



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
CENTRE

REPORT

ON THE MANIFESTATIONS OF
XENOPHOBIA, NATIONAL AND
RACIAL INTOLERANCE COMMITTED
BY THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA



2024



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INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Communications Center presents a comprehensive report on Armenia's manifestation of national intolerance and xenophobia, prepared for the 114th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

The report, covering the period from November 2020 to July 2024, sheds light on Armenia's cruel treatment of prisoners of war based on their ethnicity, illegal military formations, mine terror, acts of vandalism perpetrated in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and the destruction and desecration of historical monuments belonging to Azerbaijanis.

The report also highlights Armenia's policy of discrimination based on national origin and its pursuit of an ideology of racial and national superiority.

These actions stand in clear violation of Armenia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and its responsibilities to the international community as a whole. The information presented in the report is sourced from open media sources, official government reports, and reports by non-governmental organizations, providing a reliable and well-documented account of Armenia's transgressions.

CRUEL TREATMENT OF PRISONERS OF WAR BASED ON THEIR ETHNICITY

Despite the signing of the Trilateral Statement on November 9, 2020, by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia, which aimed to end the Second Garabagh War, Azerbaijani soldiers have been captured and subjected to torture and other degrading treatment based on their ethnicity.

The violence committed by Armenia against the captives is a blatant violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, CERD), and other international obligations arising from humanitarian and human rights law.

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On November 8, 2020, Azerbaijani serviceman X was severely wounded in the Shusha-Khankandi direction and lay unconscious in the forest for five grueling days before being captured. After that, his captors made the decision to amputate his leg, forever changing his life.

The horrors X faced did not end with the amputation. According to his personal testimony, he was subjected to torture at the hands of his captors. The methods of torture included the use of pliers and the administration of injections.

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Y a serviceman captured shortly before November 10, disclosed that he and his fellow prisoners were subjected to electric shocks and had needles brutally stuck into their legs.

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Another prisoner of war, Z testified to the psychological torture inflicted upon him by his Armenian captors. Disturbingly, the Armenian military claimed that they were bombarding Ganja, Azerbaijan's second-largest city, in an attempt to break the captives' spirits.

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The brutality did not end there. X and Y, two other Azerbaijani hostages, were savagely beaten, kicked, and punched by more than 10 Armenian servicemen from the moment of their capture.

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Even wounded Azerbaijani soldiers were not spared from the cruelty. X and Y were severely injured and physically assaulted, with their ordeal captured on film by a Ukrainian journalist.

In a particularly disturbing incident, X was deceived into believing he was being handed over to the Azerbaijani side, only to be placed in a car and taken to an unknown location.

During the journey, he was subjected to further physical abuse and insults, as evidenced by video footage.

The footage, initially released to the public, depicts two wounded soldiers receiving critical first aid from the Ukrainian journalist and Armenian soldiers after the fighting.

However, the story takes a disturbing turn in a subsequent video, showing one of the wounded soldiers subjected to an act of violence within the confines of a vehicle.

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The horrors continued when two Azerbaijani soldiers, X and Y, went missing on April 9, 2023, in the border area of Shahbuz, a district in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, due to poor visibility caused by adverse weather conditions.

They were subsequently captured by Armenian forces. In a disturbing video circulated on social media, Y was shown being tortured and subjected to inhumane treatment.

ILLEGAL MILITARY FORMATIONS

Two non-state armed organizations in Armenia, known as VOMA and POGA, are actively promoting hatred against Azerbaijanis through their online platforms.

These groups openly operate branches across Armenia, where they recruit and train civilians in combat skills, with the explicit goal of preparing the younger generation for a new war fueled by revanchism.

What's even more alarming is that these organizations attract not only local Armenians but also members of the Armenian diaspora and citizens from other countries to their youth camps.

VOMA, in particular, has declared its ties to the Armenian authorities and military, with evidence of its members standing guard alongside regular troops at the line of contact, fully equipped with military gear. The existence of such organizations blatantly violates Armenian legislation, which prohibits the creation of unauthorized armed formations.

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VOMA, through its social media accounts, has been calling on Armenian children and youth to join their military camps for mine-laying training.

This practice is in direct violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and its 1977 additional protocols, which prohibit the participation of children under the age of fifteen in military exercises.

Armenia, being a party to these conventions, has failed to enforce these regulations.



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The head of VOMA, has openly expressed his desire to liquidate Azerbaijan as a state and disunite it. He has classified the war against Azerbaijanis as a confrontation against "barbarians."

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Additionally, POGA frequently calls on Armenians to take up arms to fight for the expansion of the Armenian homeland, including territories within the sovereign borders of Azerbaijan.

