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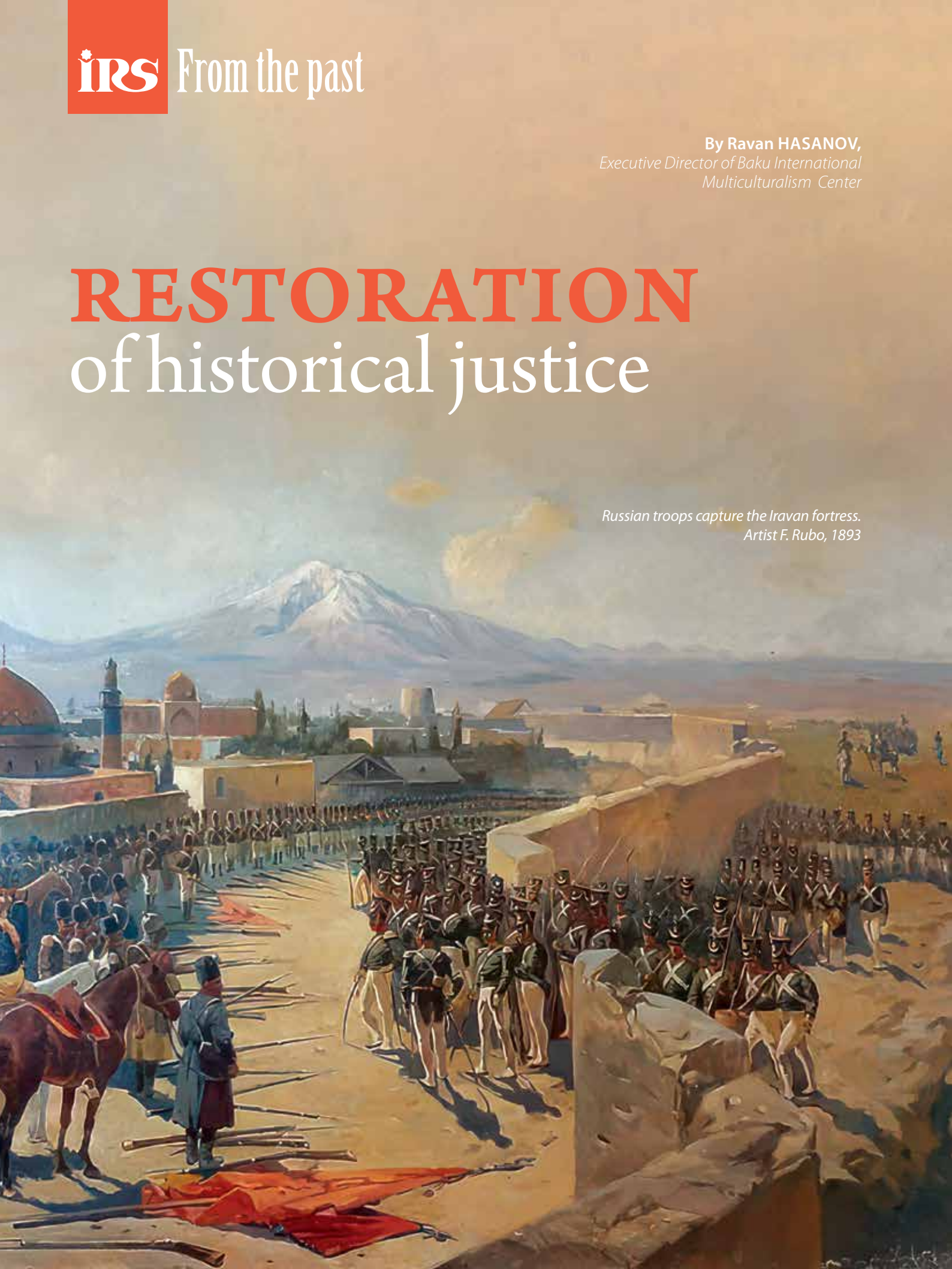
From the past

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# RESTORATION of historical justice

*Russian troops capture the Iravan fortress.  
Artist F. Rubo, 1893*



Landmark developments occurred in the world in the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result of Russia's invasion of the Caucasus in the early 19th century, the region's ethnic map underwent significant changes. Upon conclusion of World War I and World War II in the following century, the world map was redrawn twice. The collapse of the Soviet Union, a major superpower, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, led to the establishment of 15 new countries. As a result, regions with flaring ethnic conflicts emerged. Ethnic separatism had a significant impact on the emergence of those disputes.

