

LIBERTAS



Libertas: a fight for liberation

Armenian prisoners

detained in Azerbaijan!!!



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Libertas¹ : a committed collective

The tripartite ceasefire of November 9, 2020, which put an end to the 44-day war launched by Azerbaijan against the self-determined Republic of Artsakh, called for, among other measures, the exchange of prisoners of war, in accordance with the principle of "All for All". In fact, in accordance with the terms of the ceasefire and the principles of international humanitarian law, Armenia did indeed return the Azerbaijani prisoners in the days following the signing of this document. However, not only did Azerbaijan fail to release the Armenian prisoners captured during the fighting, but its forces continued to penetrate the territory of Artsakh, then the sovereign territory of Armenia, to occupy large additional sectors of both territories, while capturing new Armenian civilians and military personnel in the newly occupied spaces.

Since then, Azerbaijan's dictatorial regime has been using Armenian prisoners as hostages to extract ever more concessions from the Armenian authorities, thereby endangering the security of Armenia and the Armenian people.

The LIBERTAS collective for the liberation of Armenian POWs was born in 2022, with a program of individual sponsorship in France and Europe.

Three human rights NGOs get together

- **Center COVCAS pour le Droit et la résolution des conflits** (Covcas Center for Law & Conflict Resolution), an association founded in 1991, whose purpose is to support the principles, aims and actions of the United Nations, particularly in the field of peaceful conflict resolution and the promotion of human rights.
Contact: Hilda TCHOBOIAN, email: centre.covcas@gmail.com
- **Hyestart**, founded in 2016 is committed to democracy and human rights in Armenia and Turkey. Its honorary members include publisher and human rights activist Ragip Zarakolu and Pen Vice President Eugène Schoulgin.
Contact: A. NAVARRA, email contact@hyestart.org, website: <https://www.hyestart.org/>
- **The Armenophobia Observatory** was set up in 2020 to identify, qualify and quantify Armenophobic content, and to combat Holocaust denial, disinformation and anti-Armenian hatred.
Contact: B.SHAKHNAZARYAN, email :armenophobie@proton.me
X: <https://twitter.com/ObsArmenophobie>

¹ Site: www.libertas2020.com, X: <https://twitter.com/FreeArmenianPOW>,
Email : contactlibertas2020@gmail.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550878628558>
Instagram: [@libertas2020_](https://www.instagram.com/libertas2020_)

Libertas: a campaign that adapts

In the aftermath of the 2020 war, the LIBERTAS campaign aimed to free the 38 Armenian POWs through the sponsorship of each of them by cities, NGOs and celebrities.



On December 7, 2023, the Libertas collective welcomed the release of 32 Armenian prisoners of war and civilians, announced as part of an agreement between the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments. These releases represented a victory and hope for the dozens of Armenians still illegally detained by Baku. But, several months after this liberation, where do we stand?

Following this partial liberation, but above all after the forced displacement in inhuman conditions of the population of Artsakh [Nagorno-Karabakh] and the total occupation of the territory by the Azerbaijani army in September 2023, our campaign evolved.

Libertas' aim is now to free any Armenian illegally abducted and detained by Azerbaijan, solely because of their Armenian origin. This currently includes :

1. **Prisoners of War (POWs):** 9 soldiers and servicemen captured before and after the ceasefire on November 9, 2020.
2. **Civilians:** 6, kidnapped by Azerbaijan before, during and after the aggression unleashed against Artsakh and the sovereign territory of Armenia.
3. **Political leaders:** 8 leading figures from the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), Presidents, Ministers, Speaker of Parliament, abducted and arbitrarily detained because of their political commitment.
4. **The forcibly disappeared:** 80 to 200 civilians and soldiers, whose fate remains unknown and who deserve our full attention.

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Several NGOs (Human Rights Watch), institutions (European Parliament, Council of Europe) and European (ECHR) and international (ICJ) courts have stressed that Azerbaijan continues to torture and subject prisoners of war to inhuman and degrading treatment.

