

Conflict Weekly

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

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Ethnic Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh moving towards Kornidzor in the Syunik region of Armenia
(Image Source: Vasily Krestyaninov, AP Photo)

Nagorno-Karabakh and the End of the Republic of Artsakh



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



Armenia-Azerbaijan: Nagorno-Karabakh state announces dissolution

Abigail Miriam Fernandez

In the news

On 28 September, Nagorno-Karabakh separatist leader, Samvel Shakhramanyan, signed a decree stating that their self-declared Republic of Artsakh would “cease to exist” by 1 January 2024.

The same day, the former leader of Nagorno-Karabakh, Ruben Vardanyan, a businessman who led the separatist government from November 2022 to February 2023, was arrested by Azerbaijani authorities while trying to leave the region.

From 24 September, ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh began a mass exodus from Armenia following the military offensive launched by Azerbaijan, culminating in a ceasefire between Azerbaijan and the separatist forces. According to several news reports, over 70,000 ethnic Armenians out of an estimated population of 120,000 have left Nagorno-Karabakh and entered Armenia in the last week over fears of persecution and ethnic cleansing.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement urging the ethnic Armenians to remain in Nagorno-Karabakh: “We call on Armenian residents not to leave their homes and become part of Azerbaijan's multi-ethnic society.”

Issues at large

First, a background to the self-declared republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1923, the former Soviet Union established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, home to a majority of ethnic Armenians but located inside the internationally recognised borders of Azerbaijan. The region has operated for over 30 years autonomously with a de facto government called the Republic of Artsakh. In 1988, the region’s legislature passed a resolution to join Armenia, however, the region went on to officially declare independence. Since then, Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two major wars in 1988 and 2020 and several border skirmishes over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Second, Azerbaijan’s victory and Armenia’s loss over Nagorno-Karabakh. Since the ceasefire brokered in 2020, Azerbaijan has demanded that it should have full control of all of Nagorno-Karabakh. Over the last three years, Azerbaijan has regained substantial territory in the region. However, for Armenia, the situation is bitter once again. Armenia has lost substantial territory over the last three years and has been on the receiving end of Azerbaijan’s aggression. While the recent developments have highlighted Azerbaijan’s aggression over the region and its ability to acquire its demands, Armenia, faces challenges in its planning and regional support.

Third, the uncertain peace agreement. The hostilities on the battlefield may have come to an end, however, the hindrances in the peace negotiations continue to remain. In 2022, both sides began negotiations on a peace agreement that would formally delimit their mutual border, rebuild transport links, and restore diplomatic relations, however, these talks remain elusive. The most contentious issue up for debate would be the transportation links, particularly, the Zangezur Corridor, a road through Armenia connecting Azerbaijan to its

exclave of Naxcivan and the Lachin Corridor, which links Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh.

Fourth, the mass exodus from Nagorno-Karabakh. Mass displacements have been a common feature in this conflict. Although concerning, the present exodus is not the largest in terms of numbers. In 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that 90,000 people had gone to Armenia and 40,000 to Azerbaijan. Earlier in 1994, it was estimated that over 900,000 people fled to Azerbaijan and 300,000 to Armenia because of the war. The concern with the present exodus is Armenia's preparedness and ability to handle the influx of ethnic Armenian refugees.

In perspective

First, the likelihood of a humanitarian crisis. Given that Nagorno-Karabakh has already been witnessing a humanitarian crisis since December 2022, the displacement of people is likely to threaten the outbreak of a humanitarian crisis in the region. The crisis would take a toll on Armenia as it grapples with the influx of ethnic Armenian refugees. To address these concerns, Yerevan would require vital assistance from the international community.

Second, the complete breakdown of the 2020 ceasefire agreement. The agreement has been criticised for being lopsided in favour of Azerbaijan and for the omission of key issues that needed to be resolved. The agreement failed to discuss communication, transport links, and the issue of Armenian refugees and Azerbaijani Internally Displaced People (IDPs). These issues are likely to become more polarised with the recent developments. The two sides would likely take hard stances on these issues in an attempt to play their power.

Third, the geopolitical implications. Although Azerbaijan's reclaim of territory in Nagorno-Karabakh seems to be achieved with little effort, its actions reflect the geopolitical development that has taken place in the last three years in the South Caucasus. For instance, Azerbaijan's closeness to Turkey and Iran is likely to play out in the region further. Conversely, Armenia's relations with Russia are troubled, while the US, EU and other players remain neutral in taking sides. However, the power politics over the region should not be dismissed as it could manifest itself more evidently in the future.



Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

Rishika Yadav, Anu Maria Joseph, Femy Francis, Rohini Reenum, and Shamini Velayutham

East and Southeast Asia

China: Taiwan Affairs Office claims military drills in Taiwan Strait to combat “arrogance of separatists”

On 27 September, the Chinese spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office, Zhu Fenglian, described the drills conducted by China near the Taiwan Strait as a measure “to resolutely combat the arrogance of Taiwan independence separatist forces and their actions to seek independence.” Fenglian claimed that the actions of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) are aimed at defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China. The same day, the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence reported that it had detected and responded to 16 Chinese aircraft entering Taiwan’s air defence zone; 12 of them had crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. The Taiwanese Ministry of National Defence expressed that the drills were “getting out of hand.”

