



Truth And Accountability League (TAAL) Statement Regarding the Authoritarian State of Azerbaijan's Fictitious and Propaganda 'Western Azerbaijan Community'

[Truth And Accountability League](#) (TAAL) condemns in the strongest possible terms any nation, regime, political party, organization, media outlet, or official who has a relationship with, collaborates with, or otherwise engages with the racist, genocidal, and iridescent movement, 'Western Azerbaijan Community' (WAC).

Cooperating with the so-called Western Azerbaijan Community (WAC) constitutes deliberate complicity in the genocidal acts perpetrated against the Armenian nation by the Azerbaijani government, the propagation of falsified historical narratives, the misappropriation and erasure of the cultural and religious heritage of the Armenian people, and the policy of deceit by the Azerbaijani leadership to gain support from international organizations and governments to achieve its goal of the 'Final Solution' to the existence of Armenia.

WAC is Azerbaijan's and its allies' most recent genocidal movement to destroy the democratic Republic of Armenia and fulfill their pan-Turkic ambitions, appeasing tactical partners who have an interest in Armenia's strategic position connecting Europe to the Middle East.

While Armenians are dealing with the dispossession of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and trying to cope with its tragic consequences, Azerbaijan is escalating its demands by launching a campaign claiming that the entire territory of the Republic of Armenia is supposedly 'Western Azerbaijan.' No sensible person in the world would take such an outrageous lie seriously. Azerbaijan was formed as a 'territory' by the Soviets in 1918, only to be folded into the USSR two years later. It gained its independence after the fall of the USSR and became a sovereign nation for the first time in 1991. But it didn't take long for the nation's dictator to start his expansionist plans by starting a war with the Republic of Artsakh. Artsakh was an independent state, the 'Nagorno-Karabagh AUTONOMOUS Oblast,' located within the boundaries of Azerbaijan. The Armenians of Artsakh, who constituted 77% of its population, gained their independence from the USSR based on a legally held referendum and declared the establishment of the Artsakh Republic by plebiscite months before Azerbaijan.

After establishing the 'Western Azerbaijan Committee' with the blessing of President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan has embarked on a campaign to disseminate its malevolent historical falsifications and ridiculous schemes around the world and at the United Nations. Those concerned about Azerbaijan's expansionist plans toward the Syunik province of sovereign Armenia or the so-called 'Zangezur Corridor' should be more alarmed about Azerbaijan's ravenous appetite to take over all of the Republic of Armenia after occupying Artsakh.

The Ministry of Science and Education of Azerbaijan recently announced a school Olympiad titled 'Return to Western Azerbaijan.' This event, held in collaboration with various Azerbaijani institutions, including the Ministry of Education of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, aims to [indoctrinate](#) students with a distorted/falsified narrative of history. By referring to the territory of the Republic of Armenia as 'Western Azerbaijan,' the Azerbaijani government is attempting to rewrite history and lay false claims to Armenian lands.

The anti-Armenian propaganda in Azerbaijan is a stark example of state-sponsored Armenophobia. Under the guise of education, Azerbaijani children are being indoctrinated with hatred and phobias towards Armenians from a young age. This event, backed by the Azerbaijani government and led by the country's most aggressive Armenophobe, President Ilham Aliyev, is a disturbing display of toxic and dangerous propaganda aimed at distorting history and instilling hatred towards Armenians.

Journalists are Dupped by All-Expenses-Paid Propaganda Trips to Azerbaijan Masquerading as Press Trips

[The Azerbaijan Laundromat](#) and [Caviar Diplomacy](#) are alive and thriving, bribing, corrupting, and deceiving otherwise intelligent journalists to co-sign the Aliyev regime's crimes against humanity, corruption, and human rights violations.

By inviting journalists and social media influencers to Azerbaijan and occupied Artsakh, the government of Azerbaijan seeks to present an image of peace, prosperity, and development at a time when its treatment of Armenians and Azerbaijani dissidents alike has garnered it bad press. These unsuspecting tourists have become another arm of the Azerbaijani propaganda machine, along with bribed international officials, corrupted politicians, and a hyperactive bot army.