The ethnic and political developments in the Caucasus region are further reviewed in chronological sequence. Following Russia's occupation of eastern Georgia in 1801, as well as some of the northern Azerbaijani khanates in 1813 and all of those entities in 1828, the ethnic composition of the Caucasus was considerably altered due to the Armenians resettled from Iran and Turkey. In accordance with the Treaty of Turkmenchay signed on February 10, 1828, the latest northern Azerbaijani entities, namely, Iravan and Nakhchivan khanates, became part of Russia.

On March 21, Tsar of Russia Nicholas I enacted a decree establishing "an Armenian province" that encompassed the territory of the Iravan and Nakhchivan khanates, although Armenians constituted an ethnic minority in the region at the time. According to the outcomes of a cameral census conducted in the "Armenian province" in 1829-1832, a total of 57,266 Armenians (10,631 families) were resettled to the province from Iran and Turkey [1]. Moreover, 359 Muslim-populated villages were ruined in the aftermath of the Russo-Persian war (1826-1828) and the Russo-Turkish war (1828-1829). In addition, a significant part of the local population was killed, while the remaining residents were displaced. During that period, Armenians resided in only 62 villages out of a total of 1,111 residential areas located in the vicinity of churches in the "Armenian province". The Armenians resettled from Iran lived in 119 villages of the Iravan khanate and 72 villages of the Nakhchivan khanate, while those resettled from Turkey resided in 128 villages of the Iravan khanate, as well as four villages of the Nakhchivan khanate. Colonel Lazarev, an ethnic Armenian serviceman of the Russian army, who oversaw the resettlement of Armenians from Iran's territory, wrote that Armenians had acquired a "**new homeland**" in the Azerbaijani land. As a result, 40,000 Armenians from Iran and 84,000 Armenians from Turkey were resettled to

the South Caucasus in 1828-30 [2]. Furthermore, tens of thousands of Armenians were resettled to the territories of the former Azerbaijani khanates following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. In this period, the number of Armenians exceeded that of Azerbaijani residents in the present-day Armenian territory for the first time in history.

In the aftermath of the Armenian riots that occurred in Turkey in the 1890s, around 300,000 Armenians moved to the Caucasus. As a result, the region turned into a bloodbath. Taking advantage of the pro-Armenian stance of Russia's ruling circles, the Armenians started pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing with the use of force in 1905-1906 in the areas populated by Azerbaijanis in an effort to lay the foundation of an Armenian state in the South Caucasus. Overall, the Armenians committed mass killings in a total of 15 regions of the South Caucasus in 1905-06, including Iravan, Nakhchivan, Sharur-Daralayaz, Novo-Bayazid, Echmiadzin, Alexandropol, Surmali, Shusha, Javanshir, Jabrayil, Zang-ezur, Ganja, Gazakh, Arash and Borchali, as well as seven cities, namely, Baku, Iravan, Nakhchivan, Shusha, Ganja, Gazakh and Tiflis. A total of 286 residential areas were devastated in the South Caucasus during the massacre perpetrated in the mentioned period [3].

According to available estimates, Azerbaijani-populated residential areas account for about 200 of the



*Flag of the Iravan Khanate, 18<sup>th</sup> century.  
National Museum of History of Azerbaijan*





*Plan of the Iravan Fortress. Drawn up by Russian military command on the eve of the assault on the fortress, 1827.*

ruined villages and cities [4]. Some of these residential areas have been ruined ever since. Armenian enclaves were created in the South Caucasus during that time period. The mass killings perpetrated in 1905-06 are considered a part of the Armenian policy of ethnic cleansing pursued in a bid to acquire new land to establish a state in the region and an initial stage of those endeavors.

Following the November 1917 coup in Russia, armed Armenian soldiers and officers who fought Turkey on the Caucasus frontline as part of the Russian troops started to return to the South Caucasus. Moreover, around 260,000 Armenian refugees arrived in the South Caucasus in that period from the territory of Eastern Anatolia, which is referred to by Armenians as “Western Armenia”. They mainly found refuge in the Iravan governorate [5]. Armenian armed units ravaged 198 villages in the Iravan governorate alone by March 1918 and approximately 135,000 Turkic Muslim residents were killed [6]. The goal of the Armenians pursuing ethnic cleansing against the Azerbaijanis was to establish a so-called “Turk-free Armenian state” in the area of the Iravan governorate.

