

AZERBAIJAN'S POLICY OF DESTRUCTION AND APPROPRIATION OF ARTSAKH CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A DISRUPTION OF THE PEACE AGENDA

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As a result of the war initiated by Azerbaijan in 2020 and the subsequent actions that followed, including the transition of Artsakh's territories to Azerbaijani control, the nine-month blockade of the Lachin Corridor prior to the forced displacement of over 120,000 Armenians on September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan has systematically destroyed and continues to destroy the rich and unique cultural heritage of Artsakh. This coordinated policy strikes a blow to the planet's cultural diversity, undermines the concept of tolerance as enshrined in international law, and fosters hatred and racial discrimination in the region. These actions ultimately neutralize efforts to establish a peace agenda, deepening divisions and escalating tensions.

The article presents Azerbaijan's policy of destruction and appropriation of Artsakh's cultural heritage from 2020 to 2024. It documents the instances of heritage destruction, categorizing them by type, and discusses the impact of this policy on the continuation of the conflict, the fostering of intolerance, and the disruption of the peace agenda.

International organizations have emphasized that the destruction of cultural heritage is an ongoing war. Azerbaijan is obligated under international law to respect all cultural values, as stated in UNESCO's principles, which recognize the contribution of every nation's heritage to global diversity.

Azerbaijan's actions violate these obligations, further hindering peace and reconciliation efforts in the region.



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The Destruction of Artsakh Cultural Heritage

The deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in conflicts has a devastating impact on efforts to achieve peace, while the protection of heritage or the prevention of its destruction can positively influence peacebuilding processes. In a report by the UN Special Rapporteur, it is stated that peacebuilding is impossible without deep and unconditional respect for cultural heritage¹. However, as we observe, Azerbaijan continues to destroy and appropriate Artsakh Armenian heritage even after the complete ethnic cleansing of Artsakh.

Indeed, the 2020 44-day war was marked by acts of destruction, desecration, and appropriation of the irreplaceable cultural assets of Artsakh. Over the past four years, and even continuing to the present amid periods of non-active military operations, a systematic campaign against Armenian monuments, churches, historic cemeteries, and khachkars continues in Armenian territories under Azerbaijani control. Azerbaijan's destruction, deliberate targeting, and desecration of Artsakh cultural heritage violate the cultural rights of Artsakh Armenians, obstructing their ability to participate in cultural life, visit these sites, use them for future education, and pass them on to future generations. Cultural heritage plays a critical role in cultural self-expression, education, and the transmission of knowledge between generations. Therefore, its destruction hinders people's access to their cultural heritage and undermines their future ability to engage in cultural practices, rituals, and traditions.

The obliteration of historical traces in Artsakh occurs along two main directions:

Destruction of Cultural Heritage – This includes the demolition of churches, khachkars, monuments from the Artsakh independence era, as well as memorials dedicated to the Artsakh Liberation War, the Armenian Genocide, and the Great Patriotic War. It also involves the destruction of historical cemeteries, entire neighborhoods and villages, museums, collections, and monuments or busts of cultural figures.

Appropriation of Cultural Heritage – This refers to the systematic albanization, islamization, azerbaijanization, turkification, and russification of Artsakh cultural heritage.

The physical destruction of cultural heritage is a deliberate policy employed by Azerbaijan to completely or partially eliminate the Armenian heritage in Artsakh. By destroying churches in Artsakh, Azerbaijan severs the spiritual bond of Artsakh Armenians with these sacred sites, depriving them of vital spaces for rituals and prayers, thereby hindering their future ability to conduct religious practices. Clear examples of such heritage destruction date back to 2020, with the complete demolition of the Holy Mother of God Church (Zoravor Surb Astvatsatsin)² in the town of Mekhakavan (Jabrayil), the Saint Sarkis Church (Surb Sargis)³ in the village of Mokhrenis, and the Green Chapel, Saint John the Baptist Church (Surb Hovhannes Mkrtych)⁴ in Shushi. Additionally, the targeted shelling and dome destruction of the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi⁵, along with the continued damage to it⁶ – such as the erasure of inscriptions,

¹ K. Bennoun, UN Human Rights Council, Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights; 2016, para. 72, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/831612?ln=en&v=pdf>.

² BBC News, 2021, March 26, Nagorno-Karabakh: The Mystery of the Missing Church. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-56530604>, (accessed 16.11.2024).

³ Monument Watch, 2022, Azerbaijan destroyed St. Mokhrenes. Sargis Church, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-destroyed-the-church-of-surb-sargis-in-mokhrenes-village/>, (accessed 16.11.2024).

⁴ Monument Watch, 2021, June 4, Azerbaijanis Destroyed Shushi's Green Hour, the Dome and Bell Tower of St. Hovhannes the Baptist Church, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijanis-destroyed-the-dome-and-bell-tower-of-the-kanach-zham-church/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

⁵ Monument Watch, 2021, May 15, The Illegal Restorations of the Church of Saint Ghazanchetsots in Shushi. <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/illegal-reconstruction-of-the-surb-ghazanchetsots-church-in-shushi/>, (accessed 16.11.2024).

⁶ Extensive “restoration” construction activities are being carried out inside the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi. The dome has been dismantled, crosses have been removed from the gates leading to the courtyard of Ghazanchetsots, and the angel sculptures have been taken down from the gate's stone edges (See Monument Watch, 2023, Azerbaijan continues the “restoration” of the Surb Ghazanchetsots (Holy All Savior) Cathedral in Shushi, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-continues-the-restoration-of-the-surb-ghazanchetsots-holy-all-savior-cathedral-in-shushi/>, (accessed 16.11.2024): On October 7, 2024, a video was circulated by Azerbaijani media showing that the dome of the 19th-century church had been

destruction of Christ's bas-relief, and obliteration of cross symbols under the guise of restoration – serve as stark evidence of this policy.

In 2023, Azerbaijan turned the historical layers of the Holy Mother of God Church (Meghretsots, built in 1838 in Shushi) into a pile of debris⁷, removed the cross from the 7th-century Vankasar Church⁸, toppled the cross of the Stepanakert Cathedral⁹, and, through construction interventions, erased the unique inscriptions and cross engravings from the medieval churches of Saint Sarkis (Surb Sargis) and Saint Gregory (Surb Grigor) in Tsar¹⁰, among others.