Each trip follows the same format, which can be tracked through the press articles and Instagram stories the reporters share along the way. The most egregious part of the adventure, which is also one of its highlights, is a stop at a military base in Gubatly right along the Armenian border, where the travelers pose with all manner of weaponry and drive around in tanks. They are even given the chance to fire actual weapons at imagined enemies, most likely in the direction of the besieged Armenian population living just kilometers away. One particularly zealous tourist from Brazil [even donned Azerbaijani military](#)

[fatigues](#) as he fired weapons for his Instagram story—all this less than three years after thousands of soldiers were butchered in those very fields.

By exploiting the influence and reach of correspondents and social media personalities, the government seeks to shape international perceptions while covering up the Artsakh Genocide, its campaign of hate, violence, and hate against the Armenians, and imprisonment of Azerbaijani journalists who dare to report the truth about Aliyev's authoritarian regime.

Another tactic seen in the social media videos is how ever-present Azerbaijani journalists ambush participants at inopportune times, creating an environment of pressure to speak about something the travelers have very little knowledge about. As one of the travelers described in an Instagram story early in the June trip, 'We are being followed around all this week by local TV and media. They keep pulling all the foreigners for quick interviews, and it's online within the hour. I've managed to avoid so far!' They did eventually get him, and he gave the press a very neutral response, which seemed to disappoint the journalist with her expression. The traveler captioned the video, '[They want you to stick to a script...](#)' The number of cameras following the participants always gave the trip the look and feel of a reality show rather than a trip. [These photos](#) of Marais, shared by journalist Lindsey Snell, show her being interviewed by no less than six separate local outlets at once. During February's tour, they went to the site of the government-sponsored protest that closed the Berdzor (Lachin) Corridor to promote the false talking point [that there was no blockade against Armenians](#) who were subjected to starvation by the famine imposed on them by the Azerbaijani government, not unlike the mass starvation of the Ukrainians, during Holodomor by Stalin in 1932/33.

Some, like Marais, have learned that even if the Azerbaijani journalists do not get the ideal quote they want, that won't stop them from making it up. In the wake of the backlash her posts received, she issued a [statement about her trip to Azerbaijan](#), in which she made the following statements:

'There is a video clip released by an Azerbaijani media outlet going around with a quote that has been falsely attributed to me. This is something I never said. I was not aware prior to attending the trip there would be cameras following me the entire trip. I was not paid to attend this tour however all expenses were [sic] covered. While I understand this is a propaganda tour to the region, I agreed since this is a unique opportunity to network with other travelers and to visit a place that is impossible to visit independently.'

In light of the notoriety of Azerbaijan's 'caviar diplomacy' and the corruption of the [Azerbaijani Laundromat](#), the claim 'I wasn't paid' has become a standard defense among those who take such trips but do not feel they monetarily benefitted from them. However, accepting a free trip and accommodations and getting wined and dined along the way is still receiving a gift. Cash is not the only form of bribery.

While these free trips are still a relatively new phenomenon, the June trip was the seventh so far, and Azerbaijan is aggressively pursuing more participants. However, as their true nature is exposed, some travel groups are reconsidering the wisdom of partnering with Azerbaijan. Karabakh trips have been conducted in partnership with travel organizations such as ETIC (Extreme Traveler International Congress), TCC (Travelers' Century Club), Nomadmania, and MTP, which Azerbaijan relies upon to source its interested travelers. The May trip was made in partnership with Club 100, after which it received negative press in Sweden. Club 100 chairperson Reine Larshans, who had not attended, [told the Swedish outlet Blankspot](#), 'I expect the [organization's] board to distance itself from trips like this sponsored by a totalitarian regime which, to top it all off, are carried out in a war zone where the gunpowder smoke has hardly settled. All members can go wherever they want as private individuals, but if you make a trip in the club's name, you must be careful and not allow yourself to be used for propagandist purposes.'

The Azerbaijani government's attempts to organize all expense trips for journalists for propagandist purposes are loaded with ethical implications. By exploiting the influence and reach of media outlets, the government seeks to shape international perceptions while sidestepping its violations of international law. By going so far as to place the visiting influencers into the tanks and uniforms of the Azerbaijani forces, it symbolically enlists them in the cyber war against Armenians while using their platforms and words to conceal ongoing atrocities. By ignoring the complex historical and geopolitical realities on the ground and erasing the legitimate grievances and claims of the ethnic Armenian population in Artsakh, these professionals are not just accepting a free trip but doing active harm by deepening existing divisions and making the path to a peaceful resolution even more challenging. Ultimately, it is essential to advocate for transparency, accuracy, and respect from journalists, influencers, tourists, and media organizations, making them aware of the damage they are doing by accepting these free trips and instead fostering an environment where unbiased and informed perspectives lead the way.