The independence of Azerbaijan and Armenia was declared on May 28, 1918. On May 29, a decision was passed at a meeting of the Muslim National Council to cede Iravan to Armenia as a political center [7]. The territory of the newly established Republic of Armenia, located in a part of the Iravan governorate, equaled

around 10,000 square kilometers [8]. The undisputed territory of the Azerbaijan People’s Republic in that period amounted to 97,297.67 square kilometers [9].

Following the withdrawal of Turkish troops from the South Caucasus under the Armistice of Mudros concluded on October 30, 1918, Armenians continued to commit mass killings and looting against the Azerbaijanis in the area of the Iravan governorate until the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia. Only 12,000 Azerbaijanis remained in the Armenian SSR in November 1920, compared to 373,582 Azerbaijanis registered in the Iravan governorate in 1916 [10]. In 1922, 130,000 Azerbaijanis managed to return home.

The USSR put forward territorial claims against Turkey at the end of World War II. J. Stalin sought to restore the 1914 borders of Russia and Turkey, which would break the Kars and Ardahan provinces away from Turkey again under the pretext of Turkey and Germany’s being allies.

Armenians’ territorial claims against Turkey overlapped with the Soviet assault plans. However, the issue of settling residents in the targeted Turkish territories came to the forefront. A plan was developed to solve the matter by resettling Armenians to Armenia’s territory from abroad. According to the plan, numerous populated villages were to be vacated to settle the Armenians there. A decision was therefore made to relocate local Azerbaijani residents to Azerbaijan from their historical land. On December 23, 1947, the USSR Council of Ministers passed a decision “On resettlement of collective farmers and other Azerbaijani population to the Azerbaijan SSR’s Kura-Araz Lowland from the Armenian SSR”. The decision envisaged relocating 100,000 Azerbaijanis from 22 regions of Armenia. According to its first clause, 10,000 people were to be relocated in 1948, 40,000 in 1949 and 50,000 in 1950 [11]. The implementation of the enacted repressive measures of the totalitarian Soviet regime was marred by violence. About 100,000 Azerbaijanis were ousted from their historical homes located in over 200 residential areas in 24 regions and the city of Iravan [12].

The Soviet government’s decision to resettle Azerbaijanis enabled the Armenian leadership to simultaneously erase from the map most of the Azerbaijani-populated residential areas around the city of Iravan and along Armenia’s borders with Iran and Turkey by deporting people from their homes.

*Azerbaijani refugees deported from the former Armenian SSR in 1987-1991*

Staunch anti-Turkic and anti-Muslim propaganda regained momentum in Armenia in the mid-1960s. The decision on marking the 50th anniversary of the fictitious “genocide of Armenians” in 1965 further incited Armenian chauvinism. Following Mikhail Gorbachev’s election as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1985, an anti-Azerbaijani annexation plan was drawn up under the pretext of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians’ right to self-determination. Heydar Aliyev, the only man capable of preventing the implementation of the anti-Azerbaijani annexation plan, was dismissed from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Politburo) and the position of First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers in October 1987 under pressure of the Armenian community.

A decision was made during an extraordinary session of the Council of People’s Deputies of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (NKAR) held on February 20, 1988 and attended only by Armenian MPs to break the region away from Azerbaijan and ensure its inclusion in Armenia’s administrative-territorial division. The Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR’s) Supreme Council dismissed the unconstitutional measure. Af-

terwards, Armenian nationalist leaders started implementing the Dashnaksutyun party’s “Turk-free Armenia” program. Following a rally held to protest the violence committed against Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, mass riots were staged in Sumqayit on February 27-28, 1988 under the State Security Committee’s plan and with direct involvement of Armenian extremists. Afterwards, a new wave of displacement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia began.

Yuri Pompeyev, a Russian historian, commented on the violent deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia in fall 1988.

“They were ousting defenseless, unarmed Azerbaijanis who were usually unclothed with bare hands, from their homes, saying ‘Damn Turks, get out of Armenia!’” Pompeyev said [13].

On November 22, 1988, regional managers were instructed at an extraordinary session of the Armenian SSR’s Supreme Council held without Azerbaijani MPs’ participation to complete the process of ousting Azerbaijanis from Armenia by November 28.