Among the primary targets of Azerbaijan's policy of Armenophobia, alongside churches, are crossstones (khachkars), which have faced widespread destruction. The crossstone (khachkar), one of the most characteristic and unique symbols of Armenian identity, is both a product and an indicator of its development¹¹. With their marvelous carvings, the symbolism of the cross representing salvation, and the enduring permanence inspired by the stone, crossstones have been and remain among the most revered

and, due to their abundance and outdoor placement, the most accessible sanctities of the Armenian people. Having traversed over a millennium of historical development, they also represent a contemporary cultural manifestation, both through their historical presence and the installation of hundreds in Artsakh over the last 30 years¹².

Azerbaijan's systematic campaign in this regard is particularly underscored by the destruction of several significant crossstones. Among these are the crossstones of Arakel village in the Hadrut region¹³, destroyed in 2020, those of the memorial complex dedicated to the Hadrut city's freedom fighters¹⁴, the unique XIV-century crossstone of the Lachin historical cemetery, and several crossstones dating from the XV–XVI centuries. Additionally, in 2022, the chapel of the “Union of Karabakh War Veterans” and the surrounding crossstones in Mataghis were destroyed¹⁵, along with the unique XII–XIII century¹⁶ crossstones of the Armenian-Greek old cemetery in Shushi. The crossstones dedicated to the Artsakh Liberation War in Ukhtadzor, Hadrut region, and Vorotan city¹⁷ have also been demolished. The crossstone

altered. The Armenian church, subjected to inadmissible construction interventions and destruction, was transformed into a different structure, which Azerbaijani sources claimed to be a Russian church. It is worth noting that an inscription above the southern entrance of the church stated that the cathedral was built with donations from the parishioners of Shushi; construction began in 1868 and was completed in 1887 (See Monument Watch, 2024, The Church of the Holy All Saviour in Shushi has been defaced and desecrated, 07 October, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/the-church-of-the-holy-all-saviour-in-shushi-has-been-defaced-and-desecrated/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

⁷ Monument Watch, 2023, November 24, Azerbaijan Turns the Historical Layers of the 19th-Century Meghretsots Surb Astvatsatsin Church of Shushi into a Garbage Heap, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-turns-the-historical-layers-of-the-19th-century-meghretsots-surb-astvatsatsin-church-of-shushi-into-a-garbage-heap/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

⁸ Monument Watch, 2024, Azerbaijan Removes Cross from Vankasar Church. February 10, 2024, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-removes-cross-from-vankasar-church/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

⁹ Monument Watch, 2023, November 19, Azerbaijan Toppled the Cross in Stepanakert. 2023. <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-toppled-the-cross-in-stepanakert/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁰ Monument Watch, 2024, It was the Tsar Settlement's Turn, February 27, 2024, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/it-was-the-tsar-settlements-turn/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹¹ Պետրոսյան Հ., Խաչքար. ծագումը, զործառույթը, պատկերազարդությունը, իմաստաբանությունը, Երևան, էջ 9, https://tert.nla.am/archive/HA_Y%20GIRQ/Ardy/2001-2011/petrosyan_khachqar_2008.pdf.

¹² The khachkars installed over the past 30 years have been dedicated to public, economic, and political figures, as well as heroes of the Artsakh Liberation War.

¹³ RA MFA Spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan. Press release on Twitter, January 12, 2021, https://twitter.com/naghdalyan/status/1348922661318103040?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1348922661318103040%7Ctwgr%5E7Ctwcon%5Esl1&ref_url=%3A%2F2Fyerkirmedia.am%2Fhy%2Farticle%2F2021%2F01%2F12%2F31680 (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁴ Monument Watch, 2021, Destruction of the Memorial to the Soldiers in Hadrut, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-memorial-to-the-soldiers-in-hadrut/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁵ Monument Watch, 2023, Destruction of the Cemetery and Khachkars in Lachin, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-cemetery-and-khachkars-in-lachin/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁶ Monument Watch, 2022, Destruction of Khachkars Caused by Azerbaijan in the Occupied Territories of Artsakh, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-khachkars-caused-by-azerbaijan-in-the-occupied-territories-of-artsakh/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁷ Medium. 2020, November 25, Church and Memorial Desecration in Post-ceasefire Nagorno Karabakh, <https://medium.com/dfrlab/church-and-memorial-desecration-in-post-ceasefire-nagorno-karabakh-87ece968af3f> (accessed 16.11.2024).

placed in the area of the Kavakavanq church in 1995 has disappeared. On January 7, 2024, it was revealed that the memorial crossstone erected in October 2021 in memory of the heroes of the Artsakh Liberation War on Daniel Varujan Street in Martakert had been destroyed¹⁸, along with two crossstones adjacent to the Aghanus village aghbyur in Kashatagh¹⁹.

The destruction of crossstones is a multifaceted violation of the cultural rights of the Armenians of Artsakh. As symbols of Christianity, they also embody deeply rooted historical and cultural values significant to Armenian identity. Moreover, crossstones often serve as communal gathering places and sites for spiritual and cultural self-expression.

It should be noted that Azerbaijan's policy of systematic destruction of crossstones (khachkars) has deep roots, which were executed in Nakhichevan. From 1998 to 2006, under the guise of “peaceful conditions”²⁰, the Azerbaijani army demolished and leveled thousands of carved crossstones and tombstones with heavy construction equipment, converting the area – once home to unique historical and cultural cemetery artifacts – into a shooting range. H. Petrosyan mentions this in his article “The Iconography of Julfa’ Khachkars”: “In the 17th century, there were about 10,000 khachkars in Julfa. By the end of the 20th century, approximately 3,000 remained. By the end of 2002, the last khachkars of Julfa were eradicated due to organized barbarism by the Azerbaijani government”²¹.

Azerbaijan is systematically destroying monuments that commemorate the liberation struggle and victory of the Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988–1994) and the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. This represents a violation of the cultural rights of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. Such actions erase elements of collective memory, undermine the community's ability to honor and remember historically significant events, obstruct the transmission of heroic narratives to future generations, and diminish the sense of pride and unity. These actions constitute a deliberate attack on historical and cultural continuity, which forms the backbone of community cohesion²². Prominent examples of this chain of destruction include the obliteration of the memorial complexes dedicated to the freedom fighters of Hadrut, as well as the memorials in Shushi commemorating the Armenian Genocide, the Nagorno-Karabakh War, and the Great Patriotic War²³.

