



Church Militant Republic of Artsakh Report 2020-21

Stepanakert, ARTSAKH (ChurchMilitant.com) — On July 12, Church Militant reporter, Trey Blanton, was the first American journalist to enter the Republic of Artsakh since November 10, 2020 when a Russian-brokered cease-fire was signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

During the conflict, which has been officially recognized as lasting for seven weeks, Church Militant is credited by members of Artsakh's government with having provided the most prolific and accurate reporting of any Western media, despite conflicting propaganda and misinformation arising from the conflict.

The government of Artsakh invited Church Militant to visit the region to speak with government officials, review official documentation and hear testimony from families who lost husbands and sons, whether from fights for independence in the early '90s or current struggles.

As part of the cease-fire agreement, Russian peacekeepers serve at checkpoints on the main road called the Lachin corridor, leading from Armenia into the Republic of Artsakh; they were not happy to see an American passport.

But Church Militant is committed to reporting the most accurate and extensive details on a war that's frozen but still ongoing.

Timeline of Modern-day Aggression by Azerbaijan Against Armenians

- August 8, 2021: Sources within the Republic of Artsakh tell Church Militant Azerbaijan has blocked water supplies to the Armenians. Many citizens have been without water for days.
- July 23–24, 2021: Azerbaijan violates cease-fire agreement by flying a drone into Armenia.
- Sept. 27–Nov. 10, 2020: Azerbaijan for the third time renews war against the Republic of Artsakh.
- April 1–4, 2016: Azerbaijan initiates the four-day "April War" against the Republic of Artsakh.
- December 1991–May 1994: The Republic of Artsakh declares independence from the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan. Armenians win the conflict and establish control of diminished territory comprising Artsakh.
- 1921: Soviet leader Joseph Stalin gives to Azerbaijan the Armenian-populated region known to Russians as Nagorno-Karabakh (modern-day Artsakh).

Families Devastated

Arman Asryan

Government officials arranged for Church Militant to speak with Arman Asryan. Asryan works with the Union of Relatives of the Fallen and Missing Soldiers of the Third Artsakh War. He is engaged with documenting and recording families who have lost a son or husband during the war. Asryan described his work and the son he lost:



On September 22, Azerbaijan, with Turkey's support, launched an assault on Artsakh and Armenians who are standing up for their right to live in Artsakh.

My son was a conscript in the war. He served and fought as an artillery soldier. He fought bravely, but fell as a hero with the dream of a peaceful existence for Artsakh, a dream shared by many.

The most painful thing is that, on one hand, our people were struggling and fighting for their rights, and their lives, and their land. But, on the other hand, the world was, in a way, assisting Turkey and Azerbaijan through indifference and blindness.

These are the pictures of fallen heroes, but this is not a complete list. We're trying to do our best to compile the data and honor their memory.

The people just recently went through a terrible and very destructive war, but we are confident in our decision to stay here in the land of our fathers.

Unfortunately, right now, the question of POWs (Prisoners of War) still remains unsolved. Hundreds of MIAs (Missing in Action) remains unknown. It is unfortunate the international community does not do enough to force Azerbaijan to return the POWs and provide information on the missing.

According to November 09 joint declaration, all prisoners of war were required to be returned home, but Azerbaijan has failed to abide by the document.

After suffering so many casualties, we cannot stop working and continue their work, living here for the good of the country. Here is our birthplace.

I invite the world to this small, but beautiful part of the world. Pay attention and show interest to the people here who have dreams and goals. Disregard geopolitical interests and money from Azerbaijan's oil money.

Asryan is honoring the memory of his son by helping other families of the fallen, following his personal motto — "Nothing is forgotten. No one is forgotten." He said:

We are registering the names and contact information of families of the fallen soldiers. We're conducting analysis and visiting the relatives to figure out the socio-economic conditions for making it easier to target aid and assistance from the government and private donors.

Anonymous Mother

After Asryan was interviewed, a government vehicle drove Asryan and myself to a small home to meet a family who had been driven from their home in Hadrut. They were one of the families Asryan has worked with. A woman who lost her son was willing to speak with me but did not want to give her name:

We are from the region of Hadrut and, after the war, we found ourselves in this situation displaced and forced from our home after Azerbaijan took over the region. We were forced to leave our home on September 27.



I have four sons, three of them fought in the war with my husband. I took my youngest son and left for Stepanakert and lived in basements during the beginning of the war. From Stepanakert, I took my ten-year old son to Yerevan, Armenia so that the men could fight on the front line.

We stayed in Yerevan for 15 days. On November 11, I found out that my son, Aran, was killed at 9pm, three hours before the war ended, on November 09. There were five soldiers there. Two were killed and three survived.

Aran was 19 years old. He fought as a machine-gunner. He was sent as reinforcement to where he was killed. An Azeri fired a shot at their trench. Aran's friends saw Aran lying down, so they checked him and discovered he was dead. They placed him in an ambulance and he was transported away.

Aran was very strong, both physically and mentally. Aran never lost at anything in his life. Aran was fearless and on November 08, when I talked to him, I told him to try to hide and keep his head low and he said back to me, 'What is a Turk that I should be afraid of him?'

Aran never feared anything. He never lost in his life until the end when he experienced his first defeat.

I lost one son to the war. Another of my son's and my husband were wounded in the war. We left everything we had behind in Hadrut. We took nothing with us, but what we could fit in our pockets, and the clothes on our back.

We are, currently, living in fear and we do not have any hope that the Turks will ever change.

I want the international community to help us so that our kids will never see this again, so that there can be peace.

