



Office of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic

February 16, 2006

FACT SHEET

EVENTS IN KHOJALY (NKR) AND NEAR AGDAM (AZERBAIJAN) ON FEBRUARY 25-27, 1992

Khojaly is also often spelled as Xocali, Khojaly, Khodzhal, Khojalu, Khocalu, Khocali, Khocaly

Azerbaijan turned Khojaly into a launch pad for indiscriminate bombardment of Karabakh

In 1991 and early 1992, Azerbaijan used an Azeri inhabited village of Khojaly in Nagorno Karabakh as a launching pad for indiscriminate artillery and rocket fire on Stepanakert, the capital of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR), located only a short 15-minute drive from Khojaly. By the end of February 1992, intensive fire from Khojaly and other Azeri military strongholds in Karabakh had killed 243 people, including 14 children and 37 women, and wounded 491, including 53 children and 70 women. In addition, systematic and intense artillery and rocket fire against civilian targets in Stepanakert paralyzed the city, destroying hospitals, administrative buildings, schools, and homes. By controlling Khojaly, Azerbaijan also prohibited access to Karabakh's airport, the only link with the outside world, which was used to bring food and medical aid. Furthermore, Khojaly was also used as a staging area for military offensives on Stepanakert and nearby Armenian-populated villages. Thus, Khojaly became a legitimate military target for Self-Defense Forces of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

Legitimate target for NKR Self-Defense Units

In early January 1992, Nagorno Karabakh authorities decided to neutralize this military target and informed the Azeris. The NKR authorities also transmitted this information by radio, TV, loudspeakers, leaflets and other methods to warn the Khojaly civilian population of the upcoming operation, giving the civilian population an opportunity to exit the area through a safe corridor. Azerbaijan's leadership in Baku, as well as local authorities, and military commanders in Khojaly knew about the corridor, its width and direction. Both Azerbaijani President Ayaz Mutalibov and Khojaly Mayor Elman Mamedov in their 1992 interviews confirmed this fact. During two weeks leading to the Khojaly operation, NKR Self-Defense Forces observed a mass exodus of the civilian population from Khojaly through the provided corridor (see the map on page 2).

The operation to neutralize Khojaly base of the Azeri armed forces began at 11:00 PM on February 25 and was successfully completed within five hours. Nagorno Karabakh forces took full control of the area, killing dozens of military personnel during the operation. Unfortunately, 11 civilians became unintended victims. About 700 civilians and military surrendered to NKR Self-Defense Forces. The captured civilians were returned to Azerbaijan in the following days, while the military personnel was later exchange for the Armenian military prisoners and civilian hostages held by Azerbaijan.

Events on the territory controlled by Azerbaijan, 7 miles from Khojaly, after the Khojaly operation was over

When the military operation began in Khojaly, a large group of civilians and armed military personnel from Khojaly used the provided humanitarian corridor to exit the battlefield and began moving in the direction of the Azeri-controlled Agdam. Near Nakhichevanik village of Karabakh (outside of the provided corridor), the group provoked a gun battle with the defenders of Nakhichevanik, which resulted in numerous deaths on both sides. On February 28 and early March 1992, in the area then fully controlled by Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani and Turkish journalists videotaped images of the hundreds of killed and, during the second video shooting session, also mutilated bodies.

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Since then, official Baku has falsified the events and used the human tragedy to persistently fan anti-Armenian hysteria to demonize the Armenian people in the eyes of the Azeris and the international community. It used the images to incite anti-Armenian sentiment and intolerance, which resulted in murders and calls from Azeris to wipe out Armenians as an ethnic group.

Conclusion

Responsibility for the tragic loss of civilian life on February 26-27, 1992 on the outskirts of Agdam, territory fully controlled by Azeri forces, lies with the political and military leadership of Azerbaijan.

First, the Azeri leadership used the territory of Khojaly for indiscriminate artillery attacks on civilian targets, thus turning the town into a legitimate military target for NKR Self-Defense Forces.

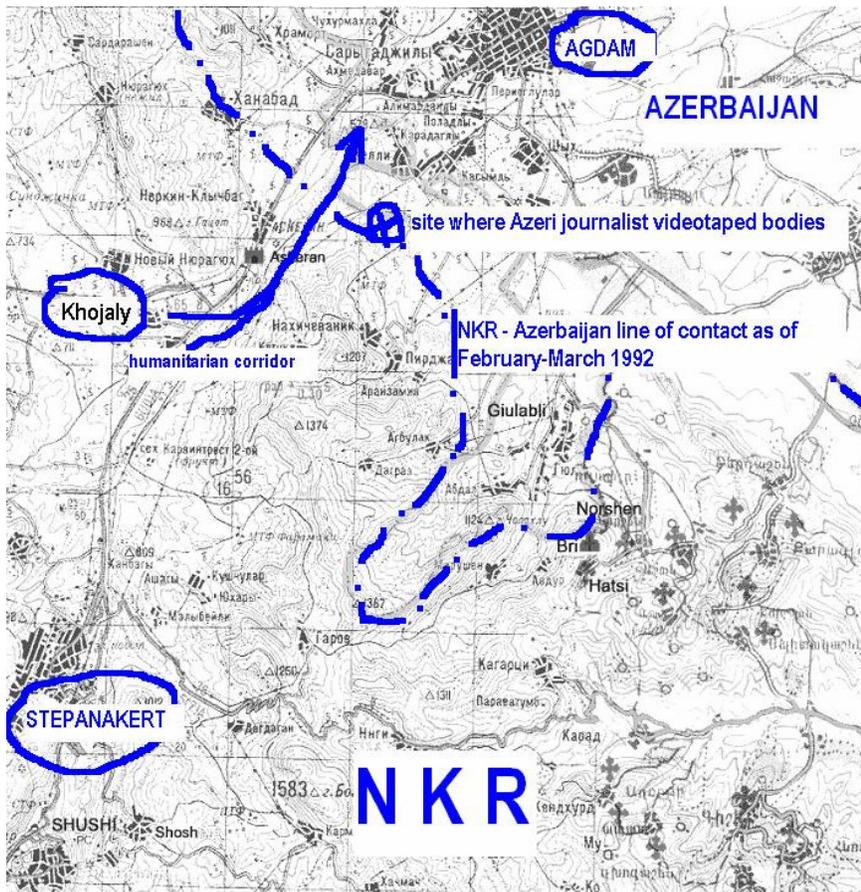
Second, the Azeri leadership intentionally prevented the civilian population from leaving the militarized village.

Third, the Azeri leadership failed to safely relocate civilians from Khojaly after public warnings of upcoming military operation, although it had many opportunities to do so.

Fourth, retreating Azeri forces provoked an exchange of fire with NKR Self-Defense Forces some five miles from Khojaly, which resulted in losses on both sides.

Fifth, those who had continued, full access to the site of reported close-range, mass killing are responsible for it. The reported killing of hundreds of civilians with incidences of barbaric mutilation of bodies took place near Agdam (some seven miles from Khojaly), on the territory controlled by Azeri forces. Free access to the site by Azeri and Turkish journalists is clear evidence to that end.

In addition, Azerbaijan continues to create ground for a prolonged human tragedy by inciting anti-Armenian sentiments and intolerance in Azeri society. Such a policy stalls efforts to build bridges between Armenian and Azeri people and achieve eventual, long-lasting peace between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh.



Background data, journalistic investigation and academic research materials to support the above information are available at the NKR Office and can be provided on-demand

The Office of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic in the United States is based in Washington, DC and works with the U.S. government, academia and the public representing the official policies and interests of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh.

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