Furthermore, the wave of destruction did not spare the monument adjacent to Saint Astvatsatsin (Surb Astvatsatsin) Church²⁴, constructed in 1904 in the village of Madatashen in the Askeran district, dedicated to the victims of the Artsakh Liberation War. In the village of Azokh in Hadrut, three separate monuments were destroyed, commemorating the victims of the Great Patriotic War, the First Artsakh War, and the Armenian Genocide²⁵. Acts of desecration were carried out in the villages of Zardanashen and Avetaranots, while monuments dedicated

¹⁸ Monument Watch, 2024, Azerbaijanis Reportedly Damage Historical Khachkar Monument in Martakert City, <https://monument-watch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijanis-reportedly-damage-historical-khachkar-monument-in-martakert-city/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

¹⁹ Monument Watch, 2023, Azerbaijan's Destruction of the Spring-Monument in Aghanus Village, Kashatagh Region, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijans-destruction-of-the-spring-monument-in-aghanus-village-kashatagh-region/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

²⁰ The deliberate destruction of cultural property is prohibited during peacetime as well as wartime under the Hague and Geneva Conventions, as well as by UNESCO conventions that hold a mandate for the protection of cultural heritage, including the 1970 “Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property” and the 1972 “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”.

²¹ Պետրոսյան Հ. 2004, Զոկայի խաչքարերի պատկերազրույթները. – ՊԲՀ, Երևան, № 1, էջ 19:

²² Stone, Peter G., ed. 2011. Cultural Heritage, Ethics, and the Military. Boydell & Brewer; Bennoun K. 2016, The Destruction of Cultural Heritage Is a Violation of Human Rights – UN Special Rapporteur. – <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2016/03/destruction-cultural-heritage-violation-human-rights-un-special-rapporteur>.

²³ Monument Watch, 2021. Destruction of the Memorial Devoted to the Genocide Victims in Shushi, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-memorial-devoted-to-the-genocide-victims-in-shushi/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

²⁴ Monument Watch, 2021. The Enemy Destroyed the School, the Cultural Center and the Memorial in Madatashen Village, and Endangered the Church of Surb Astvatsatsin, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/the-enemy-destroyed-the-school-the-cultural-center-and-the-memorial-in-madatashen-village-and-endangered-the-church-of-surb-astvatsatsin/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

²⁵ Monument Watch, 2021. Destruction of the Memorial Complex in Azokh Village of Hadrut, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-memorial-complex-in-azokh-village-of-hadrut/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

to the Artsakh Liberation War were destroyed in the villages of Talish, Karin Tak, and Mokhrenes²⁶.

The monuments, including the cross-shaped monument in Zangelan, newly erected memorials in Mataghis and Talish²⁷, the "Reborn Talish" monument in the Talish village of Martakert district²⁸, and those in Ukhtadzor dedicated to the Artsakh Liberation War, were also demolished. Similar actions targeted memorials in Getavan and Krtijvan. The wave of destructive intent by Azerbaijan, aimed at erasing memory, extended even to monuments dedicated to the Great Patriotic War and those commemorating heroes and victims. Among these was a bust of Marshal Armenak Khanperiyants (Sergey Khudyakov) of the USSR Air Force and a MiG-17 fighter-jet monument within the grounds of his house-museum in Mets Tagher village²⁹, Hadrut district. In Shushi, the bust of Soviet state and political figure Ivan Tevosyan³⁰, a native of Shushi, was also demolished. Additionally, the statue of Vazgen Sargsyan³¹, National Hero of Armenia and Artsakh, was subjected to vandalism and destruction.

In Stepanakert, monuments to notable figures including Alexander Myasnikyan, the Artsakh Hero Ashot Ghulian, the bronze statue of Armenian SSR socio-political figure Stepan Shahumyan, the bust of Anatoly Zinevich, and the Eagle monument located in the upper park of Stepanakert were all obliterated, as well as the statue of Charles Aznavour in the Armenian-French Friendship Park.

After the war, the historical cemeteries of

Artsakh became targets for Azerbaijan, under the guise of large-scale road construction activities. Specifically, historical Armenian cemeteries near the roads, such as the XVIII-century cemetery in Sghnakh in Shosh community³², Askeran district, and in Shushi, were completely destroyed. The same fate befell the Hadrut Brotherhood Cemetery and the military pantheon in Stepanakert. The graves of prominent figures of the Artsakh Liberation War in the village of Togh were also destroyed. In May 2023, historical cemeteries in Lachin and Hadrut were damaged by Azerbaijan, followed in November by the destruction of cemeteries in Shushi. Among them were masterpieces of funerary architecture, with tombstones up to three meters high, crowned with winged crosses, now reduced to rubble. Additionally, the Old Cemetery of Shushi, known for its ornate tombstones, and the Armenian-Greek cemetery, containing verified XII-XIII century khachkars, were also devastated³³.

These destructions, beyond their significant material losses, have deeply impacted the Armenian community of Artsakh by infringing on their cultural rights. The inability to connect with, visit, or maintain these cemeteries has inflicted profound psychological trauma upon individuals and communities, intensifying feelings of grief and helplessness. This erasure of cemeteries severs connections between generations, erasing family and cultural histories and disrupting the region-specific burial and mourning customs, thereby violating the community's ability to observe these rites.

²⁶ Artsakh Monuments, 2021, February 17, Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/artsakh.monuments/posts/1573895339473203?_rdr (accessed 16.11.2024).

²⁷ Guseyn-zade, Rena. 2021, Facebook, November 18, <https://www.facebook.com/rena.quseynzade/posts/3443529142348890> (accessed 16.11.2024).

²⁸ Krivosheev. 2020, <https://archive.is/PkeTz> (accessed 16.11.2024).