In view of these violations of international law and the many accounts of inhuman treatment and murder, we call on intellectuals, politicians, national and international institutions and communities, and human rights defenders, to sponsor one or all of the 23 prisoners, in order to guarantee their safety, in accordance with the provisions of international conventions, and to demand their immediate and unconditional release.



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Sponsor an Armenian prisoner of war or the entire group

Sponsoring an Armenian prisoner of war or the entire group means protecting them from cruel or degrading treatment in "a country that relentlessly pursues a systematic state policy of Armenophobia, historical revisionism and hatred of Armenians".²

In accordance with international humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict, all detainees must be recognized as prisoners of war and benefit from the protection of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949³.

Concerning the illegally imprisoned political leaders of the Republic of Artsakh, we can only be concerned about them. The terminology used in the media and by players in the Azerbaijani political and judicial world already constitutes a verdict in itself, since the Azerbaijani penal code provides for a very severe punishment for "separatism, its propaganda, the recruitment of persons for this purpose, including for the possession, manufacture, use and dissemination of symbols".

The LIBERTAS collective renews its commitment to its mission of ending the illegal detention of all Armenian prisoners.

In the face of Azerbaijan's flagrant violations of international law, we renew our call for action and international solidarity.

**Sponsor an inmate,
prisoner of war, civilian, politician
or sponsor the entire group.**

Join us in demanding their immediate and unconditional release.

Freedom for all prisoners!

² European Parliament resolution of 10.3.2022

³ Geneva Convention III

Sponsorship formulas Armenian prisoners of war held in Azerbaijan



In April 2023, Grégory Doucet met the father of prisoner Grigor Saghatelyan, sponsored by the city of Lyon.

Communicate

- **providing** the community/NGO **logo** for use on the Libertas campaign website and social networks www.libertas2020.com,
- **displaying the** community's/NGO's **support for the Libertas campaign inside and/or outside the** community/NGO's **headquarters**, using banners and roll-ups bearing the image of the sponsored prisoner,
- at a **public signing of the sponsorship agreement** with the **Libertas collective**,
- as part of **public events organized** for their release,
- in **interviews given by the local authority/NGO to the** local, national and international media, **on the local authority/NGO's website** and social networks, **or in the local authority/NGO's newsletter.**

Plead

- Lobbying with other sponsors at national, European or international level (Libertas can provide the necessary information).

Support

- Visit and/or meet the family of the sponsored POW, (visio or face-to-face).
- Participate in public events organized in support of the release of prisoners and victims of enforced disappearance.
- Provide material support and subsidies for the Libertas collective.



