



OFFICE OF THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REPUBLIC IN THE USA

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15th ANNIVERSARY OF KARABAKH LIBERATION MOVEMENT



February 1988. Demonstrators rally in Stepanakert for reunification with Armenia

On February 20, people of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh and our friends around the world celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Nagorno Karabakh Liberation Movement. President Arkady Ghoukasian and other top government officials paid tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives during the 1992-1994 war, laying wreaths at the Stepanakert Memorial Complex. A conference dedicated to the anniversary took place in Artsakh State University, followed by an art exhibition.

The two Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Congressmen Joe Knollenberg (R-MI) and Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) publicly congratulated the people of Nagorno Karabakh on the 15th Anniversary of the Karabakh Liberation Movement. In a letter dated February 14, the Congressmen said in part, "February 20, 1988 marked the beginning of

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COMMEMORATING THE SUMGAIT TRAGEDY

On February 28, 1988 a horrible tragedy unfolded in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait, situated thirty minutes away from the capital Baku. Almost the entire city (population 250,000) became an arena for unobstructed mass pogroms of its Armenian population. Azeri thugs broke into apartment buildings, with lists in hand of Armenian tenants residing there. Azeries were armed with sharpened iron rods, hatchets, knives, broken bottles, rocks and gas tanks. They killed, raped and burned Armenian residents alive and mutilated their bodies in broad daylight. More than 50 Armenians were killed and hundreds were wounded. More than two hundred apartments were robbed, dozens of cars were destroyed and burned, dozens of Armenian-owned retail outlets and art studios were demolished. Thousands became refugees.



March, 1988. Protesters in Yerevan rally for the punishment of Sumgait tragedy organizers and perpetrators

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Situation Tense on the Line of Contact

From the beginning of this year, the situation on the Line of Contact between the armed forces of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan has been tense. As we reported earlier, an Azeri reconnaissance group was intercepted in January, resulting in the capture of an Azerbaijani serviceman, who was returned to the Azerbaijani side February 6, following President Arkady Ghoukasian's decision. A similar accident took place on

February 13, when another Azeri reconnaissance group was stopped as it was trying to cross the Line of Contact in Martakert region. Hamid Alekperov, an Azeri soldier was captured. On February 18, he was exchanged for a Nagorno Karabakh POW, who was earlier abducted by the Azerbaijani side. In both cases, ICRC and OSCE representatives were informed and were allowed unfettered

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15th Anniversary of Karabakh Liberation Movement

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[your] determined effort to shake off Azerbaijan's oppressive rule and shape [your] own destiny. The same commitment to liberty lay at the foundation of the American nation."

U.S. Congressmen Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), Devin Nunes (R-CA) and Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) submitted statements to the congressional record congratulating the people of Nagorno Karabakh Republic. In their statements the congressmen expressed their support for Nagorno Karabakh's independence and its commitment to democracy and stability in the South Caucasus.

"I congratulate the people of NKR on the 15th anniversary of the Nagorno Karabakh Liberation Movement and their incredible determination to establish a free and open democratic society," Pallone said. Echoing his remarks Kennedy's statement said: "Despite years of ethnic cleansing, forced economic discrimination and state-sponsored violence and intimidation, residents of Nagorno Karabakh ...

never strayed in their struggle for independence.... I hope that this Congress will continue to assist them in the continued development of their democracy, which serves as a beacon of hope to oppressed people seeking democracy around the globe." "[Nagorno Karabakh] strongly contribute[s] to peace and stability in the South Caucasus region - a goal the United States shares with them," said Nunes in his statement before the U.S. House of Representatives.

February 20, 1988 is generally regarded as the beginning of Nagorno Karabakh's modern national liberation movement. On that day, the Nagorno Karabakh legislature officially petitioned the Soviet government to reunite the area with Armenia. Tens of thousands demonstrated for weeks in Nagorno Karabakh to support that decision and to show their desire to live in freedom and determination to restore historical justice. The national liberation movement that began immediately after Stalin's infamous decision to include NK

in Azerbaijan, was reborn in 1988 as the people of Karabakh saw an opportunity in Gorbachev's democratization agenda to correct the mistakes of the Soviet totalitarian past.

