United Nations A/HRC/46/G/17

General Assembly

Distr.: General
1 March 2021

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Forty-sixth session
22 February-19 March 2021
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 12 February 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva hereby transmits the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on the anti-Armenian attitudes and policies of Azerbaijan and Turkey (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Armenia kindly requests the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto* as a document of the Human Rights Council, under agenda item 4.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 12 February 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Report dated 19 November 2020 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on Armenophobic attitudes and policy of Azerbaijan and Turkey

Contents

Page

Chapter 1: Background information 3

Chapter 2: State-sponsored Armenophobia and its manifestations in the political discourse in Azerbaijan and Turkey in recent years 4

Chapter 3: Anti-Armenian sentiments in the course of the Azerbaijani aggression unleashed in September, 2020 against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) 7

Chapter 1: Background information

The negative stereotypes, hate speech, statements demonstrating intolerance are encouraged at the highest political level in Azerbaijan and Turkey. State-led propaganda of hatred towards Armenia and Armenians creates favorable ground for the commitment of hate crimes against Armenians. As reflected in the reports of international monitoring bodies, such as the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Armenians have been subjected to various manifestations of racism and racial discrimination by Azerbaijani people.

In its report on Azerbaijan the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted that "the constant negative official and media discourse concerning the Republic of Armenia helps to sustain a negative climate of opinion regarding people of Armenian origin, who remain vulnerable to discrimination." It also stated that people born of mixed Armenian-Azerbaijani marriages choose to use the name of their Azerbaijani parent so as to avoid problems in their contacts with officialdom, which causes serious difficulties of access to their social rights.[1]

According to relevant studies on hate speech in the Azerbaijani media, 342 (3.9%) out of the 8 679 Azerbaijani news items examined contain hate speech statements against Armenians. Hate speech was found in 8.8% of printed news items, 4.9% of electronic items and 2% of television programmes. Almost all of the 196 hate speech items dealing with ethnic conflicts were targeted at Armenians: the main disseminators of hate speech were politicians, followed by journalists. [2]

Other sources confirm recurrent hate speech towards Armenians, mostly connected with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The CoE Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities noted a persistent public narrative surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict “identifying Armenia or Armenians as ‘the enemy’ and openly promulgating hate messages”. There is a huge conflict-ridden domestic political discourse and Azerbaijan’s leadership, education system and media are very prolific in their defamation of Armenians.

In 2012, the Azerbaijani authorities pardoned, released and promoted Ramil Safarov, an officer of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, who had been sentenced in Budapest to life imprisonment for the murder of an Armenian army officer Gurgen Margaryan. The Ombudsman of Azerbaijan, Elmira Suleymanov stated that “Ramil Safarov must become an example of patriotism for the Azerbaijani youth”[3]. Safarov had axed Margaryan to death while he was asleep and tried to kill another Armenian officer Hayk Makuchyan. The court hearing made clear that Safarov had targeted Margaryan because of his Armenian ethnicity, and that he showed no remorse.

In May 2020, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in the case of “Makuchyan and Minasyan vs Azerbaijan and Hungary” finding violations of the 2nd (right to life) and 14th (non- discrimination) articles of the European Convention on Human rights by Azerbaijan, determining that the violation of those articles was interrelated. The Court established that the impunity and glorification granted by the highest leadership of Azerbaijan to Ramil Safarov, who was convicted in the brutal murder on the grounds of hatred had a causing link to the ethnicity of the victims. This ECHR decision is a ruling against Azerbaijan's policy of Armenophobia which not only recognizes, but also adjudicates on the inadmissibility of the promotion on the state level of hate crimes committed against the Armenians by Azerbaijan. [4]

[1] https://rm.coe.int/third-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b557e.

[2] https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b5581.

[3] Source: “Zerkalo” newspaper, Baku, 28 February, 2004.