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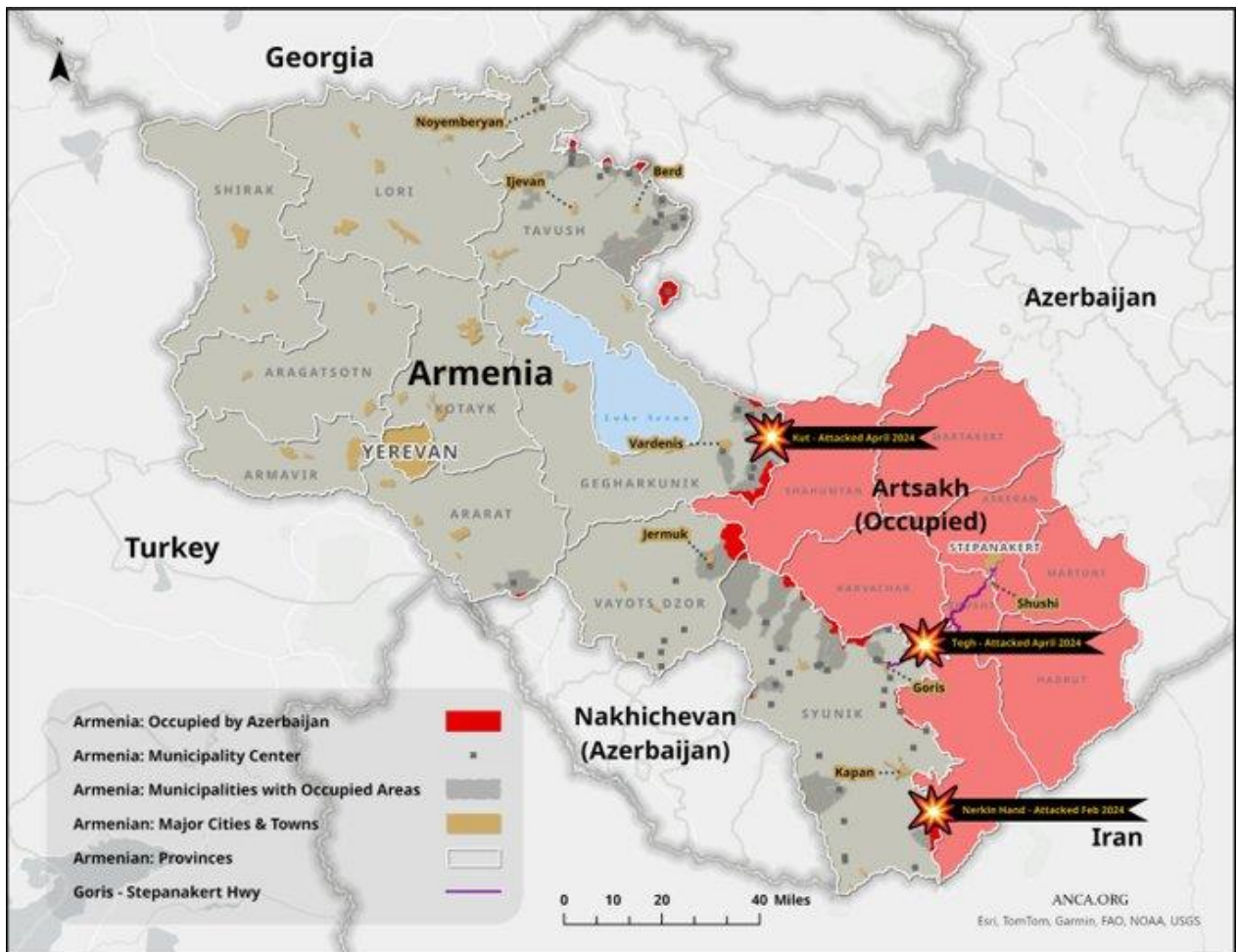


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Appendix 1: Brief history of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Artsakh, the Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh, can be considered one of the oldest Armenian lands, with a history spanning more than two millennia. The aim here is not to present a complete, continuous and exhaustive history of this region, which is considered to be one of the major centers, if not the crucible, of Armenian identity and civilization, but simply to give a few pointers to its most recent history and the origins of the current conflict.



Situation on Armenia's borders in April 2024

The modern origins of conflict, 1918-1988

In May 1918, following the withdrawal of the Russian army from the South Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, until then part of the Tsarist Empire, declared their independence.

The Paris Peace Conference recognizes Armenia de facto; it instructs US President Woodrow Wilson to define its borders by means of an arbitration award.

The same conference rejected Azerbaijan's request for recognition on the grounds of its excessive and unfounded claims to Georgian and Armenian territories. In particular, Armenia and Azerbaijan are at odds over the question of who owns the regions of Karabakh and Nakhchivan, which remains unresolved.

In 1920, both countries were occupied by the Red Army and Sovietized. In March 1921, neighboring Georgia was occupied by the Red Army.

In the same year, after an initial decision in favor of attaching Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, the Caucasian Bureau of the Bolshevik Party radically changed its position under direct pressure from Stalin. Given the ethnic and linguistic proximity between the Turks and the inhabitants of Azerbaijan, and anxious to use Mustapha Kemal to promote the expansion of communism in the Turkish-speaking world, Stalin ordered the two regions to be placed under the control of Soviet Azerbaijan: Nakhchivan, with its relative Armenian majority, and Karabagh, inhabited almost exclusively by Armenians. These thus form the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan and the Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh, administratively attached to Azerbaijan, but with a degree of autonomy from Baku.

This decision by a political party in a third country, the Communist Party of Russia, without any legal basis or legitimacy, is without precedent or equivalent in the annals of international law.

