

GLOBAL PROTESTS, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY PRESSURE AZERBAIJAN

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By Arus Karapetyan, Ontario, 1 May 2021

Azerbaijan's refusal to return Armenian POWs since the Nov 10, 2020 ceasefire is a human rights issue that concerns all humanity.

According to the November ceasefire document between Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, all POWs were to be returned as soon as possible. While Armenia has returned all Azeri captives, Azerbaijan has failed to fulfill its obligations.

When on March 19 [Armenian human rights advocates](#) held their first silent protest at the Azerbaijani and Russian embassies in Ottawa and called for the immediate and unconditional release of Armenian POWs the protest was intended to be first in a series of similar global actions. Six weeks later, on April 30, their call was echoed around the globe as [demonstrations](#) were in 14 countries and 24 cities from Hamburg, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Brussels, the Hague, Geneva, Naples, Zurich, Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Los Angeles, New-York, and a dozen more.

[In Yerevan](#) "the protesters were joined by over fifty parents of the POWs who had come to share their stories with the foreign delegations," reported organizer Seda Grigoryan. The delegates from the embassies of Germany, Italy, United States, and EU met the parents as the march proceeded along the eight embassies.

In a February report ([Nagorno-Karabakh: captives must be released](#)), United Nations experts declared their alarm "at allegations that prisoners of war and other protected persons have been subjected to extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment." They added "such acts, when perpetrated in armed conflict, may also constitute war crimes."

In its [notification to the Committee of Ministers](#), the European Court of Human Rights has applied Rule 39 of the Rules of Court, with respect to 188 Armenian POWs, according to which Azerbaijan is obliged to comply and provide outstanding information as requested by the court. The report also stated that "the Court decided to notify the Committee of Ministers of the measures taken by it, having regard to the Azerbaijani Government's failure to respect the time-limits set by the Court for the submission of information on the individuals concerned and the rather general and limited information provided by them."

In its [March 19 report](#) Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that "**the third Geneva Convention** protects POWs 'particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity.'" Azerbaijan is also bound by the absolute prohibition of torture and other degrading or inhuman treatment in international law as articulated in the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** and the **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)**." In the same report Europe and Central Asia director Hugh Williamson said: "The abuse, including torture of detained Armenian soldiers, is abhorrent and a war crime."

According to a [Asbarez report](#) Human Rights Watch Deputy Director for Europe and Central Asia

Rachel Denber told Armenpress: "Azerbaijan's international partners should press the government of President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan to hold perpetrators of torture and degrading treatment against Armenians accountable."

In April, the international community put increased pressure on Azerbaijan to release the POWs.

Below are the responses by various political organizations:

- During the [April 20 session](#), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) called on Azerbaijan to immediately return Armenian POWs (with the exception of Turkish and Azerbaijani parliamentarians)
- [The European Union \(EU\)](#) called for, on April 28, the return of all remaining prisoners of war and detained persons and to comply with the Rule 39 of the rules of court requested by European Court of Human Rights
- In Canada: On April 19, Green Party MP Elizabeth May urged Foreign Minister Marc Garneau to [call for the immediate release](#) of Armenian POWs. NDP MP Don Davies submitted a [statement](#) to PACE following the "urgent affairs" debate session on April 20th and called for the release of Armenian POWs and "the full resumption of substantive negotiations to establish a fair and lasting solution to this conflict."

The activism of the past two months gives room for optimism for a fast resolution of Armenian POWs' return to their loved ones.



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There are no comments yet.