Donara Gabrielyan and Alvina Nersesyan

An anonymous travelling companion who accompanied Church Militant knows many citizens of Artsakh. One friend, Alvina Nersesyan, crossed our path unexpectedly on July 14. Neresesyan, a university professor, brought her older colleague, Donara Gabielyan, to the hotel cafe to speak about their experiences during the three wars with Azerbaijan.



Nersesyan (right) translates for her friend Gabrielyan(left):

In 1992, my husband died while protecting our land in the war for independence from Azerbaijan. My husband was a driver for a medical vehicle responsible for rescuing the wounded from the combat zone.

My husband had three brothers and two nephews who also participated in the war. All but one of the brothers fought on the front lines as a soldier.

While my husband was performing his duties, a missile hit the car and he sustained burns over 75% of his body. He was transported to a hospital in Yerevan, but he did not survive.

I managed to speak with him by phone while he was in the hospital. He told me not to visit because I needed to care for the children.

After the war, I raised three children on my own, who are now grown.

We not only managed to survive after the first war, most people managed to make families to enlarge the population, we started businesses, including an educational institute, which teaches children how they can serve their country.

During this war, my two sons-in-law and my two grandsons were here, participating in the war. My other grandchildren were too small or girls and so fled to Yerevan for safety.

From the humanitarian point of view, it was smarter to flee the war this time, we stayed here in Artsakh during the first war. We were afraid that the Muslims would come and kill us and our children.

The people who stayed in Artsakh during the first war suffered psychological problems. From the moral point of view, people were proud to remain with their husbands, women were sure husbands would return to their families.

However, sounds of the missiles and gun fire was gravelly psychological. During the second war, it was right to leave for Yerevan so that children would not have to suffer the trauma this time.

Staying or going, either way was a difficult choice.

Our country is completely on the front line. We do not have a safe place in our country. We live in fear, but not panic. We understand where we are located. It doesn't matter. We need to remain and develop our country and, eventually, take back what is ours. Take back what was stolen by force.

November was not a just war. We still have a feeling we were betrayed and we were sold by both our people and by strangers.

Those who were fighting on the front line, were willing to stand until the last minute. When the soldiers were informed Armenia had capitulated and needed to hand over their weapons, they were crying.

My eldest daughter, on November 10 saw on Facebook written, 'Forgive us.' This is a huge responsibility for us. A lot of people died in the first war to secure our land for us. The fact that we couldn't protect what they left to us bears a responsibility.

We thought on November 09, going into the 10th, we all thought there would be a fight for the city Shushi, to take it back. The information we were getting during the war was all fake, so it was strange to see the result on the 10th that the fight was over.

Months later, there is still confusion about what happened during the war. We have no concrete information. The only way we will ever know is if there is a change in the government of Armenia.

There should be a change in leadership who will create an objective commission to investigate what happened. Otherwise, everyone will have their own truth.

There's no one in power who we feel we can trust. Its not a question of helping people, but of what is good for the country of Artsakh.

We're a very small country and we didn't have enough force to overcome Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Pakistan. It was a huge army against us. Ukraine, Israel, and Belarus sold weapons to our enemy.

We are also to blame for our loss in the war. All Armenians should have known that not just Azerbaijan, but Turkey, would fight against us. Because without Turkey's help, Azerbaijan would never have been able to defeat us.

In the beginning of the war, we were moving forward. After the first four or five days, Azerbaijan asked Turkey for help because their blitzkrieg had failed.

We need to study the statements of our first president in 1994 because what he claimed would happen came to pass.

We believe with a high certainty that President Ilham Aliyev and Turkey's President Recep Erdogan are working together. Seresyan, personally, believes Aliyev is subjected to Erdogan.



It is a question whether Azerbaijan will remain its own country.

Many countries recognize the 1915 Armenian Genocide, but countries must demand Turkey give an answer for what happened. Turkey and the Ottoman Empire are one in the same. After the war, last year, they praised Enver Pasha, a chief actor in the genocide of 1915. The 2020 war was a continuation of the same genocide.

We are the little Christian nation surrounded by Muslim countries. Georgia is Christian, in name, but their allegiances are more flexible. We are a contradiction to the Turks because we try to live out our faith.

Despite the cease-fire, Azerbaijan continues to provoke border incidents and teach their children to hate Armenians. There can be no neighborly peace with Azerbaijan. Artsakh will never be a part of Azerbaijan. It is Armenian land.

Artsakh should be recognized as an independent state. We've proven that we meet all the points to be our own nation. They are a genocidal country. They must recognize Artsakh within its historical borders and eliminate its policy of Armenophobia.

We would welcome international help but, so far, they are all talk and no action. One of our lecturers at university refused to give a lecture on international law because, he said, 'In our case, there is no international law.'

Nersesyan (who served as translator above) briefly relates her own story:

I moved to Karabakh [Artsakh] in 2005 when I got married. I worked at the university in Stepanakert, but lived in Shushi.

When the 2020 war started, my husband went to war. He told me I don't want you and our two sons, aged 12 and 14, to witness the bad things that could happen, so I want you to move to Yerevan.

Having stayed in Artsakh during the little known war in April 2016, I did not expect that I would not have a home to return to. That is why I only took my documents and notebook. I left behind everything else because I was sure I would come back.

Despite everything, I still believe that I will one day return home. That hope is the only thing that keeps me here and praying for the future. This war made me believe, even more, in the Lord. I'm starting to understand that everything is not in vain. We are here to stand for our land and our beliefs. We will stay here till the last minute.

Norayr Hovsepyan - Artsakh News Department

On July 16, Church Militant sat down with Norayr Hovsepyan to gain perspective on the war from the perspective of a local journalist. Hovsepyan is head of the information department for Artsakh television and has pledged to share news with Church Militant:

Essentially, this was the second war in the past five years. The April 2016 war was shorter and more localized. 2020 was much bigger and, in a sense, still familiar because the weaponry was the same, but it was used everywhere on a larger scale.