Our Objective is to Raise International Awareness of the Aggressive Stance of Azerbaijan's Leadership that Ongoingly Reveals its Determination to Destroy the Armenian Statehood and Eradicate Armenians and their Culture from the Region and last remaining ancestral territory where the Armenian nation has millennia-old roots

Cultivated Hatred Towards Armenians

Hatred towards Armenians has been demonstrated in kindergartens and schools, infiltrating hate from a very early age. It has been expressed in literature, music, films of mass consumption, caricature, and technology. It is directly taught in classrooms by teachers who implement the state-sponsored Armenophobic curriculum from early elementary to higher grades. The policy of hatred served as a tool to amplify the nationalistic consciousness of the Azerbaijani people, galvanize the general aggression against the common 'enemy,' and consolidate the authoritarian-dictatorial regime in Azerbaijan.

Fabrication of the History

Azerbaijan flavored its aggression with newer narratives against Armenia - denying the existence of the Armenian statehood as well as of Armenians in the region as indigenous people and claimed both - the Republic of Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia as 'ancient Azerbaijani lands' launching a new project to prepare the return of Azerbaijani people to 'Western Azerbaijan.' Azerbaijan intensified its claims for an extraterritorial corridor through the territory of Armenia to connect Azerbaijan with the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic.

Threats of the Use of Force

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev consistently used the language of intimidation and continuously emphasized Azerbaijan's military superiority and Turkey's support in trying to spread fear amongst the Armenian people as well as to strengthen its bargaining power at various levels of relations to pressure the authorities of both Republic of Armenia and Artsakh to surrender before the Azerbaijani claims.

Ongoing Terror Policies and Practices

Azerbaijan terrorized and starved the Armenians of Artsakh to disrupt their livelihood and force them to leave their homeland, thus accomplishing the policy of ethnic cleansing. Terror practices included intimidation of civilians with weapons, throwing stones against the Armenian cars, using violence and threats against the farmers doing agricultural work, damaging agricultural equipment, stealing cattle, kidnapping, routinely firing in the air, shooting in the direction of civilians, houses and schools, poisoning of water, causing fire in the nature, etc.

Special Operations to Galvanize Ethnic Cleansing

Azerbaijan activated its aggressive policies towards Armenians starting in March 2022, following the war launched by Russia against Ukraine. It included a series of military operations along the line of contact in Artsakh, occupying new territories, killing people, and emptying Armenians their villages. In September, Azerbaijan furthered its aggression and attacked Armenia, occupying strategic heights and creating threats to the local population.

The culmination of ethnic cleansing attempts of Azerbaijan was the blockade of the only road connecting Artsakh to the outside world and the cutting of gas and electricity supplies, thus depriving the local Armenians of fundamental human rights to food, potable water, healthcare, freedom of movement, an adequate standard of living, education, and safety.

Inhumane and Degrading Treatment of Armenians Illegally Held Captive

Azerbaijan continues to hold as hostages the Armenian POWs and civilians captured within the context of the 44-day war of 2020 as well as during the aggression against Armenia on September 13, 2022. Azerbaijan subjected the captives to extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearance, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, and sham trials, at the same time continuing to glorify and reward the perpetrators. Particularly shocking was the evidence of torture and mutilation of the female servicepersons that demonstrated the hatred and violence of Azerbaijani people towards the Armenians.

Destruction of Armenian Cultural Heritage

Azerbaijan continues the erasure of Armenian cultural heritage in the region by destroying, damaging, and converting Armenian monasteries and churches into mosques for leisure use or claiming Albanian origin to Armenian Christian relics and edifices. At the same time, it was argued that their origins came from their 'ancestors' – Caucasus Albanians- and that they established a specialized working group at the state level to legalize acts of vandalism. The destruction of Armenian cultural heritage was also addressed and confirmed by satellite investigations of the 'Caucasus Heritage Watch' initiative.