In 1923, following the USSR's decree to create the Oblast known as the "Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh" (RAHK), Azerbaijan annexed the adjoining region of "Plain Karabakh", thus appropriating vast swathes of the territory of this historic Armenian province (Kartman Canton), removing the territorial continuity between the autonomous region and Armenia. The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region thus became an enclave within Azerbaijan, cut off from Soviet Armenia.

Throughout the Soviet period, the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh continued to demand their return to Armenia in the face of discrimination and atrocities of all kinds, and in particular in the face of the Azerbaijani administration's deliberate economic and demographic policy of "disarmenization" of the region.

Gorbachevian "Glasnost" and "Perestroika" put to the test of history

With the advent of Gorbachev's "Glasnost" and "Perestroika", the deliberately discriminatory policy of the Soviet Azerbaijani authorities had already succeeded in emptying Nakhchivan and the Azerbaijani annexed regions of "lowland Karabagh" of their Armenian population. But the Armenian population of the RAHK (Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh) resolutely resists this policy of "disarmenization". As a result, they still make up 85% of the oblast's population.

On February 20, 1988, three years after the advent of Perestroika, the RAHK Soviet voted to return Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, in full compliance with the Soviet Constitution. But this democratic and legal choice was rejected by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. For its part, Soviet Azerbaijan responded to this vote with a series of anti-Armenian pogroms throughout the territory of Azerbaijan, in the cities of Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad, Chamakhi, Chamkhor and Mingechar. These operations, carried out with great violence and resulting in hundreds of casualties, were designed to terrorize the Armenians of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic.

Testimonies from numerous survivors, as well as from high-ranking Soviet officials and military personnel, attest to the organized and systematic nature of this wave of violence. The result was a new phase of ethnic cleansing of Armenians throughout the country, with the deportation of Armenian populations, including in the RAHK. This wave of terror led to the forced departure of 450,000 Armenians from Azerbaijan, and 180,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia. In 1989, 200,000 Armenians lived in Baku. Very few remain today.

The "First Karabakh War

From 1991 to 1993, from its military bases at Shushi and Khojaly airport (Madakert region), Azerbaijan bombed the civilian population of Armenian towns on a daily basis, particularly Stepanakert, the capital, where the inhabitants lived for almost 3 years in the cellars of their buildings, transformed into makeshift shelters.

Between April and August 1991, operations carried out by units of the Soviet Ministry of the Interior (OMON) and Azerbaijani forces led to the deportation of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and the bombing of Armenian towns and villages. These operations soon turned into an all-out attack on the Armenians.

In June 1992, Azerbaijani forces occupied 40% of the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, displacing 66,000 people within the region. In Maragha alone, over a hundred civilians were massacred by Azeri forces. But the Armenian resistance organized itself. On two occasions, in 1992 and 1994, large-scale attacks by Azerbaijani forces were repelled by Armenian self-defense brigades.

On August 31, 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence from the collapsing USSR. Azerbaijan declared itself the successor state to the "Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan" of 1918-1920, which did not include Karabakh, and at the same time abolished

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the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh, declaring it an integral part of its territory. Two days later, on September 2 1991, following the dissolution of the USSR, the local authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh proclaimed independence and created a self-determining republic. A referendum ratified this independence on December 10, 1991 (International Human Rights Day).

In May 1993, the Armenian Self-Defense Forces not only repelled the aggressions, but also succeeded in creating a security zone around Nagorno-Karabakh, while opening up the region by opening the road leading to Armenia (Latchine Corridor).

The conflict ended in victory for the Armenian side, and a ceasefire was signed under Russian mediation in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on May 12, 1994 by representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

This marked the beginning of a democratic experiment unique in the South Caucasus region, which enabled the Artsakhian population, freely self-determined and now free from any threat of annihilation, to establish democratic institutions and organize elections that were undoubtedly the freest and most transparent in the region. At the same time, the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) is building a "Defense Army".