As a result of Moscow’s backing Armenians, 170 plain and 94 mixed Azerbaijani-populated residential areas were vacated in the territory of the present-day



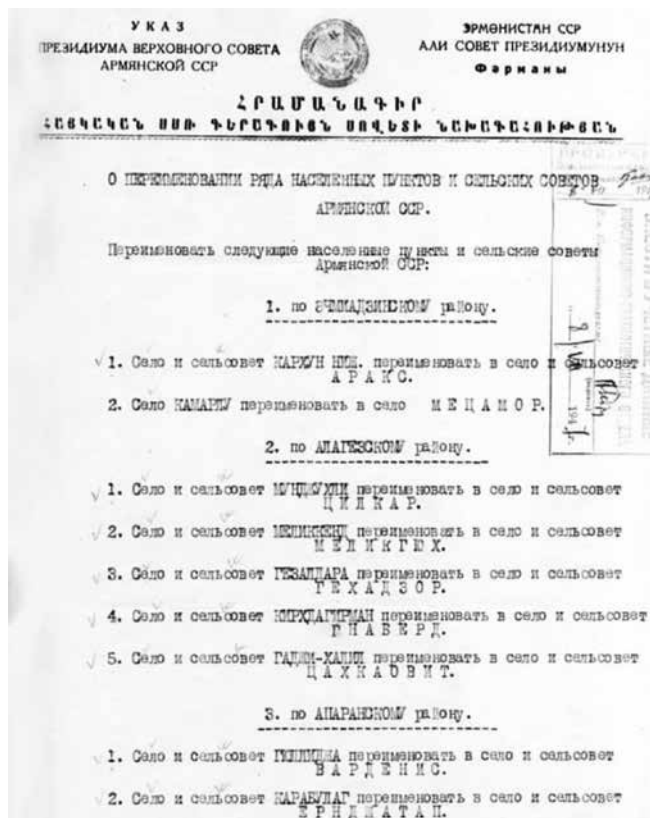
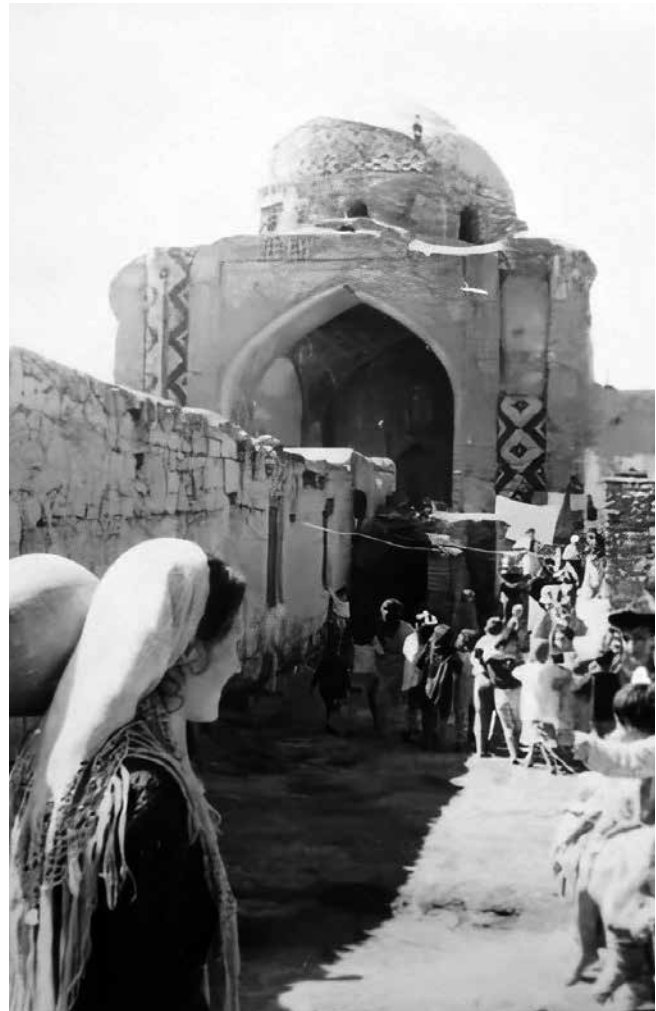
Armenia in 1988-89. Nuvadi, the last Azerbaijani-populated village located in an area of Meghri, Armenia bordering on the Zangilan region, was vacated on August 8, 1991.

In total, about 250,000 Azerbaijanis were barbarically ousted from their historical homes in 22 rural regions and six cities of Armenia as a result of the latest ethnic cleansing campaign [14]. A total of 499 vacated villages in western Azerbaijan that were once populated by Azerbaijanis are currently ruined; 702 Azerbaijani geographic names have been turned into Armenian ones to date. Armenians currently reside in 734 villages that were settled by Azerbaijanis in the past.

Over 2,000 Azerbaijani residential areas have been removed from a relevant list in the territory of the present-day Armenia in the past two centuries by different means, such as deportations, ouster with the use of force, massacres, burning down and ruining villages. A mono-ethnic Armenian state was established in the historic Azerbaijani territories.

