Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) is a mountainous enclave in Azerbaijan with a majority Armenian population (94%). The region has been characterised and defined by its decades of conflict and tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. After declaring itself as autonomous in 1991, the NK is de facto independent with its own President but is yet to be recognised by any states or the UN.

Key Info

- **Size**: 4,400 km²
- **NK Population**: 150,000
- **Armenia Population**: 2.93 million
- **Azerbaijan Population**: 9.9 million
- **Continent**: Asia
- **NK Capital City**: Stepanakert
- **NK President**: Bako Sahakyan
- **Armenian Prime Minister**: Nikol Pashinyan
- **Azerbaijani President**: Ilham Aliyev
- **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**: 'Minsk Group' monitoring the situation in NK, co-chaired by France, Russia, and the USA
- **Mikhail Gorbachev**: former and last President of the Soviet Union

Key dates

- **19th C**: Became part of Russian Empire
- **1921**: Bolsheviks declare NK an autonomous region within Soviet Azerbaijan
- **1987**: Reforms made by Gorbachev anger the NK Armenians, they demand the unification of NK and Soviet Armenia
- **1988**: Anti-Armenian violence in Azeri city of Sumgait, claims at least 30 lives and triggers exodus of Armenians from Azerbaijan
- **1991**: USSR collapses
  - Armenian authorities declare NK independent
- **1991 - 1994**: Nagorno-Karabakh War, ends in a ceasefire
- **2001**: Both sides fail to sell a peace deal to their population
- **2011**: Russian President, Medvedev, fails to secure a peace deal
- **2016**: 4 day war between N-K & Armenia against Azerbaijan, some 50 killed, Moscow help broker a ceasefire
- **2018**: April - Popular revolt in Armenia known as the 'velvet revolution' leads to election of Nikol Pashinyan
- **2019**: Jan - talks lead to both sides agreeing to 'prepare their populations for peace'
  - Aug - Speech by Pashinyan angered Azerbaijani, 'major blow' to negotiations

Threats to peace:

While a full scale war is unlikely in the region, since the 1994 ceasefire there have been constant violations along the Line of Contact. Both Azerbaijan and Armenia have been building up their military - in 2015 Azerbaijan spent $3 billion and Armenia $447 million. Although, in the past year ceasefire violations have decreased with a few exceptions, suggesting a stronger will to commit to peace.

Many peace deals have been attempted, even some with the help of Russia, but none have prevailed. However, the election of Nikol Pashinyan brings hope to open up a new positive dialogue. This hope may have been cut short due to the assertion made by Pashinyan in a speech on 05/08/2019 that NK was part of Armenia. This angered Azerbaijan and on 12th August, they detained an Armenian soldier who crossed the front line in NK into Azerbaijani trenches. No State recognises Nagorno-Karabakh, not even Armenia!

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the decades of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and there were allegations of human rights abuses on both sides, whilst refugees on both sides want to return to their homes.
Humanitarian Situation

During the decades of conflict in the region, around 1.2 million people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh have been displaced. Currently 32 percent of Armenians live below the poverty line.

It has been reported that more than $3.8 billion has been spent on supporting the needs of both IDPs and refugees since the beginning of the conflict.

Those living in NK depend on the Armenian government for support because of the absence of State recognition and the ban of society organisations and political figures from entering put in place by Azerbaijan.

HART's Partner in Nagorno-Karabakh

Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre, Stepanakert

The centre provides the treatment and support for people with disabilities. Run by Vardan Tadevosyan, the centre is an internationally recognised 'Centre of Excellence'. The centre works to challenge the stigma of disability and empowers individuals with disabilities. The therapeutic facilities include physiotherapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy. A day centre is available for children with autism.

Vardan has succeeded in breaking many of the entrenched taboos about disability, a hangover from the Soviet era, including better access to employment for people with disabilities.

Some useful links for more information:

BBC - www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18270325
The Economist - www.economist.com/topics/nagorno-karabakh
Crisis Group - www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan/244-nagorno-karabakh-gathering-war-clouds
Relief Web - https://reliefweb.int/country/arm
The Guardian - www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/02/conflict-erupts-between-azerbaijani-and-armenian-forces
HART - www.hart-uk.org/locations/nagorno-karabakh

If you have any queries, please visit www.hart-uk.org or contact office@hart-uk.org