[4] file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/Judgment%20Makuchyan%20and%20Minasyan%20v.%20Azerbaijan%20and%20Hungary%20%20violation%20of%20the%20Convention%20by%20Azerbaijan%20after%20pardon%20and%20release%20for%

Anti-Armenian xenophobia is also deeply embedded in Azerbaijani educational materials and literature, ensuring that anti-Armenian sentiments are injected and nurtured with the population from childhood. Since early childhood Azerbaijani children are taught to accept Armenians as their enemies (relevant video of an Azerbaijani school teacher disseminating hatred towards Armenians among the children was shared on social media)[5] which is among the most vivid expressions of Armenophobia adopted as a state policy by the Azerbaijani authorities. In another video the mother of a little Azerbaijani girl teaches her hatred towards Armenians and the girl demonstratively tears Armenian flag in front of the camera.[6] A whole generation has grown up absorbing State-propagated hatred towards Armenians which is currently reflected also in the racist public discourse in Azerbaijan.

The history textbooks help to maintain an image of the Armenians as the enemy and, thus prevent a long-term reconciliation. Armenophobic statements and examples are printed in Azerbaijani textbooks[7] and teachers' manuals negatively influencing the formation of children's collective memory.

Anti-Armenian hatred dominates the landscape in Turkey as well. The state-sponsored TV channels use aggressive discourse full of hatred against Armenians. Hate speech, hate crimes and protests have overwhelmingly targeted Armenians in Turkey. Between January and April 2019, Armenians topped the list of 48 groups targeted by hate speech in Turkish national and local media (287 articles), according to a report by the Hrant Dink Foundation. Between May and August of the same year, they were the fifth most targeted out of 46 groups with 169 articles containing hate speech[8]. Hate speech against Armenians was seen to be frequently used in articles about April 24 – the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. In the stories on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenians were deemed "the enemy."[9]

According to ECRI report on Turkey, extensive data is available about hate speech in Turkish print media. Studies have shown that from January to April 2014 hate speech items mainly concerned Armenians. Such public hate speech has deepened existing divisions and damaged social cohesion. Research also shows the underlying high levels of intolerance: according to recent studies around 70% of the respondents had negative views and attitudes towards Jews and Armenians. School textbooks still contain material expressing open hatred and hostility towards Armenians and other vulnerable groups.

Occasional statements by leading politicians, in particular about the Armenian Genocide, have also shown that mutual resentment and mistrust will flourish unless considerable care is taken when addressing sensitive issues in political discourse.[10]

Chapter 2: State-sponsored Armenophobia and its manifestations in the political discourse in Turkey and Azerbaijan in recent years

One of the unique characteristics of the dissemination of Armenophobia by Azerbaijan is the highest level of state sponsorship. High level officials, including the President of the state, resort to hate speech and make intolerant anti-Armenian assessments during their public speeches even in the context of the spread of the Covid-19 epidemic.

Numerous Armenophobic speeches made by the Azerbaijani officials included phrases like "Terrorists will now become a source of coronavirus dissemination in the region", "Coronavirus is a trouble for several months, while Armenians have been a trouble for Azerbaijanis for centuries. Armenians are a worse disaster than Coronavirus." or "Armenia

20an%20officer%20convicted%20of%20murdering%20an%20Armenian%20soldier%20in%20Hungary%20(2).pdf.

5 http://asbarez.com/171014/how-azerbaijani-children-are-taught-to-hate-armenians/.

6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtT95FyrazM.

7 http://azerichild.info/en/books-education-azerbaijan-hatred-from-childhood.html, http://azerichild.education/en/index.html.

8 https://armenianweekly.com/2020/10/08/sharp-rise-in-hate-speech-threatens-turkeys-armenians/.

9 https://zartonkmedia.com/2020/09/23/armenians-most-targeted-by-hate-speech-in-turkish-media-report-by-hrant-dink-foundation-shows/.

