrail region,¹⁰⁶ monuments devoted to the victims of the Great Patriotic War in the village Avetaranots, Askeran district of NKAO¹⁰⁷ and Talish, Mardakert district of NKAO,¹⁰⁸ the Armenian cross-stone in the village of Arakel, Hadrut district of Artsakh.¹⁰⁹ There are a number of videos showing aggression towards and vandalism at the Armenian cemeteries in the occupied territories of Armenian settlements.¹¹⁰

Following the collapse of Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has destroyed 89 medieval Armenian churches, 5,840 intricately carved cross-stones called khachkars, and 22,000 tombstones in Nakhichevan/Nakhchivan, another enclave separated by Bolsheviks from Armenia and transferred to Azerbaijan in 1920s. The famous cemetery of cross-stones in Jugha/Julfa - the hometown of prosperous Armenian merchants in Medieval Ages, was pulverized with bulldozers, heavy hammers and pickaxes.¹¹¹

As for appropriation of the monuments, such practices started mostly in the late Soviet period, as Azerbaijan suddenly began to claim that many Armenian/Christian historical monuments in fact belong to Caucasian Albanians previously living on the territory of Azerbaijan, and consequently - are Azerbaijani. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that Azerbaijan's repressive policies towards its minorities have almost eradicated the Christian Udi people - the actual descendants of Caucasian Albanians - living along the coast of the Caspian Sea, in the territory extending to the Kura River in the north. Their numbers used to be more than 50,000

¹⁰³ Ruptly Channel, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Drone captures aftermath of shelling Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi*, October 14, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmF23hoETyI>; Human Rights Watch, *Azerbaijan: Attack on Church Possible War Crime*, December 16, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3jXyLF4>

¹⁰⁴ Zartonk Media, *Report: Azerbaijanis Have Destroyed the Bell Tower & Dome of Shushi's Armenian "Kanach Zham" Church, Built in 1818*, November 19, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3iaSLmv>

¹⁰⁵ 1News, *The Azeris Who Entered Shushi Desecrated the Ghazanchetsots Church*, November 14, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2Lifcug>; Panorama.am, *Azerbaijanis Vandalize Shushi's Ghazanchetsots Cathedral*, November 14, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3gHmNxn>

¹⁰⁶ Thinking Humanity on Facebook, *Video Shows Islamist Pulling down Cross from Church Roof in Artsakh as He Shouts 'Allahu Akbar'*, November 17, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2Lr6Xfh>

¹⁰⁷ NewsInfo, *Azeri Troops Filmed Shooting at Great Patriotic War Memorial in Karabakh*, November 19, 2020, <https://www.newsinfo.am/eng/article/view/V1OtK7k9t>

¹⁰⁸ Panorama.am, *Azerbaijanis Desecrate and Destroy Armenian Graves in Artsakh*, November 26, 2020, <https://bit.ly/35z0CFo>

¹⁰⁹ Desecration of Kachkar in village of Arakel, Artsakh, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SMTMraqK8kaWNGor6R7MCGolmVXAzFCQ?usp=sharing>

¹¹⁰ Zartonk Media, *Azeri Soldiers Destroy Gravestones in an Armenian Cemetery in Occupied Artsakh's Karvachar*, November 26, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ZartonkMedia/videos/3495305603885048>; Azeri War Crimes Channel, *Azerbaijani Soldiers Destroying and Desecrating Armenian Cemeteries*, January 9, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHLvWjT_cpE; Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh on Twitter, November 26, 2020, https://twitter.com/artak_beglaryan/status/1331931713052794880?lang=en; Region Monitor, *Азербайджанские мародеры оскверняют и разрушают армянские надгробия*, November 26, 2020, <http://regionmonitor.com/language/ru/22602>; Azeri War Crimes.org, *Deliberate Destruction and Desecration of Armenian Cemeteries and Gravesites by Azerbaijan's Armed Forces*, January 11, 2020, <https://azeriwarcrimes.org/2021/01/11/deliberate-destruction-and-desecration-of-armenian-cemeteries-and-gravesites-by-azerbajians-armed-forces/>

¹¹¹ Heritage at Risk, *Azerbaijan: Destruction of the Armenian Cemetery at Djulfa – Continued, 2006/2007*, https://www.icomos.org/risk/world_report/2006-2007/pdf/H@R_2006-2007_09_National_Report_Azerbaijan.pdf

in 19th century,¹¹² but dwindled to 6,125 in 1989,¹¹³ 4,200 in early 2000s¹¹⁴ and 3,800 in 2018.¹¹⁵

There is evidence that under the name of Caucasus Albanian/Udi heritage Azerbaijan removed Armenian traces, such as the inscriptions on the tympanum and on tombstones outside the St. Eliasaeus church in Nij (Gabala) built in 1823¹¹⁶ and erased Armenian letters in the Virgin Mary church in Nij (Gabala) built in the early 1890s.¹¹⁷

During the recent war, on October 19 2020, Azerbaijan's First Deputy Minister of Culture Anar Karimov stated that among other things, the war also aims at liberating *"a huge number of cultural and historical monuments from the occupation of the Armenian Armed Forces,"*¹¹⁸ making it an overt statement of the intended efforts of reassignment of the cultural meaning of some monuments to Azerbaijan.¹¹⁹ On November 11, 2020, Karimov tweeted that Khudavang (the Armenian monastery of Dadivank on the territory transferred to Azerbaijan, close to the NKAO border) is *"one of the best testimonies of ancient Caucasian Albanian civilization."*¹²⁰ It is worth mentioning that the same monastery laid in ruins and served as a farmhouse before the Armenians restored it after the war of 1990s. These cases also prove that the appropriation strategy is quite recent in Azerbaijan.

In 2016, IRS Publishing House, financially supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, published an illustrated online book, *Karabakh Over the Centuries*, where all historical references to the Armenian presence in Karabakh are erased. The only mention of Armenians is a chapter on the Armenian *"aggression"* in the first Karabakh War, while medieval Armenian churches are identified as Albanian churches.¹²¹

Since the armistice of November 10, 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Artsakh has made efforts to remove from occupied Shushi the collections of the city's three museums, including about 200 monuments of the Museum of History of Shushi, nearly 800 paintings, graphic works and sculptures of the Museum of Fine Arts and over 700 samples of the Geology Museum. So far, negotiations that engage the Russian peacekeepers have been unsuccessful and there are concerns that a large part of collections will be appropriated, while others might be destroyed.¹²²

¹¹² OSCE, *Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding*, June 6, 2007, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/b/25591.pdf>

¹¹³ Demoscope Weekly, *Всероссийская перепись населения 1989 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР: Азербайджанская ССР*, http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=7

¹¹⁴ OSCE, *Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding*, June 6, 2007, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/b/25591.pdf>

¹¹⁵ World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, *Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Azerbaijan*, updated in March 2018; <https://minorityrights.org/country/azerbaijan>

¹¹⁶ BBC News, *Azeri Church Sparks Political Row*, March 10, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4336733.stm>

¹¹⁷ Armenian Mirror Spectator, *Former Dutch Envoy Exposes Azeri Vandalism on Armenian Church*, November 28, 2020, <https://mirrorspectator.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Armenian-Mirror-Spectator-November-28-2020.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Vestnik Kavkaza, Anar Kerimov: *"Karabakh will Regain its Reputation as a Center of Peace, Love and High Culture,"* October 19, 2020, <https://vestnikkavkaza.net/interviews/Anar-Kerimov-Karabakh-will-regain-its-reputation-as-a-center-of-peace-love-and-high-culture.html>

¹¹⁹ RFE/RL, *Left Behind? Churches, Monasteries Due for Handover to Azerbaijan*, November 14, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3am7DMB>