International attempts to resolve the conflict and their limits

Back in 1992, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, which later became the OSCE) set up the Minsk Group, with French, American and Russian co-chairmen, with the aim of finding a peaceful, negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Throughout its 26 years of activity to prevent a new war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the "Minsk Group" has evolved its principles and mechanisms to find a solution based on both the "right to self-determination" of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and the "territorial integrity of Azerbaijan".

During this period, several plans were outlined to achieve this objective. Meetings bringing together officials from both sides of the conflict were held in several countries, including France (January 26, 2001). But during this same period of "no war, no peace", several hundred young Armenian and Azerbaijani servicemen lost their lives on the front line, victims of a sniper war.

Azerbaijan quickly built up a strong armament base with Russia, and later with Israel, Pakistan and Turkey, while benefiting from numerous technical and logistical supports, such as French observation satellites.

On the night of 1^{er} to April 2 2016, Azerbaijan launched a "blitzkrieg" that should no doubt have alerted the Armenian authorities and the co-chairs of the Minsk Group. This so-called "4-day war" actually lasted almost 10 days, resulting, according to some estimates, in around 100

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casualties on each side and the Azeri occupation of 800 hectares of sovereign Armenian territory. A kind of test designed to gauge the capabilities of the Armenian army and the various parties involved in this hitherto "frozen" conflict.

From the 44-Day War to the total occupation of Karabagh

Four years later, on September 27, 2020, taking advantage of the crisis caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the paralysis of American political life linked to the US presidential elections, the Azerbaijani army, with the direct participation of Turkey and the deployment of Syrian mercenaries sent by the latter, launched a large-scale armed offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh along the entire length of the line of contact.

This so-called "44-day war", referred to by the Azeris as "Operation Punch", ended on November 9, 2020, "thanks to Russian mediation".

It ended in Armenian defeat, with almost 5,000 Armenian combatants killed and over 200 prisoners of war taken by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan, for its part, has never published its casualty figures.

Some specialists in geopolitics and military issues consider that this conflict marked a major turning point in military history, due to the use of new technologies, particularly drones. For many of these specialists, its diplomatic and military characteristics foreshadow Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Emboldened by this military victory and the inaction of the international community, on three occasions, May 12 and November 5, 2021, and September 13, 2022, the Azerbaijani army once again carried out major incursions violating Armenia's borders, occupying 215 km² of the country's sovereign territory.

These aggressive operations resulted in hundreds of casualties and the capture of many Armenians, both civilian and military. Several dozen people were victims of summary executions, including a military woman and mother of three, Anouch Apetyan, who was raped, murdered and savagely dismembered on September 12 or 13, 2022, during the Azerbaijani offensive on the Armenian town of Djermuk . These cases have been documented by several international human rights organizations.

In violation of the ceasefire agreement of November 9, 2020, on December 12, 2022, after a sham demonstration attributed to so-called "ecologists", Baku instituted a 10-month total blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh, declared illegal by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The death of Armenian Artsakh and its democracy

To achieve its final objective, i.e. the total occupation of the Republic of Artsakh, on September 19, 2023 Azerbaijan launched a final military aggression, thus completing the programmed ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Artsakh.



This operation of forced displacement to Armenia drove more than 100,000 indigenous Armenians from their ancestral lands, fleeing the exactions and inhuman treatment practiced by Azerbaijan. Nearly 50,000 of them had already fled to Armenia during the "44-Day War". According to information from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), only 25 Armenians of both sexes remain in Artsakh, all elderly people, sometimes suffering from serious illnesses, who have refused to leave their homes and land.

On September 17, two days before the Azerbaijani offensive, an informal meeting between the United States, Russia and the European Union took place in Istanbul to discuss the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh.

At the end of this ethnic cleansing, undoubtedly the most radical and rapid in history, for the first time this land of Artsakh, Armenian since time immemorial, was deprived of its population. Eight of its leaders were kidnapped by the Azeri army and illegally detained in Baku, with charges that already foreshadow very harsh verdicts under articles 214-1 (financing of terrorism), 279.3 (participation in the creation and activity of armed groups or groups not provided for by law) and 318.1 (illegal crossing of the border of the Republic of Azerbaijan) of the Azerbaijani Criminal Code.