10 https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-turkey/16808b5c81.

has organized imaginary elections in Nagorno-Karabakh, gathered people in one place in the name of voting. Right after that the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh started spreading coronavirus."[11]

During the opening ceremony of the Sports Complex in Terter in June, 2020 the hate speech and Armenophobic allegations made by the President of Azerbaijan constituted another huge portion of disinformation regarding Armenia, including falsification of historical facts, as well as incitement to hatred and violence. Among other irresponsible statements, the President announced the territory of the Republic of Armenia to be an ancient Azerbaijani land, stating that: "The territory of present-day Armenia is an ancient Azerbaijani land, Azerbaijan is many times stronger than Armenia in the economic and military spheres and have demonstrated this, including on the battlefield… April war should serve as a lesson for our disaster neighbor… Azerbaijan will restore its territorial integrity: we are gaining strength and will become stronger; however the geopolitical situation should also be favorable for our actions to be successful"[12]. Another hateful announcement made by President Aliyev during his visit to a military unit in Agdam was the following: "If the Armenian fascist state does not give up its dirty deeds, the very existence of the Armenian state can be called into question".[13]

Other Azerbaijani state officials have also been frequently involved in fueling anti-Armenian hatred, glorifying murderers of Armenians and contributing to the increase of the separatism between the two nations. Among them quite popular is the announcement made by the member of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan Elman Mammadov: "It is not clear why Turkey tolerates Armenian people on its lands. What is the reason Turkey does not require Armenians to free their lands? Turkey should be a state without Armenians […]. If Turkey and Azerbaijan unite, they may wipe Armenia off the map of the world. Armenians should beware of this […]. We urge Turkey to expel Armenians from its territory".[14]

The tone and the style of anti-Armenian statements are also peculiar but not limited to the Minister of Defence of Azerbaijan Zakir Hasanov:

"As the situation becomes tense on the frontline, citizens wishing to go to war appeal to the Defense Ministry. It arises from our people's hatred for the enemy [Armenians] and wishes to liberate our lands."[15]

Anti-Armenian sentiments are frequently expressed publicly by leading figures in culture, art, academia and in the media. The quotes attributed to these leading public figures are often violent and abusive, many of them having their foundations in the ethnic and religious biases towards the Armenian people. There is also a deeply worrying anti-Armenian re-writing of the history of the region in schools: major events are either removed entirely or twisted into Azerbaijani history inspiring a feeling for the national glory.[16]

Below are only a few war threats and hate speech statements delivered by the Azerbaijani President and other state and non-state officials and figures:

- Azerbaijan's Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov: "Enemy will feel Azerbaijani army's strength if Karabakh conflict is not resolved fairly"[17].
- Ilham Aliyev: "The war has not ended yet, only the first stage of war is over".[18]

[11] https://www.unikal.org/news/247077/ermenistan-pandemiya-dovrunde-de-qarabagda-yasayan-ermenilerle-qul-kimi-davranir-millet-vekili .

[12] https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3249488.html.

[13] http://en.president.az/articles/12487.

[14] https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2015/04/28/azerbaijan-mamedov/63511.

[15] http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/azerbaijani-defense-minis - ter-vows-to-avenge-martyrs.html.

[16] https://artsakhombuds.am/sites/default/files/2019-12/Armenophobia-in-Azerbaijan-1.00-Interactive-25.09.2018.pdf.

[17] http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/defenseminister-enemy-will-feel-azerbaijani-army-s-strength-if-karabakh-conflict-is-not-resolved-fairly.html.

[18] http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/presidentonly-first-stage-of-war-ended.html.

- Ramiz Mehdiyev, Head of Presidential Administration: “Relying on the Armenians” spirituality, on the belief that they will be grateful, Azerbaijan yielded the city of Irevan to them as a capital for the state, which was being created for them. […] the aggressiveness towards the neighbours has been one of the methods the politicians have implemented to hold the power over the people throughout the history of the hay people.”[19]
- Siyavush Novruzov, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Ruling “Yeni Azerbaijan” Party (YAP): “We do not allow Armenians into our party. Applications of the sort have been submitted to the party’s regional and city offices; they were rejected, however. There is not a single Armenian among the YAP members.”[20]
- Rizvan Huseynov, Azerbaijani Expert: “In essence, the Armenians are chameleons because they can gutlessly conform to other countries” interests when it comes to words; yet they put only their own goals ahead of everything else at the same time.”[21]
- Kemal Turan, Azerbaijani National-Socialist Movement Leader: “The Armenians are our enemies. No peace is possible with them! […] The Armenians are not the type of a nation with whom peaceful talks could be held. They are a nation of parasites!”.[22]
- Murad Dadashov, Honoured Artist of Azerbaijan: “We deal with an unhealthy society. I must confess I always pity our officials who have to deal with the Armenian side more often.”[23]

