



Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust

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Fact Sheet – Nagorno-Karabakh

Summary

Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous Armenian-majority populated region landlocked in Azerbaijan. During Soviet times it enjoyed autonomy, but it has been subject to dispute since it declared independence in September 1991. Thousands died in fighting; hundreds of thousands fled or were ethnically cleansed. The region is now *de facto* independent, but the internationally unrecognised Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh is officially regarded as a part of Azerbaijan. Since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1994, representatives of the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been holding peace talks mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group on the region's disputed status.

HART's partner in Nagorno-Karabakh is [The Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre](#).

History of Nagorno-Karabakh

- Nagorno-Karabakh became part of the Russian empire in the 19th century.
- The roots of the present conflict lie in early 20th century decisions made by Stalin. He created autonomous enclaves on the border of the Soviet Union, one of them being the Armenian-majority region of Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijani territory.
- When the Soviet Union began to dissolve, the issue of autonomy arose again. In 1988, Karabakh Armenians organised protests in Stepanakert, which were followed by similar uprisings in Yerevan. At this time 78% of the region's population were Armenian and 22% Azerbaijani with some Russian and Kurdish minorities.
- Between 20,000 and 30,000 people died during protests and fighting.
- In 1991, Azerbaijan abolished the autonomous status of Nagorno-Karabakh, bringing the territory under direct Azeri rule. Later that year witnessed a referendum boycotted by Azeri population for the creation of an independent state. These actions led to full scale war, forcing thousands of Azeris to leave Karabakh, and Armenians to leave Azerbaijan, none of whom have returned since then.
- Since the 1994 Russian brokered ceasefire Nagorno-Karabakh is relatively peaceful under autonomous rule. It is, however, internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan.
- The ceasefire agreement is regularly breached on both sides. Russia, France and US co-chair the OSCE's Minsk Group that monitors the line of contact and tries to broker a feasible peace agreement.

Present conflict and humanitarian situation

- "Twenty years later, Nagorno-Karabakh is often called a "frozen conflict". For most people outside the Caucasus, it is more of a forgotten one." [[Economist](#)]

And indeed it might not be that 'frozen'. While full scale war is highly unlikely, according to analysts, the increasingly frequent violations of the ceasefire along the Line of Contact constitute a threat to peace in this region. The conflict impedes economic development and regional co-operation in South Caucasus.

- Years of peace talks have led to virtually no progress. Karabakh Armenians still want internationally recognised independence, Azeris still do not want to grant that. Refugees on both sides want to return to their homes.
- Week by week the NKR Defence Ministry registers hundreds of ceasefire violations on the line of contact, but OSCE observers do not report them. Russia's "Global preoccupation with international affairs, and the ideological clash between the US and Russia in their approaches to these conflicts, reduce the likelihood that these powers will cooperate and come to a negotiated solution for peace" ([HART blog](#)). Both the USA and Russia are mediators in the Minsk Group and additionally Russia is economically interested in sustaining the status quo.

To learn more, visit:

- HART Blog Post on recent events in Nagorno-Karabakh <http://www.hart-uk.org/blog/conflict-continues-nagorno-karabakh-violence-disrupts-armenian-azerbaijani-ceasefire-line/>
- The Economist: 'The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict' <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2013/10/nagorno-karabakh-conflict>

To see photos of the region, visit:

- <http://thekarabakhconversation.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.rferl.org/media/photogallery/nagorno-karabakh/25319756.html>

For more information, please contact sam.hudson@hart-uk.org, or visit www.hart-uk.org/locations/nagorno-karabakh.
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