²⁹ Monument Watch, 2021. Destruction of the Bust of Armenak Khanperiyants and MIG-17 Fighter Jet in Mets Tagher Village, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-bust-of-armenak-khanperiyants-and-mig-17-fighter-jet-in-mets-tagher-village/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

³⁰ Sputnik Armenia. 2021. March 4, In Shushi, Azerbaijani vandals desecrated the bust of Hovhannes Tevosyan. <https://armeniasputnik.am/20210304/shushi-vandalizm-xshm-gorcich-hovhannes-tevosyan-26685429.html> (accessed 16.11.2024)

³¹ Yerkir Media. 2020. November 18. Sparapet's monument was desecrated in Shushi. <https://yerkirmedia.am/hy/article/2020/11/18/27728>. (accessed 16.11.2024).

³² Monument Watch, 2021. June 9, Destruction of the cemetery of Syghnakh. <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-cemetery-of-syghnakh/>, (accessed 16.11.2024).

³³ Tigranyan A., The Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh. Mechanisms for protection in the international system for preservation of heritage, Vem Series, No 6, Yerevan, Lusakn, 2023 pp. 134–149, <https://orient.sci.am/archive/915/article-zc2EvGaysTPwBOUn9ktuMjir4Q1oxLZASgl6KpFX.pdf>.

The Azerbaijani campaign to erase Armenian heritage has not spared entire cities, historic districts, cemeteries, and villages. One such act of destruction was the burning³⁴ of the XVIII–XIX century Yere Bazar³⁵ district in Hadrut, Artsakh, and the complete demolition of the village of Mokhrenis. In April 2024, the village of Karin Tak in Shushi was also destroyed, including its khachkars and springs. The obliteration of entire cities and villages constitutes a violation of cultural rights, resulting in the erasure of cultural heritage, the loss of intangible traditions, and the distortion of collective memory.

The destruction of monuments and museums is being carried out at an alarming rate, violating the cultural rights of both the community and individual creators. In addition to the demolition of the historic XIX-century Halivor Bridge, Azerbaijan has destroyed 51 sculptures located in the “Sculpture Park” adjacent to the Shushi State Museum of Fine Arts³⁶, damaged and dismantled the Shushi State Geological Museum named after Grigori Gabrielyants³⁷, the Avetik Isahakyan Library in Hadrut, the building of the National Assembly of Artsakh, and other structures³⁸.

Appropriation of Armenian Cultural Heritage of Artsakh

Azerbaijan’s appropriation of Armenian cultural heritage in Artsakh distorts historical facts and disconnects the community from its past. This policy prevents Artsakh Armenians from transmitting their identity

to future generations. Azerbaijan’s takeover endangers around 4,000 monuments, including medieval churches and monasteries, now under Azerbaijani control. These acts of cultural appropriation involve altering Armenian churches, denying Armenian heritage, renaming cities, villages, and streets throughout Artsakh, and reshaping Armenian cultural sites to appear Islamized, Turkified, or Russified. This includes modifying cultural landscapes, misrepresenting restoration efforts, and disrupting traditional Armenian rituals.

Professor Lori Khachaturian and Adam Smith of Cornell University note³⁹ that Armenian monuments in territories under Azerbaijan’s control face a real threat of state-sponsored destruction. “Heritage appropriation is just as toxic to our understanding of the human past as its silent demolition,” they assert in a joint statement. Experts from the Institute for War and Peace Reporting⁴⁰ further warn that Azerbaijan might destroy Armenian heritage while denying that heritage’s connection to Armenian history.

Denying evidence of the indigenous presence of the Armenians, claiming ownership of Artsakh Armenians’ entire cultural heritage, or attributing it to other nations is a key aspect of Azerbaijan’s state policy⁴¹. The country’s president, ministers, diplomatic representatives, religious communities, and “scientists” promoting false Azerbaijani claims are committed to this agenda. In cases of expropriation, they often leave a monument’s exterior intact while

³⁴ Bakinskiy Nord. 2022. October 9. Twitter. https://t.me/bakinskiy_nord/15674?single(accessed 16.11.2024).

³⁵ In 2018–2019, the Hadrut Municipality undertook specific steps to transform the Yere Bazar district into a historical-cultural reserve. Efforts were made to delineate the reserve’s boundaries, study building designs, and prepare preliminary materials.

³⁶ Monument Watch, 2021. Destruction of the Park of Sculptures of the State Museum of Fine Arts in Shushi. <https://monument-watch.org/en/alerts/destruction-of-the-park-of-sculptures-of-the-state-museum-of-fine-arts-in-shushi/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

³⁷ Ararathau. 2021. Ararathau. 2021, August 18. Telegram. The destruction of the Grigori Gabrielyantsi State Museum of Geology in Shushi. <https://t.me/ararathau/9676> (accessed 16.11.2024).

³⁸ Tigranyan A., The Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh. Mechanisms for protection in the international system for preservation of heritage, Vem Series, No 6, Yerevan, Lusakhn, 136–143 pp, <https://orient.sci.am/archive/915/article-zc2EvGaysTPwBOUn9ktuMjir4Q1oxLZASgl6KpFX.pdf>.

³⁹ Khatchadourian L., Smith A., The US can help prevent the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh. Here’s how, Cornell University, Dec. 15, 2020, <https://medium.com/cornell-university/the-us-can-help-prevent-the-destruction-of-cultural-heritage-in-nagorno-karabakh-heres-how-b809b87a5e79>.

⁴⁰ Fears for Armenian Cultural Heritage in Karabakh: Officials warn that historic sites in areas under Baku’s control risk damage, Institute For War & Peace Reporting, 18 January, 2021, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/fears-armenian-cultural-heritage-karabakh>.

⁴¹ Hikmet Hajiyeve, Twitter, 18 September, 2024, https://x.com/hikmethajiyeve/status/1836354194577432872?s=49&fbclid=IwY2x-jawFYjQBlEHRuA2FibQlXMAABHf9yT4XuiYrjWtg-9Wm5XQP7vqNG7Ze5fX-0mwYe_cauTHSZ5IUdT1nnOg_aem_9MPAj9dsGW-7W3hCy11WJ5w

stripping away its Armenian identity. They may attribute it to Albanians, Turks, azerbaijanize or russify it, alter its function, and disrupt its transmission to future generations. Sometimes, they erase historical inscriptions to remove traces of Armenianness or create new narratives about the heritage. This damages the intangible aspects of cultural value: history accuracy, authentic preservation, and the right to educate future generations with these cultural values.

