



Armenian National Committee of America

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Republic of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh)

1) Republic of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh)

The Republic of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) is an integral part of historic Armenia that was arbitrarily carved out in 1921 by Joseph Stalin and placed under Soviet Azerbaijani administration, but with autonomous status, as part of the Soviet divide-and-conquer strategy in the Caucasus. Nagorno Karabakh has never been part of an independent Azerbaijani state. Declassified Central Intelligence Agency reports confirm that Nagorno Karabakh is historically Armenian and maintained even more autonomy than the rest of Armenia through the centuries.¹ **To force Christian Armenians to be ruled by Muslim Azerbaijan would be to sanction Joseph Stalin's policies and ensure continued instability in the region.**

During seven decades of Soviet Azerbaijani rule, the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh was subjected to discriminatory policies aimed at its removal. **Even after these efforts to force Armenians from their land, Nagorno Karabakh's pre-war population in 1988 was over 80% Armenian.**

In the late 1980's, the United States welcomed Nagorno Karabakh's historic challenge to the Soviet system and its leadership in sparking democratic movements in the Baltics and throughout the Soviet empire. Following a peaceful demand by Karabakh's legislative body to reunite the region with Armenia in 1988, Azerbaijan launched an ethnic cleansing campaign against individuals of Armenian descent with pogroms against civilians in several towns, including Sumgait and Baku.

On September 2, 1991, the people of Nagorno Karabakh declared independence from the Soviet Union and became the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. On December 10, 1991, **Nagorno Karabakh held an independence referendum in which 82% of all voters participated and 99% voted for independence.** In response, Azerbaijan launched an all-out war against the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, targeting civilians and recruiting Islamic extremist mujahideen from Afghanistan and Chechnya to join the Azerbaijani army against Christian Armenians.

2) Nagorno Karabakh's pivotal role in ending the Soviet threat to America

The people of Nagorno Karabakh, in 1988, despite great risks, were the **first to rise up against the Soviet Union**, to right the wrongs imposed by Josef Stalin, and to demand their right to live under a government of their own choosing - the very same right that we cherish as Americans. Nagorno Karabakh played a vital role in sparking the democracy movement, bringing about an end to the Soviet threat to America and to decades of dictatorial rule over millions in the USSR and its satellite states.

3) Nagorno Karabakh's commitment to peace

Nagorno Karabakh has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to a peaceful, compromise resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. It was one of the three parties to sign the cease fire agreement in 1994 and unlike Azerbaijan, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, along with Armenia, support the OSCE's repeated calls to pull back snipers.

4) Nagorno Karabakh's commitment to democracy

Since declaring independence in 1991, Nagorno Karabakh has successfully conducted **five parliamentary and five presidential elections - that have been praised by international observers as free, fair and transparent.** The most recent presidential elections held in July 2012 were favorably received by more than 80 international observers from two dozen countries, including the United States. Election observers included the former Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick Lynch and Canadian Parliamentarian Jim Karygianni, who declared, "It was a picture perfect election from start to finish." Freedom House upgraded Karabakh's democracy status as a result in 2012. Parliamentary elections held in May 2010 were rated "free, fair and transparent" by an independent American-Dutch monitoring delegation sponsored by the Public International Law and Policy Group (PILPG), which noted that Karabakh "continues to make strong progress in establishing and sustaining a healthy and sustainable democracy."

¹ <http://www.anca.org/docs/cia1-website.pdf>

5) Azerbaijan's threat to regional stability

Azerbaijan's position - unchanged for more than 15 years - is to force Nagorno Karabakh under Stalin's sanctioned Soviet Azerbaijani administration, although Nagorno Karabakh has never been part of an independent Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani government seeks to pressure the U.S. and the international community to ratify Joseph Stalin's divide-and-conquer gerrymandering by returning to a failed system of foreign rule over free peoples.

In pursuit of this policy, Azerbaijan has taken reckless steps that have contributed to instability in a region of strategic and economic importance to the United States - including:

- **Threatening to commit terrorist acts and shoot down civilian aircraft** flying to Karabakh.
- Repeatedly threatening to renew aggression, with President Ilham **Aliyev stating on numerous occasions that "only the first stage of the war is over."**
- Pardoning and promoting an axe-murderer in 2012, because he killed an Armenian NATO Partnership for Peace participant in his sleep in Budapest, which was roundly criticized around the globe including by President Obama.
- Repeatedly rejecting the United States and OSCE Minsk Group's calls to pull back snipers, even though Armenia and Karabakh have agreed to do so.
- Attacking and killing soldiers on the internationally recognized border between Armenia and Azerbaijan on numerous occasions, hundreds of miles away from the Karabakh border, even hours before Secretary of State Hillary Clinton arrived in Armenia in June 2012.
- Exponentially increasing its military budget, which surpasses Armenia's *entire* budget.
- Demolishing an over 1,000-year-old sacred Armenian cemetery with thousands of gravestones, which was condemned by the European Parliament in 2006 and documented by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Obstructing the peace process by walking away from their agreements at the 2001 Key West Summit, undermining the hopes for a settlement at the 2006 Rambouillet Summit, and insisting on 9 last minute amendments to the proposed agreement, which sabotaged the Kazan Summit in June 2011.

6) Nagorno Karabakh's right to self-determination

Declassified Central Intelligence Agency reports confirm that:

- Nagorno Karabakh is historically Armenian
- Nagorno Karabakh, throughout the Soviet era, always maintained a legitimate claim to be reunited with Armenia.

The U.S. government has consistently taken steps in support of Nagorno Karabakh:

- In July 1988, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed Amendment 2690 to the Foreign Operations bill, which called on the Soviet government to "respect the legitimate aspirations of the Armenian people" petitioning for Karabakh independence.
- The U.S. Senate, in November of 1989, adopted S.J.Res.178, expressing United States support for "the fundamental rights and the aspirations of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh for a peaceful and fair settlement."
- With violence against Armenians continuing, the Senate passed S.Res. 128 in May 1991, which stated, "Soviet and Azerbaijani forces have destroyed Armenian villages and depopulated Armenian areas in and around Nagorno-Karabakh in violation of internationally recognized human rights" and called "for the end to the blockades and other uses of force and intimidation directed against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh."
- In 1992, the U.S. passed Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which limits assistance to Azerbaijan until it takes steps to "cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh."
- The U.S. State Department's representative to the OSCE "Minsk Group" regularly visits Nagorno Karabakh, which is an official party to the peace process, and consults with its democratically elected leaders.
- The U.S. Government, over Azerbaijan's protests, has provided direct assistance to Nagorno Karabakh since 1998.

Since the end of the Soviet Union, a new generation in Nagorno Karabakh has grown up in freedom, under a democratic government of its own choosing. Forcing free citizens to live under an authoritarian, foreign Azerbaijani regime - now a hereditary monarchy - would undermine years of democratic progress and destabilize the region for generations.