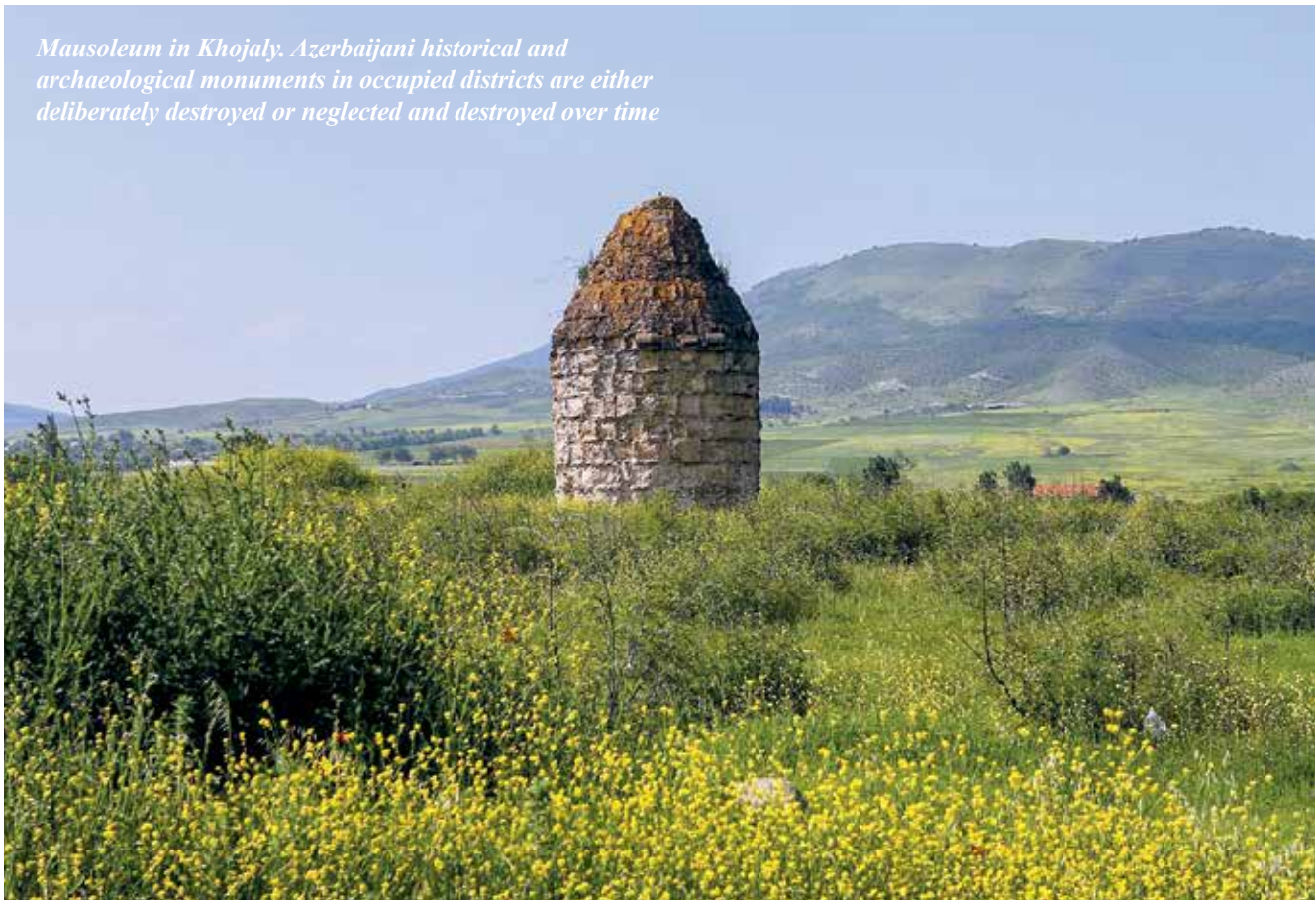


ARMENIA PLUNDERING NATURAL RESOURCES IN OCCUPIED AZERBAIJANI TERRITORIES

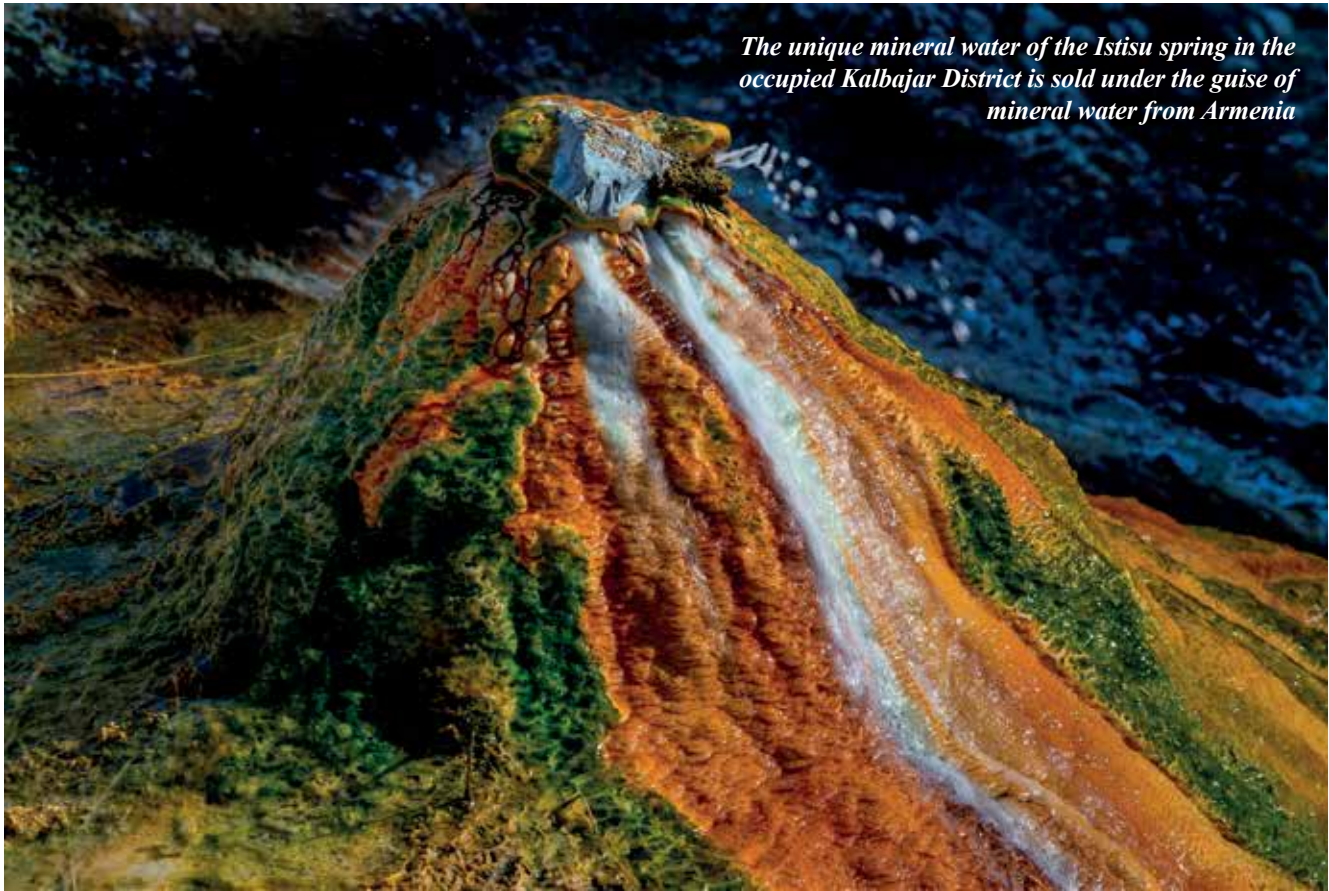
Armenia's groundless territorial claims against Azerbaijan, put forward since the early 20th century, exacerbated in 1988. Following declaration of its independence, Armenia further stepped up its baseless claims to Azerbaijan's Karabakh and Nakh-

chivan territories. This resulted in the occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory in 1991-1993, including Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the adjacent seven districts, namely, Aghdam, Jabrayil, Fizuli, Kalbajar, Gubadli, Lachin, and Zangilan.

