



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

GENOCIDE EMERGENCY ALERT: AZERBAIJAN'S INVASION OF ARTSAKH NOVEMBER 2020

From 1915 - 1922, Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire were victims of [genocide](#). They endured systematic policies of deportation and extermination. In 1918, Armenian forces halted the Turkish invasion at the [Battle of Sardarabad](#) and created the First Republic of Armenia.

The First Republic's policies were discriminatory against non-Armenians. The state systematically expelled Muslim Azerbaijani and Kurdish minorities. Armenian forces under the *Dashnaksutyun* party tormented Azerbaijani and Kurdish people and burned villages from 1918 to 1921. In March 1918, Armenian nationalists, alongside Russian and Bolshevik allies killed over [10,000 Azerbaijanis in Baku](#) during the "March Days." These massacres are still a source of Azerbaijani anger toward Armenians.

After the end of World War I and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, in the early 1920s, the Armenian region of Nagorno-Karabakh was incorporated into Azerbaijan by Stalin as part of his "divide and rule" Soviet Communist policy on national minorities. The collapse of the Soviet Union caused widespread violence against Armenians in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

In a 1988 referendum, Armenians in Artsakh voted overwhelmingly for independence from Azerbaijan. From 1988 to 1990, Azerbaijani mobs massacred ethnic Armenians in the towns of Sumgait, Baku, and Kirovabad. These massacres terrorized nearly all Armenians to flee from Azerbaijan. Today the Azeri government denies displaced Armenians the right to return to Azerbaijan and forbids a person of Armenian heritage from entering Azerbaijan's territory.

The Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh declared independence from Azerbaijan in 1991, establishing the Republic of Artsakh. In the aftermath, the Azerbaijani minority living in Artsakh was violently expelled from their homes by Armenian mobs and militias. Armenian forces [executed](#) Azerbaijani civilians and looted their property. The [worst instance of violence](#) against the Azerbaijanis occurred in [Khojaly](#) when Armenian forces shot hundreds of Azerbaijan civilians fleeing from their destroyed village in 1992.

From 1988 to 1994, over 600,000 ethnic Azerbaijani and [Kurdish](#) civilians fled from Nagorno-Karabakh. Many now live as [internally displaced](#) people (IDP) in [squalid](#) camps throughout Azerbaijan.

The current Armenian and Artsakh governments [deny involvement](#) in past crimes against Azerbaijanis and erase their cultural history from the Armenian landscape. Armenian and Artsakh authorities deny Azerbaijani IDP's the [right to return](#) to their former homes and villages.

Azerbaijan similarly denies that any crimes against humanity have been committed against Armenians. Today the Azerbaijan government denies displaced Armenians the right to return to Azerbaijan and forbids a person of Armenian heritage from entering Azerbaijan's territory.

In September 2020, the conflict escalated as Azerbaijan invaded Artsakh to retake the territory it lost in Artsakh's war of independence (1988-1994).

Artsakh and Armenian artillery have targeted Azerbaijani civilian areas living along the "Line of Contact" between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. Attacks have killed over sixty Azerbaijanis in Ganja, Barda, and the regions of Tatar, Horodiz, Goranboy, and Aghdam. Azerbaijani drones have targeted churches, Armenian troops, and civilian areas of Artsakh: in Stapanakert, Shushi, Berdzor, and Mardakert.

These acts constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity by both sides in the conflict.

Although a paper ceasefire was signed on October 15, 2020, Azerbaijani forces are still attempting to capture new territory. Azerbaijan uses laser-guided drones from Turkey, Russia, and Israel to attack Artsakh's defenders, who are mostly Artsakh civilian volunteers. Azerbaijan is using Syrian mercenaries. Turkey provides air support for Azerbaijani forces. Armenians are fearful that Turkey may support genocide against Armenians.

If Azerbaijan retakes control of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), it may plan to forcibly deport all Armenians in Artsakh to Armenia. Over 100,000 have already fled. Forced displacement is a crime against humanity.

The Azerbaijani government under Ilham Aliyev denies its past and current violence against Armenians. Aliyev is also a denier of the Armenian Genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire. The Azerbaijani government promotes hate speech and officially honors violence against Armenians. Anti-Armenian hate speech has infected Azerbaijani social media, which is replete with incitements to commit genocide against Armenians.