¹²⁰ Anar Kerimov on Twitter, November 11, 2020, https://twitter.com/Anar_Karim/status/1326437397270310912?s=20

¹²¹ IRS Heritage, *"Karabakh over the Centuries"*, 2016, https://books.irs-az.com/garabagh_en/index.html

¹²² Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), *Fears for Armenian Cultural Heritage in Karabakh*, January 18, 2021, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/fears-armenian-cultural-heritage-karabakh>; Hetq, *Shushi's Museums: Most Collections Now in Azerbaijani Hands*, January 26, 2021, <https://hetq.am/en/article/126646>; The Art Newspaper, *Azerbaijan Refuses to Hand over 1,500 Artworks after Seizing 'Cultural Capital' in Nagorno-Karabakh*, January 29, 2021, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/azerbaijan-refuses-to-hand-over-1-500-artworks-to-armenia-backed-artsakh->

Another museum that had not dislocated its collections from the occupied lands was Hadrut's Museum of Homeland Studies named after Artur Mkrtchyan. On February 22, 2021, Armenian Public Radio published the evidence of the museum being vandalized.¹²³

UNESCO has made a proposal to organize a mission to Artsakh to create an inventory of significant cultural properties so that they can be protected following the conflict. The mission can take place only with the agreement of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, however so far Azerbaijan has failed to respond to the request.¹²⁴

War crimes

During the war, the hatred and calls for violence against Armenians obviously reached a peak in the Azerbaijani and Turkish mass media and social networks. The methods and means employed by the Azerbaijani armed forces against the civilian population of Artsakh demonstrated the intention of ethnic cleansing.

As mentioned above, Azerbaijan attacked Artsakh in close cooperation and under the military leadership of Turkey, that holds the second largest standing military force in NATO. Azerbaijan/Turkey used cluster munitions and UAVs (including killer drones), systematically and indiscriminately shelling peaceful settlements and civilian infrastructures, schools and hospitals, including a maternity ward, shelled places of worship and cultural monuments of Artsakh, particularly the spiritual center St. Ghazanchetots in Shushi.

Regular strikes on populated areas created an atmosphere of terror and constant fears among the civilian population causing significant psychological harm particularly to the children hiding in the bomb-shelters for several weeks.

Azerbaijan/Turkey applied white phosphorus weapons, prohibited by the Geneva Conventions, burning old-growth forests adjacent to human settlements¹²⁵ that served as a

[government?fbclid=IwAR0g5PySrSskPD-YmJ_WF4lHTTck69ZAiAd_itOaEQj_x5V_1fqOFjvgJHq](https://www.facebook.com/archi.galantz/posts/10223964146800890): Archi Galantz on Facebook, November 25, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/archi.galantz/posts/10223964146800890>

¹²³ Armenian Public Radio, *Hadrut Museum Has Been Vandalized: Artsakh Monuments Appear to be Obstacles for the Economic Projects of Baku*, February 22, 2021, <https://hy.armradio.am/2021/02/22/%D5%BA%D5%B2%D5%AE%D5%BE%D5%A5%D5%AC-%D5%A7-%D5%B0%D5%A1%D5%A4%D6%80%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%A9%D5%AB-%D5%A9%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A3%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%B6%D5%A8%E2%80%A4-%D5%A1%D6%80%D6%81%D5%A1%D5%AD%D5%AB-%D5%B0/?fbclid=IwAR3HwvPbQXhsufw8CJfQuiLdnjlo2otMZWRR0M2u46vdmUklwCkNAfN68fo>

¹²⁴ UNESCO, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Reaffirming the Obligation to Protect Cultural Goods*, UNESCO Proposes Sending a Mission to the Field to All Parties, November 20, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/news/nagorno-karabakh-reaffirming-obligation-protect-cultural-goods-unesco-proposes-sending-mission>; UNESCO, *UNESCO is Awaiting Azerbaijan's Response Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh Mission*, December 21, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-awaiting-azerbaijans-response-regarding-nagorno-karabakh-mission>; Commonsplace.eu, *UNESCO Hoping to Send Mission to Nagorno-Karabakh*, February 5, 2021, <https://www.commonspace.eu/index.php/news/unesco-hoping-send-mission-nagorno-karabakh>; Newsweek, *Christian Heritage at Risk as U.N. Watches in Silence*, February 22, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/christian-heritage-risk-un-watches-silence-opinion-568671?fbclid=IwAR3HwvPbQXhsufw8CJfQuiLdnjlo2otMZWRR0M2u46vdmUklwCkNAfN68fo>

¹²⁵ Videos on use of white phosphorus on the forests, October 30-31, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDrjxpBJhZw> and <https://bit.ly/3oIMjL9>; The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh on Facebook, *Map of the Burnt Forests*, November 2, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ArtsakhOmbuds/photos/pcb.1706398566193965/1706398182860670>; *Satellite Imagery Shows Environmental Damage of Reported White Phosphorus Use in Nagorno Karabakh*, November 13, 2020, <https://medium.com/dfrlab/satellite-imagery-shows-environmental-damage-of-reported-white-phosphorus-use-in-nagorno-karabakh-9826391a295>

shelter for evacuees from the strikes of villages. On November 2, 2020, the head of the Nngi community in Martuni region said that the community-owned forests of more than 150 hectares have been burning for three days.¹²⁶ According to the Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, by that day already 1,815 hectares of forests were burnt.¹²⁷ Dozens of people died or were seriously injured by the chemical weapons that were applied up until the ceasefire.¹²⁸

Turkish controlled mercenaries, on the top of their monthly payments, were also promised extra remuneration for beheading Armenians. A Syrian mercenary, captured by the Artsakh Defence Army, testified that he was promised 2,000USD per month for fighting in Artsakh and 100USD as a “reward” for beheading a “kaffir” (unbeliever, in this case implying a non-Muslim).¹²⁹

More than 120 Armenian soldiers and civilians (at least two women) were held as POWs, some subjected to physical abuse and humiliation.¹³⁰ Azerbaijani authorities are hiding the real number of captives.¹³¹ At least 62 Armenians were taken after the armistice of November 10, in a peace setting under the peacekeepers’ presence in the area, and declared as terrorists, being refused the right-of-return, with the intention of trying them in Azerbaijan on criminal charges.¹³²

Visual demonstrations of atrocities, mutilation of bodies of fallen Armenian soldiers and dehumanization of Armenian POWs were widely and proudly circulated on Azerbaijani social media.¹³³

Azerbaijan grossly violated the post-war agreement and humanitarian processes and the international human rights standards with an obvious aim of terrorizing and torturing Armenians both in Artsakh and Armenia, and demanding them to withdraw their self-determination claims.¹³⁴

¹²⁶ NKR Info Center, *Statement of the Head of Nngi Community of Martuni Region*, November 2, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ArtsakhInformation/posts/207485577558897>.

¹²⁷ The number is not possible to verify given the occupation of the burnt areas.

¹²⁸ France24, *Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire: Armenia accuses Azerbaijan of using phosphorus bombs*, November 19, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/video/20201119-nagorno-karabakh-ceasefire-armenia-accuses-azerbaijan-of-using-phosphorus-bombs>.

¹²⁹ Public Radio of Armenia, *Artsakh forces capture Syrian mercenary (video)*, October 30, 2020, <https://en.armradio.am/2020/10/30/artsakh-forces-capture-syrian-mercenary-video>; Hetq, *Artsakh Army Captures Another Syrian Mercenary (video)*, November 1, 2020, <https://hetq.am/en/article/123824>; Greek City Times, *Reward of \$100 Dollars for Each Beheaded Infidel: Testimony of Captured Syrian Mercenary in Artsakh*, November 1, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3piPLGQ>.