China: Refutes Philippine's claim of removing Chinese blocking nets

On 27 September, Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) Spokesperson, Gan Yu, refuted the claims by the Philippine Coast Guard that they had removed blocking nets set by the Chinese Coast Guard at Huangyan Island. The Philippine Coast Guard announced that they removed the “floating barrier” deployed by the CCG that hindered Philippine fishermen from entering the area for fishing. Gan Yu stated that a ship affiliated with the Philippines’ Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources illegally entered the water to stir trouble. CCG claimed to have taken necessary actions by the law to restrict Philippine vessels, including warning of route restrictions and setting blocking nets on the lagoon where the vessel has entered. However, according to CCG, the nets were subsequently removed and the management measures returned to normal. China claims sovereignty over the Huangyan Island and its surrounding waters. Gan commented that CCG will continue to conduct law enforcement actions in the Chinese waters.

North Korea: Ambassador warns of imminent nuclear war threat

On 27 September, North Korean ambassador to the UN, Kim Song, warned that the Korean Peninsula has reached a “hair-trigger situation with imminent danger of nuclear war breakout.” He was delivering a speech at the 78th UN General Assembly. He criticised recent US-South Korea military exercises and efforts to strengthen trilateral ties with Japan, linking it to an “Asian version of NATO.” Kim accused the US and its allies of planning a “preemptive nuclear strike” against North Korea. Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres cautioned against a looming global nuclear arms race. He urged a renewed effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons. He stated: “Nuclear sabres are again being rattled. This is madness. We must reverse course.”

Japan: Supreme Court debates over changing gender status requirements

On 27 September, the Grand Bench of the Supreme Court of Japan considered the case debating transgender individuals being compelled to undergo sterilisation surgery to legally change their gender. Currently, the law mandates surgery and a permanent loss of reproductive function to change their gender in the family registry. Legal experts believe that if the court deems the surgery requirement unconstitutional, it would amend the law on par

with international standards. The plaintiff, a transgender woman, who challenged the existing law in changing the gender, argues that these requirements violate her constitutional rights. A decision is expected by the end of 2023. Eliminating such requirements has gained traction globally, with over 40 countries taking steps to remove them.

Myanmar: TNLA and PDF attack on army base

On 28 September, Myanmar Now reported that the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and allied forces attacked an army base in the Mandalay region on 26 September. Additionally, the People's Defence Force (PDF) joined TNLA in the attack on the village of Yae Htwet Gyi in the Mogok Township of Mandalay region. A commander of Mogok PDF Battalion 1223, La Yaung stated: "We knew that a force of about 50 enemy soldiers had arrived in the area, so our troops went there to fight them. We saw some enemy bodies and we were able to seize some weapons." The casualties are unclear. Since September, PDF along with TNLA had been carrying out operation "Moe Lone Hmine" in the Mandalay region in an attempt to take over junta base camps. Meanwhile, the junta forces carried out shelling and bombing of the TNLA bases in the Muse and Kutkai townships in the state of Shan.

South Asia

Afghanistan: Pakistani police continues to detain Afghan refugees

On 24 September, the Taliban's acting consul general in Karachi, Abdul Jabar Takhari, claimed that hundreds of Afghan refugees have been detained over the past 15 days by the Pakistani police. He stated: "The process of detaining Afghans has been continuing by Pakistan's police. More than 900 Afghan refugees have been so far detained. However, 200 of them were released by the efforts of the consulates." He further requested the Pakistani government to halt detentions of registered Afghan refugees. In response, the caretaker government of Pakistan through a letter ordered authorities in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to not disturb Afghan refugees. The letter stated that "harassing, arresting and detaining" registered Afghan refugees would "adversely" impact Pakistan's "goodwill earned over the past forty-three years" with Afghanistan. Meanwhile, on 26 September, Wion reported that the caretaker government of Pakistan decided to repatriate over 1.1 million Afghans who have been living in Pakistan illegally. The repatriation will be carried out in three phases according to the status of the Afghans residing in the Pakistani territory.

Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa

Iran: IRGC successfully puts into orbit its third imaging satellite 'Nour'

On 27 September, Al Jazeera reported that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) had successfully put a third satellite into low orbit at a distance of 450 kilometres (280 miles) from the surface of the Earth. It is the third version of the imaging satellite, Nour, meaning 'light' in Persian. It is a military reconnaissance satellite. It was put into orbit using a Qased, a three-staged carrier developed by the IRGC. The first version of the Nour was successfully launched into orbit 425 kilometres (265 miles) above the Earth in April 2020. Using the mixed-fuel carrier, the second version achieved a low orbit of 500 kilometres (310 miles) in early 2022. This development comes in the wake of mounting criticism from the West on Iran's satellite programme which they argue may violate a United Nations Security Council resolution relating to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran, however, has vowed to continue with the launches and has maintained that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.



