

REPORT - NOVEMBER 11, 2024

COP29
Baku
Azerbaijan

**AS COP29 UNFOLDS, ARMENIAN
HOSTAGES REMAIN IMPRISONED:
CFTJ URGES WORLD LEADERS TO
DEMAND THEIR RELEASE**

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As COP29 Unfolds, Armenian Hostages Remain Imprisoned: CFTJ Urges World Leaders to Demand Their Release

As world leaders convene in Azerbaijan for the UN’s COP29 conference to address the reduction of harmful carbon emissions and the challenges posed by climate change, twenty-three Armenian hostages and political prisoners remain detained in Baku’s prisons without due process. Among them are five Armenian soldiers captured during the 2020 war, eight members of Nagorno-Karabakh’s leadership who were unlawfully arrested in September 2023, and several civilians who were detained during Azerbaijan’s nine-month blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh.

On November 11, 2024, Freedom House released a “New Report: Azerbaijani Regime Ethnically Cleansed Nagorno-Karabakh According to International Fact-Finding Mission.” See [Freedom House New Report](#), [Full Report](#).

On October 3, 2024, Sixty (60) members of the US Senate signed a letter urging Secretary of State Antony Blinken to “press for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, hostages, and POWs, including ethnic Armenians, to enable a more conducive environment for successful diplomacy at COP29.”¹ On October 4, 2024, Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, rejected what he called a “disgusting” letter from U.S. lawmakers who condemned Azerbaijan’s human rights record and urged to free political prisoners, hostages, and POWs before hosting the COP29 climate conference.²

On October 21, 2024, the EU Parliament issued a Motion for a Resolution on the situation in Azerbaijan, the violation of human rights and international law and relations with Armenia, and called for “the release of the remaining 23 Armenian prisoners of war.” The Parliament further stated, “The continued human rights abuses in Azerbaijan are incompatible with hosting COP29.”³ On October 24, 2024, MEPs denounced violations of human rights and international law by Azerbaijan and called for “the release of the 23 Armenian prisoners of war detained following Azerbaijan’s retaking of the Nagorno-Karabakh region last year.”⁴

The fate of the Armenian hostages in Azerbaijan remains uncertain. They endure harsh and inhumane treatment, including torture, both during their capture and transfer, as well as while being held in detention facilities.^{5 6}

¹ [Pallone - Markey COP29 Letter - FINAL.pdf \(house.gov\)](#)

² [Azerbaijan rejects 'disgusting' US human rights criticism before COP29 | Reuters](#)

³ [MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the situation in Azerbaijan, violation of human rights and international law and relations with Armenia | B10-0129/2024 | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [MEPs denounce violations of human rights and international law by Azerbaijan | News | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ Human Rights Watch, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/armenia>

⁶ Freedom House Report, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2024/why-are-there-no-armenians-nagorno-karabakh>

The following is a list of identified Armenian hostages and prisoners who are being held illegally in Azerbaijan. Their future is unknown and remains bleak.

The Center for Truth and Justice once again appeals to international leaders to urge Azerbaijan the release of these prisoners.

Eight Political Leaders Taken Hostage in September of 2023

Azerbaijan has issued warrants for the arrest of 300 former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh. Eight (8) of them were illegally detained, publicly humiliated in front of cameras, and subsequently transferred to prisons in Baku. They remain in custody without due process and are denied direct contact with their families or access to international organizations.



Arkadi Ghukasyan, born on June 22, 1957, served as the second President of Nagorno-Karabakh from 1997 to 2007. On October 3, 2023, he was unlawfully arrested in Nagorno-Karabakh and transferred to Baku, where he has been held in pretrial detention. Ghukasyan has been denied the right to choose his own attorney and is prohibited from receiving visits from friends or family. His future remains uncertain as he continues to be imprisoned.



Bako Sahakyan was born August 30, 1960, served as the third President of Nagorno-Karabakh, and is its longest-serving leader, holding office from 2007 to 2017 and then being re-elected for an additional three-year term. On October 3, 2023, he was unlawfully arrested in Nagorno-Karabakh and taken to Baku, where he has been held in pretrial detention since. He has been denied access to a lawyer of his choice and is not allowed visits from friends or family. His future in detention remains uncertain.



Arayik Harutyunyan, born on December 14, 1973, served as the fourth President of Nagorno-Karabakh. On October 3, 2023, he was detained in Nagorno-Karabakh and transferred to Baku, where he has remained in pretrial detention. Since his arrest, he has been denied access to an attorney of his choice and has not been permitted visits from friends or family. His future remains uncertain.



Davit Ishkhanyan, born December 27, 1968, served as the Speaker of the National Assembly of Nagorno-Karabakh from August to October 2023, when he was detained by Azerbaijani military forces. Since his arrest, he has been held in pretrial detention, without access to a lawyer of his choice and permission for visits from friends or family. His future remains uncertain.



Ruben Vardanyan Ruben, born May 25, 1968, served as State Minister in Nagorno-Karabakh from November 2022 to February 2023. On September 29, 2023, he was detained by Azerbaijan's State Security Service and taken to Baku to face criminal charges. He remains in pretrial detention, with an uncertain and unclear future in Azerbaijani custody.



Davit Babayan, born on April 5, 1973, is the former Foreign Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh and served as an advisor to the President. He surrendered to Azerbaijani authorities on September 29, 2023, and has since been detained in Azerbaijan without due process. His future remains uncertain.



Levon Mnatsakanyan, born on September 14, 1955, is the former Defense Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh. While en route to Armenia, he was unlawfully detained by Azerbaijan's State Security Service. A court in Baku subsequently ordered his confinement in a high-security isolation cell. Mnatsakanyan is the only Armenian political prisoner whose whereabouts remain unknown, as no video footage of him has been released since his arrest. His condition is unknown.