¹³⁰ News.am, *The Issue of POWs Reaches a Dead End: We Have 120 Confirmed POWs, While the Non-Confirmed Number Is Significantly Higher*, Siranush Sahakyan, January 12, 2021, <https://news.am/arm/news/623147.html?fbclid=IwAR0rjKamqle8HVfcmUcC9CqR8y8YABOfx9zgCRwM30T7nisVjzATfHOvdg>.

¹³¹ Human Rights Defender of Armenia, *Ad Hoc Public Report on The Treatment of Armenian Prisoners of War and Civilian Captives in Azerbaijan*, 13 January 2021, <https://www.ombuds.am/images/files/1138b156720bec6ae0fd88dc709eb62c.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3FNNGTO9U61FgR8jQ0bYRfrwYWMX6sg-UDMeyHltXhysTDTtlvSPTGJKQ>.

¹³² Eurasianet, *Two Months after War, Dozens of Armenian POWs Remain in Azerbaijani Captivity*, January 14, 2021, <https://eurasianet.org/two-months-after-war-dozens-of-armenian-pows-remain-in-azerbaijani-captivity>; Ilham Aliyev: *We have returned all prisoners of war*, February 26, 2021, <https://apa.az/en/domestic-news/President-Ilham-Aliyev-We-have-returned-all-prisoners-of-war-343594>; Josef Siegele, Secretary General of the European Ombudsman Institute on Twitter, February 26, 2021, https://twitter.com/siegele_jos/status/1365294814238019588/photo/1.

¹³³ Human Rights Watch, *Azerbaijan: Armenian Prisoners of War Badly Mistreated*, December 2, 2020, <https://bit.ly/35G8DZr>.

¹³⁴ EurasiaNet, *Two Months after War, Dozens of Armenian POWs Remain in Azerbaijani Captivity*, January 14, 2021, <https://eurasianet.org/two-months-after-war-dozens-of-armenian-pows-remain-in-azerbaijani-captivity>.

There have been a number of atrocities committed against the civilian population by the Azerbaijani armed forces that vividly demonstrate the quality of attitude of the Azerbaijani people, fuelled and supported by the hatred and official anti-Armenian policy, obviously aimed at the intimidation of people and ethnic cleansing. Some examples are below described:

- On October 10, 2020, members of a subversive group that invaded Hadrut town killed at least four civilians. Among them was a person with a disability and his elderly mother,¹³⁵ who were shot to death in cold blood in their house. The pictures of the dead body of the disabled person revealed signs of violence on his body - his chest and abdomen. His left hand palm was shot by a gun, supposedly raised to show he was unarmed at his home.¹³⁶
- On October 15, 2020, two video clips were circulated on social media showing how two Armenian men surrendered to the Azerbaijani armed forces in Hadrut town, but who were subsequently humiliated and executed.¹³⁷ Prior to being executed both men - 73-year-old Benik Hakobyan and 25-year-old Yuri Adamyan - were wrapped in the flags of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh, respectively.¹³⁸
- On October 18, 2020, the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia publicized information that he had received a complaint regarding the beheading of an Armenian soldier by an Azerbaijani military officer.¹³⁹ According to the information, on October 16, 2020, a member of the Azerbaijani armed forces called to the brother of the Armenian soldier in question and told that his brother was under their control, that they beheaded him and were going to post his photo on the social network. This was done to cause suffering to the family members. Several hours later, the brother found the photo of his killed brother on the latter's social media page.¹⁴⁰ Other instances of beheading of Artsakh Defence Army soldiers were revealed in social media as well.¹⁴¹
- On October 22, 2020, the Azerbaijani media channel "Kanal 1" published a video showing eight persons in the uniform of the Artsakh Defence Army being ordered to say "*Karabakh-Azerbaijan*" by the military officers of Azerbaijani armed forces. One of them was standing bent down with evident signs of being in pain.¹⁴² In another video published by Azerbaijani social media users, a group of Armenian soldiers were ordered to sit on their knees, with hands behind their heads and loudly pronounce "*Karabakh-Azerbaijan*".
- On October 22, 2022, footage revealed in social media showed a soldier of the Artsakh Defence Army in the hands of Azerbaijani officers being kicked in the head and ordered

¹³⁵The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Updated Edition of the Second Interim Report on the Azerbaijani Atrocities against the Artsakh Population in September-October 2020*, October 18, 2020, <https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/735>

¹³⁶The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh on Twitter, https://twitter.com/Artak_Beglyan/status/1315581056075128832?s=20

¹³⁷Bellingcat, *An Execution in Hadrut-Karabakh*, October 15, 2020, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/rest-of-world/2020/10/15/an-execution-in-hadrut-karabakh/?fbclid=IwAR0tichQzDgSDSC7lkvLMxEilUzRSgG5F-Fv0pxEd68s4GPFS1v7z7wD6Q>; BBC Russian Service, *Кто убил Беника и Юрия? Би-би-си разбирает видео с расстрелом пленников в Карабахе*, October 23, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-54630739>

¹³⁸The Human Rights Defender of Armenia on Facebook, October 16, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Armenianombudsman>

¹³⁹The Human Rights Defender of Armenia website, *The Azeris Beheaded the Armenian Soldier, Called and Informed His Brother and Posted the Picture on the Internet*, October 19, 2020, https://ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1337

¹⁴⁰The Human Rights Defender of Armenia on Facebook, October 18, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=733479247251283&set=a.363684047564140>

¹⁴¹The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh, *Updated Edition of the Second Interim Report on the Azerbaijani Atrocities against the Artsakh Population in September-October 2020*, October 18, 2020, <https://artsakhombuds.am/en/document/735>

¹⁴²Kanal 1, *URGENT. An Enemy was Captured by a Ball. See What They Were Told. Latest News from the Front (in Azerbaijani)*, October 22, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftHHS7qUSu0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1Ca9eb7uyo0FN2O1Thd3W9ndZ6En4IMA_GlkCSJwDQONGa_XSs_qLARhyg

to curse the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan aiming to humiliate the leader of the country and the person in question. The video clearly showed that the soldier was in a painful and stressful condition.¹⁴³

- On October 28, 2020, Azerbaijan launched heavy rocket strikes towards the Medical Center, the Main Hospital and the maternity ward of Stepanakert, located at the center of the capital city of Artsakh. Whereas there were no military objects nearby the intent of the strikes was to kill civilians in the mentioned locations.¹⁴⁴ Other incidents of hitting the hospitals in Artsakh have been documented by Human Rights Watch.¹⁴⁵
- On October 29, 2020, there was a report on social media about three elderly neighbours in Togh village, who decided not to flee. As Azerbaijanis captured the village, one of them watched as they executed her two friends, beheading one and shooting the other. She escaped with the clothes she wore to Stepanakert.¹⁴⁶
- On October 29, 2020, a civilian captive, an 85-year-old Yevgenia Babayan was transferred to Armenia.¹⁴⁷ In her testimony about instances of ill-treatment under the control of Azerbaijani authorities the captive woman stated that there were two civilians of Armenian origin in the police department and was later told, by the policemen, that they too were executed.¹⁴⁸
- On October 30, 2020, another person, an 84-year-old man, Misha Melkumyan, was reported dead while under the control of Azerbaijani authorities, the death having resulted from brain trauma.¹⁴⁹
- On October 30, 2020, another video with an alleged deliberate killing of prisoners-of-war of the Artsakh Defence Army appeared on social media. The footage showed at least 19 bodies of servicemen of the Artsakh Defence Army with some handcuffed and others naked. Some of the bodies of the military personnel had sacks on their heads and their hands were tied behind their backs.¹⁵⁰ The geolocation of the footage was in Kovsakan (Zangelan) captured by Azerbaijani armed forces.¹⁵¹
- After the armistice was signed on November 9, 2020, a 58-year-old disabled woman was found in Karin Tak village nearby Shushi in the yard of her house with her hand, foot and ear cut off.¹⁵²
- On November 10, 2020 two Lebanese-Armenians - Maral Najarian and Viken Euljekian, who had moved to Armenia/Artsakh - were captured in Berdzor (Lachin corridor) on their way to Shushi to pick up their belongings. Azerbaijani authorities have