Israel-Palestine: Increasing tensions amid restrictions and violence

On 22 September, Al Jazeera reported that the Israeli military launched airstrikes on the blockaded Gaza Strip, where protesters had been tussling with Israeli troops along the border for days. The military claimed that although a tank struck one post from which rounds were fired at forces displacing demonstrators, drone attacks targeted two military outposts that belonged to the Hamas movement, which rules the Gaza Strip. Israeli troops attacked with tear gas and live fire as protesters along the Gaza separation fence threw rocks and homemade explosive devices. Protests erupted after Israel closed the Beit Hanouna, also known as Erez, border with Gaza, the previous week in advance of the Rosh Hashanah Jewish holiday, preventing thousands of workers from their jobs in Israel and the West Bank.

Europe and the Americas

Europe: UNHCR reports over 2,500 deaths in the Mediterranean in 2023

On 28 September, the UNHCR reported that more than 2,500 migrants have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean while attempting to reach Europe in 2023. According to the report, there is a significant increase compared to the same period last year when 1,680 migrants were reported dead or missing. The UNHCR emphasised the dire risks migrants and refugees face throughout their journeys. Director of the UNHCR New York office, Ruven Menikdiwela, told the Security Council that migrants and refugees "risk death and gross human rights violations at every step." According to the UNHCR, around 186,000 migrants reached Europe through the Mediterranean Sea between January and 24 September of this year. Nearly 130,000 of them have arrived in Italy, representing an 83 per cent rise compared to the previous year. Others made their way to Greece, Spain, Cyprus, and Malta. In terms of origin, 102,000 migrants came from Tunisia, while another 45,000 came from Libya.

Germany: Ban on Artgemeinschaft for spreading Nazi ideology

On 27 September, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community banned the far-right group, Artgemeinschaft, for disseminating Nazi ideology to children and young people. Minister of Interior Nancy Faeser stated: "This is a further blow against right-wing extremism and against the intellectual agitators who still spread Nazi ideologies today." According to the ministry, the group used Nazi-era literature and organised events to spread its ideology. According to the Bavarian Office for the Protection of the Constitution's latest annual report, the Artgemeinschaft believes in the "superiority of a Nordic-Germanic race," which is akin to the "white supremacy" philosophy in the US. To avoid them from mixing with other "species of man," the group enforces rules on its followers similar to the "Aryan" ideas. It required devotion to the "moral law" of the "ancestors," which necessitated a "like-minded choice of spouses" as a "guarantee of like-minded children." Police have conducted raids across 12 German states linked to the group. This move follows the recent outlawing of the neo-Nazi group, Hammerskins. Faeser emphasised the diverse nature of right-wing extremism and the ongoing challenge it poses. An estimated 38,800 individuals are active in the country's right-wing extremist groups.

Portugal: Young Portuguese sue European countries over climate change inaction

On 27 September, six young Portuguese individuals, aged between 11 and 24, filed a case with the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). They allege that 32 countries, including 27 EU member states along with Russia, Turkey, Switzerland, Norway and the UK have failed to adequately limit greenhouse gas emissions. Their complaint is based on the impact of wildfires in Portugal in 2017. The claimants argue that the inaction violates their rights under the ECHR and seek to compel national courts to reduce carbon emissions. This

case highlights the growing use of legal avenues by young activists to hold governments accountable for climate change inaction.

Brazil: Landmark ruling boosts Indigenous rights

On 22 September, Brazil's Supreme Court rejected the appeal restricting the indigenous people's right to reservations on their ancestral lands. Six among the 11 judges ruled in favour of the Xokleng indigenous community in restoring their land from which they were evicted in 2009. The Xokleng indigenous group, 2,300 in population, lived in the state of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil. They were victims of land clearances during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, in 1996, they were granted rights to Ibirama La-Klãnõ - 15,000-hectares (37,000-acre) of land. In 2009, they were evicted by Santa Catarina's Environmental Institute from lands which form part of a nature reserve. The community appealed against the eviction; in 2013, they were refused the claim to the land under the "marco temporal." According to "marco temporal," the community had to prove that they lived on the land when the Brazilian constitution was signed in 1988. The latest ruling is seen as a boost to indigenous rights that came under attack during the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro.

Canada: India open to investigate "specific" information on Sikh separatist's death

On 27 September, the Indian government told Canada that it is open to investigating "specific" or "relevant" information that Canada claims on the death of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The development comes after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed to have received credible information linking Indian agents to the killing; New Delhi had denied the allegations. During the Council on Foreign Relations event in New York, Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar stated: "One, we told the Canadians that this is not the government of India's policy. Two, we told the Canadians that look, if you have something specific, if you have something relevant, you know, let us know – we are open to looking at it." In the previous week, India suspended new visas for Canadians and called on Canada to reduce its diplomatic presence in the country over what it described force in its security environment.

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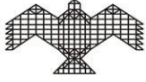
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About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of
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The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI researches are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

About Conflict Weekly



The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.

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