



September 21, 2023

**NOTICE RE: AMARAS MONASTERY, ARTSAKH / NAGORNO-KARABAKH**

Dear Sir or Madam,

The purpose of this letter is to put you on notice of the immediate threat to immovable cultural property in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), an ethnic Armenian *de facto* state. We urge you to raise your voice for a global outcry against the cultural ethnic cleansing that has ensued in relation to many Armenian monasteries. Armenian history must not be wiped out from the region. We trust we can count on you during these difficult times to take appropriate measures in the protection of cultural heritage.

The Amaras Monastery holds tremendous cultural, historical, and religious value for a plethora of reasons. This ancient monastery was built in the fourth century A.D. by Saint Gregory the Illuminator, who is responsible for establishing Christianity as the official religion in Armenia. Mesrop Mashtots—the creator of the Armenian alphabet in the fifth century—founded the first school within the monastery that would utilize the new and enduring alphabet.



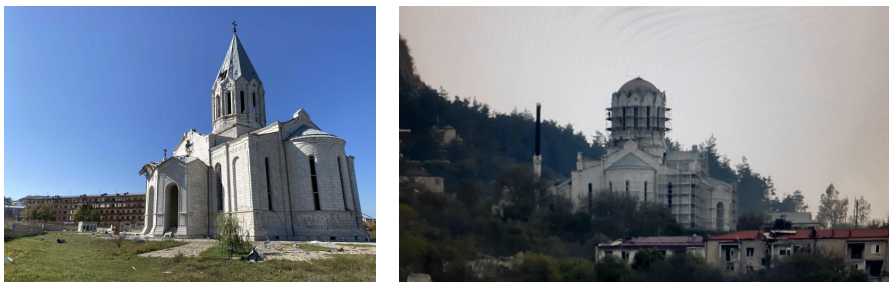
*Amaras Monastery, Artsakh/ Nagorno-Karabakh, 4<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.*

**Now, despite its immense significance, the Amaras Monastery is in imminent danger of perishing at the hands of a dictatorship.** On September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan initiated a full- scale military attack on Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). The Azerbaijani armed forces took control of the ancient monastery.

If no immediate action is taken, then the Amaras Monastery will undoubtedly suffer the same fate as numerous other Armenian churches in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, including the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral and the Saint John the Baptist Church in Shushi (another city in the Nagorno-Karabakh region). The Ghazanchetsots Cathedral is a landmark in Shushi of Armenian cultural and religious identity. It was intentionally bombed twice on 8 October 2020 by Azerbaijani armed forces during the 44-day War of 2020. After extensive damage to the cathedral, Shushi then fell to Azerbaijan, and recent images have revealed Azerbaijan's reconstruction (e.g., removal of the Christian cross on the highest dome) to use these sacred sites as a weapon to fabricate history. The damage following the attacks is seen in the images below by PanArmenian.net<sup>1</sup>, Human Rights Watch and NKR InfoCenter<sup>2</sup> along with a recent image showing the process of erasing physical Armenian origins from the church.<sup>3</sup>



These invaluable cultural sites of Armenian heritage were maimed and destroyed by Azerbaijani armed forces during and after the 44-day War of 2020. Such cultural heritage sites are undergoing deliberate modifications to alter their unique Armenian detail in Azerbaijan's campaign to fabricate history.



It is urgently imperative that your organization takes a stand today on this critical issue and ensures that any and all measures be taken to preserve the Amaras Monastery, both with respect to the prevention of any physical destruction as well as the modification of Armenian architectural elements by the Aliyev regime.

Please also be advised that there is a risk that movable cultural objects from the region may be looted and sold.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/286261/Azerbaijan\\_strikes\\_Ghazanchetsots\\_Cathedral\\_in\\_Shushi\\_a\\_Karabakh\\_landmark](https://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/286261/Azerbaijan_strikes_Ghazanchetsots_Cathedral_in_Shushi_a_Karabakh_landmark)

<sup>2</sup><https://web.archive.org/web/20201216083124/https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/16/azerbaijan-attack-church-possible-war-crime#>

<sup>3</sup><https://en.armradio.am/2021/05/03/azerbaijan-distorting-ghazanchetsots-cathedral-under-the-guise-of-restoration-artsakh-ombudsman/>

The unfortunate continued complicity of organizations with respect to Armenian cultural heritage has resulted in a wide range of destruction of priceless treasures and sites, including **Azerbaijan's complete erasure of thousands of medieval khachkars (Armenian tombstones) in Nakhichevan.**

Finally, we request that you act as a multiplier in magnifying Armenia's call for help in the global court of public opinion.

**It is time to right a wrong. Tomorrow will be too late.**

Respectfully,



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