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“We wake up to discover bullets scattered everywhere, including our rooftops.”

- Syunik border village resident

REPORT

AZERBAIJAN CONTINUES MILITARY AGGRESSION ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION IN ARMENIA

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Executive Summary

On March 20, 2025, Azerbaijan began a barrage of gunfire at night targeting the civilian population of Armenians in Syunik, located in southeastern Armenia on the border with Azerbaijan, approximately 170 kilometers from the capital Yerevan. Following first-hand accounts of the shootings into the populated villages, this article reports directly on the escalation of the dangerous situation in the southeastern region of Armenia, specifically in the villages of [Khoznavar](#)¹ and [Khnutsakh](#)². These repeated cross-border attacks are damaging homes and vital infrastructure, and having a psychological impact on residents, including children, making everyday life unbearable. The Azerbaijani military is occupying parts of sovereign Armenia, creating conditions so that the villagers are being forced to leave and seek refuge elsewhere.

Evidence

The Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ) has collected audiovisual recordings, photographic evidence, and first-hand testimonies from the Syunik region, between March 29 and April 30, 2025, from the residents in Khoznavar and Khnutsakh villages. The evidence shows a systematic pattern of targeting Armenians by the Azerbaijani military forces. CFTJ's methodology of documenting war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other acts of violence against Armenians by Azerbaijan can be found [here](#).³

Background

Following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war and the transfer of the Lachin district to Azerbaijani control, Azerbaijani military forces established positions in the highlands overlooking the villages of Khoznavar and Khnutsakh in the Syunik district of Armenia. From these strategic positions, Azerbaijani troops began to open fire on the civilian populations of these villages. The villagers are forced to live under dangerous conditions as they are fired upon, which has made daily life unsustainable, including farming, agriculture, and access to grazing lands for their livestock, which is the primary source of livelihood.

Azerbaijan's officials, led by President Ilham Aliyev, have made repeated irredentist claims on the entire Republic of Armenia, including Syunik, labeling it as part of "Western Azerbaijan,"⁴ and

¹ *Khoznavar 3208, Armenia*, Google Maps <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Khoznavar+3208,+Armenia/@39.6235731,46.3418555,15z> [Accessed, May 2025].

² *Khnutsakh 3206, Armenia*, Google Maps <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Khnatsakh+3206,+Armenia/@39.6052742,46.3832259,15z> [Accessed, May 2025].

³ *Investigations Methodology*, CENTER FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE <https://www.cftjustice.org/investigations-methodology/> [Accessed, May 2025].

⁴ *Ilham Aliyev viewed conditions created at administrative building of Western Azerbaijan Community*, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN (24 December, 2022), <https://archive.ph/uXh8m> [Accessed, May 2025].

have promoted policies with long-term strategic goals of depopulating Armenian areas through sustained intimidation and military aggression.⁵ These policies of forcibly displacing Armenians were achieved in September of 2023 when Azerbaijan ethnically cleansed Nagorno-Karabakh. The ethnic cleansing occurred after Azerbaijan blockaded the 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, cutting them off from transportation, trade, food, medicine, and electricity. After blockading and starving the population, they launched a full-scale military assault, which resulted in the complete forcible depopulation of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

In 2021 and 2022, Azerbaijani military forces illegally occupied the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Armenia, establishing military positions in the highlands. By positioning troops and weaponry within proximity to inhabited areas, Azerbaijani forces have effectively turned Armenian border communities into frontlines, exposing residents to sustained intimidation, persistent gunfire, and at risk of forcible depopulation and migration, amounting to yet another act of ethnic cleansing and genocide. [This map](#)⁶ highlights the areas within Armenia's internationally recognized borders currently occupied by Azerbaijani forces, with the red zones indicating the territories under their control.

The civilian population in Syunik faces the same consequences as the Armenians did in Nagorno-Karabakh, whereby the constant threat to life and limb, property damage, and the psychological warfare impose unbearable conditions of life intended to cause destruction and forcible displacement.

Testimonial Evidence

Witness 25LC-0001⁷

The Witness was born in Kajaran city, Syunik Province in 1969. The family then moved to the village of Khoznavar.

Between 1990 and 1991, they witnessed Azerbaijani forces targeting fellow villagers working in the fields and herding livestock. In April 1992, while working the land alongside 15 others, including elderly residents, they came under sudden gunfire from Azerbaijani forces. The shooting lasted about 10 minutes; the tractor was struck, and they were forced to stop working.

Since 1994, the village has gradually returned to normal life, with most residents relying on livestock breeding and agriculture. On December 1, 2020, Azerbaijani military positions started to

⁵ *Azerbaijan's Policy of Irredentism: Illegitimate Territorial Claims on the Republic of Armenia*, CENTER FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE (January 2023), <https://www.cftjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Azerbaijans-Policy-of-Irredentism-Illegitimate-Territorial-Claims-on-the-Republic-of-Armenia-.pdf> [Accessed, May 2025].

