Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention
Home of the Iraq Project

Lemkin Institute Statement on the Anti-Armenian Steam RPG Game Maroon Berets: 2030

Released 12 October 2022

In light of the recent rise in Anti-Armenian hate speech following the September 13th attack on Armenian territory, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is deeply disturbed by the existence of *Maroon Berets: 2030,* a Turkish-produced RPG (role-playing game) accessible through the online gaming platform Steam. According to the Steam description of the game, it "simulates the units of special forces in the [Nagorno-Karabakh] war." The game's main character is the son of a Turkish soldier killed during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War who grows up to exact vengeance on "ultra nationalistic Armenians" and invade bordering provinces of the Republic of Armenia. The following description is provided: "The rising tensions between Armenia and Turkey lead to a war where special forces of Turkey named Maroon Berets are called to the duty to fight against Armenia. At the same time, Maroon Berets face another threat - the rebels."

Maroon Berets: 2030 falls into the disturbing genre of games that dramatize, simulate, and glorify war and other violent crimes. In 2018, Steam's parent company Valve was pressured to remove a school shooting simulator from its platform. *Active Shooter*, a first-person RPG where the player acts as a shooter gunning down classmates in a high school, was released in the testing phase on the site just three months after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, where 17 students were killed and 17 others were injured.

Similar to *Maroon Berets: 2030,* the first-person war simulation shooter franchise *Call of Duty* was one of the most popular gaming franchises during the height of the US's illegal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this franchise, the player has the option to play in online forums which have been notoriously associated with violent language, racial slurs, and sexist and homophobic slurs. This genre is most popular with adolescent and teenage boys, who are much more susceptible to the deep framing of such propaganda, which not only glorifies violence but also encourages hatred of and violence towards a specific group of people. Unlike objectionable war propaganda games like *Six Days in Fallujah,* which at least gives players the option of saving the lives of civilians, *Maroon Berets: 2030* only gives players the option to kill Armenians or be killed by them.

In the context of genocide in the Caucasus, *Maroon Berets: 2030* serves as a violent propaganda piece and training tool for Turkish and Azeri youth to become desensitized to the gruesome act

of war. It glorifies the brutal war crimes of Azerbaijani soldiers, supported by Turkey and reinforced by Turkish soldiers and Turkish-hired mercenaries. It also legitimizes past and future Azeri and Turkish attacks on Armenian territory – not only Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been majority Armenian for thousands of years, but also the recognized sovereign state of Armenia proper. Having been released in May of 2022, the game has the potential to heighten future tensions and encourage further violence against Armenians and the Armenian state. As one reviewer online recently wrote, "Imagine a game where you are a Nazi and you are exterminating Jews in Poland and Ukraine during WW2. Or playing as Russians invading and massacring Ukrainians in 2022." Encouragement of ethnic-based violence is unacceptable, no matter the platform. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Steam and Valve to act accordingly and deplatform *Maroon Berets: 2030* and its developer before another wave of violence occurs.