Davit Manukyan, born on September 14, 1965, served as the Deputy Commander of the Defense Army of Nagorno-Karabakh. On September 29, 2023, he was detained without legal justification by the Azerbaijani State Security Service while en route to Armenia.

On October 1, 2024, Azerbaijan's prosecutor general brought new false charges against these political hostages, accusing them of vandalizing historic and cultural monuments.

Armenian Prisoners of War Remain Detained in Baku

During the 2020 conflict, when Azerbaijan launched an attack on the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijani forces captured over 300 Armenian prisoners of war. While the war has ended and both countries are engaged in peace talks, eighty (80) Armenian POWs remain in Azerbaijani custody. Despite clear evidence, including testimony from repatriated POWs, the Azerbaijani government denies holding these individuals.

Below is a list of Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) who have been confirmed alive and are currently being held in Azerbaijani prisons. These individuals have been wrongfully accused of fabricated charges, and many have been tried and convicted in sham trials. Throughout this process, they have been denied their basic legal rights, including access to an attorney of their choice, an interpreter, and the opportunity to properly defend themselves. On August 21, 2023, the International Court of Justice⁷ noted that

"The fact that ethnic Armenians are targeted by Azerbaijan's judicial system has been confirmed ... through sham trials based on fabricated charges..."

Many of these prisoners have been sentenced to long prison terms without the possibility of appeal, while others remain in indefinite detention with no clarity about their future. They are barred from receiving visits from friends or family, and their conditions remain largely unknown as they endure suffering in the dark and oppressive environment of Azerbaijani prisons. The future of these individuals remains uncertain and grim.

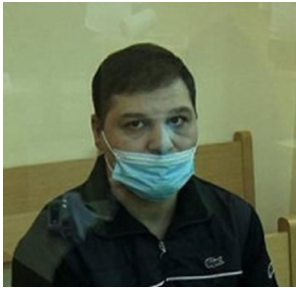


Alyosha Khosrovyan (DOB: 3/28/1967), was taken as a POW on 10/3/2020. On August 2, 2021, he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to 20 years of prison.

⁷ <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203925>



Lyudvig Mkrtchyan, born on December 5, 1969, was captured as a prisoner of war on October 20, 2020. On August 2, 2021, he was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison in Azerbaijan on false charges of "torture and cruel treatment" against Azerbaijanis during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War.



Vicken Euljekjian, born on December 7, 1979, was captured as a prisoner of war on November 10, 2020. On June 14, 2021, he was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison, charged as a mercenary in a military conflict. Originally from Lebanon, Vicken had relocated to Nagorno-Karabakh, where he had no history of military involvement. Since his imprisonment, he has reportedly endured torture and has been denied necessary medical care. On June 3, 2021, he was hospitalized. For more details, see CFTJ's special report on his case: [Special Complaint Filed](#).



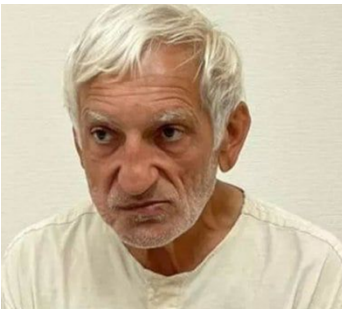
Davit Davtyan, born on February 5, 1993, was captured as a prisoner of war on November 11, 2020. On July 28, 2021, he was convicted in Azerbaijan and sentenced to 15 years in prison.



Gevorg Sujyan, born on January 21, 1989, was illegally detained on November 11, 2020. On July 28, 2021, he was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison in Azerbaijan.



Vagif Khachatryan (born October 28, 1955) was unlawfully arrested on July 29, 2023, while traveling to Armenia in an ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) van to seek urgent medical treatment. On November 27, 2023, an Azerbaijani military court sentenced him to 15 years in prison for charges of genocide. On January 15, 2024, the Azerbaijani Court of Appeal rejected his appeal. His medical condition remains unknown.



Rashid Beglaryan (DOB: 11/2/1962) was unlawfully arrested on 8/1/2023. He was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison. His current condition is unknown.



Madat Babayan (DOB: 9/15/1952) was unlawfully arrested on 9/19/2023. No additional information is available regarding his condition in prison in Azerbaijan.



Levon Balayan, born in 1978, was last seen in September of 2023 in Nagorno-Karabakh when he was kidnapped and taken prisoner in Azerbaijan. No additional information is available regarding his condition.



Vasili Beglaryan, born in 1993, was captured as a prisoner of war in September 2023 in Nagorno-Karabakh. He was detained and transferred to Azerbaijan. No further information is available regarding his condition.



Davit Allahverdyan, born in 1988, was captured as a prisoner of war in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023. No further details about his condition are currently available.



Garik Martirosyan, born in 1972, was captured as a prisoner of war during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in September 2023. No additional information about his current condition has been released.



Melikset Pashayan, born in 1971, was captured as a prisoner of war during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in September 2023. There are no additional details available about his condition while in custody.



Gurgen Stepanyan, born in 1987, was captured as a prisoner of war during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in September 2023. There are no additional details available regarding his status or condition while in custody.



Erik Ghazaryan was captured as a prisoner of war in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023. No further information is available regarding his condition while in custody in Azerbaijan.

Call for the Release of Armenian Prisoners of War and Hostages

The Center for Truth and Justice urgently appeals to the global community, including world leaders and international institutions, to demand the immediate release of Armenian prisoners of war and hostages currently detained by Azerbaijan. The continued captivity of these individuals constitutes a grave violation of international human rights law, and their prolonged suffering cannot be allowed to persist. Azerbaijan cannot be allowed to act with impunity. COP29 is a unique opportunity for the international community to demand that Azerbaijan release these unlawfully held prisoners.