Mausoleum in Khojaly. Azerbaijani historical and archaeological monuments in occupied districts are either deliberately destroyed or neglected and destroyed over time



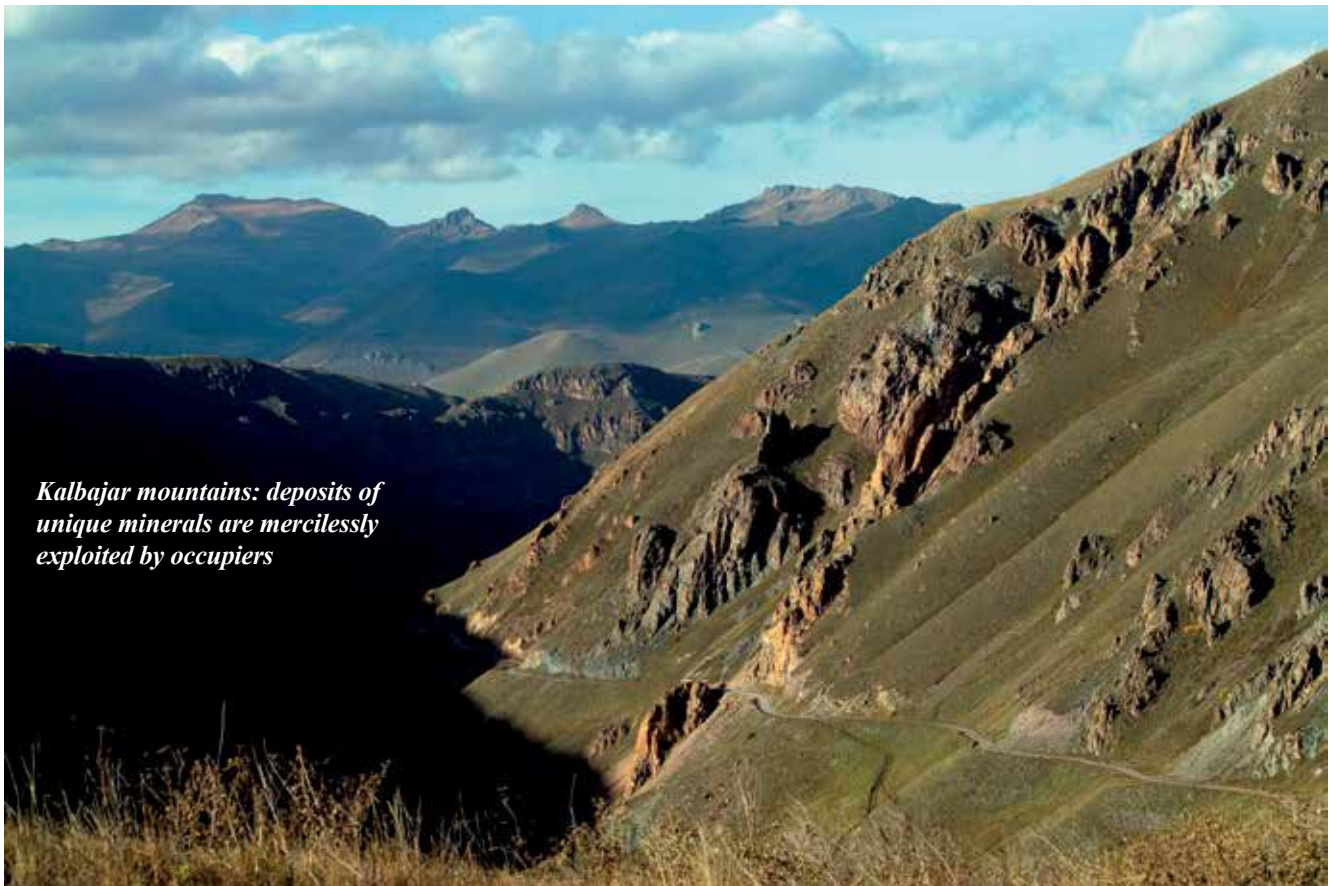




The unique mineral water of the Istisu spring in the occupied Kalbajar District is sold under the guise of mineral water from Armenia



Thermal spring in the occupied Lachin. Water from here is also sold as mineral water from Armenia



Kalbajar mountains: deposits of unique minerals are mercilessly exploited by occupiers

Armenia, which was pursuing political and economic terror against Azerbaijan, set the stage for economic separatism in the occupied territories of the Azerbaijan Republic, in violation of international law. About 7,000 Azerbaijani enterprises halted their operation in the aftermath of the war [7]. Significant financial damage was inflicted to the country.