¹⁴³Karabagh Records, *Video Showing One of the Armenian PoWs in Azerbaijan being Humiliated and Beaten*, October 22, 2020, <https://twitter.com/KarabakhRecords/status/1319203595368226818>

¹⁴⁴The Human Rights Defender of Armenia on Twitter, October 28, 2020, <https://twitter.com/aratoyan/status/1321440982064390145?s=20>

¹⁴⁵Human Rights Watch, *Azerbaijan: Unlawful Strikes in Nagorno-Karabakh*, December 11, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/11/azerbaijan-unlawful-strikes-nagorno-karabakh>; Human Rights Watch, *Unlawful Attacks on Medical Facilities and Personnel in Nagorno-Karabakh*, February 26, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/26/unlawful-attacks-medical-facilities-and-personnel-nagorno-karabakh?fbclid=IwAR3Vpl9opSeCIMS0txzlpLI_N1GBUxYF3_Xuh-QNK32sv5rrx51Gij6o_D8

¹⁴⁶Chuck Holton on Facebook, October 29, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Chuckholton/posts/10160500653406038>

¹⁴⁷International Committee of the Red Cross, *Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: ICRC Facilitates Transfer of Combatants Killed in Action*, ICRC, October 29, 2020, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-icrc-facilitates-transfer-combatants-killed-action?fbclid=IwAR0XAPKfKuaSBU5HTi9usi3i5c_EDJ54A8U7Uds4fL5ezgiNvvhJRUQJQNI

¹⁴⁸Investigative Committee of Armenia, *Video of the Victim's Story* (in Armenian), October 30, 2020, <http://investigative.am/news/view/tarec-knoj-harcaqnnutyun.html>

¹⁴⁹Radio Liberty, *Misha Melkumyan Died due to Trauma to Head in Captivity in Azerbaijan* (in Armenian), November 5, 2020, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30932177.html>; The Human Rights Defender of Armenia on Facebook, October 30, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=742153696383838&id=100017676420633

¹⁵⁰The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh on Twitter, October 31, 2020, https://twitter.com/Artak_Beglaryan/status/1322290987377610752?s=20

¹⁵¹Benjamin Strick on Twitter, October 30, 2020, <https://twitter.com/BenDoBrown/status/1322200787141971971?s=20>

¹⁵²Hetq, *Artsakh: Brother of Dead Woman Says She Was Tortured*, 14 Jan 2021, <https://hetq.am/en/article/126270>

charged Viken on five criminal counts and have released a video where Viken is forced to say that he is a mercenary terrorist and fought for 2,500 dollars.¹⁵³ ECtHR had confirmed that Maral is also a captive in Azerbaijan.¹⁵⁴

- On November 23, 2020, The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh circulated another video, which showed 18-old soldier Erik Khachatryan being humiliated by the Azerbaijani military.¹⁵⁵
- On December 29, 2020, Azerbaijani media reported on the capture of Armenian soldiers who allegedly attacked Azeri positions in Hadrut and were killed. One of those prisoners was 19-year-old soldier Erik Gasparyan who was murdered and his body mutilated.¹⁵⁶

In the three months since the war ended many dozens of POWs have not been returned by Azerbaijan though the return is supposed to be guaranteed by paragraph 8 of the statement signed by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.¹⁵⁷

The videos and images of atrocities committed against Armenian servicemen and civilians, as well as the mutilation of their remains by the Azerbaijani armed forces circulating in social media, as well as the records of ill-treatment and in some cases deliberate killing of ethnic Armenian prisoners of war and civilians in Azerbaijan¹⁵⁸ increase the concern and anxiety of the families as the whereabouts and possible return of their relatives remain in question.

These concerns are also based on the documented record of Azerbaijani authorities of the ill-treatment and killing of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians in the past.¹⁵⁹ Those concerns grow due to the intensification of the hatred policy of Azerbaijan even after the armistice, particularly demonstrated by inflammatory speeches at the highest level.

¹⁵³ Hetq, *From Beirut to Artsakh: Ani Najarian Waits for Sister Now Held in Azerbaijan*, January 26, 2021; <https://hetq.am/en/article/126701>

¹⁵⁴ Artsakh Press, *Red Cross representatives visit Maral Najarian who is in captivity in Azerbaijan*, February 13, 2021, <https://artsakhpress.am/eng/news/138960/red-cross-representatives-visit-maral-najarian-who-is-in-captivity-in-azerbaijan.html>

¹⁵⁵ The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh on Twitter, November 23, 2020, https://twitter.com/Artak_Beglyan/status/1330936149347536900

¹⁵⁶ RAGEX, *Investigation Report - The Kidnap and Execution of Erik Gasparyan*, January 22, 2021, <https://www.ragex.co/post/the-execution-of-erik-gasparyan-19-years-old?fbclid=IwAR2TW7otFKuKZuLL752J9I52BP64grVL04HiglGMdkynlxDQ-ZScMz5qXfw>

¹⁵⁷ President of Russian Federation Website, *Заявление Президента Азербайджанской Республики, Премьер-министра Республики Армения и Президента Российской Федерации*, 10 ноября 2020, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/64384>; The Human Rights Defender of Armenia Website, *Azerbaijan Grossly Violates International Requirements, Including the Trilateral Statement with Regard to the Rights of Captives: The Legal Position of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia*, January 10, 2021, https://www.ombuds.am/en_us/site/ViewNews/1475; Eurasianet, *Two Months after War, Dozens of Armenian POWs Remain in Azerbaijani Captivity*, January 14, 2021, <https://eurasianet.org/two-months-after-war-dozens-of-armenian-pows-remain-in-azerbaijani-captivity>; The American Conservative, *Armenian Christians Are Still Being Held Captive by Azerbaijan*, February 5, 2021, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/armenian-christians-are-still-being-held-captive-by-azerbaijan/?fbclid=IwAR2-WsB7xUlfuTEFepyik_wz0wtKJcH2r4FkNILLABFAuaMZiNKwiEsot11; UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), *Nagorno-Karabakh: Captives Must be Released – UN experts*, February 1, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26702&LangID=E&fbclid=IwAR3YFeJotClakzvzyt3DiFzPQ9GbdAwBhRBKO0sAAActLz9wn-7J6Xc6LxS8>

¹⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Azerbaijan: Armenian Prisoners of War Badly Mistreated*, 2 December 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/02/azerbaijan-armenian-prisoners-war-badly-mistreated>

¹⁵⁹ ECtHR, *Case of Saribekyan and Balyan v. Azerbaijan*, Application no. 35746/11, <https://www.echr.am/resources/echr/judgments/8bf062b89bad2d6409695591343b4f4c.pdf>; ECtHR, *Artush Petrosyan v. Azerbaijan*, Application no. 32427/16, communicated on March 10, 2017,

Preparation for war and the crime of aggression

In parallel to negotiations aimed at a peaceful solution of the conflict, Azerbaijan has spent the last decade accumulating arms and heavily investing in its military with the intention of taking over the region by war.