Azerbaijan is joined also by Turkey in encouraging widespread anti-Armenian propaganda at the highest political level. One evidence of this is the hate speech delivered by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during a coronavirus briefing on May 4, in which he used the insulting "leftovers of the sword" phrase in referring to survivors of the massacres of Christians in the Ottoman Empire.[24] The phrase not only insults the victims and the survivors of the massacres but also poses a real danger to the safety of Turkey's Christian community often exposed to pressures that include physical attacks. “Leftovers of the sword” clearly belongs to the realm of hate speech. According to the reports of Armenian activists and writers on social media who criticized Erdoğan for his statement “terrorist leftover of the sword” means Armenian “terrorists” who survived the genocide and could not be butchered via the sword. “What does 'terrorist' mean? Well, it changes daily: It could be a journalist, a civil society representative, a writer, a doctor or a mother of a beautiful child. They do not want those who held the swords, but the grandchildren of the survivors of a people and culture that were slaughtered by the sword to be ashamed”, they wrote.

Right after President Erdogan’s statement, on May 8, 2020, St. Mary Armenian Church in Istanbul’s Bakırköy neighborhood was vandalized during an attempted burning of the church. The apprehended suspect stated that his motive to burn down the church was predicated on the false notion that Armenians caused the coronavirus-the plague”. [25]

In November 2019, a group of extreme nationalist Turkish lawyers, members of the Istanbul Bar Association, published an article threatening ‘to deport’ all Armenians from Turkey once again. The author of the article, Mustafa Chalik, wrote that the ‘deportation’ would be ‘the mildest action’ against the Armenians. The article describes the Armenian Genocide as ‘a crowning achievement. The writer states, “We support the Armenian deportation of 1915. Those who call the deportation a genocide are making a declaration of war. Armenians and others, who call it a genocide, are threatened with a new deportation which will be the lightest measure against them. Our ancestors entered the World War to defend their sacred homeland and honor. It is our honor and the crown of our heads in all our struggles from Sarıkamısh to

[19] http://www.1news.az/politics/20161130124721754.html.
[20] http://moderator.az/haber-siyavu-novruzovdan-daha-bir-sensasiya-t2752.html.
[21] http://1news.az/news/chego-dobivayutsya-armyane-pronikshie-v-rossiyskuyu-elitu.
[22] http://pn14.info/?p=137744.
[23] http://news.day.az/politics/768394.html.
[24] https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/2020/05/11/Turkey-Erdogan-uses-Leftovers-of-the-Sword-anti-Christian-hate-speech.
[25] https://armenian-assembly.org/2020/05/18/armenian-assembly-of-america-alarmed-by-turkish-presidents-incitement-against-minorities/.

Chanakkale and from the Armenian deportation to Independence War. We will carry this crown with eternal pride," wrote Chalik[26]. This is a clear manifestation of hatred against the Armenian community in Turkey posing a real threat that a new Genocide might happen.

On April 24, 2019 on the Armenian Genocide Remembrance day Turkish President Recep Tayip Erdogan said the deportation of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century was "reasonable" at the time. Erdogan claimed that mass deportations of Armenians to the Syrian desert was "the most reasonable action that could be taken" by the Ottoman government. "Relocation is one thing, massacre is another thing," he said[27]. The justification of murder especially at such high political level obviously demonstrates the approval and praise of hate crimes against Armenians in Turkey even today.

Chapter 3: Anti-Armenian sentiments in the course of the Azerbaijani aggression unleashed in September, 2020 against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh)

The large-scale military offensive launched by Azerbaijan along the entire Line of Contact in Nagorno-Karabakh (Republic of Artsakh) on September 27, 2020 caused a multidimensional humanitarian crisis and destabilized the whole region. Despite the urgent calls of the international community, as well as the three agreements on humanitarian ceasefire reached by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan under the mediation of Russia, France and the USA, the Azerbaijani military, with the immense support of Turkish armed forces and the involvement of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters, has been continuing the bombardment of peaceful civilian settlements in Artsakh, resulting in casualties and obliteration of infrastructures. The Azerbaijani air and artillery strikes keep the civilian population of Artsakh and Armenia under constant shelling which is accompanied with an immense volume of hate speech against ethnic Armenians. Calls for violence, including killings are being disseminated through mass media, especially by social media platforms by Turkish and Azerbaijani sources.