This war was anything but unexpected because, for the past 30 years, the war never stopped. Every week, we



have casualties; every day shots were being fired. During the past 30 years, the people of Artsakh were constantly in a state of war. While the last war in 2016 was essentially a trench war, 2020 saw the war come to the doorstep of every civilian, every person living in Artsakh.

There was no difference between a soldier standing in a trench or a civilian walking in the streets of Stepanakert, the shelling reached both of them.

Artsakh security would not allow the press to get too close for our safety, but we were able to witness and report shelling and various military activities from a distance.

The war did not just consist of the shooting and fighting, there was also an information war. An element of fake news was very important, and it was being used as a weapon. Our goal was to clean up the propaganda and fake news, in order to present, as much as we were able, the truth to the people so that they didn't have to listen to the fake news and not be left out.

Every group and individual present spread information which added to the confusion and was weaponized to keep people unaware of the truth. There were both, organized and unorganized, and it is acknowledged that Azerbaijan deliberately spread false information to confuse the international community and our own people.

For example, the [targeting](#) of Ghazanchetsots Church by Azerbaijan. First, Azerbaijan officially said they were not behind the attack on the church. After a couple hours, they said it was an accident. Then, a couple hours later, they shelled the church again.

Today, when we see that they are changing the church in what is called the "Albanization Process," it makes us certain they deliberately targeted the church.

If we are being honest, we've always been preparing for another war. Maybe there was a failure of expectations, a question of the scale of what the war would be.

We did not expect Turkey to be openly involved in the conflict, and not hide their complicity in any way. We were prepared to fight Azerbaijan, and we were confident of victory against them. But not prepared for Turkey and their use of [terrorists](#). We also did not expect the international community to remain silent and blinded by whatever factors impacted them.

International terrorists were brought here by Turkey, confirmed by leaders and top officials from France, Russia, United States, and international organizations. They all said Turkey brought terrorists to the region and, to this day, we have been given no information on whether the terrorists have been removed from the region. On the contrary, we're hearing news family members of the terrorists are being transported to the region to settle in the occupied regions of Artsakh.

The Azeris continue to provoke us. The Armenian side is aiming to establish and preserve some form of civility and, so, we are trying to cover the incidents and provocations to prevent future provocations.

I call on the international community to remember that when the Turks took Constantinople, the rest of the Christian world was indifferent and thought they had nothing to do with it. After some time, they had to meet the Turks under the walls of their capitols. Today is a similar situation, everyone is saying they witnessed how the church in Shushi was targeted, but were still indifferent. Don't be indifferent. Open your eyes.

Artsakh Government Ministers

Lusine Gharakhanyan - Minister of Education:

Lusine Gharakhanyan was the first government official to speak with Church Militant on July 13. After the interview, Gharakhanyan invited Church Militant to watch the first concert held in Artsakh since the end of the war. The concert was an effort to revitalize the culture and musical education for the youth of Artsakh. Gharakhanyan had the following to say on the consequences of the war, Islam, and the Turkic enemies seeking to eliminate the Armenians:



Whatever happened during the 44 days of war, and how the world reacted to it, shows, in my humble opinion, a crisis of civilization.

The geo-political interests prevented or blinded the great powers so that they did not want to see what was happening to the small country of Artsakh. In 21st century, something occurred that is not able to be expressed through any norms or moral principles. Turkey, along with extremist groups and terrorists, occupied through force 80% of Artsakh's territory.

A lot of educational and cultural facilities are now occupied by Azerbaijan. 108 schools, 37 kindergartens, schools of music and art, cultural institutions, 11 expensive engineering labs, were occupied. Approximately, 2,000 historical monuments are currently in occupied territories. 10 state museums and two private museums. There are 20,000 very valuable items stored in those museums. We are, currently, unable to negotiate with Russian peacekeepers to bring the Armenian pieces back to us.

Right now, the Holy Savior Church is literally covered in package tape. Azerbaijan is carrying out the destruction of the cultural heritage in two distinct directions. The first one is the physical destruction of our cultural heritage. The second is the so-called "Albanization Process." The

second is more dangerous because they are trying to undermine and falsify the origins of our identity.

Small nations and ethnicities are considered dangerous and aggressive. We are dangerous because the Turks haven't completed their genocide. Azokh cave is a worldwide heritage and it has been a destination for various scientific researchers. It is no exaggeration to say we live in holy land. We have a rich heritage from ancient times in Tigranakert. [Azerbaijan's president Ilham] Aliyev along with his wife Aliyeva, who is considered a good-faith ambassador, is currently taking '[selfies](#)' in front of Azokh. What kind of 'good faith' is that?

It is shameful that in the 21st century, when we are considered to live in a civilized world, we are seeing the continuation of aggression and violence. On October 9, [airstrikes](#) were directed at Ghazanchetsots Church. I contacted the director of UNESCO and his response was that both sides must refrain from damaging cultural heritage sites. I addressed every single international organization who protects cultural heritage and I was ignored. Experts are being encouraged to visit occupied territory. I suggest Armenian items be returned.

Azerbaijanis, as a people, are nothing but an ethnic commune. They are a collection of different peoples, including Muslimized Georgians and Talysh. They settled in various regions, including Artsakh, and started claiming it as their own. We are being forced to live with barbarians. We have a Christian heritage and are unable to live with barbarians.

Shame on you. It is very shameful that in this developing world, a small creative nation is currently cornered. It will take time for us to recover and become stronger. However, my ideology is that we must protect and cherish whatever is ours, our homeland. We must own our cultural objects, regardless of whether it is occupied.