Azerbaijan apparently views the conflict as a dispute over its own 'belongings,' so finds the only solution to be the return of the territory to the 'owner' by all means.¹⁶⁰ Determination to resolve the issue through military force is evident from multiple speeches of Aliyev and some other key officials. A few of the quotes starting from 2007 are presented below:

On June 22 2007, the Azerbaijani President said *"Azerbaijan must attack Armenia in all directions. The attack must be political, economic and diplomatic."* He stated *"Nagorno-Karabakh will never join Armenia and will never be independent"*... Noting the necessity of creation of a military-industrial multiplex, Aliyev said that in the end of the year Azerbaijan will launch its first military output. *"War is not over and Azerbaijan will strengthen its army,"* he said, reminding that his country's military budget is equal to Armenia's state budget.¹⁶¹

On April 23 2010, President Aliyev said *"It is no secret that along with other spheres Azerbaijan places a particular emphasis on its military. It is our only approach since Azerbaijan is at war. The war is not over. The first phase of war was just completed. We must do it so that we could liberate our lands by military means at any moment. Military spending has increased ten-fold over the past 5-6 years, defence industry is developing, military equipment has been bought because it is our natural right... Today, Azerbaijan's army is stronger and more professional than Armenian army in all fields."*¹⁶²

On July 13, 2010, President Aliyev said at the opening address to his Cabinet *"We took very important steps in the military industry in 2009. We've been strengthening our military potential. Recently we made changes to our budget, which now stands at \$15bn. We allocated an additional \$500m to military spending.... We have to focus, first and foremost, on strengthening the country's military potential, and this is what we are doing. Azerbaijan's military spending today is \$2.15bn, which is more than the total budget of Armenia."...* *"Our military power can play a decisive role in the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh."...* *"We must be ready to liberate our occupied lands at any time. And I'm completely confident that Azerbaijan is capable of doing so today. We have considerably increased our military power...."*¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Al Jazeera, Ilham Aliyev: Armenian Government 'Overestimated' Its Global Role, October 3, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/talk-to-al-jazeera/2020/10/3/ilham-aliyev-armenian-government-overestimated-its-global-role>

¹⁶¹ PanarmenianNet, Azerbaijani President Calls "to Attack Armenia in All Directions", June 22, 2007, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/22662>

¹⁶² European Friends of Armenia, Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AliyevWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf with reference to <http://www.azertag.com/jsp/shownews.jsp?id=644&cdate=2010-04-23&lang=en>, currently not accessible

¹⁶³ European Friends of Armenia, Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AliyevWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf with reference to <http://www.news.az/articles/19078>, currently not accessible

On February 14, 2011, Azerbaijani Defence Minister Safar Abiyev told OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen that his country is seriously preparing for war against Armenia to *"liberate its territories from occupation."*¹⁶⁴

On June 4, 2011, Azerbaijani Defence ministry spokesman Eldar Sabiroglu stated that *"Eventually, Azerbaijani soldiers will meet the expectations of the people, the government, and the supreme commander-in-chief and will liberate the occupied land from the enemy."*¹⁶⁵

On October 18, 2011, on the 20th anniversary of the restoration of state independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, President Aliyev said *"Our growing military spending is a natural process. All our expenses, including the military, are growing. Considering the fact that we have the Karabakh problem, an increase in our expenses is natural. If they did not increase, it would be unnatural. They are and will be growing. The task I set a few years ago is now in the past. I said that our military spending must equal Armenia's total budget. Today, our military spending is 500 million higher than the Armenian budget. In the future, the difference will further increase. One of the reasons for my optimism is the demographic situation in the region. The population of Azerbaijan is growing every year, we have over 9.1 million citizens. The population of Armenia is decreasing by the year, and will continue to reduce due to natural processes and because of the hopelessness, unemployment and mass apathy prevailing there. All these and other factors, needless to say, further strengthen our confidence. Most importantly, the people of Azerbaijan will never put up with this situation. The people of Azerbaijan will ensure the existence of Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan."*¹⁶⁶

On January 10, 2014, President Aliyev said *"Azerbaijan will never allow the establishment of the second fictitious Armenian state on its historical territory."* He said *"Our military power plays a crucial role in a just settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with international standards."*¹⁶⁷

On August 7, 2014, the Twitter statement of President Aliyev read that *"Our territorial integrity will be restored. There are several factors that enable this conclusion. Azerbaijan is getting stronger. We are not living in peace, we are living in a state of war. Everyone must know this. The war is not over. Only the first stage of it is. But the second stage may start too."*¹⁶⁸

On June 16 2017, Azerbaijan's Defence Minister Zakir Hasanov made a speech before the graduates of the Azerbaijan Higher Military School, saying: *"The only task of the army is to be ready for war and ensure the territorial integrity by liberating the occupied lands."*¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Asbarez, *Azerbaijan Preparing for War, Says Defense Minister*, February 14, 2011, <http://asbarez.com/93413/azerbaijan-preparing-for-war-says-Defence-minister/>

¹⁶⁵ Reuters, *Azeri Defense Ministry Says Armenia Making War Inevitable*, June 4, 2011 <http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCATRE7531V420110604>

¹⁶⁶ European Friends of Armenia, *Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials*, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AliyevWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf with reference to <http://en.president.az/articles/3327>, currently not accessible

¹⁶⁷ European Friends of Armenia, *Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials*, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AliyevWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf with reference to <http://en.apa.az/news/20541954>, currently not accessible

¹⁶⁸ Ilham Aliyev on Twitter, August 7, 2014, <https://twitter.com/presidentaz>

¹⁶⁹ European Friends of Armenia, *Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials*, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AliyevWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf with reference to <http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/azerbaijanidefense-minister-meets-graduates-of-higher-military-school.html>, currently not accessible

On June 26, 2018, President Aliyev said *“The war has not ended yet, only the first stage of war is over.”*¹⁷⁰

Obviously, the society in Azerbaijan has been prepared for war for many years. Not surprisingly, after the clashes on the northern borders of Armenia in mid-July 2020, there have been massive demonstrations in Baku demanding the Azerbaijani government go to war with Armenia.¹⁷¹

Recent terror rhetoric and actions

It should be noted that after the 44-day war of 2020 Aliyev’s rhetoric became much more arrogant, humiliating and threatening, indicating his true sentiments towards Armenians.

On January 6, 2021, in a video-conference Aliyev summarized the results of 2020, where he used expressions threatening the entire Armenian people and insulting their dignity.¹⁷² His speech also implied an intent of further isolating Artsakh, which according to the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh is in violation of the internationally recognized principle that no one should be left behind and no human right ignored, regardless of the political status of the territory in which one is present or resides therein.¹⁷³ Some quotes from Aliyev’s speech include:

- *“We stopped when Armenia acknowledged its humiliating defeat, fell to its knees, threw in the towel and surrendered.”*
- *“I have just been informed that the Armenian foreign minister has gone to Khankendi [Stepanakert]. What in the world are you doing there? Let them not forget the war. Let them remember that the iron fist is still there. These visits must stop. We warn them that if such provocative steps continue to be taken, Armenia will regret it even more ... Armenian foreign minister, who are you to go there? We warn you. If a similar step is repeated, our response will be very harsh”.*
- *“Pro-Armenian forces, those who took part in ugly deeds against us during the war, those who want to take away our victory, those who support the Armenians are the supporters of the anti-national council and they are fugitives, traitors, enemies. Our people must know this, the younger generation must know this. In some cases, the younger generation is not provided with sufficient information about this shameful history. It should be included in high school and university textbooks”.*

¹⁷⁰European Friends of Armenia, *Collection of War Threat Statements by the President Ilham Aliyev and Other Azerbaijani Officials*, 2018, https://eufoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AllyevWarThreats_update_31.07.2018.pdf with reference to <http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/presidentonly-first-stage-of-war-ended.html>, currently not accessible

¹⁷¹Ruptly, *Azerbaijan: Thousands Gather to Support Army in Baku Amid Escalating Tensions with Armenia*, July 15, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCNqEu3H_OM&t=33s; Universal Information & Entertainment TV, *Live Video Thousands Have Demonstrated in Azerbaijan Protesters Demand War after Armenia Clashes*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W09yhy2SENo&t=133s>

¹⁷²Совещание в Видеоформате, *Посвященное Итогам 2020 года*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVL0JmGLQ8>

¹⁷³AzerTAc News, *President Ilham Aliyev chairs meeting in video format on results of 2020*, January 6, 2021, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3360426.html>; Armenpress, *Statements Made by Azerbaijani President Violate International Humanitarian Law – Armenian Ombudsman*, January 8, 2021, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1039658>

- *“Today, we have the task of solidifying this victory politically, preventing the rise of Armenian fascism...”*¹⁷⁴

Besides pure rhetoric, Aliyev strategically and persistently moves policies and promotes actions to terrorize and generate fear among the Armenian people.