Albanization of Armenian Cultural Heritage in Artsakh

A theory developed in the mid-20th century, which claimed that Christian Albanians—a group that had disappeared from history—were the ancestors of Azerbaijanis, now holds a prominent place in Azerbaijan's state policy. The theory of Albanization⁴² in Azerbaijan has deep roots, tracing back to the 1950s. At that time, Azerbaijani historian and academic Ziya Bunyadov argued that the ancient churches in Nagorno-Karabakh were built not by Armenians, but by now-extinct Albanians⁴³. This theory aimed to erase the historical roots of Armenians, limit their right to live and create in the region, and make room for Azerbaijan's presence.

After the 44-day war, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev initiated a policy involving 2,000–3,000 Christian Udis in present-day Azerbaijan to deny the Armenian origins of religious buildings and structures in Artsakh. This practice was based on the claim that the Udis are the only Christian descendants of the Caucasian Albanians, making them a political tool as the bearers of Albanian culture with the right to claim the Christian heritage in Artsakh. Ignoring historic evidence, Aliyev continuously organized visits⁴⁴ of Udi community⁴⁵ representatives

to churches in the occupied territories, disregarding the authentic ritual traditions of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Notably, videos⁴⁶ distributed by Azerbaijani news agencies show that during Udi divine services or prayers, the main rites of the Armenian Apostolic Church are desecrated.

Just days after the forced deportation of 120,000 Artsakh Armenians, Azerbaijan began denying the Armenian origins of most important Christian monastic complexes in Artsakh, declaring them Albanian. Gandzasar,⁴⁷ Amaras (dating back to the 4th-5th centuries), and other significant churches have been targeted for expropriation. Dadivank⁴⁸ became a target of Albanization immediately after the war's end. Despite the presence of around 200 Armenian inscriptions, Azerbaijan claims Dadivank as part of Udi cultural heritage, disregarding its Armenian origins.

On May 5, 2021, a video surfaced suggesting that representatives of Azerbaijan's Udi Christian community should celebrate church holidays and perform liturgies in Dadivank. The spiritual leader of the Udis stated that Dadivank is their church complex, should have permanent priests, and that the Muslim call to prayer (azan) should be sounded there regularly.

Dadivank Monastery was the religious center of the Vakhtangyans' Principedom in the Principality of Upper Khachen of Artsakh. None of Dadivank's components (architectural design, sculpture, khachkars, and frescoes) refer to Caucasian Albanian, Udi or non-Armenian culture. Apart from the 100 Armenian inscriptions of Dadivank monastery dating from the 12th to 17th centuries AD, there are no words or letters in any other language. The khachkars (cross-stones) of Dadivank embedded in the walls predate the buildings with the most recent dating to the

⁴² Crombach, S. G. 2019, Ziia Buniatov and the invention of an Azerbaijani past. Universiteit van Amsterdam, <https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/40165626/Thesis.pdf> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴³ Monument Watch, 2021, Azerbaijan's Policy of Islamization in Artsakh - Monument Watch (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴⁴ Laçın rayonu, "Ağoğlan" məbədi, facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1051504228724280> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴⁵ Xudavəng və Ağoğlan məbədləri, facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=344815654057444> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴⁶ Նույն տեղում:

⁴⁷ Monument Watch, 2024, Expropriation of Gandzasar Begins, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/expropriation-of-gandzasar-begins/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁴⁸ Monument Watch, 2021. May 15. Azerbaijan Claims that Dadivank Monastery Belongs to Udi Cultural Heritage. <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-claims-that-dadivank-monastery-belongs-to-udi-cultural-heritage/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

17th century AD. According to Adam Smith⁴⁹. Armenian churches, specifically Dadivank, could not have been created by Caucasian Albania, a kingdom that fell around the 8th century.

Despite historical evidence, attempts to appropriate Dadivank persist. On September 18, 2024, Baku organized a visit for accredited ambassadors and diplomatic missions in Azerbaijan to the Karvachar region of occupied Artsakh. During this visit, Ilham Aliyev's assistant, Hikmet Hajiyev, announced⁵⁰ that "Dadivank and other monuments will be restored and regain their original appearance." However, "Azerbaijani restoration," entails the destruction of hundreds of Armenian inscriptions, crosses, and khachkars, which Azerbaijan openly considers fake. These statements pose a significant threat to Armenian monuments, as such "restoration" would erase their historical and cultural identity, along with their authenticity.

The world has already witnessed the consequences of this approach. Exactly four years after the repeated strikes and bombings that violated customary laws of war on October 8, 2020, Azerbaijan presented the transformed appearance of the 19th-century Holy Ghazanchetsots Church in Shushi. Under the guise of restoration, the dome of the historic church was destroyed and all Armenian inscriptions were erased.

Several Armenian monasteries in Artsakh have been reclassified as Albanian during visits⁵¹ by representatives of the Albanian-Udi religious community. These include Saint Khach Monastery in Vank village of Hadrut, Holy Yeghishe Church in Mataghis

village, and St. Hovhannes Church in Togh village of Hadrut region. In the Kashatagh region, the Armenian church of Tsitsernavank⁵² was vandalized—members of the "Albanian-Udi" community destroyed a unique glass pit housing relics and performed rituals that go against the sacred practices of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Even the Armenian church in Kavakavank, with its unique record dating to 1742, faces the threat of Albanization. These visits⁵³ by "Albanian-Udi" community representatives appear to herald the erasure of the authenticity and history of Armenian churches.

The president of Azerbaijan's statements attempt to deny the Armenian origin of the church in Tsakuri village, Hadrut region. He claims it is Albanian, asserting that the khachkars were built during the years of Armenian occupation and the inscriptions added later. A subsequent statement, contradicting fundamental heritage preservation principles, declares that Azerbaijan must restore or reconstruct that church—an apparent ploy to erase Armenian traces and distort historical truth. To further this agenda internationally, Azerbaijan organized an exhibition in Warsaw⁵⁴. There, Armenian historical churches — including Dadivank, Amaras, Gandzasar, and Tsitsernavank were presented as Albanian. The exhibition also featured rituals of the "Albanian-Udi" religious minority being performed in these Armenian churches.

