

INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC WON'T LEAD TO PEACE

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Armen Yeghanyan*, [Calgary Herald](#), 18 March 2012



I was extremely disappointed to see Mayor Naheed Nenshi's letter of recognition of the so-called Khojalu massacre. Before the mayor of a major city like Calgary writes something highly accusatory like this, he must make sure to get all the facts.

I regret to say that his letter grossly misrepresents the facts and presents a completely one-sided view of the event.

During the breakup of the Soviet Union from 1988 to 1991, under the Soviet Union's constitution, the people of Nagorno Karabakh, an autonomous district placed in 1923 illegally under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan, had the legitimate right of secession. The peaceful movement toward secession by the majority Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh was met with pogroms by Azerbaijanis, in places such as Baku, Sumgait, Kirovobad and Maratha. This violence was followed by Operation Ring, and eventually, the Azerbaijani army drove hundreds of thousands of its Armenian citizens out of the country, where they had lived since the beginning of time. This led to a full-scale war from 1991 to 1994, when a ceasefire was agreed to. No one truly wins a war, and there were civilian casualties on both sides.

In the case of Khojalu, there is overwhelming evidence that the Azerbaijani civilians were fired on by armed units of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan, a fact later confirmed by Azerbaijan's president, Ayaz Mutalibov, and several independent journalists.

The Canadian government supports the efforts of the special international body that was created to deal with the Nagorno Karabakh conflict - the Minsk Group of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe. Unfortunately, Nenshi's letter is not in keeping with this balanced, Canadian approach, either.

The Minsk Group, composed of the United States, Russia and France, is charged with helping Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic resolve this conflict through negotiation. It is certainly appropriate to remember those who died needlessly in war, but inflammatory rhetoric and false accusations do not help show the way to peace.

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