



Statement on the Genocidal State of Azerbaijan Hosting COP29

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention opposes the decision by the United Nations to name Azerbaijan as host of COP29, the annual UN climate change summit, given Azerbaijan’s genocidal strategies in Nagorno-Karabakh, the [genocidal Armenophobic ideology](#) of its leader, President Ilham Aliyev, and the extensive corruption and human rights abuses at home. By granting Azerbaijan the honor of hosting this important event, the UN is endorsing genocidal speech, genocidal policies, and dictatorship, which benefits neither the climate nor the people of the world. The choice of Azerbaijan as COP host legitimizes, rationalizes, and normalizes genocide in world politics. Furthermore, it threatens the credibility of the principles established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In the interests of genocide prevention, human rights, and the legitimacy of the United Nations as a body representing the people of the world, the United Nations must rescind Azerbaijan’s recognition as host of COP29 and either find another host country or hold this year’s meeting in Bonn, Germany, COP’s default meeting place.

Azerbaijan was chosen to host COP29 through an established UN mechanism in December 2023, less than three months after it had overseen the genocide through “ethnic cleansing” of Armenians from the region of Nagorno-Karabakh (“Artsakh” to Armenians) and following a ten-month-long [genocidal blockade](#) of the territory. The exodus from Artsakh — which ended an almost 4,000-year-old continuous presence by one of the oldest Christian communities in the world — was one of the [most effective genocides](#) of recent times. To celebrate Azerbaijan’s “victory” against the Armenians of Artsakh, President Aliyev even lit a bonfire in the Artsakh capital of Stepanakert for what he [called](#) a “final cleaning” on the occasion of Nowruz. President Aliyev viewed the choice of Azerbaijan as COP29 host to be an endorsement of his genocidal policies towards Armenians (among other things). Upon hearing the news, he [stated](#): “We consider it as a sign of respect from the international community to Azerbaijan and what we are doing...”

It cannot be forgotten that during the 2020 war between Azerbaijan and Artsakh, Azerbaijani soldiers were guilty of engaging in extreme and horrific [atrocities](#) against disarmed Armenian soldiers as well as Armenian civilians, including elderly and disabled people. These documented atrocities include

beheadings, mutilations of Armenians while still alive, torture, and ritual humiliations of Armenians solely because of their identity, as evidenced by the use of flags and songs. When Azerbaijan started an aggressive war against Armenia in 2022, it engaged in similar atrocities, including the use of [sexualized violence](#) against Armenian women and the [massacre](#) of disarmed Armenian soldiers. There has been no accountability for these crimes. They are reminiscent of the genocidal atrocities committed against Armenians by Turkish and Azeri troops, gendarmes, soldiers, and civilians from 1915-1923 and help explain why it was so easy for Azerbaijan to terrorize the Armenians of Artsakh into flight with its invasion of the territory on September 19, 2023.

Apart from blockading the estimated 120,000 Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh for ten months, invading the territory, and forcing the flight of almost the totality of that population, Azerbaijan also has been methodically [destroying](#) Armenian cultural heritage in Artsakh. If nothing is done about this, Artsakh will become like Nakhchivan, the Azerbaijani exclave that at one time had a significant Armenian population but now has none, where Azerbaijan has already [destroyed](#) an estimated 98 percent of Armenian cultural heritage, including churches, cemeteries, and monasteries.

Beyond these crimes, Azerbaijan continues to illegally detain Armenian POWs, civilians, and democratically-elected members of the Artsakh government, including Ruben Vardanyan, the noted international humanitarian who co-founded the [Aurora Humanitarian Initiative](#). There is strong evidence of the repeated use of [torture](#) against Armenian hostages.

Azerbaijan routinely flouts international law by ignoring treaties and judgements by international courts. The 2022 war against Armenia, the ten-month blockade of Artsakh, and the invasion of Artsakh on September 19, were all violations of the [Tripartite Ceasefire Statement](#) agreed to by Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia in November 2020, which ended the 2020 war. Moreover, Azerbaijan has ignored and violated provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice on [7 December 2021](#), [22 February 2023](#), [6 July 2023](#), and [17 November 2023](#).

It also bears mentioning that Azerbaijan has a [dismal human rights record](#) at home that is only getting worse. From 2023 to 2024, Azerbaijan's Freedom Record [declined](#) by 2 points, from 9 to 7 (out of 100), making it one of the most authoritarian governments in the world. Furthermore, actions of Azerbaijan and the Aliyev regime in regard to land use and preserving the natural climate stand in direct opposition to the core principles at the heart of the COP29 conference. Not only is Azerbaijan a petrostate that relies on fossil fuel exports, but also the state energy and natural resource industries in Azerbaijan are riddled with [corruption](#), placing the country in direct opposition to one of COP29's stated goals, which is the completion of the first [enhanced transparency framework](#).

Azeri officials have [claimed](#) they want "to make COP29 a COP of peace". The Lemkin Institute finds such assertions to be absurd, embarrassing, and deeply cynical, given what we all know about the Aliyev regime. If Azerbaijan truly wants to demonstrate its commitment to peacebuilding, it should start by facilitating the immediate and unconditional release of its political prisoners. If this small step cannot be taken, their true intentions are clear. At a time when the world population has lost faith in international institutions, the United Nations needs to get its head out of the sand and end its diplomatic sponsorship of the genocidal state of Azerbaijan, starting with COP29.