Recently, Rizvan Huseynov, director of the Caucasian History Center in Azerbaijan, published videos⁵⁵ about the Gandzasar complex. He claims that Armenians have

⁴⁹ L. Khatchadourian, A. Smith, The US can help prevent the destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh. Here's how, Medium, 15 Dec, 2020, <https://medium.com/cornell-university/the-us-can-help-prevent-the-destruction-of-cultural-heritage-in-nagorno-karabakh-heres-how-b809b87a5e79> (accessed 01.09.2024);

⁵⁰ Hikmet Hajiyev, Twitter, 18 September, 2024, https://x.com/hikmethajiyev/status/1836354194577432872?s=49&fbclid=IwY2x-jawFYjQBleHRuA2FlbQlxAABHf9yT4XuiYrjWtg-9Wm5XQP7vqNG7Ze5fX-0mwYe-cauTHSZ5IUdT1nnOg_aem_9MPAj9dsGW-7W3hCy11WJ5w (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁵¹ Monument watch, Udi propaganda as an expression of Azerbaijani politics, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/udi-propaganda-as-an-expression-of-azerbaijani-politics/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁵² Monument watch, Representatives of the "Albanian-Udi" community of Azerbaijan desecrated and destroyed the unique pit inside the Armenian church of the Tsitsernavank monastery in the Kashatagh region of Artsakh, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/representatives-of-the-albanian-udi-community-of-azerbaijan-desecrated-and-destroyed-the-unique-pit-inside-the-armenian-church-of-the-tsitsernavank-monastery-in-the-kashatagh-region-of-artsakh/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁵³ Monument watch, Azerbaijan's Policy of Islamization in Artsakh, 2021, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijans-policy-of-islamization-in-artsakh/> (accessed 123.11.2024).

⁵⁴ Panorama.am, Ապատեղեկատվության միջազգայնացման քարոզով՝ Ադրբեջանը վերաշարադրում է իր համար նոր պատմություն. Արմինե Տիգրանյան, <https://www.panorama.am/am/news/2024/06/05/Արմինե-Տիգրանյան/3012024> (accessed 23.11.2024):

altered the church's historical appearance, "Armenized" it, and forged the inscriptions, asserting that they are of Albanian heritage, not Armenian. However, it is crucial to note that the outer facades of the Gandzasar St. Hovhannes-Mkrtich Church and its vestibule bear dozens of Armenian donative inscriptions. These inscriptions provide valuable insights into the political, spiritual, and economic realities of medieval Artsakh. Dismissing them as fake directly contradicts the history of the region.

Researcher Yelena Hambardzumyan⁵⁶ points out that the discredited theory of Albanization — or the continuous erasure of Armenianness — served two purposes. First, it aimed to eliminate any connections between the now-extinct Caucasian Albanians and living Armenians. Second, it sought to establish a link with the now-extinct Christian civilization, creating an ancient and indigenous identity for Azerbaijanis in the South Caucasus.

It's important to note that from the 8th century AD, the Albanian Church's system of beliefs and rituals, including also its liturgical language, was identical to that of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In 1836, the Tsarist government abolished the Albanian Church, and the Christian Udi communities were incorporated into the Shemakha Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Until the 1990s, most Udis living in modern Azerbaijan were followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Islamization of Armenian Heritage of Artsakh

Azerbaijan's policy of appropriation is evident in the Islamization of Armenian heritage, particularly impacting the cultural heritage of Shushi⁵⁷ and Hadrut. Since 2021, various forums have been held in Shushi⁵⁸, aiming to distort the city's historical and cultural identity by presenting⁵⁹ it to the international community and organizations as solely Azerbaijani. On September 17, 2021, at the 38th International Meeting of Turkish Ministers in Khiva, Uzbekistan, Minister Anar Kerimov confirmed Baku's intention to declare Shushi the "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World 2023"⁶⁰. Furthermore, in May 2024, a memorandum of cooperation was signed⁶¹ in Shushi between the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and ISESCO. This agreement provides for the exchange of experience in culture, science, and education, the development of new technologies, and the implementation of joint projects in Shushi and other cities.

In Shushi, Azerbaijan constructed a museum, mosque, and square on the site of a former Armenian Genocide monument, which Azerbaijan had previously destroyed. In September 2024, President Aliyev attended the opening of "Flag Square," built in 2021 where the Genocide memorial once stood. Azerbaijani media reports that a "Victory Museum"⁶² commemorating Azerbaijan's victory in the 44-day war will also be built

⁵⁵ Ризван Гусейнов, Албанский Гандзасарский монастырь. Агдере - 01.10.2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ueplv-PZPP10> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁵⁶ Ambartsumian Ye., Why Armenian Cultural Heritage Threatens Azerbaijan's Claims to Nagorno-Karabakh, "Hyperallergic", February 28, 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/614619/why-armenian-cultural-heritage-threatens-azerbajians-claims-to-nagorno-karabakh/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁵⁷ Monument watch, Azerbaijan is planning to declare Shushi "cultural center of the Turkic world", <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-is-planning-to-declare-shushi-cultural-center-of-the-turkic-world/>

⁵⁸ Monument Watch, 2022. May 27. About the conference organized in Shushi. <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/about-the-conference-organized-in-shushi/> (accessed 23.11.2024); Monument Watch, 2024. May 13. New attempts have emerged aimed at the Islamization of Armenian cultural heritage. <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/new-attempts-have-emerged-aimed-at-the-islamization-of-armenian-cultural-heritage/> (accessed 16.11.2024).