The Azerbaijani aggression in September was preceded by another series of cross-border attacks against Armenia's northern Tavush region, resulting in the deaths of Armenian soldiers. On July 16, Azerbaijan even threatened to launch missile attacks on Armenia's Metsamor nuclear plant. Meanwhile, thousands of Azeri protesters reportedly gathered at the main square of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, demanding an all-out war against Armenia and shouting slogans such as *"*Death to Armenians*"* and "Order us to go to war"[28].

On October 4, during his address to the nation Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev once again instigating hatred against Armenians mentioned: "We are driving them away like dogs! Azerbaijani soldiers drive them away like dogs! The Azerbaijani flag is being raised in the occupied territories! Azerbaijani soldiers are standing in their trenches! Their posts are in our hands! We are driving their tanks! Their other weapons are in our hands, their trucks are in our hands! We are fulfilling our mission of salvation and we will complete it!."[29]

On October 17, during his another address to the nation Aliyev stated: "We will throw you out of there anyway. There will be no trace of them left on those lands. We will drive them out of our lands to the end. Let them leave of their own accord!" … "No force can stop us. No force can stand against the will of the Azerbaijani people. Everyone should know this. No-one can stand in front of us. Let the predatory Armenian state vacate our lands", "We will punish them, and our punishment will be just. They deserve the most severe punishment. Armenia's political-military leadership are criminals and we will punish these criminals", "Look, they gave Fuzuli an ugly name. Let this name be a curse on you. This name will go

[26] https://armenianweekly.com/2019/12/09/erdogans-backers-threaten-to-commit-a-new-genocide-against-armenians/.

[27] https://mirrorspectator.com/2019/05/02/erdogan-says-deporting-armenians-was-appropriate-at-the-time-2/.

[28] https://providencemag.com/2020/07/azeri-hatred-armenians-costs-lives-armenia-azerbaijan-border-conflict/.

[29] https://defence.az/en/news/146240/president-aliyev-azerbaijani-soldiers-drive-them-away-like-dogs.

to hell. This name no longer exists", "Where is the place where you conducted the "swearing-in ceremony" of the leader of that fake gang? We have destroyed it, completely destroyed it" or "Get out of our land and we will stop! Get the hell out of our lands! I have said this before and do not hide anything", "We need lands. We will get this land by any means. Let everyone know this"[30].

On October 24, Toghrul Mammadli, the Head of Department at the Council of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the Azerbaijani President, reacting to the wedding ceremony held at the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in the city of Shushi, twitted the following: "You guys killed this peace bird one week ago in Ganja. If the story of this wedding true I can only say that was last wedding of yours in occupied territories. Because #Azerbaijan is coming to finish the weddings /were disrupted in Shusha, Khojaly & oth"[31].

On October 27, Kenan Mastaliyev, the Press Secretary of the Weightlifting Federation of Azerbaijan shared the following post on Facebook: "Video of the murder of former Minister of Defense of NKR, Jalal Harutyunyan! The best enemy was a dead enemy, the best Armenian was a dead Armenian! Grave, dishonorable." [32]

On October 31, Nurlan Ibrahimov, the communication officer of the "Qarabağ" Azeri Football Club, made a comment on social media calling for the killing of all Armenians: "We (Azerbaijanis) must kill all Armenians- children, women and the elderly. We need to kill them without making a distinction. No regrets. No compassion." Although the post was later deleted, following the complaint of the Football Federation of Armenia, UEFA banned Ibrahimov from exercising any football-related activity with immediate effect until the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body decides on the merits of the case." He was charged with facist and other discriminatory conduct (Art. 14(1) of UEFA Disciplinary Regulations), and violating the basic rules of decent conduct – Art. 11(2)(b)[33]. While the posts were later deleted it was not before the Armenian Football Federation had been alerted and filed a complaint to UEFA. In a statement issued on November 4, UEFA provisionally banned Nurlan Ibrahimov from exercising any football-related activity with immediate effect until the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body decides on the merits of the case."