It is common knowledge that the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region is very rich in mineral deposits and waters. Gold, silver, copper, iron, zinc, granite, marble, precious stones, fire-resistant clay and other deposits are available there. According to official estimates, there are 155 mineral deposits of different types in the occupied territories [8]. Armenia, which presently operates these fields, claims to have become one of the world's major exporters of precious metals. The Soyudlu-Zod gold field, located in Azerbaijan's Kalbajar district, the Gizilbulag gold deposit in the Aghdere district and Vejnali in Zangilan are being operated by the Armenian government.

Canada's First Dynasty Mines (FDM) company was previously engaged in operating the Soyudlu field in Kalbajar. 73 percent of the deposit is located in the

Armenian-occupied Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan [6]. Though the operation of the field was suspended in 1992, US specialists tackled geological exploration in the area in 1996. Over 40 tons of gold were discovered as a result of the exploratory activities. In September 1997, Armenia's Ministry of Commerce and Industry and FDM signed a \$63.3 million contract on ore extraction. FDM assets are owned by Sterlite Gold LTD, headed by Markus Randolph. Having acquired 50 percent of stock in Armenia's state-run Ararat Gold Recovery Company in 1998, FDM launched gold production. The company became its sole owner after purchasing the other half of the shares in 2002.

Armenian Copper Programme (ACP), which is engaged in black copper production, produced 9,500 tons of this product in 2004 after processing 40,000 tons of concentrate from the Vejnali gold deposit in Zangilan. In 2003, 6,300 tons of copper were processed using 24,000 tons of concentrate.

The Armenians mainly began plundering natural resources in the occupied territories in the early 2000s. Since 2016, companies producing gold, marble, silver, copper and other natural resources have been



The Sarsang water reservoir, the biggest reservoir in Karabakh built in 1976, used to irrigate lands in six Azerbaijani districts before occupation in 1993

operating in the occupied Azerbaijani territories, including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts. Though the Azerbaijani government has consistently issued protest notes to the countries where the companies illegally doing business in the occupied regions are based, saying their operation was unlawful and ran counter to international norms, the countries in question charged that they could not interfere with the matter under the pretext of those businesses being privately owned.

According to Azerbaijan's Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, some 30 enterprises producing gold and other precious metals operate in the self-proclaimed "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" and the surrounding districts, though this is denied in Khankandi (Stepanakert) and Yerevan [4]. All of those businesses are owned by Armenia. However, a number of world countries have played a significant role in the illegal investments made in the occupied territories. US, Russian, Canadian, Swiss, British, French, German, Spanish, Dutch companies as well as those from other countries have been involved in the formal plundering of minerals and raw materials in the territories of the Azerbaijan Republic [2].

Armenian economy minister Andranik Khachatryan said in 2016 that "more than 160 companies have invested in Nagorno-Karabakh". "Whereas foreign investors previously were accessing the market as the founders of new companies, recently there has been an upward trend in the number of joint ventures. The average bulk of the drawn funds accounts for approximately 10 percent of the total investments. Foreign investments are now becoming involved in the process of the expansion of active local firms," he said [10].