⁵⁹ Monument Watch, Azerbaijan proposes to include Shushi in "The Creative Cities Network", <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-proposes-to-include-shushi-in-the-creative-cities-network/>

⁶⁰ Monument watch, Azerbaijan is planning to declare Shushi "cultural center of the Turkic world", <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijan-is-planning-to-declare-shushi-cultural-center-of-the-turkic-world/>

⁶¹ Фонд Гейдара Алиева и ИСЕСКО подписали меморандум о сотрудничестве, 11 May, 2024, https://t.me/bez_tor/46879?single&fbclid=IwAR05sHczpWazAOsC1xU98r8RJV1lwI-Ful8XW6pny7Cp301_nGTRrEi2o (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁶² Сотрудник Шушинского государственного заповедника Муслим Имранлы: [https://t.me/bez_tor/53964?single&fbclid=IwY2xjawFbyINleHRuA2FibQIxMAABHSSHBXTvESAr_Tvb1JDrt-knxjGmekuRRMrM2RDYBySleYIBW2NBwt2yAA_aem_GxfnM4y_QtPUxKkLAFZuxQU98r8RJV1lwI-Ful8XW6pny7Cp301_nGTRrEi2o](https://t.me/bez_tor/46879?single&fbclid=IwAR05sHczpWazAOsC1xhttps://t.me/bez_tor/53964?single&fbclid=IwY2xjawFbyINleHRuA2FibQIxMAABHSSHBXTvESAr_Tvb1JDrt-knxjGmekuRRMrM2RDYBySleYIBW2NBwt2yAA_aem_GxfnM4y_QtPUxKkLAFZuxQU98r8RJV1lwI-Ful8XW6pny7Cp301_nGTRrEi2o) (accessed 23.11.2024).

there. Furthermore, a new Shushi Mosque⁶³ is under construction, symbolizing Azerbaijan's "victory." President Aliyev laid its foundation stone in May 2021.

Since 2020, a new trend of Islamization⁶⁴ has emerged in Artsakh, affecting its historical, cultural, and natural landscape. This state policy is evident in the construction of new mosques throughout the region. These mosques, funded⁶⁵ by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, are being constructed in Shushi, Hadrut, Karintak, Mataghis, Berdzor, and Zangelan.

In Hadrut, Mataghis, and Karintak — areas historically without a Muslim population — mosques⁶⁶ are being constructed on elevated terrain. Notably, these new mosques span Artsakh geography: one in Hadrut to the south, another in Mataghis to the north, and one in Karintak in the central region. Moreover, a new mosque is under construction in Berdzor, the town formerly known as Lachin.

Hadrut⁶⁷ is undergoing Islamization through mosque construction and the official approval of a project⁶⁸ to convert Saint Harutyun Church into an Albanian religious site. The Azerbaijani government has posted a sign indicating plans for excavations around the church of the Holy Resurrection followed by its restoration and the establishment of a Caucasian Albanian cultural museum. This effort appears to reframe the historically Armenian Hadrut as part of an Islamic, Azerbaijani heritage. The project⁶⁹ also includes "restoration" of the historical core in Hadrut and several other monuments.

In this Hadrut settlement, which has long had a predominantly Armenian population and distinct Armenian cultural and religious heritage, a new Azerbaijani identity is being constructed at the expense of its original history. As part of this narrative shift, a mosque was built in Hadrut in 2021, despite the city's historical lack of a Muslim population.

The destruction of cultural heritage as the neutralization of peace

The international community has recognized the critical role of cultural heritage preservation in strengthening security, development, and peace⁷⁰. On March 24, 2017, the UN adopted Resolution 2347, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage as a pathway to peace for all humanity. The resolution condemns the illegal destruction of cultural heritage, as well as the looting and trafficking of cultural property by terrorist groups during armed conflicts. The denial of historical roots and cultural diversity by such groups is considered a factor exacerbating conflicts and an obstacle to post-conflict reconciliation. The destruction of cultural heritage undermines not only security but also the stability, governance, and social, economic, and cultural development of conflict-affected states.

The Rome Criminal Court affirms that evidence of attacks on cultural heritage can indicate that the primary target of the assault was the civilian population, given the collective significance of cultural heritage for civil communities. Furthermore, crimes against

⁶³ Ильхам Алиев заложил фундамент новой мечети в Шуше, CBC TV Azerbaijan, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAXPwm-mIqmQ> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁶⁴ Monument watch, Azerbaijan's Policy of Islamization in Artsakh, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/azerbaijans-policy-of-islamization-in-artsakh/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁶⁵ Azertac, Prezident və birinci xanım Zəngilan məscidinin açılışında, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdXZlpmj4> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁶⁶ Monument watch, Foundation of new mosques in the Armenian settlements of Artsakh, <https://monumentwatch.org/en/alerts/foundation-of-new-mosques-in-the-armenian-settlements-of-artsakh/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁶⁷ Report, Президент Азербайджана: У меня было много замечаний в связи с генпланом Гадрута, <https://report.az/ru/vnutrennyaya-politika/prezident-azerbajdzhana-u-menya-bylo-mnogo-zamechanij-v-svyazi-s-genplanom-gadruta/> (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁶⁸ The alienation of the historical Armenian identity of the city of Hadrut in Artsakh and the creation of a new "Azerbaijani identity", 27 December, 2023, https://westernarmeniatv.com/en/culture_en/the-alienation-of-the-historical-armenian-identity-of-the-city-of-hadrut-in-artsakh-and-the-creation-of-a-new-azerbaijani-identity/, (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁶⁹ Sputnik Azerbaijan, Подготовлены генпланы поселков Суговушан и Гадрут, 17 April, 2023, <https://az.sputniknews.ru/20230417/podgotovleny-genplany-poselkov-sugovushan-i-gadrut-453862618.html>, (accessed 23.11.2024).

⁷⁰ UN General Assembly, Human rights of internally displaced persons, 2021, para. 3 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/N21/194/86/PDF/N2119486.pdf?OpenElement>

cultural heritage may also suggest the discriminatory nature of the attack⁷¹.

The 2005 Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society emphasizes the role of heritage in promoting peace and resolving conflicts⁷². The civil society organization Europa Nostra, linking heritage protection with issues of peace and security, emphasizes the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage as a means of fostering stability and harmony.

In 2021, the European Parliament adopted Resolution No. 2693⁷³ on Armenian prisoners of war. In its 16th point, the resolution strongly condemns any acts of destruction of Armenian heritage in Azerbaijan and calls on Azerbaijan to restore damaged or destroyed monuments. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for greater international involvement in the region to ensure the protection of global heritage. Additionally, addressing the maintenance of peace in the region, the resolution highlights the paramount role of heritage preservation in establishing peace.

