

ARMENIA VS AZERBAIJAN: THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT



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Over the last one week, military action claims 200 lives in the Nagorno-Karabakh, a region disputed b/w Armenia and Azerbaijan, the two countries in the [South Caucasus](#) region. Armenia, a **Christian majority** state is in battle with the **Muslim majority** Azerbaijan.



The current clashes broke out on September 27, where each side blames the other for firing the first shot. Both countries declared *Martial law*. The approximate total disputed area is 4400 Km². More than 95% of the population is ethnically Armenian in Nagorno-Karabakh.

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The origin of the conflict is hidden in the [Kremlin's](#) decision to include the ethnic Armenian majority region within the Soviet Azerbaijan. During the decline of Soviet union in 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh legislature passed a resolution to join Armenia. This was done despite the region's geography within Azerbaijan. In 1991, the autonomous region officially declared independence, which was not accepted by either of the parties. As a result war erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region, leaving roughly 30 ,000 casualties and hundreds of thousands of refugees.



By 1993, Armenia controlled Nagorno-Karabakh and occupied **one-fifth** of the surrounding territory. In 1994, Russia brokered a cease-fire which has remained in place. However, many small scale **skirmishes** has occurred since then. The possibility of a full-fledged war has been frozen for more than a decade, but in April 2016, violence again erupted .

A group named [Minsk group](#), co-chaired by the USA, Russia, and France was created in 1994 to address the dispute, but have failed to produce a permanent solution to the conflict. The current fighting is the most serious since the cease-fire in 1994. The international context surrounding the conflict has also shifted. This complicates the efforts to peacefully address the underlying dispute.

Major Players:

1. *Turkey*

Turkey sided with Azerbaijan in the initial conflict and the two countries share close **ethnic and cultural ties**.

Over the past years, Turkey has sold Azerbaijan a wide range of weapons, including UAVs, missiles and electronic warfare equipment.

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The Turkish president **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** declared that Turkey would remain by the side of its brother Azerbaijan and demanded that Armenia must immediately return the occupied territory. Some reports also suggest that Turkey has reportedly dispatched Syrian Jihadis to Azerbaijan, though [Ankara](#) denied this.

2. Russia

Turkey’s intervention in Nagorno-Karabakh is it’s most explicit challenge to Russian influence in the former Soviet Union. The **Turkish-Russian rivalry** has already engulfed Syria and Libya. Russia has a military base in Armenia and considers it to be a strategic partner.



3. France

French president **Emmanuel Macron** has voiced solidarity with Armenia and blamed Azerbaijan for starting the conflict. **Macron** claimed “It was determined that the attacks on Sunday came from Azerbaijan.”

4. Pakistan

In a big development, Armenian deputy foreign minister **Avet Adonts** said that it can’t exclude the possibility of Pakistani fighters on the ground fight, however Islamabad termed this as baseless. Pakistan supports Azerbaijan’s position on Nagorno-Karabakh since 1988, when the conflict started. Even Pakistan is the only country in the world that **doesn’t recognize Armenia** as a state, whereas Azerbaijan itself recognizes the existence of Armenia. This is mainly due to Azerbaijan’s support to Pakistan for the **Kashmir issue**.

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Concerns:

Since the Azerbaijan president **Ikhlam Aliyev** has stated directly that for the fighting to stop, the Armenian forces must unconditionally leave Nagorno-Karabakh, there’s high possibility that this may lead to a military conflict between the various parties involved. The instability could also disrupt **oil and gas exports** from the region since Azerbaijan is a significant oil and gas exporter to the Europe and Central Asia.

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