There are interesting ideas in Islam. However, there is no word to fight in the Bible, but [a command to make war is] widely circulated in the Koran. There are many stereotypes in the Koran against Christians. I believe that, right now, Islam poses a danger to the entire world. Not just Artsakh, but also Europe and other places. In general, there are very aggressive elements in Islam directed at Christians. One example, "break that which is above the neck of the Christian." And I can offer many examples like that. Allah empowers those acts.

During the 2020 war, those on the Turkish side were calling on Allah. Essentially, in Islam, if you call on Allah's name, you go to heaven.

French President Emmanuel Macron tried to give a response. However, he succumbed to Erdogan after Erdogan insulted him. The civilized, soft France was invaded by Muslims [through immigration] and became too soft. Islam is a dominating religion. It dominates others. Islam is deprived of tolerance. It is enough to say Islam rejects the Christian.

I would love for a dialogue in the world between everyone. I would want to meet with Ministers of Culture and Education in Azerbaijan. I am certain it would be rejected. That meeting can occur in the occupied territory, Baku, or here, but those people are not prepared for dialogue.

For the growing generation in Azerbaijan, the [prisoner of war museum](#) is a very de-humanizing and anti-humanitarian and immoral example to civilization. It is a grave insult to the 5,000 fallen soldiers on our side and their relatives. I'm surprised that, till now, there has been no call by the world to tear that museum down. If you ask me, as a psychologist, why I think they won't take the museum down, I see that they are a nation deprived of identity. They want to keep it in order to feel strong. Azerbaijan did not win the war against Artsakh. Turkey did. 80 million strong Turkey.

This is a war of two civilizations: one nation, the Turks, has not completed its own ethnogenesis; and ours, which is one of the oldest civilizations.

Aram Sargsyan - Minister of Infrastructure

Aram Sargsyan has been busy in his role of rebuilding Artsakh's infrastructure and providing adequate shelter for citizens displaced by the war, or whose homes were damaged before the onset of winter:

During the war, the civilian infrastructure was damaged heavily from shelling and artillery fire from Azerbaijan. After the war, we set up a hotline to register all the damage and to proceed to rebuilding.



One of the problems: because the war ended near the winter, the priority was to rebuild roofs and windows so that basic needs to cover and preserve heat could be met. It is estimated that more than 7,000 civilian buildings were damaged, but we are still in the process of registering so the number could be even higher.

It is estimated the damage cost was 40 to 45 billion drams, or the equivalent of 81 to 91 million U.S. dollars.

We haven't registered any cases of Azerbaijan interfering with our reconstruction efforts because we are using resources from within our territory. We are also bringing materials from Armenia through private companies, so there are no problems because of the help from Russian peacekeepers.

We have received a lot of humanitarian aid, mostly from the Russians and the Russian government specifically. A number of international organizations have helped us with rebuilding efforts. However, the most aid, the roofs, windows, and wood, came from the Russians.

The priority, now, is to recover the different facilities damaged. Most of it is completed. We have recovered the facilities supplying electricity and water. The goal is to have the rest complete by the end of the year.

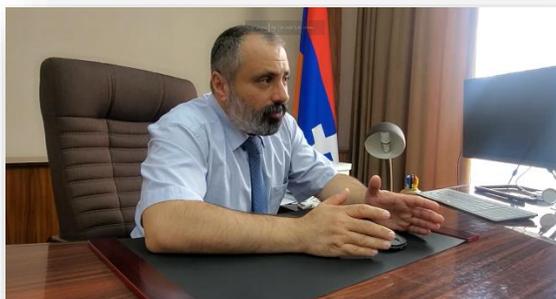
The people's primary concern brought to my office is security. The government takes care of the basic needs, but our safety is the biggest concern.

We are sending experts out to assess damages and manage different arrangements with firms to help the reconstruction.

My primary concern, along with every Armenian living in Artsakh, is the status of our Republic and our security, both as a country and to each person. We're very close to European values and interact with various international organizations. We meet the standards to be considered our own state and should be recognized as such.

Davit Babayan - Minister of Foreign Affairs

Church Militant [interviewed](#) Davit Babayan over a video call on February 3, 2021 in order to report on the aftermath of the war with Azerbaijan. Babayan's office was instrumental in arranging interviews with government officials and the local population. His office accredited Church Militant as journalists in his country.



Here were Babayan's comments speaking in-person to Church Militant in July:

This war is significant because it is the third war we have been involved in. In the first two, we won when we only fought Azerbaijan. This time, Artsakh fought against Azerbaijan, Turkey, and international terrorists combined. This small Artsakh — with a population of 150,000 — had to face a population of nearly a hundred million.

This was an existential battle, because the criminal alliance wanted to finish the genocide, to solve the Karabakh question.

This conflict generates a lot of questions. How come a NATO member is able to make an alliance with terrorists and attack a democratic state? This was an attack on the Western community because, as a member of NATO, Turkey ignored the opinion of its partners. NATO tacitly gave a green light to this attack because of their silence. If Turkey ignored NATO, is it because NATO or the United States is so weak that they couldn't stop Turkey?

We paid a high price. Five-thousand people, the most important people of our genetic code, sacrificed themselves to fight terror. To defend our land and the civilized world. We lost around 80% of our territories.

Now we are like a wounded man who has lost a leg or a hand. But we are alive, which means we have a chance to recover.

There is a dilemma in the international community between morality and interests, between geo-politics and international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, the international community either can't make a decision or it makes, unfortunately, decisions based on interests and geo-politics.

If a small state is under threat of genocide and the international community is unable or not willing to do anything, it means there is a serious crisis in the value system of [the] international community. If this is the case, then we may expect further negative developments all over the world.