The central government in Moscow and later, newly independent Azerbaijan resorted to political pressure, blockades, massacres and an outright war, to crush the liberation movement. By the summer of 1992, with Azerbaijan's military forces occupying most of the NK, the country was on the verge of extinction. Total physical annihilation of NK Armenians seemed imminent. Yet, despite enormous hardship, the perseverance and determination of the people of Karabakh prevailed. Morally supported by human right champions, including Vice-Speaker of the British House of Lords Baroness Caroline Cox and the late Andrey Sakharov, Nagorno Karabakh successfully expelled the aggressor and defended its right to live in freedom, under a government of its own choosing.

Commemorating the Sumgait Tragedy

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The anniversary of this tragic event was commemorated in Nagorno Karabakh this year. President Arkady Ghukasian, Parliament Speaker Oleg Yesayan, Prime Minister Anoushavan Danielian and other government officials visited the Sumgait memorial in Stepanakert and laid flowers in the memory of innocent Armenians who fell victim to the blood-thirsty Azerbaijani mob. A rally was organized near the monument.

In his address to rally participants, Yesayan said: "By committing this act of genocide, Azerbaijani authorities declared war against the Armenian people. They transformed the political process of the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh problem into an armed ethnic conflict. They had as their purpose the forceful deportation of the entire Armenian population of Azerbaijan. Today the authorities of Azerbaijan continue encouraging hatred towards the Armenians, which is a clear manifesta-

tion of racist ideology... The Nagorno Karabakh Republic will continue its efforts aimed at the recognition of the Sumgait tragedy as genocide against Armenian people. There is no statue of limitations for the crimes against humanity." Rally participants adopted a resolution calling on the United Nations, the Presidents of the Co-Chairing countries of the OSCE Minsk Group and a number of international organizations to try the organizers and implementers of the genocide of Armenians on the territory of Azerbaijan.

The Sumgait massacre was the starting point of similar campaigns in Baku, Kirovabad (Gandzak), She-makha, Shamkhor, Minge-chaur and Nakhichevan that led to the disappearance of Azerbaijan's 450,000-strong Armenian community and inspired the military aggression against the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh in 1991-1994. The evidence clearly proves that the massacre was organized on the

governmental level. For example, in his address to the Supreme Council of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region, a high-ranking Azerbaijan Communist Party official, Hidayat Orujev, issued the following chilling warning days before the massacre of Armenians in Sumgait: "If you do not stop campaigning for the unification of Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia, if you don't sober up, 100,000 Azeris from neighboring districts will break into your houses, torch your apartments, rape your women, and kill your children." Orujev is currently the State Advisor for Ethnic Policy in Heidar Aliyev's presidential staff.

The organizers of the Armenian massacres in Azerbaijan throughout the 20th century were certainly inspired by the fact that Turkey, after butchering more 1.5 million Armenians in the genocide of 1915-1923, has even to this day not been held accountable.

Situation Tense on the Line of Contact

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access to the Azerbaijani POWs in Nagorno Karabakh custody. Another reconnaissance group of Azerbaijani soldiers was discovered on February 21 on the Martakert frontline. In a fourth incident this year, a group of five Azeri saboteurs was spotted on the southern portion of the Line of Contact on February 26. As they retreated, Azeri servicemen opened fire at the NKR Defense Army soldiers, lightly injuring two.

NKR Defense Army issued statements regarding these incidents, strongly condemning "Azerbaijan's gross violations of the cease-fire regime, which can destabilize the situation in the zone of the Azerbaijani-Karabakh conflict." The

most recent statement, issued February 26, also warned the Azerbaijani side that similar attempts to cross the Line of Contact will be countered with resolute actions.

President Arkady Ghoukasian and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk twice discussed the situation on the Line of Contact during this period. The sides stressed the importance of maintaining the cease-fire as a necessary step in the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Kasprzyk also met with Foreign Minister Ashot Ghouljian and Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Seyran Ohanian.