On December 7, 2020, Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs at a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov mentioned that there are no significant signs of Turkey making any effort to withdraw the foreign terrorists from around Artsakh. He said, *“Quite the contrary, there are confirmed reports that Azerbaijan is planning to expand the geography of spreading armed terrorists and mercenaries and populate the occupied regions of Artsakh with them.”*¹⁷⁵

As mentioned by the chairman of Turkey's Nationalist Movement Party Dovlet Bahcheli, there is a plan to establish a school in Shushi by Ulku Ocaklari Education and Culture Foundation, which is the official name of “Grey Wolves”, internationally recognized as a terrorist neo-fascist organization and recently banned in France.¹⁷⁶ According to the representative of the International Christian Concern (ICC) *“the opening of a Grey Wolf school in Shushi further proves that this war has had strong ideological foundations from its start.”*¹⁷⁷

Turkey and Russia established a joint monitoring center in Aghdam, towards the eastern border of Artsakh. There is not much official information about the purpose of the center, but it seems to be as a base for surveillance drones to monitor the new ceasefire lines between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces, implying also that the drones - the major devices that ‘won’ the war and devastated Artsakh - now will be regularly be flying over its sky.¹⁷⁸

The mentioned instances of the presence of jihadist terrorists in the neighbourhood and surveillance by Turkish drones spread threats and intimidation among the Armenian population and are obviously intended to wipe them from the area in the future, even without any further military intervention.

It should be noted that according to the tri-partite statement of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on the armistice, the peacekeeping forces of Russia will stay in the region for 5 years with a possibility of automatic extension unless either of parties expresses an “intent of suspension”, provided 6 months in advance.¹⁷⁹ People of Artsakh are seriously concerned that the peacekeepers will leave the area upon the demand of Azerbaijan before the conflict is resolved

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Asbarez, *Turkey Must Withdraw Troops, Mercenaries from Karabakh, Says Armenia's Foreign Minister*, December 7 2020, <https://asbarez.com/199022/turkey-must-withdraw-troops-mercenaries-from-karabakh-says-armenias-foreign-minister>

¹⁷⁶ Deutsche Welle, *France Bans Turkish Ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves Group*, December 4, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/france-bans-turkish-ultra-nationalist-grey-wolves-group/a-55503469>

¹⁷⁷ ICC, *Grey Wolves Announce School Opening in Nagorno-Karabakh*, January 27, 2021, <https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/27/terrorist-organization-grey-wolves-announce-school-opening-nagorno-karabakh>; Civilnet, *Turkey's Ultranationalistic Grey Wolves to Open School in Shushi*, February 1, 2021, <https://www.civilnet.am/news/2021/02/01/Turkey%E2%80%99s-Ultranationalistic-Grey-Wolves-to-Open-School-in-Shushi/417929>

¹⁷⁸ Eurasianet, *Russia and Turkey Open Joint Military Center in Azerbaijan*, February 2, 2021, <https://eurasianet.org/russia-and-turkey-open-joint-military-center-in-azerbaijan?fbclid=IwAR1yTR8f9vQvFsIAM5K6E-moPgDaV2cwtxdovY4RWpCeDjpBCk25vdmR5SU>; Caucasus Watch, *Nagorno-Karabakh: Putin and Erdogan Discuss Monitoring Centre; EU, UN Agencies and Japan Send Humanitarian Assistance*, February 19, 2021, https://caucasuswatch.de/news/3569.html?fbclid=IwAR3AfnpYh9OJpXqQW7OE5WrGR40oqvHFUX3Vg_g6iws7CNzf7z4qZ_g4ija0

¹⁷⁹ President of Russian Federation Website, *Заявление Президента Азербайджанской Республики, Премьер-министра Республики Армения и Президента Российской Федерации*, November 10, 2020, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/64384>

diplomatically and Armenians will be left alone faced with the existential threats caused by hatred and ethnic cleansing intentions of the Azerbaijani government.

Ethnic cleansing triggered by Turkey

Heydar Aliyev, former president of Azerbaijan and the father of current President Ilham Aliyev has once described Azerbaijan and Turkey as “*One nation, two states.*” Both countries share a Turkic culture and populations.¹⁸⁰

The ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Artsakh by local Turks has been directly or indirectly supported and promoted by Turkey since the beginning of 20th century. Turkey has been an active player both in early 1920s in the negotiations with Bolsheviks to divide parts of Armenia, annexing those to Azerbaijan and its autonomous Nakhichevan republic, squeezing the territories of both Armenia and Artsakh inside Turkish/Azerbaijani borders. As known, Turkey itself was the organizer and the denier of genocide of its Christian minorities - 1.5 million Armenians as well as of hundreds of thousands of Greeks and Assyrians - in the Ottoman Empire in 19-20th centuries.

Despite recognizing the independence of Armenia after the collapse of Soviet Union, in 1993, in reaction to Armenian victories during the first Artsakh war, Turkey unilaterally froze all its relations with Armenia putting the latter into an economic blockade and actually putting at risk its future development.

Under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's policies have become more nationalistic and antagonistic towards its neighbours with vivid signs of racism and expansionism.

On 4 May, 2020, President Erdogan used the term “*kılıç artığı*” (in Turkish - “*leftovers of the sword*”) referring to survivors of the genocide in the Ottoman Empire. He specifically said that “*We do not allow terrorist leftovers of the sword in our country [Turkey] to attempt to carry out [terrorist] activities. Their number has decreased a lot but they still exist.*”¹⁸¹

In July 2020, Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that they were going “*to continue to fulfil the mission of their grandfathers, which was carried out a century ago in the Caucasus,*”¹⁸² which was an explicit threat of continuing the Armenian Genocide.