Azerbaijan killed a lot of people. They mutilated people. Their prisoners of war became hostages and targets of terror. They won't even tell us how many hostages they have, and, we suspect, they are illegally using our prisoners of war for organ trafficking.

They won't refute the information we are receiving and are denying access to this information.

They are destroying our heritage, committing a cultural genocide. They are poisoning our water system. It should be a signal to the world that if terror succeeds here, violence can spread to the rest of the world.

The state of Azerbaijan appeared for the first time on the world stage in maps in 1918. This place was never called "Azerbaijan" previously. They were a geo-political project of the Ottoman Turks. The nation, under the name Azerbaijan, appears in 1936 for the first time.

Armenians are indigenous to this region. We have lived here for thousands of years. How can we illegally occupy our own historical lands?

The result of the first war was to try to settle the Karabakh movement, begun in 1988, when we separated from the Soviet Union. We fought and won our independence and wanted to reunite with Armenia. There was no question of borders. What we won was 1/6th of our historical lands, but we didn't push for our full lands.

We defended ourselves and our right to live on our land. They started this war. They are our oldest enemy because they never conceal their true intentions. They publicly say they are planning to kill us, to destroy us. Why do they say it publicly? Because the international community was not so active.

Now we see different ambassadors from various countries are visiting occupied territories with Azerbaijan. It is a kind of show by Azerbaijan. Why do they visit? Have they lost their conscience, their moral values? Or do they simply enjoy caviar? This is a crisis of value system [sic]. It is the destruction of the immune system of a society. It means a crisis in faith system [sic].

I think a clue to healing society is to strengthen faith, because all other ways are not effective. International law has been infringed, as are moral values ignored. The only way to bring back order is faith.

You could expect in Nazi Germany, during Hitler's reign, something like this prisoner of war museums in Azerbaijan. You see this park, like a Disney Land, they are creating a concentration camp museum, but praising hatred. Worshipping hatred. It is a degradation of moral values in society. The ordinary people of Azerbaijan are not guilty, but they are being injected with this Armenophobia and hatred.

The international community is totally mute, aside from a few organizations. Can you imagine that tomorrow you could see a park praising Nazi leadership? If we ignore this here, then tomorrow you could see another opened elsewhere in the world.

International entities are becoming weaker and can't react to these atrocities.

Our people are very resolute. We are going to sustain ourselves through difficulties. This is not a job, this is a mission which we have to face and overcome. We have to strengthen our faith system. If your faith is unshakeable, you will be optimistic. You will have additional power. Our self-control must be so great that we are inspired to accomplish our mission.

We need patriotic, professional leadership. Patriotism is different from nationalism. You cannot love your nation by hating other nations. You have to love your nation and respect other nations.

We have all Armenians all over the world because they fled the 1915 genocide. This is our greatest strength and weakness. We need to utilize our friends all over the world.

The entire world should understand that what happens to Artsakh, what happens here, will be reflected in other parts of the world. If we do not stop terrorism here, it will spread.

Artak Beglaryan - Minister of State

Artak Beglaryan is the second highest ranking member in the Republic of Artsakh and the right-hand man to the President of the Republic of Artsakh, Arayik V. Arutyunyan. Beglaryan provided documentation, both public and not public, on the human rights atrocities committed by Azerbaijan and its allies:



In general, we suffered multiple war crimes committed by Azerbaijan and Turkey. The purpose was ethnic cleansing, or genocide, in order to clean the whole territory of all Armenians. The governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey say that this is not Armenian land, but the history, the culture, lots of monuments, show the contrary. We've lived here for thousands of years.

The only problem was the Soviet time history. During the Soviet time, Karabakh, with its 95% Armenian population, was given to Soviet Azerbaijan. All conflicts stem from that decision.

During the 2020 war, Azerbaijan and Turkey were quite stronger than us. They used [sophisticated weaponry](#) against both our military personnel and civilian population and property.

Thousands of our houses and apartments have been targeted directly and indiscriminately. Our civilian infrastructure — our electricity, gas, road system, bridges, and more — was totally destroyed.

At least 80 civilians were [killed](#). Over 40 civilians were captured by Azerbaijan and killed. Many were tortured and beheaded. Our cultural heritage, our Christian heritage, is being vandalized or destroyed.

During the war, many of our schools, hospitals, and ambulances were targeted by Azerbaijan.

Human losses weren't as high as material losses because 70% of our population fled homes to Armenia for safety because the war was intense and aggressive.

There were cases of [beheadings](#) on our civilians. They not only brutally did those crimes, but published videos to a welcoming reaction. There is systematic hate speech against Armenians. Killing an Armenian is considered a heroic act by Azerbaijan.

For decades, there have been signs of this Armenophobic policy, including awarding soldiers who beheaded Armenians and welcoming a soldier who axed to death an Armenian officer in his hotel room.

The international community remains silent. Even though they acknowledge that these atrocities are happening, they do nothing. This policy by the world emboldened Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan used banned weapons, including phosphorous and cluster bombs on civilian and military targets. This is forbidden by international community. Even though Azerbaijan and Artsakh are not signatories to the convention banning cluster bombs, however, the ban on cluster munitions is customary under international law. So, even if you are not signed, there is an obligation to not use them.

That could be argued on a legal basis. Using [phosphorus weapons](#), however, is 100% banned by international law and there is no need to sign on to that provision. There is a rule in international law not to recruit and [use mercenaries and terrorists](#), which Azerbaijan and Turkey did.

Human Rights Watch recorded Azerbaijan used these weapons against our civilians.

Unfortunately, human rights are only wishes. Human rights protection in international relationship is only a curtain for geo-political interests. Azerbaijan and Turkey are strong enough, and have enough resources, in order to push their interests in different countries, especially great powers.