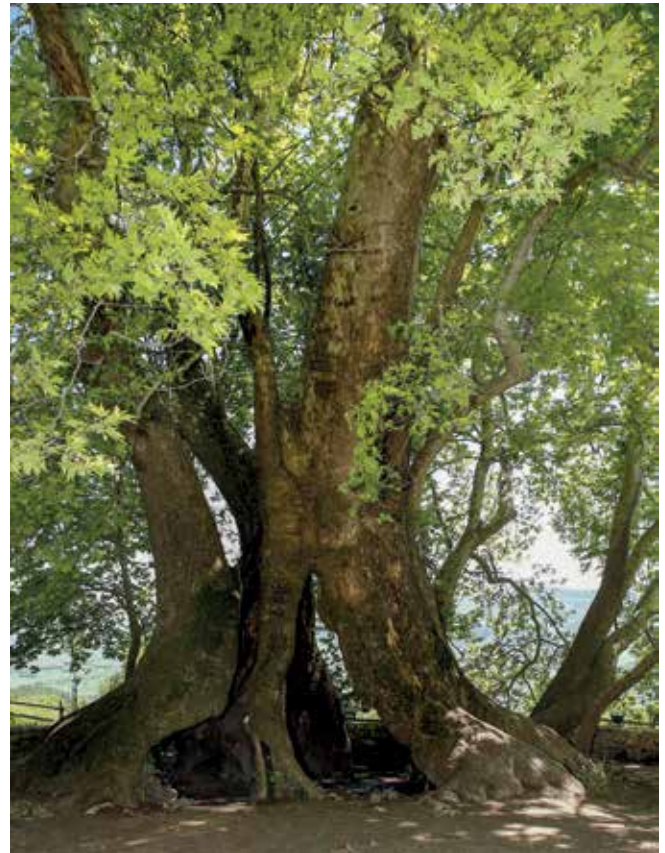
These companies are appropriating both natural resources and the intangible wealth of Azerbaijan. These include, among other companies, AtaVank-Les CO, Arvard CO, Yerkir Tour CO, Minasian CO, Artsakh Gorg Ltd. (USA), Mika Ltd. (Britain), Sirkap Armenia CO, Haik Watch And Jewellery CO, Andranik Shpon CO (Switzerland), Australia Nairi Ltd., Sasun CO (Iran), First Dynasty Mines, Sterlite Gold Ltd., and Grand Tobacco (Canada). Moreover, Aurubis AG, Zeppelin Baumaschinen GmbH (Germany), Zeppelin Armenia LLC, Strathcona Mineral Services Ltd. (Canada), Atlas Copco (Sweden), and Tamrock (Finland), etc. cooperate with a number of illegally operating Armenian companies [1]. Furthermore, Ster-

***The highest plane tree in Hadrut forests.
Karabakh forests are mercilessly cut down and
used as timber on international markets***

lite Gold Ltd., Sirkap Armenian, Base Metals, Manex and Valex, Armenian Copper Programme, and First Dynasty Mines extracted 22.9 tons of gold in 2001-2016 in Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied Azerbaijani territories and delivered it to Armenia.

Overall, Armenia has turned the occupied Karabakh region's territory, which possesses rich natural resources, into a safe haven for "offshore" companies, and the "Karabakh clan" headed by former president Serzh Sargsyan has been created there. The companies illegally operating in Karabakh form a part of Sargsyan's multi-billion business empire, which includes the "Hadrut winery" run through Mika Group that is comprised of three smaller wineries active in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, as well as "Mika-Karabakh", a jewellery producing company [5]. The ongoing monopoly over the Armenian economy has led to further enrichment of the country's ruling political class. The facts cited in Armenian sources confirm that in addition to the looting of natural resources in the occupied Azerbaijani territories, former presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan facilitated the use of these areas by the international drug mafia [3].

Furthermore, forests are a part of the natural wealth that faced plundering the most – next only to gold – in the occupied regions of Azerbaijan. The occupied mountainous area of the Caucasus Minor is Azerbaijani territory that is rich in forests. Armenia is also carrying out operations in these areas, which account for about 25 percent of Azerbaijan's overall forestry (or 246,700 hectares). Thus, Armenians arriving in great numbers from Armenia and other countries massively fell trees of valuable species in the Kalbajjar, Lachin, Gubadli and other regions and sell them abroad as a semi-finished product. In the city of Shusha, rare perennial trees from Karabakh forests are used for fuel, which is a major manifestation of Armenian vandalism. Construction work was carried out in the reserve area of the Topkhana Forest; 1,500 to 2,000 oak trees that had been available in an area of Shusha called Hacha Yal for many years were chopped and taken away by the Armenians. In addition, the Lachin forests spanning 25,000 square kilometers have been destroyed since 1995 for furniture manufacturing purposes. In the Aghdam mountain mass, Armenian servicemen burned down 17,457 hectares of pastures, rendering them unusable. Politicians and law-



makers of numerous countries have witnessed and confirmed all these facts. At the same time, forests with rare tree species, significant subsoil resources and sources of water rich in minerals are being exploited in the Gubadli district. Extraordinary natural habitats with rich flora and fauna are being destroyed. Hazelnuts with the height of up to 25 meters in Kalbajar, the Oriental sycamores covering 107 hectares of land in the Zangilan district that are unmatched in Europe, walnut and other valuable trees have been completely felled by the Armenians and used as a clothing material [8].