Xenophobic statements are never a hidden, but rather an obvious strategy adopted by the Azerbaijani politicians. On October 8, during a show broadcast on Rossia 1 TV, the head of the division for relations with diplomatic institutions at TASS news agency Saadad Kadirova, an ethnic Azerbaijani, justified the attacks and bombardments of the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in the city of Shushi of the Republic of Artsakh, as a result of which Russian reporters were wounded, one in extremely critical condition. She recalled Russian President Putin's statements on "killing terrorists in restrooms", adding that Armenian servicemen are occupiers, and the bombardment of the church was justified, thus drawing parallels between the cathedral and a restroom.[34]

Amid the ongoing war between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, a sharp rise of hate speech is noticed in Turkey as well, threatening Armenians living there. As it was reported by Turkey's Armenian Parliamentarian Garo Paylan, Turkish government engages in war propaganda by openly supporting the military conflict and is publicly resorting to belligerent rhetoric against Armenia. Moreover, Turkey's Armenian community has also been intimidated in this climate of hate speech. "Any hate speech towards the Armenian people makes our own citizens an imminent target. The government is using this conflict for domestic consumption. Armenian-origin citizens have become scapegoats and the object of rising racism and hate speech. Most of the people around me want to leave, because we never

[30] https://apa.az/en/nagorno_karabakh/Azerbaijani-President-We-will-drive-them-out-of-our-lands-to-the-end-333183
https://apa.az/en/domestic-news/President-of-Azerbaijan-Ilham-Aliyev-addresses-the-nation-colorredUPDATED-2color-333158.

[31] https://twitter.com/toghrulmammadli/status/1320065085218357248.

[32] https://www.facebook.com/kenan.mastaliyev.

[33] http://www.insideworldfootball.com/2020/11/04/uefa-bans-qarabags-ibrahimov-call-kill-armenians/; https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN27K1NC.

[34] https://news.am/eng/news/607070.html.

see a decline in hate speech against us. We are always in first place", he mentioned [35]. As Rober Koptas, an author on Armenian history and culture, noted, "The Armenians of Turkey have already been living with an internalized fear for decades, and this fear multiplies in tense times like this. And this is not a paranoid fear, it is based on many historical and current tangible examples and experiences"[36].

As the war perpetrated by Azerbaijan rages in Nagorno-Karabakh Turkish ultra-nationalists storm Armenian neighborhoods in Istanbul. On October 5, a convoy of Turkish ultra-nationalists stormed the Kurtulus neighborhood in Turkey, which is home to a large Armenian population. Judging by the videos filmed from the nearby buildings, it can be seen how the vehicles block the streets, hazard lights, flashing and honking erratically. Many Armenians see this as an attempt to intimidate their community[37].

Through cyberwarfare – disinformation, hacking, and complete lies – the governments of Turkey and Azerbaijan continue encouraging hate crimes against Armenians around the world. A vivid example are the Anti-Armenian sentiments driven by the tweets of Ibrahim Karagul, editor-in-chief of *Yenisafak*, a pro-Erdogan Turkish daily newspaper known for promoting hate speech. On September 27, he tweeted: "A missile must accidentally fall on the exact mark of Yerevan," which was retweeted more than 11,000 times.[38]

In the context of the ongoing war, there is a large number of aggressive web pages and groups both in Turkey and Azerbaijan spreading video materials and texts provoking hatred and violence, containing materials illustrating cruel treatment of living or deceased people, killings and destruction. The mentioned materials are disseminated through Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and other social media networks. They target Armenian social media users, including minors. More aggressive materials are spread through TikTok with the purpose to spread fear amongst the peaceful population.

There is also a significant number of fake profiles with false Armenian names, which send threats and intimidating messages to actual Armenian users. A fake Armenian fund website was created by the Azerbaijani hackers to steal money from Armenia and from all those who want to show their support to the Armenian nation during these harsh days of war[39].

On October 9, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet expressed her alarm at the suffering of civilians as hostilities continue to widen along the Line of Contact in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone calling for an urgent ceasefire due to the impact on civilians. Right after this statement an Azerbaijani diplomat tweeted the screenshot of the account of the High Commissioner, inviting his fellow compatriots to spam and harass her online[40].