Armenians are the first nation the embraced Christianity as the state religion over 1700 years ago in 301 AD. We are the core of Christian values. We have cathedrals and churches from the 4th and 5th century.

Since European and American civilization is based on Christianity, they should accept the reality that we are in danger because of our Christian identity. We can benefit the world in communications and tourism, but those advantages aren't as valuable to the world. There is development potential here in intellectual resources.

Since the beginning, our nation has defended its Christian identity. Since the 7th century, our lands have been under control of Muslims, be they Arabs, Seljuks, Turks, Persians, again Turks, et cetera. The Armenian nation has never changed, despite this. We were tortured, suffered through a genocide, have lost millions of lives for centuries. Our core, unchangeable values, endure.

The world needs to understand this reality and understand the risk of Islamic radicalism which doesn't tolerate Christians, but wants to eradicate them. In Europe and the U.S. it's already visible. The world should be intolerant to and Islamist who rejects other religions.

Christian Armenians live in many Muslim nations and they respect and love the nations they live in. Radical Islamists do not. Azerbaijani and Turkish propaganda accuse others of the actions they themselves are committing.

International organization report on abuses, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, Council of Europe, U.N. reports, etc, never can you see signs of Armenians committing Islamophobia, but you will see many documents of Armenophobia.

Turkey wants to be the leader of Muslim states, or at least Turkic states. Armenia is an obstacle for them in that geo-political plan.

We want to recover from the war, have enough resources to develop the country, and to keep people in their homes. We are working on large housing projects, because we have over 40,000 displaced refugees from the war. This is a humanitarian crisis we must solve.

Our international status must also be cleared. Our right to self-determination should be recognized and respected by [the] international community. We have the right to live in our homeland and decide the political status of our country. We have a problem of boundaries because much of our territory is occupied by Azerbaijan. My hope is one day we will get these lands back. However, based on Azerbaijani statements, we know this will not be easy for us but we will fight for our rights.

They want to take everything. They want to continue the Armenian Genocide and reach the end goal of the genocide. They know our statements, they know that they are criminals, they know that they are crazy. They know that their own people will see new tragedies if they continue their policies.

Azerbaijan Human Rights Violations

Civilian Casualties

As of December 22, when the initial [report](#) on human rights abuses was compiled, 61 civilians have been killed by Azerbaijani forces. Of those, 40 were killed in or around their homes. Two civilians have been killed in an Azerbaijani prison. Furthermore, 21 of the 61 civilians were killed at some point while held in captivity by Azerbaijan.

The youngest civilian killed was Victoria G. — a nine-year-old girl. Victoria was killed on September 27, 2020 in the town of Martuni when Azerbaijan attacked. Victoria was killed by exploded shrapnel in front of her home. The girl's neighbor, Ellada Balayan (Born in 1961) was also killed. Victoria's two-year-old brother, mother, and neighbor Manush Avanesyan were injured in the attack.

Lesmonya Stepanyan was born in 1941. Stepanyan lived in the town of Hadrut. Stepanyan lost her arm during the first war for Artsakh independence in the 1990s. Stepanyan was killed by Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020. She was killed by a suicide drone in front of her home.

Grisha Narinyan, born in 1992, was killed October 01, 2020 in the town of Martuni. Narinyan died from shrapnel when Azerbaijan shelled the town. Narinyan was escorting a group of journalists, four of whom were injured. The targeting of local and foreign journalists by the Turks will be further addressed in this report.

Ashot Hovhannisyan was born in 1958 and lived in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Hovhannisyan was transporting food to the civilian population in the town, Tigranakert, on October 10, 2020 when his car was targeted by Azerbaijani forces. Hovhannisyan was killed in an explosion.

Civilians Executed in Captivity

Yuri Adamyan was born in 1995, and bred cattle in the village of Tyak. On October 10, 2020 Adamyan and another resident, Benik Hakobyan (aged 73), were captured by Azerbaijan's military. Both civilians were tied up and executed by gunfire in the Hadrut town square.

Yuri Asriyan was born in 1938 and lived in the village of Azokh. Asriyan could not flee his village due to health concerns. He was captured by Azerbaijan soldiers on October 21, 2020 when they invaded the village. In December, video circulated online showing Asriyan being beheaded while he pleaded for his life. Asriyan's body has not been recovered from Azerbaijan.

Targeting Journalists

On October 01, 2020, four journalists were [injured](#) while covering the conflict. Two of the journalists are French citizens. Azerbaijan is accused of deliberately targeting media who wore distinctive clothing and marked vehicles designating themselves as reporters.

Media organizations [responded](#) to the targeted assault, calling on "the International Community to resolutely condemn the war unleashed by Azerbaijan and demand from the official Baku to stop attacks on civilians and media representatives performing their professional duty."

In another statement, media organizations respond to the assistant of Azerbaijan's president who said the journalists were operating in Artsakh illegally, [saying](#), "Azerbaijan, with few exceptions, does not accredit the foreign media representatives that would like to cover the conflict, making every attempt to impede their work on the Armenian side by life-and-health-threatening actions. This also infringes the right of the public to obtain information under martial law."

