



Red Flag Alert for Genocide

Azerbaijan

UPDATE

Released 19 September 2022

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention condemns in the strongest possible terms the evidence of Azerbaijani atrocities committed against Armenian troops, especially against female members of the Armenian military and medical corps, during Azerbaijan's most recent aggression against Armenian territory. We call on the governments of the world to condemn Azerbaijan and to call on the international media to report accurately about this terror campaign.

The recent atrocities committed by Azeri troops have been shared on the social media site *Telegram*, just as they were during the 2020 war. They are being celebrated on Azeri social media and serve to wound, humiliate, demoralize, and terrorize Armenians as a whole, everywhere in the world, but especially in the Republics of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Armenia.

The first *Telegram* video to emerge shows Azeri soldiers surrounding a naked woman's body (later positively identified as Armenian sniper Anush Apetyan). She has been partially decapitated, her legs have been cut off, at least one finger has been severed and placed in her mouth, and one eye is gouged out and replaced by a stone. The Azeri soldiers surrounding her are celebrating and mocking her. Another Armenian woman similarly, stripped naked and mutilated, appears to be in the background of this video. Since then, a second video has emerged, showing the stripped and tortured body of Armenian nurse Irina Gasparyan.

Due to Azerbaijan's permanent denial of its crimes, and the lack of international condemnation, it is currently impossible to carry out any investigations to determine the proper nature of these war crimes. The evidence is in the hands of Azerbaijanis, and it is very unlikely that under the current scenario any national or international independent investigatory team will be able to access them. Preserving evidence of these war crimes, which could also constitute crimes against humanity and/or genocide, is essential for accountability and prevention. Therefore, we call upon the international community to order an urgent investigation of all current and past atrocities.

These videos are reminiscent of tactics used by the Islamic State against ethnic and religious minorities in Syria and Iraq as well as tactics employed by the Turkish military against Kurdish fighters in eastern Turkey. As such, they bear all the hallmarks of institutionalized genocidal ideology and state terrorism.

In case one is tempted to make the mistake of thinking that these atrocities are isolated events, the Lemkin Institute wishes to point out the terroristic pattern that ties these atrocities to anti-Armenianism practiced in Azerbaijan, in Turkey, and by the Grey Wolves terrorist organization that is supported by both of these states. To this point, on Saturday, an Azeri diplomat threatened to rape Armenian women protesting Azerbaijan's war of aggression in Washington, DC, with the words "I will [expletive] you."

The Lemkin Institute believes that Azerbaijan is committing slow genocide — genocide by a thousand cuts — against Armenians with the full support of NATO member Turkey. In such a situation, Western calls for Armenia to negotiate with Azerbaijan and Turkey over the status of Artsakh, over a corridor through Syunik, and over Azeri-occupied territory in the Republic of Armenia are short-sighted and dangerous. Western powers must have the courage to recognize what they have been supporting in Presidents Ilham Aliyev and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. They must take immediate action to isolate these genocidal regimes. All territory occupied by Armenians must be protected and secured, including territories in Artsakh.

Governments, organizations, companies, and agencies that continue to empower these genocidal states are currently and will continue to be complicit in these atrocity crimes — unless they change course and actively work against the impunity that Turkey and Azerbaijan have enjoyed for far too long. The Lemkin Institute is dedicated to preventing genocide and ensuring that perpetrators, including those who are complicit in genocide, are held legally and morally accountable.