In the 44-day war Turkey helped Azerbaijan through the provision of weapons (including Bayraktar killer drones) and assistance by its high-ranking military personnel. Turkey also

¹⁸⁰ <https://mfa.gov.az/en/content/151/turkey>; BBC News, Armenia-Azerbaijan: Why Did Nagorno-Karabakh Spark a Conflict?, November 12, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54324772>

¹⁸¹ Genocide Watch, Turkey: Erdogan Uses “Leftovers of the Sword” Anti-Christian Hate Speech,” May 11, 2020, <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/2020/05/11/turkey-erdogan-uses-leftovers-of-the-sword-anti-christian-hate-speech>, Assyrian International News Agency, Erdogan Insults Survivors of the Turkish Genocide of Assyrians, Greeks and Armenians, May 13, 2020, <http://www.aina.org/news/20200513130644.pdf>

¹⁸² Abdulla Bozkurt on Twitter, July 15, 2020, <https://twitter.com/abdbozkurt/status/1283302470572220417?lang=en>; The Armenian Weekly, Turkey's escalations pose an existential threat to Armenia, September 30, 2020, <https://armenianweekly.com/2020/09/30/turkeys-escalations-pose-an-existential-threat-to-armenia>

recruited mercenaries (including jihadists) from Syria and employed them in the region – promising them 1,000-2,000USD as monthly salaries and additional 100USD - for each beheaded Armenian.¹⁸³

The president of Christian Solidarity International has signalled that the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia represents a genocide against Armenian Christians, referring particularly to the fact that Azerbaijan was aided by the Turkish military and the former ISIS fighters from Syria recruited by Turkey as mercenaries against Armenia.¹⁸⁴

Obviously, the violence and hatred have not remained contained within Azerbaijan and Turkey, but also have spread throughout other continents, where there are concentrations of Armenian and Azerbaijani diaspora. On October 29, 2020, videos appeared, reportedly of Azeris and Turks in Istanbul, Turkey as well as in Lyon and Vienna, France, marching aggressively in the streets and looking for Armenians.¹⁸⁵

International Christian Concern has observed that the conflict in Artsakh also fuelled anti-Armenian hatred throughout Turkey towards the indigenous Armenian population as well as Turkish-influenced areas of Syria. E.g., in Istanbul, a demonstration convoy encircled the former Agos offices and the Memorial Site of Hrant Dink, a Turkish-Armenian editor of Agos assassinated in 2007. The mayor of Akçakale in Turkey (shares a border with Syria's Tal Abyad, a historically Armenian area) distributed Azerbaijani flags to shopkeepers and citizens,

¹⁸³ The Wall Street Journal, *Turkish-Backed Syrian Fighters Join Armenian-Azeri Conflict*, October 14, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/turkish-backed-syrian-fighters-join-armenian-azeri-conflict-11602625885>; Media Room, *Urgent: The General of the Libyan National Army Confirms the Transfer of Mercenaries by Turkey to Azerbaijan (video)*, October 15, 2020, <https://mediaroom.am/int/item/16126-2020-10-15-18-45-39.html>; Orakarg, *Some Part of Mercenaries Moved from Syria to Azerbaijan Have Died, Many Have Returned: A Syrian Terrorist*, October 16, 2021, <https://orakarg.com/44128>; Orakarg, *One of the Leaders of Firqat al-Hamza Division Has Been Killed*, October 27, 2020, <https://orakarg.com/46409>; France 24, *Des vidéos documentent la présence de mercenaires syriens dans le conflit du Haut-Karabakh*, October 20, 2020, <https://observers.france24.com/fr/20201020-vidéos-document-présence-mercénaires-syriens-conflit-haut-karabakh>, also covered by Hetq, October 22, 2020, <https://hetq.am/hy/article/123406?fbclid=IwAR09AInNF-twbpN1mLP-mJkboVeC6hQRBSUk92EK66-US8CQUSc1HwscBxM>; MediaLab, *We Are Here in Mataghis, There Is No Food, No Water, Take us out from This Swamp: Voice Message of a Syrian Mercenary (Video)*, October 21, 2020, https://medialab.am/104601/?fbclid=IwAR2ZBe9wcMLEwM3_TOZ0yKiDjILSJAD1LFphwI5ZVBJ92aM_D7gWBFh8cHQ; Boycott Turkey on Facebook, *Photo of a Document of a Syrian Mercenary*, October 24, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/BoycottTurkey.org/posts/132670191941144>; Radio Liberty, *Snell. Erdogan Sent More Than 15,000 Mercenaries to Libya, and Got No International Criticism, Why Wouldn't He Send Them to Fight Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh?*, October 25, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=718362778776579>; Alexander McKeever website, *SNA Mercenaries in Azerbaijan: the Visual Evidence*, October 26, 2020, <https://akmckeever.com/2020/10/26/sna-mercenaries-in-azerbaijan-the-visual-evidence>; Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, *Turkish-backed Mercenaries in Azerbaijan | Struggle to Recruit Fighters Despite Inducements, Number of Fighters Arrive in Azerbaijan Rises to 2,350, of Whom Over 215 Killed, and 320 Returned*, October 28, 2021, https://www.syriahr.com/en/190066/?fbclid=IwAR18CqslquexnfHAbgiy-ZKlo5Flr8_qg5rgBTDY7TZP9nT8yHPcl82qNko; Armenian Unified Infocenter, *Defense Army Divisions Captured Another Terrorist the Interrogation of Who Leaves No Doubt about Presence of Terrorists on the Front Line*, October 30, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2025672844236387>; Armenian Unified Infocenter, *Another Syrian mercenary was captured by the Defense Army*, November 1, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=692675944691046>; Armenian Unified Infocenter, *Here is the Testimony of the Second Mercenary That Was Captured*, November 4, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=400393217659652>; A Video Proving Participation of Jihadist Mercenaries to Azerbaijan, https://www.dropbox.com/s/7o5kxbqyiffq0e8/%D0%A2%D0%92.mp4?dl=0&fbclid=IwAR22q8ZLLwfSEtFbjcWW_hOt6QijErdpz2VQIQsYOY1oY9lZP0GKOkIXF0c; The UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries, *Mercenaries in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Zone Must be Withdrawn – UN Experts*, November 11, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26494&LangID=E>.

¹⁸⁴ ICC, *Human Rights Organization Labels Artsakh Conflict Genocide Against Armenian Christians*, January 14, 2021, https://www.persecution.org/2021/01/14/human-rights-organization-labels-artsakh-conflict-genocide-armenian-christians/?fbclid=IwAR3zrQTsuWcb3QO58HW5E0UAU3ndkeHhZLmzBQmy6-E3xVDSUIQYcGem_EXU; ICC, *Report Documents Turkey's Reliance Upon ISIS*, October 10, 2020, <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/10/report-documents-turkeys-reliance-upon-isis>; Rojava Information Center, *Database: Former ISIS members now part of Turkish-backed forces in Sere Kaniye and Tel Abyad*, October 9, 2020, <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/storage/2020/10/Rojava-Information-Center-Database-Former-ISIS-Members-Now-Part-of-Turkish-Backed-Forces.pdf>.

¹⁸⁵ Zartok Media, *Hundreds Of Turks & Azeris Take To The Streets In Lyon, France Looking For Armenians*, October 29, 2020, <https://twitter.com/ZartokMedia/status/1321567512522158080?s=20>

asking them to stand *“against the Armenian persecution.”* A grenade was thrown at the Armenian Church in Hasakah in Syria.¹⁸⁶

On December 10, 2021, Erdogan participated in the military parade in Baku, where he glorified the organizers and perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide during the times of the Ottoman Empire and the mass atrocities against Armenians committed in Baku in September 1918.¹⁸⁷ *“Today, may the souls of Nuri Pasha, Enver Pasha, and the brave soldiers of the Caucasus Islam Army, be happy”* he said.¹⁸⁸ He said *“The fact that Azerbaijan saved their territory from occupation does not mean that the struggle is over. The struggle which has been carried out in political and military arenas so far will now continue in various different fronts.”*¹⁸⁹

In response to Turkish President Erdogan’s comments referring to the Armenian genocide of 20th century Azerbaijan’s President Aliyev said *“My brother said that Azerbaijan was right in this war! Turkey’s political and moral support for Azerbaijan makes every Azerbaijani citizen proud and happy.”*