From the first days of the war the dissemination of hatred against Armenians and calls for cruel treatment and killings have become even more coordinated culminating into excessively dangerous volumes. Accompanied with explicit violations of international commitments, such policy is a real threat to the peace in the whole region. It is noteworthy that Facebook has removed 589 Azerbaijani Facebook accounts, 7,906 Pages and 447 accounts on Instagram that comprised a network of coordinated inauthentic behavior. As it was reported, the network originated in Azerbaijan and focused primarily on domestic audiences, using false names and stock images to comment and artificially boost the popularity of particular pro-government content.

[35] https://armenianweekly.com/2020/10/08/sharp-rise-in-hate-speech-threatens-turkeys-armenians/.

[36] https://catholicphilly.com/2020/10/news/world-news/hate-speech-rowdy-convoys-minority-armenians-in-turkey-feel-targeted/.

[37] https://observers.france24.com/en/20201015-turkish-ultranationalists-storm-armenian-neighborhoods-istanbul-fighting-rages-nago.

[38] https://twitter.com/ibrahimkaragul/status/1310124405129990144?s=20.

[39] https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/10/10/fake-azerbaijani-website-stealing-money-from-armenia-charity-brought-down-by-anonymous-greece/.

[40] https://twitter.com/Kornelij/status/1315578222713634816/photo/1.

As already mentioned, thousands of foreign terrorist fighters have been recruited by Turkey to fight for Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh. This is no longer a suggestion, but a fact already affirmed and recognized by the international community[41].

Extremely degrading and inhumane videos are being disseminated on social media both by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and the terrorist groups.

On 15 October, 2020 the Human Rights Defender of Armenia obtained two video clips, as well as a photo evidence illustrating the Azerbaijani military's inhumane, cruel treatment of two Armenian civilians who got captured by the Azerbaijani military. Though surrendering to the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, the two were humiliated at maximum and then executed with the extreme cynicism, in gross disrespect to the rules of international humanitarian law. The Azerbaijani army members' behavior is accompanied with hate speech. The captives were bound and draped in Armenian flags during the execution. One of the civilians was a 25-years old man from the village Taiq of Hadrut region and the other was 73-years old man from the town Hadrut[42].

The videos have been released by Azerbaijani sources on 15 October, 2020 and have been widely spread, also by targeting children and elderly. Afterwards, the Azerbaijani sources tried to remove the videos, however, they were duly documented by the Office of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia. Actions by the Azerbaijani military undeniably constitute a war crime.

On October 18, the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia received an alarming call certifying that the Azerbaijani Armed Forces beheaded an Armenian soldier several days ago. The initiated proceedings revealed that on October 16, a member of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces called the brother of the Armenian soldier informing him that his brother is with them; they beheaded him and were going to post his photo on the Internet. Several hours later, the brother found his killed brother's photo on social media. As it is reported by the HRD of Armenia, there were two phone calls with Azerbaijani soldiers who used hate speech with the intention to humiliate the killed Armenian soldier's brother. [43]

The mentioned incidents clearly indicate that Azerbaijan is carrying out a consistent policy of ethnic cleansing and terror-inspiring means against the Armenian population, which is instigated by Turkey[44].

---

[41] The list of statements and comments by some international media outlets regarding the mercenaries fighting in the Republic of Artsakh you can find in Annex 1: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/9t6wva4pbud3tw7pesl5s/Annex-1.docx?dl=0&rlkey=pzp7j8usjxu9sk10uwl9oyzyq.

[42] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGk5ydztLG8&bpctr=1606125197; https://t.me/karabah_news/1315?fbclid=IwAR0nasrHqOmygydQWH7RK66RbE2NxDgY0hduo7ih24rWeGTESSwW2rQHKoU.

[43] https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=733479247251283&set=a.363684047564140.

[44] Some of the screenshots of online hate speech dissemination towards Armenians by persons of Azerbaijani and Turkish descent you can find in Annex 2: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/mxld2l4q3i5nst1u3ic3t/Annex-2.docx?dl=0&rlkey=bkis7zkuql6gst23angw915yt.