Conclusion

The systematic destruction and appropriation of Artsakh cultural heritage by Azerbaijan from 2020 to 2024 represents a calculated attack on the region's identity and a broader assault on global cultural diversity. This policy undermines international legal principles, including those enshrined in UNESCO's framework, which mandate the preservation of cultural heritage as a shared legacy of humanity. Beyond its cultural consequences, Azerbaijan's actions exacerbate regional tensions, foster intolerance, and disrupt the foundation for sustainable peace.

By targeting cultural heritage, Azerbaijan not only erases the historical and cultural footprint of the Armenian people in Artsakh but also perpetuates an environment of hatred and division, contradicting international efforts toward reconciliation and coexistence. The destruction of heritage is an ongoing war that transcends physical damage, inflicting lasting harm on cultural identity, collective memory, and the prospects for peace.

⁷¹ ICC, Policy on Cultural Heritage, 2021, para. 64. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/itemsDocuments/20210614-otp-policy-cultural-heritage-eng.pdf>.

⁷² Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005, art. 9. հղված:

⁷³ Stfu European Parliament resolution on prisoners of war in the aftermath of the most recent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (2021/2693(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0277_EN.html.

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Արմինե Տիգրանյան

«Ամբերդ» հեղափոխական կենտրոնի կրթութիւն հեղափոխող, ՀՊՏՀ

ԱՆՎՏԱՆԳՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ԵՎ ՄԱՐՏԱՀԱՐԱՎԵՐՆԵՐ

ԱՂԻՐԵՋԱՆԻ ԿՈՂՄԻՑ ԱՐԾԱՆԻ ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ԺԱՌԱՆԳՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՈՂՆՉԱՑՄԱՆ ԵՎ ՅՈՒՐԱՑՄԱՆ ՔԱՂԱՔԱԿԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐ՝ ՈՐՊԵՍ ԽԱՂԱՅՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԱՐԳԻ ԽԱՌԱՐՈՒՄ

Աղրբեջանի կողմից 2020 թվականին սանձազերծված պատերազմի և դրան հաջորդած գործողությունների ընթացքում՝ ներառյալ Արցախի պատմական հայկական տարածքների աղրբեջանական վերահսկողության տակ անցնելը, Լաչինի միջանցքի ինժամայա շրջափակումը և 2023 թվականի սեպտեմբերի 19-ին ավելի քան 120,000 հայերի բռնի տեղահանումը, համակարգված կերպով ոչնչացվում է Արցախի հարուստ և եզակի մշակութային ժառանգությունը: Աղրբեջանի այս քաղաքականությունը հարվածում է մոլորակի մշակութային բազմազանության պահպանմանը, խարխում միջազգային իրավունքով ամրագրված հանդուրժողականության սկզբունքները և նպաստում ատելության և ռասայական խտրականության տարածմանը տարածաշրջանում:

Ադրբեջանի այս գործողությունները խաթարում են նաև խաղաղության օրակարգի հաստատման ջանքերը և սրում լարվածությունը: Հոդվածում ներկայացվում է 2020-2024 թվականների ընթացքում Ադրբեջանի կողմից Արցախի մշակութային ժառանգության ոչնչացման և յուրացման քաղաքականությունը: Փաստագրելով ժառանգության ոչնչացման դեպքերը՝ դրանք դասակարգվում են ըստ ուղղությունների, և քննարկում է այս քաղաքականության ազդեցությունը հակամարտության շարունակման, անհանդուրժողականության խթանման և խաղաղության օրակարգի խաթարման վրա: Միջազգային կազմակերպություններն ընդգծում են, որ մշակութային ժառանգության ոչնչացումը շարունակական պատերազմ է: Ադրբեջանը, միջազգային իրավունքի համաձայն, պարտավոր է հարգել ամեն մի մշակութային արժեք, ինչպես սահմանված է ՅՈՒՆԵՍԿՕ-ի սկզբունքներում, որոնք ճանաչում են յուրաքանչյուր ազգի ժառանգության ներդրումը համաշխարհային մշակութային բազմազանության մեջ: Ադրբեջանի գործողությունները խախտում են այս պարտավորությունները՝ էլ ավելի խոչընդոտելով խաղաղության ջանքերը տալիս ռաժաշտական:

Հիմնաբառեր. *Արցախ, մշակութային ժառանգության ոչնչացում, յուրացում, խաղաղության օրակարգ, անհանդուրժողականություն, ռասայական խտրականություն, միջազգային իրավունք, Ադրբեջան*

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БЕЗОПАСНОСТЬ И ВЫЗОВЫ

ПОЛИТИКА АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА ПО УНИЧТОЖЕНИЮ И ПРИСВОЕНИЮ КУЛЬТУРНОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ АРЦАХА КАК НАРУШЕНИЕ МИРНОЙ ПОВЕСТКИ

В результате войны, начатой Азербайджаном в 2020 году, и последующих действий, включая переход территорий Арцаха под контроль Азербайджана, девятимесячной блокады Лачинского коридора и вынужденного переселения более 120 000 армян 19 сентября 2023 года, Азербайджан систематически уничтожает богатое и уникальное культурное наследие Арцаха. Эта скоординированная политика наносит удар по культурному разнообразию планеты, подрывает концепцию толерантности, закрепленную в международном праве, и способствует распространению ненависти и расовой дискриминации в регионе. Эти действия в конечном итоге нейтрализуют усилия по установлению мирной повестки, углубляют разделение и усиливают напряженность. В статье представлена политика Азербайджана по уничтожению и присвоению культурного наследия Арцаха с 2020 по 2024 год. В ней документируются случаи уничтожения наследия, классифицируются по типу и обсуждается влияние этой политики на продолжение конфликта, содействие нетерпимости и нарушение мирной повестки. Международные организации подчеркивают, что уничтожение культурного наследия — это продолжающаяся война. Азербайджан обязан по международному праву уважать все культурные ценности, как указано в принципах ЮНЕСКО, которые признают вклад наследия каждой нации в мировое разнообразие. Действия Азербайджана нарушают эти обязательства, что еще больше препятствует усилиям по установлению мира и примирению в регионе.

Ключевые слова: *Арцах, культурное наследие, уничтожение, присвоение, мирная повестка, нетерпимость, расовая дискриминация, международное право, Азербайджан*