International Christian Concern claims *“These two countries [Turkey and Azerbaijan] have pursued their actions in a way which elevates and echoes the 1915 genocide of ethnic Christians.”* The demonstrated *“language and behaviour shows an intention of eliminating a community from their homes simply because of an identity they were born into. It has caused serious bodily harm, mental harm, and even death to those residents. As such, it should trigger international concern that a genocide has and is taking place within Karabakh toward ethnic Christians. Given Turkey’s role as a conflict instigator and now as a peacekeeper following the truce agreement, there is also concern about the current system monitoring Karabakh and whether it will truly encourage diversity.”*¹⁹⁰

There is evidence that signals a new wave of anti-Armenian sentiments in Turkey. The Turkish Hrant Dink Foundation showed that Armenians were the most targeted group in hate speech in Turkish media in 2019 – much of it related to the Genocide.¹⁹¹ Additionally, there are efforts by the government to destroy the Armenian heritage in Turkey, such as putting on sale or demolishing churches.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁶ ICC, *Grenade Targets Syrian Armenian Church*, October 5, 2020, <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/05/grenade-targets-syrian-armenian-church>; ICC, *Caucasus Conflict Ignites Anti-Armenian Sentiment*, October 9, 2020, <https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/09/caucasus-conflict-ignites-anti-armenian-sentiment>;

¹⁸⁷ France 24, *‘One Nation, Two States’ on Display as Erdogan Visits Azerbaijan for Karabakh Victory Parade*, December 10, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20201210-one-nation-two-states-on-display-as-erdogan-visits-azerbaijan-for-karabakh-victory-parade>

¹⁸⁸ The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, *At Baku Victory Parade, Aliyev Calls Yerevan, Zangezur, Sevan Historical Azerbaijani Lands, Erdogan Praises Enver Pasha*, December 11, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2ZkKDay>

¹⁸⁹ The Hindu, *Azerbaijan’s ‘Struggle’ with Armenia Not over: Erdogan*, December 10, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/azerbaijans-struggle-with-armenia-not-over-erdogan/article33299188.ece>

¹⁹⁰ ICC, *The Anatomy of Genocide: Karabakh’s Forty-Four Day War*, January 2021, <https://www.persecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Anatomy-of-a-Genocide.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Byline Times, *How the Murderous Past of Armenian Genocide Flourishes Today in Denial*, February 3, 2021, <https://bylinetimes.com/2021/02/03/how-the-murderous-past-of-armenian-genocide-flourishes-today-in-denial/?fbclid=IwAR3ahRL3UFEp855KgstCYdzvNPb4Pu5UBk8S6Lt6LDle8eX2AS21mPlyLH0>; Hrant Dink Foundation, *Hate Speech and Discriminatory Discourse in Media 2019 Report*, October 2020, <https://hrantdink.org/attachments/article/2727/Hate-Speech-and-Discriminatory-Discourse-in-Media-2019.pdf>

¹⁹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, *Answer by the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan to the Question of News Agencies*, February 2, 2021, https://www.mfa.am/en/interviews-articles-and-comments/2021/02/03/Spox_comment_Churches/10780?fbclid=IwAR1r0WI9_S-t6V0mFxXfZiQqWrSiCoihwVyerEL3cJIGgn-4849PfU6fHug

Given the openly voiced brotherhood between Turkey and Azerbaijan, their joint actions in war against Artsakh, Erdogan's increasingly vivid fascist dispositions and expansionist intentions, serious consideration should be made to the statements coming from Turkey that might further reveal the ultimate aims behind Azerbaijan's Armenophobic policies.¹⁹³ Concerns about the Azerbaijani and Turkish anti-Armenian xenophobia and aggression and the imminent genocidal threat have also been raised by about 80 academic scholars all over the world.¹⁹⁴

Conclusion and recommendations

Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries different governance regimes in Azerbaijan have systematically tried to remove indigenous Armenians from the region applying a variety of policies and tactics, such as discrimination and humiliation, pogroms and massacres, veneration of murderers and terrorizing people, falsifying the history and erasing the cultural traces.

There is a strong belief that the Armenian people of Artsakh are targeted because of their ethnic background as well as for their determination to independently organize the political life of their community. The systemic nature of the tactics used against them proves Azerbaijan's purpose to wipe out the indigenous Armenian population from the region to strengthen Azerbaijan's rights for the land. The Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance particularly exacerbates the existential threats for Armenians of Artsakh.

Unless there is an effective and bold intervention of the international community that adheres to the respect of human rights and democratic values, Armenian people of Artsakh will be continuously faced with threats of ethnic cleansing.

Hereby, the authors of this report appeal to the international organizations, including the UN and its institutions, particularly the Secretary General, UN Human Rights Council, UN Security Council, UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, UN Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Committee of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, UN Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups on human rights, the Council of Europe and its institutions, particularly the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, NATO, OSCE and particularly the OSCE Minsk Group, in accordance with their respective mandates:

¹⁹³ Global Watch Analysis, *Erdogan: The Hidden Meaning of the New Massacre of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh*, https://global-watch-analysis.com/erdogan-le-sens-cache-du-nouveau-massacre-des-armeniens-au-haut-karabakh/?fbclid=IwAR0W5ei0Uieb7ApzpMNmFxo_zU4NDfnnikNbNS18nWJb0xnI3EmEOGAKeo&lang=en; Global Watch Analysis, *Erdogan as the New Godfather of Islamic Fascism*, <https://global-watch-analysis.com/erdogan-en-nouveau-parrain-du-fascisme-islamique/?lang=en>

¹⁹⁴ The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, *Statement from a Group of Genocide Scholars on the Imminent Genocidal Threat Deriving from Azerbaijan and Turkey against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh)*, October 2020, <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/23.10.2020.php>

1. To urge the Azerbaijani authorities to discontinue any action that puts the life and well-being of POWs and civilian captives under imminent risk and to immediately return them to Armenia and Artsakh;
2. To investigate the racism and Armenophobia in Azerbaijan and war crimes driven by their ethnic cleansing intents, such as the systematic shelling of human settlements, hospitals and schools, destroying places of worship and cultural monuments, use of chemical weapons, engagement of mercenaries tasked with beheading, torture and degrading treatment of Armenians, humiliation of POWs and captives, mutilation of bodies of fallen soldiers, refusal of returning POWs, etc.;
3. To investigate the current state of education in Azerbaijan to devise measures for preventing the hate education in educational establishments of the country;
4. To put an end to impunity for inflammatory language and hate crimes against Armenians through promoting criminalization of incitement to hatred and violence on ground of racism, xenophobia and ethnic origin, including through internet, and to establish for effective investigation of such acts, including by high-ranking politicians and human rights defenders;
5. To appeal to Russia and Turkey to remove the joint monitoring center in the neighbourhood of Artsakh or to ban the flow of their air vehicles over the sky of Artsakh, as well as to prevent other controversial projects initiated by Azerbaijan, such as the plans of settlement of jihadists in the neighborhood of NKAO or establishment of a school of “Grey Wolves” in Shushi;
6. To ensure deployment of additional international peace-keeping troops from neutral OSCE member countries - with clearly defined mission and rules of operation, on the border of NKAO and transportation corridors to ensure the safety and protection of Artsakh people as well as visitors to Artsakh;
7. To put efforts to stop the isolation of Artsakh and ensure accessibility for all, without restrictions to actors providing humanitarian assistance and reporting on violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, including international governmental and non-governmental organizations, diplomatic missions, development projects as well as international journalists and visitors, in order to put in action the UN principle of ‘leaving no one behind’.

International organizations shall engage effectively to ensure long-term and sustainable resolution to the problem of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) with acknowledgement of the existential threats to its indigenous Armenian population and of the need for security guarantees under international monitoring mechanisms. De-occupation of NKAO and assurance of a safe geographic zone for proper communication between Armenia and Artsakh shall be guaranteed in order to prevent the risks associated with Armenophobia in Azerbaijan.