Appendix 2: Call to condemn the Azerbaijani Parliament's racial hate speech targeting French and European citizens (April 2023)⁴

As part of the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs' visit to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia (April 26-28, 2023)

Paris, Lyon, Geneva, April 27, 2023

The Covcas Center for Law and Conflict Resolution, Hystart and the Observatoire d'Arménophobie solemnly call on the French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs to condemn the Azerbaijani Parliament's declaration that the Armenian Diaspora - French and European citizens - is a "cancerous tumor of Europe". The Minister joins the Mayor of Lyon, Grégory Doucet (EELV), and the France-Armenia Friendship Group of the French National Assembly, chaired by Anne-Laurence Petel (Renaissance), who have already condemned this statement.

This insulting and racist statement targets the European Armenian Diaspora, a **group descended from the survivors of the genocide of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire and Turkey** at the beginning of the 20th century, committed precisely on ethnic grounds. We recall that the history of the 20th century teaches us that mass exterminations are always preceded by appeals to racial hatred in the official discourse of the genocidal group, aimed at dehumanizing the victimized groups.



Azerbaijan 2020" stamp series depicting the chemical disinfection of Artsakh: an apology for the extermination of indigenous Armenians

⁴ https://twitter.com/al_petel/status/1649652239978446848?s=20

This statement comes at a time when the Azerbaijani head of state, President Aliev, has made no secret of his determination to eradicate the indigenous Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been living under an illegal and inhumane blockade since December 12, 2022. Moreover, Azerbaijan has chosen **April 24**, the date of the commemoration of the Armenian genocide, to complete its illegal and inhumane blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh, in violation of the legally binding order of the International Court of Justice of February 22, 2023⁵

We believe it is all the more important for the French government to condemn in the clearest possible terms this "**state policy of systematic Armenophobia**"⁶, which also targets its own citizens who, for example, are not allowed to travel to Azerbaijan simply because of their Armenian surname.



An emblematic example of a war crime: Anouch Apetyan - an Armenian soldier raped, dismembered, disembowelled, filmed and exhibited on networks in Azerbaijan.

This characterization of a human group as a "cancerous tumor", expressed by the highest authority of the national representation of a member country of the UN and the Council of Europe, is clearly **incitement to racial hatred of Armenians**⁷, wherever they may be, because of their ethnic origins. It violates international law, notably article 4.c of the Convention on the

⁵ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/180/180-20230222-PRE-01-00-FR.pdf>

⁶ see EP Resolution of March 11, 2022

⁷ : <https://www.lyonmag.com/article/129423/gregory-doucet-conduit-une-delegation-ville-metropole-de-lyon-en-armenie>

Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and article 20 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This is why we are asking the Minister to take the necessary measures to make it clear to the Azerbaijani authorities and the Azerbaijani embassy in Paris that racism against its fellow citizens has no place in France's relations with its country, and to **condemn this call to hatred by Azerbaijan**, a state ranked by the NGO Freedom House among the 16 countries with the lowest levels of democracy and freedoms in the world, and which goes so far as to resort to attempts at the political assassination of its opponents who have taken refuge in France and Europe.

It's time for the international community to finally take action against a power that is following in the footsteps of the dictatorships of the 20th and 21st centuries.



The "Trophy Park" in Baku depicts a humiliating caricature of Armenian soldiers.

Appendix 3: Press release: Azerbaijan kidnapped two Armenian soldiers (June 2023)

Paris, Lyon, Geneva, June 5, 2023

The LIBERTAS Collective for the Liberation of Armenian Prisoners of War informs that on May 26, 2023, two more Armenian soldiers, H. Hovakimyan and K. Ghazaryan, were kidnapped by the Azerbaijani army following an illegal incursion into the sovereign territory of Armenia.

While delivering supplies to Armenian army units guarding the border in Syunik province, H. Hovakimyan and K. Ghazaryan were ambushed in the Shikahogh forest reserve.