Reaction of International Institutions

The International response to Azerbaijan's outrageous policies and acts has mainly been inadequate or ineffective, lacking due condemnation of the aggression and practical actions by relevant international actors and institutions. The ineffectiveness of the global response is proven by the mere fact of continuous emboldening of the criminal regime of Azerbaijan and the furtherance of its aggressive racial and expansionist policy, in complete disregard of the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and orders of the International Court of Justice. The absence of any sanctions against Azerbaijan, false equivalence between the perpetrator and the victim, and the 'bothsideism' statements without actual naming of the aggressor created a conducive environment for the furtherance of the policy of hatred towards Armenians and materialization of the aim of ethnic cleansing in Artsakh.

Artsakh Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, Armenian Cultural Genocide, and Ongoing Threats

Let us remind those immersed in Azerbaijan's terrorist and authoritarian regime that between 2020 and 2023, Azerbaijan, with help from Turkiye, Russia, and Israel, committed the [Artsakh Genocide](#) against the indigenous Armenians of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). They brought Syrian, Libyan, and Pakistani mercenaries to massacre Armenians. Each was paid \$2,000 monthly to do their bidding, with \$100 bonuses for every Armenian [beheaded alive](#). Human rights groups and independent investigations verified several execution videos filmed by Azeri forces.

Between September 27 and November 9, 2020, 5,000+ Armenians were massacred, and more than 90% of Artsakh was occupied.

Then, on December 12, 2022, the Lachin corridor, the only road linking Artsakh to Armenia, was blocked by Baku to use food as a weapon in its ethnic cleansing of Christian Armenians. In February 2023, the World Court ordered Azerbaijan on Wednesday to ensure free movement through the Lachin corridor. Armenia told judges at the World Court, formally known as the International Court of Justice, that neighboring Azerbaijan's blockade was designed to allow '[ethnic cleansing](#).'

An August 2023 [report](#) issued by the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court concluded that a genocide is underway against 120,000 Armenians living in Artsakh. This Genocide does not feature crematories or machete attacks. Instead, the blockade of food, oil, medicine, and other essential goods to a protected group should be considered Genocide under Article II (c) of the [Genocide Convention](#), which addresses 'Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.'

This left the 120,000 or so Artsakh Armenians inside as hostages in a conflict where geopolitical heavyweights such as Turkey, Russia, Israel, Iran, the United States, and the UK all have strategic interests.

The humanitarian situation worsened abruptly when Azerbaijan [stopped all traffic on July 11](#), citing bogus 'security reasons.'

In September 2023, Azerbaijan carried out another attack and finally ethnically cleansed Artsakh of its remaining 120,000 indigenous Armenians who had lived there for millennia. Azerbaijan began a fake 'anti-terror activity,' with soldiers and tanks attacking and capturing villages under the cover of artillery fire and missile strikes. As Armenians fled their towns, villages, and homes, the Azerbaijani military indiscriminately killed anyone in sight, including women, children, and the elderly. Hundreds more Armenians were massacred, and thousands wounded. Artsakh officials were illegally arrested without charge and taken to Azerbaijan as hostages, where they are still captives to this day.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention captured graphic execution videos as Armenians fled and experts warned of Genocide. 'Find them...cut them into pieces and give them to the dogs for dinner,' one pro-Azeri channel posted with photos of missing Armenians. One video showed the beheading of a civilian, according to researchers at investigative outlet Bellingcat. Armenians in Artsakh – known as Nagorno-Karabakh, the original Armenian name of the territory – reported that Azeri forces had entered the capital city Stepanakert and [executed civilians and soldiers](#).

According to the [Lemkin Institute](#), genocide experts believe that Azerbaijani policies, including the nine-month blockade and attacks on civilian population centers, amount to ethnic cleansing and Genocide. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention [stated that](#)

the blockade is 'genocidal in its intent, which is to eliminate the Armenian population of Artsakh.'

On September 30, 2023, Genocide Watched released a [statement](#) declaring that a genocide was underway in Artsakh.

'Two years after President Biden [formally recognized](#) the 1915 Armenian Genocide, the world is standing by as another Armenian genocide and forced deportation unfolds. [Genocide Watch](#), [The Lemkin Institute](#), [The Save Karabakh Coalition](#), [former ICC Prosecutor Ocampo](#), and [Armenian organizations warned](#) that Genocide has been underway in Nagorno-Karabakh since 2022. By January 1, 2024 the independent Armenian Republic of Artsakh will [cease to exist](#).'