The OSCE representatives carried out several monitoring sessions in Febru-

ary and March. The first took place February 6 near Karmiravan village in Martakert. Kasprzyk led the mission from the Karabakh side. A brief radio contact was established between the commanders of opposing sides. The Line of Contact was monitored again on February 27. The first two went without incident; however, prior to the third monitoring, on March 13 near the town of Aghdam, shots were fired from the Azerbaijani side. The shooting incident was registered by the OSCE officials. During all three monitoring sessions, representatives of NKR Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs accompanied the OSCE representatives.

National Statistic Service Reports on 2002 Economic Data

The National Statistic Service reported on February 6 that industrial output in 2002 totaled \$14 million. An industrial growth of \$3.7 million was registered last year, which is 36% higher than in 2001. The private sector experienced a remarkable boost in industrial production, with its output more than doubling over 2001. In the same period, government-owned enterprises increased their production only by 1.1%. Sales of finished goods also increased by 33.6%, totaling \$13.6 million. Exports went mostly to non-CIS states with

a total \$2 million this year (4.4 times higher than in 2001), while exports to CIS states totaled \$0.5 million. Three hundred forty-two new jobs were created in the industrial sector last year. The level of capital construction stayed almost constant, \$10.7 million in 2002.

Since the end of hostilities in 1994, the Nagorno Karabakh government has been attempting to revive the collapsed economy with notable success. Despite the absence of assistance from international lending organizations, the government has made significant progress

in partially restoring the republic's industrial infrastructure. Serious economic reforms, initiated by President Arkady Ghoukasian's administration in 1999, tax code simplification and the introduction of numerous investor incentives resulted in an inflow of almost \$30 million from Armenia, Australia, Great Britain, Iran, Lebanon, Monaco, Russia, Switzerland and the United States since 1999. Major investments have been made in telecommunications, agriculture, wood processing, hotel business, fine jewelry and watch production and banking.

MSF-France Armenia Mission Head met with Foreign Minister, ICRC Embarks on a New Program

The Head of the Médecins Sans Frontières' (MSF-France) mission to Armenia, Marie Deblez visited Nagorno Karabakh and met separately with Deputy Foreign Minister Masis Mailian and Health Minister Zoya Lazarian on February 25. Informing Nagorno Karabakh officials that her tour of duty was nearing its end, she introduced her successor, Samuel Enrion. Mailian informed MSF representatives that the government will continue assisting the humani-

tarian organization in its projects. MSF has been actively involved in providing humanitarian assistance to Nagorno Karabakh since 1992. In 1997 it launched its successful anti-tuberculosis program, providing local hospitals with medications and training.

Another humanitarian organization involved in post-conflict humanitarian assistance in Nagorno Karabakh, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began implementing its

"Safe Playgrounds for Children" program. The Head of the ICRC Office in Stepanakert, Charlotte Hartford announced in March that the program envisions construction of playgrounds in 30 villages of Dizak, Jraber, Khachen, Shushi and Varanda provinces in secure areas, away from mine fields. The first playgrounds will be installed by the end of June. The program, undertaken in cooperation with the government, will be completed by the end of this year.

The Nagorno Karabakh Parliament Adopts New Laws

The Nagorno Karabakh National Assembly ratified the laws "On Taxes", "On Income Tax", "On Value-Added Tax" and "On Trade Tax" at its 6th session on Feb-

ruary 28. During deliberations, members of the government answered parliamentarians' questions regarding the bills. During another session on March 19, the

parliament adopted bills "On Orphans", "On Food Security", "On Joint-Stock Ventures" and amended laws "On Education" and "On Mass Media".

**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REPUBLIC
APPEALS TO ALL ARMENIAN AMERICANS:
PLEASE HELP TO SAVE ARTSAKH WAR VETERAN
MIKHAIL BAKHTAMIAN**



Disabled Artsakh war veteran Mikhail Bakhtamian urgently needs a kidney transplant. Bakhtamian suffered a head wound on the battlefield in 1994 and underwent surgery. But chronic kidney failure followed in 1997 and despite a series of treatments in Yerevan, his condition has deteriorated seriously. Doctors advise that a kidney transplant is critical.

ONLY A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT CAN SAVE BAKHTAMIAN'S LIFE

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\$70,000 U.S. DOLLARS**

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Please make your check payable to the Armenian Children's Relief Fund and include a note "for Mikhail Bakhtamian".

**For more information, please contact
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