⁶ *Armenia-Azerbaijan Border*, Google My Maps, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1m2TzodkKuLvUrFXXKz3FL2MFwc7WvVHo&usp=sharing> [Accessed, May 2025].

⁷ CFTJ Witness 25LC-0001, Testimony taken on 31 March, 2025.

appear in the highlands surrounding the village. Seven Azerbaijani military posts can be seen from the village in the surrounding hills. The Witness reported that two families recently left the village because of insecurity and dangerous living conditions. The villagers' livelihoods have become unsustainable due to the diminishing availability of pastureland, a consequence of Azerbaijani military aggression and daily gunfire targeting both residents and their pasturelands. This reduction in grazing land has forced residents to sell their livestock. The Azerbaijani military not only poses a persistent threat to the villagers, but they also steal their livestock and target shepherds who attempt to access pastures.

On March 20, 2025, Azerbaijani forces started firing guns from all surrounding military positions, primarily targeting the villages of Khoznavar and Khnatsakh. The gunfire typically occurs nightly between 10:15 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. Although the intensity varies from sporadic to heavy, the barrage has become a daily occurrence. In the mornings, villagers discover bullets scattered throughout the area, including on rooftops. The weapons used are primarily AKM and PK-type firearms.

On March 31, in Khnatsakh, a residential building with people inside came under fire, directly hitting the home and shattering a window. The incident has heightened fear and tension among the villagers, particularly concerning the safety of children and the elderly. The population remains in a state of fear and uncertainty.

The Witness emphasized that the villagers feel insecure, unable to make plans and move forward as a community. They state that the village has many natural and cultural attractions, but due to the security concerns, tourism remains unattainable. The Witness expressed deep concern that Azerbaijan will not allow them to live in peace and fears the start of another war.

Witness 25LC-0002⁸

The Witness was born in 1987 in Masis, Armenia. Their parents are from the village of Khoznavar.

The Witness spent their childhood in the village and recalls constant gunfire while villagers fled in all directions and took shelter in nearby caves. The Azerbaijani military subjected the village to shelling, forcing residents to live in caves for extended periods during the conflict.

After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, the Witness and their family were forced to sell their livestock because their pastures fell under Azerbaijani control. Previously, they had access to 200–300 hectares of mowed fields and grazing land around the Black Lake, “Sev Lich”, located within the Republic of Armenia. However, the Azerbaijani military advanced into Armenia proper in May 2021 and established illegal military positions around the Black Lake, making the area inaccessible

⁸ CFTJ Witness 25LC-0002, Testimony taken on 31 March, 2025.

to residents. See the current map of [Black Lake](#), the red areas are currently occupied by Azerbaijani forces.⁹

The village primarily engages in livestock breeding and agriculture. Since 2020, about 10 families have moved out of their village because they cannot breed livestock, and there are no job opportunities in the area.

Since March 20, 2025, residents have regularly heard gunfire coming from Azerbaijani positions. The Witness first heard gunfire at 10:20 p.m. The firing typically occurs at the same times each night, around 10:20 p.m., 2:20 a.m., and 4:20 a.m., and is usually brief. Additionally, bullets of various calibers have been found in the village.

The constant sound of gunfire has created a climate of anxiety among the villagers, including the Witness, who fears a potential attack and worries that the firing may escalate. The Witness also stated that their children are scared.

The Witness said on the day of their testimony, gunfire was heard at 12:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m., and 4:00 a.m., with the same level of intensity as on previous nights. They emphasized that the shots usually come from multiple Azerbaijani positions. The daily routine of villagers now begins with checking whether there was gunfire during the night.

The Witness's house is located near the village administration building, a local shop, and several other houses. Azerbaijani military positions are visible from their house. The village school, situated in the center of the village, remains operational, and children continue to attend classes with great anxiety.

Witness 25LC-0004¹⁰

The Witness was born in 1959, in the village of Khoznavar in the Syunik Province. Their ancestors are also from Khoznavar.

The Witness recalls that during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988-1992), they avoided staying home and lived in caves for four or five years due to constant gunfire. Azerbaijani forces bombed the village daily to drive the civilian population out of the village. During the early 1990s, 10–12 houses were damaged due to shelling and bombardment. Eventually, Azerbaijani forces destroyed the Witness's home after they struck it with a Grad rocket.

Once again, Azerbaijani military positions, established between 2020 and 2022, now completely surround the villages of Khnatsakh and Khoznavar.

⁹ Sev (Black) Lake, Google My Maps, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1CkNuuSxVep-BRqLgV1wbdOSmpnTXBu4&ll=39.58568867999634%2C46.23610241452125&z=12> [Accessed, May 2025].

¹⁰ CFTJ Witness 25LC-0004, Testimony taken on 29 April, 2025.

For the past month and a half, constant nightly gunfire has occurred mostly around the same hours: 10:30 p.m., 12:00 a.m., 2:30 a.m., and 4:30 a.m. Tensions are high. Specific weapons include automatic and PK machine guns, which have damaged residential homes.

