

# OPEN LETTER TO THE WRITERS, ARTISTS, PERFORMERS, ACTIVISTS, SCHOLARS, AND INTELLECTUALS OF CANADA

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**Nuurd Tadevosyan**, Kingston, Ontario, 22 October 2020

While the rest of the world was reeling from the repercussions of a global pandemic, on September 27th, the government of Azerbaijan, backed by the government of Turkey, launched a full-scale attack on the Line of Contact of Nagorno-Karabakh. This is only the latest in an onslaught of genocidal campaigns intended to bring the political descendants of the Ottoman Empire rulers to former glory.

In 1923, the regime of Joseph Stalin redrew Soviet Union's boundaries to incorporate the historical Armenian land of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) into the territory of Soviet Azerbaijan. The ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, who comprised majority of the population, widely disapproved of the divide and conquer reordering of their lands. These indigenous Armenians were denied the right to self-determination following a free and fair referendum in 1991, where the vast majority voted to secede from the Soviet Union and declare independence. These tensions erupted into a war in Nagorno-Karabakh, and thousands of Armenians and Azerbaijanis were displaced.

Azerbaijan has received open support from Turkey in the form of military equipment and Syrian mercenaries, therefore it would be fair to assign the aggression to the dictatorial regime of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Despite growing evidence, Turkish politicians continue to deny direct involvement in this conflict. Motivated by a Pan-Turkic, Neo-Ottoman dream of imperial expansion, the Azerbaijani government is attempting to ethnically cleanse Nagorno-Karabakh of its original Armenian inhabitants. This dream of territorial expansion will not stop here; Turkey's current occupation of Cyprus as well as Northern Syria are mere indicators of what is yet to come.

Cities and civilian settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh have been bombed, including hospitals, schools, a cathedral, and the archaeological site of Tigranakert. 70,000 Armenians are currently displaced from their homes. Disturbing, graphic videos are emerging that showcase Azerbaijani soldiers torturing and killing Armenian prisoners of war. Besides Syrian mercenaries, the Azerbaijani frontline is made up of the indigenous groups of Azerbaijan, the Talysh, Lezgin, and Udi, who have no wish to fight. The government of Azerbaijan has issued a media blackout, and its civilians are exposed to violent, Armenophobic rhetoric, foreign journalists are denied entry, and peace activists are detained and jailed. This follows in line with Erdoğan's regime, which has imprisoned countless human rights activists, journalists, and members of the opposition party, reaching a rank 154/180 in World Press Freedom, according to the Reporters Without Borders index.

The pogroms of Baku and Sumgait, and destruction of ancient, Armenian cultural monuments in the enclave of Nakhchivan are grim reminders of what is to be expected if international communities continue to turn a blind eye to the ongoing conflict. Affected are not only the lives of countless indigenous minorities, but also the freedoms of Azerbaijani and Turkish citizens.

We recognize the right to self-determination and the independence of the Republic of Artsakh. We condemn the actions of Turkey and Azerbaijan, their unprovoked and inhumane aggressions, the



**There are no comments yet.**