The organization glorifies Garegin Nzhdeh, the founder of the ethno-nationalist "Tsegakron" ideology, which asserts Armenians' superiority over other ethnic groups.



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Similar statements are also made by another organization, POGA. POGA has been engaging in recruitment efforts on social media, and on February 11, 2022, it described Azerbaijanis as "barbaric and coward."

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VOMA also frequently refers to the racist statements of Nazi collaborator Garegin Nzhdeh on its social media, further emphasizing its extremist ideology.



MINE TERROR

Despite the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia following the end of the Second Garabagh War, Armenia continued to evade its commitments.

As Armenian forces fled from the occupied lands, Armenian authorities not only refused to provide accurate maps of mined areas but also actively continued to mine territories far from the combat zones.

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Under persistent demands from Azerbaijan and international organizations, Armenia eventually provided some maps, allegedly "as a sign of goodwill."

However, these maps turned out to be incomplete and inaccurate, with an average accuracy of only 25%, significantly complicating the demining process.

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The demining operations carried out by the specialists of the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) revealed that Armenians continued to carry out sabotage raids in the liberated territories and planted anti-personnel mines "E-001M," manufactured in Armenian factories and dated 2021, • long after the end of military actions in November 2020.

These actions can only be seen as the deliberate organization of terror against the civilian population. Despite Azerbaijan's tireless efforts, vast areas in the region remain uncleared of mines, posing a severe danger to the peaceful life of the population.



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Armenia deliberately planted landmines in villages formerly inhabited by ethnic Azerbaijanis, violating their rights to personal security, protection from bodily harm, and the right to return.



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These actions are in direct violation of the Ottawa Convention On the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Since November 10, 2020, landmines have caused casualties among 350 people in the affected areas, with 65 deaths and 285 injuries. The number of victims continues to rise.

Attached to the report is a monitoring report on mine incidents prepared by the Center for Strategic Communications for the year 2023.

*Strategic Communications Center (2023),
Mining Accidents and Additional Information, p. 2.*

ACTS OF VANDALISM IN THE FORMERLY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

As ethnic Armenian residents chose to leave the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan, they began to destroy their properties and belongings, rendering these areas uninhabitable for returning Azerbaijanis.

Armenian authorities encouraged these actions, and have taken no steps to investigate these racially motivated acts of destruction or hold those responsible accountable.

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Illegal settlers, specially placed by Armenia in the formerly occupied territories after the first Garabagh War, also participated in the vandalism.

Armenia's policies during the occupation period paved the way for ethnic Armenians from Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, and other states to illegally settle in the formerly occupied territories.

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The illegal settlers burned and vandalized local homes, cemeteries, and forests as they departed. These premeditated acts, motivated by racial hatred, were intended to prevent Azerbaijani internally displaced people from returning to their homes or finding any remnant of their previous lives.

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Some of the houses were found covered with pig's blood splattered across the walls as a racist and Islamophobic slur directed at ethnic Azerbaijanis. On one wall, the words "pig blood" were written in Cyrillic Azerbaijani.

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Video evidence shared on social media on August 14, 2022, shows Armenian settlers openly promoting racial hatred against Azerbaijanis as they set houses on fire.

One settler in Zabukh was recorded saying, "The Turks (meaning Azerbaijanis) will not be able to benefit from this house," as he prepared to burn it down.

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A video posted on Twitter on August 21, 2022 features another Armenian settler in Zabukh explicitly promoting racial hatred against Azerbaijanis as he doused a house in gasoline, saying "It is time to die. I will not let the Turks (meaning Azerbaijanis) carry on".





DESTRUCTION AND DESECRATION OF HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF AZERBAIJANI HERITAGE

For decades, the Republic of Armenia has been engaging in a deliberate policy of destroying the material and cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people within its territory, in blatant violation of international law and norms.

This destructive campaign extended to the regions of Garabagh and Eastern Zangazur, which remained under Armenian occupation for nearly 30 years. Not only did Armenian authorities encourage this cultural erasure, but they actively participated in the destruction of historical sites.

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During the occupation by Armenian armed forces, over a hundred villages, cemeteries, mosques, and historical and architectural monuments were systematically destroyed. The process of erasing traces of Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage in Armenia intensified after the 1990s.

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The report includes a study conducted by the Center for Strategic Communications, which details the destruction of the cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people in Yerevan.

The fate of Tepebashi quarter, the last remnant of Azerbaijani national-cultural and historical heritage in the city of Yerevan: the destruction of the heritage of the Azerbaijani people in Armenia and the erasure of historical traces, pp. 87-105.