Azerbaijan's Karabakh region is also rich in mineral and medicinal waters, and springs. Mineral water deposits with tremendous curative properties, such as the world-known Yukhari Istisu, Ashaghi Istisu, Keshdek, Garasu, Tutkhun, Mozchay, and Goturlusu, are available in Kalbajar, and there are natural springs containing healing water with more than 600 mineral substances in Gubadli [11].

Realizing that their presence in the occupied territories is temporary, the invaders are trying to take advantage of this. They are not only bolstering their economy by plundering natural resources but are also trying to garner international recognition for their



Once densely populated Azerbaijani villages are now abandoned and destroyed. Minkand village in Lachin District

country. According to the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry's report titled "Illegal economic activity in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", the Armenians, who gained a demographic advantage as a result of the relocation of Azerbaijanis, continue pursuing their economic activities internationally. As part of these activities, which are supported by Armenia, valuable minerals, forests and agricultural goods are illegally exploited in the territories such as Lachin, Shusha, Zangilan, Gubadli, Kalbajar, Khojavand and put on sale in world markets as those of Armenian origin.

According to preliminary estimates drawn up by the working group in charge of evaluating the loss and damage from the occupation of the territories of the Azerbaijan Republic by the Armenian armed forces, environmental damage worth 244.4 billion USD was inflicted during the occupation period. The damage resulted from the destruction of overall bio-diversity and forests, rendering soil unusable, environmental pollution and contamination of the sources of water, and the plundering of mineral deposits [9].

Overall, the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh

conflict has inflicted damage worth up to 50 billion USD to the Azerbaijani economy. The lingering conflict has also caused challenges for Azerbaijan in the implementation of several international projects. In particular, in the course of building the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, investing companies pledged financial aid if the pipelines would be routed via Armenia. A similar problem emerged with the financing of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project. As a result, Azerbaijan had to assume financing of Georgia's \$200 million share in the project [4].

Azerbaijan continues asserting its rights in line with international norms. The UN Security Council's consecutive Resolutions No. 822, 853, 874 and 884 urging an unconditional pullout of the Armenian troops from the occupied Azerbaijani territories were passed in 1993. Similar resolutions were issued by the UN General Assembly, PACE, OSCE, OIC and other organizations. The Azerbaijan Republic has been working internationally for many years to achieve restoration of its territorial integrity and regain its tangible and intangible resources, which are being plundered. Though relevant demands



Thanks to Azerbaijani archaeologists, the Azykh cave has been known as an ancient dwelling site since 1960. After occupation, illegal excavations are carried out in the cave in order to substantiate Armenian claims on the lands of Karabakh

have been put forward to Armenia, the country's government not only ignores them but also continues pursuing false propaganda claiming that these territories have historically belonged to Armenians, which contributes to making Armenia known internationally as a rogue state. 🌿

References:

1. Report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Illegal economic and other activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, 2016, s.48, 65-66
2. Qarabağ: bildiklərimiz və bilmədiklərimiz. //Qafqaz Universiteti. BMAM, Bakı, 2010, s. 141,148
3. Vüsal Qasimli, Zaur Şiriyev, Zülfüyyə Vəliyeva. İran-Ermənistan münasibətləri: geosiyasi reallıq, siyasi iddialar. Bakı, 2011, s.22
4. Rüstəm Məmmədov, Xaqani Məmmədov. Müasir beynəlxalq hüquq nöqteyi-nəzərindən Azərbaycanın işğal olunmuş ərazilərində Ermənistanın qanunsuz və hüquqa zidd fəaliyyəti. Bakı, 2017, s.17
5. <http://newtimes.az/en/politics/2385> Destitution of the Armenian people or Sarkisyan's business empire
6. <http://sesqazeti.az/news/analytics/219219.html> Dağlıq Qarabağdakı xarici şirkətlər
7. <https://intpolicydigest.org/2017/04/12/economic-impact-of-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict/> "Economic Impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict"
8. http://garabagh.net/content_174_az.html Qeyri-qanuni təbii ehtiyatlar axtarışı
9. <http://eco.gov.az/az/111-isgal-olunmus-erazilerin-ekoloji-veziyyeti> İşğal olunmuş ərazilərin ekoloji vəziyyəti
10. <https://gagrule.net/over-160-companies-with-foreign-participation-registered-in-karabakh/> Over 160 companies with foreign participation registered in Karabakh
11. http://garabagh.net/content_87_az.html Bulaqlar