Legal Analysis: *The people of Artsakh declared their independence from Azerbaijan in 1991. The right of self-determination of a people or a nation is a fundamental principle of international law. Artsakh has exercised its right to self-determination. Azerbaijan's invasion of Artsakh in September 2020 cannot be justified by any UN Resolution because UN Resolutions are subordinate to the national right to self-determination under UN Charter Article 1 and under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which enshrine the right of self-determination of peoples and nations. Azerbaijan no longer has a legitimate right to reassert Soviet borders by invading Artsakh.*

Genocide Watch's Ten Stages of Genocide are present in Azerbaijan's invasion of Artsakh:

Classification: Muslim Turkic Azerbaijani "us" vs. Armenian Christian "them."

Symbolization: Artsakh Armenians have Armenian names (ID cards, passports), language, dress, churches.

Discrimination: Armenians were massacred, forcibly expelled, and now excluded from Azerbaijan.

Dehumanization: Armenians are called "terrorists," "bandits," "infidels," "leftovers of the sword."

Organization: Azerbaijan gets drones, and arms from Turkey, Russia, Israel. Turkish Air Force supports the Azerbaijani attack on Artsakh.

Polarization: President Ilham Aliyev and social media use anti-Armenian hate speech.

Preparation: 67,000 Azerbaijani troops invaded Artsakh; Aliyev wants "liberation" of "occupied" territory.

Persecution: Artsakh civilians live in bomb shelters due to Azerbaijani shelling. Thousands have fled Artsakh.

Extermination: Genocidal massacres of Armenians in Azerbaijan in 1918 killed over 23,000 Armenians. Massacres resumed in 1988. Armenians fled from Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani atrocities against Armenians are officially rewarded.

Denial: Aliyev and Azerbaijan deny the Armenian Genocide during the Ottoman Empire. They deny current atrocities.

Because of Armenia's denial of war crimes such as the Khojaly massacre and other crimes against Azerbaijanis, and the current shelling of Azerbaijani civilians by Armenian artillery, Genocide Watch considers **Armenia** to be at **Stage 8: Persecution and Stage 10: Denial.**

Genocide Watch has no evidence that Armenia or Artsakh are likely to commit genocide.

Because of Azerbaijan's invasion of Artsakh in September 2020, Genocide Watch considers **Azerbaijan** to be at **Stage 9: Extermination and at Stage 10: Denial.**

Genocide Watch considers that Azerbaijan's leadership may intend to forcibly deport the Armenian population of Artsakh by committing genocidal massacres that will terrorize Armenians into leaving Artsakh.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Armenian government should recognize the crimes committed against Azerbaijanis during the Nagorno-Karabakh War, including the Khojaly Massacre.
- Displaced Azerbaijanis should be compensated by the Artsakh and Armenian governments for their lost property.
- The U.N. Security Council should demand that Azerbaijan stop all offensive attacks in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).
- World leaders should condemn hate speech and genocide denial by the Aliyev regime.
- The U.N. Security Council should impose an embargo on the sale of arms to Azerbaijan.
- The "Minsk Group" should broker an effective peace agreement between Azerbaijan, Artsakh, and Armenia.
- All sides should honor a genuine cease-fire to protect civilians from this genocidal national, ethnic, religious war.
- A U.N. Peacekeeping Force should deploy along the Line of Contact to stop attacks by Azerbaijan against Artsakh.

*Genocide Watch is an organization that aims to **predict, prevent, stop, and punish genocide and other forms of mass murder.** This Genocide Emergency Alert is intended to provide background information on the Azerbaijan - Artsakh - Armenia conflict, as well as to assess current genocidal intentions in the War in Artsakh. Genocide Watch recognizes Armenian atrocities committed against Azerbaijanis during the war of independence of Artsakh. But Genocide Watch does not currently consider Armenia likely to commit genocide. Genocide Watch considers Azerbaijan the aggressor in the current war in Artsakh. If the reader wishes to read further about self-determination, please refer to the publications of the members of our Alliance Against Genocide (<https://www.against-genocide.org/>) particularly of the [Minority Rights Group](#).*