On the morning of April 20, 2025, at approximately 2:20 a.m., the Witness's house was damaged from gunfire. Solar water heater cylinders on the roof were broken, three others cracked, and one PK bullet penetrated the roof. The shooting occurred at approximately 2:20 a.m.

The Witness showed photographs of the damaged solar water heater. The photographs were taken on April 22 – two days after the incident. The first [photo](#) shows a bullet found on the roof. The second [photo](#) and third [photo](#) show two broken and missing solar water heater cylinders. The fourth [photo](#) shows three additional damaged cylinders.

The Witness also reported that a bullet entered a neighbor's house, located slightly below his own. The residents were inside at the time, and one individual had a bullet pass just over their head before striking a piece of furniture.

International observers have visited and documented the damage, yet the gunfire continues. The Azerbaijani positions are situated 1 kilometer away from the Witness's home.

The Witness stated that many villagers once owned substantial numbers of livestock, but most have been forced to reduce their herds due to the inability to safely access pastures, which are now near Azerbaijani positions. A significant portion of the village's grazing land, approximately 200–300 hectares near the Black Lake area, has come under Azerbaijani control.

The Witness states that engaging in agriculture has also become dangerous. Although the villagers continue to cultivate the land, they do so with fear. During spring planting in 2023, the Azerbaijani military forces began to open fire, forcing the villagers to stop their work.

The Witness noted that the village cemetery lies directly below Azerbaijani military positions. As a result, villagers are fearful when attending burials, concerned that they could come under fire during the service.

The school and other residential homes are above the Witness's house. There are three children at the Witness's house: a six-year-old, a four-year-old, and a six-month-old. Whenever the children overhear adults discussing the ongoing gunfire, they get frightened. The Witness desires peace so that their grandchildren can live in tranquility.

The Witness thinks that the children could have been harmed if a bullet had passed a little lower, where the children slept. They now cover the windows with pillows. The Witness wishes for the international community to intervene so that Azerbaijan does not start another war.

CFTJ Fieldwork

CFTJ staff have been regularly visiting Armenian southeastern border villages affected by Azerbaijani gunfire to speak with residents, gather their accounts, and document the incidents.

On two separate occasions, CFTJ recorded live overnight gunfire from Azerbaijani military positions directed at villages where residents were sheltering in fear. Specifically, on March 31 at 10:19 p.m., while interviewing villagers in Khoznavar, CFTJ recorded ongoing gunfire in real time¹¹ (audiovisual documentation link [available here](#)). Further evidence of this violent pattern was captured on April 28–29, 2025, in Khnatsakh. Timestamped audiovisual footage, recorded overnight, documented three separate instances of gunfire at 10:21 p.m., 12:31 a.m., and 2:31 a.m. (audiovisual documentation link [available here](#)). The footage further supports the residents' claims that such attacks are routine and ongoing, terrorizing the residents and causing insecurity throughout the region.

During these field visits, CFTJ staff witnessed the profound anxiety and distress within these communities. The psychological impact was clear, with a recurring concern about uncertainty, safety, and the ability to remain in their homes and on their lands.

Conclusion

Azerbaijan's policy of violence and aggression in Armenia's southeastern border villages aims to depopulate Armenian lands, consistent with the policies they carried out in Nagorno-Karabakh, which resulted in the forcible deportation of 120,000 Armenians from their homes and lands. Their strategy includes sustained violence, deprivation, and terror to achieve ethnic displacement and further occupation inside the borders of the Republic of Armenia. The same pattern – repeated gunfire, targeting civilians and infrastructure, and psychological terror is making Syunik uninhabitable. These acts, aimed at forced displacement and illegal occupation, severely threaten Armenia's territorial integrity.

CFTJ calls upon the European Union Observers, the diplomatic missions in the Republic of Armenia, as well as all non-governmental and governmental institutions, to document these crimes being committed daily inside the Republic of Armenia by the Azerbaijani military forces and demand it stop. They should demand that the Azerbaijani military immediately withdraw its military forces from sovereign Armenian territory. Documentation and corroboration of facts are critical to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its criminal acts that include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Violating the sovereign borders of Armenia
- 2) Illegally taking military positions in Armenia
- 3) Shooting into the villages at civilians and civilian infrastructure
- 4) Damaging property

¹¹ Center for Truth and Justice (@cftjustice), INSTAGRAM, (1 April, 2025) <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DH4QAQuBd3e/?igsh=MXZ2ZjVIY2JuZjMwOA==> [Accessed, May 2025].

- 5) Causing mental and psychological harm to the population
- 6) Terrorizing the civilians of the villages
- 7) Deliberately inflicting on Armenians conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of the villages and make life unsustainable
- 8) Forcing populations to leave, forcible deportations from their homes

The Center for Truth and Justice will continue to document all crimes committed by Azerbaijani forces. We call upon all international institutions to condemn and sanction Azerbaijan.