Azerbaijan Hate Speech

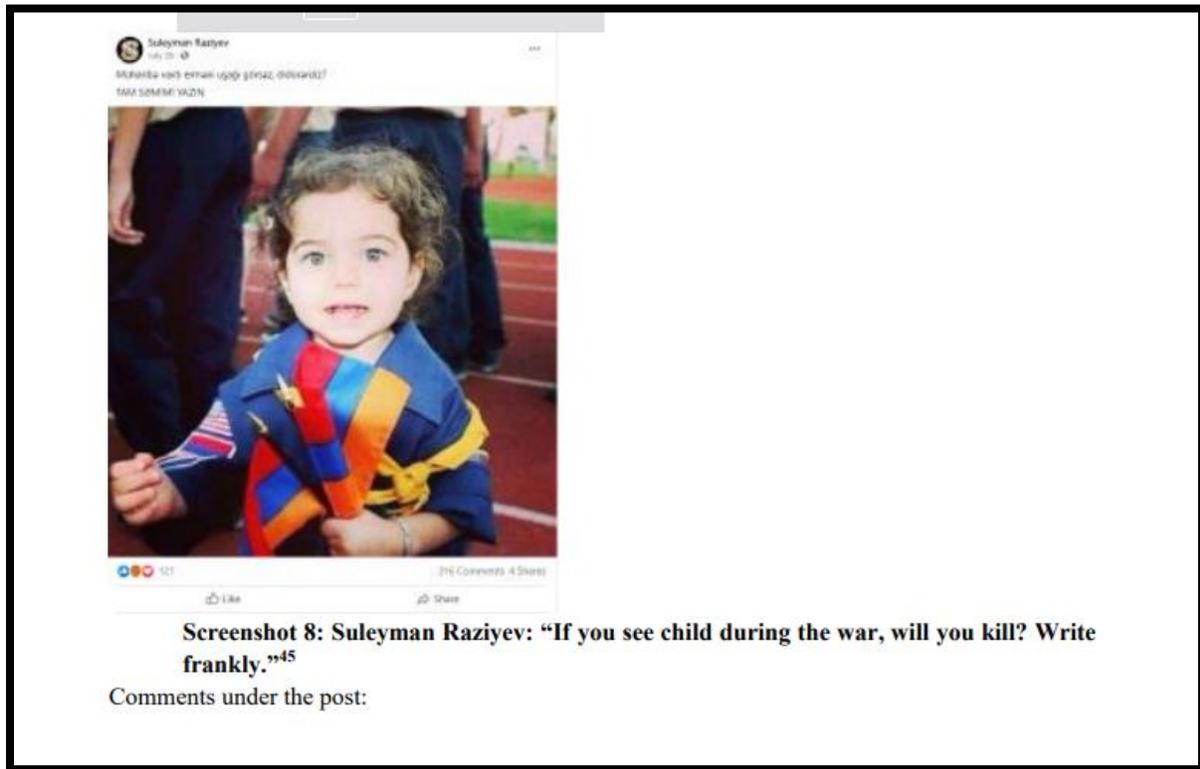
[Statements](#) allowed to remain on social media, including Facebook and Twitter, show Azerbaijan citizens express hate speech, even against children:

Elmeddin Muradlı: "If you see an Armenian child, will you kill him? I think in some cases abortion is not a sin."



Sona Əmirova: "An Armenian child should not be pitied, as the Armenian child grows up and becomes an Armenian boy."

Facebook comments reflect the barbarity of Azerbaijani-Turkish sentiments towards Armenians:



Afa Ceferova replied to image of Armenian child saying:
"Surely, I will kill. My hands are itching to do it."

Kentucky Fried Chicken [advertised](#): One free order of French fries if you presented a ticket from Baku's Military Park Museum, where tortured wax Armenian figures are on display for children to abuse.



Torture of captives and Abuse of Corpses

Extensive documentation of Azerbaijan's human rights violations has been submitted to international political bodies. The bulk of the evidence was acquired from videos and pictures shared by Azerbaijani soldiers themselves to their social media accounts. The evidence is extremely graphic, but, for academic research and to refute Azerbaijani claims of peaceful intentions, may be [viewed](#). Some notable examples of documented human rights violations are as follows:

- In one video, an Azerbaijani soldier approaches the moving body of an Armenian soldier. The Azerbaijani fires one shot into the head of the Armenian and then fires 21 more shots at the dead Armenian.
- In another video, an elderly Armenian man in civilian clothes is lying on the ground with his hands tied behind his back. While the Armenian is still living, an Azerbaijani can be seen sawing off the ear of the Armenian. Afterwards, another Azerbaijani can be seen grabbing the Armenian by the head and slamming his face into the tile floor repeatedly.
- Standing in a trench filled with dead Armenian soldiers, an Azerbaijan commander can be heard giving his soldier permission to cut the ear off of a dead Armenian soldier. The commander says, "Cut it. May Allah give strength to your hands." While the Azerbaijani is cutting, he calls the dead soldier a, "Son of a b***," and insults the dead Armenian in a sexually explicit way.

The Azerbaijani shows off the detached ear to his commander and the camera, he says, "Inshallah [God willing], we will avenge the blood of our martyrs. Inshallah, we have already solved it. We solved it with Allah's permission." He then asks his commander if he can cut off the entire head. The commander does not give permission.

Another Azerbaijani can be heard commenting on how another dead soldier is a child and that he should cut off his ear too. The dead Armenian boy's ear is cut off and while the ear is being shown off to the camera, the Azerbaijanis converse saying, "We will eliminate their race as well. God willing"

Historical Precedent of Muslim Turkish Threat

Raymond Ibrahim, scholar and author on Islam offers historical context for today's ongoing persecution of the Armenians by Turkic peoples:

The heart of the Muslim world—the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia Minor—was all Christian before the sword of Islam invaded.



Thus, before Islam violently conquered eastern Anatolia (Asia Minor) in the eleventh century, Armenia was significantly larger than today. Beginning a thousand years, however, Turks chipped away at and absorbed ethnically Armenian territory. What is happening today is simply part of that continuum.

The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa (d.1144), an Armenian historian who lived close to the initial conquests, makes all this clear.