'The forced deportation and Genocide in [Nagorno-Karabakh](#), known to Armenians as Artsakh, is the culmination of a [decades-long conflict](#). Artsakh is the homeland of 120,000 Armenians, who have [lived there since the Fifth Century](#),' said the statement.

In August 2023, the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court warned that Azerbaijan is preparing Genocide against ethnic Armenians in its [Nagorno-Karabakh region](#) and called for the UN Security Council to bring the matter before the international tribunal.

A report by Luis Moreno Ocampo said [Azerbaijan's blockade](#) of the only road leading from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh seriously impedes food, medical supplies, and other essentials to the region of about 120,000 people.

'There is a reasonable basis to believe that a genocide is being committed,' Ocampo's report said, noting that a UN convention defines Genocide as including 'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.'

'There are no crematories, and there are no machete attacks. Starvation is the invisible genocide weapon. Without immediate dramatic change, this group of Armenians will be destroyed in a few weeks,' the report said.

Azerbaijani propaganda dehumanizes Armenians. Azerbaijan schoolchildren's textbooks portray Armenians as evil, aggressive enemies. Tofiq Veliyev, head of the Department of History of Slavic Countries at Baku State University, claims that negative expressions are required to portray Armenians 'accurately.'

Azerbaijan is erasing Armenia's ancient history. Azerbaijani historians and [state-run media](#) falsely claim that Armenia and [Artsakh](#) are [historically Turkic lands](#). Azerbaijan systematically destroys Armenian Christian churches and [holy sites](#).

Background

Armenia is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. She has weathered wars, subjugations, independence, conquests, natural and man-made disasters, massacres and genocides, survival, and revival, and continues to stand today as a beacon of resilience and democracy at one of the most perilous crossroads in her millennia-old tumultuous history. During the Bronze Age, several states thriving in what became the Armenian Highlands, including the Haya-Azzi and Urartu, gave rise to the ethnogenesis of the Armenian nation. The capital city of Armenia, Yerevan, dates back to Erebuni, a royal capital founded by King Argishti I in 782 BC on the plain of Ararat. Armenia is depicted in the oldest known maps, including the 6th century BCE Imago Mundi Babylonian map, the 5th century BCE Herodotus map, and many others.

Under King Tigranes the Great (95-55 BCE), the Armenian Kingdom extended from the Mediterranean to the Black and the Caspian seas. Although the Republic of Armenia lays no claim, most of what is Azerbaijan now used to be a part of historic Armenia.

About TAAL

TAAL is a 501©3 non-profit advocacy organization founded in 2020 due to a significant increase in anti-Armenian racism, defamation, hate crimes, and Armenophobia. We monitor and confront bias, disinformation, propaganda, and slander of the Armenian people and culture at the media level, including social media, academics, intelligentsia, and public policy.

Related Scholarly and News Articles

Genocide Watch

[Genocide is Underway in Nagorno-Karabakh](#) (9.4.2023)

Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention

[Graphic Execution Videos Emerge as Armenians Flee and Experts Warn of Genocide](#) (9.22.2023)

Time Magazine

[What Cultural Genocide Looks Like for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh](#) (10.12.2023)

University Network for Human Rights

[Continuing Abuses Against Ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh](#) (12.12.2023)

Reuters

[Nagorno-Karabakh Exodus Amounts to a War Crime, Legal Experts Say](#) (9.29.2023)

Just Security

[Starvation as a Means of Genocide: Azerbaijan's Blockade of the Lachin Corridor Between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh](#) (8.11.2023)

International Court of Justice

[Order: The Republic of Azerbaijan shall, in accordance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) (11.17.2023)

CNN

['Reasonable' to believe genocide against Armenians being committed, former ICC chief prosecutor says](#) (8.20.2023)

International Law & International Legal Thought

[A Serious Humanitarian Crisis Leading to Genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh](#) (9.13.2023)

United States Congress Resolution

[Condemning Azerbaijan for Perpetrating an Ethnic Cleansing Campaign Against the Armenian Population of Nagorno-Karabakh](#) (6.27.2024)

Council on Foreign Relations

[Ethnic Cleansing Is Happening in Nagorno-Karabakh. How Can the World Respond?](#)
(10.4.2023)

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