H. Hovakimyan's mother told *Radio Free Europe* that her son regularly went back and forth along the same road where he and his friend were kidnapped. She said: "*He knows this road very well and wouldn't have strayed an inch from it*".

The Armenian Foreign Ministry has reported that Azerbaijan has applied no less than 6 charges against the two abducted servicemen, including "terrorism", "incitement to hatred between peoples" and "illegal transportation of armaments", accusing them of sabotage activities accompanied by "violation of the borders" between the two countries. The Armenian government has asked the European Court of Human Rights to order the Azerbaijani authorities to provide urgent information on the state of health and conditions of detention of the two soldiers.

The LIBERTAS collective points out that, in addition to these two kidnapped soldiers, Azerbaijan is still holding 33 Armenian prisoners of war recognized by the ICRC, whom it has sentenced to prison terms ranging from 4 to 20 years for "terrorism", in violation of the Geneva Convention III of August 12, 1949 relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

This figure does not include the "forcibly disappeared", people captured by the Azerbaijani army since the 2020 war, estimated at 100 - 200 civilians and servicemen whose existence Baku denies despite numerous testimonies and irrefutable evidence.

Despite the application by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) of Article 39 of the interim measures concerning Armenians captured by Azerbaijan (October 2020), Baku is not cooperating with the latter. On May 20, 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all Armenian servicemen and civilians captured or arrested during and after the conflict, and for Azerbaijan to refrain from arbitrary detentions in the future.

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Several NGOs (Human Rights Watch), institutions (European Parliament, Council of Europe) and European courts (ECHR) have confirmed that Azerbaijan continues to torture and subject prisoners of war to inhuman and degrading treatment.

The Libertas Collective for the release of Armenian prisoners of war calls on France and the European Union to demand the **immediate release of all** Armenian detainees, in accordance with international law and Azerbaijan's own commitments under the November 9, 2020 tripartite agreement.



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Appendix 4: CP: Libertas salutes the liberation Armenian prisoners (December 2023)

Paris, Lyon, Geneva December 08, 2023

The Libertas collective welcomes the release of 32 Armenian prisoners of war and civilians, announced as part of an agreement between the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments.

Libertas recalls that it had taken up the cause for the release of these prisoners by soliciting international NGOs and French and European local authorities to sponsor their release.

According to initial information to be confirmed, the 32 released prisoners include civilians captured in Shushi in the aftermath of the 2020 ceasefire, 26 Armenian soldiers captured by the Azerbaijani army on December 13-14, 2020 during the occupation of Hadrut in the south of the Republic of Artsakh, as well as soldiers and civilians kidnapped first in May 2021, then in August 2023 on the illegal checkpoint between Artsakh and Armenia.

Azerbaijan is holding a further 23 Armenians, including civilians, military personnel and politicians from the Republic of Artsakh. Among them are Armenian soldiers who fought in the first Artsakh war, guilty of taking part in Armenian self-defense in the face of the ethnic cleansing already undertaken by Azerbaijan. These people are currently facing sentences of up to 20 years in prison, for crimes invented during mock trials in a country well known for its low level of democracy.

Hilda Tchoboian, from the Libertas collective, said: "Libertas is delighted that these prisoners will be returning to their families in the next few days, in the hope that their release will finally put an end to their suffering, and that of all their loved ones traumatized by the scenes of mistreatment inflicted on the captured Armenians.

These releases, which came 3 years late for certain prisoners used as bargaining chips in the peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, must be followed by the release of all other prisoners held hostage by the Aliev regime.



Liberation of Armenian prisoners

Libertas reports that the ICRC visits prisoners of war and detained civilians every 5 weeks. However, it appears that abducted and illegally detained political leaders do not benefit from these regular visits. LIBERTAS fears for their health, and in the absence of reliable information from impartial international organizations, warns Azerbaijan against possible mistreatment of them.

Libertas would like to thank all the sponsors, cities, personalities and NGOs, who have committed themselves to the protection and liberation of the POWs released today. Their commitment has now been rewarded.

Like the rest of the prisoners of war held in Baku, the 8 leaders of the Republic of Artsakh must be released unconditionally.