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Over time, numerous religious and historical monuments of the Azerbaijani people were destroyed, including the Erivan Fortress, Khan's Palace, Abbas Mirza Mosque, Zal-Khan Mosque, Damirbulag Mosque, Sertip-Khan Mosque, Haji Novruzali Bey Mosque, Haji Jafar Mosque, Gantar Caravanserai (market), Haji-Beyim Bathhouse, Haji Ali Bathhouse, and Akhund Sheikhlislam Bathhouse, among many other religious and historical monuments in the city of Yerevan.

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The Tepebashi quarter, located in the western part of Yerevan, remains the only evidence of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage in the city. Historically inhabited by Azerbaijanis, Tepebashi has now shrunk to a mere 16 hectares and faces the threat of destruction and obliteration.

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One of the most prominent landmarks in Tepebashi is the Blue Mosque, which was destroyed in 1918–1919. During the Armenian SSR period, the mosque lost its function and was converted into a city museum in 1931, and later a planetarium.

In 1995, the city administration of Yerevan granted the right to use the Blue Mosque and its territory free of charge for 99 years to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Armenia as a cultural center.

This move has led to the mosque being inaccurately presented to visitors as a "Persian or Iranian mosque," despite its Azerbaijani origins. •The fate of the Blue Mosque highlights how Azerbaijani religious monuments have been used as tools for political manipulation.



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DIFFERENCE

You must know



DISCRIMINATION BASED ON NATIONAL ORIGIN

In the public sphere, offensive statements aimed at belittling the dignity of the Azerbaijani people are disturbingly common in Armenia.

This manifests in various forms, from internet subcultures and social networks to animated films.

The dehumanization of Azerbaijanis is also evident in the statements, personal posts, and speeches of Armenian politicians, activists, and public figures, and is expressed in their appearances on news, educational, and socio-political TV channels.

Despite the Armenian Criminal Code's limitations on such actions, the Armenian government tolerates them, allowing various age groups, including children, to absorb this ideology of hatred and develop stereotypical thinking towards their neighbors.

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One glaring example is the channel “Noyen Tapan,” which has over a hundred thousand active listeners. It runs a segment called “Soft Power” that openly promotes racism and hatred towards Azerbaijanis. In this segment, political activists and public figures such as make openly racist calls.

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Armenian opposition leader X has also contributed to this dehumanizing narrative. On his Facebook page, which has over 22,340 subscribers, he shared a photo that portrays the “brave Armenians who defend their people” against the “cowardly” Azerbaijanis (more precisely, the Azerbaijani army) who are placing the Azerbaijani civilian population against the Armenian army.

The hashtag #HumanityVsAzerbaijan, or Humanity opposed to Azerbaijan, is a vivid example of the dehumanization of the country and the Azerbaijani people in general.

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Even high-ranking officials, such as former Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, who is also the Member of the Executive Council of the Republican Party of Armenia, have engaged in this rhetoric.

During the war, he shared excerpts from the Bible in three languages on his personal Facebook page, presenting the war as religious, implying that God will help the Armenians but not the “devils” – Azerbaijanis.

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An Armenian National Assembly member from the “Prosperous Armenia” party has shared and endorsed a controversial video excerpt from the “Kill Dim” cartoon series. The politician shared a post, which featured a caption saying “go to sleep” along with racist hashtags.

In agreement, the politician wrote, “That’s it.” who shared a video of Azerbaijanis, went as far as describing them as “sheep.”

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Renowned Armenian journalist claims that the key difference between Armenians and Azerbaijanis lies in the “mental superiority of Armenians, who possess a deep understanding of what they are fighting for.”

According to journalist, Azerbaijanis on the battlefield can be categorized into two groups: those who are forced to fight without comprehending the reasons behind the conflict, and those who are merely mercenaries, fighting for financial gain rather than national pride.

Analysis goes beyond the battlefield, suggesting that Azerbaijanis, as a nation, are of the “lowest race and class”, lacking the necessary qualities to effectively engage in combat. Again, he is belittling of Azerbaijan as a nation that does not know how to fight and is illiterate.

Furthermore, journalist introduces a second narrative, asserting that Armenians are essentially “fighting against anyone other than Azerbaijanis.

In this way, the Armenians insists that the Azerbaijanis do not possess the characteristics required to pose a significant challenge to the Armenian side.

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The animation studio behind the controversial cartoon series, "Kill Dim" Production, is known for producing satirical content depicting Armenian and Azerbaijani soldiers on the front lines.

However, their portrayal of Azerbaijanis has been criticized as extremely racist and offensive. Armenians themselves have described the series as "a cartoon about the stupidity of an Azerbaijani soldier who finds himself in all sorts of funny situations due to the negligence of his government."

Despite the studio claiming to have suspended new episodes, old episodes containing the xenophobic content continue to circulate on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.

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The creator of controversial animations about Azerbaijanis, is the son of Armenian cartoonist. Both father and son are known for their strong Armenian nationalist views, which date back to the Soviet era.