According to this valuable historical resource, in 1019, "the first appearance of the bloodthirsty beasts ... the savage nation of infidels called Turks entered Armenia ... and mercilessly slaughtered the Christian faithful with the sword." Three decades later the raids were virtually nonstop. In 1049, the founder of the Turkic Seljuk Empire himself, Sultan Tughril Bey (r. 1037–1063), reached the Armenian city of Arzden, west of Lake Van, and "put the whole town to the sword, causing severe slaughter, as many as one hundred and fifty thousand persons."

Other contemporaries confirm the devastation visited upon Arzden. "Like famished dogs," writes Aristakes (d.1080) an eye witness, the Turks "hurled themselves on our city, surrounded it and pushed inside, massacring the men and mowing everything down like reapers in the fields, making the city a desert. Without mercy, they incinerated those who had hidden themselves in houses and churches."

Eleven years later, in 1060, the Turk's laid siege to Sebastia (which, though now a Turkish city, was for the preceding 400 years Armenian). Six hundred churches were destroyed, "many and innumerable people were burned [to death]," and countless women and children "were led into captivity to Persia."

Between 1064 and 1065, Tughril's successor, Sultan Muhammad bin Dawud Chaghri—known to posterity as Alp Arslan, one of Turkey's unsavory but [national heroes](#)—laid siege to Ani, the fortified capital of Armenia, then a great and populous city.

The thunderous bombardment of Muhammad's siege engines caused the entire city to quake, and Matthew describes countless terror-stricken families huddled together and weeping.

Once inside, the Islamic Turks "began to mercilessly slaughter the inhabitants of the entire city... and piling up their bodies one on top of the other.... Innumerable and countless boys with bright faces and pretty girls were carried off together with their mothers."

Not only do several Christian sources document the sack of Armenia's capital—one contemporary succinctly notes that Muhammad "rendered Ani a desert by massacres and fire" — but so do Muslim sources, often in apocalyptic terms: "I wanted to enter the city and see it with my own eyes," one Arab explained. "I tried to find a street without having to walk over the corpses. But that was impossible."

Such is an idea of what Muslim Turks did to Christian Armenians—not during the Armenian Genocide of a century ago but one thousand years ago, starting in 1019, when the Islamic conquest of Armenia first began.

"That was the beginning of the misfortunes of Armenia," Matthew of Edessa concludes his account: "So, lend an ear to this melancholy recital." This has proven to be an ominous remark; for the aforementioned history of blood and tears was, indeed, just "the beginning of the misfortunes of Armenia," whose "melancholy recital" continues to this day, most recently by the nation's recent concessions which, in the long run, may well have been in vain.

Analysis and Conclusion

At time of publication, sources in the Republic of Artsakh report Azerbaijan has blocked off water to the residents of Stepanakert and has continued to attack the borders of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh.

Azerbaijan's so-called president, or hereditary dictator, has [claimed](#) all of Armenia, including Yerevan, belongs to Azerbaijan.

These "post-war" actions indicate a nation hungry for more land. As noted by Donara Gabrielyan, Armenia geographically blocks off access from Turkey to Azerbaijan, and the rest of the Turkic-inhabiting world including, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Large Turkic populations exist in other states.

There are two policies at play in Turkey's politics. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appears to have started off his career as a "[Kemalist](#)" politician in favor of Pan-Turkism. Pan-Turkism is the process of uniting all Turkic-speakers under a secular system, united by their Turkic blood.

As Erdogan, and his party, have lost power, owing to economic failings and other domestic issues, Erdogan has been forced to reach out to political groups favoring "Neo-Ottomanism," or the uniting of the Turkish world under Islam. This shift in policy is seen in such actions as [converting](#) the Hagia Sophia from a museum into a mosque.

Both secular and religious paths are different without distinction. Both envision Turkish superiority in the world. Secularists, like Kemal Ataturk, the founder of "modern Turkey" merely wanted power out of the hands of Sultans, who were recognized as the supreme leader by right of their religious succession from Muhammad.

A Muslim who operates in a secular sense, does not necessarily disregard the aspects of Islam which say to kill the Christian. Rather, they are merely in opposition to being led by a dynastic, religious leader.

Members of the Christian community, Armenian or otherwise, do a great disservice to the survival of Christendom by discounting the threat Islam, itself, poses. There may well be Muslims in the West who are "bad Muslims," just as there are bad "Christians," who disregard their faith and live atheistic lives while identifying as their given religion.

The difference is the large number of Muslims who disregard the tenants of Islam become better people because they have embraced civility and have rejected the tenants of their faith which calls for the death and subjugation of Christians and all others.

Many Armenians of Artsakh do not understand why the army of Armenia — the officially recognized nation — did not come to their aid. One of the little reported occurrences during the war and, still today, is that Azerbaijan did, and continues to launch military offenses against Armenia, as well as Artsakh.

Without an official investigation or statement from Armenia's government, it is impossible to know the full truth, but concern for an invasion of Armenia, with the intent of taking the capitol Yerevan, would be a valid reason why there wasn't a greater presence of Armenian soldiers in Artsakh.

To date, most of the international statements have held both Azerbaijan and Armenia equally accountable for the conflict.

Comparisons have been made to the Republic of Artsakh and the Siege of Vienna by the Ottoman Turks.

In 1683, Christian Europe rallied in defense of Vienna which had stood as a bulwark against Ottoman aggression for over a hundred years. The defeat of the Ottomans led to the Islamist state's decline in power and preserved Christianity in Europe until the heresy of Modernism crept in.

At present, there is no clarion call to aid our Christian brothers and sisters in the Republic of Artsakh.

Failure to recognize Azerbaijan as an aggressor nation, with the intent of eliminating the Armenian people, will inevitably result in such an extinction in the Southern Caucasus.