Following the rise of Armenian separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh in February 1988, the Armenian leaders, who realized that this territory could not be annexed to

*A destroyed mosque. Armenia, late 1980s*



*Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR on renaming Azerbaijani place names*

Armenia with Moscow’s support, initially created armed units in the autonomous region in an effort to materialize their territorial claims.

Armenian armed forces invaded 20 percent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1991-1994. The territories occupied as a result of Armenia’s military aggression included the city of Khankandi, as well as Khojaly, Shusha, Lachin, Khojavand, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Gubadli and Zangilan districts, along with 13 villages of the Tartar district, seven villages of the Gazakh region and one village of Nakhchivan’s Sadarak district. More than a million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons in the wake of the groundless Armenian territorial claims. Moreover, 20,000 people were killed and 50,000 others disabled in military action [15]. The OSCE Minsk Group, tasked with mediating a peaceful settlement to the conflict, failed to take substantial steps to resolve the dispute in the course of 28 years. Armenia was deliberately drag-

*Azerbaijani refugees deported from the former Armenian SSR in 1987-1991*

ging out the negotiations to maintain the status quo in the conflict resolution. Armenia was resettling Armenian families from other countries to the occupied Azerbaijani territory, looting its resources available both above and under the ground. President Ilham Aliyev was holding talks patiently to resolve the conflict without bloodshed and liberate Azerbaijani land through negotiations. However, Armenia, which was relying on its backers, was unwilling to pull out of the occupied territories. The Armenians indulged in euphoria and considered themselves “invincible”. Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan threatened Azerbaijan with “a new war for new territories”, while Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed that “Karabakh is Armenia. Full stop”. However, the Armenians did not realize that the Azerbaijani people would never reconcile with the invasion of their land. Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani government was making comprehensive preparations with pinpoint accuracy for liberation of the country’s territories. In retaliation to an Armenian provocation, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched a counter-offensive on September 27, 2020, which concluded with Azerbaijan’s victory 44 days later. A new page was written in world history with the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War by the courageous and victorious Azerbaijani military, which is

among the most powerful armies in the world. Thus, the proud Azerbaijani people displayed invincibility to the international community once again.

The liberation of the city of Shusha from the Armenian occupation on November 8, 2020 was a deciding factor in the war. On November 10, the Armenian prime minister signed an act of capitulation. Afterwards, the Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar districts were returned to their rightful owners without firing a single bullet. Victory Parade was further held in Baku. Military machinery of the Armenian armed forces, taken over as trophies, was displayed during the event. This implied a crushing military defeat of the Armenians, who deemed themselves “invincible winners” for over 100 years. It also amounted to a defeat of the entire Armenian community and its supporters.

Azerbaijanis have been repeatedly evicted from present-day Armenia, which is historic Azerbaijani territory. The Azerbaijanis, who are currently part of Western Azerbaijan Community, are waging a struggle aimed at returning to their historical homeland.

In a meeting with a group of intellectuals from western Azerbaijan on December 24, 2022, President Ilham Aliyev stressed the importance of Western Azerbaijan Community’s organized activity both for the people

*Azerbaijani refugee family. Armenia, late 1980s*



who hailed from Western Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani people in general. At the same time, the Community should have an international agenda that would be equally important. These realities must be communicated to the world community, just as it was done with the Karabakh conflict. Exhibitions, presentations and international conferences should be organized. In other words, respect for Azerbaijanis' legitimate rights should be sought. This is a right enshrined in all international conventions, the President said.

Western Azerbaijan Community is working to ensure a safe and proper return of Azerbaijanis ousted from the present-day Armenia to their homes and further observance of their personal and collective rights. Its efforts are in line with the right of persons to return home in-

dicated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Refugee Convention and other major international documents.

Western Azerbaijan Community adopted the Concept of Return on January 26, 2023. It also passed appeals to both the Armenian government and international organizations. The United Nations Secretariat circulated the Concept as a formal document of the UN Security Council, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council.

The Azerbaijani government guarantees protection of the rights of Armenian residents densely settled in multicultural Azerbaijan's Karabakh region, who are citizens of the country, as well as their social and cultural



*All property of this Azerbaijani family was looted. Armenia, late 1980s*



development. Likewise, Armenia is to secure return of a significant number of Azerbaijani residents deported from their historical land, along with their safe living conditions. In this case, international humanitarian law will be upheld and historical justice will be served. 🌹

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