The creator is a popular public figure and honored artist with an active civic position, has even expressed pride in his work "Kill Dim". In view of these facts, the question of non-application of various sanctions against this person remains open.

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The dehumanizing portrayal of Azerbaijanis as "sheep" is not limited to these animations; it is a widespread narrative found throughout Armenian media. In one instance, a video of Azerbaijanis protesting for Garabagh was dubbed over by Armenians, replacing the protesters' voices with the bleating of sheep.

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During the Second Garabagh War, there was a sharp increase in Armenian-created pages using the keyword “Azerbaran,” a play on the Russian word for sheep (baran).

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This disturbing trend of depicting Azerbaijanis as non-humans is not new and has been observed for quite some time. The popular blog of X regularly publishes posts with radically offensive content, including a section titled “Azerbaijanis–non-humans.”

This section features anecdotes that vividly express the Armenian attitude towards Azerbaijanis, such as: “A rabbit and a skunk meet. The rabbit asks: - Who am I? - You are white, with a fluffy tail—that means you are a rabbit! And who am I? - You? You are black and smelly—that means you are Azerbaijani!”

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During the visit by representatives of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), it was found that there is a limited understanding in Armenia of what should be considered as hate speech, including incitement to hatred and discrimination.

This leads to confusion about what can be regarded as acceptable criticism in politics and the media. Unfortunately, insufficient measures are taken to prevent and punish such incidents, which allows the concept of "Armenian identity" to be used for inciting intolerance, particularly against the LGBT community and other minorities.

Particular attention in these cases is given to offensive remarks against "Azeris" and "Turks," which are based on hostile narratives that have developed in the context of the longstanding conflict with Azerbaijan.

These narratives are often used to discredit political opponents, deepening internal divisions within the country and hindering peace negotiations. Despite ECRI's recommendations to combat hate speech, Armenia still lacks a comprehensive database on such incidents and hate crimes, making it difficult to fully assess the scale of the problem.



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IDEOLOGY OF RACIAL AND NATIONAL SUPERIORITY

Armenia continues to promote ideologies of racial and national superiority, erecting monuments to honor collaborators and active proponents of Nazi Germany's philosophy.

These figures, often with a local twist emphasizing hatred towards Azerbaijanis and Turks, are being heroized, their life stories presented as examples for the younger generation to follow.

Schoolchildren are regularly taken to visit these monuments, exposing them to the openly fascist ideologies of these racist figures.

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The fascist propaganda in Armenia is closely intertwined with the cult of Garegin Nzhdeh, a Nazi collaborator who founded the theory of “Tsegakronism” – a belief in the racial and national superiority of Armenians.

Until 2018, the previous government officially rehabilitated Nzhdeh’s legacy, and even after the change in leadership, the current government has taken no action to condemn or ban this ideology.

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In his article “My Word to the Armenian Youth,” Garegin Nzhdeh openly expressed his admiration for Adolf Hitler and the Nazi ideology. He wrote, “If, upon seizing power, Dashnaktsutyun comes to dominance with its half-hearted program of socialism, we will all leave this party. We must finally learn to act like Hitler.”

This statement reveals Nzhdeh’s disturbing belief that Armenians should treat Turkic and Muslim peoples in the same manner that the Nazis persecuted Jews in Germany and other occupied European territories.

Archive of SGB AR. – case. AD-705. – pp. 7-8 verso, 175-175 verso.

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Nzhdeh's detailed biography is widely known, and his works continue to be published and republished. On June 20, 2001, the Republic of Armenia established the "Garegin Nzhdeh" medal through a law to honor officers and warrant officers of the armed forces and special services. This medal is awarded by the order of the Minister of Defense of Armenia.

Kuznetsov O.Yu.. "State policy of glorifying Nazism in Armenia and the reaction of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: historical and legal analysis" Sciences of Europe, no. 40-3 (40), 2019, pp. 36-44.

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On August 28, 2016, a solemn ceremony took place in the central square of Yerevan, Armenia, as a monument to Garegin Nzhdeh was unveiled in front of the Armenian Government Building.

The event was attended by then-Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, who declared Nzhdeh a "national hero" of the Armenian people, comparing him to Russian historical figures like Alexander Nevsky and Generalissimo Suvorov.

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The current Armenian government has taken no steps to address this problematic legacy. Instead, fresh flowers are regularly laid at the base of Nzhdeh's monument, and schoolchildren and youth are brought to the site.

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The glorification of Nzhdeh and his racist ideology stands in stark contrast to universal human norms, as outlined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1965.

The convention clearly states that any theory of racial superiority is "scientifically false, morally reprehensible, socially unjust, and dangerous," and that there can be no justification for racial discrimination in any form, "whether in theory or in practice."

